

Committee Name:
Joint Committee on Finance – Budget Hearings (JCF_BH)

Appointments

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Clearinghouse Rules

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K-12



GREENDALE SCHOOL DISTRICT

5900 SOUTH 51ST STREET GREENDALE, WI 53129
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE (414) 423-2700 BUSINESS OFFICE (414) 423-2710
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April 15, 1999

Testimony for Borrowing Money Outside the Revenue Caps

Thank you, members of the committee. My name is Bill Hughes; I am superintendent of the Greendale School District, located in the Southwest corner of Milwaukee County. Greendale is bordered on the north by Southridge Mall, to the south by Crystal Ridge ski hill, and the Root River Parkway. I appreciate the opportunity to testify again before you regarding borrowing authority outside the revenue cap for local school districts in general, as well as regarding the impact of revenue caps and the state funding formula on the Greendale School District.

The reason I am appearing before you today is to present our concerns regarding an initiative that would provide borrowing authority outside the revenue caps at the local level. School boards already have \$1 million in borrowing authority but are effectively precluded from using it because the debt payment must come from within the revenue caps requiring equivalent cuts in operating expenditures. I'd like to detail some of the important points that could be a part of a bill or amendment to the budget.

- Borrowing authority must be outside the state sharing formulas. This eliminates any cost to the state. It also means Greendale, as a "third tier" or "negative aid" district, isn't forced to tax \$1.62 for every \$1.00 it needs to spend. There are over 100 "third tier" districts. If a district feels strongly enough that the funds are needed beyond the revenue caps, they should be willing to pay for the funds themselves. If not, districts

still retain the option to go to referendum, raise the revenue cap and have the state pay on average two-thirds of the cost.

- Allow borrowing up to \$350 per student, or 4-5% of the district budget. This is in line with many businesses. School districts face the same needs, i.e. roofs, asphalt, athletic facilities, painting, equipment, computers, etc. that private businesses face.
- Limit to capital repairs and maintenance, to avoid use for normal operating expenses, thus evading the revenue caps. Also, there should also be a restriction to prevent larger districts from using this borrowing authority for major building and construction projects to avoid the referendum process.
- Limit to districts with small surpluses. Districts with large surpluses (with amounts beyond those needed for cash flow purposes) should be required to use these funds first for capital repairs and maintenance.
- Require a supermajority vote of the school board. Because the vote effectively overrides the revenue caps, a simple majority is insufficient. A unanimous vote is not viable for many boards and can allow one individual to defeat the democratic process by blocking the process.
- Provides school districts with a safety valve for major unexpected repairs and maintenance.

A bill or amendment to the budget of this type should be easy for legislators and taxpayers to support because the amounts are small, requires a supermajority board vote, and would be specifically limited to capital repairs and maintenance, school safety issues, and possibly technology. Further, any revenue generated through this authority would tax only the local districts and would require no state funding. It also leaves the referendum process in place for districts that desire to use it. The legislative alternative, often presented in this kind

of situation, is a referendum. As many of you are aware, a referendum is not really viable to "third tier" districts. I'm not sure many taxpayers would be willing to spend \$1.62 in taxes in order to allow the school district to spend \$1.00.

Greendale School District has benefited from revenue caps in that property tax relief has been provided to residents as well as requiring the district to adopt a "best practices" approach to the management of the system. It has given the schools the opportunity to collaborate with the Village through the expansion of shared services, and has brought a sense of fiscal conservatism at all levels of education. However, over the past three years, the district has eliminated \$1.3 million through budget cuts, resulting in a budget of approximately \$21 million per year. Included in these cuts have been an elementary principal, where today the director of pupil services also serves as a principal of one of our neighborhood elementary schools. In addition, 8.8 fte teachers, 2.0 fte IMC Directors, a reading specialist, an elementary guidance counselor, eight coaches and extra-curricular advisors, support staff including secretaries, aides, custodial and maintenance personnel along with deferring maintenance, reducing bussing, and freezing spending levels for textbooks and academic materials. Finally, our local AFSCME union, representing the workers who provide a quality service in the area of building and grounds accepted a wage freeze in lieu of additional cuts to their staff.

On behalf of the Legislative Committee, composed of residents of Greendale, we recognize the difficult choices that your committee faces as you determine how best to fund public schools. At the same time, a revenue carve-out initiative provides a safety valve for major unexpected repairs and maintenance, technology initiatives, and possible safety needs, while at the same time being sensitive to the ability of taxpayers to pay. It returns another step

towards local control where residents and board members assume responsibility for funding their schools and determining the kinds of programs that the community has come to expect. This always was a priority.

I want to thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I will be happy to answer any questions the committee has relative to this presentation.

William H. Hughes, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools
(414) 423-2701

Chairs: Brian ^{Sen}Burke → John ^{Rep}Gard

April 14, 1999

Statement to the WI State Joint Finance Committee
Regarding the Funding of Public Education:

*My name is Erin Raether, a lifetime Wisconsin citizen. I am speaking for myself and on behalf of the Education Task Force of Progressive Dane.

*The public educational system of our state is not just *under-funded*, but it is being handcuffed and hurt by the legislative acts of this state. Several aspects of Wisconsin's budget are severely limiting the abilities of schools and the teachers to do what is necessary: to educate and help minds to grow!!

*The spending caps on local school districts *must be eliminated*. These spending caps are causing budgetary problems in the far majority of districts by cutting funds spent on textbooks, extracurricular programs, the arts, and so much more. *Over* half of schools are suffering from such basic problems as building maintenance deterioration and teacher vacancies.

*Also, the legislature must live up to its apparently empty promises to school districts in the area of special education. Despite the guarantee that the state would pay 63% of the federally mandated Exceptional Educational Needs costs, the state is only reimbursing the school districts at half that rate. The legislature *must* be held accountable to what is required by its own laws.

*Because of the spending caps, and the additional money Wisconsin's school districts are being forced to pay for Exceptional Educational Needs programs, the education of the state's youth is suffering. It seems pointless to try and prove how significant *public* schools are in opening minds, spreading knowledge, and developing the skills of new generations. I will not even begin to try, as the reasons are obvious to me and they should be to you.

Erin Raether
Madison, WI

← 508 W. Doty St. #1 Madison, WI 53703
(608) 257-6557



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

DAVID WARD

37th Assembly District

The attached is provided
for your information.
Please let me know if I can be
of further assistance.

Sen. Decker

Please find attached the comments
from my constituent, Jill Farnsworth
from Lake Mills, regarding the
expansion of kindergarten. She
requested that I distributed her comments
to the Joint Finance Committee.

P.O. Box 8953, Madison, WI 53708
(608) 266-3790

Impact on Taxes of Expanding Kindergarten

The State of Wisconsin is one of the highest taxing states in the Union. In an effort to lower property tax, the State has chosen to increase funding for public schools to two-thirds of the cost, and limit annual per pupil increase in State funding to a flat amount. As a result, communities have seen a drop in property taxes.

However, many school districts have been able to pass referendums to increase capital expenditures because of the lower tax rate. Since the State pays school districts based on enrollment, many school districts are choosing to expand to full day 5 year old kindergarten, 4 year old kindergarten, and even consider 3 year old preschool programs to increase their revenues from the State. If these increases continue, the State will not be able to pay for them, unless they raise taxes.

Local communities are passing these spending increases because residents believe they are getting "free" kindergarten programs. However, as more and more school districts expand kindergarten, a significant tax increase is inevitable.

If local school districts decide to expand their programs, local communities should pay for them, not the entire State.

Dear Editor:

In the news in the last couple of days there has been a lot of talk about full day kindergarten programs, and also four year old "kindergarten" programs increasing in the state. The attitude has all been positive. People think they are getting "free" programs because, after all, the "state" is funding these programs. Who do you think "the state" is? Wisconsin is already one of the highest taxing states in the union. In an effort to lower property tax, the state has chosen to increase funding for public school to two-thirds of the cost per pupil. As a result, communities have seen a drop in property taxes. Therefore, many school districts have been able to pass referenda to increase capital expenditures.

The school districts get paid state aid based on enrollment, so many are turning to full day kindergarten, so these children count as 1 child instead of 1/2, they are turning to four year old programs, and many are even considering 3 year old preschool programs to increase their revenues from the state. If these increases continue, the state will not be able to pay for them, unless, of course taxes go up. Sure, it looks good now to a district, they see all this "state money" available, why not increase their enrollment by taking in children all day, and/or include four year olds in their enrollment count? But that can't continue forever. After all, "state money" is tax money.

It looks good to working parents too, they are getting "free" child care. But once their child is past kindergarten, they are paying for everyone else's child care.

The districts sell these programs to taxpayers by citing the educational benefits to the children. "It seems easier to sell to the community because it's not coming out of the local taxpayers' pocket" said Jim McCoy, early-childhood consultant with DPI, in a Milwaukee Journal Sentinel interview. "For the local communities, the pressure is off. How the state is going to pay for it, I don't know."

