The Nation's Report Card and 12th Grade Academic Preparedness

Regional Symposium

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NAEP—the National Assessment of Educational Progress—is also known as The Nation's Report Card. Congressionally authorized and funded since 1969, NAEP reports to the public on the status and progress of student achievement in core subjects at grades 4, 8, and 12.

The National Assessment Governing Board that oversees NAEP is conducting a comprehensive program of research to transform it into an indicator of 12th grade academic preparedness for college and job training.

The Governing Board established the NAEP 12th Grade Preparedness Commission to raise public awareness of the Governing Board's planned research program on 12th grade preparedness, the research results, and the potential of NAEP 12th grade data as an indicator of academic preparedness for postsecondary education and training.

As a part of this work, the Commission is conducting a series of symposia around the nation with leaders in K-12 and higher education, business, civil rights, and legislative policy. This is a record of the symposium conducted on November 18, 2011 in Nashville, Tennessee.

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Chair, NAEP 12th Grade Preparedness Commission
Former Governor of Mississippi

PANEL

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United States Senate

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Tennessee Businesswoman

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Doug Horne:

Good morning. I'm Doug Horne. Welcome to the symposium. We've got a lot of great leaders here from the state, and we're very excited about the symposium, the panelists, and a program I think you'll be very pleased with.

I am a member of the University of Tennessee Board of Trustees and a member of the NAEP 12th Grade Preparedness Commission, the host of today's symposium.

We are very glad to be here today to discuss 12th grade academic preparedness for college and job training with you.

Ronnie Musgrove, who is one of my long-time friends from Mississippi, where I was born, was governor there from 2000 to 2004, was also lieutenant governor, and served two terms in the state senate, where he chaired the Education Committee. A very great leader in Mississippi, he has been a major proponent of public education throughout the country and has held numerous leadership positions on national and regional boards.

So I want, at this time, to introduce Governor Musgrove, Chair of the NAEP 12th Grade Preparedness Commission, and let's get started.

Governor Musgrove:

Doug, thank you very much. It's a pleasure to be here this morning in Nashville, Tennessee. When you grow up in North Mississippi, you don't have to go too far to meet people whom you happen to know.

Marty Willis—who is with the State Department of Education—and I went to junior college together at Northwest. First time we've seen each other since we walked out in 1976, a long time ago. He's got a lot of gray hair in his beard. I've got a lot of gray hair on my head. It's the way it works.

Janet Ayers was just starting to talk about some of the people she went to school with, and I'll never forget going to junior college at Northwest, graduating from Ole Miss and then being accepted into law school at Ole Miss; that's what I had always wanted to do since I was eight years old. I did not think I was academically gifted enough to be accepted, but nonetheless, they let me in.

I was so apprehensive my first day, I went about 30 minutes early to my first class. Now there were two other guys sitting in the room, and I don't know what their deal was or what they were thinking. But I spoke to them, sat down beside one of them, struck up a conversation, and, literally, in less than five minutes, I came to two distinct conclusions.

Number one, I was not that impressed with the guy that I had sat down beside. And number two, I thought, If they accepted him, under the theory that he was capable, then I felt much better about my chances, to be quite honest with you.

Now, in the spirit of full disclosure, I must tell you that, sometime later, he was speaking in front of a crowd of about 5,000 and he recited that same story, except he said he wasn't that impressed with me that day. As it turns out, that was John Grisham that I had sat down beside [audience laughter].

So, before you criticize my inability to ascertain talent when it's up close and personal, the reason education, to me, is so important is that, when a kindergarten teacher, when a preschool teacher, when a first grade teacher sees a child, he or she never knows the potential that child brings when he or she walks into the classroom.

That's the reason what we're doing is so important, that we make sure we're doing the best that we can to provide opportunities for those students.

First of all, I would like to say thank you for allowing us to be here today. Tennessee leaders from across the state are here, representatives from the K through 12 and higher education communities, the policymaking and legislative arena, the business community and the civil rights community, all of which are represented here today. I know that you understand, on behalf of the state and the region and our country, the importance of education to all of us. And you understand the necessity of having a trusted source to tell us whether we're succeeding or not in our educational endeavors.

Are we indeed preparing students to walk into the world of college, community college, or the business world? Are we preparing them, and are we succeeding? Will our 12th graders be prepared academically to take their roles in their communities and in our society, to make a difference?

Now you may ask, "Why a symposium of this nature in Tennessee?" Well, I want to brag on you a little bit in case you won't brag on yourself. There are really some very specific reasons for this symposium being conducted in Tennessee.

This is the third of ten symposia that we plan on having across the country.

We chose Tennessee because you have a long history of leadership in education. In 1986, Tennessee was one of the first of three states seeking a rigorous measure to compare student achievement. Working with the Southern Regional Education Board and with Mark Musick, who is with us today, these states chose NAEP as that rigorous measure and produced the first ever honest comparisons in 11th grade reading.

When Congress authorized state NAEP on a regular, voluntary basis in 1988,

Tennessee was one of the first states to opt-in and use NAEP, the Nation's Report Card, for its measure.

Finally, Tennessee is focused on ensuring that students graduate from high school academically prepared for college, for the business world, and for job training.

And, as such, the ACT, the EXPLORE, and PLAN assessments also figure prominently in Tennessee's accountability system. So we hope to examine how NAEP at the 12th grade might add value to the measuring of achievement you do here in Tennessee.

My background with NAEP goes back a little ways. I was appointed by Secretary Dick Riley to be a member of the National Assessment Governing Board when I was in the governor's office. I attended the meetings, and was always impressed with NAEP as what I call the gold standard of measurement, uniformly and professionally across the board and across the country.

NAEP is a measure that has credibility, that has distinction, that has a sense of fairness for every state in the nation because it is looked at on the same basis.

There are a couple of people that I want to particularly note before I turn the program over to Darvin Winick this morning. I'd like to thank Ellen Thornton, the executive director of the Tennessee Business Roundtable and Jamie Woodson, the executive director of SCORE, for their support in preparing for the meeting today. We're also appreciative of having you here in the audience, Tennessee leaders.

And here's the focus of today's symposium: to hear from you about the potential of the National Assessment of Educational Progress as a 12th grade preparedness indicator, hearing your thoughts on the research that we're doing and its relevance to Tennessee, and getting your ideas about other research we should consider.

Our format will be a mix of presentations and discussion. The first half of the morning will include a welcome address by Senator Lamar Alexander; a presentation of our work on the 12th grade NAEP by Darv Winick who is here at the table and an advisor to our commission; and a panel discussion on the implications of the work here in Tennessee.

The panel is made up of Tennessee education leaders: Janet Ayers, business woman and president of the Ayers Foundation; Kevin Huffman, commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Education; Mike Krause, director of academic affairs for the Tennessee Higher Education Commission; and Gary Nixon, executive director of the Tennessee State Board of Education. The panel will be moderated by Mark Musick, also an advisor to our commission. At the end, there will be time for question and answer. The presentation by Darv and the panel

discussion are intended as food for thought as you think through what has been presented and the ideas that are given. And then, for the second half, we'll be focused on hearing from you.

We hope that the first part jogs your ideas and thoughts that you can convey back to us. Notes will be taken and projected on the screen as you are sharing your thoughts, so we literally can present the feedback that you give us.

So we want you to be very liberal – and I use that term in a very positive way – be very liberal in your thoughts back to us, whether they be praise in one way or constructive criticism in another. That's the way that we gain the information.

I might also tell you that Fielding Rolston, chairman of the Tennessee State Board of Education and recently appointed to the National Assessment Governing Board, will help guide the audience in the discussion. Of course Fielding is with us on stage this morning.

And now I want to have a presentation from Senator Lamar Alexander by way of video, and let me say just a little bit about him. I don't really need to tell you a lot, in terms of his background, his standing and what he means not only to the State of Tennessee but also to the country as a United States senator. But he has a long and important connection with NAEP.

He was governor in 1986 and advocated for the first ever comparable assessments using NAEP. He was appointed that same year by Secretary of Education William Bennett to look at the future of NAEP, and in January of 1987, the group recommended two major changes to NAEP. One, making state comparisons a regular part of NAEP, and number two, creating an independent board to set policy for NAEP—the National Assessment Governing Board. And this became law in 1988.

So he has had—and continues to have—an instrumental role in shaping NAEP as we know it today, and he is certainly to be commended for that. So, ladies and gentlemen if I could, Senator Lamar Alexander.

Senator Alexander (via video):

Good morning and thanks for inviting me to address your gathering to discuss the NAEP 12th Grade Academic Preparedness Initiative and how that can fit within Tennessee's education reform efforts.

I'm a strong supporter of the National Assessment of Educational Progress and of the idea of having a national report card that can tell us how our schools are doing in educating America's children.

When I was governor of Tennessee, then-Secretary of Education, Bill Bennett,

asked me to co-chair, along with Thomas James, a blue ribbon commission made up of 22 bipartisan leaders—including President Kennedy's former education secretary, First Lady Hillary Clinton, and others—to make recommendations about the role of NAEP in American education.

In January of 1987, our commission made two major findings. First, NAEP should be used to collect state-level data so that more reliable comparisons could be used to meet the rising public demand for quality information on the performance of schools. And second, we recommended the establishment of a new independent governing structure for the NAEP, outside of the U.S. Department of Education, that would be broadly representative, prestigious, accountable to the public and sheltered from political influence.

Much of our recommendations were subsequently enacted into law with the help of Senator Ted Kennedy and President Reagan in 1988, resulting in the National Assessment Governing Board and the NAEP structure that we continue to see today, more than two decades later.

The NAEP serves a very important role in elementary and secondary education, what I think is the most important role that Washington should play: collecting and reporting on the academic achievement of students and the performance of schools. Through NAEP, this information challenges governors, state legislatures, state chiefs and local superintendents to keep high standards and high expectations for our children regardless of race, economic status or disability, rather than continuing to allow what President George W. Bush described as "the soft bigotry of low expectations."

Much has been made recently in Congress about the overdue reauthorization of No Child Left Behind. I firmly believe that we can and must fix that law this year. One of the most important things we need to have in this law is the Secretary's Report Card on Education. We've learned this from NAEP.

