
Commission Meeting

of

SPEAKER'S COMMISSION ON EDUCATION: POLICIES, FACILITIES AND REVENUE

“Testimony from invited speakers on the subject, New Jersey’s Core Curriculum Content Standards and Statewide Assessments: Elementary School Proficiency Assessment, Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment, and High School Proficiency Assessment”

LOCATION: Committee Room 1
State House Annex
Trenton, New Jersey

DATE: June 25, 2001
2:00 p.m.

MEMBERS OF COMMISSION PRESENT:

Assembly Speaker Jack Collins, Chair
Assemblyman Alex DeCroce, Vice-Chair
Assemblyman Peter J. Biondi
Assemblyman Peter J. Barnes Jr.



ALSO PRESENT:

Theodore C. Settle
*Office of Legislative Services
Committee Aide*

Haskell B. Berman
Christina O'Malley
*Assembly Majority
Committee Aides*

Jennifer Sarnelli
*Assembly Democratic
Committee Aide*

***Meeting Recorded and Transcribed by
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ASSEMBLY SPEAKER JACK COLLINS (Chair): Good afternoon, everyone.

First, let me apologize twice: first, for being late, and secondarily, to all, but particularly the panel members.

What we just had a little conference there about was-- We all decided, wow, what an impressive panel we have. (laughter) And we didn't let Assemblyman Barnes in, because he already told me how impressed he was with you.

ASSEMBLYMAN BARNES: It was not bipartisan, that's for sure.

SPEAKER COLLINS: But we all agree that they're an outstanding panel.

ASSEMBLYMAN BARNES: But I do, unilaterally, I do.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Yes, and we appreciate that.

Let me start off by thanking you very much for being here today. We are starting the discussion today on a topic that has gotten quite a bit of attention through the last few months, with regard to public media attention -- but something that has elicited the attention of educators, particularly teachers themselves in the classroom over a long period of time.

And not to embarrass anyone, but to put into a perspective-- When I started to focus on this, and I've told my colleagues on this Commission-- And I will introduce them and officially start this hearing.

But prior to it, let me definitely focus on the whole testing situation and how it really got a focus from me. And when talking with some of my colleagues -- agreed--

My daughter, who is a teacher in Salem County, was -- joined a group of fellow alums of mine from then Glassboro State College at dinner two years ago. They were 30-year teachers. She was a first-year teacher. And during the course of the dinner, the conversation turned to testing. And you had the same concerns and appreciations of the challenges faced by our society over testing.

And I sat there. I thought, wow, my daughter, who I have great respect for just starting -- my friends, who I know have been in education for 30 years -- and they come together on the importance of this issue. And it was one of the driving forces that led me to set up the Speaker's Commission on Education. And that's why we're here today. And we thank you for coming.

Before I introduce the members and introduce the panel, let me just set what this is about, because in the system of government, we want to make sure that all understand what is going on so we don't step on anyone's toes.

What we have here is a Commission. I, as Speaker of the Assembly, put forth this idea. It was supported by my colleagues. But it is a Commission. It is not a committee. This group of legislators will not vote on bills or any other of the processes involved in passing legislation to become law. That would go, in most cases, to the Committee on Education, chaired by Assemblyman David Wolfe, in our house.

But what we have been doing for the greater part of this year has been to go around the state -- first at public hearings all over the state -- and listen to what the concerns were of people who are actually dealing with the educational system of New Jersey. We then focused on particular areas. We

finished with a number of paneled discussions and hearings with regard to special education/vocational education.

Today, we're going to move to the beginning discussions of testing in the broadest sense. And that's what you're here for.

And later this year, hopefully, we are going to spend some time focusing on the cost of education and how that should -- cost should be carried in the future. Now, we know the greatest amount of it comes from property taxes. Is that the best system? Is there another system?

But today, we are particularly concerned about testing.

Before I introduce the panelists, let me introduce the legislators who are here.

To my left is the Vice-Chairman of the Commission, Assemblyman Alex DeCroce, from Morris County, and to his left is Assemblyman Peter Biondi, from Somerset County. To my right is my colleague from Middlesex County, Assemblyman Peter Barnes. We also may be joined later by Assemblyman Joe Roberts from Camden County. And I am from Salem County.

The panelists we have today are, and I'll read them in the order I have them here -- Mr. Jay Doolan, the Acting Assistant Commissioner, Division of Academic and Career Standards of New Jersey, the Department of Education -- thank you, Commissioner; Mr. Kurt Landgraf, President and CEO, the Educational Testing Service; Ms. Jennifer Vranek, Director, Benchmarking and State Service, Achieve, Incorporated; Ms. Trudy Doyle, Educational Consultant for Curriculum and Instruction; and, in a bias I have here for a neighbor, Mr. Bob Bumpus, the Superintendent of the Cumberland Regional High School.

We thank you all for coming. And what we have done with these panels is really just have a discussion. And those of us in education, not to exclude some of my colleagues, who bring other experiences to life--

One thing we can do in education is hold panels. (laughter) And we can just chitchat and discuss, and then maybe, and hopefully -- and that's our goal here -- some real structure will come sometime in the future.

So we thank you for coming.

And before I turn to the panelists, would any of my colleagues like to make any comments to start?

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Well, we're looking forward to listening to each of you today.

ASSEMBLYMAN BARNES: I think one of the big parts of education is listening to learn. So we'll try to do that.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Well-- And there will be--

Now, let me set it this way. We'll start with the Commissioner, since we're in Trenton.

Let me say this: This is a discussion. If anything is said that you would like to join in part of the discussion on that particular point, please do so. If anyone, us or you, say anything that we don't agree with, don't be afraid to say, "My gosh, what is that," because we want to, as Assemblyman Barnes and Assemblyman DeCroce said, and I know Assemblyman Biondi and I feel the same way-- We want to be educated. We have had a great learning experience through the special education discussions. And we look forward to this one.

So, with that, Commissioner Doolan, if you would share some thoughts. And after that, we'll just go.

ACTING ASST. COM. J. EDWARD DOOLAN: Thank you very much.

SPEAKER COLLINS: One last thing. This is all being transcribed. And that will be available to all participants here today and the general public if they contact the Speaker's Office here in the General Assembly.

Commissioner.

ACTING ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER DOOLAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to be here this afternoon to talk about the standards and assessment system, as well as interact with all of you and my colleagues on the panel.

Let me say that our statewide assessment system is a critical component of New Jersey's standards-based reform initiative. Our initiative is a systemic process that includes five critical components: one, the standards themselves, which -- New Jersey, six years ago, came together and decided what our students needed to know and be able to do and understand.

The second thing is an aligned curriculum and instruction system. All of the districts are aligning and working on their curriculum to align to the core curriculum content standards in all of the content areas.

The third, and probably most important, is the professional development of teachers and soon-to-be administrators. That's really the heart and soul of our standards-based reform and one of the significant ways that student progress and achievement can be attained.

The fourth and fifth areas of our reform have to do with an accountability system -- the statewide assessment system is certainly that -- in the benchmark grades of 4, 8, 11, and 12, assessing the progress of students across the board in terms of the standards.

And the fifth area is our State monitoring system, whereby our county offices and other officials go in to ensure that the districts have a number of things in place.

Our standards and a reliable assessment system provide the State with information that teachers need to be able to raise student achievement, and most important for you, for the policy makers, and ourselves at the Department and the State board, to determine about how to allocate resources and judge the effectiveness of the reforms that we put into place.

I thought I could very briefly review the current status of our assessment system and then talk about some of the issues that I'm sure many of my good friends will bring up.

First of all, the current status-- We've just completed the third year of the operation of our fourth-grade test, the ESPA, and the eighth-grade test, in the areas of language arts literacy, math, and science. And the districts will be getting those results, if they haven't already, this summer.

In addition, because of the concerns about the language arts literacy assessment in the fourth-grade test, we have reconfigured that test, and we will be setting a new standard in July, which means the results from that assessment will go to the districts in September.

This past year was also the last time that we gave the high school proficiency test as the test of-- Those results have already gone to the districts this past month.

In 2001-2002 upcoming, we're adding a social studies assessment to the fourth- and eighth-grade test, and we're also, for the first time, administering the high school proficiency assessment. That will be given to next year's juniors in March, and that will be in language arts literacy and math.

In addition to all of those assessments, we are moving forward on an alternative proficiency assessment for students who have been identified as having severe disabilities. That's in the planning stages -- the pilot test -- and a field test will be given next year. That assessment will be operational in the 2002-2003 school year.

Just about three weeks ago, Commissioner Gagliardi made a decision to be -- to halt the development of assessments in world languages, health and physical education, the visual and the performing arts. I think most of us at this table would agree that, based on the need to ensure that the assessments and the content areas that are ongoing are technically valid and reliable, it was best to not begin the development or implementation in these three other areas. We also wanted to give districts sufficient time to ensure that their curriculum and instruction was aligned to the standards in all content areas.

