FLEXIBILITY, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND QUALITY EDUCATION

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH CONGRESS

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HEARING HELD IN BRADENTON, FLORIDA, FEBRUARY 16, 2001

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HEARING ON "FLEXIBILITY, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND QUALITY EDUCATION"

Friday, February 16, 2001

U.S. House of Representatives

Committee on Education and the Workforce

Washington, D.C.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:00 a.m., in the media center, Wakeland Elementary School, 1812 27th Street East, Bradenton, Florida, Hon. John Boehner [chairman of the committee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Boehner, Castle, Tiberi, and George Miller.

Also present: Representative Dan Miller.

Staff present: Kent Talbert, Professional Staff Member; David Schnittger, Director of Communications; Maria Miller, Policy Assistant; Alex Nock, Minority Professional Staff Member.

Chairman Boehner. A quorum being present, the Committee on Education and the Workforce will come to order. Under Committee Rule 12-B, opening statements are limited to the Chairman and ranking members. Therefore, if other members have statements, they will be included in the hearing record.

With that, I ask consent for the hearing record to remain open for 14 days to allow members' statements and other extraneous material referenced during the hearing to be submitted for the official record, and without objection, so ordered.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN JOHN BOEHNER, COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE, U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Chairman Boehner. For those of you that I have not had a chance to meet this morning, I'm John Boehner, Chairman of the Committee. I represent the 8th Congressional District in Ohio. I want to extend a warm welcome to all of those that are in attendance today, and especially to my colleagues, Mr. Miller, Mr. Tiberi, a member from Ohio, Mr. Castle, the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Education Reform, from Delaware, and of course, you know your own Congressman, Dan Miller.

I especially want to thank Ms. Jackie West, the principal here at Wakeland Elementary, for making the media center available for our hearing. I know that the hearing involves an awful lot of work for you and your staff, and we're grateful for your hospitality.

This is the first of several education reform hearings our committee will be holding over the next few weeks. As Congress begins a new legislative session, our committee will be traveling around the country to hear from parents, teachers, school administrators, and many others about local education reforms that are improving academic achievement.

These hearings will help lay the foundation for legislative action later this spring on our major K-12 federal education law, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Just a few weeks ago, the President announced his education reform plan, a plan with academic accountability as its centerpiece, and a plan that ensures that no child is left behind.

Despite nearly a decade of uninterrupted economic growth during the 1990s, the achievement gap between disadvantaged students and their peers remains wide. Today nearly 70 percent of inner city fourth graders cannot read at a basic level. I believe that President Bush's emphasis upon closing the achievement gap for disadvantaged students puts the attention of the federal education policy where it should be, upon ensuring that every child learns.

Our hearing today will focus on accountability, flexibility, and other measures that ensure quality education for all of our nation's children. I'm very interested in Florida's “A Plus Plan for Education,” which was enacted into law in 1999, and which has been at the cutting edge of academic accountability. Central to the accountability system are school “report cards.” Under this system, schools are assigned a grade between A and F based on how well they perform on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test. Schools that do well receive cash rewards, and those that are low performing are given additional resources to help them improve. However, if a school receives an “F” for two years in a row, then parents are given a tuition scholarship to pay for the attendance of their children at a better-performing school of their choice. With that, I think I'll put the rest of my statement into the record and recognize my colleague from California, the ranking member, Mr. Miller.

WRITTEN OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN JOHN BOEHNER, COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE, U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES – SEE APPENDIX A

OPENING STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER GEORGE MILLER, COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE, U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. George Miller. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm Congressman George Miller. I'm the senior Democrat on the committee, and as the Chairman said, I'm from California. I'm delighted to be here this morning with the Wakeland school community, and Principal Jackie West, thank you very much for your hospitality and for the tour that you gave us.

As the Chairman said, this is our first hearing, and it parallels the process that we are undertaking in the committee to try and develop a reform of ESCA, if you will, with special emphasis on Title I. I think it's clear to everyone in the Congress on both sides of the aisle that we have clearly and simply got to get better results from the money that we're spending at the federal level. Obviously, there are a number of states around the country that have taken the bull by the horns and tried to reform their systems to get those results that are so important to the children and to their parents.

I certainly believe that there are key elements to successful school reform, and that is that we must begin by focusing on high quality standards and assessments, and we must make a very substantial investment in our teachers' quality. We must increase funding to immediately try and turn around those failing schools, and we must give special attention to class size and school infrastructure in that same process. If those schools are unable to turn around then we must take the kinds of dramatic reforms that are necessary that, again, many states have started to contemplate and in some cases, put in place.

I think first and foremost, we must make sure that every classroom has a teacher that is competent to teach the subject matter for which they are teaching. Unfortunately, all too often in my state and many other states across this nation, that is simply not true. It's mostly not true in low income schools. We end up with a situation where the poorest children in the poorest schools get the poorest teachers. That's a recipe for disaster, and I think that's why in many instances we have not closed that achievement gap between majority and minority students in the system. That was the intent of this program, and we must make it the result of this program.

I think every member of this committee is absolutely dedicated to changing the results that we receive under the federal program. I think we all recognize that it's going to require additional resources. We all recognize it's going to require some very difficult decisions. But more importantly, we've got to recognize that there is a group of people that have to live with those decisions on the ground, if you will, on the front lines. We've got to see that we can, in fact, make it compatible with the needs of the school system and with what has been learned over these many years.

This is an opportunity, I think, with the new President and with a new Congress to in fact get it right this time and just not simply sleepwalk through another re-authorization, pretending like everything is okay, because clearly it is not.

Unfortunately, it's not okay in many instances for the poorest of our children. It flies in the face - and I'll just finish this saying that the research is very clear. If you take a poor child from a poor neighborhood, even with a lot of chaos in its life, and you put him with a first class teacher, with a first class curriculum, in a decent facility, he'll learn just like every other child in America. This country can no longer allow that gap to continue. The evidence I think even at this school is pretty clear. If we are diligent and apply the resources, and we have competent staff, that we can in fact turn it around for those children.

So I look forward to the witnesses, and Mr. Chairman, thank you for scheduling this hearing.

Chairman Boehner. I'd like to introduce the six witnesses that we have here this morning. First is Mr. Charlie Crist, Commissioner of Education here in the State of Florida. Next we'll have Mr. James Warford, who is the Superintendent of Marion County Public Schools in Ocala, Florida. We also have with us Dr. Frank Till, Jr., the Superintendent of Broward County Public Schools in Ft. Lauderdale, Ms. Bertha Zapata, a teacher at Broward Elementary School in Tampa, Ms. Sonia Trejo, who is a parent here in Bradenton, Florida and Dr. Debra Robinson, a School Board Member for District 1 in the West Palm Beach County School District, West Palm Beach, Florida.

