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ABSTRACT

A variety of viewpoints were represented in this symposium for chief state school officials and senior staff of state departments of education. Russell Vlaanderen, Education Commission of the States, opened with a national overview: "The Policy Implications of Minimum Competency Testing: The Case of the Standardized Student." Attorney Merle Steven McClung cautioned that many current state programs may violate student "due process" in "Are Competency Testing Programs Fair? Legal?" Glenn Davis, in "The California Experience in Minimum Competency Testing and CBE," and Ken Loewe in "Florida's Program in Minimum Competency Testing," offered an historical perspective for the less experienced states. Michigan State Senator Jack Faxon addressed "The Consumer's View of Education: Legislative Concerns for Educational Accountability." Representing the National Institute of Education were Paul Cawein: "Beyond Minimum Competency Testing: CBE as an Educational Reform Process" and Ed Ellis: "Linking Educational Agents for Improved Practices." Presentations on "State Programs Related to CBE and Minimum Competencies" completed the proceedings; Alan Morgan described New Mexico's Basic Skills Plan which has an unusual life skills emphasis, James Casey described Oklahoma's recent basic skills assessment, and Keith Cruse outlined Texas' unusual approach to defining educational outcomes through a school accreditation process. The presentations highlighted important policy implications in the nature and assessment of competencies, the evaluation of student progress, and the organization of curriculum and instruction for competency. (Author/CF)

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**ISSUES IN MINIMUM
COMPETENCY TESTING
AND COMPETENCY BASED
EDUCATION**

**Proceedings of an
Invitational Symposium**

**February 8-10, 1978
New Orleans, Louisiana**

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INTRODUCTION

This volume represents the proceedings of an invitational symposium on Issues in Minimum Competency Testing and Competency Based Education which was held in New Orleans, Louisiana, on February 8-10, 1978. Convened primarily for the Chief State School Officers and senior staff of State Departments of Education, the symposium was sponsored by the Regional Planning and Service Program of the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory under a grant from the National Institute of Education.

The symposium's purpose was to articulate the major educational policy issues related to minimum competency testing and competency based education. In order to meet that objective, a variety of viewpoints were presented. Representatives from three of the states in the Laboratory's region (Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas) summarized developments in minimum competency testing and competency based education in their states. Spokesmen from two other states well established in the minimum competency testing movement--California and Florida--shared their experiences with symposium participants. National issues were highlighted by speakers from the National Institute of Education, the Education Commission of the States, and the Center for Law and Education.

The opening session, conducted by the Director of the Department of Research and Information of the Education Commission of the States, gives an excellent national overview of the current status of State minimum competency testing programs. Readers will also be interested in Vlaanderen's comments on the possible historical sources of the minimum competency movement, and on his discussion of the relationship of minimum competencies to the goal of social pluralism.

Merle McClung's excellent article, reproduced in full in this document, was the basis for his presentation.

McClung suggests that many current State approaches toward minimum competency testing may violate students' "due process." Other programs may be open to charges of racial discrimination. McClung offers some timely guidance to States wishing to avoid these pitfalls.

Glenn Davis' and Ken Loewe's case histories of California and Florida offer a historical perspective to those who have less experience in competency based education and minimum competency testing. Davis speaks cogently to the issues of locus of control and educational equity as they relate to minimum competencies, while Loewe describes his state's entry into minimum competency testing as a response to the demand for educational accountability.

Jack Faxon, in a humorous recounting of legislative concerns for educational accountability, gives the "consumer's" point of view about minimum competency testing and competency based education.

Paul Cawein and Ed Ellis, representatives from the National Institute of Education, have valuable insights into the complexities of the symposium topic. Ellis, a member of the Dissemination and Resources Group, is concerned with linkage and with translating the developments in minimum competency into useful practices and products. Cawein, a member of the Educational Productivity section of the NIE, has a long history of involvement with competency based education. He speaks eloquently of the potential of competency based education for reform, and of the relationship of competency based education to a concern for educational productivity.

Presentations by three SEA representatives complete the symposium proceedings. Alan Morgan describes New Mexico's Basic Skills Plan, which reflects a concern for accountability and has an unusual life skills emphasis. James Casey describes a recent basic skills assessment in Oklahoma and communicates concerns about the dangers of minimum competency testing. Keith Cruse, speaking for Charles Nix of the Texas Education Agency, outlines an unusual approach to defining and measuring essential

educational outcomes through a school accreditation process.

Minimum competency testing, and the current national concern for defining and measuring essential educational outcomes, may become a true educational movement, or may be simply another educational fad. Competency based education was originally conceived to be a humanistic, outcomes-based system for organizing education with great potential for reform. Minimum competencies and their assessment is only a part of that complete system. The question of whether current developments will ever lead to this desired reform is certainly not answered by the discussions in these proceedings. Readers, however, will find presentations which highlight important policy implications in the nature and assessment of competencies, the evaluation of student progress, and the organization of curriculum and instruction for competency.

Norvell Northcutt
Symposium Director

THE POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF MINIMUM COMPETENCY TESTING

The Case of the Standardized Student

Russell Vlaanderen

The history of education in America is replete with accounts of periodic and cyclic times of intense criticism of the public schools. We are presently undergoing another such period. A major educational concern in this decade is that students are not acquiring the basic skills necessary to be successful in today's society. The solution proposed by many critics and reformers has been the establishment of minimum competency testing programs. These critics are basing their objections on the assumption that the present educational system, which requires 12 years of attendance and completion of a predetermined set of credits, does not assure the acquisition of these basic competencies. Their solution generally suggests something like this: first, the selection and definition of competencies that are considered necessary for success in life; second, the establishment of minimum levels of proficiencies in these competencies; and third, the development and administration of tests for the purpose of determining whether or not the standards are being met either by schools or by individual students.

As of the end of 1977, the Education Commission of the States has identified 30 states which have taken action, either by legislation or by state board regulation. Judging by some of the early action in several state legislatures, the list will increase this year.

Action in the state capitols so far in 1978 includes Kansas Senate Bill 507 that would require a proficiency examination in reading, writing, and mathematics, to be administered to pupils before the completion of Grades Three, Six, Nine, and 12. Students not passing the examination would be required to have remedial work, and high school graduates could receive a certificate of attendance upon leaving school. However, graduation with a regular diploma would be contingent upon passing the test.

HB 1161 in Indiana would establish a basic skills achievement program and test in the public schools. Testing would be required once before Grade Five and once in the 10th grade, leading toward high school graduation. The bill would provide for special assessments for handicapped students as well as for parent-teacher conferences for students failing all or part of the examination.

The State Board in Connecticut recently approved the lowering of the mandatory attendance age to 16 and would allow students at this age to take an examination: a mixture of the general educational development and adult performance level tests, or both, in order to leave school early. While the program would require parental permission for students to take the examination, it would not require them to leave school if they passed the test. The program also calls for a counseling program in the schools to assist the students in making decisions regarding leaving school early. It also calls for the Department of Education to work with the Department of Labor on the effect of this program on the labor market.

HB 790 has been introduced in West Virginia. This bill mandates that the State Board of Education shall determine minimum standards of student performance that shall be required for promotion of students from sixth grade to seventh grade, and from ninth grade to 10th grade, and for graduation from high school and the corresponding granting of diplomas. It further requires that no high school may grant a diploma on the basis of any work or credit that does not meet the minimum standards prescribed by the State Board of Education. The bill also applies to any private, parochial or denominational school within the state. The bill further provides that the State Board of Education shall develop the examinations before the beginning of the 1979-80 school year and shall arrange for the examinations to be given during the 1979-80 school year and every school year thereafter. I have a copy of this bill with me if any of you might care to examine it in greater detail. The interesting part about this bill and the copy we have is that there is a fiscal note attached. The costs of implementing this bill have been estimated by the Department of Education as follows: for the first year, including

the development of the tests and the printing of the tests, \$969,540; second year and recurring costs are estimated at \$2,302,658. Added to this would be the cost for 1980-81 and the following years estimated at \$2,903,340.

Two bills have been introduced in New York--S 2609, which would repeal the regents' examination, and S 6613, which would also repeal the regents' examinations and the diploma, but require the board of regents to establish a testing system based on nationally-normed tests. In addition, we have worked with a legislative drafter in the New York Senate on a bill that, in its present form, would require among other things, that a child receive a certificate of readiness by a qualified educator before he would be allowed to enter first grade, and would further require that a student make a choice at the end of the ninth grade whether he wishes to attend a vocational school or go through a regular academic high school. We have made a number of suggestions concerning this bill, but as of this week, have not received the final copy as it will be introduced. It promises, however, to be very interesting.

Legislative action is also promised in Iowa. This week I received a letter from a legislative intern in the House of Representatives from the State of Iowa who asks the following questions about minimum competency testing:

1. What states have competency tests for requirement for graduation?
2. What states have other forms of competency testing and what are their programs like?
3. What effects are the tests having?
4. How long has the individual program been in existence in the state?
5. What is the general annual cost of the program?
6. How is the program accepted by the students, faculty and parents?
7. Are the tests compatible with the students' level of achievement?
8. Are the tests tuned just for the basic skills such as reading comprehension, writing skills, and computation skills or are the tests designed to show other types of skills the student has acquired?

These and other questions like them have virtually inundated the Research and Information Department for the last year and a half. At one point, I calculated that questions concerning minimum competency testing constituted 35 percent of our total requests--by far the largest of any single topic. During that time we have prepared and published seven updates on the progress of minimum competency legislation and state board regulation. If the action is as heavy as it presently promises to be, we will undoubtedly be publishing Update XIII in about 2 or 3 months.

Turning now to the other chart which has been furnished you, we find that nine states of the 30 have legislation, 19 have adopted minimum competency testing by state board regulation or state department of education ruling, and two have a combination of these. An examination of the chart will reveal that states are all different from each other in that they have not adopted any particular model legislation or model regulation. This is not a phenomenon that was started by an organization and spread from state to state, but rather one that seemed to spring up from the grass roots virtually simultaneously and independently. Some states have mandatory legislation and regulations while other states are permissive. In general, we have found that those states which are highly centralized have mandatory provisions while those states which are traditionally local control states have permissive provisions. It is also obvious from the provisions stated in this chart that where legislation has passed, the legislators are thinking in terms of the 3 R's--reading, writing and arithmetic--which in those states where state board regulations have provided the initiative, they are most likely to add life skills and other subjects.

To illustrate the extent of public interest in this movement, I can report to you that the Columbia Broadcasting System is considering the filming of a 3-hour special concerning minimum competency testing. To this purpose, they have had an advance team in Denver during the last month or so and we have met frequently with them. You are also undoubtedly aware of the federal interest in the movement and recall that representative

Mottl of Ohio has introduced two bills concerning minimum competency testing at the federal level. You will also recall that Admiral Rickover testified rather forcefully in the Congress concerning the need for a federal testing program and the setting of federal standards. One would not wish to dampen the Admiral's enthusiasm for upgrading education, but I feel constrained to remark that when the Admiral gets into methods he is in over his head. However, when I realize that he has spent all of his adult life in the submarine service, I can only conclude that he is accustomed to being in over his head.

Let us turn now to what are some of the possible reasons for the introduction of legislation and regulation. One group of proponents is convinced that the quality of education is declining and points to a number of signs indicating that decline. These are:

1. High enrollment in remedial courses for students entering college,
2. Lawsuits by high school graduates charging "educational malpractice" in that diplomas were awarded without imparting to the student the skills necessary to perform adequately,
3. A slow but steady decline in both the verbal and the mathematic sections of the scholastic aptitude tests,
4. Complaints from parents and employers that students have not been challenged to develop work habits or competencies required in the world of work, and
5. Evidence that some students are asking that the schools be more rigorous in their demands for excellence.

This group generally pins its hopes on a back-to-the-basics movement, and some proponents are even proposing the implementation of a European style curriculum and credentialing process to restore high standards. This is evident in part in the proposed bill in New York.

Another group sees an opportunity to limit the spiraling costs of education and, in fact, hopes that some

way may be found to cut the levels of spending. These people simply cannot understand the apparent dichotomy of declining enrollments and increased costs and, in their minds, a declining quality of output. It is incomprehensible to many people that test scores have increased as much as 140 percent. They feel that both students and schools must make a more serious effort to achieve at higher levels, consistent with the funds already allocated. This group hopes, in short, that the push for standards will bring a more efficient system of educating students. The establishment of minimum standards is viewed as a possible mechanism for prohibiting further increases in educational costs. Included in the efficient operation might be early exit for students who can demonstrate proficiency at minimum levels and choose to leave school, excusing students from some courses if they can demonstrate proficiency, and replacing teachers and other personnel who do not demonstrate productiveness. Chris Piphio, my associate director, and I can scarcely recall a time when we have spoken to legislative committees that the question has not been asked, "Can we use the results of minimum competency tests to evaluate and dismiss teachers?" Still others, of course, see an opportunity to eliminate subjects which they would list under the general heading of "frills."

Still another group is interested in minimum competency testing because it hopes to define education in a way different from what it has been in the past. These people, who are a definite minority, feel that students need different and better training and preparation for the future than the schools have traditionally provided. It has been said in the past that generals are always busy preparing to fight the last war. I am certain that it has been said somewhere that educators are busy preparing the present generation to solve last generation's problems. I must confess that I feel this is a true statement. Education by its very nature ought to be concerned with the future. There is an axiom among futurists that the decisions made today will affect the next 5 to 20 years. When we consider the fact that the child entering kindergarten in the fall of 1978 will be in the high school graduation class of 1991, we need to ask ourselves the question, "What kind of world are we preparing this student to enter?"

Certainly some thought of the future ought to be given consideration as we set policies in this and other educational areas.

Advocates for special school populations are also interested in minimum competency testing. Minority groups hope that the establishment of standards will enable the schools to provide basic skills to a large number of students from culturally different backgrounds who are not presently making it through the system. They also express concern about the unfair use of tests and standards against students as evidenced by tracking or denial of opportunity.

To my mind, what the enthusiastic proponents of minimum competency testing are forgetting is that there is nothing inherent in minimum competency testing that promises new teaching methods, innovative programs, or new use of technology. They seem to have forgotten that minimum competency testing is only a means to an end, is not the only means, and possibly may not even be the best means.

What are likely to be the outcomes of minimum competency testing? In 1976, The National Association of Secondary School Principals devised just such a list and arranged the outcomes in two groups--positive outcomes and possible negative outcomes. This association lists as positive outcomes: one, the question, "What is a high school education?" must be squarely faced; two, the statements required for each course will likely result in carefully organized teaching and carefully designed sequential learning; three, slow learners and under-achievers will likely receive direct and immediate attention; four, courses of study will likely be revised to correct identified deficiencies; five, subjects leading to the development of competencies will receive additional emphasis; six, alternatives and options not requiring attendance in class will likely to be broadened; seven, the senior year may gain more holding power because of a new focus on requirements and options; and eight, the community will know the minimum performance required in specific subject areas for the diploma. They list as possible negative outcomes: one, confusion over the meaning of a high school diploma will continue if each district identifies its own level of com-

petencies and performance indicators; two, the emphasis on pragmatic and practical competencies may result in the erosion of liberal education; three, the emphasis on measurable outcomes could result in less attention to outcomes which are difficult to measure; four, the record-keeping system could become burdensome to teachers and administrators; five the conflict between humaneness and accountability may be intensified as criteria are established and clarified; six, community disagreement may arise over the nature and difficulty of competencies; and seven, dropouts could increase, depending upon the level of the minimum competencies.

My assignment in this symposium was to indicate to you the current state of activity in the states and the federal government. One of the difficulties of trying to make a speech which emphasizes currency is that one is tempted to add more material at the last minute. This has indeed been the case with this speech. To the best of my knowledge, it was up-to-date as of noon yesterday, but at the rate this movement is progressing, I have no doubt that it is now out-of-date.