In 1987, Secretary Bill Bennett went to Chicago and proclaimed that public schools were the worst in the nation based on testing data. This public shaming pushed Chicago to institute groundbreaking reforms with help of leaders such as Paul Vallas and Arne Duncan. But we haven't let Chicago or other folks off the hook.

Here, in Tennessee, the NAEP annual report card has served as a call to action towards improving the performance of our schools and achievement of our students in relation to the rest of the country. We won't just sit back and hope that Governor Haslam and Commissioner Huffman's reform efforts will work, though they're off to a terrific start.

As these reforms take hold, we must examine NAEP test results to learn if these efforts are really working. I mean the NAEP results will help verify what

Tennessee is doing because, if NAEP results don't improve, we'll know our state reforms need improvement.

I'm proud of the work that Governor Haslam and Kevin Huffman are doing with Speaker Harwell and Ron Ramsey and all of our state and school leaders. Tennessee is continuing to lead on ways to hold schools accountable, evaluate teachers and principals and reform our schools so that all children have an opportunity to succeed.

And we in Congress are working to fix No Child Left Behind. As we do that, we need to come to some important agreements. One agreement, in particular, is related to the reason why you're gathered here today. Republicans and Democrats agree that we should set a new national goal that all children should be college and career ready when they graduate from high school.

Now I may question whether the goal should really be college *or* career ready, since we don't really expect all our students to go straight to college and certainly don't expect them all to go to the stereotypical four-year liberal arts college.

We should value community colleges, work colleges, professional apprenticeships as well as the four-year, even three-year, degree programs offered by our colleges and universities. But the idea that a student should graduate from high school ready to go onto the next step in life, whether college or career, is a smart goal. It's a much better goal than the current No Child Left Behind goal of having all students be proficient on state tests by 2013-14.

A college and career ready goal is much easier to understand for parents, for teachers and for local communities. It's a better benchmark. It makes sense when you talk about it. I mean how many students graduated from high school ready to go to a college or a career?

But the next question is how should states measure that? How will they know if their students meet that mark? One way that states will measure that is through NAEP, and you all are gathered in Nashville to discuss the work of the NAEP 12th Grade Preparedness Commission as they're examining how to improve the NAEP test for 12th grade students and how that will fit with what Tennessee is doing.

That's an important project, and I encourage you in your efforts. As Tennessee and other states continue to work on improving state education systems, NAEP must continue to be the gold standard for states to compare themselves against. Thank you very much.

***Governor Musgrove**:*

I want to say thank you to Senator Lamar Alexander for the time and opportunity I've had to work with him. You can see his passion and his belief that this is extremely important.

As I will do throughout the morning, I will make a mistake or two, and I flipped the page too quickly a minute ago. Our other panelist that we have this morning is Ralph Schulz who is president and CEO of the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce. And while he might not be a university person, he is, in effect, one of the recipients of that product that we call outstanding young academic minds that walk out of our schools. And so, he will be one of our panelists this morning. The chamber, which is a nonprofit, member-based organization, was founded in 1847; it is Middle Tennessee's largest business federation and a leading driver in economic and community development. So, Mr. Schulz, we're glad to have you with us today.

At this time, I want to recognize Darv Winick who will give us an overview of NAEP and of the 12th grade academic preparedness initiative that we're doing. A little bit about Darv, we've got two sets of orange here today. Darv is a University of Texas person. So we wanted to make sure that we had the full array of colors here today.

He served as chairman of the National Assessment Governing Board from 2002 to September of 2009 and currently is an advisor to the Governing Board's NAEP 12th Grade Preparedness Commission. He's president of Winick and Associates, and Dr. Winick is also a senior research fellow at the College of Education and the executive director of the Institute for Public School Initiatives at the University of Texas at Austin.

He brings with him a wealth of background knowledge and intimate work with the Governing Board and with the Commission. Darv, would you please come forward?

Darvin Winick:

Governor, thank you. Welcome, everybody. I'd – two just kind of personal comments before I start out. One is the governor's been very nice, but he's instructed me very carefully about using the term UT and what I might say or might not say. So I understand. What came as a shock, to some Texans, that's there's another one, but anyway…

The other one's a little more serious. You had Senator Alexander on first, but my personal story is, when I showed up as a new person on the Governing Board in '02, as its chair with no prior federal government experience, I got two messages within the first few days.

One was from Senator Alexander, and one was from Senator Ted Kennedy, and said, "If anybody messes around with NAEP, you give us a call." It's interesting. That's a true story, and that continued – that kind of backing continued through my term. And, you know, Senator Kennedy is not here but, through his tenure, if anybody said that we're going to take any step that might make NAEP less independent, call, and we'll see. That didn't happen, fortunately, but it's nice to have that kind of backing. Those of you who have been in Washington, to have a couple of senators interested in what you do is really a nice thing.

My task today is to fill in maybe a little more information on the Governing Board, on NAEP. But not a great deal because I suspect that this – because of Tennessee's history and because of your activities in education – I suspect that most of you are reasonably well acquainted already.

But, anyway, let me – We're going to talk about three entities today very quickly. One is the Governing Board, which has been discussed in some detail. The Governing Board, as noted: independent, established by Congress, a fixed set of specific kinds of board members with a stated way of nomination. So it is, as boards go, quite independent.

By law, it has to have a Democrat governor and a Republican governor, certain number of teachers, boards of education members, state legislators and on down. So it is, by definition, a multi-unit, nonpartisan, well-spread kind of board.

The major function of NAEP is well defined in the law and reasonably narrow. It is to report on the achievement of U.S. public – oh, not just public – U.S. education. I start out with that because some people will say—and correctly—"Well, NAEP doesn't tell us what to do. It doesn't tell us whether we should have program A or program B."

That's right. By law, it is not supposed to. It is to talk about the achievement of Students, and do that well.

First and foremost, parroting Senator Alexander, to make the public aware of what is happening. It's an information system for the public. It is also a method of initiating dialogue so that we begin to talk about student achievement, and I think we're happy to say, over the history of NAEP, that student achievement is much more in the public discussion than it was before there was a NAEP.

So what is NAEP? NAEP is the only continuing national assessment of student achievement. It is a well designed, carefully structured, I would say modestly put together, elegant assessment system.

I think the pride that goes with this, that you hear all of us speaking, goes as we have become known as The Nation's Report Card. The Commission, which is

sponsoring this event, is a product of the National Assessment Governing Board in the execution of its NAEP responsibility, and I'll talk more about that as I get into the presentation.

A little bit about NAEP – again, you may know this – but NAEP has grown over the years. It actually was first used in 1969, but that was the **national** assessment; there were no state data at that time. What it has become now is a major assessment program, covering almost all of the subjects of our public schools.

For the fourth, eighth and 12th grade, as most of you may know, it covers – and I won't read them all but reading, mathematics, writing and so on through the list. There's a very interesting addition at this point in history, which I would stop and pause at a moment, and that is the addition of a new subject area for NAEP that will be available to you and to the nation in 2014, and that is called the Technology and Engineering Literacy assessment.

With all the interest in engineering and technology and STEM – as most of you know, it – we thought it important to put into NAEP a measurement that would show how well we are preparing our students in the areas of technology and engineering.

And I won't digress too much, but that, as educators here will quickly understand, that's a most fascinating thing because to whom do you put the responsibility in your schools? Who is in charge of teaching technology? I just want to pass that by. That's an interesting thing that we'll – that will come up as we go on.

As has been noted, Tennessee has participated in this almost from the beginning of each and every piece of NAEP, and to that, I commend you. The results, now, started out with only national, as Senator Alexander stated. It was expanded to state reporting that, in the beginning, was voluntary and, thus, exactly which states participated changed somewhat from year to year. So it made the comparison of state results not quite as complete as it might be.

No Child Left Behind made it – we shouldn't say mandatory, but if you wanted to get your Title I funds, you participated in the fourth and eighth grade NAEP in reading and math. So, with all states participating, we no longer need a separate national sample in these subjects and grades. In the last few years, on a trial basis, NAEP also reports on 21 major urban districts.

The way that NAEP is put together, without going into the technology too much, it's a sampling mechanism. By law and by the design of the sampling plan, NAEP does not produce individual student results nor individual school results.

We are now venturing into 12th grade state NAEP, and we'll talk about that.

What does NAEP do for Tennessee or what does it do for a state? Well, what it does is it gives you an external, independent, reliable estimate of how your state achievement compares to other states and to the nation.

But this is just an example [showing chart]. This happens to be fourth grade math results for the nation, Tennessee, and the highest and lowest performing fourth grade math states, over time from 1992 to 2011.

That type of information – that's just an example – is available in math. It's available in reading. It's available in fourth grade. It's available in eighth grade.

The other thing that NAEP does, which is important—and again, you have devices here in Tennessee where you are ahead of most of the nation—but for the most part, NAEP is the one way that states can look at how well they are doing by individual student sub groups. And here, again, is one example: Tennessee math performance by racial-ethnic breakdown in fourth grade.

This chart [indicating PowerPoint slide] shows that, while achievement has gone up in math for all groups, the achievement gaps between subgroups haven't changed enough.

NAEP also breaks out data by gender, the English-language learner student population, students with disabilities, and students eligible for free and reduced price lunch.

This is kind of unique, and I only put the word "kind of" in here because of your activity with the ACT in Tennessee. You're a step ahead of almost every other state. But for most states, the NAEP results provide the only reliable, standardized, progress-over-time kind of report where the same kind of assessment data can be examined systematically.

This is interesting because, unlike a lot of programs, this whole program is done without any cost to the states. There's some effort required, but there's no actual resource allocation other than some support. The tests are designed by the – actually, the Department of Education – Institute of Educational Sciences and contractors. The costs for giving of the tests, the administration, setting up the samples, taking away the material, the analysis of data and the reporting is all part of the federal NAEP program.

It is one of the few federal activities that has very little burden on you, on the local folks. The students are sampled so no student spends more than about an hour.

So you sample schools and then you sample students within schools and then you sample test booklets across students in order to put together the whole information package. As I repeat, no individual student or campus results are calculated.