I'd like to remind our witnesses that your entire written statement will be made part of the record. We'd like to limit your statements to as close to five minutes as we can, and remind members to hold their questions until all of our witnesses have testified. With that, Mr. Crist, you can begin.

STATEMENT OF CHARLIE CRIST, COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION, FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA

Mr. Crist. Great. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Members of the Committee, it's a pleasure to be with you. I want to also thank the principal, Jackie West, for her courtesy and her kindness in setting this up in great order, and the students at Wakeland most particularly.

My name is Charlie Crist. I am the new Commissioner of Education in Florida, and it's an honor to be invited to speak before you today. Welcome to Florida. We're glad to have you here in the Sunshine State.

It's a pleasure and an honor to be here because we feel that Florida is on the cutting edge of education reform in our country; at least we are striving for that. Let me also thank you for choosing this place as a field hearing. We are very proud of Manatee County, obviously, as is Congressman Miller; it's always good to see you, Dan.

As Florida's Education Commissioner it is my responsibility to ensure that all of Florida's students receive the highest quality education possible. With the passage of

Governor Jeb Bush's A-Plus Plan for Education in 1999, our schools and communities have shown a renewed commitment to education by initiating reforms that are truly impressive in substance and scope. Reforms such as allocating additional resources, reductions in the student-teacher ratio, extending the school year, and a dedication to the traditional core subjects of reading, writing, and arithmetic will ensure in fact that no child is left behind.

My Greek immigrant grandfather, Adam, was a living testament to the uplifting power of education. He never went further than the third grade and at one point in his life shined shoes for a living. Yet he was able to educate all his children, including my father, who ended up being a medical doctor. My grandfather never stopped preaching the virtues of education, even to me. That's why I have such a passion for making sure each child receives the opportunity to gain the lifelong benefits that education can truly provide.

Last week, I was honored to join with other state education leaders from around the country to discuss education issues with President Bush at the White House. His desire to improve our schools is driven by the deeply held conviction that every child should be at the center of our efforts. Congressional leaders obviously also recognize that point, too.

Earlier this week, Governor Bush and I were in Collier County to advance his Family Literacy Initiative. I had the opportunity to read to a group of third graders at Vineyard Elementary School in Naples, Florida and discuss the importance of reading and education with them. It was rewarding to see their young faces excited about learning. When we make children and not institutions the center and the beneficiaries of education reform, there is no way that we can help but win.

My personal commitment to our education, our children and the future of our state is why I chose to make a difference, or at least try, as Education Commissioner. Allow me to explain some of our major reform initiatives that will help ensure a high-quality education for Florida's students.

Accountability is at the core. Accountability is one of the themes of this field hearing. Our strategy for directing more education dollars to the classroom is based upon the fact that too much tax money is absorbed by a burgeoning education bureaucracy. Our spending choices must be child-centered, not institution-based. Accountability for spending, for decisions, and for outcomes provides the foundation for our reforms. We propose that Florida school districts undergo independent financial management audits to evaluate the effectiveness of programs. Cost savings through contracting or outsourcing would ensure resources are used to achieve the core mission of providing children the very highest quality education.

Children must be safe to learn. We are too often faced with the specter of school violence and its devastating effects on the lives and well-being of our children and families. We have learned this all too well in Florida. Just last year in Palm Beach County, one of our hard-working public school teachers was tragically shot and killed. We propose requiring school districts to undergo safety audits to help them. We want to partner with our districts, because these are good people. They are hard-working people and they care deeply about our children, our teachers, and our families. Schools and districts would be given a safety grade on a scale of A to F, just as we do with schools

today. When a school receives an F grade two years in a row, parents would have the right to send their child to another public school.

As you are aware, I am sure, we have a teacher shortage problem. We face it in significant ways here in Florida. One of our greatest challenges is to deal with that. So I am proposing that we provide scholarships of $5,000 per year to graduates of Florida public high schools who will agree to teach in Florida schools once they have finished college. They would get full tuition, fees, and books paid for by the state. We recruit college athletes. I used to be one; I played quarterback in college. It's important and it's fun, but it's much more important to make sure, I believe, that we have good quality teachers for our young people for their future. That's why I think this is an important measure. We hope to pass it this session.

Learning cannot take place under substandard conditions and in facilities where students feel unsafe. That's why I've proposed that portable classrooms be completely eliminated from our state by July 1, 2003.

We must commit ourselves to improving every facet of our children's learning experience. How successful we are in achieving this goal depends on the value we place on the future welfare and prosperity of our young people. Our students deserve every opportunity to excel and it is our responsibility to make sure that it happens.

In 1996, Florida adopted a rigorous set of achievement expectations known as the Sunshine State Standards. They tell us what students should know and be able to know from kindergarten through high school. To measure students' mastery of standards, the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test, known as the ``FCAT,'' was developed. It was first administered in 1998, although the grading of our schools began under the Lawton Chiles' administration.

Florida's system of education accountability also includes holding schools accountable for that learning. To that end, in 1999 Governor Bush proposed, along with Lt. Governor Brogan, the A-Plus Plan, which was enacted by the Florida legislature. Public schools are assigned a grade, A through F, based on student performance on the FCAT and other factors. Students attending schools that receive two F grades in a four-year period are eligible to receive opportunity scholarships. The scholarships enable them to choose a higher-performing public school or a private school. One of the myths surrounding opportunity scholarships is that only the best students would choose to attend another school. This, as well as the theory that public schools would be ``abandoned'' and that the children who attend them would be ``left behind'' has been proven wrong in our state. Roughly even numbers of high-performing and low-performing students have chosen to attend another school. In addition, school districts throughout our state have implemented changes with remarkable student achievement results.

Just yesterday, the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research issued a report evaluating the effectiveness of Florida's A-Plus Plan. In addition to validating FCAT as a reliable measure of student achievement, although we know it's imperfect and we are trying to improve it continuously, the report concluded that opportunity scholarships clearly motivate failing schools to improve.

I want to point out here that I think our public school teachers deserve a tremendous pat on the back. In our second year of testing with the FCAT, there were no

F schools, and I think it's important to make sure that we have a lot of carrots in addition to some of the sticks that we have in our accountability. The carrots should be that we hold up our public school teachers as having done a great job and having met the challenge.

Florida students have made remarkable strides in their academic success. Even with these dramatic advances, there is much work to do as we continue to implement comprehensive education reform. We are in the midst of an exciting time in education, and we have the opportunity to continue the necessary reforms that will impact us well into the future.