We're also now beginning to revise the core curriculum content standards. The State Board of Ed has required us to do that every five years. And we just celebrated the fifth anniversary of the development of the standards.

Because over the next year we will be revising them, we felt it best not to begin any new assessments until that process had taken place.

We're also looking at developments on the Federal level. And you know that there are new assessment regulations likely to come down, which could possibly mean the development of assessments in Grades 3 through 8 and at the high school level. So we did not want to introduce anything new to our current plans.

Also, next year, for the first time, very importantly, we will be disaggregating 2000-2001 assessment data for the ESPA and GEPA test next year. That means, for the first time, we'll be sending out results in a number of areas: by gender, by race, ethnicity, limited English proficiency, by special education status, migrant status, and also socioeconomic status. This will bring us into compliance with regulations from the U.S. Department of Education. It will also ensure, I believe, that our assessment results for all students will be carefully reviewed at not only the State level, but at the district level and at each individual school level.

There are a number of issues that I know you are concerned about. And I'm sure your daughter, Mr. Speaker, has shared some of these concerns with you -- the fact that -- especially with the elementary school -- the fourth-grade tests-- There's lots of anxiety about the test results and also about the expectations for that assessment. For language arts literacy, we have convened a committee to take a look to ensure that the expectations are appropriate. We've revised that test somewhat.

We've also had an extensive outreach to parents and educators and have included information on our Web site, have disseminated specific sample

tests in all of the content areas, and also have sent to the schools individual results, particularly in the reading and writing areas.

We've also modified the tests in a number of ways. There were some concerns about the length of the tests. The test items have been reviewed, and the overall length of the ESPA and GEPA has been shortened. We think we've arrived at a pretty good mix of ensuring that we cover the critical areas, as well as not swamp the systems in terms of the amount of time.

We've also had our ESPA and GEPA and HSPA undergo scrutiny by Achieve, Incorporated, in the areas of language arts literacy, math, and now science. Jennifer will spend some time talking about that, but we believe that we have gotten very positive feedback about the rigor and challenge of our assessments in those areas.

There's also a study that's just come out from Rutgers University. Professor William Firestone has looked at the impact of New Jersey's new assessment system on teaching in a series of papers. And there's been very positive results to show that the assessments have encouraged teachers to try out more inquiry-oriented instruction, higher-level instruction -- place a greater emphasis on problem solving. The Professor recommends a number of things that we could do to ensure that that system is strengthened in the coming years.

We've also been sensitive to the concerns about how the test results are reported, essentially the amount of time that it takes for the results to get back to the schools. And we've tried to work with the testing company to ensure that we have a quicker turnaround time.

We also are responsive to the districts' concerns about generating meaningful information about the assessments. We have a tutorial about that

on our Web site, our new virtual academy, which has been very helpful to a number of districts in that area.

I can say in closing that the Department fully acknowledges that a successful assessment system evolves through the evaluation of good feedback from many sources and by making the appropriate adjustments. And we believe we've followed that process and will continue to do so.

I look forward to your questions.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Well, thank you. Let me just ask two questions.

One, what are we trying to do with our testing program? And two, is the testing program consuming the entire educational program in the sense that I hear a lot of HSPAs and GESPAs and TESPAs and-- First, we should come up with new names. But I don't hear a whole lot of discussion about reading or writing or even foreign language other than, "Hey, we're at a shortage of teachers."

My questions are two: one, what are we trying to do, and secondarily, is this consuming our whole educational program?

ACTING ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER DOOLAN: Well, they're two very good questions. One, I think the most important thing that we're trying to do is to align our assessment system to the standards.

First and foremost come the standards. The State assessment system evolves from the standards, takes those most important aspects -- what we want our students to know and be able to do, and develops an assessment system that challenges the students to demonstrate that they've mastered higher-level critical thinking in the content areas that we've developed.

I should say that standards and assessments are not only being done in New Jersey, it's part of a whole national network to improve education to ensure that all of our students are prepared for higher education and the workplace. So this is a national effort. And we're challenged to develop high-level standards in assessment through the Federal government.

That's essentially what we're trying to do, identify where curriculum and instruction needs to improve, and most important, identify the performance of students at three benchmark years.

Is it consuming the educational community? Certainly, I think, because the assessments, at least at the fourth- and eighth-grade level, have been fairly difficult, because our standards are difficult -- perhaps more rigorous than more standardized test information that many of the districts have utilized. It is getting a lot of attention, because the students don't seem to be performing as well as they have on nationally standardized tests. The tests are different. They're criterion reference tests, and they're aligned to the standards, whereas many of the national assessments are not.

What I've been hearing, and certainly being on the front line of this with not only school superintendents, boards of education, but also teachers and other administrators, is not so much a concern about assessment, but what the districts have to do to align their curriculum and instruction to assessment. So, in spite of the fact that there is a lot of concern about the results, there is also a lot of concern about where there should be concern. And that is what is happening in the classroom. How is teaching and learning impacted by the assessments and the standards, and most importantly, what can teachers do to

change their approach, expand their repertoire and ensure that students are benefiting from instruction to the standards.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Well, the-- What I hear is, and not just at my dinner table, but all over, being a former educator myself, is, no offense to administrators, but not that concern of how they're doing, but the time involved in the testing and the preparation, as you say. But I know that educators are not teaching to the test, because, or at least I never thought they were, because I remember when I was a second-year Assemblyman -- that was 14 years ago -- and someone I respect greatly, commissioner -- then Commissioner Saul Cooperman told me in the Republican caucus that there is no way that teachers are going to teach to the test. Fourteen years ago he told me that, and I'm sure that he was right and accurate, a man of his consummate experience and so on.

You don't teach to the test, do you, Mr. Superintendent?

ROBERT L. BUMPUS: I don't think we do.

As Jay mentioned, the real problem is we're in a standards-based reform movement now, and these tests are different.

When Saul Cooperman was commissioner, there was a host of standardized tests that every school district had. And it was virtually impossible to really target that. When the State got involved in testing, it's a little bit easier to target it. But the notion is that these standards are broad enough. And, in fact, Achieve has found that they're too broad, they're too vague. And there's a disconnect between the standards, which are good, and this test, or the test, I'm sorry, which were good, and the standards were too vague. So the standards assessment review is designed to make them more specific.

But if you wouldn't mind, Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin with a statement. And I know your background as a basketball coach. And I have an analogy I think might be interesting.

Imagine if school basketball seasons--

SPEAKER COLLINS: By the way, Mr. Bumpus, just between us, there could be some changes at Schalick High School. And I may be returning to the hardwood.

Go ahead.

MR. BUMPUS: Imagine if school basketball seasons ended in a special test rather than the playing of basketball games. Imagine if the players and coaches could not know in advance which practice drills they would be asked to complete. Imagine further that they would not know which shots went in the basket until next year.

Keep going, and imagine that statisticians invented a different series of tests of basketball. Finally, an imaginary reporting system in which the coaches and players received only the final scores, long after the season ended, and were never told which drills were done well and which were not.

Since these new basketball test results would be reported in the newspapers, what might happen next? Might coaching become distorted in a nervous effort to address the test's form and content? Would coaches stop worrying about complex performance and concentrate on having players run drill after drill at the expense of student engagement in genuine learning? Would anyone, coach or player, improve at the real game under these circumstances?

This is all an elaborate analogy for what ends up as accountability in schools. A handful of tests are required to provide willfully sketchy and

delayed feedback on tasks that do not reflect real achievement in the first place. The results are no more than hard-to-fathom proxies for genuine performance. The tests are unknown until test day. The feedback comes after the end of the school year so it cannot be used to improve the performance of the students tested. And the coaches end up focused on a handful of artificial audit indicators rather than the real goals of schooling.

Should there be any surprise that there is a rising tide of disenchantment with State testing among educational professionals and the public?

Returning to the analogy for a moment, if coaches and players never know the specific game that will be used to evaluate them, how can they be held responsible for the results? And when the results come back after the year has ended and the players are gone, how can the coaches be responsive to the results?

New Jersey needs a system based on commonsense principles of teaching and learning. It needs to be responsive, giving people the information they need to improve learning. And that requires helpful and timely feedback.

New Jersey needs a system that recognizes where learning takes place: in the school and the individual classroom. With that kind of system in place, local work and teacher judgment become keys to State accountability. Then incentives for school renewal and ongoing professional development for all teachers become obvious necessities. And then the system will inspire creative teaching rather than compliant “teaching to the test.”

From another perspective, those who seek a driver’s license need to pass both a written test and a road test. The written test is necessary to check

on the applicant's mastery. No one would argue that passing the written test doesn't mean the applicant is ready. The road test evaluates whether the applicant has had enough practice and experience to use that knowledge to drive safely and competently. In exactly the same way, paper and pencil tests cannot do justice to all the intellectual tasks in which knowledge gained must be applied.

But the current GEPA, ESPA, and HSPA can be compared to physical examinations, also as a point in time, not as a total holistic diagnosis of the student.

