

Committee Name:
Senate Committee – Education
(SC–Ed)

Appointments

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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 retainee is a non-white male, 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 better a 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

Photos courtesy of William A. Owings.

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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William A. Owings is Superintendent of Accomack County Public Schools, P.O. Box 330, Accomac, VA 23301. He is also a past president of Virginia's ASCD.

Susan Magliaro is Associate Professor of Education at Virginia Tech, Department of Teaching and Learning, War Memorial Gym, Blacksburg, VA 24601.

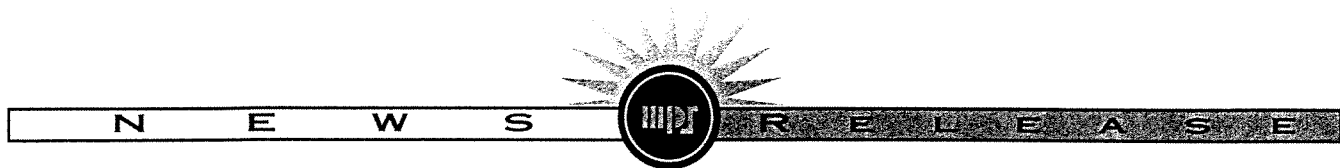
CRITICAL POINTS REGARDING THE EXIT EXAM

- 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.***
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- 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?

Jean M. Boothby
819 Noridge Trail
Port Washington, WI 53074
414-284-2726
larryb@execpc.com

Arlie M. Davel
1415 Norview Cr.
Port Washington, WI 53074
414-268-0837
adavel@excel.net



Milwaukee Public Schools

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 23, 1998

MPS OFFERS PARENTS A READING GUARANTEE FOR THEIR CHILDREN

Parents can register for 1999-2000 school year January 4-22, 1999

Milwaukee Public Schools is offering parents a guarantee that their children will read on grade level by the end of second grade in a continued effort to strengthen reading achievement in the district. The MPS Reading Guarantee is being offered to parents of five-year-old kindergarten children who will be enrolling in school for the 1999-2000 school year. Registration is occurring January 4-22, 1999.

“Our most recent reading scores were among the best this district has achieved in the past decade,” says MPS Superintendent Alan S. Brown. “We want to continue moving in a positive direction, and we are confident that with our current reading programs in place, we can guarantee our parents that their children will read well if they attend an MPS school.”

The MPS Reading Guarantee guarantees that incoming five-year-old kindergarten students that enroll by September 1999 and remain in MPS at least through June 2002 with an average attendance of 90% or more over three years will read on level by the end of second grade in their language of instruction, or MPS will provide individualized tutoring to accelerate their progress.

The individualized tutoring may consist of children attending reading clinics at MPS after-school sites, or through tutoring programs at area colleges, universities, or other private, professional agencies.

Parents can take advantage of the MPS Reading Guarantee by enrolling their child in a five-year-old kindergarten program during the district’s School Selection period, January 4-22, 1999. Parents can register at any Milwaukee Public School.

To assist parents and their children choose a school and complete the application process, MPS Central Services, 5225 W. Vliet St., will be open two Wednesday evenings, Jan. 13 and 20, until 8:00 p.m. Parents with questions about the sign up process can call 475-8000.

Parents of new 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old kindergartners and first graders also must present a certified birth certificate. In addition, parents are asked to provide immunization records. Proof of residency is required for all new students and students who have moved since the start of the school year.

Information about every school is in the school selection catalogs, *Directions*. Copies were mailed to MPS parents in mid-December. Copies also are available at all schools, or by calling MPS at 475-8276.

For more information, contact Karen Salzbrenner, Communications and Public Affairs, 475-8276.

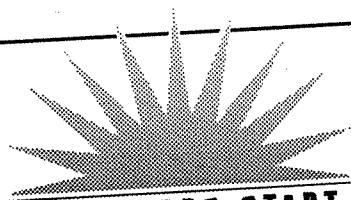
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MPS READING GUARANTEE

Milwaukee Public Schools is strongly committed to providing its students a quality education which will allow them to reach their fullest potential. MPS guarantees that incoming five-year-old kindergarten students that enroll by September 1999 and remain in the district at least through June 2002 with an average attendance of more than 90% over three years will read on grade level by the end of second grade in their language of instruction, or MPS will provide individualized tutoring to accelerate their progress.

SCORING RUBRIC



HIGH STANDARDS START HERE
MILWAUKEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

GENERIC CRITERIA FOR MATHEMATICS PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENTS

PROFICIENT: RESPONSES

Reflect confident command of mathematics knowledge and skills in interpreting, solving, and documenting problem situations.

	6	5
STRATEGY ► ORGANIZATION ► COMMUNICATION ► SOLUTION ► MATHEMATICS ►	An appropriate strategy is used effectively. The response is highly organized and well documented. Responses to all parts of the prompt are effective and appropriate. A correct solution is presented. Efficient, accurate use of mathematics is evident throughout.	An appropriate strategy is used. The response is well organized and sufficiently documented. Response is clearly communicated. A basically correct solution is presented. Accurate and effective use of mathematics is evident throughout.

BORDERLINE RESPONSES

Reflect adequate use of mathematics knowledge and skills in exploring, solving, and responding to problem situations.

	4	3
STRATEGY ► ORGANIZATION ► COMMUNICATION ► SOLUTION ► MATHEMATICS ►	A strategy that could yield a solution is used. The response is somewhat organized and documented. Response is understandable. A solution is presented in appropriate form. Appropriate mathematics applied with only minor flaws.	A strategy is attempted but is incomplete or poorly carried out. An attempt at organization and documentation is evident. Part(s) of the response is/are muddled or reflects misunderstanding of the prompt. A partial or incorrect solution is presented. Some of the mathematics used are inappropriate or frequently flawed.