My assignment did not include a discussion of policy issues, but since this symposium is concerned with policy issues, I would like to take this opportunity to present some of the issues as I see them. Educational policy has traditionally been set in a vacuum, that is, without regard to other overarching policies of society. For instance, the policies which have been set in the minimum competency testing movement have probably not been considered in light of the manpower policy of this country. However, I would remind you that in the guidelines of Title One of the Comprehensive Training and Employment Act of 1973 is a section which says, "Prime sponsors shall make appropriate efforts to encourage educational agencies toward granting academic credit for the competencies participants gain in the entitlement program." If there is to be a concerted movement in this country to allow students to participate in outside work and experience and to receive credit for these experiences outside the school setting, who is to be held accountable for the competencies to be developed and

who will administer the minimum competency tests in these areas? Certainly the school cannot be held accountable for the development of competencies over which they have no control, and I doubt very much that business and industry will want to be graded on minimum competency tests.

Let's look at another national situation, if not a policy. For years this country called itself a melting pot. This embodied the idea that immigrants would eventually be alloyed with and actually become "Americans." It presupposed some sort of common value system and some common purposes. The concept of administering minimum competency tests to all types of students would seem to emphasize this particular ideology. However, there is evidence that America is not a melting pot and, in fact, never was. The emphasis at the present time is upon pluralism and the development of a pluralistic society. Is it possible that we are going to embark upon a huge, nationwide testing program which will run counter to this concept of America? Furthermore, what will the early exit test and its possible results do to the labor market? One of the functions of the schools has been to keep teenagers out of the labor market for as long as possible.

Let us now turn to some rather obvious educational policy issues. For instance, for what purpose should minimum competency testing programs be established? Should saving taxpayer money take precedence over training teachers to diagnose the individual student's reading problems? Or establishing graduation requirements? Or determining which students will be promoted, remediated, or allowed to exit early from high school? And evaluating which teachers will be fired, or which schools will lose certification, or otherwise be judged inadequate? When should the tests be administered? A strong rationale exists for not waiting until the 11th or 12th grade to administer a competency test. A single measure late in the student's career will be less helpful than assessments which provide feedback for diagnostic purposes throughout the grades. The use of a single test of competency to determine student qualifications for graduation or grade-to-grade promotion is a practice which has many pitfalls. Multiple measures of a student's abilities can provide a broader data base for making

such important decisions. Therefore, should test scores be included as only a part of such requirements as teacher observation, school grades, student and parent interviews? Furthermore, what should be done with the incompetents, once they have been identified? The alternatives to be considered under this issue include remediation, differentiated diplomas, withholding of diplomas, and retention. Which level of government can best make decisions regarding minimum competency testing policy--the federal, the state or the local? A single federal policy would fail to recognize the different needs, philosophies, funding levels and resources of individual states. Certainly at the present time, the movement is so new that time is needed to test a variety of approaches. This would not be possible under a single federal plan. If the state level decision made involves financing or graduation requirements, the appropriate state agencies must participate in these decisions. There is a strong tradition in this country which would support decisions being made at the local level. Certainly decisions at this level could involve teachers, parents, students, community leaders, and school administrators--which might be difficult at the other levels.

Who is going to determine the competencies which will be tested? Who will set the standards or the desired levels of outcomes? How are the test instruments to be developed and who will develop them? These questions constitute a small sample of the policy issues that will have to be faced as we move into an era of minimum competency testing. I am certain we will think of far more during the following discussion.

ARE COMPETENCY TESTING PROGRAMS FAIR? LEGAL?

Merle Steven McClung

(This article appeared in whole in the Phi Delta Kappan, February 1978, and is reprinted here at the request of the author with his permission and that of the Phi Delta Kappan.)

Some considerations that should give pause to state legislators and school leaders who have jumped on the minimum competency bandwagon.

Responding to the public's demand for accountability in teaching and learning basic skills, legislators and educators in many states have unfairly shifted the burden of poor performance from the schools to the students. An increasing number of states and school districts are requiring students to pass a minimal proficiency or competency test as a prerequisite to a high school diploma. Given the number of studies showing substantial numbers of functionally illiterate students receiving high school diplomas, the requirement on its face seems fair enough. Many of the programs incorporating this requirement, however, are designed and/or implemented in an inequitable manner, and some may be illegal. This article will discuss these points in more detail under the following headings: inadequate phase-in periods, inadequate match between test and instruction, racial discrimination, and model program provisions.

Inadequate Phase-in Periods

Many competency programs are being imposed upon students late in their secondary education with little prior notice. Imposition one year before graduation means that a student will have spent his first 10 or 11 years in the school system without notice or knowledge that passing a competency test would be a condition for acquiring the diploma. In fact the school district would have explicitly approved his progress by promoting him each year, even if he did not have basic

competencies. It is likely that many if not most of those students failing the test would have studied differently in earlier years had they been given such notice--and teachers might have taught differently as well. The competency test is designed to assure that minimal competency is acquired after 12 years of schooling, but students in this situation would not have received notice until their tenth or eleventh year of schooling.

Traditional notions of due process should require adequate prior notice of any rule that could cause irreparable harm to a person's educational or occupational prospects. Whatever notice is considered fair in this situation (first grade? fourth grade?), notice after most of one's educational program is already completed clearly seems inadequate.

Inadequate Test/Instruction Match

Most persons would agree that fairness requires a school's curriculum and instruction to be matched in some way with whatever is later measured by the test. In other words, the test would be unfair if it measured what the school never taught. This concept should be considered in terms of both curricular validity and instructional validity.

Curricular validity is a measure of how well test items represent the objectives of the curriculum. An analysis of curricular validity would require comparison of the test objectives with the school's course objectives. For example, if the curriculum was not designed to teach functional competency, it would be unfair to deny individual students their diploma because they did not learn to be functionally competent. In this situation, failure on the competency test should reflect on the schools, which are not offering an appropriate curriculum.

A competency test should also have what may be called *instructional validity*. Even if the curricular objectives of the school correspond with the competency test objectives, there must be some measure of whether

or not the school district's stated objectives were translated into topics actually taught in the district's classrooms. While a measure of curricular validity is a measure of theoretical validity of the competency test as an instrument to assess the success of students, instructional validity is an actual measure of whether the schools are providing students with instruction in the knowledge and skills measured by the test. Instructional validity obviously does not require prior exposure of the student to the exact questions asked on the test, but it does require actual exposure of students to the kind of knowledge and skills that would enable a student to answer the test questions. This will present difficult proof problems in some cases; in others it will be relatively easy to show that the test is measuring what the school never taught.

It is important to note that content validity, as defined by the American Psychological Association,¹ does not insure either curricular or instructional validity. The concepts are related but distinguishable. Content validity is a measure of how well test items represent the performance domain that the test purports to measure (for example, adult performance skills), but it is not necessarily a measure of how well the test items and performance domain represent either a particular school's curricular objectives or instruction received. Instructional validity should be the central concern, because content and curricular validity mean very little in this context if the test items are not representative of instruction actually received by the student.

Test developers will be reluctant to evaluate the curricular or instructional validity of their tests, but they have some kind of professional responsibility (beyond the usual disclaimers) to assure that their tests do not measure skills and knowledge that were never taught in school, particularly when they design a test instrument for an individual user. A promising step in the direction of professional responsibility was recently taken by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) when it announced that it would not report National Teacher Examination (NTE) scores to the South Carolina

Department of Education until it had assurance against probably misuse.² The ultimate responsibility for the curricular and instructional validity of the test, however, should be with the school or school system that uses the test. *A school or school system that cannot assure the curricular and instructional validity of its competency tests should not use them as a basis for denying promotion or a diploma to any of its students.*

Questions of curricular and instructional validity are relevant, given either of two general purposes of competency testing: 1) to measure the students' mastery of the school's curriculum, or 2) to predict the minimal competence required in the adult world.³

The terminology will vary from school to school, and some schools will merge the two concepts by deciding that their curriculum should be based upon minimal adult competence. The different versions of adult competency tests usually go beyond basic proficiency skills, because they seek to measure an individual's ability to apply 1) basic skills (including literacy) to 2) necessary adult life-role activities such as those of a consumer, producer, or citizen. Examples include ability to understand common indices for comparison shopping, to understand the nutritional ingredients necessary for a balanced diet, to understand a contract for a car loan or home mortgage, to read and understand a newspaper, to fill out a job or loan application, to complete a tax form, to balance a checkbook, to follow a recipe in preparing a meal, to understand proper behavior and attitudes for getting and keeping a job, to use leisure time productively, and to participate as a citizen in the community, state and nation.

The actual test questions should be subject to close scrutiny, as these examples raise questions about what skills and knowledge are necessary in today's adult world and whether values and background are assumed that discriminate on the basis of race or culture, or that infringe upon individual choice. The law relating to racial discrimination is discussed below. Tests may also be legally vulnerable if they involve mandatory personal and social behaviors that infringe upon an individual-

ual's freedom of choice. Furthermore, tests that go beyond basic skills and attempt to measure the affective aspects of social responsibility, good citizenship, self-concept, and job preparedness are vulnerable not only because it is questionable that these "skills" can be measured but also questionable whether they can be generally taught, given the current state of instructional and curricular research.⁴

Where an adult competency purpose is involved, as is the case in many school systems where various adult performance level (APL) tests have been adopted, it is less likely that the school will in fact have taught what is measured by the test. And where this is the case, greater curriculum revision and longer phase-in periods will be necessary. A competency test that measures adult life-role skills that were never taught in the school (and then is used as a basis for denying a diploma) is arguably so arbitrary as to violate due process of law. A competency test lacking curricular or instructional validity might violate substantive due process because then the students are being penalized even though they cannot be personally faulted for poor performance on the test.

Racial Discrimination

While substantial numbers of white middle-class students cannot meet minimal competency standards, there is some evidence that a disproportionate percentage of black and Hispanic students will be adversely affected by the competency test requirement.⁵ A number of competency studies show a racial and socioeconomic impact, and this pattern has in fact occurred where competency testing programs have been implemented.

While not opposed to competency testing per se, some black parents in desegregated communities see a racial motive behind competency testing. They say that competency testing was not a major concern at either black or white schools until the schools in their district were desegregated, at which time competency testing was introduced ostensibly "to protect standards." The effect can

be resegregation within the school according to test results (or other forms of tracking), since unequal educational opportunities and/or discriminatory tests may cause black children to score lower than their white counterparts.

Whether or not a racial motive is involved, such practices are arguably unconstitutional in formerly segregated districts. In analogous situations (for example, cases involving ability grouping and voting rights), the federal courts have held that practices that carry forward the effects of prior racial discrimination are prohibited.

The legal standard to be applied to other school districts (those not recently desegregated or found to be subject to prior discrimination) is less clear. As a constitutional matter, the U.S. Supreme Court held in *Washington v. Davis*⁶ that the disproportionate racial impact of a test (in this case, a police department's personnel test) was not sufficient to establish an unconstitutional racial classification without proof that it reflected a racially discriminatory purpose. The Court, however, stated that such disproportionate racial impact can be *evidence* of discriminatory purpose. And in a concurring opinion, Justice John Paul Stevens emphasized that a person is presumed to have intended the natural consequences of his deeds. Given the numerous studies of the competency levels of public school students (mentioned above), the natural consequence of most competency testing programs will be racial differentiation.

The Supreme Court in *Washington v. Davis* also found that federal statutory law may provide stronger standards for fair testing than the federal Constitution, noting that the standards for Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (prohibiting discrimination in employment) are more stringent than provided by the Constitution, since they incorporate an effect rather than a purpose standard. Thus when a test or practice disqualifies substantially disproportionate numbers of blacks in hiring and promotion decisions, the burden under Title VII shifts to the employer to validate or practice in terms of job per-

formance (that is, to show that the test or practice is sufficiently job-related).

The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare regulations implementing Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 incorporate a similar effect (rather than purpose) standard, prohibiting practices that have the effect of discriminating against individuals on the ground of race, color, or national origin. Since virtually all public schools are subject to Title VI regulations, competency testing programs having a disproportionate effect on blacks or other protected minorities should be examined in light of Title VI standards, especially where there are indications of unfairness in the test itself or in the administration of the testing program.

Similar standards apply to competency testing programs that have a disproportionate effect on Hispanic children. Some school districts are imposing the competency requirement without a Spanish translation of the test or corresponding curricular and instructional modification. Such practices may not satisfy HEW standards requiring public schools to take affirmative steps to remedy the linguistic exclusion of non-English-speaking children.

The point here is not that minorities should not have to meet the same standards of functional competence as whites. In fact, blacks and Hispanics, who in disproportionate numbers have experienced schools that do not emphasize basic skills, are in the forefront of those calling for increased attention to basic skills. But care must be taken to assure that competency testing does not lead simply to another form of racial discrimination. The model program provisions suggested below will help to assure fairness in competency testing for all children regardless of race.

Model Program Provisions

The decision to implement a competency testing program raises several far-reaching questions. Should the

testing program, for example, be designed to measure only basic proficiency skills such as reading, writing, and computation, or should it go beyond this by measuring a student's ability to apply these skills in adult life-role activities such as those of a consumer, producer, and citizen? Should satisfactory performance on the test, whatever it measures, be a minimum standard to be used in conjunction with other criteria, or should it be the exclusive criterion of satisfactory performance resulting in a high school diploma regardless of age or course credits?

My opinion is that single-criterion evaluation of students, teachers, and public education as a whole sells public education short. For one thing, the state of the art is not sufficiently developed to warrant such exclusive reliance on competency-based evaluations. More important, the primary goals of public education are or should be broader than those reflected by minimal competencies, and students, teachers, and public education generally should not be evaluated exclusively by these narrow measures. Even given a strong commitment to a broader view of public education, there is always the danger that the minimal standards will become maximums rather than minimums. As in other areas such as drivers' license and bar examinations, however, the need for establishing minimum standards has been demonstrated, and safeguards can be developed to assure that broader goals are not by-passed.

These issues are subject to considerable difference of opinion, as illustrated by early exit programs that allow students, regardless of age, to graduate from high school upon passing a minimal competency test. Competency testing programs obviously involve implicit or explicit decisions about performance objectives and educational goals; and these in turn have important implications not only for curriculum and instruction but also for other school practices such as grouping and discipline.⁷ Given the crucial importance of these decisions, a model program would provide for representative community-based participation in the decision-making process.

A model program would also include the following provisions designed to assure that competency testing is fair to students. First and most important, the test should not measure what the school never taught. If, for example, the decision is to test for ability to apply basic skills in life-role situations, satisfactory performance on the test should not be a prerequisite to a high school diploma or grade promotion until the school's curriculum and instruction have been sufficiently matched with these objectives. In other words, the competency test should have curricular and instructional validity, as defined above.

Second, any functional competency test, and the curriculum on which the test is based, should reflect all aspects of our pluralistic society - or at least the extent of diversity reflected by the student population. A functional competency test given in the Miami or San Antonio schools, for example, should include a number of Hispanic skills and content items, as some cross-cultural competence is arguably necessary for successful functioning as adults in those cities.

Third, a lengthy phase-in period should be incorporated not only to allow for necessary curricular and instructional changes but also to give students adequate notice that failure to learn during this period can have severe consequences. Depending upon the program, this might mean phase-in and notice starting as early as first grade.

Fourth, a model program would provide for multiple learning, evaluation, and remedial opportunities. Students who will have difficulty passing the test should be identified by pretests and given sufficient instruction and/or remediation to help them pass the test. Provision should be made to insure that students who do not pass the test are not tracked in all courses just because remedial instruction is necessary. The program should also provide former students who failed the test the option of further remedial education and test opportunities at any later point in their lives.

Finally, since learning is a two-way street, a model program should provide for students and educators to share responsibility for performance rather than place the full burden on the students. For example, if passing a competency test is one criterion for a student's earning a high school diploma, perhaps a teacher's success in helping students pass the competency tests should be one criterion in the various forms of teacher evaluation (for example, tenure decisions). Such evaluation is feasible if students are tested at the beginning and end of each year for mitigating circumstances such as student absences and transfers. Furthermore, administrators should be responsible for making the necessary changes in school practices, and the public should be responsible for financing such changes. Developing a workable model of shared responsibility will obviously be more difficult than placing the entire burden on students; but it will also be fairer.

Conclusion

The competency testing movement in this country is gaining considerable momentum, spurred by legislators trying to be responsive to a public call for increased accountability of elementary and secondary schools. Many competency testing programs, however, are unfair to students and undercut public education generally because they do not provide for adequate notice and phase-in periods and are subject to other shortcomings discussed in this article. Educators in particular have a special interest in making sure that any competency testing programs developed in their states and school districts are equitable for all concerned.