While we have begun to make Florida's educational system performance-based and child-centered, much of the federal budget is regulation-based and system-centered. That's why we thank you for being here today. President Bush's philosophy for education reform that addresses the federal role in education is welcome and needed. For too long we have allowed student academic performance to wallow in low expectations. With this committee's help, and your help, Mr. Chairman, there can now be a meshing of state and federal policy that ensures every student will achieve academic success.

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for being here today. Thank all of you for traveling to Florida. Congressman Miller, welcome home.

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF CHARLIE CRIST, COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION, FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA – SEE APPENDIX B

Chairman Boehner. Mr. Warford?

STATEMENT OF JAMES WARFORD, SUPERINTENDENT, MARION COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS, OCALA, FLORIDA

Mr. Warford. Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is James Warford. I am Superintendent of the Marion County School District here in Florida. I am a businessman and an educator with a passion for public schools and school reform. You see, I was born into poverty and a troubled home. I'm sitting here today because of what teachers did for me. I know that teachers don't just change lives they can save them. Teachers are the only hope some of our young people will ever have. So I'm very proud of the fact that as a former teacher, I was named ``Teacher of the Year'' in my district four different times.

As Superintendent of Schools, I have fully embraced and support The Florida A-Plus Education Plan and its philosophy of accountability. I am following the lead of Governor Jeb Bush, Lt. Governor Frank Brogan, and Commissioner Charlie Crist. Not because it's politically popular or easy to do, but because it's right and because it works. It is based on a very simple philosophy that is accepted without question in the business world: what gets measured gets done.

If you take anything away from my remarks today, I would want it to be this: The A-Plus Plan has already made a difference in the lives of the people who matter most to me, my students. Today, in Marion County, Florida, our students are reading, writing, and calculating better than they were just three years ago. You will find attached to my testimony some of the gains that we've already made in our district.

Let me retrace our steps just a minute. In 1997, before I was superintendent I might add, we identified three of our lowest-performing elementary schools. In these schools almost 80 percent of the fourth graders tested below grade level, and the majority of them by as much or more than two years. The data showed that they had been that way for years. It is no surprise that the students in these schools were also poor, often minority, spoke other languages, and had a high mobility rate. These were the exact reasons given by our district for their poor performance. I refused to accept that. I agreed with Frank Brogan, who was, at that time, our Commissioner of Education. He believed that these were just excuses.

Here's what was really happening in those schools. The parents of these students were also poor. They paid few or no property taxes, they often had little education themselves, they did not know how to access the ``system,'' or to help their children, and here's a point that this committee might appreciate. They tended not to vote. But more importantly, I believe these parents and students were victims of the most damaging form of racism in our country today, the racism of low expectations.

I was asked here today to address the issue of accountability. The simple truth is that failing schools like the ones I've described can exist only where there is no accountability. The Bush/Brogan A-Plus Plan put in place a system of accountability that made the conditions in our failing schools impossible to hide.

The components of this plan are very simple. It establishes a set of high standards, the Florida Sunshine State Standards that determine what our children should know and be able to do at each grade level. It uses a meaningful test, the FCAT, to measure how well they have done. Most importantly, it holds each school accountable by grading them from A to F on how well their students perform. Make no mistake about it, the A-Plus Plan provided a much-needed wake-up call for our district.

When the scarlet letter ``F'' was given to the three failing schools and the glaring spotlight of media attention was focused on the failure that is when things began to change. It has been said that large organizations don't change because they suddenly see the light, but because they begin to feel the heat. With three ``F'' schools and eight ``D'' schools in my county, it got plenty warm. Failing schools meant the threat of vouchers, and that really lit a fire under some folks.

As a result, attention was focused on the problems of our low-performing schools. I was also elected superintendent. A district school intervention plan was created. Training, tools, and time were provided to the teachers in those schools, who are the only ones who can make a difference, and higher expectations were set for everyone.

What were the results? All three schools improved dramatically. Two schools went from an ``F'' to ``C'' and one school, Fessenden Elementary, was one of only two schools in the State of Florida that actually went from an ``F'' to an ``A'' in one year. I have furnished you with copies of the improvements these schools have made. They

made tremendous gains across the board in reading, writing, and mathematics.

I am very proud of those students and their teachers. They proved that all children can learn and that they will reach any goal we set for them. However, we are forced to ask ourselves this question: Why did it take the threat of vouchers to force us to do what we should have been doing all along and might not have done otherwise?

In closing, the story of these three schools illustrates exactly why I support both Bush education plans, my governor's and my President's. It works, and it's not rocket science. Set high standards for what children should learn, test them to see if they've learned it, and have meaningful consequences for those schools that fail to make adequate progress. What gets measured gets done. As a state and as a nation, as our President and as my governor have both said, we can no longer afford to leave any child behind. Only with meaningful accountability can we make sure that does not happen. Thank you very much.

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF JAMES WARFORD, SUPERINTENDENT, MARION COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS, OCALA, FLORIDA – SEE APPENDIX C

Chairman Boehner. Thank you, Mr. Warford. Dr. Till?

STATEMENT OF FRANK TILL, JR., SUPERINTENDENT, BROWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS, FT. LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA

Mr. Till. Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. It's a pleasure to be here from Broward County. Broward County is the fifth-largest school system in America, with approximately 255,000 students. We will grow about 11,000 students between this past September and next September. Of that, about 40 percent will be foreign-born. So today we are going to talk about accountability, but we could talk about other things. For example, we have gotten every dollar that you've made us eligible for. We're going to spend $1.8 billion on construction over the next five years and we're going to be a billion dollars short. Many of the things coming before Congress will not give us one penny because of our millage rate here in Florida.

We have other issues, too, and I can certainly talk about vouchers. I respectfully do not agree with my colleague to the right on vouchers. I think they are short-term and would not be there. Maybe in the question and answer period I will expound on that.

But I want to talk about the critical issue that I think the federal government can address. That is, the shortage of teachers and qualified administrators. I agree with the comments earlier and I've said this, in the fifth largest school system in America, give me a good teacher in every classroom and my job will become significantly easier and achievement goes up. We've got to find a way in America to entice people to go into education.

Only in America, only in America can you have someplace that only 20 percent of people graduate from college. Yet teachers are demeaned as being stupid because they don't have SAT scores. A college graduate is a high-achieving student. My faculty has a

tremendous number of master's degrees and a tremendous number of doctorate degrees.

So in Broward County we've created a strategic plan. In our strategic plan we brought 80 of our business leaders together to create this plan. We didn't do it from an educational prospective. We did it with the idea that the business community would hold us accountable. So in addition to the A-Plus Plan, which in general I support because I think it is making a difference in Florida, we wanted the business community to keep us from thinking like educators so that no one could criticize us in the end for having a plan that was too narrow. We created that strategic plan, and in my testimony I present it to you. You have a copy of the ten goals. Those goals were in fact to bring forward quality.