UNACCEPTABLE RESPONSES

Reflect inadequate use of mathematics knowledge and skills and little success in exploring, solving, and responding to problem situations.

	2	1
STRATEGY ► ORGANIZATION ► COMMUNICATION ► SOLUTION ► MATHEMATICS ►	A strategy is begun. The response is poorly organized and documented. Response is vague or reflects inadequate understanding. A solution is attempted. Major flaws in mathematical understanding or skills are evident.	No clear strategy is evident. The response is disorganized. Response reflects random thoughts or haphazard restatements of fact. Minimal to no response is offered to the problem prompt. Little or no use of appropriate mathematics is presented.

⓪ No Attempt/Off the Point/Illegible

PAY DAY

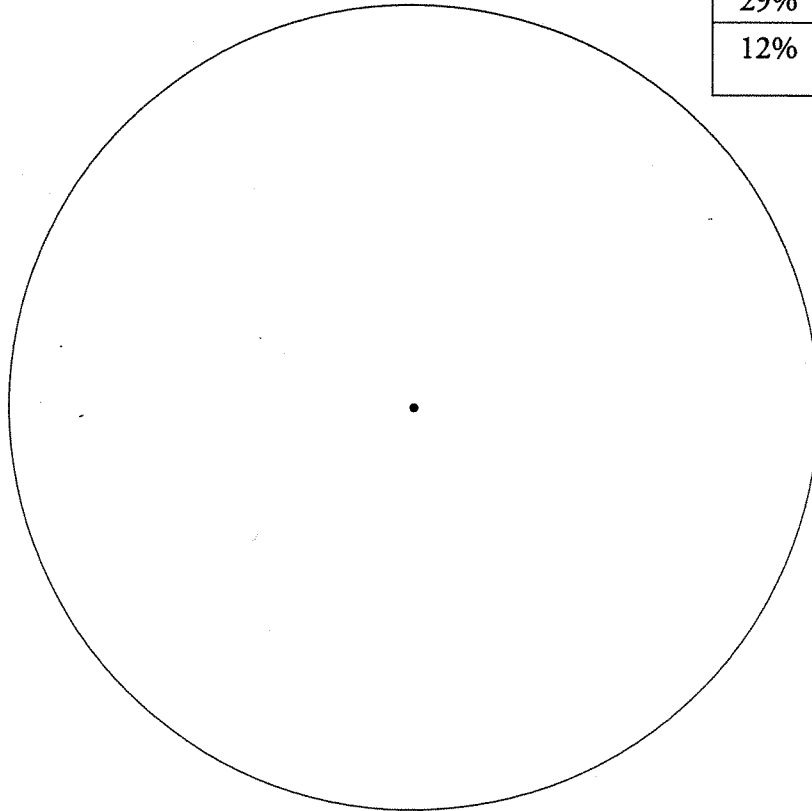
Good job & great pay!

You just got paid \$200.00 from your part-time job.

Create and label a circle graph to show the distribution of the \$200.00 using your budget plan.

Write the amount of money that would be in each section of the graph.

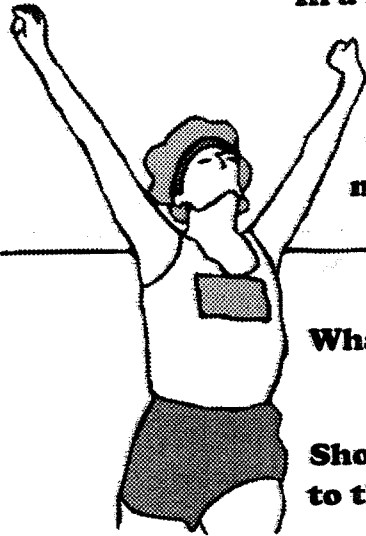
22%	save
14%	recreation
23%	school supplies
29%	misc
12%	lay away



**You must show all of your work.
Thank you.**

THE RACE IS ON

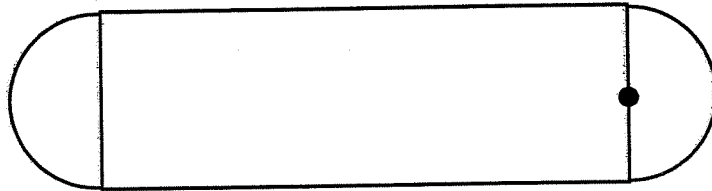
In a special race, athletes run one lap around an oval track formed by a rectangle and two semi-circles as shown.



The length of the radius of each semi-circle is 12 meters, and the length of the rectangle is twice the length of the diameter of the semi-circles.

What is the number of meters in the length of the race?

Show your work and write your answer to the nearest tenth meter.



You must show all of your work.
Thank you.

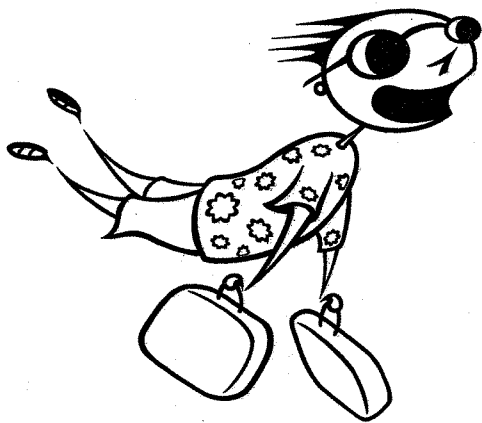
1

You are a travel agent for a small company whose employees use car rentals in their business activities.

You are evaluating ads for two car rental companies and preparing a report for the company.

