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**STATEMENT ON RESULTS FROM
THE NATION'S REPORT CARD: MATHEMATICS 2007™ and
*THE NATION'S REPORT CARD: READING 2007™***

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Today we are releasing national and state data on 4th- and 8th- grade mathematics and reading achievement, signaling the beginning of a new cycle of The Nation's Report Cards™. In a few weeks, we will release similar results for 11 large urban school districts. Over the next several years, in addition to the biennial national and state reading and mathematics reports, we will report on student performance in writing, science, U.S. history, civics, and geography. We will also report on high school course-taking and long-term trends in reading and mathematics.

The frameworks for these upcoming assessments represent large resource commitments. Literally, hundreds of educators, policy-makers, business leaders, and interested citizens have participated in numerous meetings, reviews, and public hearings. State and international standards have been reviewed and considered. All frameworks are available to the public, along with actual items from past assessments. I would suggest that anyone who questions the appropriateness of the Report Card items look them over and let us know which cover information they do not want their children to know.

In reviewing student performance over time, as these report cards are issued, it is important to remember that the makeup of the student population that is assessed continues to change. Over time, our country has modified our definition of universal education from success at the 6th-grade, to success at the 11th-grade, to completion of high school. Most of us now place education past high school within the definition of education that should be available to all students. While the changes in international relations, social mobility, communications technology, and labor markets that bring about these modifications in educational expectations are well-discussed, their potential impact on assessment results may be not be as well-understood.

In the past, more difficult-to-educate students were often directed away from regular class attendance and, consequently, were not included in academic performance evaluations. Expecting *all* students to acquire the skills and information that they will need to advance through high school and beyond and to be assessed on their accomplishments creates new challenges for our students, teachers, and administrators. Expecting *all* students to remain in school, learn, and to demonstrate academic success on well-designed standardized assessments is not the historic practice in our country.

As we are all aware, the portion of our students who identify themselves as racial or ethnic minorities is growing, and many of them are members of groups that have historically performed worse on national assessments.

On the 2007 national assessment, minorities represent about one-third of the student population—a proportion that is much higher in some states. The number of students identified as either having special needs or being English language learners has more than doubled since 1992, to more than one out of five 4th-graders, for example. Most of these students are sampled in the national assessment and their performance is represented in today's results.

Although the percentages of students with disabilities and English language learners excluded from the assessment vary among states, on average, the results today represent more than 90 percent of 4th- and 8th-graders across the nation.

Of course, we hear concerns from educators that higher inclusion rates negatively affect assessment results and that expectations for continuing progress are unreasonably high. Greater diversity and higher rates of inclusion can be an excuse for lack of academic progress, but **average academic performance is up**. In elementary school, where much of the recent instructional reform has been directed, achievement results, represented by the 4th-grade assessments, are improving for almost every student group.

Even though the 2007 results released today would likely look even more encouraging if we went back to earlier demographics and out-of-date participation policies, the practice of making results look better by limiting instruction and assessment to higher-performing students is not very attractive nor especially honest.

Finally, because the student demographics differ from state-to-state, separate results broken down by student and family characteristics are reported along with the overall averages. When making comparisons between states, these differences should be considered and reported.