We also adopted the Baldridge equivalent in Florida, the Sterling, which was started by President Bush, brought to Florida by Governor Chiles, and now adopted by Jeb Bush. The idea behind that was our belief that we had to talk to our community in a language that they understood. We are a business and we are businessmen. I run a building company of over $1.8 billion. I transport over 140,000 students a day. I feed over 160,000 students a day. I am the largest employer in Broward County. The next-closest employer, I have 26,000 employees, has 6,000. So I am a businessman, but I have this special commodity called 255,000 students. Those 255,000 students also have a special commodity; it's called the teacher.

We have created a disincentive for our teachers from going into the field. The salary is low. Our beginning teacher is about $32,000 a year. I can train students in my high school for a career, to walk out and go to work for Cisco Systems at $40,000 a year. A wide variety of my students go into being nurses for several thousands of dollars more than my teachers. So we've got to find ways to entice people to go into teaching.

In our system, we have tackled that. We went to our major universities. Nova University is one of the largest private universities in the United States. It is now going to California, my former state. Florida Atlantic University, our community college, Barry University, Florida Atlantic University, and other universities have put together a teacher summit. We created a teacher summit to find out what the barriers are for teachers going into education. One of the things we found without a doubt is that teachers just do not feel appreciated by the public. There is too much bashing of education. There is too much bully pulpiting in education. We cannot reform education from a bully pulpit. We can reform it only by cooperating.

In Broward County we are looking at trying to entice people to come in. We think it would be great if, for example at the federal level, when you create enterprise zones, you create enterprise zones for teachers who teach in those communities. A friend of mine in San Diego, in the barrio of San Diego, had an enterprise zone where he got a tax break for being in the barrio. But my teachers one block away did not get one tax credit for teaching the most poverty-stricken kids in San Diego. Why don't we begin to level the playing field and entice people to go into education?

In Broward County we believe in accountability. We are not afraid of competition. We have more charter schools than anyplace else. We are willing to look at reassignment policies. We have approximately 10,000 students who were reassigned. We like competition, because we want to be compared with the best, because that's where we're going to be. We agree with Governor Bush, President Bush that we don't want to leave any student behind. In fact our motto is, ``Reforming Education One Student at a

Time."

We believe that we've got to knock down the barriers. If you come to Broward County, you will see us all wearing anti-barrier buttons. We ask five questions in my district: What are the barriers? Who caused the barrier? How does it impact children? Why do they have the barrier? And why do we need to remove it?

I believe that with the re-authorization of Title I, at the federal level, and with the leadership of Commissioner Crist and Governor Bush that we can begin to look at the barriers. But we've got to look at the barriers and make sure that we as federal government, as a state government, or as a local school district have not put barriers in the way of our teachers that keep them from teaching our kids.

We've got to make sure that when we require them to go to staff development that it adds value to the classroom and not just a roll sheet. We've got to make sure the paperwork that is done is done in a way that helps students; that it doesn't just satisfy somebody sitting in an office in downtown Ft. Lauderdale, downtown Tallahassee, or Washington, D.C.

So you can read my testimony and see the positive things we are doing. I think we are closing the gap, and we are a model for the country. But the reality is that we've got to do more to reform our system to get to that next level. I thank you very much for inviting me here today.

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF FRANK TILL, JR., SUPERINTENDENT, BROWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS, FT. LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA – SEE APPENDIX D

Chairman Boehner. Thank you, Dr. Till. Ms. Zapata?

STATEMENT OF BERTHA ZAPATA, TEACHER, BROWARD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, TAMPA, FLORIDA

Ms. Zapata. Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, I am Bertha Zapata. Last month I had the privilege of being a participant in President Bush's roundtable discussion with successful reading providers. I am ESOL research teacher, that's English for speakers of other languages, at Broward Elementary in Tampa.

Broward is a Title I school. Eighty percent of our students qualify for the Free and Reduced Lunch program, and 65 percent are categorized as highly mobile. I teach students who speak little or no English. The majority are Hispanic and Asian, but I also have Russian and Kosovar students. By the end of one year the vast majority of my students are speaking, reading, and writing in English. It is not magic. It is not because all these children are extremely bright, though many of them are. It is because of the Spalding method, which I have been using to teach non-speaking children since 1994. It incorporates research-based components essential for all children to become accurate speakers, fluent readers, and accomplished writers.

The worst mistake a teacher makes is to underestimate their student's abilities. One of my first grade bilingual students, a young six-year-old boy from Colombia, who

just turned six in November, has been here less than one year. Excitedly he told me last week, “Mrs. Zapata, I only need two more points to meet my goal!”" He is reading independently on grade level and then taking a test on the computer. Yesterday he said to me, “I've met my goal!”"

Quality education depends upon high expectations. Students of all ability levels must be challenged to produce quality work that fully develops their intellect. When teachers have high expectations, children are more likely to set high standards for their own work. No child need be left behind if they are taught the alphabetic code.

English is a phonetic language. Researchers have discovered that the ability to read and comprehend text depends upon rapid and automatic recognition and decoding of single words. That skill, in turn, depends upon letter knowledge, vocabulary, and comprehension skills which must also be taught.

I start by teaching my students the 70 phonograms that represent the sounds of the English language. Phonics instruction takes place in the spelling lesson. Students say and write the sounds used in spoken English. That connects written symbols to their spoken sounds. Also included in the spelling portion are precise techniques for good, easy handwriting, because researchers have found that improving the speed and accuracy of handwriting frees up students' minds for the higher order of thinking needed for writing better compositions.

I begin writing instruction in kindergarten and first grade by teaching children to use spelling words in oral sentences. Learning to construct good oral sentences prepares children for writing and reinforces the meaning of unfamiliar words. By using the words they have written to compose and write two or three sentences daily, my students learn how words and sentences are constructed. They begin reading by reading their own original sentences.

I do not neglect literature. Students first learn to listen to and then read good literature. I incorporate comprehension strategies, such as teaching students to check their understanding, make connections with prior knowledge, predict, and summarize. So children understand what they read. The mental work involved in applying knowledge of reading, writing, and spelling engages student's minds and interests. Quality education is research-based instruction.

Without accountability for results children will be left behind. I am certain that my students are succeeding because a daily assessment of progress is built into the method I use. Therefore, I have a clear indication of what my students know and what they still need to learn. However, that is not the case with many programs. For too many years we have not been accountable. Therefore, teaching fads come and go. Assessment instruments and careful observation of student progress guides teachers in planning appropriate instruction and adjusting instruction to meet student needs. To improve accountability, annual standardized or performance-based testing is essential.