There are many excellent child care and preschool programs available to working parents. The scare over the lack of child care slots due to W-2 was unfounded. The state is sitting on many dollars that were earmarked for W-2 participants that are still sitting there unused. Good child care programs are available, and a good one has higher staff qualifications and better teacher child ratios than are required by the school districts' four year old programs!

Then there are bussing versus walking issues; curriculum issues, as a four year old learns differently than a five year old; and even some five year olds are not ready for a full day of school. I have seen many a.m. kindergarteners come back to their child care center and lay down for a rest

Dear Parents,

I hope you have read the story about the Facilities Committee work in the March 26 issue of the Leader. I also hope you noticed that of the four "solutions" to the addition at Prospect diagrammed by the space consultants from "DLR Group" (I don't know what this group is) that were presented all included space for "grades" **pre-kindergarten** through grade five.

These "solutions" have gotten me quite upset. Why should the tax-supported school system be going into the pre-kindergarten business? Why does this "group" assume this community wants or needs not only full day kindergarten, but four year old kindergarten? They don't even present any options that DO NOT include full day and four year old kindergarten.

I believe that the taxes in this community are high enough, we are already beginning to support the mansion downtown called the city hall, do we need to build a school big enough for full day and four year old kindergarten?

And is this community prepared for the consequences of the school doing full day and four year old kindergarten? Namely, putting **First Class** and Teddy Bear Pre-School out of business? Eliminating five and four year olds from here would mean us losing 29 out of our 69 children. We can't afford that. Then where would these 29 children go on the many, many days off from school if we're not here?

If you are as interested in this as I am, I urge you to join me next Tuesday, April 6 at 7:00 at the Middle School for the next facilities committee meeting; and/or the Public forum at the high school at 7:00 on Thursday April 8.

Remember, while the school providing care for your four and five year olds NOW may sound good to you, are you prepared to pay for everyone else's four and five year olds care on your tax bills for the rest of your life?

Come see me with any questions!!! See you at the meetings. Jill

Joint Finance Committee Hearing (Madison) Speech

15 April 1999
Jaidee K. Moore

When the bill permitting the capping of school budgets was passed into law, it was done with nothing but good intentions. I am here to tell you that I have witnessed exactly the opposite both in the Madison schools and in other schools throughout the state. Overall, the budget caps have devastated the Madison schools. Particularly at West High School, we have not had enough money even for basic repairs. As a result, our roof leaks, the electrical system is faulty, and our heat has failed during the winter. Certainly, such poor conditions do not promote a good educational environment for students. There have also been limits placed on athletics and other extracurricular programs that provide opportunity for students in Madison. For example, the West football team has had tremendous trouble in finding adequate equipment with which to play. The track team, of which I am a part, has no where to run meets, as the Mansfield Track has been closed due to a lack of money.

The budget caps have also created problems outside Madison. I have traveled to Milwaukee on numerous occasions as part of forensics and debate, and I have found the scene there to be one of utter devastation. Even in their select schools, such as Solomon Juneau Business High School, the school that produced Astronaut Jim Lovell, they do not have enough money for adequate technology or maintenance. These schools do not appear to be suitable places to achieve a proper education. I have personally met with numerous students of high potential that we are simply not giving a chance due to financial constraints created by the budget caps.

History provides an important example of where we may be headed. At the end of World War I we were confident that we had no enemies, so we cut funding to our military. By the eve of World War II our military was so dwindled away that we almost lost that war. The very same thing is happening right now to education thanks to the budget caps. The cutting of school budgets directly affects the proper education of our youth. These are the youth that will grow up to lead this nation, to be the managers and engineers. We cannot cut back their opportunities and allow others to get a better chance at taking American jobs. For the good of this nation as a whole, and in order to give American youth an equal shot at life, we must modify or abolish the budget caps.

**School District of La Crosse
807 East Ave. South
La Crosse, WI 54601**

Memo

To: Joint Finance Committee
From: Woody Wiedenhoef
Date: 04/15/99
Re: Declining Enrollment Challenges

I respectfully request that action be taken in regards to declining enrollment school districts as it relates to revenue limits, special education categorical aid, and general obligation notes (67.12(12)). In the absence of change, La Crosse School District's maintenance and capital needs are delayed for the third year. We will continue to delay textbook adoptions, curriculum updates, and library updates. We will continue to reduce operating supplies and building budgets. We have started reducing staff and will consider raising class size and reducing program offerings.

We are not oblivious to the help the State of Wisconsin has given the taxpayers. The two-thirds funding has lowered school taxes. The Teach Program and the Sage program help provide for some technology needs and some smaller class sizes. It will be challenging for the State of Wisconsin to continue this funding commitment to its taxpayers and its commitment to certain programs.

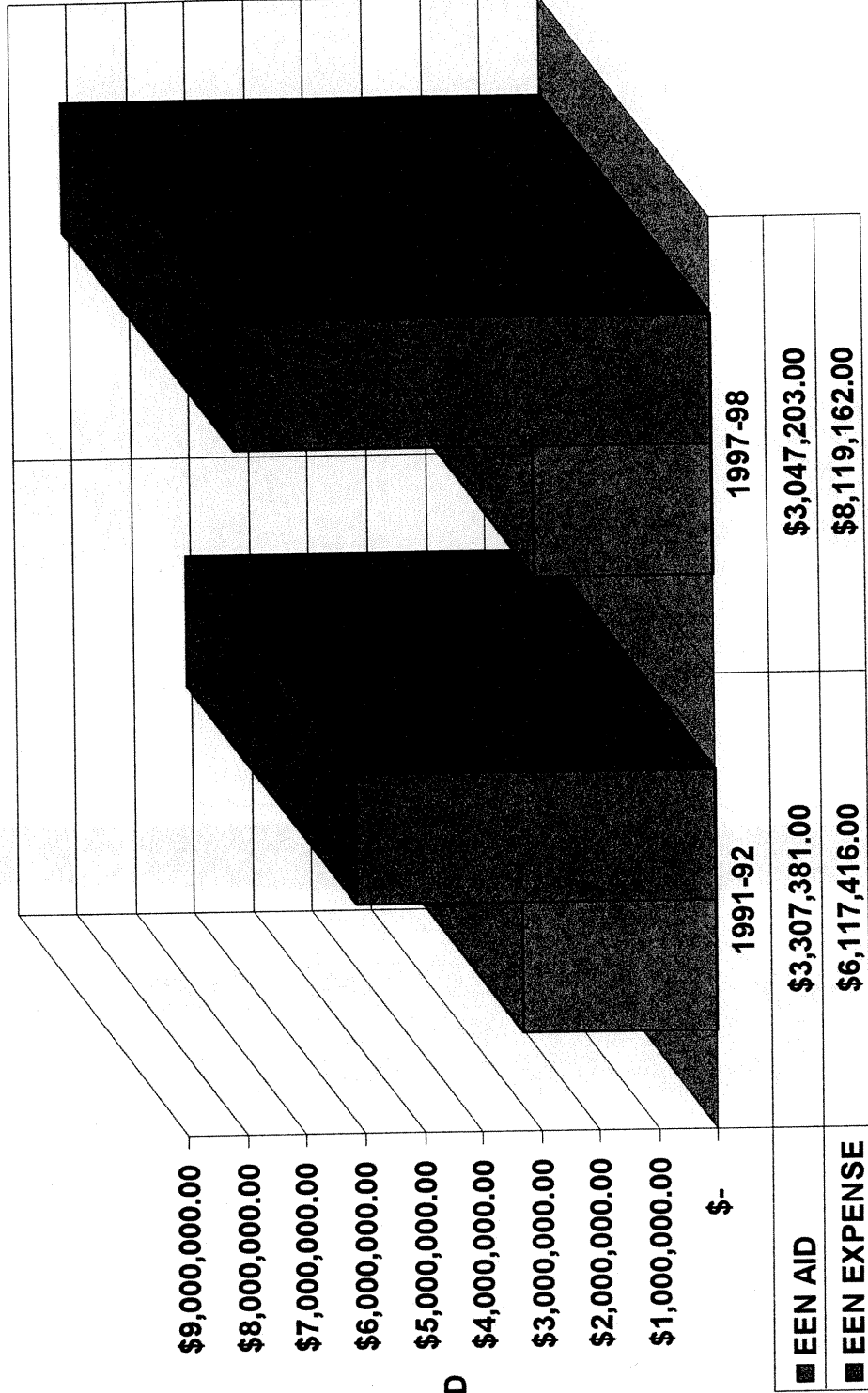
However, the revenue limit is tied to enrollment and the ability to maintain needed revenues is severely curtailed in declining enrollment districts. The revenues of the School District of La Crosse increase at approximately 2 % a year. The State's strategy is described with the analogy of a three-legged stool. The first leg controls employee compensation costs. The second leg controls spending. The third leg controls property taxes. For most declining enrollment school districts, the compensation leg grows at approximately 3.8%. The spending leg grows at approximately 2.5%. The two-thirds funding is being debated. This stool will tip over someday.