Your report should include:

- ▶ **an algebraic equation for each company relating the rental price to length of rental**
- ▶ **a table of values showing total rental costs for rental lengths of one to ten days**
- ▶ **a graph of these ten day costs for each company**



AUTOMOBILE • RENTING AND LEASING

R•I•T•Z RENTALS

NEW LOW RATES

\$30.00 PER DAY

PLUS A \$20.00 SERVICE CHARGE

FEATURING QUALITY COMPACT CARS

SMITS

AUTOMOBILE RENTALS
SINCE 1995

COMPARE OUR LOW, LOW RATES

ONLY \$15.00 PER DAY

(PLUS A SERVICE CHARGE OF \$80.00)

2

Your company generally rents cars for an average of two days for consultation trips and uses rentals of five days for sales trips.

What rental company would you advise your manager to use as the best choice for your company?

Use charts and/or graphs to support your decision.

**You must show all of your.
Thank you.**

Statement from Wisconsin PTA on the 4th & 8th Grade "no social promotion" policy

Senate Education Committee Hearing, Feb 10, 1999

I am here today to speak on behalf of the more than 45,000 parents and teachers across the State of Wisconsin who comprise Wisconsin PTA. We are extremely concerned regarding the high stakes test for 4th and 8th grade students and the retention penalty for failure to pass these tests.

PTA believes that the overall goal of student assessment and testing programs should be to identify how instruction can be improved and how learning can be increased. Assessments should be used to increase opportunities for students, not deny them. We also believe that valid assessment does not consist of one single test score that becomes the sole determinate of a student's academic future. To do so would be to completely ignore current educational research and data. Retention, when necessary, should remain a decision made at the local level between the educators, the parents and the child.

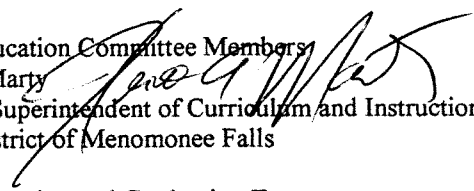
There have been dozens of studies over the past two decades which indicate that retaining students contributes to academic failure and behavioral difficulties. Retention does not automatically lead to academic success. The Carnegie Council of Adolescent Development's Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents found that retention leads to increased dropout rates. First retention frequently results in multiple retention. Repeating even a single grade increases the likelihood by 40% to 50% that a student will drop out of school. A second retention increases this risk to 90%. Creating more "at risk" students is not good public policy.

While a "no social promotion" policy may sound good on the surface, it is policy with no probable educational benefit and will come at enormous expense. Wisconsin PTA urges you to return retention decisions to those who know the individual student and can determine what course of action will best meet the needs of that student.

Respectfully,

Sondra Pope-Roberts
Wisconsin PTA Board of Directors

February 10, 1999

To: Senate Education Committee Members
From: Keith A. Marty 
Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction
School District of Menomonee Falls
Re: Social Promotion and Graduation Test

I would recommend that the Legislature review current provisions of the social promotion legislation and return some options to the local school district to determine the appropriateness of retaining a student based on multiple factors.

Secondly, I would recommend that you maintain the current Statute on the Graduation Test, which does give parents and local districts some options for alternate assessments.

The Committee should understand that parents know their children, and many of our parents have stated their desire to work with teachers and principals in determining what is essential for their children. For many parents tests, such as the Graduation Test, will be appropriate for assessment. But for others, alternatives to a twelve hour test should be considered.

Thank you.

Public Hearing 2-10-99 – Assessment and Testing

DPI – Steve Dold, Gary Cook, John Fortier

1% has been the norm for opt out

\$500,000 in Biennium, \$850,000 this year to create a graduation test.

Sample test will be ready in a year.

2001-02 1st test (not high Stakes)

2002-03 1st high stakes

4th and 8th grade test – issues:

1. Can't make responsible determination based upon the results of 1 test (4th, 8th and grad).
2. Test should be an important factor, but only 1 factor.
3. Board policy should set the other criteria.
4. Current law puts great weight on state testing and shifts balance between state and local. Restore the balance between state/local boards w/ local having the final say.
5. For high stakes need custom developed test, of greater length and need more forms. Currently need \$1.3 million for 4 subject, 3 grade levels. Requesting \$6 million to develop 4th and 8th. \$3.6 million to administer graduation test.
6. H.S. Grad test silent on EEN (special Education). In 118.33 vs. 4th and 8th grade in 118.30 which addresses EEN
7. Test would currently be 6 hours with 30 items per subject. High Stakes grad test would be 12 hours with over 100 items per subject.
8. Need to prepare 4 6 tests-- 4 actual, 1 test, and one for public viewing.

OPT OUT yes if high stakes, if not high stakes no need for opt out.

Other comments:

- Lack of definition of alternative Assessment.
- Parents not aware of what's going on.
- Districts should have high standards, early intervention and remedial programs.
- Issue of mobility
- Youth apprentice could be an alternative criteria
- How do you address those not college bound, i.e. arts
- Private and parochial schools don't need to administer
- Unfunded mandate
- Distraction from mission of schools
- Pace of implementation, schools won't be ready, add them gradually, one level at a time
- Summer school, staff cuts due to revenue caps, declining enrollment, - need these resources now to address remediation
- Focus in now on integrating technology – don't have time to do both at the same time.
- Research on retention – best for those in early grades if it benefits educational needs with specific redemption program in place.
- Ohio has seen more kids go to private schools and have higher drop out rate.
- Should more closely resemble GED
- Legal risks involved in high stakes
- Companies who provide tests also provide text books, ethical standards of teaching to the test
- Creates more at risk students
- Religious reasons for opt out
- Opt out inline with other initiatives: parental choice, charter schools, open enrollment, home schooling.
- Any child receiving state aid, (Charter, voucher) should be required to take test.
- Test should be a tool to help kids vs. club to hurt them.
- To much pressure put on teachers, to much paperwork to protect them from future lawsuits.
- Curriculum and focus change to meet test.

