

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2101

March 3, 2009

Dear Darv,

I'm grateful for the invitation to address all of you today, and I wish very much that I could be with you in person. The National Assessment of Educational Progress is an indispensable resource for our nation's schools, teachers, and policymakers, and for two decades the Governing Board has been ensuring that NAEP maintains the highest standards for its assessments and for our nation's youth.

Our current economic crisis reminds us that education is essential for the economic transformation our nation will need to stay strong for the future. Before the creation of NAEP it was difficult for policymakers to reliably assess how well American students were learning, and to set an effective strategy for the nation in this vital area. Thanks to NAEP, we now have an objective yardstick for the performance of students over time in a wide range of subjects.

The Governing Board's work is more vital than ever today to ensure that accurate and dependable information is available about the achievement of the nation's children. In providing it, you draw the attention of all of us in Congress to the persistent achievement gaps that mean too many of our low-income and minority students are still being left behind.

The Board was founded to help raise our goals for the future. By maintaining NAEP's high standards, you have an essential role in keeping our eyes firmly on our goal of the best possible education for all students.

I look forward very much to working with you in the new Congress to guarantee that NAEP remains strong and that we continue to use the important information you provide as the foundation for improving education nationwide.

Today's thoughtful conference is a fitting tribute to all you do so well, and I commend you for your distinguished service to America.

With great respect and my warmest wishes for the years ahead,

Sincerely,



Edward M. Kennedy