In terms of NAEP, there's no way to know what's going to be on it and no way to teach to the test. It is not tied to any state activity. So there's no time used by schools for test preparation. So it's not a matter of anybody getting ready for the NAEP, again, lowering the burden to some extent.

There's a new piece of data that will be available to you probably in a little over a year that some of us think is quite important. There's a lot of conversation in this country, as you all know, about how do we compare internationally.

The Governing Board pushed for and has accepted, in the NAEP assessments for 2011, a statistical linkage with the international assessments in reading at grade 4, and science and mathematics at grade 8, also being conducted in 2011. Thus, states will have from their NAEP scores equivalent scores for the international assessments and be able to compare their results with those of other countries. These results will be available at the end of 2012 or early 2013.

Let me make a couple of comments before I move on. Administering NAEP at the 12th grade at the state level is new. It has not been part of the NAEP routine. There have been concerns for some time – and educators here are aware – of, "Should we measure in the 12th grade? Is that a good time? Are the kids – have they lost interest? Are they doing other things? Should we do it in 11th grade?"

Many of our high school test regimens in this country are completed by 11th grade. The bulk of our SAT and ACT tests are done earlier than 12th grade for college entrance. These are not necessarily criticisms, but they give us some pause, again– do tests administered before 12th grade measure most accurately how academically prepared a 12th grader is for college and job training?

And so we have supported 12th grade NAEP at the state level. We have been very careful, we the Governing Board and the Education Department have been very interested in making sure that we get good 12th grade samples. And, at this point, I'm happy to say that the quality, the technical, statistical quality of the 12th grade NAEP is about as good as the eighth grade and fourth grade as participation rates, the filling in the blanks, you know, not skipping items and various things you look at are comparable.

And so we're very comfortable that the 12th grade NAEP information is good, reliable, valuable.

As I say to people when I'm wearing my other hat, not having 12th grade NAEP is like the automobile industry having inspection for all the parts but never seeing if the car runs. You know, if you think about it, it's kind of odd we don't evaluate the end product. Anyway, I think that's changing, and I expect that's going to change.

What we have done, for the first time in 2009, is support a pilot that produces state-level results at the 12th grade in reading and mathematics. Eleven states volunteered for this pilot and are able to compare their 12th graders' achievement.

This chart [indicating slide] shows the state-level results at 12th grade in mathematics, by scale score and by what we call achievement levels.

These are the chosen words that the Governing Board, some time ago, picked for various benchmarks going from Advanced being superior, Proficient being competency over challenging subject matter, Basic being less and below Basic being less than that.

The reason I explain it that way is that leads us into today's conversation. If Proficient means "academically prepared," then we're saying, nationally, that 75 percent of the kids are not ready. I'm being very casual about that because I didn't define "ready," and that's one of the problems. Variation state to state is fairly large.

What Proficient means is a legitimate, reasonable, rationale question. What is Proficient on NAEP? That is complicated by the fact that states also use that term for performance standards set on state tests. But we don't claim that one state's Proficient is better than another's. So this could be the most important slide.

Anyway, that leads to – and I end up now talking about preparedness.
So what did we do? Well, we were concerned about a drop in NAEP 12th grade participation rates in 2002 that threatened the validity of the results and the viability of the assessments at 12th grade. We appointed a committee, and actually, it was a quite good committee. It was a blue ribbon panel of people who were major users of high school graduates: postsecondary institutions, the military, and business, and major preparers of high school graduates—elementary and secondary educators and policymakers—and asked them to consider the utility, relevance, and future of 12th grade NAEP.

So the panel did what panels do. They thought it through and came up with a rationale for the fact that the Governing Board should be doing more. The obvious, back to my checking whether the car will drive or not. Grade 12 is the transition, as we're stating here, to postsecondary education and training. We need an indicator of 12th grade preparedness. That's hard to argue with.

Because NAEP is the only source of nationally representative data at the 12th grade – this is the panel talking to the Governing Board saying that – you folks have the one measure that we probably should build on. So you ought to get after the issue of transforming NAEP to report on preparedness for college and job training. So we did.

The numbers that we started getting into are, I think, probably pretty familiar to

all of you now. Matter of fact, these are your numbers. They are not terribly different in some variation across the country or nationally. This is showing that kids leave high school with a diploma, and they go further, and they go back to taking developmental or remedial courses. So there's a suggestion that they're not ready, certainly.

The numbers in Tennessee community colleges—which, I might say, this is not terribly different than I'm seeing as I look at other states. This is not very good, but this is essentially what we're seeing everywhere. There are almost identical numbers in California, and it looks like Texas is very similar in that 70 percent is the number that's kind of batted around of the kids that go into a community college and need some kind of remediation or developmental education, as we now call it.

This gets better as you look at more selective processes. So the four-year institutions look better than community colleges. Nevertheless, whatever it is, the cost of remediation, as all the educators in the room know, is high. There's a debate about how high, but there's no conversation that says it's not important or it's not high.

The sad conclusion is that a high school diploma does not necessarily mean the same thing as being ready for further education. And if you just think about it, that's not good.

But there's another catch here that is very serious, and if you look at the change in the demographics of our student body, nationally, it varies across states, but generally, there are increasing proportions of our students in groups that traditionally have performed less well.

So, if you think – bottom line, that remediation after high school is a big problem now, OK, run it out three, four, five, six, eight, ten years with a changing population if we don't do something. You know, it could – if you just do straight-line population growth charts, it becomes quite, quite important.

OK. So we saw all that, and we thought, "Why is this? What do we know? I Mean, why is it that we seem to have all these problems?" Well, we get – I'm sure all of you could give me the answers that we first heard. Education is complicated. There's a lot of different data. Kids are different from here to there. State requirements are different. I mean it's too complicated, and it's much too changeable. It's much too variable. So we really can't get a good standard answer about preparedness, and so the answer though, is pretty fascinating, particularly to an old consultant like me. Because, at the same time, if we ask what we know, we know some things about some very, very complicated metrics in this country and other countries.

For instance, I could tell you right now, if I can get on my Blackberry, I can tell

you exactly what the New York Stock Exchange is and what 500 or 600 stocks are selling for. Now, or one minute ago. Now that's pretty complicated if you do that across the world. You know, I can get the price of oil nationally and internationally right now.

So to say that we can't do complicated metrics doesn't make sense because we do some very complicated metrical reporting in this country and other countries. Now we could go through it. Have you ever just thought about the complexity of knowing how much wheat is produced in the world and gathering that data? It makes gathering student 12th grade performance data probably fairly easy by comparison.

Anyway, I could go on. So it's not a good argument that we can't do it. So where do we start? Well, the first thing is: What are we talking about? What is the definition? Makes sense. So we have come up with a working definition for beginning the research, which I will get to.

So here's what we did. The Governing Board does things in a very methodical manner. So this goes back to 2004 at least, if not conversations before that. We have the blue ribbon panel that I mentioned to you then we started reviewing NAEP in terms of what kinds of things we did and didn't do.

We put together, in 2006, a high-level technical panel to get into the how would we come up with a measure of preparedness? What would we have to do? Essentially, we said, "We will define 12th grade preparedness as the academic, particularly math and reading, knowledge and skills that are required of a high school graduate to get credit-bearing work in postsecondary institutions."

It's an entry level metric. There's no comment about success. We chose, with guidance of some of these folks, to not use the term readiness but use the term preparedness for a specific reason. The minute you get into the classic discussion of readiness, you begin to talk about motivation which we don't deny. You begin to talk about social understanding, the ability to get along. You begin to talk about study habits, and a number of things all of which are to be considered, but none of which NAEP is designed to measure.

So, we said, NAEP will focus on the academic requirements to take credit-bearing courses or to get into military training or to get into job training after high school.

The panel also came up with a set of research activities that we should get into, and I will cover them briefly. They suggested, and the Board adopted, five kinds of research studies. This is ongoing. These are things that are committed in the field, happening now, and I'll give you some early findings, which are kind of fascinating.

Of the five kinds of studies we are involved in – and which, frankly, we would

like you to interact with, particularly Tennessee, I might add. I'm not here to make a recruiting pitch, but I think a state where all students take a standardized test, the ACT, makes you a very important potential partner to this kind of research because you're one step ahead of where the bulk of the states are.

One type of study is a content comparison. It answers the question—How similar is NAEP to other measures? What's the overlap between NAEP and ACT or NAEP and SAT or NAEP and various placement tests? That research is pretty well completed and the results show a great degree of overlap.

With the ACT, there's a high degree of overlap, and generally, in both the ACT and SAT, NAEP covers a little more than the other exams but what they do cover is very, very similar. NAEP, because of its sampling, can do a little more depth and a little more breadth. So that's the first kind of study. What is the content, and how similar is it to relevant tests?

Next is statistical linking. Fancy words, but it's just—How does performance on NAEP compare to performance on other tests? I'll tell you a little bit about that—what we have found is a correlation of about .90 between performance on NAEP math and SAT math; the correlation for reading is about .72.

We also have ventures in standard setting, which try to answer the question, What is the point on NAEP scale that expert opinion suggests, represents the knowledge and skills needed to qualify for college or job training?

We then are going to get into benchmarking, which is rubber hits the road, and it's a tougher kind of research. And that is how do the folks that you judge to be ready or prepared, how do they actually do on NAEP? If you say students, if they get this score, can go into community college, take credit bearing courses and move on, does that really happen?

And, particularly, I'm interested in this in Tennessee because you will have information on how well your students did on the ACT, which we can tie to performance on NAEP.

We're doing an almost identical thing to what I just described in Florida, which also student data onto college data and onto workforce, which is the ultimate – you know, the ultimate step where we're headed. Preliminary results are confirming of the results we found for NAEP-to-SAT linking study.

Finally, just to find out what's going on, we have planned and have underway a study to find out just what are the tests specific to reading and math achievement that are being used by various universities, colleges, community colleges, industrial training programs and so on across the country. We will be doing a nationally representative survey of 1,700 colleges and universities to find out what tests they are using and the cut-scores on those tests for making decisions

about first-year placement into credit-bearing versus developmental college courses.

I've already told you about the 90 percent correlation, but here's the next interesting finding. In this first study–first study, now, more will happen–it appears that NAEP Proficient is about the same as 500 on the SAT. Now those of you who know the SAT scale, 500 is college prepared, according to the College Board.