DPI

1% has been norm for opt out

high school grad.

500,000 in Bien. } to create grad. test
850,000 this year }

Sample test in a year.

2001-2002 1st test (not high stakes)

2002-2003 high stakes } this
\$3.7 mil } Budget req.
\$6.7 mil }

- 4th & 8th grade

ISSUES-

- cannot make ^{respon.} determination based upon results of 1 test (4th & 8th & graduation)

test be import. factor, but only 1 factor
Board policy set other criteria.

current ^{low-great} weight on state testing shifts balance between state/local
restore balance between state & local

boards - w/ local being final say

custom developed } all needed when high stakes -
greater length } vs. current tests (1.3 mil.

more forms

4 sub., 3 grade lev.

Budget } \$2 mil to develop for 4th & 8th
reg. }

#3.6 mil 1st year for administration of grad test

* h.s. grades. 118.33 Silent on EEN- special ed.

118.30- 4th & 8 currently 3-4 hr, 6 hr. 30 ~~hr~~ items per sub.

6 hr.
grad, 12 hr. for high school grad. - over 100 per sub.

preparing 6 tests

4 actual

1 test

1 public viewing

→ opt out current law- high stakes
yes

if not high stakes- all should participate

Meredith Scrivner, Nancy LeGrand, Pam Woodard
Whitefish Bay

John Odom - Frank Humphrey NAACP

does not favor social promotion

local sb. set standards

degree of weighting of one test

Dave & Terri Mills

Jean Boothby

* Lack of defn of ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT

Mary Lamping, Mickey Beil MPS

has had grad test for a # of years
opt^{out} of DPI - grad test - standards - create
their own due to cultural diversities

their test } multiple measures - assessments
contains } multiple opportunities

language, handicaps are addressed
no opt out - 3 or 4 year process

could possibly include state test if not
high stake

Menomonee Falls

Keith Marty - curriculum director

Kathy Schirala

concerns high stake

locally

process of enacting

Jan Wilson

* parents not aware of what's going on

that's why some legis. don't hear from constit.

Nancy Gurrie

loc. bas. define criteria

state tests & altern. can & should be used

Districts should hold high standards

"

have policies on early intervention

- Not one test

State shouldn't interfere w/ local decis.

* mobility is a major issue - hard to monitor progress.

youth appent. (could be an opt out provision)
an alternative would not be a diff. test

Dr. Elliot Moeser - Nicolet High School
School Administ.

opt out is app. now

- not necess. if not high stakes
(private & par. schools don't need to administer)

unfunded mandate

test is a distraction from mission of schools

Larry Stordahl - Spencer Superint.

* Remediation

pace of implementation - won't be ready
for grad test (or 8th grade) in 3 years
4th grade 1st (not high stake)

work on remediation - add tests

gradually

summer school, staff cuts due to
revenue caps, declin. enrol.

focus now is integrating technology - don't
have time to do both at same
time

Doreen Dembski } West Bend
Patricia Herdich }
Research on Retention

↳ Benefit Ed needs w/ spec. Remed. plan
Best for those in early grades

Before you eliminate parental optout need more
clarification - is in low stakes - what
% would test count for

Ohio has seen more kids going to private
schools. - higher drop out

Should // GEO more than college entrance

* Risks involved in high stakes

Those who develop tests also have branches
that provide books-texts aligned to test.
Will see entrepreneurs providing material
to prepare

DAVID LODES - Arrowhead HS.

* have opt out - alt. criteria something
other than another test

DPI has been very conflicting on what
alternatives are

Sondra Pope-Roberts PTA
creates more at risk students

Janet Kane Middleton Cross Plains

Eliminate High Stakes

Ass. make deal get rid of optout & it won't be high stakes - Against such a trade

Religious Reasons for optout

parent opt out in line w/ other unit.

choice, charter, open enrollment

home schooling

We need a program- test that parents want to participate in - a form of an assessment for the state

vs. old- will help drive curriculum

timing of exam (spring) is more useful

Joe Quick- Madison

Does not support high stake

Look at grad test as well as 4th & 8th Resources

If tests a factor - comfortable w/out optout

Any child rec. State aid charter, Miles Voucher should take test

Katie Stout WEAC - need opt out

Annette Tallis

1 factor

need clarity

- those rec. state funds should
take test

- tool to help kids vs.
club to hurt them

- teachers asked to do too much
paperwork etc to help
prevent lawsuits down the
line - too much pressure
put on teachers - focus,
curriculum is changed

Testimony at Senate Education Committee Hearing on 2/10/99 from Pamela Woodard, Whitefish Bay School Board President.

Thank you for allowing me to speak to all of you today. My name is Pamela Woodard. I am a parent of three children, one child is a freshman at UW-Madison, one is a senior in high school, and one is in seventh grade. One of my children will be affected by what we are discussing today. I have served on the Whitefish Bay School Board for 6 years. I have been president for the past 3 years.

I would like to say that I agree with all of the comments you have heard with regard to the concerns of a high stakes test.