1. *Standards for Educational and Psychological Tests*, 1974, p. 28.
2. See Thomas McDaniel, "The NTE and Teacher Certification," *Phi Delta Kappan*, November, 1977, pp. 186-88. The South Carolina situation did not involve curricular or instructional validity.

3. A test with this second purpose should also have *predictive validity*, or an acceptable substitute. Predictive validity requires a comparison of the predictions about each test-taker based on the test results with the actual functioning of the test-taker at a later time.
4. See, for example, George Madaus and Peter Airasian, "Issues in Evaluating Student Outcomes in Competency-Based Graduation Programs," *Journal of Research and Development in Education*, Spring, 1977, pp. 79-91.
5. For example, Superintendent Joseph M. Carroll reports that when Palm Beach County (Florida) schools first used the Adult Performance Level Test published by American College Testing, 42.5% of minority students failed in from one to five content areas, whereas only 8.5% of non-minority students did so. (See *Implementation of a Minimum Competency Skills Program in Palm Beach County Schools, Florida*, Joseph M. Carroll and Jerry K. Williams, Palm Beach County Schools, 3323 Belvedere Rd., West Palm Beach, FL 33406).
6. 96 S. Ct. 2040 (1976).
7. See, for example, William Spady, "Competency-Based Education: A Bandwagon in Search of a Definition," *Educational Researcher*, January, 1977, pp. 9-14; William Spady and Douglas Mitchell, "Competency-Based Education: Organizational Issues and Definitions," *Educational Researcher*, February, 1977, pp. 9-15.

THE CALIFORNIA EXPERIENCE IN MINIMUM COMPETENCY TESTING AND CBE

Glenn Davis

California's effort to deal with quality control of and influence on educational excellence must be understood within the context of our effort to address the "Serrano v. Priest" New School Finance System. You may be aware that the Supreme Court has ruled that students may not suffer unequal educational opportunity on the basis of the tax wealth of their residence. By that the Court was referring to the district within which the students resided. This was the basic constitutional issue upheld by the California Supreme Court in Serrano v. Priest. The Court has given the state legislature until 1980 to solve the problem. In the fall of 1977 the legislature enacted a bill that can best be described as substantially but not fully complying with the Serrano ruling. The Serrano issue was basically a taxation problem which could have been solved by simply sharing poverty. It had nothing to do with the quality of education in any way, shape, or form. Superintendent Wilson Riles of California was adamant about trying to address the question of quality of education and quality of life within the same context of financing for Serrano.

Our Serrano new school finance system* has three basic characteristics:

- 1) It provides a taxation structure where the revenues available to students in all districts are more equalized.
- 2) It provides a specific funding source for school program improvement. These revenues are available only to schools which meet state program planning and implementation requirements.

*Charts were used to display the New School Finance Structure

- 3) It provides for full funding of state categorical programs for the educationally disadvantaged, non- and limited-English speaking students, and handicapped individuals funded through the California Special Education Master Plan.

The bill was initially written to provide for a five-year phase-in for full funding of all three categories. The bill was enacted and signed by the Governor, providing funds for three years of the five-year phase-in plan. In other words, the bill is funded through June of 1980.

From a program point of view, the most significant provisions of the bill set aside program resources available to each student above the base funding level. These additional funds could be authorized only if the school developed a program plan to improve educational productivity within requirements established by the State Board of Education. Again these monies are specifically set aside for programs for students which are planned cooperatively by the principal, teachers, and parents at each school site. These monies are not available for other purposes and are specifically protected from some employee negotiation uses.

Programs for non- and limited-English speaking students are funded and regulated through a consolidated program application process consistent with the school site program planning requirement established for school improvement funding.

To review from a programmatic point of view, there are three funding concepts:

- 1) Base resources equally available to all students.
- 2) School Program Improvement resources available to districts and schools which choose to conduct program planning, implementation, and evaluation efforts within the requirements set by the State Board of Education and a program framework adopted by the Local Board of Education.
- 3) Categorical funding for non- and limited-English

speaking students, educationally disadvantaged students, and handicapped students eligible for funding under the California Special Education Master Plan.

Even though the School Improvement and categorical funds for category three were protected from collective bargaining for salaries and fringe benefits, we had to develop a way to protect them from other negotiated purposes such as reduction of class size. Keep in mind that the resources required to fully fund School Improvement for every elementary and secondary school in California totals \$350 million.

In California if you want to reduce class size by one, it costs \$100 million. If you want to reduce class size by five, it costs \$750 million. Now the extra monies allocated to meet the demands of the new legislation are less than \$750 million. So you see, if you used every bit of money and simply reduced class size, you would be reducing class-load by less than five students in each class. So, while it appears to be a lot of money, there is not much there comparatively speaking. But in the collective bargaining sense and in the governance sense, what we tried to create was a balance between the interests of collective bargaining in a centralized sense, (which is the interest of the teachers in terms of salaries, benefits, etc.) and the interests of teachers in a decentralized sense (that is, participation in decisions about programs at the school site level). So, at the school site level, we tried to create a relationship among parents, teachers, and principals so that the resources could be addressed directly to students' needs. This tailored the programs to students' needs and allowed the consumer to be part of the process.

One of the major issues we are facing in California is the mythology of local control. I think that as you discuss the proficiency standard issue, you will discuss it in the sense of "Should it be a single state standard?" or "Should it be applied district by district?" and "Who makes that decision?" Exactly the same question came up about legislation on School Improvement, and School Improvement is a school-by-school decision.

Historically speaking, the policy structure in California education was a directive structure from the top down. It was a prescriptive code, and local districts could do only those things specifically provided for in statute. It was a directive system. When you analyze the directive system you find (if you are honest with yourself) that it has very severe weaknesses, because power becomes enforcement of the directive. By definition, that means that whatever is established or prescribed is minimum. There is very limited power in the directive system, but it carries the mythology of power. What really exists are local prerogatives.

Our new school finance package was enacted so that districts would get monies to distribute to their schools on a phase-in basis for the purpose of improving the program. The school board, as an illustration, could allocate that money to the schools; the schools could develop a plan; they could submit the plan; the local board could approve the plan and then the school would receive the monies to implement the plan. We found that we had to help our local school people understand the power of this kind of system to change governance and administration. The first thing we had to help local school and lay persons to understand was that proficiency standards, by definition, are an absolute minimum standard. Whatever the schools addressed, they had to address it as a minimum concept. If they did not, they would be misleading themselves and the public. Very quickly we also discovered that the public does not understand the word "proficiency." Proficiency in a lay connotation suggests that you can do something well, so it was misleading to the public. The moment the proficiency standards were beginning to be discussed earnestly, the public's response was, "My God, is that all you expect?" So we had to help people understand that the proficiency standard concept was a minimum standard and that they had to establish their own standards, district by district. We suggested a two-step process: (1) adopt proficiency standards and (2) consider establishing criteria for excellence and explore how they can be used to influence program standards which far exceed minimum standards.

To illustrate, assume that one strand might be math-

ematics: when you establish the proficiency standard at the minimum level, why don't you consider establishing within your spiral curriculum of mathematics those performance expectancies which you have for your college-bound students, so that if in fact the college-bound student can meet those expectancies, he or she has a 99 percent chance of passing the college entrance examination?

By doing that, you have a way of communicating your minimum standards and your excellence standards to your community. California law does not require the second phase. The law requires only minimum standards.

Now, let me get back to the relationship between the issues of proficiency standards and school improvement. We have said to the superintendent and local boards, "Sure, have your minimum proficiency standards. But on a school-by-school basis, establish the criteria for approving that school plan and for judging the effectiveness of that school plan based on the status of the school." This represents a decentralized governance process, so you have to have decentralized management. The reason we say "use difference criteria" is the following: You may have a school that has been in a categorical program for a period of 3 or 4 years and that school ought to be farther along than the school that is receiving categorical program resources for the very first time. The differences among school populations and program status requires a recognition of those differences. In order to be fair with people beyond the minimum standard, the proficiency standard, we believe that it is fair to use different criteria, because different schools are in different postures, in a different place. Historically we have said sameness is fairness. We are having to turn that around and say difference and uniqueness is the issue beyond the minimum standard. If you are willing to begin to use some new administrative techniques and new management tools, and if you can in fact get into those schools and evaluate them, then you have a stronger power, the power of influence. You use your minimum standards first simply for compliance; then you can use program quality control methods for influencing the quality of that educational process beyond the minimum. That is the reason we have focused on the relationship between proficiency standards and School Improvement.

Now, to turn to the legal issues of minimum standards, we are concerned about two specific issues. One is the issue of testing and the other is the content and context of instruction. In testing, we are concerned that those proficiency standards being taught are being tested in the same context. The second concern is from an instructional point of view. Do those people in the classroom actually match their instructional process to the context of the proficiency standards? That requires some monitoring. Our California law also requires articulation of proficiency standards between elementary districts and high school districts. You may be aware that we have three different districts in California: a unified district, K-12; an elementary district, K-8; and the high school districts, 9-12. If the proficiency standards are not articulated, which district is responsible? That is a major legal issue. For some districts a good case can be made that they are working diligently at both developing the standards and the context of instruction which matches the standards. As long as the district can show good faith it will be quite helpful in the courts.

In California we are vulnerable on the following:

- 1) Are the tests administered uniformly in all schools within each district both in the sense of time and procedures?
- 2) Do all schools within each district have a uniform process for parent-student consultation?
- 3) Following the consultation, does the required "individual program" and classroom instructional program match the context of the proficiency standards?

Two additional legal problems can be identified where districts may leave themselves vulnerable to civil suit:

- 1) If the district does not pay attention to the uniformity of due process, one principal could give the test in Grade Four and initiate remedial instruction while another principal might give the

test during the 5th month of Grade Six, leaving inadequate time for remediation. I believe the parent can make a major case for unequal treatment and justify a ruling in favor of the child based on the equal protection clause of the constitution.

- 2) Because of the relationship between the context of the test item and the context of instruction, it is essential that the district use a classroom monitoring procedure to document that the instructional program as planned was presented in such a way as to assure that the context of instruction matched the test context of the proficiency standards. Failure to do so may lead to a civil suit charging negligence based upon the fairness principle, i.e., testing and potentially denying individual rights based upon things that were never taught.

At the state level we created one heck of a problem with the school improvement bill. The proficiency standards in California are to apply to all schools without regard to additional monies. And in California as in other states, most of our school people have been conditioned to believe that unless there are additional monies flowing to address the needs of disadvantaged kids, you are really not legally vulnerable for not addressing those needs. That is no longer true.

Maybe I can illustrate one impact that School Improvement may have. Assume that you are the Superintendent of an elementary school district. Suppose new School Improvement monies become available in your district for some of your elementary schools. Because of these new monies several things may happen to you and your district:

- 1) Many of your school principals will get far more information about proficiency standard issues as well as other state requirements because of their orientation about "School Improvement" requirements.
- 2) These principals will get staff training from state staff who provide extensive training to those school staffs developing new "School Improvement" programs.

These principals are very attentive because of the focus on their school and they are anxious to get on with it.

- 3) Other principals who are identified to enter the "School Improvement" program two to three years in the future may be less vigilant about all requirements including the proficiency standard requirements.

If this occurs and if the district suffers from reasonably uniform administrative requirements, even if accidentally, I believe the local superintendent and the local board members are vulnerable to civil suit on the grounds of negligence, maybe even systematic managerial discrimination. If proven, depending on the grounds, a court ruling might include punitive damages.

These circumstances and a resultant case can be far more profound with regard to the non- and limited-English speaking students.

For example, because of the nature of the additional compensatory or school improvement monies you receive, you may meet the compensatory funding requirements by illustrating how you are dealing with the non- and limited-English speaking youngsters in your school. Once the youngster is identified, for instance, at Grade Four as a non- or limited-English speaking youngster, you give the test at Grade Five. The youngster does not meet the proficiency standards. You go ahead and set up an individual instructional program including instruction in a language the youngster can understand. Now, whether or not the youngster passes the proficiency at Grade Six is not the issue. The issue is that you have done everything reasonable to help the youngster. But, in another case, let us say that you were fully aware in Grade Four that the youngster was limited- or non-English speaking, but you did not have an individual program for that youngster. You tested him at Grade Five, but you still did not have an individual program to meet the state law for proficiency. All of a sudden the student is in sixth grade and none of the mandates of Law have been met. Because this school didn't receive state categorical

funds, it didn't develop, submit, or have approved a school plan. I submit to you that, not only the principal, but board members, and the superintendent are personally liable for damages on the basis of unequal educational opportunity and all of the impacts related thereto. It is my judgment that proficiency is a train that is rolling very fast and it is my judgment that we do not have the "cop-outs" that we used to have. In the Peter Doe suit in San Francisco for educational malpractice, the court pointed out that, in an historical sense, mandatory education was a mass issue not an individual person's right. No longer is this true in my judgment. Now not only do we have to lay out minimum standards for education, but we also have to be able to assure the courts that the youngster has been exposed to due process to be able to acquire the educational proficiencies. With both Title VI and Lau, the federal government is saying that indeed this type of education is an individual right. I dare say California will probably be the first state to go through one of these lawsuits, which will clearly establish that vulnerability is not as vague as it used to be. I submit again that the reason that is true in California is because of the specifics in the law regarding how school people will treat the child. In some areas I understand that the onus is solely upon the student, but in California that is not true. The onus is upon the system to demonstrate that it did everything reasonable to help the student achieve proficiency. If it can do that, I think a school district can successfully defend itself against malpractice. But if it cannot, I think the school district is extremely vulnerable to findings of neglect if not malpractice.

FLORIDA'S PROGRAM IN MINIMUM COMPETENCY TESTING

Ken Loewe

I am happy to be participating with you in these discussions on this very important topic of Competency Based Education.

Florida has been deeply involved in educational accountability and minimum competency testing. I would like to describe what Florida has been doing and is doing now, and how it evolved into what it is today. Those of you whose competency based testing program is still in the formative stages of development may be interested in some of the changes we have made. I will be discussing how the Florida Department of Education responded to mandates and how the program was implemented. I will also talk about some of the outcomes or consequences of our program in Florida, about some things that happened which surprised us.

The most controversial part of the program, the part which received the most interest inside, as well as outside the state, is the functional literacy test. This year the functional literacy test is part of the graduation requirement for all juniors. They must pass it by the time they finish senior year to get a diploma. If they don't pass, they will receive a certificate of attendance only.

The Florida program that we have now began a number of years ago. Some of the forerunners appeared in 1968. In that year there was a mandate by the legislature to the Commissioner of Education to focus on constructive educational change. It was a vague and broad mandate, but it was a request to look at new mechanisms, new ways to improve education in Florida. The Commissioner of Education presented a list of principles of education to the State Board of Education, and they approved the list. Two of these principles have a direct bearing on Florida's current competency assessment program. One principle was that a set of educational objectives for the State of Florida should be established. The other principle was that there should be a minimum standard of performance for these objectives. The adoption of these

resulted in schools in Florida focusing on behavioral outcomes. I can relate to that personally. I was in a classroom at that time, teaching science in junior high. Personnel from the district office came out and used a filmstrip to teach us how to write behavioral objectives--and how to measure the outcome of our teaching efforts. You may have gone through something similar in your state. We were focusing then on behavioral objectives and trying to describe our goals in behavioral terms, and in a way that we could measure. For the next few years these objectives were developed by schools and school districts. There was a contract for universities and others to collect these objectives from the districts, to catalog them, and to codify them. This gave us a bookshelf full of objectives, very specific objectives, about what could be taught in physical education or home economics, or math, or any other academic subject.

In 1971 the next step was the first Educational Accountability Act, which had as its purpose to test for the attainment of educational objectives. These were some of the same objectives that we had been talking about. The very first time we had an assessment, we tried to measure about 175 objectives or more per grade level. That is, a lot of measurement, and of course it could not be accomplished with any one student without monopolizing a major part of the student's school life. So, instead, we did multiple matrix sampling. We sampled items and we sampled students, and recorded the results as a public report card. We did this on a sample that was only representative of the district and the state. (Since our school district boundaries are the same as our county boundaries, our district tend to be geographically larger than districts in other states.)