Now, go back in your mind to my state-by-state comparison. What does this say if it's true? 75 percent of the kids, in the United States, are not prepared. Well, that's rather sobering. Now we'll need more information and maybe it isn't 75. Maybe it's 65, but still, I mean you can come down some. Still not real good.

Now you have to understand that's all kids in high school. So that includes those who are not going to graduate as well as those who will graduate and will go on.

As I said, no matter how you slice it, this is a serious problem. The Florida study is well underway, and as I said, I would hope that you all – I'm out of there now, but I hope that you all talk about how Tennessee might be partnering in this type of study because of your ACT data.

Moving to the comment Senator Alexander made about whether we talk about college and career, or college or career and how we handle does everybody go to the same kind of college, that's – those are, of course, valid issues, very serious questions. To get the nose under the tent, what we have decided, as a board, is to pick a small set of well-known, fairly large postsecondary training programs.

And we have picked, in order of just trying to get a common understanding, five occupations as places to start: automotive master mechanic, computer support specialist, heating and HVAC, as we call them, technicians, the LPN and pharmacy tech, and we are in the process trying to identify the reading and math skills and knowledge needed to qualify for these training programs. Now, there are myriad kinds of jobs that we can look at, but this is a sample and a place to start.

What does all this mean? Well, it means one of several things that are interesting. As I explain to people in research courses, it's wonderful to get findings. It's also important to get no findings. It's also important to know what works and what doesn't work. And so we have been very careful, in this whole process, to make no prior assumption of the fact that going to this college, that college or this job or that job are the same. We're not saying they're not. We're saying that's an open question.

As you know, there are those that say that there's one score. There's one

preparation level whether you choose industry or whether you choose academia. We're saying that we make no statement. What we are doing though, is to explain to everybody, ourselves and others – and, actually, our technical panel suggested this is a way to really show what we're up to.

And so we have – they have developed, for presentation and explanation, three possible outcomes of this whole process. This is the one I call the psychometrician's dream. This would be the great outcome, and that is where your college preparation in different kind of colleges, A, B and C, whatever they might be, coalesce around a number. Now this is entry level. We're not saying who will get a Ph.D. from Stanford. We're saying who can qualify for credit-bearing courses.

And we have these jobs that we have selected, and, sure enough, to get into good job training at the local industrial plant or the local technical college, it requires the same number, the same preparation level. This would be great. We can say, "You take NAEP, and if 30 percent of your kids get this number, 30 percent are prepared."

Maybe that's not what happens. If we got another finding, that still would be very valuable, and that is that college preparation is one thing and preparation for the workplace training is another. And you get both numbers, and they're just different. That's still very useful. I mean, I make no value judgment here. I'm just saying that, if those are the facts, they would be very helpful, and as educators and policymakers, it's important we know that.

However, there's another possibility, and that is that we do not coalesce either across job categories or academic activities. That is not nearly as neat, but that would still would help our planning and help our policymaking and help our educational design considerably.

So, my agreement that I'm going to kind of end with here, is that it's too early to say. We'd all love to think that we're going to come out with scenario one, and if we come up with a number, we come back to you and say, "This is it. Research says that you've got to get this, and you're prepared." It may not happen that way.

Like always – and I'm going to end this with the classic academic ending – more research is needed. That's what keeps college departments going, and I'm one of them now. So I can say that.

We're going to ask you today to, if you would, reflect on these things. Reflect on what we're doing. Suggest what else we might do or what we ought not do. And there's going to be considerable time and activity needed before we're done.

Thank you all for your attention. I've tried to give you some feeling of what we're up to. Got to say a little sales pitch in there, Governor, for Tennessee if I might. Anyway, thank you.

Governor Musgrove:

Thank you, Darv. Now I've always been told that the greatest form of compliment in introducing someone is a short introduction. When we recognize the president, all we say is, "The President of the United States." We don't give anything about the background.

Since their bios are in the packets we gave you this morning, I'm going to go straight to our panelists with that type of introduction this morning because what we want to do now is have our panel of experts talk about this research. We have asked the panelists to address two issues, given what you have heard from Darv as background.

First, the potential relevance and utility to Tennessee of the NAEP 12th Grade Preparedness Initiative. That is, the relevance and the utility of the 12th grade NAEP as an indicator of academic preparedness for college and for job training, and of our research.

Second, what additional research we should consider conducting that would be potentially beneficial to Tennessee and to our initiative in connection with the 2013 12th grade NAEP reading and math assessment and possibly partners in that research. So that's what we've asked our panelists to look at this morning and to talk about, and then after that, we'll take a break. And when we come back, then we're going to flip the discussion to you to answer the same two questions, with Darv's presentation on why we're doing the research and the panel discussion on what the relevance is to Tennessee as background.

So let me go ahead and recognize the panel. Janet Ayers is a Tennessee businesswoman and president of The Ayers Foundation—and if I can ask you to come on up, as I introduce you. Second, Kevin Huffman is Tennessee commissioner of education. Kevin.

Third is Gary Nixon who is executive director of the Tennessee State Board of Education. Mike Krause is the director of academic affairs for the Tennessee Higher Education Commission. Ralph Schulz is president and CEO of the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce. Mark Musick will moderate the panel, and as Darv alluded to a minute ago, Mark is a past chairman of the National Assessment Governing Board. He is also President Emeritus of the Southern Regional Education Board and brings with him a tremendous background of knowledge.

So, Mark, with that, I will turn it over to you for this distinguished panel. Thank

you.

Mark Musick:

Thank you, Governor, and, as you just said, we're going to get right to the topic here. The bios, as Ronnie said, are in our folders, but we're going to – we want to hear from the persons on the panel and then we want to hear from everyone in the room.

I'm going to be a little informal, if you don't mind, so I don't waste time on the high sounding titles here. I'm going to go, and I'm going to say to Janet Ayers, chivalry is not dead in the South. We're going to start with you.

Janet Ayers:

OK.

Mark Musick:

As the Governor said, the relevance and utility. You know, research is nice, but relevant research that you can use is even nicer. You and the Ayers Foundation and I know you do a lot of things, but one of the things you have done has to do with getting students in college.

In our discussions, you have said, "You know, it's not just about getting students in college." From a business standpoint–and you've hired a lot of folks in your business background – and from working with the Ayers Foundation and getting youngsters – young high school graduates in college, you've heard this this morning. You know something about NAEP.

What about the utility and usefulness of, and relevance of 12th grade NAEP to the world in which you live?

Janet Ayers:

You know and I'm – because I am more of a practitioner than I am an academician–probably I can sum it up, when I'm sitting here and listening and just the background – what little I know about NAEP is you can talk all day long about college access and getting someone into college and all those kinds of things.

But if we aren't realizing if our students are prepared or not, what we've found with the foundation, and what I found in the work world, was – no surprise – it truly is a waste of time, and you lose a lot of students when they start school and they're not ready and they're having to take remedial courses.

And the utility of it is–and the thing that I was really the most impressed about is that college access has been around for awhile, and you used to talk about access and just getting a student there and that's really where the number stopped.

Well, it's not about access. It's about the student being prepared so, when they get there, that on the backend, they're employable. And I think the thing that NAEP is addressing and the fact that it's not just college preparedness but it's also military preparedness. It is job-readiness preparedness.

I think that they did a very good job of limiting to what those technical – you know, those available jobs are out there, those five core areas and are extremely important. And we've seen that with the foundation. We have a lot of students going through the pipeline, and they get bottlenecked when they go to those remedial courses.

And if there is some kind of tool that can help us address and know that they're ready so we can streamline them and get them through the process, that's great. I think the thing that I also see is, with NAEP is, while we're looking at 12th grade preparedness, there's got to be some kind of way that we, as a state – when you're talking about the utility for the State of Tennessee.

NAEP is a tool. We have to decide what to do with that information. So, if we have a tool that says our students aren't prepared, as a consumer of the students when I was in the work world, that doesn't do me a lot of good after the fact. So we need to make sure that we do stuff on the front end so that they're ready.

Mark Musick:

Good, good. Gary, I could not imagine having this meeting today and you not being here to say something. Because, when I hear you talk around Tennessee, about Tennessee and Tennessee achievement, you almost always talk about NAEP results in that context.

So the usefulness and relevance of 12th grade NAEP from your standpoint.

Gary L. Nixon:

I'm going to take you back two years when I first came back to the state board in 2004. One of the first things we did was ask Dr. Gene Bottoms to come to Tennessee and meet with the board and give the board a clear vision of where Tennessee truly is in terms of student achievement.

And about halfway through that session, Mr. Jim Ayers, Janet's husband who serves on the state board, made the observation. He said, "You know, Tennessee does pretty good when it measures itself against itself, but when we measure us

against the rest of the world, the rest of the country, ACT, SAT, NAEP, we don't do so good."

And those comments really resonated with the board and resonated with the staff and me, and they have guided us. We have – we became cognizant, at that point, and it's driven what we do and the way we think, up to today, that we have to have measures, other than the state test, as a barometer, as a gauge of the – of where we are and as a way of measuring the progress we do make.

So, as we got into that journey, we got involved with the Diploma Project. We've redeveloped all the curriculum standards in reading and math and language arts and kindergarten through eighth grade. We developed new assessments.

Mark Musick:

You had gateways.

Gary L. Nixon:

We had gateways. We now have new assessments that are much more rigorous than our old assessments. What we found was that we–if we were going to have truth in advertising and, instead of saying 90 percent of the kids in Tennessee are proficient when NAEP says well it's 26 percent, we have to see why.

And one of the reasons why was our performance measures were totally different than NAEP's performance measures. We had three: advanced, proficient and not proficient. When NAEP has the four. So, de facto, in Tennessee, proficiency meant, at that point, really a D-minus because we used that cut score for proficient as the passing when we converted them to a grade to be averaged in high school, that lowest proficient cut score or scale score, got a D-minus.

So we did a great job of getting our kids–we got 90 percent of the kids up to a D-minus level. If we're going to have truth in advertising, we've got to raise that up. So we adopted cut scores, measures very parallel to NAEP, advanced, proficient, basic, below basic.