In short, Mr. Speaker, we need a new system, one that holds us accountable to some degree. We don't argue that there has to be accountability. And Mr. Doolan is correct when he says it's an accountability system. But we need to supplement it with real-world authentic types of assessments which really get to the heart of whether or not students are achieving standards.

The two major questions with an assessment are validity and reliability. The problem with validity is it gets too broad, if you want to test the seven content areas.

Mr. Doolan did not share with you that Trudy and I were both on the statewide assessment panel and spent nine months looking at world languages, fine and performing arts, physical education and health. We concluded that they should be assessed in less than traditional ways. And we're recommending, through our association, that if we're going to have to test in the traditional paper and pencil way, we should relegate it to math, language arts literacy, and science to accommodate the business community. We believe that's important.

But it's got to be narrow, in a sense, and then supplement that with a broader based performance assessment system, which is going to require significant professional staff development for our teachers and some type of regional monitoring system that the State Department will structure through the county system.

So that's what our recommendations are. And I can share those with you, Mr. Speaker, before we leave.

But your question is an absolutely critical question. We asked that of Commissioner Hesper. What is the purpose of our statewide accountability system? Is it a gotcha model, or is it a model that's going to improve teaching and learning? We hope, from our Association, it's a model that's going to improve teaching and learning. So we need vital feedback, good feedback that's authentic.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Well, whatever that answer is, we'll let it sit for a few moments, because there are tests that have been developed that have been used. And maybe I'm sure there are entities who are trying to make a better test.

Is that not true, Mr. Landgraf?

KURT M. LANDGRAF: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Go right ahead.

MR. LANDGRAF: I'm going to try and talk a little bit -- I would just -- for a moment--

I've been the President and Chief Executive Officer of ETS for about a year. Prior to that, I was chairman and chief executive officer of a very

large corporation called DuPont Merck. My approach is from that perspective, as well as being relatively new to the educational environment.

In today's *New York Times* is a summary of a report that I've put at each of your places. And I wonder if I could just hand those down to my colleagues on the panel. I'd just like to summarize those.

One of my great concerns, looking at this from a relatively new perspective, is there's a lot of this discussion -- is based upon anecdotal evidence and information you receive, as the Speaker just talked about, over his dining room table.

What we tried to do here is we commissioned Hart-Teeter. Hart and Teeter are two -- they do the *Wall Street Journal*/NBC poll. Hart is a Democratic pollster. Teeter is a Republican pollster. So we tried to get this as bipartisan as we could.

I'm just going to read to you a summary of -- that you can see in the *New York Times* today -- of what that report says.

First, let me just also tell you the Educational Testing Service does not do any of the K-12 testing here in New Jersey. We do do the NAEP exam, which is a national assessment. And you should know that New Jersey scores very, very, highly on the NAEP exams. So, as you address this problem, you should know that you're dealing already from a place of excellence.

Fifty-three percent of the parents in the United States give our schools -- not New Jersey's schools, but the public schools in America -- no better than a C. Eighty-three percent of Americans favor giving state and local authorities more control over how they can spend Federal education funds. Eighty-nine percent favor hiring more teachers to reduce class sizes, as well as

increasing teachers' salaries in order to hire and retain well-qualified teachers. Eighty-three percent support standards for achievement in testing students to determine whether these standards are being met. Seventy-seven percent want teachers and administrators held responsible for student learning. Seventy-six percent support a policy to require every student in Grades 3 through 8 to be tested annually in reading and math, using tests developed by each state. And 78 percent of those over 1000 -- 78 want state test results compared with the nationally standardized tests.

Americans favor testing to measure learning, but they also do not want -- this is to your point -- they do not want tests used as the only measure of accountability. And I would suggest to you that this is where the real debate should be -- is not whether or not standardized testing is important, because it is, it's what you use standardized testing for.

Let me conclude by just saying this. I think New Jersey is well ahead of -- I've lived many other places in my previous -- well ahead of other places that I have lived, as is measured by our NAEP exams. I will also tell you this -- that there is-- From my perspective as a person who was chairman of a large publicly traded company, 40 percent of those people that we hired -- 40 percent of those people we hired could not read or write at a fourth-grade level. This is--

SPEAKER COLLINS: Wait a minute. Let me hear that one again.

The transcriber is even underlining it.

Say that one more time.

MR. LANDGRAF: Forty percent of the people that we hire could not read or write at a fourth-grade level. And I'll tell you another statistic.

Ninety percent of those people we hired at entry-level jobs had no computer skills.

This, to me, is the real issue -- is that we basically need to test. We need to hold educators accountable, but you must provide them with the resources to get the job done, which, incidently, we don't always do. And we must use a common-- This is not nuclear physics, Mr. Speaker. We must require a commonsense approach to this thing. Holding school districts, holding educators responsible for something they have no control over is not something that any of us would do outside the education environment. The reciprocal of that is not holding people responsible for what goes on in our public school systems -- is, in fact, going to make this state, this country, nonglobally competitive if we continue to do that.

And the study that I just handed out shows an overwhelming consensus from the public, educators, and public policy makers like yourself that testing is an important component in the mix of looking at what our school systems do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Thank you.

Ms. Vranek, I saw you shaking your head on that. Maybe I'll come to you.

Do you want to shake your head and continue?

JENNIFER VRANEK: Sure.

Well, I thought I could, today, give you a sense of where New Jersey stands in the national context with standards testing and accountability and perhaps offer some ideas, based on the work we had done previously in

your language arts and math standards in tests, for how you can comply with the new Federal law that is coming down.

As you may know, Achieve was created after the 1996 National Education Summit. Our entire purpose is to help State education policy makers raise student and school system achievement through a combination of standards, testing, accountability, and related programs that will make those actually happen in schools.

We are an independent, bipartisan, nonprofit organization. We're governed by a board of directors of six governors, three of whom are Republicans and three of whom are Democrats, and six corporate chief executives, including Art Ryan of Prudential.

Achieve believes that states can, and should, take the lead in challenging students and schools to raise performance by developing clear and rigorous academic standards, by measuring progress toward meeting those goals across the state with common measures, and by providing assistance and incentives to focus on the standards.

In 1999, Achieve sponsored another national education summit. And on October 9 and 10 of this year, we will again bring together more than 120 business leaders, governors, and education leaders to continue to push for higher standards and achievement.

I'll talk more about the 2001 summit in a few moments, but first let me tell you what the national picture is with regard to standards and accountability.

This year marks the fifth anniversary of the 1996 summit that led to the founding of Achieve. In 1996, only 14 states had academic standards in

the four core subject areas: English, math, science, and social studies. New Jersey was one of those 14 states -- so an early leader in setting standards.

As of this year, all states but Iowa have adopted standards in the core areas, and the commitment to measuring standards with common statewide measures is also strong. Forty-eight states give statewide assessments in at least reading and math at least once in elementary, middle, and high school. Twenty-nine states currently test science, and 23 states test history, social studies at least once. When you look at testing elementary, middle, and high school, as New Jersey does, it's about 15 states that test in the four core areas.

States are also making substantial progress in developing and implementing incentives for students and schools to focus on results, as Mr. Landgraf said. Six states -- for example, California, Michigan, and Ohio -- have scholarship programs for students who have high performance on their state assessments. There was more than \$220 million in funding this year available to students in those six states.

Twenty-four states, including New Jersey, currently require or plan to require students to meet at least tenth-grade standards in at least English and math as one of their requirements to earn their high school diploma. Every one of those 24 states allow students multiple opportunities to pass the tests. There are no one-shot, make-or-break tests for graduation.

Fifteen of the 18 states that already have those tests in place require that students who fail the exams the first time around get extra help, remediation, special funding. So it's not just punitive. It's identifying students who need extra help.

When it comes to giving educators incentives to enhance student learning, 47 states publish school report cards. Thirty-five of those states plan or currently give assistance to schools that are labeled low-performing, in part on test scores. That's not usually the only measure. That assistance can be extra funding, professional development, help from an on-site external team of expert educators. We're using a research-based curriculum plan, like in New Jersey. It's a variety of extra help options.

Twenty-four states have taken another tack of rewarding schools that are successful with cash bonuses, including New Jersey. Three states, Delaware, Georgia, and Texas, have laws on the books to tie teacher evaluations in part to student test scores, but also to a variety of other measures. And 18 states have the authority to close down, reconstitute, or take over schools that fail year after year to teach their students to read or write or do basic math.

What's more is, as Mr. Landgraf said, in poll after poll, the American public consistently supports this. No matter what some may tell you, the public usually -- about on average over 80 percent of teachers, parents, employers, college professors, and other members of the public consistently support standards, testing, and accountability for all the adults and the students in the system.

These kinds of facts and figures could obscure the following fact, which is that the quality and meaningfulness of the state standards tests does vary from state to state. That's why Achieve is in the business of helping states benchmark their education reforms. Our goal is not to criticize or grade states, as there are plenty of other ranking exercises in public education. But instead,

we've set up an external, world-class yardstick against which to compare states' standards, testing, and accountability programs.