In 1974 another Educational Accountability Act was amended. Its purpose was to identify the primary objectives for measurement and to identify those that were most important. We began by testing second and fourth grades, and later moved to include third and sixth grades. We moved to sample testing, but we still issued something like a public report card on the student data, school data, district data and statewide data, based on the objectives. We tested every student so we could report on every student. Still, there were no direct implications for any

particular student.

The 1976 regular session of the legislature passed another Educational Accountability Act. I believe this to be a rather comprehensive educational act. Some of the provisions of the act are as follows: There was an early exit program. Students could exit the high school program earlier than the usual age of 16 if they could demonstrate proficiency on a test. We implemented this and are now allowing students to exit the high school program through demonstrating proficiency on the General Educational Development exam.

Another provision of the 1976 Educational Accountability Act was that subject area exams were to be developed for all subjects that are part of the school curriculum and part of the graduation requirements. It is somewhat like the CLEP program, the College Level Examination Program where you can receive credit for college courses by demonstrating proficiency in the course rather than studying through the course and taking a final. We have a program like the CLEP program, but at the secondary level.

The 1976 act specified different testing at Grades Three, Five, Eight and 11. It specified two different kinds of tests: a basic skills test, which is synonymous to a school skills test, and a functional literacy test, which is more like a life skills test. The functional literacy test is only administered at Grade 11; the basic skills test is administered at all four of those grade levels--three, five, eight and 11. Another important feature of the 1976 Accountability Act is that it specified consequences of this testing program. The basic skills portion was necessary for promotion from grade to grade. If the student did not pass all of the major objectives on the basic skills test at any grade, the district was to remediate those deficiencies and certify that the student did then have the skills. The functional literacy test was a necessary prerequisite for a diploma. If the student did not pass the test, he was given remedial instruction by the district and took the test again. If the student did not pass the test after the third or fourth time, he was eligible only for a certificate of attendance. It is very

clear that the legislature did not intend for this certificate to be equivalent to a diploma. It was only to certify that the student had attended school for 12 or 13 years.

Let me explain further the difference between the basic skills assessment and the functional literacy test. Functional literacy is only applied to Grade 11 and subsequent years for those who fail to pass the first time; the basic skills test is administered to Grades Three, Five, Eight, and 11. The basic skills test is a straightforward test that you might use as an achievement test or in any kind of a statewide assessment program; whereas, the functional literacy test applies these basic skills to realistic situations, situations that may be faced in life. The consequences are very different. With the basic skills test, the district is responsible for remediation and certification; with the functional literacy test, the student must pass the state test. The district must remediate, and the state is the only agency which can certify successful completion.

The last aspect of the 1976 Accountability Act is that the Commissioner is to identify deficient school programs--those school programs which are performing inadequately compared to other school programs in the state. After identification, the Commissioner is to try to identify the causes of those deficiencies and to cure those ills. This shows even in the 1976 act itself that there was attention given to doing something about the deficiencies, not just identifying them and making some hurdle that the student could not go over.

Before the 1976 act with its provisions for retention was actually implemented in the classroom, another funding act was passed. This is the Compensatory Education Act of 1977 which provides funds for each district based on its demonstrated need in the skills that were measured, whether it be the basic skills or the functional literacy test. The first year \$10 million was allocated to this program. This is expected to increase by about 250 percent in the next legislative session. These monies are allocated on need. The only provision for their receipt is that the funds be applied fairly and uniformly. That is, all students

with similar deficiencies must be eligible for programs funded under this act. The funds must be applied to the learning situation, and cannot be used for overhead or administrative expenses.

To recap what I have said, we started out in Florida by measuring many skills, and we then narrowed that down to looking at essential skills or the most important skills, the skills that are necessary to do the kind of tasks that are required at the next grade level. We have gone on to examine the skills that are important, or critical, in real life. We had at one time simply advertised or reported the results as a kind of public report card on districts and the state, and now there are direct consequences of this testing program for pupil promotion and graduation.

I would like to clarify that the goal of the Florida program is to assure that all students learn identified essential skills. These are skills that educators have validated as important. Classroom teachers and lay people have evaluated these skills. Our goal is not to withhold something, or to retain someone in the same grade level. In dealing with the legislation, we identified objectives, and we did not do this in a vacuum. We started with the core of objectives that had been narrowed down from the work of many teachers, who spent many hours writing objectives. We kept recirculating these objectives among educators, curriculum experts, and lay citizens to verify that they were the most important objectives. Those studying the objectives were also given the opportunity to suggest changes after we had gone through this process for quite some time. We then advertised these objectives as the state objectives or the state standards. Of course there was not complete and absolute uniformity. We then chose those objectives, those skills, that had the most agreement. They are very basic skills, skills that I think all of us agree must be in the school curriculum if any cognitive development role is accomplished in the school program. We developed an amplification of these objectives. We call that amplification "item specification." It provides guidance in writing test items and puts limitations on the kinds of questions we ask. We have developed test items for each of these objectives.

We measure math, reading and writing competency. We measure and report on the domain level, math, and we report at a general or broad objective level, which we call a standard. For example, a standard in math could be "computing with whole numbers." We also report at a finer level, which we call the skill level, which is a more narrow objective under this broader standard. The standard I just read was "compute with whole numbers." Two skills for the third grade under that standard could be:

- (1) add two digit whole numbers without regrouping;
and
- (2) subtract two digit whole numbers without regrouping.

These would be two skills that measure that standard in that domain. Then we have a series of items measuring each of the skills, with four or five items under each of the skills. We report at the student level, classroom level, school district level, and state level. We report at these levels for each foil, each item, each skill, and each standard.

I am now going to describe some of the anticipated and some unanticipated results of Florida's Competency Testing for Graduation (functional literacy testing). There was a high failure rate. We expected a fairly high failure rate, but it was higher than expected. The state average failure rate was 36 percent. In the highest scoring district, 25 percent of the students failed. In the lowest scoring district, 70 percent failed. The failure rate was disproportionately higher for minorities than for whites.

The failure rate, and the disproportionate failure rate, have surfaced rumors of threatened law suits over diplomas not granted to students who fail. This is only rumor at this time, however. There are also rumors of legislation to be introduced which would delay the implementation of the law for one or more additional years. The popular sentiment among the citizens seems to be that we should not change the implementation time.

We did not expect the amount of support the functional literacy test would receive in Florida. The news media

were quite supportive, and so were parents and even many students. School officials commented on an improvement in student attitude and a more positive learning situation for students. This improved attitude was witnessed before and during the testing for all the students, and after testing for those who failed a portion of the test. Special education leaders were concerned about this testing program, and the requirement that special education students needed to pass the test in order to graduate.

There are a number of policy implications that have surfaced. Some of these are as follows:

1. Dealing with exceptional students. There is interest in making special provisions for special education students. One possibility is to have special education standards and a special diploma for those who pass those special education standards.
2. Providing help for those who fail. The legislature has already moved toward helping students who failed by providing a special compensatory education fund to identify and label students as deficient, and doing nothing to correct the deficiency, is, in my opinion, immoral and unethical.
3. Treating causes rather than symptoms. We need to do the research necessary to prevent these deficiencies, rather than trying to overcome them after the problems become great.

THE CONSUMER'S VIEW OF EDUCATION: LEGISLATIVE CONCERNS FOR EDUCATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Jack Faxon

It's wonderful to be here with you and share the outburst of enthusiasm that is concomitant with suddenly rediscovering that the wheel is round. In the educational world we frequently rediscover those things that we have all believed in for many years. We then can take note of the fact that history does have a tendency to repeat itself.

Lately, the new product we are touting is that which deals with Competency Based Education. It was as if somehow all those who have labored so long in the vineyards of education and have suffered through those many years in the classroom have never been concerned with the competency of students. It was as if suddenly we had discovered the Rosetta stone: the key that unlocks the mysteries to the problems that plague society. How can this happen? How can an old product be resold in such a fabulous new form?

There are a number of systems by which we in this society sell the old. You all know how old cars are made to look new: they are given a new paint job, and the interior is cleaned and polished. Of course, people will buy the car, even though it may not take them very far, because it gives them the sensation of a new car.

Similarly, the ultimate in sensation has been tried in Toronto, where they are encouraging people to utilize air transportation to travel to wonderfully exotic places in America, like California, by simulating the experience of an airplane, complete with cocktails, in-flight movies, and slight air turbulences. The prospective travelers spend four hours, as though they had traveled to San Francisco, but in fact they do not move. This is the ultimate educational trip of all times--to spend four hours in a simulated experience and in reality experience no change.

Now, to repeat my original question: Why this sudden interest in Competency Based Education? One of the simple reasons, of course, might be that everyone has become very bored with the issue of educational finance. It had reached the point where people were tired of talking about educational finance, and as they grew more tired the reports on educational finance multiplied in the nation-wide proliferation of documents on the studies of the refinancing of public education.

The school librarians were saying they were bored with the issue of school finance because nobody was looking at their materials on the subject. The publishers were always glad to reproduce the tables on school finance, and the tables always had to be updated. But one of the main reasons the issue faded was that you couldn't sell school financing any more because it had already been studied to death. But because of the circular pattern of things, the issue will never die but will revive itself, which is what has happened with Competency Based Education. CBE is a revival of something old, but it is in a new form.

Another reason why CBE has emerged as an issue is because the federal government has money to spend, and people always like to find ways to spend federal dollars. If the federal government were to be very clear about how to spend federal dollars in ways that would be most purposeful to the achievement of educational results in accord with what the public wants, then it would be too simple. To do anything directly on the federal level is much too simple. You must do things indirectly, and indirectly means that first we have to fund studies to fund programs, so that people can study the studies of the programs, and then study the programs of the studies.

Additionally, when school enrollment was dropping, we had a great abundance of professional educators who needed jobs. So we have devised a means of a guaranteed minimum annual wage for professional educators by re-discovering "Competency Based Education." Because Competency Based Education is such an exciting new thing,

the Education Commission of the States has picked up CBE as another one of their new "babies." In their bulletin they headline workshops on CBE: "Regional Minimal Competency Work Shops Begin in Late September." Other headlines tell you: "More than 70 Legislative Bills Introduced in 1977."

Seventy legislative bills sounds exciting. Already you begin to feel you should go out and introduce your own bill. Legislators begin to see that this is what the public wants. But again I feel this has all been devised by the education community to secure employment for fellow educators.

Now, to quote an authoritative definition, Competency Based Education is a "data-based, adaptive, performance-oriented set of integrated processes that facilitate, measure, record, and certify within the context of flexible time parameters that demonstration of known, explicitly stated, and agreed-upon learning outcomes that reflect successful functioning in life roles." This is the kind of jargon that makes an old idea sound new. Restaurants have done this for years. Once the menu said simply "duck" and then it was "orange duck" and then it became "canard a l'orange." You know they can take the same recipe and give it a different name and people try it.

Now we note that people are often saying they are concerned because children cannot read. Rudolph Lesh over 20 years ago was talking about the same thing: "why Johnny can't read." Every few years we go through a new phase. When the Russians launched Sputnik in 1957, everybody said we have to emphasize science. Similarly, when we found out that children were learning a second language in other countries, we decided we had to emphasize second languages. Then we decided there needed to be programs to address the problems of the underprivileged youth of the cities, to give them the opportunity to secure the educational objectives that were already obtained by the middle class youth.

Whether a new program is aimed at inner-city youth or increased reading ability, its beginning is always widely heralded. But, conversely, the end of these programs is never announced. In my younger days as a legislator, I would say, "I want to know what programs you have done away with." I was told that all educational programs were successful. Results had been compiled—some of the most irrelevant data the world has ever known—by educational departments to testify to the achievements of the average boy at the age of seven in any school district of that state. In the State of Michigan, we have compiled data of retrievable educational information that makes a data bank on anybody's personal income look insignificant. We keep teachers busy day after day compiling statistics and turning in reports so that we can have information, because somewhere in some distant future there will be a policy-maker who will want to know some item of information about the elementary schools, and we have to be able to give that policy maker an answer.

Now, we also have the problem of what the public thinks. Educators want to think that the great concern on the part of the public is that their children cannot read. Of course, that is very oversimplified. We have known for years that people are not reading as much because they are watching television. Now, we have known that is going to have an impact on reading because we do not have as literate a society as before. I occasionally listen to the dialogue that goes on on television, and I am amazed at how horrible it is, how dull it is, and how ungrammatical it is. We have created "ungrammar" as the popular form of expression.

Now, the public may or may not be concerned about this, but the public is very much concerned about how children respect adults in school, how children relate to their neighbors on the street. In fact, if children had given the proper respect to their peers, their elders, and their teachers, the public in all probability would have never become concerned with education. As many principals have long known, their chief objective has been to avoid trouble and keep things quiet.

If the kids kept quiet, everybody was happy. The public was probably more concerned with teaching children citizenship than with teaching them grammar.

In Competency Based Education we deal with a very specific type of skill development. Most of the public generally thinks that when we talk about CBE we are talking about basic skills, as if there were something magical in the achievement score on a test. This preoccupation, of course, redirects interest to a side issue, which in the final analysis will turn out to be quite irrelevant.

There is a myth that school can do everything and that teachers can reshape children in their own image, as man was created in the image of the Lord. According to the myth, children are very docile, willing, submissive, moldable persons who, when exposed to the teacher and the creative enterprise of the educational establishment, are somehow molded as in that popular play of the 1940's, "The Corn is Green." It is always held that the success person is one who is able to reshape, redirect, and reinstitute those positive values that are so basic to the successful performance of adult societal roles. This is what a teacher does. But in this whole process of Competency Based Education, we have completely forgotten the teacher.

Now, according to Commissioner Boyer, the Office of Education has been told that a major reason for its lack of success with innovations is quite simple. Classroom teachers were not involved in the planning: they did not understand what was expected of them, and they were not provided with proper inservice preparation. That is a conclusion that they slip in very quietly: lack of success with innovation. This society is spending all this money to make a big difference, and in education we are not better off today than we were 10 years ago. Of course, when we are not successful we must spend more money to evaluate our efforts. We have created a whole generation of people whose jobs are to evaluate. So, after all of this they have found out that the problem apparently was the lack of teacher involvement--the teacher was not included in the planning process.

Of course, Competency Based Education is not a movement that emanates from teacher concerns. As you well know teachers have been the last people to be heard from. Likewise, teachers are the first to complain because those people who are on the production end of things are tired of program after program that promises no change but only offers them an additional way to tell them what they already know. After all, what have teachers been doing for years? In my own state, the state superintendent of schools has said that "the test program implemented in '78-79 would provide the Detroit public schools' teaching and guidance staff with necessary information on a pupil's academic progress." This of course suggests that the grading program has no relationship to progress. We do not believe the grades anymore. We have to have objective measurements.

The discovery of Competency Based Education is not something, as I said, that is new this year. Over 35 years ago we had developed a general educational development test, which was a competency test for older youth and adults so that they would receive a high school equivalency degree. You recall that, those of you who are of my generation. So we have had that test around for a long time. So why are they making something new here?

Michigan, by the way, is considered one of the leading states in CBE because back in 1969 I said we should have accountability in education. I did not know when I said it that people were going to interpret it to mean that we should start hiring professionals at the state level to arrange for the contractual relationship with other professionals at other levels to engage in the process of deciphering and disseminating an examination that will be used to validate subsequent examinations against the results of each subsequent examination, against which it will be measured to determine whether or not the first examination was as valid as the fifth examination after you have already determined the validity of the first three examinations!

In Michigan we began with a staff of three professionals. Then in 1970 we went to a staff of five and

a half. Then in '72 we added another professional, and then in 1973 three more were added. So now we have expanded from three to 13. Of course, that is nothing compared to where they want to go. In Michigan we are doing a fairly good job, according to the superintendent, because that is the only kind of job you will hear the superintendent tell us we have done.