In addition to the restricting revenue limits special education aid is restricted. The attached graph speaks for itself. The difference between special education costs and special education aid is funded with the revenue limit increase.

We propose realigning the law to keep the stool from tipping over. The controlled growth of the legs of the stool must be equalized. In addition, we propose that something less than a full-blown referendum have to be used for maintenance and capital needs. Reintroducing the SB 268 proposal from 1997 will go a long way towards providing appropriate flexibility.

Thank you for your time, attention, and consideration.

EEN AID COMPARISON



EXPENSE VS AID

SCHOOL YEAR

■ EEN AID ■ EEN EXPENSE



April 15, 1999

Dear Joint Finance Committee

My name is Margaret Wilsman and I work at the Wisconsin Educational Communications Board as Director of Education Research and Evaluation and WECB Online. I have been the evaluator on the Wisconsin Staff Development Initiative (WASDI) Project which is entering its fifth and final year as a statewide professional development program funded by the National Science Foundation for reform of K-12 mathematics, science and technology education.

The purpose of my testimony is to urge the Joint Finance Committee to support the motion to continue state funding for the WASDI Project as a new agency budget item for the Department of Public Instruction.

Over the past five years, the National Science Foundation has invested six million dollars in the WASDI Project and Silicon Graphics, Inc., formerly Cray Research, has also invested over 1000 thousand of dollars in the project for the past two years. As shown in the statewide Academy brochure that is attached, at each of the 12 WASDI Academy locations, hundreds of Wisconsin businesses and industries have also contributed to each Academy. I believe that it is time for the state of Wisconsin to begin funding the WASDI Project.

My most recent WASDI Evaluation Report ("Growth Over Time Evaluation Summary") is also attached. In it I report on how groups and organizations across the state have clamored for the opportunity to open a WASDI Academy in their area. The Academy structure is modeled upon the highly successful, original, Cray Academy, begun and supported by Cray Research in the Chippewa Falls for eight years.

The WASDI Academies have a successful track record of changing teaching and learning classroom practices. Teachers report that their students are more eager to tackle and are more successful in accomplishing more difficult mathematics, science and technology education educational outcomes related to problem-solving, inquiry, critical reasoning and communication.

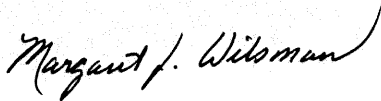
Just last week the WASDI project began preparing the last group of 66 WASDI Lead Teachers. These are the best Wisconsin K-12 teachers in mathematics, science and technology education. They enter an 18-month Lead Teacher Institute program that prepares them to be committed to assuming new teacher-leadership roles in their school districts, particularly with respect to aligning the district curriculum with the 1998 Wisconsin Model Academic Standards and with respect to preparing teachers with what is needed to increase student proficiency levels on the new Wisconsin Student Assessment System (WSAS) and other new high stakes testing programs as they develop.

As a result of WASDI there now are 300 Lead Teachers prepared to provide leadership not only at the district level, but regionally through the CESAs and statewide through professional organizations.

The WASDI Project has been recognized by NSF as a unique model for how to accomplish statewide systemic reform. Please consider appropriating the funding to keep in place the existing project structures that will ensure the continuation of the best parts of this project and the expansion of the project to the other two tested disciplines, language arts/reading and social studies.

Thank you for considering my concerns. We each recognize that students are the life giving force for Wisconsin to continue as the best state in the nation. Wisconsin students deserve the best teachers, who in turn, deserve outstanding professional development opportunities that are readily available. Legislative support for the WASDI Project means students will continue to have the best prepared teachers in the nation.

Sincerely,



Margaret J. Wilsman, Ph.D.
Wisconsin Educational Communications Board
Education Administration Director
Director, Education Research and Evaluation and
WECEB Online
3319 West Beltline Hwy, MADISON WI 53713

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Attachments (2)

JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE HEARING
April 15, 1999

Testimony from: Jean M. Boothby

Materials collected by:

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8. Figure 1.3 Paradigm for the Analysis that ***may influence learning and behavior.***
9. Why the Testing Craze Won't Fix Our Schools.
10. Can Retention Be Good For A Student.
11. Grade Retention: A History of Failure.

EXAMPLE OF KEVIN
FROM THE TESTIMONY OF:
Jean Boothby and Arlie Davel

By reviewing this 5th graders grades, you can see he was a solid A-B student. Likewise for his first quarter of 6th grade.

To earn those grades, Kevin had to work 2-3 times harder than the average student. On a normal day he will average 5 hours of homework a night. To keep up with this work load, Kevin also gave up soccer. After reviewing his CTBS test scores, you can see he has scored very low. The low scores are not the result of wrong answers, the scores are low because he was only able to complete 12 sections of the more than 32 sections on the test.

This past fall, out of concerned with the length of time for homework, CTBS test results and the students high anxiety level, his parents chose to have him tested outside of the school district. Through the testing it was confirmed that this child does have a glitch in his ability to retrieve information. He knows the material, but when it comes to sorting all the information at once, as it would be on a test, this task proves to be very difficult and a lengthy process for him. We were told that time tests would never be an option of measurement for Kevin. Other forms of criteria would be needed to demonstrate his abilities.

Had the CTBS test been the state exam, this A-B student would have been retained. **What would our state have accomplished by retaining this student?**

This is just one example of many, as to why our legislators must go back to the drawing board to establish a more equitable measurement of knowledge, skills and concepts for all the Wisconsin Public School children.

Thomas Jefferson Middle School

4th Quarter Report Card

6/16/98

Grade: 05

Student #: 12777

Homeroom Teacher: Wisotzke

Period	Course	Course Name	Teacher	Qtr				Sem 1		Qtr		Sem 2		Year		4th Quarter Comments
				1	2	3	4	Final	Final	4	Final	Final	Final			
	5352	Comm. - Reading	Wisotzke, L.	B	A	A-	B	A-	B	B+						
01	5100	Math	Wisotzke, L.	B+	A	A	A-								1. Outstanding effort	
02	5200	Social Studies	Wisotzke, L.	B	A-	B	A-								1. Takes pride in work 2. Outstanding effort 3. Cooperative	
03	5009	Band Lessons	O'Keefe, L.	A	A	A	A								1. Pleasure to have in class 2. Shows improvement 3. Good effort	
04	5350	Comm. - English	Wisotzke, L.	C+	A-	B	B									
05	5351	Comm. - Spelling	Wisotzke, L.	B+	A	B	B									
07	5930	Art	Pemberton, R.	B	B	A	B									
07	5800	General Music	Ofedahl, K.	A-	A	A-	A									
08	5910	Health	Burke, E.	A-	A	B+	A									
08	5920	Phy Ed	Burke, E.	A-	B+	A-	A									
09	5400	Science	Wisotzke, L.	B	A-	A	B+								1. Good effort 2. Pleasure to have in class	

Congratulations, you have achieved Academic Excellence

Thomas Jefferson Middle School

1st Quarter Report Card

11/5/98

Grade: 06

Student #: 12777

Homeroom Teacher: Thiel

Period Course Course Name Teacher Qtr 1 Qtr 2 Qtr 3 Qtr 4 Final 1st Quarter Comments

01	5351	Comm. - Spelling	Thiel	B						1. Good effort
02	6100	Math	Thiel	B						1. Good effort
03	6200	Social Studies	Geib	A-						1. Good effort
04	6400	Science	Thiel	A-						1. Good effort 2. Pleasure to have in class
05	6940	Tech Ed	Culliney	A-						
05	6913	Health (R, F)	Coulson	B						
05	6921	Phy Ed (M, T)	Coulson	B+						
07	6350	Comm. - Reading	Thiel	B						1. Good effort
08	6352	Comm. - English	Thiel	B						1. Good effort
09	6009	Lessons (T,R)	O'Keefe	A-						