When we set the cuts for proficient, we took the recommendations from the committees, and we actually hired a national expert to do an equating. And on our eighth grade math, we equated it, and it was exactly on the cut score for NAEP, eighth grade math proficient. So we use NAEP as a barometer to measure where we are and how we progress.

And I see the utility of this 12th grade as another barometer. It's another measure that we can anchor to and to see what kind of progress we're making as we move forward. If we did–we don't move that needle, we're not doing our job.

Mark Musick:

OK and I'm going to come back to that in a moment. Kevin Huffman, we're very pleased to have you here today because, when we started calling around, they said, "Well, it's going to be hard to get Commissioner Huffman because he's all over the state. He's rarely in Nashville, or he's out in the schools."

So your views on NAEP and its relevance and utility as you move throughout the state of Tennessee.

Kevin Huffman:

I would echo a lot of what Gary just said. I think that it is really important that we take an honest look at where we are. And one of the things that I use NAEP for is not just to say this is where we are in terms of rankings compared to other states but to look at some of the NAEP data broken down further, to look at the disaggregated NAEP data to say, How does Tennessee compare with other states in free and reduced priced lunch kids? How does Tennessee compare with other states across different demographic groups? What's our ranking there? What does that mean? What does it mean that Tennessee is one full year behind Kentucky and North Carolina when it comes to educating kids who are free and reduced price lunch kids?

That's the mirror that NAEP holds up that I think is really critically important to us, both in terms of just understanding where we are but also having a sense of what progress we should aspire to attain. I think it's very easy to fall into the trap of saying that our results are what they are because of poverty, for instance, and I think then, when you use NAEP and look at the data and say, "Well, if it's poverty, then how come poor kids in Kentucky are a year ahead of poor kids here?"

That doesn't make any sense. We can't use that as an excuse anymore. We need to look at the system that we're building and leave that to drive results. So I think NAEP is critically important as a barometer of our progress. We want to make progress against our Tennessee state standards, but we have to make progress against the rest of the country on NAEP as well. We simply have to.

It is a national and global marketplace. When I talk to employers across the state of Tennessee, one of the things that they say to me – well, they'll tell you two things. Number one: we have a hard time finding people to hire. You know, it's ten percent unemployment in the state. We have open positions. We can't find people to hire, and then, number two: so, therefore, we go to Kentucky or North Carolina or Georgia and hire people from there for those positions.

Now that's a very bad thing and something that starts with our educational system. It starts early, and I'm excited about the prospect of 12th grade coming into NAEP as well because it gives us the chance to make sure that we have that snapshot, the comparative snapshot the whole way through.

Mark Musick:

All right. I was going to move to Mike and Ralph, but I want to zero in there because Gary and Kevin have both mentioned 12th grade Tennessee. Tennessee will have the opportunity to participate in a 12th grade NAEP program. It will be one of those states that gets Tennessee 12th grade information.

Is that on your radar screen? I mean because a decision is probably going to come down through your board and you, Kevin, I suspect. And so are you all thinking about that, talking about it?

Gary L. Nixon:

We have had some preliminary conversations as a result of being here. My belief is that it would probably be something Kevin can talk to his boss about, and with the recommendation then to the state board, the board would consider it. It's very much on my radar, and I would support it.

Mark Musick:

And I think the cost of doing that, Ray is?

Ray Fields:

There's no cost to the state.

Mark Musick:

No direct cost. Right. OK. So. All right. Mike, Tennessee and college preparedness or college readiness or whatever term you want to use – and it was interesting. Darv picked up on it immediately about what Lamar Alexander said and/or – and the and/or debate or the and/or discussion is one that we need to – you know, we need to keep wrestling with.

And Senator Alexander's comments, I thought, were quite, you know, quite – just exactly right, upfront about this. But Tennessee, with performance funding which Tennessee led the nation and you focused on one of those measures of performance funding has to do with remedial/developmental.

So we've been at this 30 – almost 40 years, I guess. And so, as you, Mike, look at what Tennessee has done and what the Tennessee Higher Education Commission has done and 12th grade NAEP, what are your views?

Mike Krause:

Well, first, I think that it's important to remember that every corner of postsecondary education right now is focused on one ambitious goal. That is to reach the national average for higher education attainment by 2025. That's going to require us to do two things.

First, we're going to have to hold constant our current rates of attainment, and then we're also going to have to improve about 3.5 percent annually, over and over and over. And so that is an ambitious goal. And so, in higher education, what that makes us think is, first, the seniors of 2025 have yet to enter K-12, and many of the seniors en route are at various junctures along the K-12 pipeline. And so that's why higher education has been working so closely with K-12 right now, in the Race to the Top projects but also in an array of other initiatives.

And so, in regards specifically to NAEP, it makes me think two things. First, our current rungs of assessment PLAN and EXPLORE and the ACT are fantastic, and, as Darvin mentioned, do offer us some really great opportunities to take snapshots and where students are in their march to readiness. But those assessments do end when the ACT is administered, generally, at the end of the junior year.

And so we do have a situation where students will not enter higher education for another 15 months most likely, and so, when we look at specific mathematical competencies, for instance, if that student was competent at polynomial functions, at the end of their junior year, there's probably a question as to whether or not they'll retain that competency into the first semester of their freshmen year. And so, in that respect, a 12th grade NAEP assessment is very interesting.

The other thing I point out is that senior year matters in Tennessee. When we made the decision to adopt the Diploma Project and move forward with those standards, our students are taking four years of math. They're taking four years of English, and so the senior year's a substantive year of education. And so, certainly, it's intriguing there, and it's intriguing for higher education because, certainly, that's the last juncture in which we can take a look at how a student currently stands and then they'll enter higher education, and, as I led with, their success at higher education is the focus of what we do.

Mark Musick:

Very good. As you look at the potential for having the 12th grade NAEP data and, as you noticed, Darv mentioned the ACT 11th grade – as you think about, what

questions or what are some of the things you think Tennessee might learn from that if you had that data?

Mike Krause:

Well, sure. First, we've been embarked on a very ambitious redesign of how we conduct developmental education the last several years, really, and so, to be able to kind of triangulate where NAEP performance was up against ACT performance and then success in either remedial class or a credit bearing class, that's really interesting.

But think about this, what if you could then back it up to where that eighth grade NAEP data was and where that fourth grade NAEP data was? And then you provide a really great depiction of what a student's path looked like throughout the juncture, that's intriguing.

Mark Musick:

And, obviously, I don't mind admitting, I'm selling this idea of Tennessee 12th grade NAEP because, as Darv said, you will have something that few states in the country have. We will have something, in Tennessee, if we had the ACT data and the NAEP data.

Ralph, with anchoring the business end to your –

Ralph Schulz:

I almost feel like Kevin, also, anchored to the business end, too.

Mark Musick:

Well.

Ralph Schulz:

I agree completely with his comments.

Mark Musick

Well, and Kevin's point is one that's near and dear to me. I'll just get off on a slight tangent here because, when you look–and we don't want to make excuses, and we don't want to–and you weren't. I mean you were saying it, but it's important to look at this information because, for example–I went one day to–

I was in Minnesota, and the NAEP reading report had come out the day before, and the headline, in the *Minneapolis Star* was, you know, "Minnesota Second in

the Country"–or something–"in Reading." Well, what the story didn't say was that Minnesota white students were trailing Texas white students.

So the reason Minnesota was number two in the country was they were such a homogeneous group, and I can also say–and I did say to these folks that African-American students–and I've forgotten which state I picked out, but it was a southern state, had higher scores than the African American students in Minnesota.

So you don't say these things to – you know, to make excuses or to get off track, but it's important, as you said, and maybe you want to follow up on that, Kevin.

Kevin Huffman:

Yeah. I mean I just think that you need–more data is a good thing, and I think having national data is a really good thing, and I think our ability to cut the national data and look at where Tennessee stands comparatively to our neighboring states and then, also, the nation as a whole, across different demographic groups gives a really important piece of information about how far we have to improve, what the possibilities are, what our expectations should be for the next four years.

And I just think it's really important because, otherwise, you can fall into the trap that Gary identified, which is becoming mired in your own state standards and lose track of whether those state standards are also moving you forward against the country.

Mark Musick:

OK. And I think it was Gary, your immediate former governor who went to a national meeting and came back, and maybe you want to tell that story or–

Gary L. Nixon:

Well, when he returned, the commissioner's phone rang pretty quickly. He said, "Tim, what's going on? Why are we–why do we have an F in truth in advertising? And it was because we had the widest gap between the percent proficient between NAEP and state proficiency.

Well, we didn't–we were tied with Oklahoma. There was another publication that came out, about the same time, they called *Education Next*. And they gave the F in truth in advertising. But they also gave Tennessee and Oklahoma the Creampuff Award. Not only are your expectations low, you're not taking–at that point, we're not taking any actions to improve it.

So those spurred us forward, and just soon after that, the governor affiliated Tennessee with Achieve and the Diploma Project, and we began this work.

Mark Musick:

Ralph, you say that you would amen what the commissioner said now, but what else would you say, from your standpoint, as with the chamber and the work you've done?

Ralph Schulz:

Well, first I would say it's great to see businesspeople out in this crowd because I think ten years ago the idea of businesspeople at a NAEP symposium would be a foreign thought, a foreign idea. It gives you an idea of the level of commitment and interest by this community.

And I would also say that I–the business community looks to these NAEP results, first of all, as an indicator of the progress that the education system is making, but businesspeople care about the results. And the results are that the people leaving the education system, to some degree, are not joining their businesses ready to go to work.

The Diploma Project, Complete College, et cetera, demonstrated things like problem solving, team building in addition to the academic and so forth and so on, but as we work with the business community, they look at the NAEP results that came up twice yesterday in discussion.

What do the NAEP results say about our position as compared to other states? As our position compared internationally, et cetera? What those businesspeople then do with that information is they become engaged, involved, supportive and motivated.

When they look at ACT scores, which is the only measure, they'll argue, right now, about should we be looking at graduation rates. Should we be looking at ACT scores? What should we be looking at? NAEP is the one piece of information that everybody looks at and says, "Okay. That's an objective measure that we can all trust."