As long as schools are held accountable for student progress, local school districts must have the flexibility to choose instructional programs that meet their students' needs. We do not need a national reading program. Holding schools accountable for results is the way to demonstrate that whatever program is selected does work. The National Reading Panel Report documented that systematic instruction in phonemic awareness,

phonics and comprehension strategies significantly improved students' reading across kindergarten through eighth grade.

Some existing programs already incorporate these essential components. For example, the reading program that I have used successfully with my ESOL students has a 45-year history of teaching children to read. Unfortunately, programs such as this have not been widely implemented because of the prevailing philosophy at colleges of education.

If we are really serious about leaving no child behind, attention needs to be focused on teacher preparation. Teachers cannot teach what they do not know. Underlying the debate about reading methods is disagreement about the value of explicit instruction and skill practice. Too many education professors believe that instruction and practice stifle creativity and higher level thinking.

I am here to let you know that nothing is further from the truth. No one is able to think of more than one thing at a time, and neither are children. If they can't decode the words they cannot get meaning from them. Professional preparation programs have a responsibility to teach a defined body of knowledge, skills, and abilities based on the best research in the field.

I, like most teachers I know, recognize the need for better training. I went to a private provider, Spalding, to obtain the knowledge and skills to help my students be successful. Thank you for letting me testify on this subject for which I am passionate.

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF BERTHA ZAPATA, TEACHER, BROWARD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, TAMPA, FLORIDA – SEE APPENDIX E

Chairman Boehner. Ms. Zapata, thank you. Ms. Trejo?

STATEMENT OF SONIA TREJO, PARENT, BRADENTON, FLORIDA

Mrs. Trejo. Good morning. My name is Sonia Trejo, and today I want to talk to you about school accountability and high standards for all students. I am a parent of four school-aged students. Two children attend elementary and one attends middle school. My other child attends high school.

In our family, education is a top priority for all. Only one of my children attends their home school; that is my high school daughter. My two elementary school children attend this school because we had decided to apply for school choice. We chose this school because of the increase in test scores as compared to their neighborhood school. My middle school son attends a charter school, which is Pal Academy, because of the small class size and individual attention that he receives.

I want and desire much more for my children than I was able to achieve for myself. I only finished seventh grade and attended vocational training to become a cosmetologist. Presently, my husband and I own our own roofing business. High standards for my children and school accountability remain first and foremost for us as a

family.

I am glad that the public school that my children attend continues to strive for excellence. I am also very glad that I have had the opportunity to exercise school choice and make decisions about where my children are to attend school. I am sorry I don't have much more to say, but I didn't want to get off track.

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF SONIA TREJO, PARENT, BRADENTON, FLORIDA – SEE APPENDIX F

Chairman Boehner. No. Thank you. We appreciate your testimony. Dr. Robinson?

STATEMENT OF DEBRA ROBINSON, SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER, DISTRICT 1, WEST PALM BEACH COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT, WEST PALM BEACH, FLORIDA

Dr. Robinson. Good morning. I want to thank Chairman Boehner, Ranking Member Miller, and other members of the committee, as well as the principal and the students of Wakeland Elementary for giving me the opportunity to share my thoughts on Florida's accountability system.

I am the daughter of a civil-rights attorney and an educator. I'm a proud graduate of Michigan State University and the Howard University College of Medicine. I'm a school board member, a practicing internal medicine physician, and most importantly, a wife and a mother of three sons. My sons are members of the group most likely to be undereducated in this country. I am also a founding member and past chair of the nonprofit organization, The Coalition for Black Student Achievement. These are the reasons that I responded to the call for public service and ran for the Palm Beach County School Board. I was elected in September 2000 and was seated in November 2000.

I believe that Florida's accountability system is essentially a sound system, but it does have some shortcomings. I recognize that not all of the problems with our state's system can be or should be addressed at the federal level. The state must address some of these issues and some accountability issues have to be addressed at the local level. The federal government has an important role to play in establishing a strong foundation, a bottom-line accountability on which states and school districts will build. The bottom-line accountability should ensure that high achievement for all students occurs, and it should ensure that every state, school district, and school eliminates the gap that separates low-income students and students of color from others.

First, the federal government should require that states use disaggregated data for accountability. The Florida accountability system no longer uses such data. Without using such data, you cannot clearly determine which groups are being essentially kicked to the curb. You can mask the difference in achievement between these groups and you will not accomplish the reported mission of "leaving no child behind." The achievement of each child matters, and under the current federal accountability system, which would allow for averaging of achievement data across student groups, the achievement of too many of our children would not matter.

Additionally, be clear that the unit to measure is the student and not the school. We have to ensure that every student is counted. When Florida was using disaggregated data, they used it based on subgroups. Each subgroup was defined as having at least 30 students in that group per grade level, per school. Therefore, if you had a school with only 27 black students in the fourth grade, those 27 children's achievement data was not measured when factoring the school's grade. It is important that the federal government design an accountability system that requires all groups and each student in each group to be measured.

Thirdly, the federal government has to provide a clear standard and definition of school success and failure. My understanding is that the federal government currently allows each state to establish their own definition of a failing school. Therefore, there is great state-to-state variation in school failure rates. This is similar to students in one school getting an "A" for the same work in which other students in other schools would receive a "C." In other terms, you might say that hanging chads are counted in some states and not in others.

I believe that there needs to be a strong federal guidance to the states on what it means to be in need of improvement. You must define the universal benchmarks for schools as The Sunshine State Standards do for students. Now I want to be clear that I don't want the federal government or anyone else to reward school failure. However, I think it is nonsense to expect struggling schools to improve without a clear definition of the target, and an investment of additional resources on the things that we know work to boost student achievement.

Fourthly, vouchers make no sense in a strong public accountability system. There is a broad consensus that the best way to raise achievement for all students and close the gap between groups of students is by creating a system in which schools supported by public dollars are held accountable to the public for helping all students meet a set of clearly stated, publicly articulated goals. That is why I am opposed to the Florida voucher program, and why I would also oppose any federal voucher program based upon that model. Such a scheme would send public funds into institutions that have no publicly articulated goals for their students and therefore cannot be held accountable to the public. So in fact, private school vouchers are anti-accountability.

More than that, I believe that vouchers are an empty promise since there are not enough spaces in private schools to accommodate all the students to which we owe a good education.

Finally, I'd like to say that accountability is only a buzzword without effective teacher preparation. The most important variable effecting student achievement is not family income; it is not the number of children in the classroom. The most important variable is the content, knowledge, and teaching skills of the teacher in that classroom.

In large measure, the low performance in urban and low-income schools is the result of the disproportionate numbers of uncertified teachers and teachers teaching without a college major or minor in the area in which they are instructing. Too many colleges of education do not prepare our graduates to teach reading or manage the challenges of teaching in an urban classroom. The federal government must outline the minimum course content for degrees in education. K-16 initiatives can assist in outlining

the correction course for this curriculum and outlining the necessary competencies.