Congratulations, you have achieved Academic Excellence



CTBS COMPLETE BATTERY

Home Report

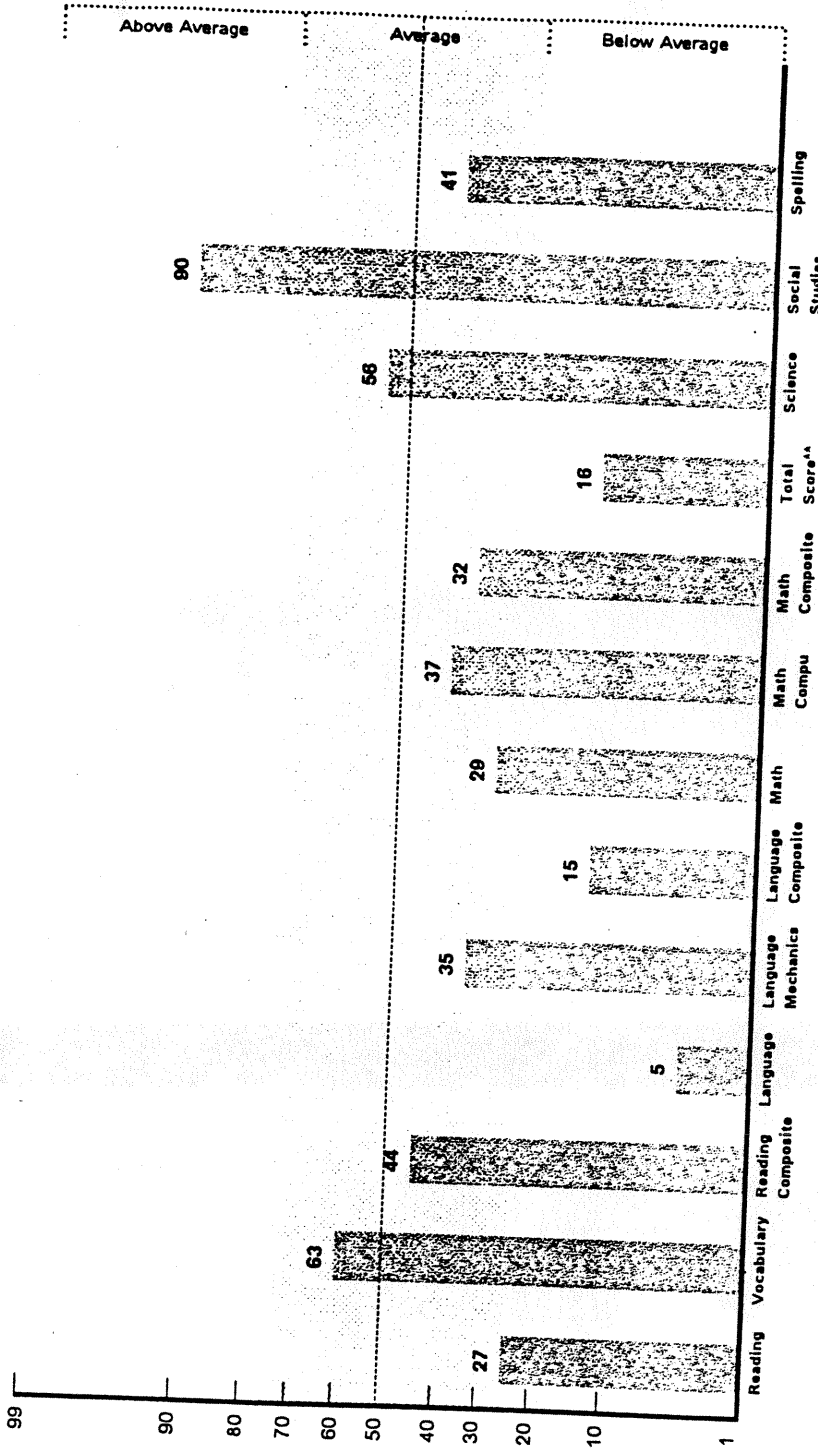


Grade: 6

Purpose

The Home Report presents information about your child's performance on the TerraNova Assessment. It describes achievement in terms of National Percentiles, which compare your child with other students of the same grade nationally. The report may be used to determine areas of strength and need.

National Percentiles



** Total score consists of Reading, Language, Mathematics Cmpat: Composite

Observations

The height of each bar shows your child's National Percentile score on each test. The percentile scale is shown on the left. The graph shows that your child achieved a National Percentile of 27 in Reading. This means your child scored higher than approximately 27 percent of the students in the nation.

The scale on the right side of the graph shows score ranges that represent average, above average, and below average

in terms of National Percentiles. Average is defined as the middle 50 percent of the students nationally. Your child has nine out of thirteen National Percentile scores in the average range. One score is above the average range and three scores are below the average range.

See the reverse side for more detailed information about your child's strengths and needs.

Birthdate: 04/17/87

Special Codes: ABCDEF GHIJKL MNOPQRST

Form/Level: A-18

Test Date: 09/21/88

Scoring: PATTERN (IRT)

Norms Date: 1986

Class: THIEL JILL

School: T JEFFERSON M

District: P W S S D

City/State: PT WASHINGTON, WI

City/State: PT WASHINGTON, WI



EXAMPLES OF A STUDENT FOR WHICH ONE TEST DOES NOT SHOW THE COMPLETE PICTURE

Enclosed please find a copy of Laura's 5th grade district math test results from May 1997.

*** As you can see, she failed with a 64%.**

This student was a very shy student who had just transferred from a school in North Carolina and was not participating in many extra-curricular activities. Our District has excellent remedial programs in place and she attended their summer school math course.

*** As you can see, she passed the District Math test at the end of summer with a 88%.**

*** Enclosed also is a copy of her current report card (she is now a 7th grade student).**

As you can see she is an academic excellence student.

This student is now a thriving well-rounded student who not only achieves academic excellence, but is on Student Council, Yearbook Committee, Peer Mediation Group, and Pom Poms. Had the current law been in place, this student would have been retained (she failed ONE subject test). I believe if this student would have been retained, you could very possibly be looking a very different student. Perhaps one without any self-esteem, not at all active in her school activities. This is only one example of a student who could have been lost in the shuffle of our laws, who could "fall through the cracks" - But this is MY child and therefore I know this would not have been a student in danger of being "socially promoted". This could be your child too.

EXAMPLES FROM LINCOLN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL 1999

- 1) **4TH Grade Boy who is an average student.** Started the WSAS testing, however was so anxious and nervous he froze. The teacher tried talking to him and encouraging him, but to no avail. This student eventually was exempted from the test by his parents. (Our Principal indicated that every year about 4 of our 4th graders (class average 75) have test anxiety so severe that they are unable to complete or sometimes even start the test).
- 2) **4TH Grade Boy who is an average student.** He is clinically diagnosed with Depression, which is not a learning disability. Attempted to take the WSAS test several times, however failed to complete any sections. Eventually the Grandparent exempted the child from the test because the results would have been unreliable in showing his knowledge.
- 3) **4TH Grade Girl who was extremely ill during testing.** On the first day of testing she was in school with a 103 degree temperature. She did complete a small portion and then went home sick. She came back in two days and did another small section of the test, consequently going home again ill. She did finally complete the WSAS testing, however due to her illness during the testing she scored extremely low. Her teachers felt that the test score was not an accurate picture of her knowledge.
- 4) **4TH Grade Girl who is an above average student.** Took the WSAS test, however half way through realized that she was missing 4 pages of the test. The testing procedure had to be halted while the missing pages were added (calls had to be made to the district to verify procedure). The child was interrupted during the stressful testing procedure and was emotionally upset. She did complete the entire test eventually, however her scores were extremely low.

All of these examples are average students. I feel that they could be anybody's child. The "**ONE SIZE FITS ALL**" concept does not work for our children. If you are a parent, as we are, we want to see our children achieve their goals and grow into stable, happy, productive adults. Lets make sure that the legislation does that for all our children.

Grade 5 District Math Test Results

Date: *May 1997*

Student: *Laura Reed*

Number Sense:	7/10	<input checked="" type="radio"/> pass	<input type="radio"/> fail
Estimating/Whole Numbers	4/5	<input checked="" type="radio"/> pass	<input type="radio"/> fail
Estimating/Decimals:	3/5	<input checked="" type="radio"/> pass	<input type="radio"/> fail
Whole Numbers:	3/8	<input type="radio"/> pass	<input checked="" type="radio"/> fail
Decimals:	3/8	<input type="radio"/> pass	<input checked="" type="radio"/> fail
Understanding Fractions:	4/6	<input checked="" type="radio"/> pass	<input type="radio"/> fail
Adding & Subtracting Fractions:	2/8	<input type="radio"/> pass	<input checked="" type="radio"/> fail
Measurement:	4/4	<input checked="" type="radio"/> pass	<input type="radio"/> fail
Geometry:	6/6	<input checked="" type="radio"/> pass	<input type="radio"/> fail
Coordinates:	4/4	<input checked="" type="radio"/> pass	<input type="radio"/> fail
Graphs:	4/6	<input checked="" type="radio"/> pass	<input type="radio"/> fail
Problem Solving:	7/10	<input checked="" type="radio"/> pass	<input type="radio"/> fail

Total Score: *64%* *51/80* pass fail

68% required to pass

Grade 5 District Math Test Results

Date: July 1997 (Summer School)

Student: Lana Reed

Number Sense:	10/10	pass	fail
Estimating/Whole Numbers	5/5	pass	fail
Estimating/Decimals:	4/5	pass	fail
Whole Numbers:	7/8	pass	fail
Decimals:	7/8	pass	fail
Understanding Fractions:	4/6	pass	fail
Adding & Subtracting Fractions:	8/8	pass	fail
Measurement:	3/4	pass	fail
Geometry:	5/6	pass	fail
Coordinates:	4/4	pass	fail
Graphs:	5/6	pass	fail
Problem Solving:	8/10	pass	fail

