



## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dan Eignor, *Educational Testing Service*

As I write this column, I'm thinking that this is the last Newsletter column I'll be writing and that my term as NCME President will be up in four short weeks. The time has literally flown by and things have been far from boring. I am extremely happy to have had the opportunity to serve NCME in the capacity of president and I can honestly say that I am satisfied with what the Board and I have been able to accomplish over the past year. I would have liked it if a few of the activities we've undertaken were a little further along than they presently are, but that's a fairly universal lament. Anyway, your new NCME President for 2007 – 2008, Anne Fitzpatrick, is already on top of things and I anticipate that next year will be equally as or more productive than this past year. Please join me in welcoming Anne to the position and in recognizing the contributions of the two outgoing Board members, Terry Ackerman and Linda Cook.



## 2007 Annual Meeting News

Program co-chairs Mary Pitoniak and Mike Jodoin have prepared a section for this Newsletter that constitutes their reflections on the whole process of putting together the Program for this year's meeting. They've done a great job and I think you'll find the contents of this section to be interesting.

## AERA/APA/NCME Standards

The Standards Management Committee is continuing the work needed to inform the selection of the next Joint Committee co-chairs and then the individual members of the Joint Committee. We expect that the announcement about the co-chairs will occur this Spring.

## On-Line Manuscript Submission System

The on-line manuscript submission systems for both *JEM* and *EM: IP* have now been configured as trial versions, and the editors, Jim Carlson and Sue Brookhart, have been trying their systems out. Both editors have reported that things are operating smoothly and both anticipate that the systems will be operational in the near future.

## Handbook of Teacher Evaluation

Mary Kennedy and Greg Cizek have agreed to be co-editors for the new edition of the *Handbook of Teacher Evaluation*. They have completed a tentative timeline and a book prospectus and are in the process of putting together a table of contents and suggested chapter titles. The progress being made on this project continues to be quite amazing, and besides Mary and Greg, we have Board members Terry Ackerman and Judy Koenig to thank for the progress that has been made.

## International Standards

I wrote about the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and their sponsorship of upcoming work on an International Standard for psychological assessment in my last two columns. Working with the American member of the ISO—the American National Standards Institute (ANSI)—AERA, APA, NCME, and ATP (Association of Test Publishers) have formed a Technical Advisory Group (TAG), with ATP taking the lead as TAG administrator. Through this TAG, the organizations should be able to influence the content of the International Standard to be developed. A meeting was held in Washington on February 26, to discuss a strategy for presenting our concerns about the proposed Standard at the initial meeting of ISO in Berlin in early March. G. Harris, executive director of ATP, will represent the TAG at the meeting in Berlin. After the meeting, we should have a better understanding of the impact the proposed standard may have on our Joint Standards.

## NCME Website

Task Force chair George Englehard and Task Force members (Jim Impara, David Miller, Susan Davis, Josh Goodman, and John Hofman of the Rees Group), along with Publication Committee chair's Terry Ackerman and Steve Sireci, participated in a conference call in mid-February to discuss issues related to the process of updating the NCME Website. The following questions were used to focus the discussion:

How do we use the website to...

- 1) link NCME to other relevant organizations?
- 2) make other organizations aware of NCME?
- 3) serve as a resource for material relevant to state and district testing personnel?
- 4) serve as a medium for informing policy?
- 5) serve as a mechanism for creating opportunities for professional growth?

The Task Force plans on developing a set of recommendations for the Board to consider at its upcoming meeting in Chicago.

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## REFLECTIONS FROM THE ANNUAL MEETING PROGRAM CHAIRS

by Mary J. Pitoniak and Michael G. Jodoin, ETS

As we write this update, we are in the last throes of assembling the program for the annual meeting in April. In the past, the newsletter has included program highlights, but since a brochure has already been distributed with that information it was agreed that the program chairs would instead share some additional information about the upcoming meeting and impressions we've had about the process.

First, given that we're a statistically-based profession, here are some data about the submissions and acceptances for this year's meeting.

Session Type	Submissions		Acceptances		Percentage Accepted	
	2007	2006	2007	2006	2007	2006
Paper	294	244	153	145	52%	59%
Coordinated Session	39	44	27	23	69%	52%
<b>Total</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>58%</b>

We were encouraged to see that the overall submission rate was up from last year. We were also heartened that so many members had volunteered to be reviewers (or agreed to be once we asked them). This year we had 289 reviewers, as compared to 144 last year. We would like to thank everyone who reviewed proposals, since it enabled us to obtain three reviews for 77% of the submissions, with the remainder receiving two reviews.