We've worked with 20 states in a variety of programs, and New Jersey was one of the first nine states to volunteer for an intensive look at the quality, rigor, and alignment of the language arts and mathematics standards in tests in Grades 4, 8, and 11.

What did we find? You may have seen the report, but New Jersey had been one of the first states, as I said, to set standards in the early to mid-1990s. So it was also one of the first states to struggle with finding the right balance between local control of curriculum, but yet providing sufficient detail in the state standards to guide schools and districts.

Last year, when we took a hard look and we compared the New Jersey standards to exemplary standards from the best states and nations, we found that the New Jersey standards were far outclassed. There are some pockets of excellence, but we recommended that the state should use the standards revision process to add a good deal more clarity, specificity, and rigor in several cases.

For example, the standards lacked any guidelines at all for how teachers might teach children to read. The only standard about this was in Grade 4 that said read with comprehension. There was nothing for kindergarten or second- or third-grade teachers that might show them how they can actually help their students learn to read. So it's fleshing out the standards in these kinds of ways that can help make the connection much closer to teaching and learning between the states' standards.

We also looked at the state assessments. And I think this is probably the more anticipated set of analyses. Of the nine states we had previously benchmarked, only one, Michigan, had met our demanding standards for having high-quality tests. So we're not an organization that, because we like tests, we just go out and say everybody's tests are great. We were happy to find that New Jersey also has high-quality, world-class assessments.

Let me give you a few reasons why, and I want to emphasize these. In the fourth-, eighth-, and eleventh-grade English and mathematics test, by and large, the tests measure important knowledge and skills that form the core of the content standards. They measure these concepts in challenging and meaningful ways. This isn't drill and kill, fill in the bubble. The tests tap both basic skills like understanding the main idea in reading and whole-number computation, add, subtract, multiply, divide. And they also tap higher level reasoning and problem-solving skills and encourage teachers to teach the kind of deeper thinking in the classroom.

This is what really set New Jersey apart. This is something most other state tests we reviewed failed to do, which is move beyond the basics and get to the more interesting, more complex, creative thinking. And perhaps most importantly, we found that the tests were rigorous yet reasonable for all students. All of these tests should stretch students and schools to do better and to learn in deeper and important ways, but they're not unattainable standards in tests.

We did find some areas for improvement. Jay mentioned the fourth-grade literacy test -- we felt was too long. There were some problems scoring the reading and writing tests. The math test, particularly at Grade 11,

was actually too easy. It was more like a seventh- or eighth-grade math test. And this was the one that was being field-tested to hold students accountable for graduation.

We told the Department this, and I think that they're listening and acting to our findings. Because of the study, they also asked us to take a similar hard look, with the support of Merck, at the science standards in tests. And we'll have that ready by the end of this year.

I just want to underscore that we think the tests require continuous improvement process -- that no testing system is perfect. Even though we liked these tests, we think that there needs to be a continued refinement, evolution. Decisions need to be made about how to continue them, when to administer them. There needs to be ongoing benchmarking by other groups, not just Achieve. That should be part of what is daily life in an assessment program.

Let me just conclude a little bit by talking about the Federal law that's going to come down. It's not clear, right now, some of what -- some of the significant differences between the House and Senate bill are -- how those will be resolved, but there will be three main elements that have already been agreed to.

States will be asked to test in Grades 3 through 8 in reading and math. That's not going away. States will be required to hold schools accountable -- not districts, schools. And that accountability must take into account narrowing the achievement gaps between socioeconomic and ethnic groups. And states will have to verify their own state results with tests like the NAEP. There's some dissention in the house about whether that should be the

national assessment or other standardized tests, but the President seems pretty firm on using the NAEP.

Right now, only 15 states have annual testing in 3 through 8. Only seven of those use their own standards-based tests. So this is a huge challenge.

SPEAKER COLLINS: If I may jump in, because I was going to wait until later on this, but I have to do it now-- You just said, or I thought I heard you say a while back, that 47 states now have a testing program. But now you're saying only 15 have annual testing. What do those other 32 do?

MS. VRANEK: Most states have the kind of program that New Jersey has for Grades 4, 8, and 10.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Oh, I see.

MS. VRANEK: They just test once in elementary school.

SPEAKER COLLINS: There are 15 states that test every grade every year.

MS. VRANEK: In Grades 3 through 8.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Okay. All right.

MS. VRANEK: And some of those test high school, some of them don't.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Well, if I may, since I have this, and before you moved into what is going to happen -- kind of declarative that it will happen, you said-- I couldn't help but think I've been down that road in New Jersey, too -- that this was going to happen. And all of a sudden, nothing moved. I'm not saying testing, but other issues.

MS. VRANEK: Right.

SPEAKER COLLINS: But what, in your opinion, just Jennifer Vranek, not Achieve-- In 1996, there was -- my term, not yours -- limited testing in this country. Now, 47 states test. What's happened in those five years to have everybody running around testing?

MS. VRANEK: Well, a number of things. We started looking at what European and Asian countries were doing, which was having regular, ongoing assessments that matched the curriculum. And we looked at the results from international settings like the third international math and science study.

SPEAKER COLLINS: When you look at that -- this is the personal bias I have -- do you consider, whomever these people are that make these judgments -- the various cultural aspects of what's going on and the value of education, the "freedoms," whatever that term means -- just the way you said that -- I'm surely not jumping on you -- that--

You know, they looked at the results and said, "Oh, my gosh, we'd better test." My results would be-- Here's what I would say, and I could be out of the mainstream. "Oh, my gosh" -- if I cared that they were doing better-- And on a personal note -- make sure you get it in there -- I don't care. But if I cared, I'd say, "Hey, we have to do a better job." I wouldn't worry, "Oh, let's expand our test." But you think that's what really moved it.

MS. VRANEK: Well, I think Mr. Landgraf would want to say a little bit about the global economy and why we need to care about how other nations are doing and how well-prepared their workers are.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Well, we don't really have to go through that debate. That's just me who's out of the mainstream, who is one of the 90 percent who doesn't know a thing about a computer. But I'm not applying for

any more jobs, so that's enough. (laughter) So we don't have to go through that debate.

MS. VRANEK: Let me just say that in these international studies with the 45 nations, they didn't just take a test. They looked at the curriculum. They had surveys of parents and teachers and schools. They looked at all the factors that surround education in these countries.

And the correlation-- It's not always a correlation between family background or resources. Some of the highest achieving countries in the world spend half of what we spend, have many more cultural and linguistic differences in their countries, and it's because they have common standards, high expectations, a common curriculum. They have textbooks that every kid in the country uses that are similar and of high quality. They have regular assessment. They have outstanding teacher education. They have all the kind of pieces that we're trying to put in place with standards and testing that are just the beginning of reform.

SPEAKER COLLINS: But should we start with testing and go that way, or do-- If they're needed, as a teacher and college graduate -- better teaching standards of education and so on--

I mean, it seems to me, the way you stated it -- "Hey, we looked around the country -- looked around the world, we tested. And under this test, this country was doing better. And wow, we'd better do something." And we're moving right to the testing aspect. But since you've mentioned his name twice already--

Sir.

We're going to get to you, Ms. Doyle, or you could jump in.

And members can jump in.

MR. LANDGRAF: Mr. Speaker, I think the point that's attempting to be made, and I think it's a good one, is that it's basically-- Education is the fundamental foundation for everything we do in our economic and political system. I don't think you ought to take any given country and compare it against what the United States does. I think you do need to say this. If we look at the results of this study, look at what's happening in American education, one must draw the conclusion that our students and our school systems are not preparing our students to operate in a global economy. Over the long term, this lack of preparation threatens the United States. It just does.

I was chairman of DuPont Euro. I've lived in Switzerland. I'll tell you, I don't want to-- If I wanted to live there, I would have stayed there. I like it here better. But I grew up in Newark, New Jersey. And I will tell you the kind of educational preparation that goes on in those school systems is very, very, very bad. And the long-term for this is that the United States economy will suffer, and New Jersey will suffer. So it's not testing that's the issue, it's what kind of resources we put into education vis-à-vis our international colleagues. And I believe that's what Ms. Vranek was trying to point out.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Thank you.

Ms. Doyle, at least get into the foray, and then we'll--

TRUDY DOYLE: Before I get into the foray, I just have a question for Jennifer.

You mentioned that seven states use their own test. In your studies, did you come up with what kinds of tests the other states are using? Are they using nationally standardized tests?

MS. VRANEK: The other eight of the fifteen?

MS. DOYLE: Right, there's 15 altogether. Seven use their own test, eight use--

MS. VRANEK: Eight use national, commercial tests like the Stanford 9.

MS. DOYLE: Okay. Thank you. I just wanted to clarify that.

Just a quick background-- Bob and I have been working together for -- I think it's going on three years very soon. We have been Co-Chairs of the New Jersey Association of School Administrators' Ad-Hoc Committee on Assessment.