Total Score: 88 % 70/80 pass fail

68% required to pass

Reed, Laura A
 1415 Norview Circle
 Port Washington, WI 53074

Thomas Jefferson Middle School

Grade: 07
 Student #: 958
 Homeroom Teacher: St. Peter

1/25/99

Period	Course	Course Name	Teacher	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Final	2nd Quarter Comment
00	7200	Social Studies	St. Peter	C+	C+				1. Participates well in class
01	7916	Health (M, R)	Campbell	A	B				
01	7921	Phy Ed (T, W)	Coulson	B	B+				
02	7940	Tech Ed	Culliney	A-					
03	7400	Science	Kane	B	C				
04	7100	Math	Greisch	B-	B				1. Good effort
06	7060	Chorus	Oftedahl	A	A				
07	7300	Communications	St. Peter	B	B				1. Pleasure to have in class 2. Participates well in class

Congratulations, you have achieved Academic Excellence

Subject: [Fwd: Exit Exam and No Social Promotion Test]

Date: Fri, 19 Mar 1999 12:20:08 -0800

From: Larry Boothby <larryb@execpc.com>

To: larryb@execpc.com

Subject: Exit Exam and No Social Promotion Test

Date: Fri, 19 Mar 1999 11:02:35 EST

From: Richphylk@aol.com

**To: wisgov@mail.state.wi.us, Sen.Panzer@legis.state.wi.us, Rep.Hoven@legis.state.wi.us,
Rep.Jensen@legis.state.wi.us, Sen.Grobschmidt@legis.state.wi.us,
Michelle.Arbiture@legis.state.wi.us, larryb@execpc.com, adavel@excel.net**

This is in regards to the proposed "High Stakes" test law passed by Wisconsin Legislature.

We agree that far too many students are being advanced and graduated without the necessary knowledge to obtain and maintain occupations and life styles which promote a healthy world atmosphere. We do not agree, however, that an "exit exam" or a "no promotion" type test will be the answer to these problems. Many students write an exceptional test and carry an exceptional aptitude for learning, with high intelligence and top grades, but have no common sense. Unfortunately, this trait was exhibited by people like the Unibomber as well as the most recent antics of our administrative leaders in Washington D.C. We feel this problem does not exist because of teaching staff abilities, but originates in the home. There are some students who just do not want to learn and cannot be motivated to do so. The moral decay that exists in our world today has more of an impact on these students than any teacher, professor, law enforcer or religious leader could ever impart.

We have a grandson who has a marvelous intelligence. His grades are never below a 3.75; he has been enrolled and remains in the TAG program at his school since second grade when he was reading and spelling on the 4th grade level. He excels in math as well. He is mature for his age and has an exceptional imagination especially for writing stories. His problem? He suffers from Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and is taking medication to control its most obvious distractions. He does not test well at all. His teachers have been very ingenious in formulating his tests in a way that he can understand them so that he will not get a failing grade. He cannot be given a piece of paper, or a pamphlet, where questions are listed from top to bottom. He uses a series of "block-outs" in order to concentrate on only one item at a time. If he is presented with too many options at a time, his focus is disrupted. He carries a high IQ, but would fail a test if it was not presented to him in any other way. What will happen to these students? We know that there are many different scenarios that will need to be addressed, not only for students like our grandson, but for students with other learning disabilities. Since mainstreaming students is now the norm, and we agree that it's much better this way, then global testing with a single "high stakes" test will prove detrimental for many of our young people. This is not fair!

We cannot, unfortunately, offer any answers to this problem. However, we do feel that if this testing is not well thought out with many diversifications, than it will only cause more problems than we already experience with our youth. Students who score well on SAT and ACT testing will have no problems writing another test. Students who do not want to learn will have problems no matter what is taught or tested. Please be considerate of those students who want to succeed but will be penalized with global testing such as is suggested because of learning disabilities.

Sincerely,

Richard and Phyllis Kraft
Saukville, Wisconsin

WORKING DRAFT

Re-configuration of OEA Testing Program for High Stakes Assessment

(June 23, 1998)

School Year	School Year	School Year	School Year	School Year	School Year
1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003
High School Graduation Test Blueprint/Architecture Customized Development \$5.5 million	High School Graduation Test Custom Test Specifications & Item Development - 6 Forms \$3.8 million	High School Graduation Test Item Development 6 Test Forms + Field Testing \$4 million (est.)	High School Graduation Test First Administration 2 Forms (NF) - Set Pass/Fail \$7 million (est.)	High School Graduation Test Administration - Secure Forms 1 and 2 \$1BD	High School Graduation Test Administration - Secure Forms 3 and 4 \$1BD
WSAS (Grades 4, 8, & 10) Current Contract - Shelf Test Second Year CTB (\$1.3 million)	WSAS (Grades 4, 8, & 10) Current Contract - Shelf Test Third Year CTB (\$1.3 million)	WSAS (Grades 4, 8, & 10) Contract Extension DOA Approved CTB (\$7 million est.)	WSAS (Grades 4, 8, & 10) Contract Extension DOA Approved CTB (\$7 million est.)	WSAS (Grades 4 & 8) Contract Extension DOA Approved CTB	

CRITICAL POINTS REGARDING THE EXIT EXAM

- If our state is relying solely on the exit exam as the determination for the receipt of a diploma, parents, teachers and administrators ***must*** have the option to opt out a student. Not all students can be measured accurately with a single High Stakes test.
- We have come so far in our curriculum for education, that school districts are practically able to tailor make a curriculum according to a student's abilities and career interest. By implementing the exit exam, there is no way a single test can measure the wide variety of curriculum offered throughout the state of Wisconsin, and therefore resulting in higher failure rates.
- The greater the failure rate on the High Stakes test the greater the drop out rate. Already students at the 8th grade level have stated that if they fail the first time, they will drop out of school.
- The state of Wisconsin already has a solid assessing program in place. Why spend an additional \$10,000,000. - \$15,000,000. for a new test? Especially when the business community, whom have sampled the test say that the content is not what they had intended. The business community has felt that students were ill equipped to fill out applications, resumes, checkbooks etc.. Nor are the students prepared for the interview process or public speaking. Computer skills were also lacking with graduates. The state exam covers ***none*** of the above.
- To demonstrate the extent that this exit exam will drive curriculum, our school district has eliminated Speech as a year long required class. Instead the school district plans to integrate speech with communications (English) to focus more on the test content.
- The Exit Exam ***does not*** test for ***basic knowledge***, which it was intended for. This exam is definitely geared toward the accelerated and college bound students. For the student who is preparing to enter the Military, Tech School, Vocational School or simply to work in our factories and farms, ***these students are being set up for failure.***
- If there is a student who has met the required high school credits for graduation, carried an average or above grade point and has demonstrated their proficiency through assessing, yet does not pass the States High Stakes Exam, what has our state accomplished by denying this student their diploma?

- School accountability must not be placed squarely on the shoulders of our young people. There are many other factors that have a direct influence on how our children learn and perform in school. School accountability is a shared responsibility between administrators, teachers, parents and students. **With the High Stakes Exit Exam, our students pay the full price. No one else is held accountable.**
- Testing must be just one tool used to measure a students ability. Parents, teachers and administrators **must** be allowed to consider other measures of proficiency before the denial of a diploma is considered.
- Many of our legislators are under the impression that parents can opt out or exempt their child from these exams. So far we have discovered as parents that this is not an option. From what we understand our district plans to create or purchase an additional **test**. For those students where testing is not an accurate measure, this is not an option.
- As a last note - Colleges, when considering a student look at variety of criteria. ACT's or SAT's, high school grades, extra curricular activities, past community service. There are a number measures a college will consider. If colleges look at a broader picture of a students achievements, why should our state use only a single high stakes test to determine whether a student has earned their diploma?

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**Governor Tommy Thompson's
Education Retention Law for 4th, 8th, 10th grade and the
High School Exit Exam**

This bill was proposed by Gov. Thompson. Its intent is to counteract "social promotion". This bill was passed in June 1998 under the "umbrella" of the 1997-1998 budget. The implementation will take place in the school year 2001-02. Students will have to pass the test or they will be **RETAINED** in their current grade.

POINTS OF THE BILL

- According to D.P.I. (Department of Public Instruction) this test will be more extensive than what our students have taken in the past. The state exam for 4th, 8th and the high school exit exam will cover 5 subjects: Math, reading, science, social studies and language. We have been told that the state test will most likely include multiple choice, fill in the blank and written essays.
- The D.P.I. has been tasked to come up with a statewide test for these specific grades. The D.P.I. was against the bill, because they felt that the use of the test as the sole factor in the decision to retain pupils in 4th or 8th grade places too much emphasis on a single, high stakes performance, rather than the complete picture of a pupil's abilities and knowledge, including a broad array of pupil performance indicators, such as grade points average, general test scores, extracurricular activities and behavioral indicators.
- The test will be given at the 4th, 8th, and 10th grade levels. The 4th and 8th grade students will have 2 chances to pass the test. They have to pass in all five subjects or they will be retained in their current grade.
- As we understand, the 10th grade state exam that has been administered in the past will be grandfathered out and an exit exam will take its place. If a student has failed any portion of the test they will have three more opportunities to take the exam. The exit exam will also cover 5 subject areas. At this time no student will be exempt from taking the exit exam. If a student fails in any of the subjects, they *will not receive their diploma*.
- The DPI estimates that the test will cost approximately 15 - 20 million dollars to prepare, administer and score. This figure does not include any consideration for remedial assistance for those students who do not pass.