The review process left us with some impressions we wanted to share for the good of both next year's program chairs and meeting participants. First, we'd like to stress how important it is to follow the guidelines for the structure and length of the proposal. Reviewers were sometimes unable to judge the work being summarized because all of the pertinent information was not included. In addition, following the length guideline is important since exceeding it may result in the proposal receiving poor reviews for lack of compliance (and it's also not fair to ask a reviewer to read a 20-page proposal, in some cases consisting of an entire paper). Also, asking someone else to read the proposal for clarity and intelligibility before submitting it is always a good idea.

Second, those submitting coordinated session proposals should be sure that (a) they have at least one discussant, and (b) that the discussant(s) are preferably not an author or co-author of any of the submitted papers. The guidelines state that "at least one independent discussant should be included," and we believe that conference attendees are best served when the discussant is able to take as objective a view as possible of the papers presented.

Third, it is very helpful when reviewers write comments both to the authors and to the program chairs. These comments helped us to better interpret the numerical ratings and make comparisons across reviews. In addition, comments may help authors in improving their paper for presentation or for future submission.

We would like to thank meeting participants for their patience as they awaited the preliminary and final programs. We understand that it is frustrating not to be able to make travel plans earlier, and appreciate everyone's understanding that we need to wait for the final AERA program before issuing our final program. It is indicative of the productive nature of our

members that 34 sessions needed to be rescheduled between the preliminary and final NCME programs because one or more participants were involved in an AERA session at the same time.

We are very excited about the content of the final program. Among the invited sessions will be four dedicated to the topics included in the fourth edition of *Educational Measurement*. We are pleased to be able to offer meeting attendees the opportunity to hear from the key researchers in each area of the field. Invited sessions will also be conducted in relation to the topics of value-added modeling, measuring growth, and assessment engineering. The contributions of a key researcher in the area of computer-based testing will be recognized in a session honoring David J. Weiss. Two sessions related to the updating of standards will be held by AERA but also listed in our program—one on the standards for educational and psychological testing and the other on the evaluation standards. An additional symposium to which we are looking forward is one on noncognitive assessments in education, which will feature as a discussant James Heckman, who received the Nobel Prize in Economics in 2000 and has an interest in noncognitive skills.

We look forward to seeing you all in Chicago. And again, we thank you for making the proposal submission/review and the program scheduling processes as smooth as possible. We are sure that through your participation the meeting will be very informative and productive.

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## STUDENTS' READINESS FOR COLLEGE

*Susan E. Phillips, Consultant; Gerald Melican and Jennifer Kobrin, College Board*

A 2004 study by the American College Testing Program (ACT) concluded that a majority of high school graduates taking the ACT college admissions test were not adequately prepared for college level academic courses. Specifically, the study found that only 26% met the readiness benchmark for college biology, 40% for college algebra and 68% for college English composition. Only 22% demonstrated adequate preparation for all three college courses (Cavanagh, 2004).

The results for minority students were even more disappointing. For example, the percents of African-Americans and Hispanics who were academically prepared for college algebra were 11% and 24%, respectively, compared with 57% of Asians and 46% of whites<sup>1</sup>. Results for college biology were similar in pattern but uniformly lower.

Kobrin (2007) used data from the entering class of 1995 at 41 institutions to determine benchmark scores on the SAT (the version prior to March 2005) that predicted a 65 percent probability or higher of getting a first-year college grade point average of either 2.7 or higher or 2.0 or higher. The percentage of students in the College-Bound senior population meeting the benchmarks at the 2.7 criterion level was very similar to those reported by ACT (2004). In 1995, 22 percent of students met the SAT total score benchmark, and in 2005 the percentage increased slightly to 25 percent. College readiness benchmarks for the revised SAT Reasoning Test will be available by early 2008.

These findings have led to a recommendation for more rigorous coursework in the K–12 educational system. This recommendation has two components: convincing more students to take challenging courses in high school and offering high school courses that are more academically rigorous.

Concomitantly, at the state level there is a growing recognition of the need for high school reform. Although many states have adopted more rigorous high school standards and assessments as the result of NCLB mandates, AYP gains for many high schools have remained stagnant, lagging far behind those for elementary schools. (Manzo, 2004).

## References

Cavanagh, S., *Students Ill-Prepared for College, ACT Warns*, Education Week, October 20, 2004, p. 5 (excerpted from ACT, *Crisis at the Core: Preparing All Students for College and Work*, Iowa City, IA, 2004). ACT set benchmark standards for the ACT Assessment math and science tests that resulted in a 75% probability of a grade of C or better and 50% probability of a grade of B or better in college credit courses such as algebra or biology.