On the national level there are a lot of people in Washington who are supposedly interested in Competency Based Education. Of course, Congress is not going to pass laws about Minimum Competency Based Education, because the next thing you know, someone will say that Congressmen ought to take the test and that would be outrageous. I have always believed the principle that we as adults make kids do what we do not want to do ourselves. We can make the kids balance a checkbook; we do not have to balance our own. Some of the kids may not ever have a checkbook in their lives, but we still want them to learn how to balance one. We expect kids to do a lot because kids do not have a voice in the educational process.

Years ago I was a teacher too, and I was involved in schools that were a part of experimental programs. In order to receive funds for any program, you have to hire a person to run the program. Likewise, none of the money can be used to enhance existing programs to which the school is currently committed. What this means is that here I was in my classroom with a blackboard that was so worn down that you could not write on it with a piece of chalk. All I ever said was, "All I'd like would be a new blackboard." But you can't take any of the money and buy a blackboard with it. You can spend the money, but you cannot put it onto the regular teaching structure of the school, because money for those improvements comes out of another program, and you cannot ask the program.

Another headline I would like to share with you is something our superintendent said: "Proficiency tests may end assembly line education." That has got to be the second biggest lie I have seen put before the

public next to Joseph Goebbels. It will do the opposite. It will begin assembly line education.

We think that the process of education ought to be fundamental to what we spend our dollars on. But Congress wants to have a role in doing things of this kind. Education always belonged to the states, but Congress is not satisfied in the simple way of doing things, which would say, "We want to give out \$2 billion or \$3 billion. We will divide it up and give it to the states where the educational responsibility is identified and let them make one change--one change only. We will let them reduce the class size in every state by 20%."

Now, the problem with anything as simple as reduction of class size is that it does not require a lot of professionals to supervise the distribution of the money and to require the paper feedback that goes with the distribution. That feedback helps professionals to be certain that the distribution is in accordance with the rules and regulations promulgated by the respective department after determining the objective of the particular act that was passed by the Congress. So, if you do not have those professionals built into the process, you cannot have a salable program. You have to prove that you are going to hire X number of professionals to give out so much money.

I have had that experience in a number of other areas. It was once a joke with another department. In order for us to give out \$50,000 we were going to have to hire for \$100,000 the professionals to evaluate the programs that would be necessary for the distribution of the \$50,000. Now, that has to make you think for a minute. What are we paying our money for? If we are paying money for the people to do all this evaluating, who is benefiting? What difference is it going to make to the kids? It is the same with Competency Based Education.

First of all, CBE is very sophisticated. A lot of people will be required to take workshops. Teachers

and educators are going to have to study testing all over again, and they are going to have to study statistics all over again. They may not know statistics or testing, but at least they will have the chance to study them under the auspices of grants. Also, CBE is too sophisticated for parents to understand. All the parents are saying is, "We want the kids to behave. We want the kids to know something when they finish school." But that is not the way Competency Based Education is going to work.

First of all, it is going to be consumed by the bureaucracy. After about 5 years--after the bureaucracy mulches CBE up, regurgitates it, chews up the cud all over again--then the educational community will come up with the results: it does not work. Now, somewhere I read something that said educators pretty well know what is going to happen with CBE now and five years from now. But according to this way of thinking, it is all right, because it is a good learning experience to go through the process of rediscovering what you know. So the educators all go back to school again, so that they can learn what they know all over again, but at least we are learning something. I would not be here in New Orleans if Competency Based Education were not an issue.

A few weeks ago I attended a retirement party for a woman who had been with the Department of Education for 40 years. This woman was presented with a copy of the 1859 School Laws of Michigan. This book had illustrations of old schools and instructions on how to build schools. The book also had a message from the superintendent of public instruction. And in that message he said that you can bring a horse to water but you can't make him drink. You can tell all the children that they have to go to school, but that does not mean they are going to learn anything. He said that all learning must begin with the child's wanting to learn, the child's motivation: the child is the key to the process. He was talking to the teachers in 1859.

The teachers have to understand that the key factor in the individual's performance in school is the child's motivation. If the teacher can go in there and motivate that child, that child can and will learn. That is what we ought to be concentrating on.

Recently I read an article that suggests that Competency Based Education is flawed in its understanding of the essential characteristics of school operations and therefore will not generally be effectively implemented because CBE does not relate to how the schools are organized. The reasons given for this were: (1) even the most enthusiastic advocates of Competency Based Education programs make no claim to any fantastic new techniques for improving teaching or learning-- Competency Based Education programs serve to reorganize school activities, not to alter the fundamental processes of teaching and learning; and (2) for students, the actual mobilization of those skills and energies required for more effective pursuit of learning goals depends largely on whether individual students voluntarily adopt for themselves the instructional goals to be achieved. They are saying the same thing that was said in 1859 by the superintendent.

This current article goes on to say, "...as instructional opportunities are expanded to support student engagement in achievement of life-role based competency goals, the school's ability to specify the criteria for competency demonstration and certification becomes increasingly difficult." All that means is that as the child begins to be self-motivated and starts learning the things that he wants to learn for his life goals, it becomes more and more difficult to standardize his learning into a specific set of learning objectives. So what have we accomplished?

The article continues, "One obvious inference to be drawn from this particular issue is that the entire basis of reporting student progress and reporting to parents will need to change." Maybe that is a part of the problem. We have given parents reports without giving them an honest accounting of what those reports mean.

When I was a teacher, I was not considered an easy teacher because I had standards even though I did not have competency based examinations. I remember having a boy in the 11th grade who could not do anything very well. But he came to class, which was a very important thing to do because attendance is a factor, and he was not impolite. That was the second very important thing to do. He did one other thing--he would turn in something whenever a homework assignment was due, but all he would turn in was something he would copy out of a book. He had done three very valid measurements for student performance: he attended school, he was polite, and he turned in copied work. But when it came time to evaluate him, all I could do was give him a very low grade.

The parents came up to the school. I remember sitting in the principal's office. The principal opened up the boy's general performance record and showed me that his language skills tested out between the 3rd and 4th grade level. The parents said their boy had never received less than a "B" grade for the two years he had been in high school. Now he comes in to Mr. Faxon's class and gets low marks, so obviously something has to be wrong with Mr. Faxon.

I thought the assistant principal handled it very gently. She suggested that Mr. Faxon had very legitimate standards and expectations. She went on to suggest that although the boy apparently was doing his best, it was important neither to discourage him nor to lead him to believe that his past performance necessarily reflected the quality of his work. In saying this, she also did not mean to diminish his former teachers' evaluations.

This was a key issue to me, for I felt it was true that many of my teaching colleagues did not uphold any standard that I could understand beyond that of attendance and politeness. I said, "We ought to have some standards," and everyone else said, "Don't be silly." So I went ahead and did what I thought was right, which was to fail half my students.

The first thing I knew, the supervisor came to see me. He said, "Do you know, Mr. Faxon, that you have failed more students here in your class than the combined total of all other social studies teachers in the city?"

I said, "That is a disgrace to the other teachers. Do you mean to say that the other teachers have passed all these students and I am the only one who is looking at these people and saying they can't perform?" Of course, there was no working with me. I was a bit of an obstreperous teacher, I must confess. I just thought it was important to have standards.

When we take a look at our kids today, in the face of Competency Based Education, we find that more children are alienated than ever before. We find statistically higher rates of suicide among teenagers than ever before. We find higher rates of drug use than ever before. We find an alarming increase in teenage pregnancy, well over anything we have ever known before. And what is our response? Competency Based Education? The child should take a test and find out how he or she performs relative to any fictional child in that state.

In Michigan we have a program where we do not measure children: we measure the school. We measure the school districts. And what do we do it for? Because the Michigan Test is the Michigan Test, and in 10 years we are going to have a compilation of results that will show what the Michigan Test could produce in 10 years. And what will we have achieved if at the end of 10 years children's performance on the Michigan Competency Based Reading Examination shows that they are reading at the statistical level that was validated for the 7th grade level? Will that address itself to suicides, drugs or pregnancy? Will it change the performance of children in the schools? What will it have achieved?

I am not one to denigrate any sense of innovation in education because I have been a supporter of much of what we have been promoting. Some things I think are

very important. I happen to believe that the art program is an important part of education and, when that is cut back, there is a loss in the child's self-concept because children can feel good by working in the arts. I have promoted in Michigan the idea that early elementary education is where the greatest emphasis ought to be placed, in spite of the fact that education in general has held out the highest standards for those who teach in the secondary level. And I have held out that in a time of declining enrollment, which we are experiencing to a great extent in Michigan, we have a unique opportunity to place resources in the hands of the schools, where they can once and for all begin to address themselves to the problems that they have recognized for years: the need for greater individualization and the need for greater counseling and teacher-pupil involvement.

Our schools are being closed because we have lost in 10 years over 50,000 children in the Detroit schools. That is like wiping out the whole city of Grand Rapids. In some of the suburban areas only half the schools are now being used, so we have more personnel per pupil than we have ever had before. So here we have a chance to do something that I think educators would agree is valid.

I have found that there is no such thing as putting educators out of business. How I hope that we can direct their energies into those areas that will begin to produce some of those needed changes we all can agree will, in the long run, create healthier conditions in our society.

BEYOND MINIMUM COMPETENCY TESTING: CBE AS AN EDUCATIONAL REFORM PROCESS

Paul Cawein

I have been asked to discuss competency based education as an educational reform movement. Since CBE means a variety of things these days, and educational reform has even more diverse interpretations, let me begin by indicating that the National Institute of Education is not an advocate of CBE in any of its forms. Our primary mandate in the area of educational reform is to aid the states in improving educational opportunities for all Americans.

The particular unit with which I am associated at NIE, the Productivity Division, has been charged with expanding understanding of ways to improve the relationship between the rapidly rising costs of education and its outcomes, the benefits gained by students and society in general. Our exploration of productivity research and education resulted in the view that input-output analysis (the primary approach to work on productivity of education to date) had been of relatively little value to education. This was because we had such little understanding of the learning environments of schools and classrooms, the so-called "black box" of economic analysis, where the resource inputs of the educational process produce as outputs the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development of students. For a portion of our research plan, therefore, we decided to look for opportunities to study schools where significant variations in the structure of the learning environment were occurring. This would improve the understanding of what might be called the "technology of schooling." Several years ago representatives of the State of Oregon approached us and asked assistance in understanding the impact of their efforts to introduce competency based education in their schools. We were interested in the question, because their efforts in introducing CBE appeared likely to produce some significant changes in learning environments.

We were aware, of course, of some of the background of the concept of CBE, particularly at the post-secondary level, where it was sometimes called competency based cur-

riculum, or as at Florida State, the "curriculum of attainments." At a 1974 Atlanta conference of post-secondary institutions interested in CBE, Ralph Tyler suggested that CBE was an attempt to focus on the perennial problems of education: what is to be taught in the limited time we have with students, and how do we relate the learning experiences that take place in schools with the practices of the real world? When schools themselves fail to resolve these problems, society finds other solutions. The Merrel Act of 1865 was in part a political reaction to the failure of the Ivy League colleges of the East to meet the real education needs of the agrarian-industrial orientations of the South and West.

There are many critics of the orientation of contemporary American schools. In his book, The Age of Discontinuity, Peter Drucker suggests that, since their origin in the Middle Ages as training centers for scribes, schools have evolved an institutional perspective which is largely ingrown. We justify much of our elementary curriculum on its role in preparing students for high school, where in turn the orientation is largely preparation for college. College in turn focuses on preparation for graduate school; and the highest reward is the PhD which is primarily useful as a credential for lifelong tenure in the cloisters of academia. Additionally, most of our tests are validated on their success in predicting success at higher levels of education, and little effort has been made to correlate what we teach in schools with the full dimension of life roles assumed by our students.

Vocational education at the secondary level is the major exception. I recall the director of vocational high schools in the District of Columbia Public Schools describing how he had taught his plumbing classes. He did an analysis of the skills and knowledge required to perform as a plumber, designed individualized, sequential learning packets for students, and permitted students to move ahead at their own pace. Each year he surveyed his graduates to assess their performance on the job, and refined his training program accordingly. Several of the states represented at this symposium are associated with the V-Techs Program which has been using task analysis to develop outcomes criteria for the full range of vocational programs.

At the post-secondary level, there has been increasing interest in this pattern of task analysis. It is my understanding that many, if not most, pharmacy programs around the country are now built on competency based education. The University of Minnesota is running through several interim steps in building and designing its program. Many nursing programs are now designed in that fashion. I was involved with some work with the Antioch Law School, a school in Washington, D.C. which is attempting to build for lawyers a competency based educational program. They are responding to a variety of concerns including questions raised by Chief Justice Burger regarding the preparation and performance of the radically expanding number of American lawyers. As you know, the traditional pattern of training a lawyer was to read for the law, which meant studying the law books. Recognizing that this was somewhat removed from reality, the Harvard Law School developed a case study method some 25 years ago. In this method students were involved in reading simulated cases and analyzing what was happening. That pattern of instruction is now common in all law schools. Defining the true competencies of a lawyer requires a more discreet analysis of skills. One of the competency areas explored by the Antioch Law School is associated with successful interviewing of a client, something you do not get by reading a law book or even from a simulated case. These skills include dialoguing with a person in trouble, asking the right questions, and structuring that dialogue so that you identify the crux of the real need, and then helping the client to better analyze all options. They have attempted to build a course of study that trains future lawyers to develop these skills. It is their judgment, and the judgment of many, that there are many lawyers who have never developed such skills.

Analyzing and defining the competencies required for success becomes much more difficult when one moves away from a vocational or professional area to the liberal arts. Yet some undergraduate liberal arts institutions over the past five or six years have been attempting to introduce competency based education. One of the most famous of these is Alverno College in Milwaukee. It is a small Roman Catholic girls' school. They were very concerned about the lack of relationship between the goal statements at the

front of their catalogue and the course statements at the back. On the front page, they were talking about problem-solving skills, communication skills, and social skills, and in the back pages they listed History 101 and Geography 202. The correlation between the goals on the front page and the courses listed in the back pages did not seem very clear. They began to ask, "Can we identify more clearly what the goals really mean and restructure what we do to students in the black box we call Alverno College? We want to be able to have confidence that we are meeting our goals. We want some way of assessing our graduates to ascertain that what we have done has been focused on those goals which we put on the front of our college catalog."

They asked all the instructors to rethink what they were doing, and they came up with some different constructs like "analytical capabilities" and "problem solving abilities." They even anticipated doing away with their traditional Departments of History and English and coming up with a Department of Communications and a Department of Problem Solving. They set up coordinating committees to draw together specialists from history and from science to think about how to help students develop such things as critical thinking and problem solving skills. They did ask that instructors analyze what they were doing in their classes toward those ends, and required that all courses be reviewed by the coordinating committees. As a result, they made significant changes in what they were doing in their classes.

One of the major effects was to reduce the orientation on content learning. We know that most of what a student learns in terms of knowledge, the kind of stuff that we test with paper and pencil, is forgotten within two years. Fifty percent is forgotten after the end of the first year. Yet that is what most university courses seem to be focused upon; and course testing follows suit. At Alverno College they attempted to identify common skills that undergird science or communications. They did not ultimately succeed in doing away with the subject matter departments of course; that would be just a little too threatening. How can you say to faculty members who have spent considerable time training to get PhD's in history that they should now become disas-

sociated from that discipline and somehow be associated with a discipline called critical thinking? Why critical thinking does not even have a national association! Nevertheless, at Alverno they made an effort to make significant changes in what is going on in their college for students.

Therefore, when Oregon educators came to us and said they wanted to introduce competency based education in their schools, we looked at what they were doing. The regulations for establishing competency based education in Oregon came out of the State Board of Education and not out of the State Legislature, and included two critical elements. One was the establishment of high school graduation requirements on the basis of competencies. Every school district in Oregon was to set up the minimal requirements for a high school diploma. The way the requirements were structured was left to local option; however, there were certain guidelines to be dealt with. While minimal requirements had to include basic skills, they were also to be based on analysis of life role competencies: the role of a consumer, the role of a citizen, the role of a lifelong learner, the role of a producer. In school districts throughout the state, teachers and parents got together and tried to identify these competencies. They came up with remarkably different sets. Some school district listed 30 competencies, some 300. And these were only minimal competencies.