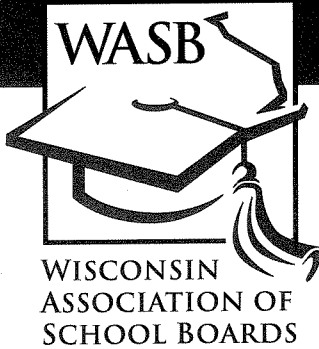
Before I express some of my concerns with a high stakes test, I would like to talk about the good things that are happening in districts already. I would like to inform you that the entire standards movement has already produced very positive results in our district. We have always had what we regarded as a high quality curriculum, good delivery system and positive results in student achievement. When legislation was passed requiring school districts adopt either state standards or local standards, we responded. We have spent two years reviewing state standards and benchmarks and our own local standards and curriculum. As a result, we have been refining our curriculum to match those standards we have adopted. We *are* looking more carefully than ever before about what we want children to know and when and how to help students who aren't meeting these benchmarks. Enormous attention and positive results are happening in our school district, as I am certain they are in other districts around the state.

What we don't need is to ruin a good thing by carrying it one step too far – in the form of a high stakes test.

I have great fear that this initiative is setting up school districts for lawsuits from angry parents. Even one lawsuit, which must be defended, could easily cost a year's teacher's salary – or an entire program. We do not have this kind of money, and even if we wanted to spend it this way, under the revenue caps we won't be able to. *Lawsuits will cost us in the loss of educational programs.* Fear of lawsuits should not keep us from holding schools accountable and helping students achieve, but high stakes testing will result in litigation; there must be more flexibility. Preservation of the parent opt-out will protect us from this to some degree, but I believe that high stakes tests will inevitably result in legal action in school districts and against the state. *A parent opt-out is not a district opt-out!*

Let me assure you, we want student success – even more than you do. These are our children, they are my friends and neighbors children, and they are my constituent's children – and these children are our future.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak with you today on this important topic.



122 W. WASHINGTON AVENUE, MADISON, WI 53703
PHONE: 608-257-2622 • FAX: 608-257-8386

KEN COLE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

FEB 15 1999

To: Sen. Rick Grobschmidt, chair, Senate Committee on Education
Lisa Moen, committee clerk

Fr: Annette Talis, legislative service coordinator, WASB

Re: Public Testimony—Feb. 10, 1999

Dt: Feb. 12, 1999

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony to the Senate Committee on Education. The issues of standards, assessments and retention are very important to school board members throughout the state. We appreciate the time your committee took to gather testimony on Feb. 10.

I prepared the attached talking points for the public hearing. However, as I was at the end of the agenda after a long day of testimony, I abbreviated my remarks considerably. At the request of several individuals with an interest in this issue who were unable to attend the hearing, I have shared my prepared comments as a record of my testimony. Therefore, I believe it is also appropriate to share the written comments with the committee as well.

Again, thank you for scheduling this very informative hearing.

Testimony—Senate Committee on Education

Feb. 10, 1999

Annette M. Talis, legislative services coordinator, WASB

1. Thank you for allowing school board members and me to speak to you today about this important educational issue. While others will address the specific retention issue, I am going to focus on some broad considerations for local policymakers.
2. First, our association approved a resolution relating to the issue of social promotion on Jan. 20 during our Delegate Assembly. In essence, it supports the provisions of AB 94: "The WASB supports the use of the state 4th and 8th grade tests as one factor in determining the promotion of students into higher grades if districts are also permitted to develop and consider other criteria and the weight to be given to each area." Our members believe in accountability. They know it is Main Street common sense to say that students should not be promoted until they have attained the skills and knowledge they need to be successful.
3. Furthermore, an existing policy endorsed by our membership in past years supports inclusion of a district's entire student population in the state's testing program with reasonable modifications offered to certain students with disabilities and those with language barriers. This resolution was approved prior to the enactment of the so-called no-social-promotion law that would make the tests the sole criterion on which to base decisions about a student's eligibility for promotion. While this is the official position of WASB, there are members of our association who have strong opinions about the parental opt-out that contrast with this position.
4. Although the WASB has historically opposed state testing mandates that influence local curriculum decisions, our association supports the use of assessments that focus on the bottom line—accountability for student achievement. In that spirit, school boards have made substantial efforts to use the state test data in monitoring overall student achievement. Schools boards are also learning sophisticated ways to analyze disaggregated data to look at small group and individual performance. The pace of these developments has accelerated in the new era of test correlation with standards and new individual student proficiency measurements. School board members, who aren't in classrooms every day, are increasingly using this data as the window on student achievement that we've never had before. Boards are demanding accountability district wide, in individual schools and among individual students. To that end, the tests have been an asset.
5. However, the current law that requires districts to use the tests as the sole criterion for determining a student's eligibility for promotion pushes most public policy goals aside and limits the test to one purpose—a purpose it cannot adequately fulfill, as others will surely describe. The law suggests that we ignore district wide analysis, ignore school-building performance and look only at the performance of individual students. If 10 percent of fourth graders and 24 percent of eighth graders failed to achieve a basic score on one or more sections of the tests last year, we have a moral obligation to do something to help those kids. Retention is just one option in that endeavor. It is costly and should not be over-applied where it cannot succeed. At the same time, we should also be looking at accountability district wide, in school buildings and in classrooms.
6. In contrast to the notion of the no-social-promotion law, school boards don't believe their job is done when every student achieves a basic score. School boards are in the business of setting high expectations for all students. School boards are responsible not only for moving targeted students from minimal to basic performance, but also for moving those in the middle from basic to proficient and those at the top from proficient to advanced. The current law overlooks that in focusing solely on children in the minimal and basic categories.