Manzo, K., *Educators in California Set Their Sights on Improving High Schools*, Education Week, Nov. 3, 2004, p. 12.

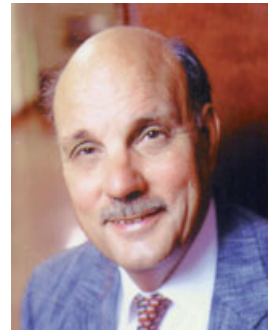
Kobrin, J. L. (2007). *Determining SAT benchmarks for college readiness*. (College Research Note No. RN-30). New York, NY: College Board.

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<sup>1</sup> In Colorado and Illinois, where the ACT exam is required of all students, college preparation results were only slightly lower than the national results. However, these results may have been affected by differential statewide test preparation activities.

# TESTING IN A DISCONNECTED K–16 SYSTEM

Michael W. Kirst, Stanford University



Admissions literature focuses upon what is most beneficial to postsecondary education without contemplating the impact of admissions tests upon secondary schools, K–12 students, and teachers. Admissions tests send powerful and clear signals to all K–12 groups about what knowledge is most worth knowing and how it should be taught.

A big issue is the proliferation of tests in grades 9 through 11 caused by the combination of postsecondary admissions assessments, and the new statewide tests created by the K–12 standards movement. For example, California tests all students in grades 9 through 11 with a cross-cutting mathematics and language arts assessment, and state-mandated end-of-course exams in most academic subjects, such as biology, U.S. history, and English literature. As of 2007, none of these K–12 tests are used as an admissions factor by the University of California (UC) or California State University. During the Spring of the 11<sup>th</sup> grade, there is a particularly onerous amount of testing for UC applicants that includes: the SAT I, SAT II, Advanced Placement tests, and at least five state K–12 tests that have no admissions or placement stakes for students.

Education standards and tests are created in different K–12 and postsecondary orbits that only intersect for students in Advanced Placement courses. How else could 50 states set K–12 standards and assessments without talking with higher education institutions and state boards for higher education? The huge disjuncture between K–12 and postsecondary school standards results in a lack of K–16 understanding, collaborative design, and knowledge about the assessments used by each education level. For example, colleges in California complain that secondary tests do not emphasize trigonometry enough. Higher education is concerned with the upward trajectory of pupils, a key function of admissions tests is to predict student performance in the first year of college. Secondary education is concerned with high school graduation and the attainment of annual state and federal achievement targets for K–12 state assessments. Secondary educators rarely discuss or consider the impact upon postsecondary education that new and expanding assessment policies might create. Moreover, there is no K–16 accountability system that might cause the two levels to work together on common assessment goals or reduce postsecondary remediation.<sup>2</sup>

Universities provide some good arguments to explain why they pay little attention to K–12 standards or assessments. First, the universities emphasize that they are not involved in the creation or refinement of the K–12 standards. Second, the universities observe that both politics and technical problems effect frequent changes in state K–12 standards. Third, they note that the K–12 assessments have rarely been evaluated to see how well they predict freshman grades (although such evaluations are not difficult to conduct). The result is a K–16 babble of education standards that leads to unclear signals for students (particularly those from low-SES families), high remediation rates, and much misdirected energy by students caught between conflicting standards. For 80% of students who do not go to selective four-year schools, a crucial standard is an institutionally administered placement exam which is often not aligned with the ACT or SAT I. Yet placement exams are essential for channeling students into non-credit postsecondary remedial courses.

The alignment of curriculum standards, assessments, and teacher practice from K–12 through the first two years of college can enhance college preparation and completion. Many students lack college readiness because their high school courses and exams are different from the academic expectations at college. Increasingly, four-year colleges and universities are outsourcing remediation to community colleges, so it is difficult to get valid indicators of remediation incidence. But some students have the potential to succeed in four-year colleges, but do not apply. So K–16 assessment alignment (including admissions and placement exams) is desirable.

So far, three state policy possibilities have emerged:

- K–12 educators negotiate with colleges concerning a statewide aligned assessment both will use. No statewide higher education system has done this.
- Higher education negotiates with K–12 to modify an existing K–12 statewide exam to make it congruent with college/university expectations. California State University has done that through its “Early Assessment Program” (<http://www.calstate.edu/eap>).
- K–12 officials agree to use an existing college assessment for their secondary grades. Six states use ACT and Maine utilizes the SAT I.