I served as a superintendent up until a year ago. I was a superintendent for 11 years. And that's how I got involved in the Assessment Committee.

SPEAKER COLLINS: If I may, where were you the superintendent?

MS. DOYLE: Bedminster, in Somerset County.

And I was very active in our Association -- got involved with the assessment piece at the behest of my friends in Somerset County, as you know -- Assemblyman Biondi is well aware, I think. And Somerset County, I might point out, is a very high-achieving county within the State of New Jersey.

Although I am not currently serving, right now, as the superintendent, I have maintained my volunteer activities in the field -- in the area of assessment, because I believe it's critically important to education in our state. I am continuing to be a member of NJASA. And I think we need to be a strong voice as educational leaders for the children in our state.

So we have allowed this initiative to consume us, now, for several years. And I want to begin by saying that many of the things that Jay said are very true. And I know Bob would agree with me that the changes that have occurred over the last two or three years have been remarkable.

You asked the question earlier about teaching to the test. Frankly, two years ago, you could not teach to the test, because no one knew what would be on the test.

I, as a superintendent, believe it or not, was forbidden to look at the test. There was a shroud of secrecy around these tests that was almost FBI-ing, if you will. And a lot of that has changed.

When NJASA, and other educational groups, began to have dialogue with the Department of Education, the Department of Education began to listen to our concerns. And obviously, one of the major concerns was -- of educators -- if we are going to be giving these tests to our children, we need to be familiar with this different test.

Now, you mentioned-- We heard a lot about assessment from Jennifer, which I thought was really a good overview. The kinds of nationally standardized tests that most districts give annually, by the way, already do Grades 3 through 8. Nationally standardized tests like the Iowa Test, for example, and Terra Nova, Stanford-Binet, etc. -- very different than the test that is coming from our Department of Education. So it required a major shift in the way people looked at testing in order to be prepared for this test.

I think that the Department did a very good job over the last year or so of trying to give educators a kind of information that they needed in order to make children, and this is the important issue, comfortable with the test. If

children had always been taking tests, as someone mentioned earlier -- fill in the bubble -- and suddenly they're given a test where they have to answer a question in a paragraph, that's a different way of approaching testing. And so we've made some progress in that area. The Department has listened, I think, to the concerns of the educational community, as you heard earlier, in regards to the length of the test.

There's one statement, though, I need to make, because I think it's critically important to this discussion. In all of the meetings that Bob and I have attended with our colleagues, no one has ever said that they are against testing, that they are against being accountable. And everyone that I know of in this field is supportive of a graduation test. And I would say probably 90 percent of our colleagues are extremely supportive of the Grade 8 test, because the Grade 8 test will give you a good overall assessment of a student and what you need to do to make sure that when they get to eleventh grade, they're going to pass that high-stakes graduation test.

The furor over testing erupted when we began giving this test to our fourth-graders. And I believe, and I still believe, the reason there was a furor was because of the age of the children involved. This test, which is supposed to help us become accountable, has turned out to be a very high-stakes test, and it needn't be that.

We have suggested to the Department of Education that a -- in our opinion, a better approach, if we need to have a test at the fourth-grade, would be to have a test very similar to NAEP, which would be a test that would measure program accountability, as opposed to student accountability. And we believe giving districts feedback on the programs they offer will enable them to

prepare their students to pass the test, if you will, in eighth grade and in eleventh grade.

Fortunately-- And we still give Commissioner Hespe a tremendous amount of honor and credit for the fact that over a year ago he formed a statewide assessment committee to look at the three areas that have not yet been tested by the Department of Ed. And he gave us an opportunity to work over a nine-month period of time to give him recommendations about other ways to test, besides a paper and pencil test. That report is in the Department with Commissioner Gagliardi. And we are supportive of that report in that what it says is, good assessment takes place in the classroom. Good assessment means teachers assess their students on a daily basis, which they already do -- just have to train them how to do some of that differently. And that is where we are able to adjust the way we teach to improve learning.

And one of the criticisms that has come upon the State for the testing system is that these tests have become extraordinarily high-stakes tests. And they are snapshots in time. They are one day where -- actually they last four to five days -- where students are under a great deal of pressure to perform at that moment, because those results have a lot to do with what will happen to their educational futures.

I just want to point out, too, that I think one of the things that sets American education apart from education anywhere else in the world is that we offer an education to all of our children. And if we can help all children become literate to enter society -- that they can read and write and do fundamental mathematics, then I think we have accomplished a great deal.

The purpose of public education is to create citizens in a

democracy. And I think that does set us apart from the kinds of educational opportunities in other countries in the world where there is certainly a segregation of who is permitted to proceed through the educational system and who is not. And I think we have taken upon ourselves a tremendous task in saying that all children can learn. And I think we're-- I think our State's wed to that. And I think educators believe that. And I think that we need to find, especially -- and I will keep saying this, probably, forever-- I think we need to look at doing things differently for fourth-graders. Fourth-graders are nine and ten years old. And I think we need to look at that and relook at what we do in fourth grade. And that's really been our emphasis, I think, all along.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Well, before you speak, Commissioner, let me just say it seems to be, at least at the core -- there seems to be unanimity among the five of you. My question then is, am I bumping into the wrong people who have concerns, or are you five out of the mainstream of thought of what's going on?

And one other thing. Particularly from Mr. Bumpus and you, Ms. Doyle, it was -- even as you concluded -- we just have to do better with the fourth grade and so on.

And when you were speaking, Mr. Bumpus, it was, we have to come up with a plan that is -- my term -- better. Whose challenge is that? Is that not the Department's? Is that not Mr. Doolan's responsibility? That was not a rhetorical question. You may answer. I just wanted to--

MR. BUMPUS: There's plenty of expertise around the country with good assessment practice. In fact, there's a coalition that's been formed called the Coalition for Responsible Assessment in New Jersey, and it's being

endorsed by every major educational group, including the NJEA. And we've commissioned with Grant Wiggins, who's one of the foremost expertise in the area of assessment, to help us with this project.

And basically, what we're looking at is assessment as a core in the teaching-learning dynamic. What we're using good assessment practice within the context of the class, within the context of the course, particularly in high school -- for instance, the world language.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Well, when you-- Who is dealing with Grant Wiggins?

MR. BUMPUS: NJEA, NJPSA, NJASA.

SPEAKER COLLINS: And whatever you come up with, whatever that may be, it still falls back on the Department, though.

MR. BUMPUS: Yes, but--

SPEAKER COLLINS: I mean, they're the ones that are going to have to develop a plan, be it for fourth-graders or eighth-graders or any other grade, and whether it's from Grant Wiggins and your organization or anyone else.

I mean, it seems to me, as we're all getting along here, that it's the Department that has to step up and respond to those challenges that you say are still out there and to developing tests that are appropriate -- at least the approval of them, if not the actual development of the test. So what are you doing in the Department?

ACTING ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER DOOLAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would believe that the Department has stepped up and has developed an aggressive assessment -- dissemination plan to ensure that teachers in the

classroom, as well as other administrators and parents, know exactly the nature of the assessments and are trained in how best to change teaching and learning to help students achieve on those.

Five years ago, when the standards were being implemented, we began this effort. And over the last five years, it's continued. We've sat down with major associations across the state to try to allay some of the fears about the assessment. The assessment is secure, and it was necessary to keep a lot of the information away from superintendents and teachers and that sort of thing to uphold the security of the assessments. But as we've moved through this, we've been able to disseminate sample items, hold tests that give teachers and administrators an idea of the items that are being assessed.

And so I concluded my statement by saying that we are evolving through this process, that we've taken our responsibility very strongly, and that we have responded by opening up the process so that, most importantly, teachers and administrators know how best to adapt their curriculum and change their instruction to ensure that the students perform best on the assessment.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Now, that's my problem, and maybe I don't understand all of this, but here's what I think I just heard you say: that they have to adapt their curriculum to have them perform well on this standard test. Shouldn't the curriculum be developed and then the test made up to see if they're learning in the curriculum?

ACTING ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER DOOLAN: Well, that's exactly how it occurs.

SPEAKER COLLINS: That's not what I heard you say. Maybe I heard it wrong.

ACTING ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER DOOLAN: Number one, the standards point the way. And of course, the standards have been developed in concert, really, with the entire state -- teachers, administrators, parents, boards of ed, and most importantly, the business community.

The standards drive curriculum and instruction. And we've developed frameworks that give thousands of examples of how the standards can be implemented in the classroom level.

Professional development of teachers and administrators helps understand what teachers need to do differently in the classroom to be able to work within the standards-based reform. And then the assessment comes in and takes a very small part of that reform to ensure that students and programs have adapted to the standards.

MR. BUMPUS: And that, in the ideal world, is the way it should happen, but in the real world, that's not the way it's happened in New Jersey, and Jennifer just spoke to that.

And, Jennifer, could I ask you to reemphasize what Achieve found with the disconnect between the standards and the assessment, particularly in fourth grade?