7. In our view, AB 94 and similar legislation would successfully broaden the scope of the original law and will balance the partnership between state and local schools. In the end, it could result in some very exciting developments.
8. Promotion and retention policies that are based on an objective measure of student achievement along with other criteria such as classroom performance, local test scores and teacher recommendations may reveal to school boards new information about how well the curriculum is aligned with the standards. This will help boards monitor school performance and make sure that all students have an opportunity to learn what they need to be successful.
9. Establishing clear promotion policies at these benchmark years will encourage districts to develop intervention check points in all alternative years, beginning in kindergarten. This will encourage teachers to collaborate in monitoring early literacy skills and other academic skills in the grade levels leading up to the test years. Parents will want to be included in early intervention efforts to make sure that their children will have an opportunity to be successful on the 4th and 8th grade exams. We are optimistic about AB 94 and similar legislation. We look forward to working with legislators in addressing these concerns.

WISCONSIN EDUCATION ASSOCIATION COUNCIL

Affiliated with the National Education Association

TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

by **Katie Schultz Stout for WEAC**
February 10, 1999

I am Katie Schultz Stout from our Instruction and Professional Development Division.

On behalf of the members of WEAC, as educators and parents, I would like to share some thoughts about high stakes testing. In addition, I would like to share with you the effect that these tests are having on teachers and students. As you may recall, WEAC has supported state level testing for two reasons. First, good assessment is an essential tool that can help teachers identify skill areas that need attention and design learning opportunities to address them. Second, the public is entitled to a reasonable level of accountability from the schools that they fund.

As all good teachers know, achievement and learning cannot be determined by a single measure. Testing experts insist that test results should never be used as a single measure to determine advancement or completion of school. In addition, there is also evidence that placing punitive high stakes on testing can distort an educational system in ways that have very high long term costs.

First, high stakes testing costs the state more, in some cases double, to develop and administer the tests. In districts these costs are multiplied as we see evidence of excessive amounts of time and money being spent to help ensure that districts protect themselves against law suits when a child does not advance or complete school. In Wisconsin right now, we have districts in some cases spending a great deal of money and in more cases asking teachers to spend inordinate amounts of time doing paperwork designed to protect districts from paying legal judgments.

Terry Craney, President
Donald E. Krahn, Executive Director

Two examples will illustrate this. One excellent school district has purchased the second grade version of a test similar to the 3rd and 4th grade state test. They administer the test with the help of proctors whose role is to help children learn how to take the test. An effort like this not only results in inaccurate test scores, but it robs students of classroom learning time and drains resources that should be used to support quality programs. With revenue caps in place, this practice and those similar can have very negative effects.

Another example is a district that told all teachers to take the state standards and identify each in their daily lesson plans from the previous year. While on the surface this may appear to make sense, when thought through it is evident that this exercise does nothing to improve learning, but takes a great deal of time away from teacher planning.

While these examples have flaws, they also have opportunities. In general, excessive time is being spent on legal protection at the expense of improved learning. The learning is our goal and must remain so for Wisconsin's children.

To that purpose we recommend:

- that all schools receiving public funds be required to participate in all state testing.
- that the high school achievement test be one factor a school board considers for graduation.
- that all parents have the right to opt their children out of state testing.

It is not the role of the state, school districts, or educators to create structures that guarantee more failure. We urge Senators to revise WSAS to insure that it becomes a learning tool rather than a political club that undermines student success and forces increased drop-out rates.

Statement from the Middleton/Cross Plains Board of Education on the mandatory retention policy to take effect in 2002-2003

House Education Committee Hearing, Feb. 9, 1999.

Our district uses the results of the Wisconsin Student Assessment System (WSAS). The district averages provide us with information about the quality of our math, language arts, social studies, and science curricula. Scores for individual students are used as one piece of information about what the student knows and is able to do. Usually the individual scores support what teachers and parents already know.

The new state academic standards have sparked important discussions about what schools are or should be teaching. As we debate and explore what is taught and when it is taught, we must remember that, first and foremost, we are teaching children. The Middleton/Cross Plains Area School Board has serious concerns about the new state policy to retain all 4th and 8th grade students who score below the basic level on the new state achievement tests. We believe that such high stakes testing will get in the way of providing educational services to children. When a single score is the only criterion for a decision, instruction can shift from broad curricular goals to the specific skills needed to pass the test. We know that not all of the state standards will be evaluated by the state tests. In some curricular areas, as many as one-third to one-half of the standards can't be assessed by a standardized paper and pencil format. If promotion decisions are based only on test scores, the untested standards will be irrelevant.

Merely retaining a child for another year in 4th or 8th grade is a simplistic response to a very complicated issue. Low scores result from many factors.

Some children score low on the tests because of learning disabilities. In our school district, all but one of the children below the standard on this year's third grade reading test have one or more diagnosed learning disabilities. These children need additional instructional support and specially trained staff to adapt curricular materials and activities for them. Simply repeating a grade is not what these children need.

For some children, a low test score is an error, or, in testing jargon, a false negative. A child may have mastered the skills and concepts being tested, but do poorly on a test because of other factors. Basing promotion *exclusively* on test scores will require schools to hold back some children who really are ready to move on. Families of these children will not be happy to have their children held back. They make take legal action, or they may enroll their child in a private school or choose home schooling to avoid repeating the grade.

Some children achieve less than they might because of personal or family problems. Much has been written about stresses on families today. Some children's school performance is substantially disrupted by family problems. For some of these children, school is their only

safe and stable environment. Retaining these children may disrupt their lives even more. Their friends will move on to the next grade, or even the next school, and they will be left behind. Many research studies conclude that inflexible retention policies increase the drop out rate.

High stakes tests are expensive. Their reliability and validity must be firmly established through a series of studies. They must be able to stand up to legal challenges. Changing the WSAS will cost at least \$10 million, and there will be recurring expenses for test development, test security, and legal fees.

