

CHAT & CHEW

with Dr. Malon Southerland
Vice President for Student Affairs

SEPTEMBER 24

11:00 - 1:00 PM

BLOCKER



- Discuss questions
- Voice concerns
- Light Refreshments

6 THE BATTALION NATION

Monday • September 22, 1997

Clinton proposes national testing policy

WASHINGTON (AP) — If President Clinton has his way, millions of fourth- and eighth-graders will soon sit down in their classrooms to take tests measuring how well they can read or do math.

They'll fill out multiple-choice questions. They'll write answers: a few words, a sentence, sometimes longer. They'll show how they solved their math problems — and might get some credit for using the correct approach even if the answer is wrong.

As little as six weeks later, the grades will come back — a numerical score based on correct answers to the 90-minute tests, each given over two days.

Each child's skills and knowledge will be deemed basic, proficient or advanced in the subject — a judgment not made in the other widely used, commercially available tests now found in many American schools.

And if the Education Department can iron out technical problems, the math results will be compared with how students in other countries do.

Whether the voluntary tests are given in the

spring of 1999 as planned depends on Congress. The House voted last week to block them. The Senate has given them the green light, but only if an independent board takes control of testing from the Education Department.

The Clinton administration says the idea behind the tests is to give parents and schools new types of information in a more-timely fashion.

First of all, the tests of fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math will be among the most public around, says Marshall S. Smith, acting deputy secretary of education.

A model test will be put on the Internet next spring, along with suggestions of activities or books for teachers and parents to use.

"Everybody will see what the test is like," said Smith. "There will be descriptions of the items, why they are on the test and what they are trying to measure."

The actual tests also will be made public soon after they are given so teachers and children can go over them and other people can try them. Because of that public distribution, the tests would have to be changed each year.

Also, the graded tests will be returned to parents and schools before the end of the school year.

"The teacher will be able to sit down with the

kids and say, 'This is where you're strong, and this is where you're weak,'" Smith said. Parents could use the test to help see that teachers are better trained.

But not everyone believes the uses will be benign. Civil rights groups worry that poor and Hispanic children in substandards schools will be branded as inferior and unteachable. Some teachers worry about the use of tests to rate them and to compare schools.

Other people criticize the tests for the opposite reason.

"If a student fails or if a school is failing to reach real skills and knowledge, all we have is a test," said Oklahoma Gov. Frank Keate, a Republican. "There are no consequences."

Oklahoma is one of 46 states creating a new set of standards that all students should be able to meet. Those who fail the state's third-grade reading test get "intensive remediation" and may be held back.

Oklahoma students now take the National Assessment of Educational Progress, a series of federal tests given to a sample of students nationwide to measure trends in achievement. Clinton's national tests would be based on math and reading portions of that national assessment.



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- Student Programs Office (2nd Floor MSC)
- Student Activities Office (125 John J. Koldus Building)
- Sterling C. Evans Library
- Office of Graduate Studies (125 Teague)
- Office of the Dean of each College
- Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs (10th Floor Rudder)

Completed applications must be received by the Student Activities Office no later than 5:00 p.m. on Friday, September 26, 1997. They may be hand-carried to the Student Activities Office, sent through Campus Mail, or sent through U.S. Mail. (See the application for addresses.)

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