So I guess, sort of summing up all of those comments, businesspeople are first and foremost concerned with what kind of workforce are they getting, and they are not getting the workforce, as the commissioner mentioned, that they're looking for–not prepared for the right things and not prepared in the right way to some degree. That's not an exclusive statement.

But then they look to NAEP and these results as a guide for the educators to determine how much progress has been made and what should our targets be, and

then, as a business community, they look at it as what should our targets of support be and how is the–how are we measuring up? What's the accountability measure?

NAEP's seen as a good accountability measure. So that's the whole talk, and I'm…[crosstalk].

Mark Musick:

No. You're good. What you just said, Ralph, and I'll see who wants to comment on this, but because Senator Alexander made a very direct statement this morning. He said–and I'm only going to leave out a couple of words–"If NAEP scores don't improve, then our efforts in Tennessee aren't working."

That was that and now,you can quibble, maybe, with some of that but that was a pretty–Janet, you're shaking your head. So what do you say about that statement?

Janet Ayers:

Well, I mean I think that, again, I think that is exactly the case because NAEP is our litmus test. If we're going to compete in a national and global market, we need some kind of measure. Like it or not, you need some kind of measure that's uniform.

Every industry has a benchmark, and you can argue all day long the pros and the cons, but you need some kind of benchmark. And the best we have is NAEP to be able to address where we are along in the process.

Nashville is the healthcare capital, certainly, of the country, probably of the world because, you know, we're an incubator for healthcare companies. It's not been too long ago that they're looking at 1,000 health IT jobs available. What I see, from a business community not just as foundation trying to–you know, like I said, college access is one thing, but we are really focusing on getting our students in something postsecondary, completing something postsecondary and being gainfully employed.

And I think that NAEP is really doing a good job of assessing the areas where there's meaning at the end, and we can talk all day long about the results, but you want to be gainfully employed at the end. And if you don't have that qualified workforce, if they aren't ready, if–when we're assessing all of the tools that we're using in the education system and they're not ready then, you know, at the end of the day, we don't have the workforce to use.

And so I see, as a businessperson with my former hat and a former chairman of an economic development board, if I wanted to look at NAEP and say–because it's a very good indicator of what's happening in a region with a demographic. And I

look at NAEP scores and Tennessee, who is high in healthcare. We have Volkswagen in Chattanooga. So you have the auto mechanic thing that was listed on the screen, and we're very high in preparedness.

Where is a company going to locate?

Used to be, it's just an available workforce, but now it's an educated workforce. And I think that's really important from a business perspective that you can use that tool and say, "Well, you know, Tennessee is at the forefront. You know, they're really looking at getting their workforce educated." So I see that as a good business tool.

Mark Musick:

OK. Mike?

Mike Krause:

And, certainly, the slide earlier, where we talked about the judgmental standard-setting research that's being conducted on occupational fields–that's interesting because, in Tennessee, a central part of our link between higher education and the workforce occurs at our technology centers.

Our technology centers are unique in the nation. There are 27 of them in the state. They have over 30,000 students enrolled, and they have a 75 percent completion rate and a 76 percent job placement rate. And that's remarkable, and those students are training in those fields exactly that were listed, LPNs, computer skills, HVAC. And those students are going on into excellent jobs and enhancing their local workforce economy.

So the ability to make–to not just triangulate how a student's going to do entering a traditional four year institution but also, perhaps, some vocational tracks within the two year system or here at our TTCs is extremely useful. And I think what it does is it also prevents us–we throw out college and career readiness, but so often, when that's thrown out, then the conversation really becomes about college readiness.

And so I really think that there's great utility in being able to focus on the whole phrase in discussing career readiness and discussing the parts of postsecondary education that occur in sectors other than a four year.

Mark Musick:

OK. Yeah.

Ralph Schulz:

I have to say the business conversation is moving more toward postsecondary, as Janet said, as compared to college only or even specific skill training. Those 11,000 jobs in the healthcare industry or the IT industry that are available right now, when you talk to the CEOs and the people doing the hiring, they'll tell you they can be resolved with one-year programs, two-year programs. They don't have to be four-year programs.

I think the key, though, is, you know–I kind of come into this discussion thinking of NAEP at the 12th grade level as a lagging indicator, and the reality is it's not the end.

I mean it is an intermediate indicator, but if it isn't used to improve the activity and the results that take place beforehand, then it–you know, before the 12th grade, then really, it's almost too late. You know, it's – the 12th grade is almost too late. So the one thing I did want to emphasize here though, is you're right. This postsecondary and what Janet was saying about these jobs, the postsecondary focus is evolving to be very important to business.

They don't want to do the remediation themselves. They're willing to do a certain amount of company specific training, but they're looking for one-year, two-year solutions and they'll take it from there.

Mark Musick:

You used the term, Ralph, lagging indicator. One of the things that I've marveled at over the years is the answer to Darv's first question. What is NAEP?

So far today, Janet has called it a litmus test. Ronnie called it a gold standard. Al Shanker referred to it as a national treasure. Gary called it–referred to it as a barometer. The term benchmark has been used and lagging indicator, and there are a number of others. So we – it's interesting to me how we all struggle or maybe use our own way of seeing NAEP.

The research role, what NAEP – we've talked about what the – the impact that NAEP has had on Tennessee, and Tennessee was, as Senator Alexander and Governor Musgrove have said – Tennessee was the first state in the country to raise its hand and say, "Measure me with NAEP. " in 1986 when no one – only Tennessee, Virginia and Florida were doing that.

But what about the potential of this research that you've heard about today for Tennessee? Do you have specific things that you could see – we've obviously seen the potential for the ACT/NAEP tie but you – could you amplify that or add to that?

Kevin Huffman:

I–well, just to throw in a couple of things. I mean I think the ACT/NAEP tie is really important, and NAEP 12th grade is different than ACT in a bunch of different ways. And one way is just that Tennessee is one of the only states where all kids take the ACT. So, when you look at Tennessee compared to other states on ACT, it's not an apples-to-apples comparison, which means that we need something else at the high school level.

But I'm also interested in the research that ties to employment. We have a robust CTE programming across the state, at the high school level. And one of the things that's really important to me is that we ensure that our CTE programming aligns with both higher education and also the workforce.

And, as we move forward, we have to make sure that we are aligning both really high academic standards – especially as we go into the Common Core – with readiness for tech centers, for associate degrees, for four-year college degrees and also with the kinds of jobs that are going to be available in the future.

And it's a complicated crosswalk, and I think any research that helps identify the proficiency levels that are needed in different fields will be very helpful for us as we think about the role of CTE and the role of high schools in that whole picture.

Mark Musick:

And that relates to the tech center point you were making, Mike, right?

Mike Krause:

There was a report that came out, earlier this fall, at the Southern Governors Conference called the Middle Skills Report, and I think there's a Middle Skills Commission. I Googled that and researched it, and I found Tennessee data. And it told us that the advanced skill jobs–those, I guess, B.S. degrees and above – 28 percent of Tennessee's jobs required advanced skills. Twenty-seven percent of the workers have it. Fifty-four percent of the jobs in Tennessee require middle-skill training. Forty-four percent of the workers have it.

So we've got a ten-point gap. Think about it. Ten percent of all the jobs in Tennessee, we don't have skills for. That's a lot of jobs, and I think, doing this research, when we identify the skill level that's needed for the job and then we can start to back map into the training programs and to be sure that we're delivering that level of preparation. That can be critically important to know those things.

Mark Musick:

And I know the two ten percents are different. Ten percent unemployment and the ten percent figure, but those two numbers do have something to do with each other. I mean in some way.

Governor, we–I know we could keep on this track, but we want to hear and get questions and comments from everyone in the room. So let's turn this over to you.

Governor Musgrove:

Let's take a few questions. I know we're about ready for a break in just a minute. But I want to, while your mind is fresh on the issue, if you have questions of the panelists, of Mark, we've got a couple of mics walking around. Please seek recognition and ask here. There's a mic right behind you.

Sidna Bookout, retired educator:

I'm from the Memphis area, and I'm appalled at–

Governor Musgrove:

Make sure you identify yourself.

Sidna Bookout:

And–oh, my name is Sidna Bookout, and I'm from the Memphis area. And I'm appalled at the high dropout rate, particularly in Memphis, but in Tennessee in general. What can be done? I mean we're talking about kids who make it to the 12th grade and who get a diploma, but what about all the ones who don't make it that far?

Can we use the fourth grade and eighth grade results somehow to identify those kids and provide them with some type of training so they don't have to have careers as bank robbers and drug dealers? I mean this is a really bad situation in Memphis. What can we do for those kids to give them some kind of training so they can get a decent job?

Kevin Huffman:

I'll just–a couple of things. So, obviously, I think performance levels of the lower grades are predictors of which kids drop out, and one of the thing we're doing, through Race to the Top, is building an early warning data system that will help identify kids that are high risk of potentially dropping out, which I think is really important.

I actually think that schools in Tennessee do a better job. This is actually an area of strength in Tennessee–a better job of preventing kids from dropping out relative to other states in the country. We actually have a higher graduation rate, and one of the things that I think is important is, as our kids are being pushed to graduate and as our schools are doing more to ensure that kids graduate, we have to make sure that they're graduating with strong skills.

So the two challenges are not mutually exclusive. I mean, what you identify is a real challenge, and in some areas of the state, there really are higher dropout rates than other areas. And I think there is a lot that can be done by identifying kids in eighth grade and ninth grade, which are really the critical years for identifying kids that have high potential of dropping out.

Gary L. Nixon:

I think it's also important to remember that we're not using NAEP to identify children. We're using the NAEP results as a barometer–I'm going to use it again – a barometer of the work we're doing. It's through the state exams that we have the data that are predictive.

Mark Musick:

And this is an insufficient answer, but one thing you could do–and you can test me and see if I'm right about this. Since we have every student taking ACT, there is a question that those students are asked. Granted this is the 11th grade and it's, as Ralph said, it's maybe too late but, "What are your plans? Are you planning on going to postsecondary? Are you planning to go into the military? Are you planning to…?"