I have already alluded to how competencies have been defined in the professional/vocational area through task analysis of performance requirements in work settings, and of the difficulties encountered by post-secondary liberal arts institutions in determining what competencies they should establish. This is a problem which public schools must consider very carefully, and which we may not be able to resolve in the near future. Ben Bloom in his taxonomies of educational objectives, which all of us have wrestled with at some point or other, develops a hierarchy from the learning of facts and knowledge to higher levels of synthesis and analysis. He also talks about effective competencies which involve valuing, the adoption of goals and structuring one's own behavior. These are issues which

have to be dealt with if we are talking about the performance of individuals outside the school.

John Raven, a Scotch researcher, has written a book that he discusses in an article in "Teacher's College Record" in May, 1977. In the article, Raven suggests that people in Scotland and England have defined the most critical outputs of education as initiative, the ability to work effectively with others, the ability to communicate effectively, self-confidence, and the ability to make one's own observations and learn on one's own. Somehow basic skills is not listed there.

David McClelland, whom some of you know, is a psychologist at Harvard who has done some significant work in achievement motivation. He has found that achievement motivation correlates very closely with entrepreneurial success, and interestingly enough does not correlate with IQ. He discusses the issue of "Testing for Competence Rather than for 'Intelligence'" in an article which appeared in "The American Psychologist" in January, 1973. He argues that ~~most tests predict performance in school, but ignore the competencies which undergird success in life.~~ One section of his article dealing with communication skills is particularly interesting:

Many jobs and most interpersonal situations require a person to be able to communicate accurately by word, look, or gesture just what he intends or what he wants done. Writing is one simple way to test those skills. Can the person put together words in a way that makes immediate good sense to the reader? Word-game skills do not always predict this ability, as is often assumed. I will never forget an instance of a black student applicant for graduate school at Harvard who scored in something like the fifth percentile in the Miller Analogies Test, but who obviously could write and think clearly and effectively as shown by the stories he had written as a reporter on the college paper. I could not convince my colleagues to admit him despite the fact that he had shown the criterion be-

havior the Miller Analogies Test is supposed to predict. Yet if he were admitted, as a psychologist, he would be writing papers in the future, not doing analogies for his colleagues. It is amazing to me how often my colleagues say things like: 'I don't care how well he can write, just look at those test scores.' Testers may shudder at this, and write public disclaimers, but what practically have they done to stop this blind faith in test scores?

In Ethiopia in 1968 we were faced with the problem of trying to find out how much English had been learned by high school students taught by American Peace Corps volunteers. The usual way of doing this there, as elsewhere, is to give the students a fill-in-the-blanks, multiple choice objective test to see whether the student knows the meaning of words, understands correct grammatical forms, etc. We felt that this left out the most important part of the criterion behavior: the ability to use English to communicate. So we asked students to write brief stories which we then coded objectively, not for grammatical or spelling correctness, but for complexity of thought which the student was able to express correctly in the time allotted. This gave a measure of English fluency that predictably correlated with occupational success among Ethiopian adults and also with school areas. Curiously enough, it was significantly related to a word-game skill (English antonyms) that more nearly approximated the usual tests of English competency (Bergthol., 1969).

Important communication skills also are nonverbal. When the proverbial Indian said, 'White man speak with forked tongue,'

he doubtless meant among other things that what the white man was saying in words did not jibe with what he was doing or expressing nonverbally. The abilities to know what is going on in a social setting and the skills to set the correct emotional tone for it are crucial life outcome criteria. Newmeyer (1970), for instance, has found a way to measure success at enacting certain emotions so that others receive them correctly and to measure success at receiving the correct emotions over various enactors. He found that black boys at a certain age were consistently better than white boys at this particular kind of communications skill, which is a far more crucial type of criterion behavior than most paper-and-pencil tests.

What are the competencies that we are teaching for in schools, and what are the competencies that we should be teaching for? As McClelland indicates, there are many ways of looking at competencies. Somehow the term implies that we are talking about the ability to perform in all aspects and at all levels outside the school.

Now what about minimal testing? Is it competency based education in terms of its definition of outcomes? I am a little nervous about that. Do minimal requirements reflect the skills that we think are important in life, the skills that we think are important for success in college? I am not suggesting that minimal assessment is the wrong thing to be doing. After all, as school educators we do not always have the decision to make. We have to respond to pressure. I feel uncomfortable, and I hope educators who are involved in minimal assessments are at least uncomfortable, too. Because one of the dangers of minimal assessment, particularly where it is becoming a matter of law and involves heavily refined testing programs, is that it will take on a life unto itself, rather than being just a process leading us to the time when we can deal effectively with what may be more important competencies.

The second critical part of the Oregon State Board of Education's regulations had to do with the delivery system, what happens in the learning environment. The goals of each course must be clearly stated and interfaced with lists of required competencies to assure that the competencies to be required for graduation were indeed being covered in some of the courses. It was hoped that this interface would result in more clearly focused goals for courses and improved use of instructional time. The idea of defining what students are to learn and of structuring effective learning experiences is not a new idea to public schools. It has probably been most successfully employed, however, at the elementary level. Secondary teachers tend to be discipline oriented. Elementary teachers focus on the child. It is at the elementary level that the major progress has been made to date in terms of restructuring or rethinking what we are doing with students to focus upon outcomes.

Most of you are acquainted with the Individually Guided Education program that has been developed at the University of Wisconsin R&D Center. Reference was made yesterday to the work of Ben Bloom and Jim Block in mastery learning. While both of the reform efforts have been largely focused on basic skills at the elementary school level, they do explore critical variations in the learning environments of schools. They emphasize the establishment of clearly stated learning goals. Individualized student programs are based upon an analysis of students' needs and objective processes, as well as their learning styles. It is assumed that all students can achieve, although the time required for different attainment may vary with the student needs and style. The student is placed in a partnership role in determining what shall be learned and how the student shall go about it.

One of the schools that I have had an opportunity to visit of late that has a sort of competency based program is North Central High School in Indianapolis. It is an alternative high school, not unlike those in most of your home states. A portion of the student's learning takes place outside the school in many cases, and it involves a new kind of engagement structure of learning for students.

One of the interesting things they have done at North Central High School is to randomly select students for the program, rather than just making it voluntary. They discovered that success in their alternative high school is not correlated with IQ. Not all students find it comfortable. However, the difference is not in the traditional things we measure in school. It has something more to do with the ability of students to identify their own goals, to carry out those activities, and to be able to receive rewards which are sometimes delayed. The advocates of competency based education do not purport to have the specific answers to the needed changes in the learning environments of schools, but all are involved and see these changes as the responsibility of educators. One of the primary purposes of student assessment in CBE is to feed back information regarding the effectiveness of schools in serving all students.

Here in the French Quarter of New Orleans I cannot help but remember the motto of the French Revolution-- liberty, equality, and fraternity. Now of course, the French Revolution took place after our revolution, and it was not the cause of our revolution. However, over the last 25 years, we Americans have become increasingly concerned that something called egalitarianism, the opportunity for individuals to make it on their own in society regardless of their social and economic background, is something that is important. American education is the critical variable in the opportunity of children that takes them wherever they are, unequal as their backgrounds may be, and attempts to provide for them an equal opportunity to succeed.

The National Institute of Education recently has been rethinking its reason for existence. Our new director suggests that our primary purpose as an institution coming out of the antipoverty program and the great movement of the Johnson era is to further expand equality of opportunities. It seems to me that the advocates of competency based education are arguing that the schools can become something more than a sorting process that perpetuates the inequalities that students bring with them as inputs when they enter the black box. The schools can do this by more clearly defining that what we want students to learn are

those things which are relevant to success. The schools can significantly alter the pattern of instruction so as to meet students where they are and to provide them with patterns of instruction in the forms and at the times which will enable them to learn. I do not know of anything more important than this as the goal of education. If minimal assessment efforts are a first inadequate step toward reform in the schools of the order that I have suggested, then so be it. If they are somehow an end in themselves, I am personally very uncomfortable with them.

Whether competency based education is possible or even feasible over the long haul, I am not sure. However, what I want to say is that I hope in our efforts to define basic skill test measurements that will determine whether kids learn to read or write or not, we do not lose sight of what seems to me are the basic purposes of American education. And I want to express some of my anxiety that minimal assessment, while it might be a step in the right direction, might be a very serious step in the wrong direction. We are the ones who ultimately have to carry the responsibility, no matter what the problems are that cause us to do what we are doing and to go the way we go. I hope we will not forget that responsibility.

LINKING EDUCATIONAL AGENTS FOR IMPROVED PRACTICES

Ed Ellis

The National Institute of Education is attempting to play a significant role in bringing to the surface issues that relate to competency based education. NIE is concerned with providing mechanisms through which these and related issues can be discussed.

NIE is currently in a responsive mode in that the Institute is trying to find out from practitioners and from people who are working at the school level those activities which could be pursued to gain support for the improvement of educational practice. Those are the words you are going to hear over and over: "improvement of educational practice."

In the Dissemination and Resources Group within NIE, the Consumer Information Branch works with the area of research information as it pertains to education generally, and more specifically to the improvement of educational practices. The Consumer Information Branch supports four major activities.

One of the programs supported by CIB is in the area of knowledge synthesis, and another is related to knowledge identification or product identification. The work with knowledge identification has not gone well because of the difficult process of identifying products which have not been entered into the ERIC System or made visible in other ways. There seems to be an enormous amount of material produced by state agencies, local school districts, and people away from the visible scenes in education. These materials tend to be available only to the immediate audience and tend not to be recognized by the larger educational community. School districts and state agencies have little responsibility for sharing information beyond their own borders. NIE recognizes this fact and is grappling with ways to make little known, useful materials available to more people involved in attempting to improve educational practice.

The other two programs in the CIB are more visible. The Regional Services Program is new this year, and the Regional Exchange Program has been in operation for about 18 months. The primary function of the regional exchange is in the exchange of information, and this action has gone through a very difficult period. There were those at the national level who conceptualized the effort as a national system to move information down through states. The direction has now been modified, and the exchange is dealing with the development of a program that has as its central focus regional services as defined by state educational agencies and the practitioners served through the educational lab which hosts the individual exchange.

It is a very significant concept in that the Institute is joining with Labs and Centers in trying to respond to what regions say they need for the improvement of education in their geographical areas. Now when you need information the Regional Exchanges also tie into programs that are not funded by NIE: most specifically with those efforts coordinated and/or funded through the regional offices of the Office of Education. In a number of sections of the country the Exchanges have established excellent working relationships with the regional offices supported by USOE. This is a growing trend and we applaud it. In this section of the country the Regional Exchange Program operated by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) has identified more of the information resources--actors on the scene from which information can be sought, for the improvement of educational practice plays the linking role between the regional SEAs and the information source. That is the kind of mechanism we are trying to develop nationwide, so that the exchange process gives visibility to really significant trends and enables educational decision-makers to direct resources more efficiently.

Among the first steps taken by the Exchanges is to identify those issues that ought to be addressed at the regional level. The region should in turn help decide those issues that ought to be addressed at the state level. The state will work with locals to cite those issues that ought to be decided at the local level. The hope is that

the district level will identify those issues which can best be addressed at the school level. That is where the process usually stops, but the Exchange notion encourages the school to identify those issues which could best be dealt with by individual teachers, for that is where individual growth ultimately has to happen--between the child and his or her learning experience.

The experience of learning in the school is not limited to the interaction between the teacher and the child, because there are many ways kids learn in schools. They learn from each other. They learn from janitors, from lunch room workers, from the people who come in and put on assembly programs, from mass participation, from the cumulative experiences of school life. To say that learning experiences come only out of interactions between the teacher and the child is a very narrow concept. The Regional Services Program promotes a much broader framework. The regional services notion responds to things that go beyond the sharing of information, such as in this setting where you are planning and using information supplied by the Regional Exchange Program, and designing activities which will be delivered through other programs. Regional Services tries to blend all this together. This, it seems to me, is one of the most exciting concepts in education today.

When one has served at least three levels of education, a number of things appear to be duplicative. The Regional Exchange and regional services notion reduces duplication significantly and seeks to help establish roles which are mutually more supportive. If they can find others to supply specific information to specific audiences, they encourage the Exchange to do it. The first thing an Exchange will do in answering a specific request for services is, not to build a mechanism to perform the required task, but to find others who already have that capability and then link them together. If this meets the requestor's needs, the Exchange is through and goes on to address other issues and provide services not otherwise available. The Exchange is constantly trying to work itself out of a job. This is why the Exchange notion is a truly exciting prospect.

Things are changing at the Institute level. They have been changing for some time. The whole federal perspective /

on education is up for reconsideration. Whether education is reorganized at the federal level into a Department of Education or not does not make much difference. Many of the issues are going to be discussed regardless of reorganization. You have heard them here already. How much of education is funded by Labor? How much of education is in the social services part of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare? What part belongs to the Office of Education? How much support of education is somewhere else within the federal bureaucracy?

The advances in education in the military establishment alone stagger your mind. They have developed vocational skills and significant methods of training. They have developed competency based education without making any fanfare about it whatsoever, and they have done a tremendous job. Most of the people who are advocating the "new" systems across the country are people who received training in the military. Some of them stayed in the military and went through the retirement process before becoming valuable resources to the public schools. Others, like many of us, were in the military for a little while and got exposed to their methods of training. These experiences have had a tremendous impact on our field. Far more than we realize.

We must come to the realization that we are not talking about federal money, state money, local money. It is all public money. The centermost issue in competency based education is: who is really in charge? I don't think we have answered that, but I think that is what a discussion about a "Department of Education" is going to force.

Moving away from the federal view to the view of an education professional, let me talk about education in the larger setting. We have two perspectives. One is what is going to be and the other is what used to be. Both perspectives have to be brought into focus to get a clear picture of where we are now and what really are our options.

If one looks at where we used to be, there is no way on earth one can do anything but applaud the American education system. It is true that the public schools are

under criticism, that today they have the image of failing more people than ever before. But look for a moment at the process. In the last decade, public schools have tested more eyes, more teeth; done more counseling; held more health exams; fed more breakfasts and lunches; rearranged safety organizations; had demonstrations where society came together in a massive conflict of values which ended up integrating the school population; and they did it all within the framework of the same hours and very little more resources. Then, the schools were given national standardized tests which were devised by people who did not recognize or accept the rapid rate of growth of information and all the changing factors affecting the kids, and the kids did only a little bit worse than ever before. Hurray for the public schools!

Many aspects of education are beyond the scope of schools. Did the teachers say "Pass the child"? No! The parent said, "Pass the child." Did the teacher say "No discipline"? No! The court said, "Whatever discipline you're using isn't due process." All of a sudden, the public realizes that we have kids who do not behave according to group values and kids who cannot perform, and it is the school's fault. The world of information has exploded and it is ridiculous to think that all a child ever learns is in the relationship between the teacher and the child. Take a 6-year-old; sit down and talk to him or her and listen. He or she can tell you things that you did not know when you were 15 years of age. He or she will use words just from Saturday morning cartoons that most of us cannot spell. The sociologists told us back in 1950 that this would be known as the century of change, and that 75 percent of the change would come in the last 25 years of the century. Ladies and gentlemen, we are 3 years into that change. You haven't seen anything yet. I hope that the people who are now devising the tests keep their answer sheets handy, for the answers are going to change!

The Director of the National Institute of Education, Pat Graham, has said, if I read her right, that statistical measurement in education has to be put in perspective, and the only thing that ever really will tell us what is happening is in the creative reflection of the mind of the trained professional. The day of creative thinking is back.

with us; I do not advocate throwing away a single test that meets acceptable criteria and that does the job for which it is intended, but the process has to be put into perspective. Test scores must be considered for what they are--indicators. And many of us still say the best measurement device in education today is within the mind of the trained, dedicated professional.

One other aspect I would like to discuss concerns students who fail--who fail at giving the answers that the adult society says they ought to give. We used to call those folks radical. We used to call them nonconformists. How many of you have had a person in your class that you would have sworn would never make it, only to see him or her years later become the best contributor to society in general and to our way of life in particular? I think we have to encourage those who deviate from the norm, for many times they are the ones who can achieve the most.