We must institute a system of accountability that not only clearly articulates the benchmarks for students and defines proficiency, but also provides teachers with the tools to impart knowledge to our most challenged students. Teacher staff development must be focused on the benchmarks; it must be job-imbedded and ongoing. Additional resources are necessary to replicate best practice models for staff development in every district and every school.

We will only lure the best and brightest into the teaching profession if we start to treat teachers as the professionals that we expect them to be in a system of accountability. There must be more scholarships for high-performing students to enter our colleges of education, and greater financial rewards when they graduate and enter our classrooms. Students will benefit greatly if the federal government, as well as others, provides additional funding directly to the school districts to provide incentives for bright minds to teach.

In closing, I'd like to say that accountability for adults that impact the education of our students is necessary. But accountability without strategic planning will only serve to identify schools that haven't reached the mark, and will not prepare our children for the future. Thank you.

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF DEBRA ROBINSON, SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER, DISTRICT 1, WEST PALM BEACH COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT, WEST PALM BEACH, FLORIDA – SEE APPENDIX G

Chairman Boehner. I'd like to thank all of the witnesses for their excellent testimony. We leave Washington to go out, as I would describe it, to the real world and talk to real people about what the real solutions are to the problems that we face. Clearly, our visit here this morning has been rather rewarding in terms of getting testimony from people who are here on the ground and involved in these issues.

Dr. Robinson, I found your testimony interesting in terms of what you are asking us as federal legislators to do in terms of setting high accountability standards. As you may or may not be aware of, under the President's proposal, that would be left to the states. We have a fine line that we are trying to walk, all of us, especially those of us in Washington who want to refocus our efforts and energies toward disadvantaged students. We think this should be done through the implementation of higher standards. However, we don't want to take your place as a member of the Palm Beach County School Board. We don't want to be the national school board in Washington. I want to see if you can help me understand where that line is.

Dr. Robinson. I'd be happy to.

Chairman Boehner. We've got the federal government; you've got the State Department of Education and your own school board.

Dr. Robinson. Yes. I think that if you are really going to talk about accountability at the federal level, you cannot allow 50 different standards to define a school as successful or unsuccessful. You have to define that standard to some degree.

Now I'm not asking you to say how we get there. I think the point is well made that we shouldn't hand teachers or local administration a package and say just follow one, two, and three. But you have to set a clear target, just as in Florida. Now let me tell you, I agree with previous statements about the racism of low expectations. That is what has happened. Black children, especially black males, have been told frequently, "That's good enough for you."' So I am very pleased with the Sunshine State Standards and have spoken a lot in my community about the need to have a shared common target. I did this because before, the target was lower for black children and other children of color, especially black males. So now we have a clear target.

I don't want the target for schools in Florida to be different from the target for schools in the State of Washington. That target for schools has to be set at the national level and it has to be clearly defined.

Chairman Boehner. Under the President's proposal, whatever the state assessment model is it would be similar in certain grades to how well Florida would be doing. When compared to other states two things will be ensured. First, that the assessment being used in the state is accurate. Secondly, that children are improving and learning. However, it would still leave how the assessment would occur and what the standards would be up to the State Board of Education and the local school districts.

Dr. Robinson. I appreciate the point. I'm not asking you to create a national version of the FCAT. What I am saying is that before the federal government rewards or punishes school systems, schools, and ultimately students for what is deemed success or failure, you still have to define it. You know, I don't know if that means you get some experts to compare the assessment tools from state to state, but it still has to be clearly defined. Let me just say one more thing, because there is a numbers game that goes on, okay? There are schools in the State of Florida that move from an "F"' to a "D" by virtue of teaching one student how to write.

The other problem in terms of "no child being left behind" is that we have a situation where because of the way schools are graded, schools are putting a lot of resources and effort into the children that fall just below the mark and they are getting them over that hump so the school grade will go up. But the children in most need of intensive care educational services are being pushed to the side, saying, we don't have time to invest in you. We have to be clear. We have to look at each and every child. We can't play that little numbers game. It's up to the federal government. If we're going to talk about "no child being left behind," to institute a system that says just that we're not playing this little numbers game that goes on.

Chairman Boehner. Mr. Warford, did you say that you had several schools in your district identified as "F" schools, one of which became an "A" school?

Mr. Warford. Yes, sir. It went from an F to an A in one year. If you look at some of the documentation I have provided you will see that it wasn't one student. We made significant gains across the board.

Chairman Boehner. How? That's my question, how?

Mr. Warford. Well, we did for those schools what we should have been doing all along. We provided more resources, we lowered class sizes, we provided intensive teacher

training and I'm going to tell you very frankly. I'm going to speak very candidly to this committee. Because of the conditions I had outlined in those schools, prior to my becoming superintendent, that's where we had parked many of our low-performing teachers. We don't put those teachers in our high-profile schools. The parents in those schools won't allow us to do so. What we do is we send those teachers to the low-performing schools.

So we identified those teachers. Some of those teachers opted out because they didn't really want the scrutiny and the pressure that they knew was coming. So we did all of the things we knew made a difference. We extended the school day, we extended the school week, we remediated the children before the failure occurred, and it works.

The point that I want to make, and I can't stress it enough, is that I think the recent report that the commissioner referred to from the Manhattan Institute indicates very clearly that the voucher effect on low-performing "F"' schools in the State of Florida was more statistically significant than reducing class size with regard to motivating those schools to improve.

Chairman Boehner. I'm sure I'm already over my five minutes of questions, but Mr. Crist, how many students in Florida today are the recipients of a scholarship?

Mr. Crist. There are only 73 in the state. You mean an opportunity scholarship, I presume?

Chairman Boehner. Right, I'm sorry.

Mr. Crist. Yes, for two schools in Escambia County, Pensacola. So there was a large hue and cry when the program was first passed.

Chairman Boehner. Yeah, we heard it all the way in Washington.

Mr. Crist. I'm sure you did.

Chairman Boehner. We heard it for a long time, but I heard from the testimony earlier; the fact is that the Florida School Improvement Plan, which is similar to the Bush Plan, is designed so that 99.9 percent of the plan is aimed at improving public education. As I understand the opportunity scholarships in Florida, which are similar to the portability issue with the President's plan, are nothing more than a safety valve at the end of the process to protect children. But there were only 73 students in Florida?

Mr. Crist. Yes. I should point out that 73 students out of about 2.5 million students.

Chairman Boehner. I'll recognize the gentleman from California.

Mr. George Miller. Just on that point, is the program still open for enrollment? Aren't you on hold or something?

Mr. Crist. It's still open for enrollment. The situation is that if a school doesn't receive an "F"' grade two out of four years then it doesn't apply to them. I think the point of the superintendent is well taken, and if I could give just one other example.

