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**STATEMENT ON *THE NATION'S REPORT CARD:*  
*MATHEMATICS 2009***

**DAVID P. DRISCOLL  
Chair, National Assessment Governing Board**

The results from this Report Card come at an important time for public education in America. Teaching and learning in mathematics is an issue that is very much at the forefront of discussions regarding international benchmarking.

There is some good news in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade according to the NAEP 2009 Mathematics report, as improvement in performance continued again this year. In fact, the national average mathematics score for 8<sup>th</sup>-graders was higher in 2009 than in all previous assessment years. Scores also increased from 2007 to 2009 in 15 states, and not a single state showed a decline.

The same was not true for 4<sup>th</sup>-grade results. Gains in students' average mathematics scores made from 1990 to 2007 did not continue from 2007 to 2009, although the prior level of achievement was maintained.

Overall, you would have to conclude that mathematics achievement is not close to where it should be, particularly compared to other countries. A major reason continues to be the lack of content knowledge and mathematics preparation of our teachers.

In my last year as Commissioner of Education for Massachusetts, we announced that we were going to beef up the mathematics portion of the elementary teacher test. Despite the two-year advanced notice, this past fall 55 percent of the test takers failed this new test.

We made the change because teachers could receive a state license without answering a single math question correctly on the general curriculum exam. That's because math was folded in with the other subjects such as language arts, history, and science, to generate an overall score.

We recognized that elementary teachers and sometimes middle-school teachers are generalists, so content knowledge makes a big difference. Moreover, we were particularly concerned about the math content at the elementary education level, where it turned out that prospective teachers could literally fail the math part and still pass the test.

Classroom teachers, especially at the elementary school level, are crucial to math instruction in many ways. They provide the building blocks of math, including computation skill and the conceptual reasoning/ number sense that students must master before facing more difficult content like algebra and calculus later in their academic lives.

Additional background data from the NAEP assessment have indicated a link between teacher preparation and achievement. In 2009, 8<sup>th</sup>-graders with teachers who majored in mathematics as an undergraduate scored 9 points higher than peers with teachers who did not major in mathematics.

We're clearly not requiring enough of our math teachers, and we're not challenging them in pre-service or equipping them as well as we should. Ultimately, the current commissioner in Massachusetts wisely chose to give temporary licenses to those teachers who did poorly on the math exam, giving them a chance to re-take the test. It doesn't have to be this way.

If we are to succeed, we all must work together to provide comprehensive, challenging math courses for future educators. In turn, we can improve the performance of students in such an important subject.

We know we can make progress in math. It is happening in some states and districts. NAEP reports remind us that we did see impressive gains from 1990 to 2007 in both 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades. And while the overall average score for 4<sup>th</sup>-graders in 2009 was unchanged from the score in 2007, it was still higher than the scores in the six assessment years from 1990 to 2005.

There is room – and opportunity – for growth and improvement. We proved that in Massachusetts in 1999 when 61 percent of prospective teachers failed the Basic Communications and Literacy test. I refer to it as the “second shot heard ‘round the world” since it made international news. However, within a few short years, we saw the great majority of candidates passing as preparation programs adjusted.

That is what is called for today in mathematics instruction in America: a focus on better training for our teachers so that students can meet the high expectations we hold and the world requires. Thank you.