NOTES ON THE POSSIBLE RAMIFICATIONS

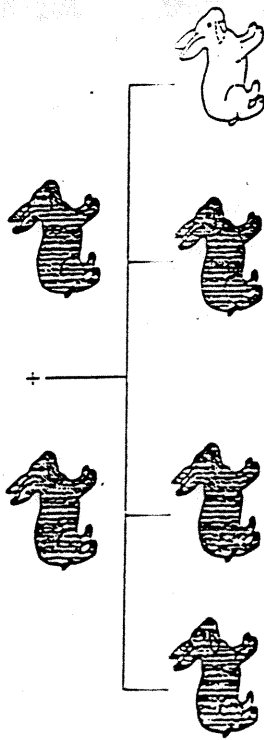
Based on the statewide results of the 1997-1998, 4th and 8th grade knowledge and concepts examination, 10% of 4th graders and 24% of the 8th graders in the state of Wisconsin would have been retained in their current grade had this bill been in effect for the year 1997/1998.

Researchers around the country who have studied the effects of pupil retention on pupil performance, self esteem and behavior have found very little evidence that grade retention is beneficial to children. These research findings indicate that the effects of retention on pupils tend to be negative, harmful or negligible, rather than positive. Additionally, there appears to be a high correlation between grade retention and future incidences of school dropouts.

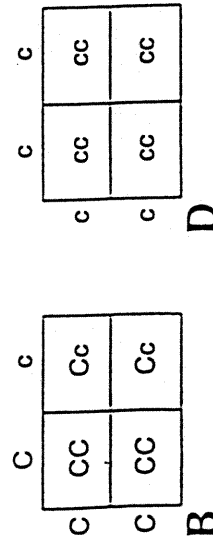
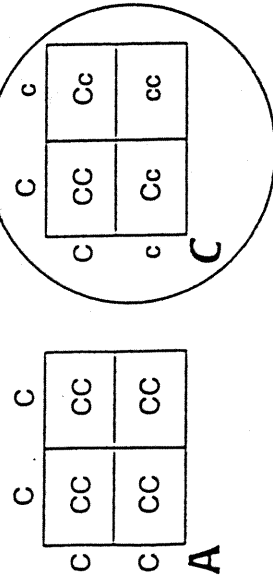
SOME EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS FROM THE WI HSGT, RECENTLY PUBLISHED BY DPI

SCIENCE EXAMPLE

The diagram below shows the phenotype (physical characteristics) of two generations of rabbits. Suppose a dominant gene "C" carries the trait for gray fur, and a recessive gene "c" carries the trait for white fur.



Which square shows the genetic makeup of the two generations of rabbits?



SOCIAL STUDIES EXAMPLE

"The official obeys whom he serves...The official feels responsibility to his master alone and his master is the political machine of his party. The people whom he serves in theory, he may safely disobey."

— Robert M. La Follette, July 4, 1897

To which problem was La Follette referring?

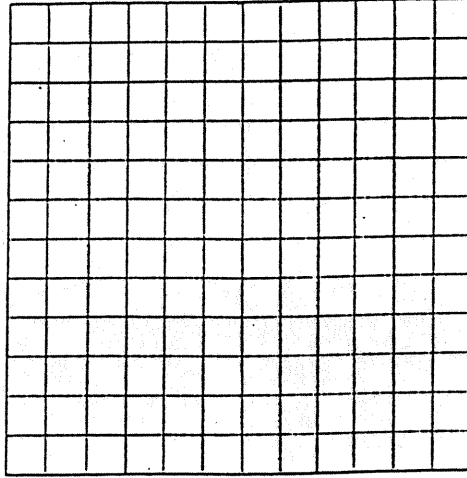
- A. The representative form of government was effective on the state level, but not on the local level.
- B. Campaign funding from foreign nations was causing corruption of government officials.
- C. The two-party system was accumulating too much power, so that party candidates were unable to compete.
- D. Elected officials were ignoring those who elected them.

MATH EXAMPLE

The total projected profit in dollars (p) of a landscaping company is given by the equation $p = x^2 - 30x + 6000$, where x represents the number of employees.

PART A

Graph this equation on the grid below. Use positive values for x . Be sure to label the axes and use correct scales.

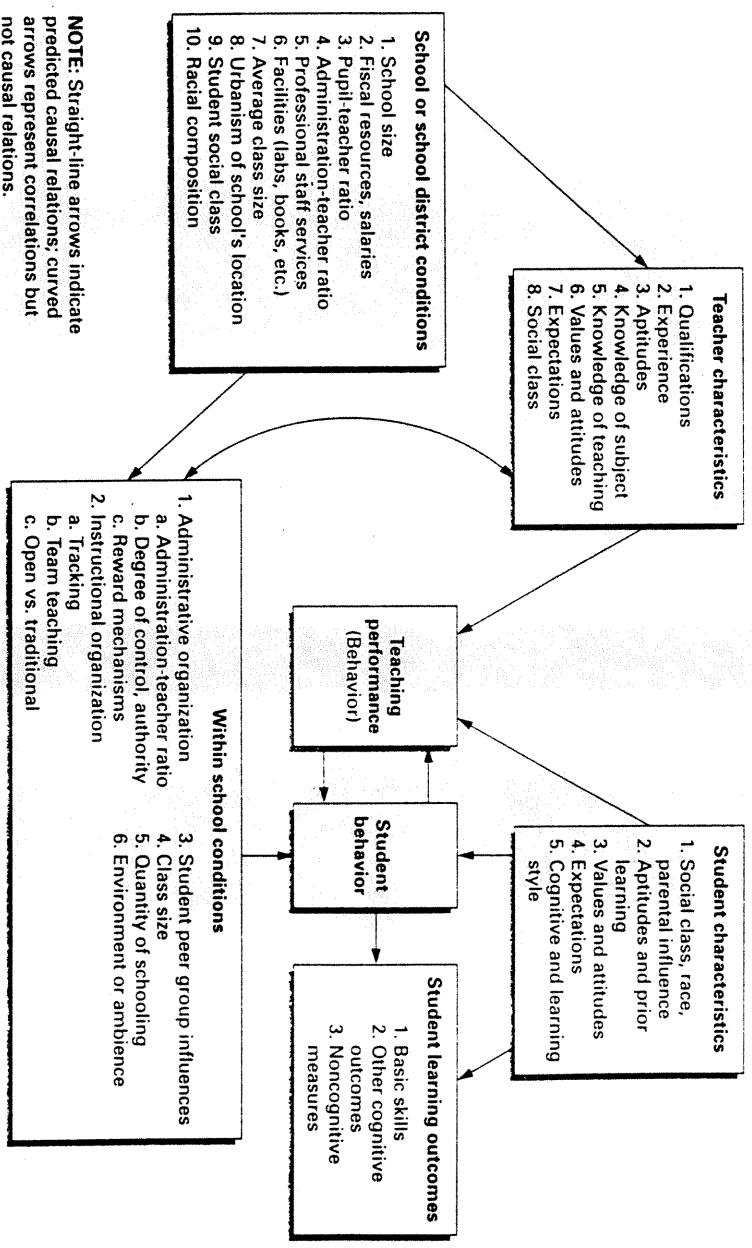


PART B

Use your graph to determine what the company's minimum profit would be.

Answer:

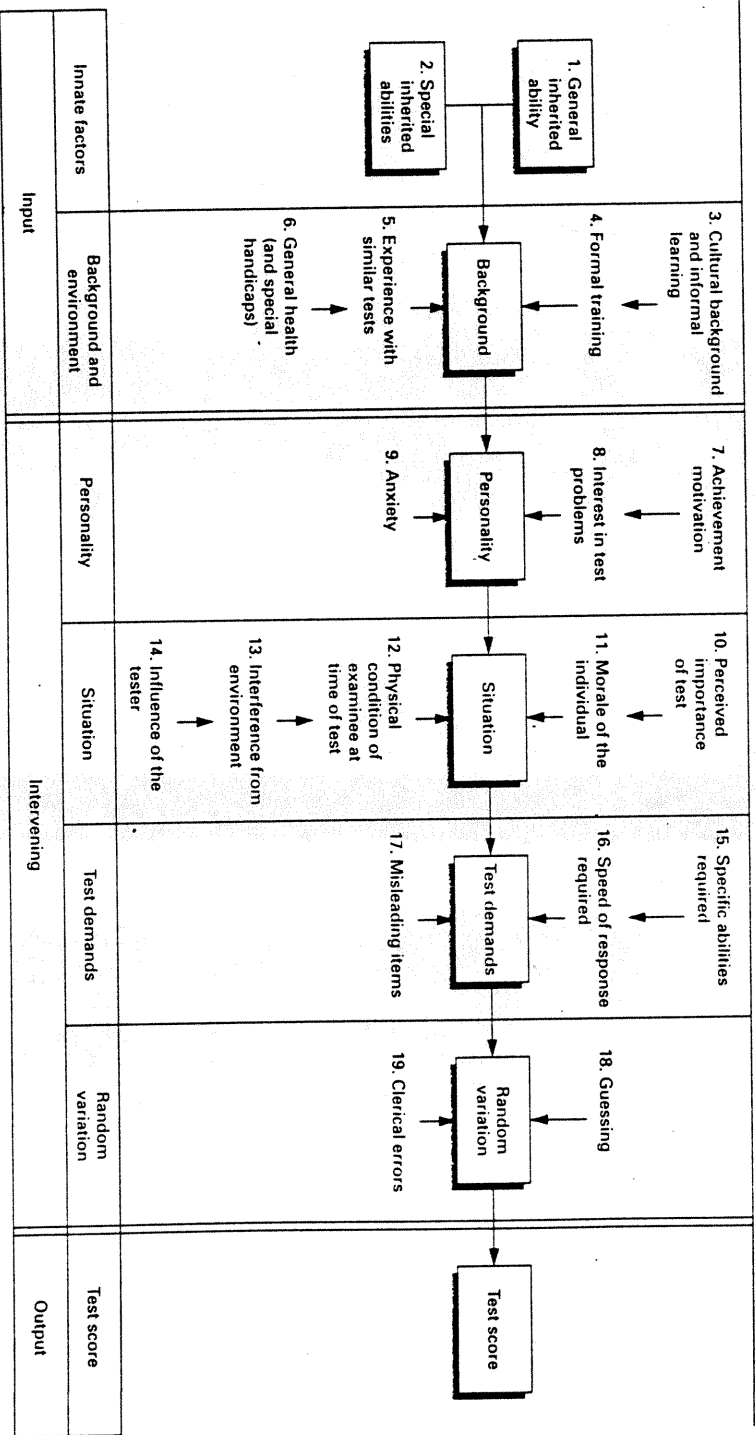
Figure 1.2 Structural Model of School and Teacher Variables Influencing Student Learning Outcomes



NOTE: Straight-line arrows indicate predicted causal relations; curved arrows represent correlations but not causal relations.

From J. A. Centra and D. A. Potter, "School and Teacher Effects: An Interrelational Model" in *Review of Educational Research*, 50:277. Copyright © 1980 by the American Educational Research Association.

Figure 1.3 Paradigm for the Analysis of Variables that may Influence Learning and Behavior



Reprinted from *The Search for Ability: Standardized Testing in Social Perspective* by David A. Goslin. © 1963 the Russell Sage Foundation. Reprinted with the permission of the Russell Sage Foundation.

Why the Testing Craze Won't Fix Our Schools

Spring 1999

Whether you're a parent, teacher, or policymaker, it's impossible to ignore how the long arm of standardized testing is reaching into every nook and cranny of education. U.S. students are already tested more than any other children in the industrialized world. And it's getting worse.

This issue of **Rethinking Schools** presents a number of articles on testing and assessment, particularly from the perspective of the classroom. We hope the articles will increase parental, community, and teacher input into discussions too often dominated by politicians and policymakers.

It's not just that the use of tests is growing. Most ominous is the increasing reliance on "high-stakes" standardized tests and how these tests, tied to state standards, shape curriculum. Standardized tests mandate one "correct" answer and demand that children darken the circle accordingly. So nice, so efficient. And so unlike the real world.

Proponents of standardized tests often wrap themselves in the language of high standards. But that's not the issue. No one advocates low standards. The issue is what we mean by higher standards, and how we can reach those standards. By and large, calls for more standardized tests come from politicians eager to prove they are serious about school reform and creating a "high skills," internationally competitive workforce. But they offer little if any evidence that links increased testing to improved teaching and learning. Similarly, test-pushers pay scant attention to key issues such as smaller classes, improved teacher education, more time for teacher planning and collaboration, and ensuring that all schools receive adequate and equitable resources needed to boost achievement.

Rather than grappling with these issues, too many politicians have seized on a simplistic formula for reform: more standardized tests, especially "high stakes" tests.



What is the effect of so many 'high-stakes' tests on children?

Jean-Claude Lereune

Nationwide, states and school districts are forcing a growing number of children to take "high stakes" standardized tests and, on the basis of test scores, children may be retained, denied access to a preferred high school, or, in some cases, even refused a high school diploma. That's not public accountability, it's discrimination.

Dating back to the development of IQ tests at the turn of the century, standardized tests have been used to sort and rank children, most reprehensibly along racial and class lines, and to rationalize giving more privileges to the already privileged. Indeed the first standardized tests were developed by eugenicists anxious for "scientific" data to prove their theories of biological determinism.

To acknowledge the sinister origins of standardized tests is not, however, to dismiss parent and community concerns about school accountability. We understand and agree with these concerns. Too many schools fail too many children, especially low-income students, students of color, and students who do not speak English as a first language. The broader community has the right and the responsibility to oversee how well schools perform. Good assessments can be one valid method of insuring accountability.

Tests Shape Curriculum

Problems with standardized tests go beyond their "high stakes" use. Standardized tests can also drive curriculum and instruction in ways that harm children. Teachers are subjected to increasing pressures to prepare students for the tests, even when we know that the tests don't assess the most essential aspects of thinking and learning. Students often internalize the judgements of the tests -- as if test scores were the final word on one's knowledge or potential.

In addition, standardized tests come packaged with demands for more standardized curriculum -- again, wrapped in the rhetoric of "standards." These calls do not take place in a political and cultural vacuum. They are part of a broader movement to promote a narrow version of patriotism and "family values," and to silence the critical voices of feminists, environmentalists, labor activists, and advocates of racial justice. It is also worth noting that when the right wing pushes voucher schools or charter schools, they often want these exempted from statewide high-stakes tests, so that the schools can be free to pursue their entrepreneurial "creativity."

Analysis into Action

We hope that this special issue can help turn analysis into action. An essential first step is to expose the fallacy that "high-stakes" tests will lead to higher standards and improved academic achievement. Some groups, for instance the Local School Councils Summit in Chicago, have worked with national groups such as FairTest to produce parent-friendly information explaining the inherent problems in standardized tests.

Another important task is to promote alternative forms of assessment and accountability. Parents and the public need to know how well their children and their schools are doing. Developing more democratic forms of assessment and

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accountability is essential to defeating calls for standardized curriculum and testing. Educators must not box ourselves into a corner where we are perceived as opposing any form of schoolwide, districtwide, or statewide assessment and accountability. Historically, social justice activists have used such aggregate data to show how schools fail to provide a quality education to all children -- to highlight schools' "savage inequalities."

"High-stakes" standardized tests must be resisted. Such resistance can, and is, taking many forms.

In Ohio, for instance, a "Say No" campaign is underway to let parents know they can exempt their children from the 4th, 6th, or 12th grade Ohio Proficiency Tests, which are used to determine graduation and grade advancement. In Oregon, teachers have publicly challenged the state's standards and tests; they are developing alternatives to the Trivial Pursuit-like social studies multiple-choice tests. In Texas, the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) is asking the courts to declare unconstitutional the requirement that students must pass the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills in order to graduate from high school. MALDEF is particularly concerned about the requirement's discriminatory effect on Latino and African-American students.

We realize that this issue of **Rethinking Schools** only begins to touch on the many controversies surrounding standards and assessment. We hope you find it useful, and we look forward to continued discussion in future issues.

Spring 1999

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Viewpoint

CAN RETENTION BE GOOD FOR A STUDENT?

By Philip B. Bowser, NCSP

Imagine going to your physician with an illness. The doctor says, "There is an old treatment for your condition. At best it will help only one in ten, but no one can predict who that will be. That one person will experience a little bit of relief for a short period of time, but then the problem will return. Everyone will have negative side effects, some which can be severe. Many will suffer from the side effects of the treatment for the rest of their lives." If educators practiced "full disclosure," this is what we would have to say to parents about grade retention as a treatment for underachievement.

It's easy to understand the appeal of holding back a student who fails to meet benchmarks. Retention can take a student from the bottom of a class to somewhere nearer the middle. That seems like progress doesn't it? The error in this analysis is that the student is compared to the grade placement, not the non-retained peers. The student has "caught up" to the wrong group!

In the ensuing years, schools will present new topics at full speed. The retained student no longer will have the luxury of taking two years to learn a subject. Whatever learning problems contributed to the original retention decision will still be present - simply holding the student back will do nothing to change that. Thus, in a year or two, the retained student will again be "at the bottom" of the class, a comparison group that is a year younger.

As a district-wide school psychologist, I get to follow retained students over a number of years. My personal experience has shown that grade retention is a dangerous gamble. Too often, the held-back "first grader with a reading problem" becomes a "middle school behavior problem" and eventually a "high school drop-out." But don't take my word for it - the overwhelming majority of the research on the effects of grade retention shows:

- Retained students rarely make significant academic progress in the retained year.
- First or second graders who show improvement over non-retained under-achieving peers quickly lose the advantage. The two groups soon perform the same academically, however the retained group will develop measurable deficits in mental health.
- A single retention increases one's probability of dropping out by 21-27%.

