



**Outline of Comments From Former Governing Board Chair Darvin Winick
25th Anniversary Working Dinner
February 26, 2014**

- I. BOARD LOOKING AHEAD – WHAT ELSE SHOULD THE BOARD DO?
- a. Introduction
 - i. Current situation is good.
 - ii. Tempting to retreat to old Texas rule: “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.”
 - iii. Potential for controversy whenever results are made public is great—Board has moved beyond most questions.
 - iv. We all share that feeling of satisfaction when National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results are used as the standard.
 - v. Board is doing well, so why not leave well enough alone?
 - b. Three reasons, all involving important unfinished business
 - i. Need for increased understanding of the meaning of NAEP scores.
 - ii. Improved reporting of international comparisons.
 - iii. Closing the 12th-grade reporting loop.
 - c. Unfinished business reason one: reliance on achievement levels for results interpretation
 - i. Achievement levels are technically sound, elegant in construction, and impressive, but subjective.
 - ii. Potential exists for confusion and disagreement, for example, in explaining the meaning of *Proficient*.
 - iii. Preparedness research findings are a good start to better understanding, but just a start.
 - iv. Need for more anchoring.
 - d. Unfinished business reason two: information, misinformation, and lack of information on how well education functions in the U.S. compared to other countries
 - i. Need for more Board-like discipline, especially in considering impact of student demographics and standardized sampling and testing procedures.
 - ii. In spite of the popularity of claims that U.S. students are falling behind in academic achievement, evidence is not convincing. Actually, in many cases, contrary findings are suggested.
 - iii. NAEP/TIMSS pilot study is an important, serious beginning and efforts should continue.
 - iv. Increased public awareness of the facts is needed.

- v. Even though it may be attractive to use the “falling behind” argument to ask for more money for schools, it’s foolish and expensive to make resource and implementation decisions on very questionable data.
- e. Unfinished business reason three: correcting a somewhat incoherent pattern of reporting on how well our high school students are performing
- i. State or district 12th-grade NAEP scores are not available to many parents and taxpayers. Dropout and completion rates are offered up as proxies for high school academic performance for most or all systems, but less than half of the states volunteer to participate in 12th-grade NAEP.
 - ii. Possible to understand why some educators might prefer that their 12th-grade students not be assessed, but it is difficult to believe that parents and taxpayers are disinterested in how their high schools are performing.
 - iii. The Trial Urban District Assessment is an important movement forward in achievement reporting, and credit goes to the Council of the Great City Schools for proposing and promoting the program, which now includes 21 large school districts. Hopefully, this market will see the importance of high school inclusion.
 - iv. Not sure why we continue to consider such a successful program a “trial”—unless there is some aversion to using the acronym “UDA.”
 - v. A public information challenge exists.

II. BOARD LOOKING AHEAD – WHAT SHOULD THE BOARD CAREFULLY AVOID?

- a. Temptation to stray from original mission as an independent, consistent, and reliable source of achievement information
 - i. Stick to reporting the extent that learning has occurred.
 - ii. Identify what should be learned, not why or why not learning occurred.
 - iii. No ranking, rating, or accountability responsibilities.
 - iv. No individual student or campus results.
 - v. Just the facts.
- b. Pressure to adopt assessment fads and fancies
 - i. Don’t join the search for results that please.
 - ii. Don’t confuse good instructional practices with most effective assessment approaches.
 - iii. Beware of attempts to blame the messenger.
- c. Focusing on issues other than academic achievement
 - i. Be cautious in reacting to suggestions to include affective behaviors (motivation, self-discipline, ability to work in groups, etc.) in learning reports. Affective factors may be important in explaining why learning occurred, but not how much occurred.
 - ii. Reporting on affective factors may be useful, but social skills and good behavior, even though desirable, are not a replacement for academic skills.

- d. Carefully sorting what can be done with technology from what should be done
 - i. Greater use of technology in assessment is not an “if” question; it’s a “when” question.
 - ii. Separating what the student knows and can do from what the computer does for him is a Governing Board challenge.
- e. Balancing depth and breadth of assessment content
 - i. “What gets measured gets taught” is a hard-to-deny occurrence.
 - ii. Strong correlation of grade-to-grade and subject-to-subject results suggests that too frequent assessment and too many subjects may not add to the answer of the basic question “Has learning occurred?”

III. BOARD LOOKING AHEAD

- a. I end up where I started
 - i. Governing Board has an unusually good record.
 - ii. Should pay close attention to the original mission.
 - iii. Keep on keeping on.