In summary, from the federal perspective, our purpose in linking organizations together is to cut out duplication, to get maximum benefit from the resources available, in order to help existing organizations perform those activities that result in improved educational practices at the local school level. As a professional in education, I do not think we have anything for which to apologize.

STATE PROGRAMS RELATED TO CBE AND MINIMUM COMPETENCIES:

New Mexico
Alan Morgan

When we look at competency based education programs across the country, we gain a rather quick perspective about where decisions are made; and this is one of the issues related to competency based education. To begin with, I would like to give you some background about New Mexico. Like most of us, I feel that my state is rather unusual. New Mexico is a state with a relatively small population in an expansive geographic area and with quite a cultural diversity. We are one of the few states in the country, if not the only one, where the minority is the majority. In terms of median family income, we have a socioeconomic status around 49th in the country. Our school population numbers about 300,000 students. We have school districts in the state, but to somebody like Glenn Davis the numbers would probably seem like a real breeze in dealing with the state education agency. We have about 20,000 to 25,000 students at each grade level for the State of New Mexico.

Early in the development of the state, constitutional control for all public education was placed in the State Board of Education, an elected board in our case. At the same time we have a situation where state resources are a very heavy influence upon the fiscal operation of public schools. About 75 cents out of every dollar is spent for education which provides probably more control than we have seen in other areas of the country, which has its advantages and disadvantages. It is a policy of our State Superintendent and our State Board of Education to encourage decision making at a level as close to the child as possible. But when you deal with the pressures of the legislature and with the public, sometimes those decisions are made at a higher level.

Going back to the late 1960's, New Mexico was experiencing a phenomenon that was affecting the rest of the country--and that was accountability. The State Board of Education in New Mexico and the legislature were feeling some of the pressures as well. One way New Mexico dealt with the accountability issue was essentially to begin a program of statewide testing. Of the 12 grade levels in our public schools in the late 1960's and early 1970's, we were dealing with mandated statewide testing of six out of 12 grades. Therefore, we were getting a lot of information, and Senator Faxon's point about the collection of all that information is in part true. We were spending a lot of time collecting data, but not enough time using that information.

As we looked at the test results we had across New Mexico in those early years of our statewide assessment program, we had a number of objectives in mind. One was to identify the schools that were likely to need the assistance of a state education agency. We have many rural schools in New Mexico. Nearly a fourth or a third of our public schools are very small schools which may have only one or two classes per grade level. One of the things that our agency needed to do, therefore, was to develop some sort of identification system for employing our resources, our agency staff itself. Thus we were looking at test results in one sense to develop a deployment system for our staff.

We also were encouraged by the legislature to include student achievement data in the accreditation system. In New Mexico, accreditation is rather simple, perhaps simpler than in some states. All public schools are required to be accredited by the state, and if a school is not accredited by the state, it does not receive that 75 cents out of every dollar. We were being encouraged by our legislature to find a way to include student output, or student achievement, as a part of the accreditation system. This we think is possible educationally and morally, but politically is rather difficult to deal with.

We were pressured by teacher organizations, school administrators, local boards of education--all wanting us to encourage the State Board not to pursue that on a long-term basis, because they shared our concerns about looking at student achievement, at least in terms of test information on too simplified a basis.

This brings us to something in New Mexico called the "basic skills plan." About the end of 1974 or middle of 1975, several of us in the agency began to realize our responsibility as policy makers within the State Department of Education, to be better attuned to public demands for our children's improved performance, improved acquisition in basic skill areas. People were saying that children had mastered certain skills, but were having difficulty applying those skills in real-life situations. Employers were telling us not that employees could not diagram a sentence, but that they could not write a sentence very well. We found the same situation which has been discussed by prior speakers concerning the mastery level of those skills in adult performances.

We approached the problem by taking a procedural paper to our State Board of Education to get some general direction from them. Did they agree that we needed to develop a basic plan for the State of New Mexico to improve students' acquisition of learning skills? They agreed. Therefore, in Spring of 1976 we began to develop a New Mexico basic skills plan. Using a committee approach, we involved persons who were legislators, school administrators, teachers, and lay persons and found that they agreed about the kinds of things that every child should be able to do when leaving a New Mexico school. Legislators in Senate and House Education Committees were very concerned about the great difference in basic levels and abilities of students graduating from two different schools in two different areas of New Mexico.

To deal with that concern we began by developing a plan which had seven major components. The first of those components was to identify a beginning set of life competencies. That beginning set of life competencies is indeed the set required right now, but we well recognize that down the road different competencies will be necessary. On a recent television program a gentleman discussed the future proliferation of home computers. One of the computer programs which will be available--the

little cassettes that go into your home computer-- is one which can determine mortgage fees and balance an individual's fiscal accounting, including a checkbook. Both of these are included in the list of life competencies that we in New Mexico believe all children are going to need. There may not be a home computer in every home all over New Mexico, but I do assume that those competencies are going to change through time.

My first point, then, is to identify the beginning set of life competencies. The second component is what we called the local educational agency basic skills plan, an attempt to better coordinate the efforts of the local educational agencies in New Mexico with the State Department of Education. We asked each of those local school districts to put together a basic skills plan. We gave the local districts the list of life competencies. They were to tell us the kinds of skills and content necessary for students to be able to meet these competencies. Their key responsibility was to identify where to teach those things within the local school district. It is difficult to talk about the accountability for being able either to measure them or to assure that they are there as a part of the student's background.

A third component was what we called the checkpoint. We recognized that although we were trying to look at the product of our public schools, there needed to be a required checkpoint at the district level. We were not going to tell the districts what it was, but there had to be a checkpoint. We gave them a general description of how that could be handled. A variety of methods including testing could be used. The point is to try to find as early as possible the student who is having difficulty with basic skills acquisition.

Let me turn again to defining basic skills. These skills are not only reading, writing and arithmetic, at least as the public construes them to be in New Mexico, but it is the application of reading, writing and arithmetic in certain kinds of life functions. So a fourth component that we included within our basic skills plan was the typical required remediation. A student is iden-

tified as having difficulty with a checkpoint; then the school is required to do something with that child. One of the components we mentioned in that section of the basic skills plan was that retention, retaining the student, was not an acceptable remediation plan. We in the basic skills task force were assuming that simply to repeat that experience for the child probably was not going to be advantageous. We did not eliminate that as an alternative for the local schools, but we were discouraging it with the hope that something more useful would replace that kind of learning that obviously did not work well in the past.

A fifth area of the basic skills plan was the New Mexico High School Proficiency Examination, which included a multiple-choice written plan. The exam was a 200-item, New Mexico revised edition of the Adult Performance Level measurement, with which many of you are familiar--in particular Dr. Northcutt, since he was the project director of that program from the USOE project at the University of Texas at Austin. The examination has two components in our New Mexico version. One is the multiple-choice test to be administered to all students at the beginning of 10th grade. A second component is a writing assessment. We have struggled over that part and are not too pleased with what we have done so far. We simply think it is good to consider some other way of assessing a student's writing capability. We have some reservations about the typical ways that writing is examined in multiple-choice tests, in which it is a sort of proof-reading exercise with numerous multiple-choice situations. Therefore, we have instituted a student writing sample as part of our proficiency examination.

The National Council of Teachers of English agreed it was a good idea, but did not like the way we were anticipating the administration of the examination, as it was going to require teachers to look at all those samples of student writing. Considering it from a logistical standpoint, one can see that grading a couple of writing samples for 25,000 students, for example, requires a lot of time and becomes rather expensive. We can understand that objection. The first questions always asked are, "Who's going to pay me for that?" "Do I get release time if I

do it?"

We have looked at other alternatives. Although we know that it is not going to be easy, we want to continue that part of our High School Proficiency Examination. And we are looking for help from any of you who have dealt with writing assessment programs in the past on a large-scale basis.

To explain the sixth and seventh components of the basic skills program, I must back up a bit concerning the High School Proficiency Examination. Our basic skills task force conducted a pilot program in which we looked at a sample of our students in 10th grade to see how well they would do on the 200-item edition of the APL. From that, our committee established criteria for a cutoff point—the point for passing or failing the exam. Let us consider the consequences of that cutoff point because that is one of the plan's components. If a student failed the exam at 10th grade, he or she had the opportunity to take the test again at 11th grade. And if the student failed the test at 11th grade, there was the chance to take it again at 12th grade.

We assumed in developing this basic skills plan that one of our key problems in New Mexico would be a limited amount of knowledge in the local educational agencies about curriculum planning. This problem exists as well in our State Department of Education, as dealing with curriculum development seems to pose difficulties for many people. We will return to this problem in just a moment.

That seventh component is called the diploma endorsement. In essence it is a compromise. At the beginning of our work, some members of our basic skills task force believed that students who did not pass the high school proficiency exam should receive a diploma and a certificate of attendance. Others of us on the task force argued that perhaps some other kind of action should be taken if the student did not pass the exam. After extensive discussion, we decided that the way to compromise on the issue was to use something called a diploma endorsement. If the student never passes the exam, the high school

diploma will still be granted. It is a regular high school diploma granted to the student who completes the requirements of the state and local boards of education. But for the student who does pass the examination, a statement will be placed on the diploma which reads that he or she has passed the New Mexico High School Proficiency Examination required by the State Board of Education. More information about the exam is placed on the back of the diploma and is included on the student's transcript. We have had a lot of discussion about this in New Mexico, and I think we will continue to look at this issue. Currently it is a part of our New Mexico basic skills plan. We think the purpose was reasonable, to try not to place too heavy a load upon the child.

You have heard speakers discuss the importance of accountability, who is accountable, the student or the school? And it is not fair to look at one without looking at the other. We were hoping that accountability for the student would resemble the "carrot" approach, that students would try to pass the exam in order to receive the endorsement on their diplomas.

There are key issues which are not in the New Mexico basic skills plan. One is early exit from high school. We were strongly convinced by the task force experience that high school training involves more than being able to pass a 200-item exam and a writing sample; that indeed basic skills acquisition and the application of those skills in real-life situations may be important and useful, but that is not all that takes place within the high school environment. Many other kinds of behaviors which may be social and/or more academic, but nonetheless are important to the student's success, are learned also. So our purpose was not early exit.

We pointed out that we needed to have more time to implement this. We looked at the pilot program back in April 1977, and then we moved into this school year, 1977-1978, on a field study basis. In other words, nothing would happen to the student who did not pass the exam this year in New Mexico. The first year that the examination would be used for granting the diploma endorsement would be next year--next year's 10th graders who form the class

of 1981. We are not sure that will provide an adequate time for phasing in, but that is a decision we will have to make once we look at those basic skills plans.

We are not sure that the local skills plans are teaching those life competencies. The only way we can determine that is to look at the local curriculums. We must identify what skills content enables students to meet the competencies, and then determine whether or not those skills are being taught. If we find out they are not, then we must decide whether or not it is fair to the students to institute the diploma endorsement at this time. The New Mexico basic skills plan thus far has resulted in a greater public interest in education in New Mexico. The topic is widely discussed.

You have seen both sides of the issue. We tested approximately 22,000 10th graders in the state in November, and now are able to see some strengths and weaknesses of our students. At the same time we have noted areas of concern. We have found a considerable ethnic disparity in terms of test results, always an area of concern to us. We have seen this situation in New Mexico for as long as a number of us have been in the agency. Back in the late 1960's and early 1970's, when we first began our statewide testing programs, we started releasing results on the basis of ethnic information. It is as discouraging now as it was then, and that may tell us something about the testing or about the ways our public schools operate in New Mexico.

We had set a proficiency level on the APL, defining a satisfactory performance as approximately 65 percent of the items. With that criterion, about 91 percent of the Anglos passed the exam and only about 50 percent of the native Americans passed. This considerable difference has caused us to identify a couple of things, such as in what areas do different students perform best and worst. We are also trying to determine whether or not we have inadvertently included items which will result in an ethnic or cultural bias. Regarding students' opinions of the program, the vast majority think that the items included in the examination are useful and are things everybody should

know. We think that is significant. The students may feel these skills are important, but we are doubtful they know them. Therefore we must look seriously at whether or not the instruction we are providing is adequate.

The diploma endorsement is probably the most controversial part of the New Mexico basic skills plan thus far. Many people are very concerned about it. They feel it is a punitive measure for the child, and that it will have much more negative impact than we possibly had realized.

One of the other key problems that we encountered in the New Mexico basic skills plan is not being able to communicate with educators about life competencies and the skills and content necessary to teach them. It seems simple, but it is not. My feeling is reaffirmed about the difference between school skills and life skills. I have talked to so many classroom teachers who say, "This basic skills plan is going to encourage us to look at our own curriculums in terms of trying to do things that are more life-oriented. We do deal many times with skill development almost in a vacuum."

I think Norvell Northcutt noted the fact that the traditional school has prepared students for school and not necessarily for experiences that are beyond school.

The real advantages we found have included more involvement of people within our educational programs in New Mexico. We do require as part of our minimum standards that a school develop an educational plan with the use of a needs assessment process. This requires the community, the students, and the educators to work together in developing school objectives. We also require that input of the community in curriculum development, or planning, and in the program evaluation. We think that teaching will be influenced to become more life-oriented or realistic. One key advantage of the whole process is that it has been required by our State Board of Education. And as a policy group we do not have to wait each year for a 30-day or a 60-day session in New Mexico to change some of the things that we find out are not working too well. If we can determine those areas of the plan that are not working as

well as we would like them to, we can always go back to our State Board of Education and discuss with them. I assure you, they often do discuss those things with us and the ways in which we have dealt with our program. We can change it without having to wait to get a law revised, modified, or deleted.

If you would like a copy of the New Mexico basic skills plan, you should give your name and address to Dr. Northcutt.

STATE PROGRAMS RELATED TO CBE AND MINIMUM COMPETENCIES:

Oklahoma

James Casey

In regard to competency based education and minimal testing, we in Oklahoma are dragging our feet, and we have good reason to do so; however, we are trying to drag our feet progressively (not hastily making moves until we have more assurance of success).

Let me voice some of the concerns I have. One of the concerns is with Paul Cawein's model. We believe if you are inside a black box in education it is not black. New Orleans is a pretty appropriate place to tell you about our model. It is not a black box but an oyster. We get a grain of sand into that oyster, and when it comes out it is a pearl. It is a different shape, different size, different color; all kinds of things are different about it. We view from that direction instead of from the black box industrial model. What no one mentions about the industrial black box is all the slag, the tailings, the pollution, and everything else that they throw away to get that shiny piece of metal out at the end. Education has to keep it all. In our product we cannot throw any of it away.

There are some other concerns that we have. One of them is cost. In Oklahoma we recently conducted a sampling--a minimal testing program. We find that if any kind of test is applied to the state's students, it is going to cost \$1 to \$2 per child at the least. That is, any kind of test that will tell you anything. When you consider instructional time, every time we take one day's instruction away from our students it costs us \$3 million. So if we add something to what the schools are already doing in testing, it is going to cost tremendously. And think of how many teachers we could buy with that cost.

Another concern is that from all the indications that we find, we think that any CBE program, minimal testing program or whatever you want to call it, is going to cause students to drop out of school in greater numbers than they

have in the past. The increased dropout rate will put more students in the job market. The dropouts will not have fully reached the competency that they were supposed to have reached, according to some persons' opinions, while going through the school curriculum. There will be more ex-students, more prospective employees out there who cannot read, write, and compute. Either they will be searching for employment with employers who are looking for more qualified candidates, or they will be drawing welfare. And we wonder why do we do the kinds of things that keep teens off the job market, particularly when we run directly into conflict with the economic people in the nation--particularly persons who are trying to sell things. For example, advertisers want teens to have plenty of money. Teens are the most susceptible group available for buying the things advertisers want to sell. Since the law treats teens as adults, why keep them off the job market? Let them get out there and get with it. Another thing which bothers us is a conflict of desires. The employer wants employees who can read, write, and compute. He wants someone to do what he cannot do, and he is frustrated because the schools are still turning out undereducated persons like himself. That is where the noise is coming from.