MS. VRANEK: Sure.

I just want to say that what we found was that the standards were so vague that it was difficult for practicing teachers to know what was tested.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Now, do you mean our core curriculum standards--

MS. VRANEK: I do. I mean the core curriculum content standards. Like I said--

SPEAKER COLLINS: --are so vague--

MS. VRANEK: So vague.

SPEAKER COLLINS: --those that are promulgated by the Department of Education and approved by the State Board of Education. Is that what you mean?

MS. VRANEK: And that were adopted after 7000 New Jersey citizens helped write them.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Right. And a committee of legislators in the Assembly offered their advice. And actually, we were shocked they even listened to a couple of them. Some think -- just to give you cover, but that's besides the point. Those standards are what we're talking about.

MS. VRANEK: Right.

SPEAKER COLLINS: They are vague.

MS. VRANEK: They were written five years ago, before-- Like I said, only 14 states had done that. So this was a very new enterprise in American education.

SPEAKER COLLINS: But why would it matter when they were written, as to their vagary? Why? If this is the curriculum that we're putting forth, this is the standard we have, why would it matter what other states are doing and what they're testing? This is what New Jersey wants their students to learn.

MS. VRANEK: Well, I could try to give you a concrete example, if that would help.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Please.

MS. VRANEK: One of the very few standards for learning to read-- And the New Jersey standard is read literally, inferentially, and critically. That could mean 40 different things to a classroom English teacher, and it really does. And it doesn't really say, does the child -- can they read *Little Red Riding Hood*, or can they read *Romeo and Juliet*? What can they do when they do that?

So what happens when you write a test -- and this is the point I think Bob was making -- the test makers have to make the choices. And Kurt could talk to that. They have to say this is the level of the rigor of the quality -- and the quality of the reading, these are the kinds of questions. Are we just asking did Little Red Riding Hood have a red hood on, or did she really -- why did she do the kinds of things she did? And the test made those choices. So it does matter when the standards are vague, because then it's left up to the testing company and the State Department to make those choices.

SPEAKER COLLINS: But it only matters with regard to what the test says. It doesn't mean anything with regard to what the child learned, whether it was -- the goal was the red color of the hood, or was there so much more involved with was there really a grandmother, or was the wolf along the way, or was it a cheetah? What do they have to do with anything other than the child learning how to read and how to observe what they're reading?

The way I understand it, and surely we are all equals here, it's just that I have the button that can cut you off-- (laughter) But other than that, we're all equal here. So you could say, Mr. Speaker, or you could even call me Jack, I don't care -- just say, "You're out of here. You don't understand any of this."

But what I keep hearing is we have the standards. We have a *Little Red Riding Hood*. You said it's a concrete example. But it comes back to we don't know what to test. I'm much more concerned about what we teach, not what we test.

Anybody?

MR. BUMPUS: And in the meantime, we hold individual students accountable. And I think Trudy's point was well-taken when she said, why can't we look at what NAEP does. When Kurt talked about New Jersey's results on NAEP, he was really talking about matrix sampling. That's how NAEP is done. It tests the program.

Give us some time to adjust the teaching and the learning that needs to take place in order for a standard to be reached before you hold nine- and ten-year-olds accountable. The results go home, they're printed in newspapers, districts are held accountable, schools are held accountable, parents are going off the wall. If we're going to go into a very complex and difficult reform movement, which is going to take at least 10 years, let us go into it one step at a time and not hold these kids accountable.

In fact, New Jersey ASA has a proposal out there that if the GEPA results are attainable in all three areas for three years in a row, that each district should be exempt from having to test students in fourth grade. That's been put out there. We also voted for a moratorium on testing because of the fourth-grade language arts results.

These are reactions from professionals. They're not done easily, because there's a notion out there that we're just discombobulated. It's a very systemic approach to the standards-based reform.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Well, are we discombobulated, Kurt, or is it-- Do we have a bad test?

MR. LANDGRAF: I wouldn't comment on my competitor's test. I will tell you that I agree with what has been said here. These are becoming high-stakes tests. And as such, as you may know, Jack, most states don't require the testing that they use to pass technical standards. They basically require that they go with the low cost bidder. If you walk away from anything here, I would appreciate, Mr. Speaker, that you remember that if they are going to become high-stakes tests, which they are, there should be more attention paid not to the low cost of the test, but the quality of the assessment standards.

ACTING ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER DOOLAN: And Mr. Speaker--

SPEAKER COLLINS: I will surely walk away with that.

ACTING ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER DOOLAN: --believe me, I believe that we do look at the quality of the proposals that come in. We don't always take the lowest bidder, Kurt.

The other thing that I want to mention-- Bob just said that this is discombobulating -- that we need to take one step at a time, and we need to take our time. I would contend, based on what Kurt had to say, that we don't have enough time to take our time -- that we have processed this very logically. A lot of people may not understand it, but we certainly do, and we've tried to get the word out -- that we've started with standards that the State has agreed these are the things students should know and be able to do.

If they are vague, it was because seven years ago, when we began to develop these, we wrestled very carefully with the locally controlled issue and

the fact that the State did not have a state curriculum, nor did -- nor had we ever required this type of initiative before.

In addition to that, we have frameworks in every area, which certainly do provide a lot of direction to curriculum developers and to teachers in the classroom. They were developed with teachers. So there are hundreds of examples of what teachers need to know to be able to focus on the standards.

The third thing is that we don't develop the assessments in a vacuum. We have assessment committees composed of teachers. And the teachers develop those aspects of the standards that they want assessed by the testing company, and those are published. They're called test specifications. Every district gets copies of them. So that further refines the standards -- the frameworks to the key aspects of the standards that need to be assessed so that if you look at that logical progression and then provide professional development to teachers in the district based on those three items, not to mention the professional development that's provided across the state by myriads of associations, by content area committees, and others, colleges and universities, then the system does appear to be logical to ensure that teachers have the knowledge to be able to do what it is they need to do.

I would also say, finally, that the assessments at the fourth- and eighth-grade level are not high-stakes. I would agree that the graduation test will be, because you can't get a high school diploma unless you pass it with a special review assessment.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Well, why did you say that fourth and eighth grade aren't high-stakes?

ACTING ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER DOOLAN: Because of the fact that there is nothing done to the student based on the result.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Well, what is done to the school?

ACTING ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER DOOLAN: Well, the school needs to carefully analyze the results.

SPEAKER COLLINS: No, what is done to it?

ACTING ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER DOOLAN: We do nothing.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Do we cut their funding? Do we do anything?

ACTING ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER DOOLAN: We don't cut their funding.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Does Mr. Bumpus have to take a pay cut at Cumberland Regional?

ACTING ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER DOOLAN: No, he doesn't, not unless the board of education has something to say about it.

SPEAKER COLLINS: So we do nothing with the test other than, as I've heard, we get it into the newspaper, and the few people who read the newspaper--

ACTING ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER DOOLAN: The newspaper reports the results. It is-- The assessment and performance is part of the State monitoring system. And if a district is -- or a school is below the proficiency level, then we have a system called adequate yearly progress, where we expect the school and the district to incrementally--

SPEAKER COLLINS: And if they don't do it?

ACTING ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER DOOLAN: That's a monitoring issue. And the district would be in conditional certification of something like that until progress is made. We believe there has to be accountability, but at the same time, at the fourth- and eighth-grade level, it's not necessarily focused on the student.

MS. VRANEK: Mr. Speaker, I would actually just say that New Jersey is a low-stake state compared to the other 49.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Well, are all our--

MS. VRANEK: Some states take over schools entirely. And that's not happening under the standards and accountability system for academic--

SPEAKER COLLINS: Are all of the stakes going to be increased by the Federal involvement? Is that plan, as you say, that we'll pass -- I'll accept that from you. Is it going to contain a loss of revenue to those districts who don't succeed, as I believe President Bush has suggested -- or at least I think they do in Texas. Do you think that will be part of the Federal plan?

MS. VRANEK: No, the plan would require the state to hold the school accountable. And then the Federal government will hold the state accountable.

SPEAKER COLLINS: But we've already just said in New Jersey, with all due respect to our great Department of Education, we're really not holding them accountable. We put something in the newspaper, and the superintendents and principals get nervous for a day, then it goes away.

And that's just like being in politics, Bob. Don't worry about it. They'll write that stuff, and it's in the bottom of a birdcage a couple days later.

Assemblyman Biondi.

ASSEMBLYMAN BIONDI: Thank you.

I don't know if I know any more now than I did before.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Well, we're going to test you in a little bit.

(laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN BIONDI: But what I'm hearing is nobody objecting to the testing, but I'm hearing the defense of the testing, and I'm hearing comments saying we have a problem with the type of test that's coming out. And apparently, one size doesn't fit all. We're having a different interpretation of the standards. They're vague. Is this oversimplistic to have a district interpret the standards and have a test drafted for their interpretation of those standards, whether it's *Little Red Riding Hood* or whether it's whatever else?