In Hillsborough County Earl Leonard is the superintendent there; he is a dear friend and a great leader. When Hillsborough County first went through the FCAT grading and none of the schools in Hillsborough County received an F, he brought his administrators together and said, ``Look, I want to make a point. I want to make sure that none of them receives an F grade in the second year," because of the threat of vouchers, frankly. He said, "What I want to make sure that we do is we provide every possible opportunity for all of our schools to pass."

Mr. George Miller. I understand that. Let me just ask you this. Isn't there an order in place that the students who are in the private schools won't be taken out and there won't be students added until the court makes a determination?

Mr. Crist. It's on appeal right now, right.

Mr. George Miller. Yeah, I understand. So the system is on hold. You can't add additional students to it, can you, under the court order?

Mr. Crist. Not currently.

Mr. George Miller. Okay, so - okay.

Mr. Crist. But it was 73 out of 2.5 million, nonetheless, when all 2.5 million could have been eligible initially.

Mr. George Miller. Okay, I understand. I just wanted to - I didn't understand that.

Ms. Robinson, let me just say that I'm somewhere between you and the Chairman here. I don't think we can set those national standards for every state. I think two things that I agree with the President on is his insistence on disaggregation of the data so you know how each and every kid is doing, and I don't think that has yet been done in Florida. It's not done in most states. The only state that I know it was done in was Texas, where the President did it.

The other one is, that's why he's suggesting that the states then have to send a sampling of students to be tested on the NAPE. As we know, states have exams and the states do good, and the Governor looks good, and then we put them up against the NAPE and boom, they just fall right to the floor. That's true in South Carolina where Secretary Riley put the exam in place and then of course was substantially embarrassed once the kids went on to take the NAPE.

I mean, that's the kind of check we can put in place. We have talked on the committee about - I see it I think in New York - they just signed a contract yesterday that now talks about that you have to spread the teachers around the district. You can't just have the poorest teachers going to the poorest schools and everybody else bidding out the minute they have seniority, which happens almost everywhere else in the nation. If you're going to get Title I funds, there has to be some comparability between teaching staffs within districts and hopefully, within the state.

I think those are the kinds of things we can do. It's a little bit like taking your temperature after you have the flu, but I don't think we can - I just don't see us setting hard, you know, standards for 50 different states. We can't get 50 states to come up with

their own exam yet. We've got seven states that have come up with them after five years. There is obviously a lot of gaming going on there and my state is not immune from it, I don't think, in terms of trying to develop that exam.

Let me ask you another question if I might. If I get a state opportunity grant and I'm in third grade and I enroll in a private school, my understanding is then I am allowed to continue to enroll in private school until I graduate from high school?

Mr. Crist. That's true.

Mr. George Miller. That's true? So I don't know what your system is here, but do you have middle schools?

Mr. Crist. We do.

Mr. George Miller. And you obviously have high schools.

Mr. Crist. Yes, we do.

Mr. George Miller. So if I'm in third grade, by the time I get to sixth grade or seventh grade to middle school, however you divide them here, even if that's an ``A" school I can still stay in the private school system?

Mr. Crist. It's up to the parent. They have the power of choice.

Mr. George Miller. I understand that, but what does that have to do with failing schools, then?

Mr. Crist. It's the opportunity for the child and the parent to make the initial choice if they are in a failing school for two out of four years.

Mr. George Miller. Right. But if the failing school is Wakeland Elementary and the middle school is a five-star ``A" school, why aren't I back in the public school system with public dollars? Why do I continue in the private school system?

Mr. Crist. Well, in fact, you may not be.

Mr. George Miller. No, but I have the choice.

Mr. Crist. You do.

Dr. Robinson. Why?

Mr. Crist. We believe in parents having the power.

Mr. George Miller. You believe in parents having the power to get away from a failing school, but what is the power of the parent to leave with public resources?

Mr. Crist. They may; they have that option; they can leave. They can leave the private school.

Mr. George Miller. Then it really isn't about failing schools at that point, because the option would be between a high-performing middle school and a high-performing private school.

Mr. Crist. Well, we can debate what initially triggers it, but what initially triggers it is a failing school and an opportunity for a parent to make a choice.

Mr. George Miller. Well, from some of the other testimony what triggers it is if on safe passage - if the school receives an "F" grade two years in a row, which means I guess that the school would be unsafe, you could go to a private school for whatever time you have remaining.

Mr. Crist. That hasn't been passed yet. That's a proposal.

Mr. George Miller. Oh, that's a proposal?

Mr. Crist. Yes.

Mr. George Miller. Because I was going to say I think if you had enough on public safety two years in a row and students fled and you knew it and you didn't correct it, I suspect you'd be meeting the trial lawyers.

Mr. Crist. I'm sure you would.

Mr. George Miller. You know, long before that.

Mr. Crist. The sheriff, too, probably.

Mr. George Miller. I just don't know if you're setting up - what I don't understand is it seems like you're setting up a set of triggers so more and more people can escape the public system, but the burden, it would seem to me to be, is to make that school safe.

Mr. Crist. It is.

Mr. George Miller. Well, then why would you accept that it could be unsafe for two years in a row? If you knew it had an F on safety, on safe passage, you know, as I understand the law, you now have a liability or an obligation or a burden and all of the rest of the things that go with it, to make it safe immediately.

Mr. Crist. I think you've come up with probably the first amendment to that bill for this session, one year. Seriously, I'm not being trite.

Mr. George Miller. No. I'm not saying you're trite. I just don't understand. I appreciate this notion that the failing school triggers the public choice, but then the public choice runs for 12 years, or it can run for eight or nine years in spite of what the public system is doing in that area.

Mr. Crist. But at the option of the parent.

Mr. George Miller. I understand that it's at the option of the parent, but let me suggest to you that the option is a little bit deceptive to other parents, because if I'm the parent of a

middle school child in a really good middle school and I want my child to go to a private school, I don't get that option, because they didn't attend a failing elementary school. So what you ought to do is enroll your kid in a failing school so then you can go.

Mr. Crist. The idea is to have no failing schools.

Mr. George Miller. I understand. We're obviously on different sides of the issues on vouchers, but I don't get how the continuum goes. You know, it's like continuing to take the medicine after you're well. You probably wouldn't recommend that. You'd say now go back to your job and do what you were doing before that.

Let me ask you in a sense of - I don't know if you can describe this, but the difference. Sometimes we see these remarkable recoveries in schools but something tells you maybe nothing really has changed. How do you set these margins between a failing school and a "D," and a "D" and a "C"? I mean, what would be - maybe one of the superintendents would be - what's the real hurdle to change categories? I mean, is it so finely tuned that one student could move you up or down in a 500-student elementary school?