Parents want schools to overcome the influence of television without the parents having to turn the blasted thing off. Students want to be through with education as quickly as possible so they can get back to their lifetime occupations of being professional ballplayers, entertainers, or lovers. They are all frustrated. Even we educators are frustrated. By the way, the teachers want something else, too. They want to have students who are pacified and attentive, who can build upon the concepts given to them, rather than students who understand processes. Teachers do not like processes too well. They are all frustrated. Employers are accusing education for their failure to effectively interview and appropriately select employees for their organizations. They are also a little bit "hacked off" at the federal government's interference with their employment process so that they have to hire all kinds of people and give them certain rights and this kind of thing.

It is a frustrating social climate for education. Take a look at the employer and the secretary in the

business realm as an example. Many of our secretaries are a whole lot more capable than we bosses are. Yet they are not getting that kind of money that we are. We are hired to "make decisions." Yet they, many times, give us advice that results in a better decision than one we would make on our own. It is frustrating. The secretary could go back to school and be trained to take the boss's position or one comparable to it. However, the secretary knows that the boss got his job not because he deserved it or merited it, but because of influence, politics and money. In addition, he tramped on a lot of other people on the way up. Secretaries do not like that kind of thing because we have trained them well. In education, we are not like business. We care for people. We try to instill into our students that sense of caring, and many of our students are in business, in secretarial positions, and in other kinds of positions. They still care about people.

The minorities are frustrated because they are asking for some recognition of their culture. However, if the recognition were to come, it would reduce the challenges which lead toward educational achievement. Most of these requests for recognition of minority culture are not concerned with what American culture really is or what it should be. Some persons, for purely selfish reasons, are just trying to raise recognition for minority culture here in the midst of a pluralistic culture, without considering where we ought to be going as a total American culture. The resistance encountered makes it a little frustrating for minorities.

We also have students who cannot perform at the desired level, no matter whose desire it is. When they have to go to remedial programs while other students get a free choice of the kind of curriculum they want to take, we are going to have trouble.

Then we have the problem of what is Grade 5 curriculum? What is an Eighth Grade education? I have never seen one myself. The smart educators know that there is no such thing.

Then we have the problem of measurements that concern us. Which test would we use? We had a test that we gave

on a pilot basis last summer--a survival skills type of thing. We gave it to a group of 12th graders and it did what we expected. There were some students who scored very low on it. There were some students who scored at the top of the test. In the survival skills test, we asked the students how they felt about it. Those students who scored low said, "I couldn't pass anything in school anyway. They are always pulling a test on me. This is the same situation. I cannot take it." The middle group said, "Yes, this is a challenge. People going through school ought to be learning these kinds of things." The top group said, "You bore me to death. Don't you know that I have already had that stuff back in the Fifth Grade? When you get those kinds of reactions, you will have students who turn off at both the bottom and the top levels. They won't make any effort on such a test. Then people say, "Oh, so many of our students failed that thing. They could have passed it if it had been relevant."

We are bothered with the concepts of criterion referenced and norm referenced tests. We see no significant differences in the way that the results are going to be used. We say that a norm test is made up of those things that educators and other persons feel are criteria. So what's the difference? Outsiders do not recognize any difference at all, and they are the ones to whom we are going to have to disseminate the information.

Also, we are concerned about statistical measurements. There is a message that we have to get over to people about tests. Almost any test given is based upon a normal curve. Fifty percent will be below the middle. People just cannot understand that. They want us to write objectives that have 100 percent of our students being above average, and we have got to convince them that it cannot be done. Then we talk about life skills. A paper and pencil test will not measure these. What we need is some measure that uses the same measure as do people in life. Now, how are you measured in your life skills? Is it possible to measure students who are also participating in life? Education is not something separate; it is a part of life. Can we get some measure of them in relation to the kinds of measures that are measured against us? You know, there is need for a little background there. The schools were founded to teach people

to read, write, and cipher, and then they added a whole bunch of things. The secondary schools were to teach lawyers and preachers how to be lawyers and preachers. Think of success rates in these areas. How many lawyers win cases every year? Another of the same kind of question is how many coaches win ball games every year? Just half of them. We are not talking about 100 percent success; we are talking about 50 percent success. Many of you have money invested. How many of your investments are losing each day? Every one of them. No matter how much you gain, inflation is making you lose on these investments. How can you predict your profit? So we, too, have a problem with measurement and trying to measure life skills.

In addition, we have a problem with where we are going in the future. The Oklahoma Association of Secondary School Principals has made the following recommendation to the State Board of Education:

Resolved that this organization, recognizing the educational and social significance of the high school diploma, does recommend that the State Board of Education require all local school districts to establish minimum standards for graduation from high school. The minimum standard program may include a functional literacy in reading and writing the English language, a competency in mathematics, knowledge of the history and culture of the United States to include the concepts and processes of democratic governments, and the completion of courses and programs in other disciplines sufficient to develop competency and maturity.

Now an evaluator shudders at this kind of thing. But then the Association went further:

so be it further resolved that students who do not meet the minimum standards shall be provided with additional

alternatives, opportunities, and assistance in achieving these minimum standards. It's recommended that appropriate programs and testing be accomplished before the 12th grade, and it is also recommended that school districts may grant other kinds of certificates.

We have that kind of opinion and feeling coming from the principals and the grass roots level around Oklahoma, from the Association of Secondary School Principals to the State Board of Education. Because they are behind it and some teachers are behind it--probably for the wrong reasons--the movement to establish minimum standards for high school graduation is going to stay around a little while. But we think it will pass. The secondary principals and the teachers think minimum standards will make life easier; however, they really do not see far enough into it. It is really going to make life more difficult. The principals want a diploma which means something, and they had another resolution about which one of the Association members wrote an article. In it he said that we have got to get the diploma back to meaning something. Well, what is a diploma? It is a piece of paper, just a piece of paper. If an employer is really interested, he asks for the transcript. He does not want the diploma. And what is a certificate? It is just a piece of bleached, pressed cellulose. A diploma and a certificate do not mean much by themselves, and I do not know whether you can ever put any specific content meaning into them, because people are going to have all kinds of different experiences. A student is going to take the diploma that he or she got from New Mexico back there to an employer, and the employer is going to say, "Well, it does not have an endorsement on it. We cannot hire you." No, we are not going to be using diplomas in that way, so let's not be too concerned about making that piece of paper more meaningful.

The minimum standards will be more efficient, but for fewer students, because you are going to drive some of them away. They are going to be driven in different directions, too. Why are child suicides increasing in Japan? Last year

more than 700 children and teenagers took their lives there. Japanese authorities offered two reasons. One is the country's fiercely competitive educational system, in which the road to success is linked to passing difficult entrance examinations to leading universities. Another reason is the reaction of some children to the mounting pressures of excessively regulated lives. Twenty years ago there were no kindergartens in Japan. Now 80 percent of Japan's 5-year-olds are enrolled in private kindergartens. More than 20 percent of students seeking to enter universities are sent to JUKU, after-hours cramming schools. Tokyo's largest JUKU has an enrollment of 18,000 teenagers who failed their first university entrance exams and are cramming to pass their second. The educational pressures in Japan are unremitting. They not only cause ulcers in children, but in many cases they lead to suicide. One Japanese professor recently told an international medical convention that he had come across 19 children, none older than 14, with ulcerated stomachs, dramatic evidence of the unnatural life style children are forced into under the pressures of the educational system. So we will have fewer students because some will try to escape the pressures.

Another concern is that we are making students responsible for their own education, their own production, without investment in the process at the level where it should make a difference and without training teachers to do so. I have said this many times. We put our money at the college level. Every state in the nation puts more money into educating a student at the college level than it does at the first grade level. I think it ought to be reversed. If we are going to make students responsible for their own education as they go up in the educational scheme, we ought to be putting the money where the process begins.

I say that minimum competency may pass. We get lots of dramatic news articles about education, but I feel that schools will be just like China. No matter who comes in to conquer, schools will still come through and survive. The schools will survive in spite of the annual special interest pressures.

Last year we had a bill introduced in the Oklahoma Legislature to have the State Department of Education

set a standard of minimal competency and develop a test for it. It did not pass. What did become law last year, however, was a teacher evaluation program. A phase of the program makes the local schools responsible for helping teachers to overcome deficiencies that local school evaluations find the teachers have. We thereby hope to get some program improvement results. The year before that we had a bill come up in the legislature to make sure that everybody had an eighth grade reading level before getting out of school. But someone suggested giving the test to all the legislators, and the bill did not pass. The year before that we had an accountability bill. A statewide testing bill was introduced the previous year. The testing bill followed the California model. The accountability bill followed a Colorado model, and we combined the two and made the world's best accountability model. Yet, it has been scuttled. This year we had a short bill introduced that stated:

"The Legislature finds that requiring the successful completion of a competency test by public school students as a requirement for advancement to the next grade level appears to cause an increase in the school dropout rates."

The Legislature found that!

"The Legislature further finds that an increase in dropout rates, which is already at 27 percent, would have an adverse economic and social impact on the state. Therefore, a board of education which refuses a student advancement to the next grade level on the basis of the student's failure to successfully complete a competency test, shall make available free individualized tutoring to such student during the next following school year, with respect to each subject which the student failed to pass".

That probably will not pass either. It sounds too good.

We have all these kinds of things impacting education in the State of Oklahoma, and we are dragging our feet in the State Department of Education. You just ask members of the legislature, and they will tell you that. You just ask some parents out in the community who feel the need to get back to the basics, and they will say that the State Department is dragging its feet. What we are trying to do is progressively drag our feet. Then a new thing happened last year in education in Oklahoma--a new Governor took over. We had had an education commission for many years, and all they did was a little research once in a while to investigate some problems.

Then the Governor said, "I want a cabinet of education." He got the legislature to do away with the old commission, and made a council. He is the head member of that council. To serve on the council he got some senators and representatives from educational committees in the senate and house, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Director of Vocational Education, and the Chairman of the Board of Regents, and a few other citizens.

So we have those people on the council, and they have argued for a whole year about who is responsible for post-secondary vocational education--the colleges or the vocational schools?

However, they did recommend that the Department of Education do a study of the status of the state's students on reading, and to find out what kind of programs exist. We do not like to take limited directions like that without providing information to meet the needs if possible, so we included reading and mathematics in the study. We also included a survival skills test at the 12th Grade level. We gave the tests at the Third, Sixth, Ninth, and 12th Grade levels, to a sample of about 2,000 students per grade. We gave it to three different sizes of schools. The test we gave was the California Achievement Test with '76 norms, one of the latest normed tests we could find. We gave only the reading and math portions of this test.

On the basis of the test, we found our students were at the Third, Sixth, and Ninth grade levels. We found that our students were performing where we thought they were all along. The Oklahoma schools were doing well, and the students were performing slightly above the norm, right at the average in reading and math. We gave the SHARP Test (Senior High Assessment of Reading Potential), which was developed in the Los Angeles schools. It tests the reading of the kinds of things a person would encounter out in life, like telephone bills and income tax forms. We found that our students were performing just about where we thought they would, even though we had not taught any of those things in our schools. We found that 92.7 percent of the students in the state were scoring above the 70th percentile on this test, which is what the test makers consider is passing. So we felt that they were not doing badly at all.

Until we can find something that really is worthwhile, instead of further institutionalizing the instruction process with CBE and minimal testing and this kind of thing, let us let the school and the teachers, more than anybody else, try to work as well as they can with the students and give them some help, advice, money, relief, and whatever they can, instead of making more pressures on students. Thank you.

STATE PROGRAMS RELATED TO CBE AND MINIMUM COMPETENCIES:

Texas

Kieth Cruse

I am going to try to describe for you a couple of programs in Texas which are related to Competency Based Education. I say "relate to" because we do not have legislation requiring such programs. However, for years the Texas Education Code has stated that the Commissioner of Education is responsible for periodically reviewing the educational needs of the State of Texas. Furthermore, the State Board of Education, over a series of years, has made policy statements, such as the goals for public school education in Texas, which relate to accountability. The State Board has gone on in its planning procedures to require a set of priorities which include statements on accountability, reading and mathematics.

During the regular session of the 65th Legislature, several bills concerning accountability and testing of students were introduced. While these were unsuccessful, Senate concurrent resolutions 29 and 30, which are related to the area, were passed. They are not law, but they do request certain information from the State Department of Education and increase the emphasis on student performance data as one aspect of management information for educational planning. To respond to this long-term and short-term emphasis, the Legislature, in special session, passed a school finance bill that allocated \$3 million to implement the purpose of these two Senate concurrent resolutions.

To discuss Texas' programs related to Competency Based Education, I would like to create a dichotomy of

state and local levels (and I mean to include regional service centers and regional planning when I refer to the state level).

For state level purposes, the Commissioners and State Board have agreed to conduct what we are calling the Texas Assessment Project. We have had some state assessment programs on a small scale in the past, but the Texas Assessment Project will involve statewide analysis in four areas: reading, mathematics, writing and citizenship in specified grades and ages.

We are trying out several different kinds of instruments to conduct the assessment project. For example, we are going to have norm referenced tests in reading and mathematics at the sixth grade level; we are going to have criterion-referenced or objective-based tests at the sixth and 11th grades. Finally, we are going to look at the areas of writing and citizenship in a manner parallel with the National Assessment of Educational Progress Project. We will be using some of their exercises and comparing our results from 9-year-olds, 13-year-olds, and 17-year-olds.

I shall quickly describe some of the characteristics of this program. We will test 100,000 youngsters. We will do it in a manner, however, that will not yield individual student data, individual classroom data, campus data, or district data. A sample has been developed of about 10,000 youngsters each for 10 areas. We have 2.9 million students or so in the state, so this represents a fairly good sample.

We selected a sample of campuses where one or more of the packages will be administered. Approximately 25 students per campus will be selected by the contractor, not by the school, but on a random basis. We will conduct the assessment in all regions of the state. In this type of approach, we are trying to evaluate some of the kinds of information that are derived from the various tests.

The 20 Education Service Centers in Texas will be

used as the smallest unit of reporting. I repeat, we will not have information on individual districts. We will try to collect some information by size of school district; by ethnicity of students; by gender; by type of school districts such as central city, urban, suburban, small or rural; and some data on the amount expended by school districts. The sample has been drawn in a manner which should permit these types of reports.

The evaluation will have to be done rather rapidly to meet the necessary deadlines. The Texas Assessment Project was finalized in October 1977. We selected a contractor January 14, 1978 when the State Board of Education met. The contractor arrived in Texas January 16, and we are now working. The test selection is complete; we are preparing materials, and 100,000 youngsters should be tested during the month of April. We are going to look at the results during the summer and make a series of reports to the Board in October and November 1978. The intent here is to give the Board time to select and analyze the results in order for them to prepare a report for the next Legislature in January 1979.

The second aspect of Texas efforts in competency based education concerns the local level. As I stated, we are avoiding the collection and reporting of State information at the local level. Related to the local level, the State Board of Education has adopted the Accreditation Planning Process under which Texas school districts now operate. Basically, it requires a 5-year planning cycle to be accredited in Texas, and the district must be accredited to receive state funds.

What does the 5-year cycle entail? Briefly, it says school districts must set goals and separate those goals into performance indicators that are seen as important for their students. In terms of prescribing those goals, it requires only consideration of the State Board of Education Goals for Public School Education during the decision-making process.

The school then conducts a self-study in two parts. One part is a documented needs assessment. We are asking

the schools, through teacher observation, tests and other measures, to identify some perceived needs and then to collect some evidence, some documentation of those needs or learning deficiencies, on their campuses. The second part of that process, and most times parallel because of the 5-year time limit, is a program analysis. School districts look at their programs, programming progress, and funding patterns, and see what discrepancies from "good practice" might exist there. After comparing the results of these two activities, priorities are set and, from them, a 5-year plan for alleviation of student learning deficiencies is developed, and schools are accredited. Finally, the schools are asked to evaluate the process they have gone through, as well as the results of the 5-year plan for improvement.

We have seen several results from these programs in Texas over a period of years. We do see increased attention to student performance information as a basis for educational planning. We think we are seeing, also, an increase on the part of Texas educators to recognize the value of different types of information about school operation and student performance. That is, we are learning more about the things we need to know to make decisions. We must acknowledge that the Legislature has given us an opportunity to demonstrate for them that we can create some program renewal improvement without having it legislated.