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<sup>2</sup> See Michael W. Kirst and Andrea Venezia, *From High School to College*, (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 2005). The appendix has a comparison of high school and college assessments.

The ACT option is particularly interesting because ACT has 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> grade assessments that could send signals to students about college readiness and areas of academic strength and weakness. But the big problem with ACT is that it was never designed for secondary school teachers to use for their classroom instruction. Secondary school teachers complain that ACT is not specific or appropriate enough for them to plan their content or pedagogy.

It would be difficult to retrofit ACT so that it has the properties that current state and local K–12 standards contain. ACT’s curriculum is useful as a summative indicator. Postsecondary education has a different idea from K–12 about what is a “standard”. Postsecondary educators mention general attributes like critical thinking and analysis while K–12 educators use specific content and skill standards on a weekly or monthly basis. Consequently, it is difficult to align standards and tests from K–12 to postsecondary levels.

Illinois uses ACT for its 11<sup>th</sup> grade exam and found thousands of students with ACT scores high enough to succeed in college, but no plans to go to college. Kentucky will use all three ACT exams (grades 8, 10, 11), so we will know more about its potential to enhance college readiness. Colorado merely put ACT at grade 11 on top of a state testing system that is unaligned with ACT at prior grades. The disjuncture between K–12 and postsecondary admissions placement tests deserves more attention by NCME members to improve signals K–12 students receive about college readiness.

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## **FINAL REPORT: GOVERNOR’S COMMISSION ON COLLEGE AND CAREER SUCCESS COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA**

*Gerald Melican, College Board*

The Pennsylvania Governor’s Commission on College and Career Success was published in late December 2007. Citing substantive information the commission recognized that a large number of students are leaving high school without the requisite skills to compete in today’s economy. The commission makes a strong case for making changes in the educational system in Pennsylvania (and every other state) and they lay out 12 comprehensive recommendations. With suggestions about identifying at-risk students and intervening early (#7) and increasing efforts to help economically and educationally disadvantaged students (#11) the commission placed testing as the most visible and most important goal. They recommend, for instance, that Pennsylvania build a new series of tests, Graduation Competency Assessments, which every student would need to take (#1). The GCA will be in four content areas: mathematics, English/Language Arts, Laboratory Science, and American History, Economics, and Government. The content of the examinations will be linked tightly to “college and work ready” curriculum.

The commission’s charge and the 12 recommendations are presented below and the URL for the entire report is provided in the reference section.

As noted on page 8 of the wide-ranging report the commission included educators, business representatives and education advocates. The charge was quite extensive with three major components. The charge is reprinted verbatim because a synthesis would not do justice to their role.

- Create clear and consistent signals and policies for Pennsylvania’s expectations for high school success.
- Conduct qualitative and quantitative research, which includes Pennsylvania, national and international studies.
- Create incentives for school districts to increase academic achievement in high school and higher education to increase retention through the first two years of postsecondary education.

The report indicates the commission approached their assignment with zeal and the 12 recommendations address the issue directly and with definite attention to kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, students who are at-risk and students who are economically or educationally disadvantaged.

### **Recommendation 1**

Require all Pennsylvania high school students to demonstrate proficiency on Pennsylvania's academic standards to graduate. Students can demonstrate proficiency by scoring proficient or advanced on the 11th grade PSSA or by passing a series of state-developed Graduation Competency Assessments. (Emphasis added)

### **Recommendation 2**

Require all school districts to record PSSA scores and Graduation Competency Assessments on all student transcripts, and further recommends that postsecondary institutions and employers in the commonwealth be encouraged to use this information for admission, placement and employment.

### **Recommendation 3**

Accept the definitions of college and career ready in mathematics, English and science developed by the Commission for use in the review of standards, development of assessments, and development of curriculum.

### **Recommendation 4**

Expand the definition of college and career ready content areas to include social studies and develop model curricula and Graduation Competency Assessments in this area in addition to the standards, curriculum, and evaluations that support math, science and language arts.

### **Recommendation 5**

Develop preK–12 model curricula, including inquiry-based pedagogy, through which students can achieve academic standards and proceed on track to demonstrate proficiency on PSSA and Graduation Competency Assessments.

### **Recommendation 6**

Develop and implement a preK–16 student information system that is designed to collect information on student performance.

### **Recommendation 7**

Identify early on those students in danger of falling behind in their achievement of academic standards. Provide additional instruction and support services to put those students back on track for success. This early warning system should begin no later than the sixth grade.