And there's a checklist where I don't have any plans. And the last I saw, in at least one state, there was like 11 percent or more than ten percent. I would be all over those–I mean you know who they are. You've got their names, and they said, "I have no plans. I'm a junior." That won't solve the problem, but it might help with some of the problem.

Margaret Prater, Northwest Tennessee Workforce Board, Dyersburg State Community College:

My name is Margaret Prater. I'm with the Northwest Tennessee Workforce Board, also an employee of Dyersburg State Community College. We operate the Workforce Investment Act programs in an 11-county rural area in Northwest Tennessee.

I would be interested in some of your materials. I saw a reference to WorkKeys, and I would be interested in how you see that playing out as a measurement for

job readiness. I know, in our area, our workforce board, which is a group of businessmen and women, primarily have set that as a standard that, before we invest tax dollars–yours and my tax dollars–in training someone to be an automobile mechanic, a plumber or a nurse going to even a four-year institution, that we require that they pass the National Career Readiness Certificate at a level that would be equivalent to whatever that job would require.

And so we're doing that with a lot of adults, with dislocated workers. I've also seen some – we have a businessperson on our board with Marvin Windows and Doors in our area that asks us to come in with him, to the local high school. He wanted to hire some summer help from the senior class, and he asked us to come in and test those individuals and, because they want to know that they have the skills to participate, and if they don't, there is remediation that's available free through the KeyTrain system, and we do that through our career centers.

But we've been relying on Department of Labor funding for that, and that money has gone away. And so, you know, I'm currently working on a grant proposal with Delta Regional Authority and in economic development with various, you know, organizations. I'm trying to get some additional funds to help us continue that because what we're seeing is not only are existing businesses, like Marvin Windows, saying, "This is a barometer for measuring whether someone has the skills ready to come to work," but we're seeing an economic development that, when we meet with industry prospects, they're number one thing is no longer the building, the location. It's the workforce.

And they want to know that we have a prepared workforce, and so we have 20,000 unemployed people in our area. And my goal is to get those 20,000 people tested so that we can show that they are prepared and that they are a ready, willing, and able workforce. That doesn't include high school seniors, you know, coming out.

So, you know, I can do what I can do, but I can't do it all. So what is education's stand, I guess, on WorkKeys and being prepared? What are you using to measure people going to work for business?

Governor Musgrove:

Panel?

Gary L. Nixon:

Well, I think the WorkKeys question goes back several years. We found that it was valuable if it was valued in the community, if it was valued by the employers. If we mandated it from the state and there was no value in the community then it had little value to the children.

So we changed away from requiring it for the tech path kids to let them take it if they choose. But again, I'll just say I think it's a very–can be very valuable; can be very productive if it's used in the community by the employers and the institutions.

Margaret Prater:

And we are seeing more and more employers that require it. We have already tested over 5,000 people in our small rural area [away from microphone — inaudible]. The employers that we are working with now, that are hiring, they want some type of measure because a high school diploma does not tell them what they need.

Mark Musick:

Governor, Mike had a comment here.

Mike Krause:

Well, I just wanted to echo what Dr. Nixon just said and that is, in certain areas, we hear directly, in higher education, that WorkKeys is essential and valued. I would highlight, in other areas though, we've been pretty nimble in starting degree programs at TTCs and community colleges that are directly responsive to the business community.

So, for instance, chemical engineering technology at Austin Peay, that was directly the result of Hemlock Semiconductor arriving there, and that employer has basically said students that come out of that pipeline, we know that they have those competencies. So I think it's an example of, in some areas, WorkKeys is absolutely the credential you need and, in others, we're finding that completion of this higher education program, wherever it is, is kind of a de facto validation of that student's preparedness.

Governor Musgrove:

Any other questions? Doug?

Doug Horne:

On the Memphis question, I was curious what you think of the combination of the two school boards, city-county, do you think that's going to help the future dropout rate or not?

Governor Musgrove:

Doug, you've put her on the spot over here.

Doug Horne:

Well, I know. I'm just trying to help her.

Sidna Bookout:

It remains to be seen. A lot of people think that the Memphis School Board abdicated their duties, and we've got something like a 27-member school board now. And they can't – they're having trouble finding a room large enough to meet in, you know, for their school board meeting.

I – the people, you know, outside Memphis proper are very upset. I don't know. You know, we'll have to see how it works out. Our schools really are in bad shape, really bad shape. So, who knows how this is going to work out?

Governor Musgrove:

Let me take it now, if I can, Mark, I'll close up this segment here before we take a break. As soon as we get through, we'll take about a ten-minute break, and then afterward, it's where we want to have as much interaction with you as possible with regard to the relevance, utility, what we can do in our research to make that possible.

Hearing Dr. Nixon and listening to you a minute ago kind of brought to focus the way President Clinton, I think in the fall of 2010, I heard him on *Meet the Press*, and it was an interesting thing. He said it specifically. He said, "Right now, the unemployment rate is 9.6 percent." It's nine percent now, but it was 9.6 percent at the time.

He said, "Today we have five million jobs where employers need people that do not have the skills for them." He said, "If that were to take place overnight, the unemployment rate would go from 9.6 percent to 6.8 percent." Now, he took a very complicated thing and just narrowed it down.

And I think that is the paradigm that we find ourselves in: academics on one side, the business world on another side needing employment. But we need a way to measure, so that businesspeople and colleges know that our young people walking out are, in fact, ready, trainable, et cetera, because productivity, it looks like to me, is the way we make it in the United States; not cheap labor anymore.

And we've got to be very productive, which means we have to have well-trained, educated, young people. So, as we – after we take the break and when we come back, I want you to chime in, as Mr. Fielding Rolston will then setup our third segment this morning. So let's take a ten-minute break, and we'll start back at 11:10.

[Symposium re-convened]

Governor Musgrove:

If I could have everyone's attention, we'll go ahead and start with our third and final session this morning. As I indicated to you, this third session is going to be focused on hearing from you. After having set up the two sessions that we had this morning, the third session will be introduced by Mr. Fielding Rolston who is the chairman of the State Board of Education and is also one of the newest members of the National Assessment Governing Board.

So it's pleasure to have him in that dual capacity this morning. He will set up the questions that we want to base our discussion around this morning. But before I ask him to come up, would you all join me in thanking Mark Musick and our panel for their presentation?

Fielding, I'm going to use my introduction of you the same as I did earlier. Your title and esteemed stature go without saying.

Fielding Rolston:

Thank you, Governor. I think, as the governor said, I think the panel did an excellent job of addressing the questions that we really need to be addressing in Tennessee, and what we want to do now is to turn each of our tables into a panel discussion so that you can discuss the same questions that the panel was addressing.

And what we want to do is, first of all, get somebody to volunteer as a recorder at each one of the tables. Now, you know, before you start slipping under the table or trying to hide, let me assure you that you don't have to report. The only thing we want you to do is take some notes about the comments that were made at your table, and we'll collect those after the meeting. So you don't have to worry about doing the reporting.

So each one of the tables, we've got the questions up on the screen here. We'll start with the first question, which is, What value does NAEP 12th grade – and let's focus on NAEP 12th grade. What value does that add for Tennessee? You know, how can we use that? And we've got a number of things identified here as academic preparedness, the research that has been discussed this morning and so forth.

So, at each one of your tables, we'll take about ten minutes to let you discuss that question. Get somebody to record the comments that were made and then we'll come back and address the research question a little bit later. So let's take about ten minutes and have that discussion at each one of the tables.

[Table discussion ends and audience comments begin]

Fielding Rolston:

Let me ask the person who was serving as recorder to take your notes and give them to one of the staff members that is around so we can collect those and have those. At this point, let us know if you heard something at your table that you think is a very important comment that ought to be shared with the entire group. Maybe you made that comment or maybe somebody else at your table made that comment. But any comments that you think we ought to share with the entire audience here?

Who has a good one? Got so many good ones. OK. Right over here [pointing].

Liza Massey, Nashville Technology Council:

Hi. I'm Liza Massey, and I'm with the Nashville Technology Council. So we're really interested in a skilled workforce right now. In Middle Tennessee, we have 929 available tech jobs, and we have 600 graduates a year with tech degrees here in Middle Tennessee, and only 20 percent are staying. But anyway, so that's why I'm here.

But our table – and these two ladies in particular – were pointing out to us that the information that's provided is great for all of us who are interested in it, but we really need to get it out to the parents and even the students so that they can – we can shift that culture of what's important and what the workforce is demanding and how it's changed today and how the – how important a role parents play in ensuring that number comes up, too, because we all value education, not just the educators and the employers.

Fielding Rolston:

Great. Yeah. Really, really good comment. Appreciate that. Other comments that somebody made at your table relative to the value of the 12th grade NAEP? Any other comments you want to share with the group right here?

Rick Parrent:

Thank you. I'm Rick Parrent from Volunteer State Community College in Gallatin. One thing that we were discussing is the comments that were made earlier relative to not just the delivery of academics but also the sub-cohorts that are being represented, whether it's ethnicity or it's someone who's expecting free lunch, or whatever it might be.

What is, you know, the extent to which that or those individuals, that are currently enrolled as a 12th grade student in a school here in Tennessee, is supported by a, shall we say, family perhaps that has a college interest for that child. Because, if they don't have that interest, then they're not going to buttress the support of that student and create the potential for that student as they come home, whatever home is defined to be, to be successful.

So we think that's a very important piece to this.

Fielding Rolston:

Great. Good comment. Appreciate that. Any other comments on the value of the 12th grade NAEP here? OK. Back here.

Audience member:

We had a little bit further discussion regarding those CRCs and WorkKeys and felt like the reason the CRCs and WorkKeys were so important, especially in parts of the state that have had significant manufacturing loss, is that there is absolutely no faith in the employer community that a high school diploma means that you can read and do basic math.

So, if the 12th grade NAEP can help us with fixing that perception, and that may get back to the first comment of how do we get the word out, then there's a lot of value to that.

Fielding Rolston:

OK. Very good. Yeah, Mark.

Mark Musick:

Fielding, our table added one more term to the NAEP litmus test, benchmark, and that was autopsy. Which, autopsies are important and good things if you do something–

Janet Ayers:

If you do something with that information. Yes.

Fielding Rolston:

Great. So we'll record autopsy as part of – yeah. OK. One more comment and then we'll move to the next question here.