I mean, that seems to me where the problem is lying, unless I'm missing something. And I'm relying on you guys, you're the experts. I'm just a little country boy.

MR. BUMPUS: Well, we're in the reality -- an age of accountability in education. We're not going to escape that. We've accepted that in the field.

So that's why we assent to some type of standards-based testing. What we're saying, as far as the Association for School Administrators, is narrow the breadth and scope of the testing to make it reasonable and manageable.

When I talked about validity, my question is, how many test items does a standard make. When you have two weeks of testing in order to test seven content areas, you better make sure they're valid, because somebody's going to sue us if they don't reach the cutoff and aren't able to graduate high

school. We're going to be sued. And the lawyers will come in and make sure that that test is valid and reliable. And if you test in seven content areas, I don't see how you can make it valid, let alone reliable.

So we're saying, narrow the tests. If we're going to have to have a test, narrow it to mathematics and language arts literacy and science. And let us assess, in different ways, performance-based assessments within the context of the school or the classroom.

So we know the reality is we're going to have to assess our students.

ASSEMBLYMAN BIONDI: Let me ask you this, if I may--

MR. BUMPUS: But there's a difference between testing--

ASSEMBLYMAN BIONDI: What prevents us from doing that? Now I'm going to the business side of it. What is preventing us from communicating, getting together, and drafting something like this that works?

MR. BUMPUS: Well, that's what we're trying to do.

MS. VRANEK: Well, I think there's one key difference, though, and it--

ASSEMBLYMAN BIONDI: Nobody wants to be that specific.

MS. VRANEK: --gets back to the Speaker's question about what's the goal of the statewide assessment program -- what's the purpose? And it's something that locally administered, district-based -- school-based assessments can't do, which is tell the whole state how every student in the school in the state is achieving, and look at the differences between socioeconomic groups and really start to say, "As a state, this is an issue we care about. We care about equity."

And if you leave it to districts, one district's going to have high achievement, the next is going to have average, the next is going to have low. There's no common measure for assessing that. And you can also have districts that will create assessments that will make them look better in certain areas.

MS. DOYLE: We have not suggested that. What we have suggested is that the Department of Education develop performance assessments -- basically a menu that districts could choose from, again, giving districts lots of freedom to choose. But it had to be from a State-approved menu of choices -- and that districts, during their normal monitoring cycles, would be monitored on how they are administering those tests and how they're reporting their results to their public. And we have made that recommendation to the Department.

We've also asked the Department to explore the great potential of technology for students to do self-assessment. As you are probably well aware, you can sit down at a computer right now -- and the gentleman from ETS can back me up on this -- and take the GRE exam. And you can, as soon as you're done with taking the exam on a computer, have your results immediately.

There are lots of opportunities for children to become good at self-assessment and how well they're doing. And we feel that the Department could, with its resources, develop that area of assessment.

And one more thing I wanted to mention that I think is really important, and it's been spoken about here several times-- We have, from the viewpoint of our association, asked this of the Department over and over again, but understanding the Department gets its funding from you--

Years ago, we had three academies. There was an academy run by the Department of Ed in the north of our state, in the central part of our state,

and in the southern part of our state. Those academies were probably second to none in the kind of staff development that they provided for our teachers and our administrators. The Department has some of the finest professionals who were housed there who were giving the training.

Several years ago, the Department disbanded the academies. I don't personally know the reasons. I'm sure part of it was fiscal, and there may have been some other reasons. But we have asked over and over again, and this is an area, certainly, you could help with, for the Department to reestablish those academies for faculty administrators, because having academies that are funded by the State of New Jersey provides districts with the ability to train their staff, because, as you know, staff development is very expensive.

And what is it we want to train our staff? We want to train them in the ability to teach differently. And the kinds of teaching that we may have done 20 or 30 years ago -- that kind of teaching does not work with the 21st century youngster who is in our classroom. So we need to change the way that we approach our youngsters.

One last one, and I think this is very important, having come from Somerset County, on behalf of our colleagues who are not fortunate enough to work in affluent communities in the State of New Jersey. We have colleagues who have come to our meetings and said to us, we need -- and it's particularly in the *Abbott* districts -- we need to put all of our energies into getting our children to be able to read and write and do fundamental mathematics.

It takes all our time, all of the school day, all of our energy to accomplish that. That has to be our mission. It has to be our goal. And we feel we need to be able to be freed up from some of the other requirements for some

of these other things we would love for everyone to have -- to be able to speak Spanish and French and Russian and everything else. But our children first need to be able to read and write in English.

And that point has been made to us, as a group, over and over again. And I think it's important that we remember that we are not all facing the same challenges in the classroom. We are not all facing the same challenges in our communities. And we need to look at the broadness of the State of New Jersey and what kinds of things might work better for some of our colleagues who are struggling with poverty and other socioeconomic issues. And that is why professional development is important. And that is why giving districts more latitude in how they assess students is extremely important.

SPEAKER COLLINS: I got a head shake from Mr. Landgraf on that.

MR. LANDGRAF: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. I think that that's exactly the point. As a citizen of this state, what I would like to see you do is invest more money in education -- in our kids -- recognize there's a sociodemographic difference in how kids in school districts do, more money into professional development, greater support to the Department of Education, and then say for all that increased investment -- and that's what it is, an investment in your future -- that like all other investments in this society, there needs to be accountability for that. And the way to do that is through appropriate assessment of incremental change based upon the new investment in these communities.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Assemblyman.

ASSEMBLYMAN BARNES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I feel that there are pressures on the education system here in the State of New Jersey that not one of you can address.

My wife taught for 32 years as a reading teacher in Edison. And just prior to her retirement, she received a call in August -- a hurry-up call to all the teachers in Edison at this one particular school, because when they registered the kids, they found out that 60 percent of them came from either a one- or no-parent family. And it was such a dramatic change in the culture that they had a special meeting of the teachers so they could address this subject.

Now, what we're faced with here in America, and I'm not a doomsayer-- I think the American educational system is the greatest in the world because of exactly what Ms. Doyle said, that we're educating everybody. We're not from Switzerland or Germany or Japan where only the best and the brightest -- the rest of them go drive a truck.

I have four children who went through the public schools here. And they're all extremely college educated -- master's degrees. And I give the benefit to the educational system that they had in Edison.

The problem that's facing the American education system is the breakdown of the American family.

And my wife would teach for 32 years up in Edison. She teaches reading. She goes to the PTA meetings. The parents of the kids who need the help don't show up. And that is an area that none of us, the Legislature or the Department of Education, U.S. or State, could do anything about.

The problem in America today is it's a breakdown of the family. And the educational system can do everything they want. They can get the greatest teachers. They can get the greatest classrooms.

But what happened to my wife one time-- A little kid comes into school at 9:00 in the morning crying, because his mother didn't give him -- or his guardian didn't give him his snack for 6:00 at night when he's over at the YMCA waiting for a ride home.

Now, I'm on the board of directors at the YMCA up in Edison. We used to have one or two kids -- latchkey kids. Now it looks like St. Mary's Orphanage. I mean, it's mobbed with kids. There's a snowstorm in New York or-- We had a bunch of them. We had to put them in the police department, because the parents never showed up to pick them up for a lot of reasons.

So you have a situation that's facing education -- the breakdown of the family -- one-parent family -- no-parent family -- both parents working. And it's a situation that I don't think the American educational system has ever been faced with.

So we can do all the great technical work, but there are areas beyond your control. I think you do a great job. I think, quite honestly, that there are too many groups out there telling the professionals what to do. And that really confuses it.

Now, there's a bill that was introduced in the Assembly -- I don't think it's been pulled -- to do testing in the first grade. Now, when I researched the bill, the author said a parent came to me and complained that the child wasn't doing that well and they want to have tests in the first grade.

Now, I belong to the reading association of Middlesex County, and we discussed this bill. All the people there on that committee -- illiteracy and reading committee were opposed to the bill.

I don't know what you feel, Mr. Doolan, and whether or not testing -- you're talking about the fourth grade. And I think the bill is still in the hopper to do the testing on the first grade.

ACTING ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER DOOLAN: Right.

ASSEMBLYMAN BARNES: What do you think about that?

ACTING ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER DOOLAN: We're focused on our current assessment program, or a-- (laughter)

SPEAKER COLLINS: You should switch. You come over here. That was very good.

ASSEMBLYMAN BARNES: Jack Collins couldn't have answered it any better.

ACTING ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER DOOLAN: If I could just--

ASSEMBLYMAN BARNES: Listen. I have bills in there. They come over from the AG, the Department of Ed -- Department head-- That bill's no good. You've got all the problems. And I'm sure that if it gets up before a committee, you guys are going to be over there saying yes or no, correct?

ACTING ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER DOOLAN: I believe we've said no.

ASSEMBLYMAN BARNES: Huh?