- The stigma of retention will damage self-concept and create a negative attitude towards school to a much greater degree than most educators will predict beforehand or recognize in later years.
- The most common retainees are non-white males, small of stature, from a low-income family, with parents uninvolved in schooling.
- "Old for grade" adolescents are at increased risk for substance abuse, earlier age of sexual debut, behavioral problems and emotional distress (including suicidal thoughts).

Many leaders in education are calling for a better solution than retention. Dr. Deborah Crockett, in a recent policy statement for the National Association of School Psychologists, suggested that schools should not decide in May who should be retained. Instead, educators and parents should decide in September what we are going to do to ensure that everyone will be ready for the next grade. She called grade retention (and its cousin, social promotion) "failed practices." A similar statement was released by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). Those who frame the problem as a choice among grade retention, social promotion or ignoring the need for high academic standards do not see that we have a variety of remedies with stronger therapeutic force and fewer negative side effects.

What if school districts took the cost of extending a student's career an extra year - on the average around \$5,000. - and used that money instead for effective prevention and remediation programs? What if our teachers had decent class size and adequate time to reflect and plan individualized instruction? What if schools abandoned grade retention, thus clearing the way for the development of innovative alternatives? What if schools involved parents earlier, gaining their support for additional tutoring, cross-grade groupings and summer school? Wouldn't that be more effective than running a student back through the same course of instruction that was just proven to be inadequate?

What concerns me the most is that no one can predict in advance whom we will help by grade retention. When parents and teachers decide to retain, they do so in the dark, in spite of ample evidence that they will be adding a significant risk factor to the life of a child. To me, it is a chance not worth taking, especially when there are more effective treatments available.

Phil Bowser, NCSP, is NASP's 1997 School Psychologist of the Year and a practitioner in Rosenberg, OR. He also serves as NASP's Web Editor and a Communique Contributing Editor. This article was originally written for the March 1998 issue of NEA Today as a "counterpoint" and is reprinted with permission.

William A. Owings and Susan Magliaro

Grade Retention: A History of Failure

A long trail of research tells us that retention is not the route to take in our efforts to improve student achievement.

For almost 50 years, research has shown that grade-level retention provides no academic advantages to students. Yet, the practice is gaining increasing attention as schools face political pressure to demonstrate accountability for student achievement. Publications including *USA Today* (Ritter, 1997) and *Education Week* (Reynolds, Temple, & McCoy, 1997) have addressed the topic, and President Clinton in his 1997 and 1998 State of the Union Addresses called for increased retention of students with low scores on standardized tests, stating that a child should not move from grade to grade "until he or she is ready." Research suggests that retention is on the rise. According to one study (Roderick, 1995), from 1980 to 1992 the national percentage of retained students increased from approximately 20 percent to nearly 32 percent.

The overly simplistic view of retention as a panacea for education woes ignores its negative impact on children. A walk through history reminds us of what we have learned about retention.



Research indicates that students learn better without grade retention.

History of Grade Retention

It was not until about 1860 that it became common in U.S. elementary schools to group children in grade levels, with promotion dependent on mastery of a quota of content. The New York City school system was reporting the results of promotion and retention as early as the turn of the century. Maxwell's (1904) age-grade progress study became the standard vehicle for school system reports on retention, promotion, and dropouts. Within the next two decades, researchers started to examine the efficacy of retention in terms of student achievement.

The goal of grade retention was to improve school performance by allowing more time for students to develop adequate academic skills (Reynolds, 1992). By the 1930s, researchers were reporting the negative effects of retention on achievement (Ayer, 1933; Kline, 1933). Goodlad (1954) summarized the research between 1924 and 1948 related to grade retention. This synthesis showed that retention did not decrease the variation in student achievement levels and had no positive effect on educational gain. Otto (1951) suggested that retention had no special educational value for children and that the academic gain of nonpromoted students was smaller than the gain of their promoted counterparts.

In the mid-20th century, researchers began to investigate the relationship between retention and dropouts. One study (Berlman, 1949) indicated that students who were retained might be more likely to drop out of school than those who were not retained. This article appeared at a time when the literature was emphasizing the need to keep students in school (Anderson, 1950; Holbeck, 1950; Moffit, 1945; Nancarrow, 1951; Sandin, 1944).

In the 1960s and the 1970s, the pendulum moved toward the social promotion of students. After the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), a time of reduced public confidence in schools, many school systems instituted more stringent promotion and retention policies—in spite of the lack of supportive research evidence (Roderick, 1994). For the public at large, it

was counterintuitive to think that retention was not useful in helping students to reach basic skill levels (Natale, 1991).

Current Practice and Research

No precise national data record the exact numbers of retained students. However, a number of studies suggest that retention has persisted and possibly has increased. The Center for Policy Research in Education (1990) reported that by the 9th grade, approximately 50 percent of all U.S. school students have been retained. Roderick (1995) reported that the proportion of overage students entering high school has risen almost 40 percent since 1975. One synthesis of research indicated that the current level of retention matches that of the early 20th century (Shepard & Smith, 1990).

Of 66 articles on retention written from 1990 to 1997, only 1 supported retention (Lenarduzzi, 1990). These articles and Holmes's (1984) and Holmes and Matthews's (1989) meta-analyses document the effects of retention.

Many studies show the association between retention and dropping out of school (Cairns, Cairns, & Neckerman, 1989; Dawson, 1991). These studies control for the effects of other influencing factors. Grissom and Shepard (1989) determined that retention significantly increases the probability of dropping out, controlling for prior achievement, sex, and race.

Demographic data show that retained students tend to come from lower socioeconomic (SES) backgrounds than nonretained students (Thomas et al., 1992). Meisels (1993) found that approximately 40 percent of repeaters come from the lowest SES quartile, whereas approximately 8.5 percent come from the highest SES quartile. Meisels (1993) also determined that more than two-thirds of all retentions take place between kindergarten and 3rd grade. Other studies have shown that retained students tend to be male and African American, with parents who are less educated than the parents of nonretained students (Byrd & Weitzman, 1994; Dauber, 1993; Foster, 1993; Meisels, 1993). In California, George (1993) found that retention

rates for African Americans and Hispanics are twice the rate for whites. Byrd and Weitzman (1994) examined social and health factors associated with retention. Poverty, gender, mother's education level, hearing and speech impairments, low birth weight, enuresis, and exposure to household smoking are significant predictive factors. Learning disabled students may also be retained more frequently than the general population (McLeskey, Lancaster, & Grizzle, 1995).



The long-held belief that early retention is best for students continues to be refuted in the literature.

The long-held belief that early retention is best for students continues to be refuted in the literature (Johnson, 1990; Mantzicopoulos & Morrison, 1992; Thomas et al., 1992). Studies of retention in kindergarten indicate that retained students have significantly lower scores on standardized achievement tests than do nonretained students (Dennebaum & Kulberg, 1994). Another study shows no differences in achievement for retained kindergarten students and the matched control group (Shepard & Smith, 1987). Some research indicates that early retention may produce a short-lived increase in achievement; however, this gain vanishes in two or three years (Butler, 1990; Karweit & Wasik, 1992; Snyder, 1992).

Research indicates that retention produces negative social implications. Kindergarten students who were

retained indicated a slightly more negative attitude toward school than did a matched control group (Shepard & Smith, 1987). Retained students may have more behavioral problems than those who are not retained (Meisels, 1993). Rumberger (1987) suggests that retention contributes to a permanent disengagement from school.

Research also shows that retention may have negative effects on long-term student achievement. Holmes's (1989) meta-analysis reviewed 63 controlled studies that compared the progress of retained students with that of lower-achieving promoted students; 54 studies showed negative achievement results for the retained students. Holmes then reviewed only those studies with the greatest statistical control. The negative achievement effects were again demonstrated. These findings were substantively identical to those of Goodlad's analysis in 1954. Subsequent studies have provided little new evidence to contradict Holmes's synthesis of research.

Other studies indicate an increased, cumulative negative effect of retention on achievement for at-risk students (Reynolds, 1992). Retained children may continue to decline in reading achievement over time compared with nonretained students. Whether this cumulative decline occurs in mathematics achievement is uncertain.

Retention Harms Learners

Historically, educators have viewed retention as a means of reducing skill variance in the classroom in an attempt to better meet student needs. Clearly, this practice has not achieved its goal. In the process we have harmed our clients. Physicians take an oath that guides their professional practice—first, do no harm. Educators would do well to take a similar oath. Retention harms an at-risk population cognitively and affectively. Alternatives to consider include requiring summer school, offering intensive remediation before and after school, changing teacher and administrative perceptions, and increasing teacher expectations.

One indicator of a profession is that a body of research guides its practice

(Darling-Hammond & Goodwin, 1993). A body of research exists on the subject of retention, and it should guide our practice. If we are to treat our "patients" professionally, we need to stop punishing nonlearners and instead provide opportunities for success. ■

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