We need to direct dollars to educational programs, rather than high-powered tests. The revenue caps have lead to cuts in some services. When the caps became permanent, our district cut most of our summer school programs. While recent legislation allows us to count summer school enrollment as part of our membership, it will take a while to put a summer school program in place again. Rising special education costs cannot be accommodated under the cap, especially since the state's reimbursement rate continues to decline. While state statute specifies a 63% reimbursement rate, this year's rate will be about 35%, down from last year's 37.5%. Instead of spending more money on the state tests, we could relieve some of these unanticipated results of revenue caps.

The current WSAS has been useful to our district. The system will be even more informative as the results are linked to the state's academic standards. However, a single test score cannot be the sole determinant of educational services to children. The child's accomplishments, abilities, interests, and family resources must be considered along with the test scores. We cannot lose sight of the individual child and the services he or she needs. We strongly urge the legislature to eliminate the high stakes nature of the Wisconsin State Assessment System.

Respectfully,

Middleton/Cross Plains Area Board of Education

Tim Statz, President

Cindy Morehouse, Vice President

Felix Richgels, Treasurer

Paul Yochum, Clerk

Janet Kane, Legislative Committee Chair

Marcia Philipps Hyzer

Ellen Lindgren

Mary Shanesy

Dennis Wicklund

Citizen members of the Legislative Committee

Sondra Pope Roberts

David Scheer



State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 7841, Madison, WI 53707-7841
125 South Webster Street, Madison, WI 53702
(608) 266-3390 TDD (608) 267-2427 FAX (608) 267-1052
Internet Address: www.dpi.state.wi.us

John T. Benson
State Superintendent

Steven B. Dold
Deputy State Superintendent

February 22, 1999

FEB 23 1999

The Honorable Richard Grobschmidt
Chair, Senate Education Committee
104 South, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53702

Dear Senator Grobschmidt:

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before the Senate Education Committee on February 10, 1999.

We appreciated the committee's time and interest, and in particular, the excellent questions and discussion.

I have attached a copy of the remarks I had prepared for our appearance. As you will note, our presentation and subsequent discussion did not get to a consideration of different options or possible amendments to current law with regard to the High School Graduation Test, although the remarks do. I encourage you to review the options described in this paper as you consider changes that may be desirable to current high stakes testing requirements.

We would welcome an opportunity to discuss this matter further, either before the full committee or with individual members.

If you have questions or comments, or would like to schedule some time to discuss this, or other issues, please do not hesitate to call.

Again, thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Dold", is written over the typed name.

Steven B. Dold
Deputy State Superintendent

SBD:ph
Attachment



State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 7841, Madison, WI 53707-7841
125 South Webster Street, Madison, WI 53702
(608) 266-3390 TDD (608) 267-2427 FAX (608) 267-1052
Internet Address: www.dpi.state.wi.us

John T. Benson
State Superintendent

Steven B. Dold
Deputy State Superintendent

Academic Standards and State Testing

Steven Dold
Deputy State Superintendent
Department of Public Instruction

Prepared Remarks for Testimony Before the
Senate Education Committee
February 10, 1999

"Thank you for the opportunity to share a few comments related to the status and future of Standards and Assessment-based reforms in Wisconsin.

Let me say by way of introduction that Wisconsin public schools have taken very seriously the challenge to become more accountable for student achievement results by developing and focusing on academic standards, and improving the quality and use of assessments.

They have done this in a variety of ways, including through the CESA Standards and Assessment Centers by which over 10,000 teachers were served last summer alone; through the Wisconsin Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development which made standards and assessment the theme of their 1998 summer conference, with over 500 educators in attendance; and through the Wisconsin Academy Staff Development Initiative (WASDI) and its 12 academies around the state which served over 2,700 teachers last summer.

In addition to these and other organizational efforts, individual districts are focusing as never before on standards and the improved quality and use of assessments.

And the good work will continue. Our budget proposal includes a recommendation to build on the good work of the WASDI academies and we will continue to work with and through the CESA Standards and Assessment Centers and other educational associations

Let me provide some quick background on current testing:

For a number of years now, state law has required that districts administer tests adopted or developed by the State Superintendent that assess student performance in reading at the 3rd grade; and English language arts, math, science and social studies, at grades 4, 8, and 10. Last year, the State Superintendent substantially raised the bar by beginning to report student results not only in comparison to the national average, but compared to a standard of how well students SHOULD perform -- proficiency standards.

For the most part, districts have accepted these state testing requirements; all districts have participated, few parents have asked to have their students excused, and educators have accepted the challenge of using proficiency as a measure of student performance.

Most recently, we have completed pre-test workshops around the state to prepare schools to administer this year's knowledge and concepts tests at the end of this month, and we look forward to those results showing continuing improvement over last year's performance.

As part of the last biennial budget and subsequent budget adjustment bill, the state enacted laws that raise the accountability bar by requiring local districts to adopt or develop academic standards, and by requiring high stakes testing beginning in 2002-2003. The law requires 4th and 8th graders to pass a test before advancing in grade; and requires high school students to pass a test before receiving a diploma.

As a part of our responsibility under this law, the department has begun the development of a high school graduation test (HSGT), and has, within the last few weeks undertaken the distribution of the HSGT FIRST NOTICE to local school districts and other education stakeholders so that this year's 8th graders will know what is expected of them -- in terms of academic content on a high school graduation test they must pass under current law to receive a high school diploma. (I should also mention here parenthetically, that our continued development of the test as required under current law is dependent upon fully funding the budget request we submitted to the governor.)

While this new law speaks to the issue of higher standards, and higher levels of student achievement, it also confuses, we would argue, statewide accountability policy. On the one hand, the law appears to require that all students must pass a single test in order to advance in grade or graduate; on the other hand, local districts are given the opportunity to develop their own tests, and parents are given unlimited opportunity to excuse their students from state testing. The governor recently spoke of the desirability of comparing student performance results among schools and districts across the state; though I believe he -- and we certainly -- realize that no such comparisons would be possible or meaningful if every district is free to use their own measure.