Audience member:

I heard years ago that there's no evaluation without change. So, if we evaluate and don't make any changes as a result, there's no point in doing it.

Fielding Rolston:

Great, great. Good comment. OK. Let me, again, get the person that was making the notes, the recorder to get those notes to one of the staff members so we can collect all the good comments that were made at the tables.

Let me also remind you that we've asked you to fill out an evaluation–this is part of your package of material in the yellow folder there. If you would, before you leave, pull this out and fill out this evaluation form and either leave it on the table or get it to a staff member.

Let's now move to the next question we want to address, and that's basically around research. And it's–you know, what additional research do we need to do and who are the people or who are the potential partners that we can incorporate into that research.

Again, if we could, at each one of your tables, let's take ten minutes and discuss the need for additional research, what additional research is needed and also get it recorded. Use the same recorder, if you will, and get those notes back to us after this session. So ten minutes.

[Table discussion ends and audience comments begin]

Fielding Rolston:

Again, if the recorder could get the record that you have created to one of the staff members, we certainly would appreciate that. Again, there were some real good comments that were made that you'd like to report on concerning the need for research, what future research is needed, also, who might be helpful or be involved in that. Comments that have been made at your table? Yes.

Gracie Porter, Metropolitan Nashville Board of Education:

Good morning. I'm Gracie Porter from Nashville. I'm chair of the Board of Education. I made the comment earlier, and I hope my team members chime in, that we do more research on the economic level of students when we're looking at ACT, SAT, any of the standardized tests that we give, look at the economic level and closing the achievement gap.

When we look at those students, which in Tennessee we know that the African-American students are very low, and also, I've been reading quite a bit on closing

the achievement gap here recently because we're getting ready to really tackle this boldly in metro schools.

But when we look at the economic design here, a lot of African-Americans are making much, much lower when it comes in terms of jobs and dollars than our counterparts, let's say the white families. And that's where there's a big gap. So, until we look at where people live and the households, the amount of money that these households are bringing in and not having to work three and four jobs and spend more time with their children, then I think we will continue to see that divide.

Case in point, we know that when you have one population living in a very condensed area–and I'm going to name one in this city because it's in my district: Cayce Homes. If you're not familiar with Cayce Homes, it's a project area that's right at the foot of the Titan Stadium. It's been there more than 40 years. Absolutely not very much has been done in order to make it look like a livable place.

So those are the kinds of things that we're going to have to change if we need to change, as political figures in our cities across the United States–not just in Tennessee, but across the United States–then we will see the change happen in our schools.

On the flip side of that, if you–at the foot of the stadium again, Sam Levy was completely demolished, rebuilt in the same neighborhood that had the highest crime, the highest drug rates in the city. Now those people have a wonderful place to go to work and come back to in the afternoon.

The school has changed drastically. Kids feel good about going. They leave their toys outside. They can come back and the toys are still there.

Fielding Rolston:

Great.

Gracie Porter:

It's no longer a gated area or excluded area, but that's what we're going to have to do first is look at where people live and how we can increase…

Fielding Rolston:

And I think–you know, a lot of what we're doing, hopefully with assessments, NAEP and other assessments has identified the areas that we need to work on such as the ones you're identifying. OK?

Gracie Porter:

Thank you.

Fielding Rolston:

Other comments? One of our panelists here is going to speak.

Janet Ayers:

Well, I do this because I was asked to do this. I really just wanted to sit on my hand and not do it. But one of the things, when I was looking at the material to get ready for today and in the research component of NAEP, when I look at it, it felt like the whole focus was on that end results, the assessment itself.

But, in reality, when you're researching and doing this, is the information that you're compiling, the rich data that's being compiled where it's – what you know you need for math and reading and all those kinds of things – that the value of NAEP and your research of that – of the data that you're compiling is just as important or more important than that end assessment.

And when I came into this today and I was thinking of that end assessment, I am the consumer in the business world, and I'm the one that's trying to get my students placed in something postsecondary. So a test at the 12th grade that tells me whether they're prepared or not, doesn't really help my student after the fact.

But what NAEP is doing that is very important, that I think you really need to emphasize, is all of this great research you're doing on what you need in order to be ready before you get to that 12th grade test. That you're going to do a great job of measuring how we've done is a very important component of this whole process so that we know that that's what we're teaching and we're training towards on the backend.

And then, you know, the part I understand that you're for preparedness and I had to turn off my readiness hat because that's where our program comes in. I get them ready. This test shows me that they're academically prepared. I just want to know what I need to do beforehand.

Fielding Rolston:

Great, great comment and, of course, one of the important things that we need to be doing here and trying to do is with NAEP four, eight and 12 and also with EXPLORE, PLAN and the final ACT, is trying to get those indicators out there early so we can take corrective action early in the student's career.

One more comment. Any other comments that you want to share? Got another one here. OK.

Audience member:

The research is wonderful, and I'm sure we can use it in various ways. I wonder if you considered this research on preparedness at kindergarten. I think we're doing too little too late. We need to start when these students are five–four or five, when they're entering school and make sure they're on grade level when they enter kindergarten. Then we have a better chance of keeping them there through the high school and graduation time.

Fielding Rolston:

Great, great comment. One of the things I think the state board is proudest of is the work that we did on pre-K work, so forth in the state, and I think it's making a big impact and has great results, and we need to do more of it, more of the research. Good comment.

Audience member:

What she said, maybe you need to, instead of doing the 12th grade or, in addition to the 12th grade, back up and do a 10th grade, too. I mean, between eighth and 12th grade there's a lot of ground covered. And if we don't know–you know, as Ms. Ayers said, when they get to the 12th grade it's too late. We just know they weren't prepared. So maybe add another level.

Fielding Rolston:

OK. Good, good comment. Let me, again, remind you to – those who are recording comments, to get those comments to one of the staff members and, also, to do your evaluation form.

Governor, we'll turn it back over to you, sir.

Governor Musgrove:

Before I close us out this morning, are there any other general comments or questions that you might have, either individually or as a group, from discussions that the panelists put forward, discussion that Darv put forward with his presentation about NAEP, anything that I may have said or in your discussions? I don't want to cut off the opportunity to be heard.

As Fielding said, we want to make sure we get the written comments because, certainly, we will go over all of those, but is there anything else that anyone wants to add before I close us out this morning? Back – table back here.

Elizabeth Wilson, Cumberland Gap High School:

I just want to say thank you for inviting us to attend this [inaudible]. Sorry. I guess I should introduce myself. My name is Elizabeth Wilson, and I am a school counselor. And I am in the trenches, and I just appreciate the opportunity to come and hear what's going on and to gather some information and to share together.

It is so important that we make connections with one another for our students' sake, and the more that schools make connections with business and with other industries that are out there and other services that are out there, the better our students will be. And I just appreciate the opportunity to share and thank you for gathering the folks together.

Governor Musgrove:

Thank you. Any others?

Marty Willis, Tennessee Department of Education:

I'm Marty Willis, Department of Education in the Career and Technical division. It was mentioned a couple of times, during the panel. What I'd like to ask the assessment – in building the assessment, if each state reports their career and technical students as concentrators to the federal government for reporting purposes and if there was some way that, when these students are assessed, that the student is identified as a CT concentrator, I think the research and the data would be used; would be very helpful. Because we constantly brag on our CT students as performing well and graduation rates and other things. But it would be nice to have NAEP to go ahead and verify what we keep bragging about.

Governor Musgrove:

OK. Thanks, Marty. Any other comments?

Audience member:

We'd like to hear later about, John Grisham about the preparedness of his colleagues at Northwest…

Governor Musgrove:

Which, of course, would be a reflection on me, and I don't know. I'm going to gag him by virtue of the authority vested in me. Let me close by saying this–and I want my closing remarks to focus around the statement that the lady in red, over here, made earlier this morning.

And that was that the business community has no belief that a 12th grade diploma is an indication of being ready…Am I correct in my…? So. Let me give you a couple of reasons why, to me, it's so important today. Fifty years ago, when my mother and my dad were going to school, Mom dropped out of school in the tenth grade. Dad dropped out of school in the fifth grade.

That was not that uncommon. I thought that, actually, I was a unique person in that I must have been the only one in that situation. Time has shown that's not true, but at the time, our economy was set up on the fact that really only the elite needed to have postsecondary opportunities. And the entire economy was based on, not educational level, but just simply the ability to work.

When you fast forward to today, though, we find a completely different setup, and Janet made reference and others have made reference that Nashville is a place – and the greater Nashville area–that healthcare is a very large issue and employer.

There are very few jobs in the healthcare world that take less education. Typically, it's more education. Whether you agree or disagree with the Affordable Care Act, the statistics are real and compelling, set up by the U.S. Department of Labor, et cetera. For every $1 billion you spend in healthcare in a year, you create 12,833 new jobs.

Now, if you look at what's going to happen over the next several years, with the increase of the availability of people to be on healthcare and the need for people to be in the provider world of healthcare, we don't need dumber students. We need more prepared students.

And secondly, if you look at what's happening in China—you can say you heard this here first today on this Friday afternoon. If you look at what's happened in China, I predict, over the next 15 to 20 years, you're going to start to see a reversal of the jobs going there to the jobs coming back.

Now you add that–and there's a lot of reason that I can back that up that I won't go into – if, in fact, that is true and accurate, then it's all the more important for our workplace to be prepared. And, to me, the timing of what we're doing and the connection between being prepared, being ready to go into the work world for training or into education to then, ultimately, be trained, is so much more important that we don't just educate the top 25 percent, because it's the rest of the percent that also make up the workforce.

And that's hugely important. So I want to thank Tennessee, today, for what you have done. As Darv presented some of the statistics, some of them may not have been great. But it's an acknowledgment of the reality that we all start with and then figure out how do we improve.

And the job that NAEP does is not to change policy but, hopefully, to give you some legitimate, credible statistics so that the policymakers, in term of educators, decision makers on the boards, and legislative and executive branch decision makers can make needed decisions and necessary changes.

And so I want to thank you for being here today. I want to thank you for your input, for a very successful symposium today on 12th grade preparedness. Thank you very much for coming.

[End of Audio]