



Thursday, November 18, 2010

**STATEMENT ON THE NATION'S REPORT CARD:
*NAEP 2009 Reading and Mathematics Grade 12***

THE HONORABLE RONNIE MUSGROVE
Chair, NAEP 12th Grade Preparedness Commission and
Former Governor of Mississippi

I am pleased to be at today's release of the NAEP 12th-grade reading and mathematics results. Thank you to the National Assessment Governing Board and fellow panelists.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress at the 12th grade serves a unique and important role—it is our nation's only representative measure of 12th-grade student achievement.

On the other hand, college admissions tests, like the SAT and ACT, are taken by a self-selected group of college-bound high school juniors and seniors, and therefore are not representative measures of 12th-grade achievement. These tests do not produce nationally representative results. Likewise, state-based testing programs typically do not test all of their 12th graders and, even if they did, the different state tests could not be combined to get a national score.

There really is no other source of national results at the 12th grade than NAEP.

And now, with the 12th-grade results released today, we have the first-ever, state-level 12th-grade achievement data in reading and mathematics.

The 11 states that volunteered for this groundbreaking pilot are to be commended for their courage and their vision. These states want to have a measure of the output of their K–12 systems that is credible, trustworthy and rigorous, and that can be compared with the nation and with other states. They turned to NAEP, and each now has a baseline of performance in reading and math at grade 12, to chart their progress over time.

Having a measure of 12th-grade student achievement is important because 12th grade is the end of mandatory schooling for the vast majority of our students. Twelfth grade is also the transition point to adult pursuits—college, job training, the military, and, ultimately, the management of our nation’s affairs—in business and government.

The achievement of 12th graders is an indicator of the nation’s potential “human capital,” captured at a decisive moment. Knowing how well our 12th graders read, write, compute and know science and history provides the nation with information about the ability of rising generations to meet our economic, civic and security needs. Knowing how well our 12th graders perform provides policymakers and educators with information about whether the results are good enough and upon which they can act to make improvements.

For the United States, a well-educated population is needed to compete in the global marketplace. China and India are producing more college graduates than we are, and we were once first in the world in college graduates.

For the individual, a good education is now a necessity for a good job, makes life more fulfilling and provides a foundation for being an informed citizen in our complex democracy.

Forty years ago, a high school education may have been sufficient. Today, a good education means a college education or substantial job training beyond high school.

But are our students prepared for college and challenging job training?

We have indicators that are worrisome. For example, large numbers of college freshmen need remedial instruction in reading, mathematics and writing. Nationally, about 20 percent of all public university freshmen are enrolled in remedial courses; in community colleges it is more than 40 percent. The cost to students and families is great, in both money spent on non-credit remedial courses and additional time required to finish a degree.

Across the country, businesspeople tell me all the time it takes us too long to train new employees. We’re losing production and productivity because we have to get our young people up to speed. Clearly, the more prepared they are, the less training our businesses will have to do, and the more successful they both can be.

But these indicators are for outcomes after high school—they are not nationally representative of 12th graders and are somewhat anecdotal.

The NAEP 12th-grade results released today—important as they are—tell us only the average scores and the percentage of students at *Basic*, *Proficient* and *Advanced* levels

of achievement. NAEP is not yet able to answer critical questions about 12th-grade students' preparedness for postsecondary education and training.

However, the National Assessment Governing Board, the sponsor of today's release, is transforming 12th-grade NAEP reporting to shape it into an indicator of preparedness.

The Governing Board has begun a comprehensive program of research, with 17 studies planned or underway. These studies will identify the skills and knowledge in reading and mathematics needed to qualify for college or job training, as measured by NAEP.

The first of these studies, a comparison of the reading and mathematics content in NAEP and the ACT, NAEP and the SAT, and NAEP and WorkKeys (an assessment related to the workplace), will be made available tomorrow at the Governing Board meeting in Arlington, VA.

Over the next year, results of other planned studies will continue to become available. The Governing Board will review these studies collectively to develop and validate statements NAEP can make about 12th graders' preparedness for college and job training. While reporting in terms of preparedness is not a foregone conclusion, we are cautiously optimistic about the prospects. The plan is to compile the study results in a preparedness report to be released toward the end of 2011.

As chair of the NAEP 12th Grade Preparedness Commission, I will join my fellow commission members in sharing this information with the public, policymakers, and educators. For those of you who would like to have updates on this important initiative and the research results, please visit www.nagb.org/commission.

Thank you very much.