### **Recommendation 8**

Take all necessary action and expend adequate resources to redefine the role of guidance counselors and student service coordinators as school-wide facilitators of student advising to ensure that all high school students are well advised in school concerning post-graduation expectations and how to transition successfully into both college and career.

### **Recommendation 9**

Establish new regional alliances of business, high schools, and higher education institutions where necessary and more fully utilize existing alliances to address specific challenges in preparing students to be college and career ready. These challenges, perhaps unique to specific regions, will be overcome most effectively with local stakeholders working in concert with statewide efforts to achieve college and career readiness.

### **Recommendation 10**

Increase and enhance the number of educational options available to high school students to achieve high standards with particular attention to career and technical education.

### **Recommendation 11**

Facilitate the coordination of existing, and the development of new, programs designed to encourage economically and educationally disadvantaged students to attend, be retained and complete their postsecondary education programs.

### **Recommendation 12**

Build systematic approaches to re-engage and re-enroll former dropouts in high-quality programming that yields a high school diploma and leads to college and career success. The Pennsylvania Department of Education should lead this statewide effort in cooperation with other relevant commonwealth agencies.

Governor's Commission on College and Career Success Commonwealth of Pennsylvania: Final Report (December, 2006).  
<http://www.project720.org/images/stories/commission%20final%20report%2012-22-06.pdf>

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## **NATIONAL ACCESSIBLE READING ASSESSMENT PROJECTS**

The National Accessible Reading Assessment Projects (NARAP), three projects that focus on designing accessible reading assessments for students with disabilities, have released two reports, one on defining reading proficiency for accessible large-scale assessments, and a second on focus group reactions to three definitions of reading. NARAP is funded by the Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.

In *Defining Reading Proficiency for Accessible Large-Scale Assessments: Some Guiding Principles and Issues*, NARAP identified three principles for defining reading proficiency. These principles are:

**Principle 1:** Definitions of reading proficiency must be consistent with core NCLB provisions.

**Principle 2:** Reading proficiency must be defined in such a way that flexible expressions of reading are allowed while preserving the essential nature of reading. This is crucial as we seek to make assessments accessible to students with a variety of disabilities.

**Principle 3:** Definitions of reading proficiency must reflect both comprehension and foundational skills.

Each of the principles is discussed, along with issues that they raise for assessments in general and in particular for students with disabilities. These principles and the issues will be used to guide each project's research and will help in the identification of general principles and guidelines for accessible reading assessments and in the eventual development of a prototype accessible reading assessment.

The *Defining Reading Proficiency* report and the research report resulting from the focus group, *Focus Group Reactions to Three Definitions of Reading (As Originally Developed in Support of NARAP Goal 1)*, can be found on the NARAP Web site ([www.narap.info](http://www.narap.info)) at <http://www.narap.info/publications/reports.htm>.

Currently, NARAP is conducting research on making reading assessments accessible for students with disabilities that affect reading. Watch for reports of this research at national conferences and on the NARAP Web site this spring.

For more information contact Michael Moore, Communications Director, 612-626-0546.

NCME Members participated in the focus groups that were conducted at our annual conference in 2005 and we were asked to provide input on this paper at the 2005 annual NARAP General Advisory Committee meeting.

A representative from NCME sits on the NARAP General Advisory Committee and provided input on this paper at the 2005 annual NARAP General Advisory Committee meeting.

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## EVENTS OF REGIONAL INTEREST

### Northern Rocky Mountain Educational Research Association (NRMERA) – 2007 Conference: *Making Connections*

The 2007 NRMERA conference, *Making Connections*, will be held October 4-6 2007, in beautiful Jackson Hole, WY. The conference provides an excellent forum for graduate students and emerging researchers to present their work. The Call for Proposals will be available April 1<sup>st</sup> with proposals accepted until June 1<sup>st</sup>. Check out the NRMERA website ([www.nrmera.org](http://www.nrmera.org)) for upcoming conference announcements and details! Contact Chad Buckendahl ([cbuckendahl2@unl.edu](mailto:cbuckendahl2@unl.edu)) with any questions about the conference.

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SCOTT BISHOP, Editor, Data Recognition Corporation  
Send articles or information for this newsletter to:

Scott Bishop  
Data Recognition Corporation  
13490 Bass Lake Road  
Maple Grove, MN 55311

Phone: 763.268.2029  
Fax: 763.268.2529  
e-mail: [SBishop@DataRecognitionCorp.com](mailto:SBishop@DataRecognitionCorp.com)

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