ACTING ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER DOOLAN: I believe we have said no, at least that's what I--

If I could just comment on the first part of your-- You do hit on a critical issue in education today. But I believe there are teachers that are

currently working in the program that are working very successfully with those students. We probably have to do more, and we are.

But the promise of standards-based reform is that every student, no matter what racial, ethnic background, no matter what kind of one-, two-, three-parent family they come from, will be addressed in the most appropriate way. And that is the wonderful promise about this in America and how we can address the needs of all students.

MR. BUMPUS: If I might jump in, also, Mr. Barnes, with your comments-- A few years ago, Commissioner Klagholz talked about mission creep. And he said that what was happening in our public school system was we were being the only child care givers in the country -- and in all the issues with child care was falling at the feet of the public education system. And mission creep was coming in. So the whole notion with standards was trying to get it focused again on what our primary purpose is. And that is to help students learn.

Our contention with the statewide assessment system is that is it going to help our students learn, or is it just going to sift and sort? Is it going to be like the standardized test, which will tell us how many people are in the 95th percentile or the 85th percentile? And the elite among us will be very happy, and they'll go to the postsecondary institutions, which are the best in the world, by the way. But the vast majority of our students, the 70 percent that are in the middle, are going to be-- They're going to be forgotten again. We'll have our special education population, which is approaching 20 percent across the state. And they're exempt from the statewide testing program, by the way. We're going to do the APA and the SRAs and all the other acronyms.

What about the 70 percent that we really have to focus on? And that's what we're talking about with the statewide assessment system. We need to narrow the scope of this thing to make it manageable and to make it valid and reliable. And that's what we're trying to influence our State Department of Education-- They are listening, and they are adjusting.

We know we're in an age of accountability. We should be held accountable. But we need to narrow it so we can manage it well and supplement it with better assessment practices, which will help our students learn better.

ASSEMBLYMAN BARNES: I agree with you. My feeling is that why should a teacher be held accountable for an area that he or she has absolutely nothing to do with? The child coming into school at seven years old-

MR. BUMPUS: They shouldn't be. There's a lot of other factors, and your point is well-taken.

ASSEMBLYMAN BARNES: Ignatius Loyola, I think, in the 15th century said, "Give me a child until he's seven, and do with him what you may." It's a tough job for a child who comes from, say, a dysfunctional family, and all of a sudden they're placed in the first grade. And the teacher's got to contend not only to teach the child, but all the other problems that the child brings to school with him. But that's another matter.

I'd like to make one comment here. And I'm sure that-- I hope I have the attention of the Speaker.

SPEAKER COLLINS: I'm hanging on your every word. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN BARNES: I have a bill in the Assembly. It's been there for two years. And it's to create a license plate with the map of New Jersey on it with an open book with the logo "read to succeed."

Now, if we can have Penn State, Notre Dame, candy dances, retired telephone people--

SPEAKER COLLINS: Assemblyman Barnes--

ASSEMBLYMAN BARNES: I can't understand why I can't get this bill through the Assembly.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Well, you never asked me. (laughter) And guess what? I'm glad you asked me. I like that idea.

Is it in committee?

ASSEMBLYMAN BARNES: Well, I went to committee, and I said to the chairman of the committee that-- I checked. I found out there are only 1500 Notre Dame alumni in the State of New Jersey.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Be careful now, be careful. Don't hit the Irish now, Assemblyman. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN BARNES: Then the chairman of the committee said, "You better not go in the Assembly and tell the Majority Leader that, because you're going to be in trouble." But I think the read to succeed should be a gangbusters license in the State of New Jersey.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Well, I'll tell you what-- What chairman is that, DeCroce?

ASSEMBLYMAN BARNES: It was Alex, yes.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Well, see, he left. We'll get him right now when he comes back.

I will ask him to consider that bill, Assemblyman.

ASSEMBLYMAN BARNES: Thank you very much.

SPEAKER COLLINS: We don't know if we've accomplished anything over there, but look how happy he's going to be right now. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN BARNES: I think it's a good bill.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Let me go back to something that I was going to ask at the end, but you opened it. And we are near the end. And we thank you all for all of the involvement here -- the end of this particular panel. This just starts us towards the next get-together that we may be dealing with with regard to testing.

But when you just mentioned the special education students are removed-- In the Sunday *Star-Ledger* on June the 3rd, three weeks ago, there was a story by John Mooney. It says, I quote, "Among the findings in nearly 60 of the largest districts, State monitors found a dramatic rise in the number of special education students in Paterson, particularly for the fourth and eighth grades when the statewide tests are taken." In Newark schools -- untrained substitutes. It goes on. I don't want to just pick on those.

It seems that when the test results are answered, anyone who doesn't succeed is moved into a special education status.

Reaction to that by anyone? Is that what tests are supposed to do? Is that what the Department is allowing, or is that what devious school administrators are doing to trick us?

Anybody can answer.

ACTING ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER DOOLAN: Number one, special ed students are included in our State assessment program. We've

encouraged all of the districts to include as many of those students, if not all of those students, in terms of the assessment program. We've provided accommodations for many of those students -- a longer period of time in which to take the test, maybe smaller rooms in which to accomplish it. We've changed the forms based on the student's disability.

We've also included limited English proficient students in the statewide assessment program. This is an inclusive program, and all students are definitely included.

We are working to ensure that students who have severe disabilities -- those students who are in our day training centers, our regional day schools -- that they are participating in a standards-based reform environment, as well. And I mentioned in the beginning that we are developing a new assessment for students with those conditions. And that will be piloted this coming year.

SPEAKER COLLINS: But are people shifting students around after the test? Anyone?

MR. BUMPUS: Well, some of those special education students are exempt from the monitoring elements in the accountability system, because make no mistake, Mr. Doolan did characterize it well early. It's an accountability system. It includes assessment and monitoring. So many of those students are exempt from the monitoring percentages -- the cutoffs the schools have to attain in order to maintain good status around the state.

So I don't know whether there's shifting going on or not. All I know is that when I was in school, I didn't know what special education was. Today, we have 20 percent or so of our students classified with learning

disabilities. And I've heard it said that virtually all of us have some form of learning disability.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Speak for yourself. (laughter)

Well, let me say, and I said this before, and I just have to get it in. It's just one of my little things. And I've done this when we dealt with the special ed, and I'll say it again.

This great determination of so many students who are ADD. I still, with all due respect to the professionals who make those proclamations, I often point out -- and granted, I'm 58 years old, so it was almost 50 years ago I was in grammar school. Of course, I went to a parochial school. I definitely was ADD, and today. But when I was in school, the good nuns gave me two choices to deal with ADD: pray the rosary or get whammed with a stick. And here I am today, Speaker. It shows you, it's scary. (laughter)

But with all due respect to our continual effort to make sure that every child is not only educated, but classified in some role is pretty scary.

ASSEMBLYMAN BARNES: What did you do, Speaker?

SPEAKER COLLINS: I prayed the rosary. Of course I did. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN BARNES: Maybe I'll try it myself.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Let me, if I may, before we bring this to a close -- and I thank you all for educating us, not just with a few statistical numbers or what's going on nationally or the ongoing effort of some of our professional organizations, or-- Very honestly, Mr. Landgraf, having read your name and seen it in so many stories and professional journals, it's a thrill to meet you.

And I have to close with this question to you, which is testing in a whole different vein. I've been seeing some of this momentum that maybe we don't need testing anymore for entrance to college and so on and so forth. No one's listening. (laughter) Are you a little concerned about that for your company?

MR. LANDGRAF: For my company-- I would say that that high-stakes testing at the transition of high school to college is going to diminish as we increase the K-12 testing requirements that your commission has been looking at. If you have an eleventh-grade assessment tool to measure competency, I think it's very difficult to rationally argue that you need to take a college entrance exam on top of that.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Now, that-- No offense to the rest of you, but that-- I can't believe I didn't think of that.

MR. BUMPUS: Jack, can I just--

SPEAKER COLLINS: Surely, Mr. Bumpus.

MR. BUMPUS: The New Jersey college basic skills test--

SPEAKER COLLINS: Pardon me?

MR. BUMPUS: The New Jersey college basic skills test--

SPEAKER COLLINS: The one my wife administers. Go ahead. Be careful.

MR. BUMPUS: Ask her about it, because there's no connect between that and the HSPT.

SPEAKER COLLINS: You know, she's in the back of the room to start, but I cleared her out before we got to this discussion.

MR. BUMPUS: A student can get--

SPEAKER COLLINS: She has some strong feelings on it, Bob.

MR. BUMPUS: There is no connect. It's a different type of test. But because a student does well on the HSPT and then he goes and he's tested with the New Jersey college basic skills test and he doesn't know algebra-- Well, there's an algebra on the HSPT. What does that tell you about the testing? Is it reliable? I don't think so. It's a different test.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Well, maybe that's where we'll go at our next get-together.

We thank you all for coming here today. This was very, very good.

I thank my members and, of course, staff.

This hearing is adjourned.

(MEETING CONCLUDED)