Let me identify a number of beliefs we hold that underlie our position on these issues:

First, we believe, and I think the current statutes reflect a similar legislative intent, that ALL students should be expected to meet -- at a reasonable level -- appropriate academic standards as a precondition of grade advancement and graduation.

Second, local school districts must be supported in their efforts to revise and improve curriculum and instruction, including providing additional instruction where necessary, so that all students have the opportunity to learn and meet higher standards.

Third, we believe that the determination of having met the standards cannot, and should not, be based exclusively on the results of a single test. This belief is echoed across the state and nation by educators, researchers, and psychometricians, and appears in -- among other places -- the test publishers and users bible, "The Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing." In it, the authors state, "In elementary and secondary education, a decision or characterization that will have a major impact on a test taker should not automatically be made on the basis of a single test score. Other relevant information for the decision should also be taken into account by the professionals making the decision."

Fourth, we believe that our achievements in education as a state are significantly attributable to the shared state and local responsibility for the quality and equity of educational opportunities available to students in our public schools -- a balance, a partnership between state responsibility and our simultaneous belief in local control. It is not either - or; it is both. Current law describes an either - or situation that will lead to a fragmented system that over- or under-represents the legitimate role of each party. If districts use the state graduation test, for example, it may become the sole determiner of whether a student graduates. If they develop their own graduation test, they become a disconnected island from anything resembling a coherent statewide accountability policy.

There is a way, we believe, to amend current high stakes testing requirements to make them more workable and to achieve the following objectives:

- - to create and maintain a standards-based system that clarifies and focuses our efforts on improved student achievement;
- - to respect the individual differences of children while still holding them to a reasonable standard;
- - to provide important information on school and district performance;
- - to respect the desire of many communities to go beyond the state model standards and assessments; and
- - to restore the balance in the state-local partnership for ensuring quality and equal educational opportunity across the state.

Current statutory provisions can be improved, through modest amendments, to address these objectives.

First, with regard to the "no social promotion" provision, we support Representative Olsen's bill -- Assembly Bill 94 -- as a way of improving the law, keeping the focus on accountability, making important determinations on multiple performance measures, and restoring balance between state and local decisions.

With regard to the HSGT, we believe the law must be amended to make it workable, and meaningful. The issues here are political as well as substantive. All of the arguments that apply to the 4th and 8th grade "no social promotion" issue apply to the high stakes graduation test. The solution proposed by Representative Olsen in AB 94 is a relevant option.

There is some question, however, with regard to the HSGT, about whether this approach is rigorous enough. And for purposes of discussion I would like to share with you a continuum of options that illustrate various beliefs or assumptions one might make in devising an accountability policy aimed at improving student achievement:

(A) Current Law (2002-2003) : This option requires students to pass a graduation test to receive a diploma. The only other route to a diploma is for parents to ask that their student be excused from the test in which case they must satisfy a locally developed alternative criteria.

(B) Test or other evidence option: This option requires all students to take the test, but then acknowledges that all students may not be able to demonstrate having met the standards on a single, large scale test. So it also provides an alternative process by which students can appeal the test results and demonstrate with appropriate other evidence having met the standards. The local school district would make the appeal determination.

(C) Multiple indicator/board policy option: This option applies Representative Olsen's "no social promotion" to the HSGT. In essence, it says the state test would be only one indicator, among other locally determined indicators, specified in school board policy. The decision to award a diploma would be made locally, based upon the student's performance on multiple measures.

(D) Endorsement option: Under this option, students may receive an unendorsed diploma by completing existing requirements. But students may also receive a state endorsement for passing the HSGT.

(E) Test or other success indicators: This approach is the same as (B) above with one significant difference. It creates a third option for gaining a diploma for students who are unable to demonstrate having met the standards in the four subjects, but who in other respects have been exemplary students and demonstrated successful performance in other areas. This approach offers a "waiver of the standard" option.

(F) Current practice option: Under this option, students would receive a diploma, as they do now, by meeting state and district credit requirements and other requirements as determined in school board policy.

Each of these options raises important questions about our beliefs in the proper balance between state and local responsibility, the appropriate use of test results, and whether we are primarily concerned -- in using a high stakes test -- with individual student accountability, or school and district accountability. Current law is, at best, ambiguous on these points.

It goes almost without saying that any testing program must respect specific provisions in law and rule that govern the appropriate use of assessments with students with disabilities or limited English proficiency.

Let me say a few words about the various opt out provisions that are a part of current law. We believe all districts should participate in the statewide assessment program -- as they do now. We believe the state testing program should NOT DRIVE districts and parents away. We believe the language that currently permits districts to develop their own tests -- in lieu of state assessments -- should be repealed. It makes little sense from a statewide accountability policy perspective, or a cost perspective for districts to develop or adopt such alternate assessments.

It is likely that the high stakes nature of current law, with important determinations based upon a single test, is causing districts and parents to consider opting out. A more reasonable and balanced way of assessing whether students have met the standards would not have the same effect.

Let me repeat our position on the high stakes assessment provisions in current law:

We support Representative Olsen's Assembly Bill 94 as a solution to concerns over 4th and 8th grade "no social promotion" testing.

With regard to the HSGT, we believe that current law must be amended so that students have the opportunity to demonstrate in other ways in addition to the test that they have met the standards. A student's performance on a variety of measures should be taken into account in awarding a diploma.

Once again, thank you for your time. We would be pleased to discuss these issues further before the full committee, or with members individually. And we would be happy at this time to try and respond to your questions."