Mr. Till. Potentially a small number of students can move you from an "F" to a "D.'' It takes a much larger number of students to move you from a "D"' to a "C." In my opinion, it's harder to go from a "D" to a "C" than a "C" to an "A."

Mr. George Miller. It's harder to move those two?

Mr. Till. It's harder to move from a "D" to a "C."

Mr. George Miller. Why is that?

Mr. Till. Because it requires a higher level of achievement -

Mr. George Miller. Across the board?

Mr. Till. - across the board, 60th percentile or something like that. So I support the standards. But it's easier to go from an "F" to a "D," in my opinion, because you can focus on the lower-achieving student or the student in the second quarter to bump that up. If you just aggregate your data like we can, you can target the students; we didn't do that.

We struggle like a lot of systems in Florida where there was probably too much emphasis on FCAT, which narrows the curriculum down. You narrow the curriculum down and take away the arts and the PE's in some schools to keep the A's. So you begin to water down the curriculum. So the real key is that you can focus on a small number of students -

Mr. George Miller. You said, "water down the curriculum." So you're what?

Mr. Till. You're narrowing it down.

Mr. George Miller. You're narrowing it. So you're getting rid of PE so you can spend more time on tasks to pass the test?

Mr. Till. The national studies on testing and things such as these high stakes tests like the FCAT exist because people don't necessarily have those skills, so you begin to narrow the curriculum. They begin to bring in the test preps and those kinds of things like that. So some of the initial bump you get, being honest, is simply around test preparedness. And you get people -

Mr. George Miller. In fact, that's the national experience, more or less. Isn't it? You get this kind of bump and then it starts to drop off after a couple of years?

Mr. Till. I think I said earlier in my comments I support what we're doing in Florida. I think there are some things I would disagree with, but I think where we have to go is to get that next level of the NAEP and some of the other things. I think what you're going to begin to see is if you have a NAEP test is what Secretary Riley saw. If you are not aligning your curriculum around taking a NAEP test, and the NAEP is not aligned with the FCAT, you're not going to get the similar kinds of results.

Mr. George Miller. As one who went to three years of law school, I understand teaching to the test. I spent three years, and they taught me to the bar exam. It was the only goal of the school was to get 90 percent of their students over to the bar exam, right?

Mr. Till. Did you pass the bar exam?

Mr. George Miller. Yes.

Chairman Boehner. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Delaware -

Mr. George Miller. You don't think I'd raise that subject -

Mr. George Miller. It's the last test I took I ever passed.

Mr. Castle. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let me thank everybody here at the school and all of the other guests who came interested in education, and probably are dying to get up and say something. We're sorry we can't hear from all of you, but you can understand the confusion if we did.

Let me just say a couple of things. One is, we in the federal government are only responsible funding-wise for about 7 percent of all education. I think almost everybody here knows that, and we're limited in what we can do in terms of what's happening there. Most of that funding is through Title I, while the rest of it is for children with special needs and things of that nature. So we're not exactly the whole answer to education.

I would also say that I did not really know President Bush before he got elected. I am very impressed by his interest in education. I would encourage you to read his plan if you have not read it before, *No Child Left Behind*, because it does tell you a few things that I did not know before in terms of what his plan is. You read things differently in the newspaper.

Also, we're probably going to be dealing with that in our committee and in the U.S. House of Representatives of the Unites States in the next two months. We are in a very short time frame in terms of what we're doing here. So if I ask any of you questions and you have input as to what you think we should be doing at the federal government,

feel free to add that and perhaps not just discuss the local programs, because that's sort of what I'm looking for. I have questions for all of you but I'll get through a few of them and then the Chair will cut me off or whatever it may be.

Mr. Crist, let me just start with you. I'm concerned a little bit about the FCAT testing in terms of what it tests. I sort of agree with Mr. George Miller to some degree. I mean, sometimes you see improvement and you wonder if it's really all that great or whatever it may be. I worry a little bit about teaching to the test, although that's probably the best way I learned. But having said that, I wouldn't want testing that's so narrow in scope that we're missing all the subjects that the kids should learn.

I don't know much about the FCAT testing program, but I just raise that question, too. I'll probably ask the superintendents, also, but I'll just ask you that question, if you would help me with that.

Mr. Crist. Well, I think your point is well taken; we share that view. In fact, that's why we're going through an expansion of the subject matter that will be tested. Currently it tests reading, writing, and math. That is going to be expanded to include sciences and other topics as we progress. Please understand we've taken a giant step in education reform in our state. As I dare say, we're the first on a statewide basis, to have opportunity scholarships available. So we learn as we go and it is not a perfect system, but we believed that it was so important to get moving on it, that two years ago our legislature and our Governor got it done.

What do they say? The largest journey begins with one step, and we took the one step and it's a long journey that we're on. However, your point is well taken as I said at the outset. We will expand the subject matters that will be tested. We've heard the cry about teaching to the test. You know, when you talk about teaching to reading, writing, and arithmetic I don't know if that's a bad notion. We ought to be expanding it and we are about doing that.

Mr. Castle. I'm not saying go crazy with expansion, but let me just also say as Mr. George Miller said, I believe in the NAEP testing as well, as a balance system. I had it the other way in my state. Our kids weren't doing well at all on the test. They took the NAEP test and did better than some other states were doing. It gave us a little bit of confidence that we were lacking there for a while. So I believe that is a necessary balance, and as everyone knows, that's a sampling. It's not disaggregated to the individual schools, districts, or anything of that nature. I think it's a very good tool for states to use. You wanted to add to that, Mr. Warford?

Mr. Warford. I just wanted this committee to understand that in our district of 40,000 students we did not narrow the curriculum. We simply focused on those skills. You cannot teach to the FCAT; FCAT measures reading and writing ability. You can only teach the knowledge and the skills that children need to master.

I come from an arts background; I support the arts. I do not believe that it's necessary to narrow or eliminate the curriculum. Now I will give you this as a factor. When we looked at our low-performing schools in Marion County, we had a third of our children who could not read. I'm going to put to you that as a leader I have to set priorities. The arts are not going to be of great value to a child who cannot read. So you

must begin somewhere, which is where our state chose to begin.

Mr. Castle. Let me ask you a question, Dr. Till, about Title I, if I may. We had a discussion with somebody in the audience about this before and I worry about this too. Are we broadening Title I too much in terms of the classification of schools income-wise that can be eligible for it? Are you satisfied with the federal formulas now in terms of how it helps or does not help you in your district? You have a large district.

Mr. Till. I'm satisfied with the formulas. I think the focus that Congress gave a few years ago around poverty - when I was in my former district of San Diego, before you changed it about eight or ten years ago, you could actually have a school achieve and lose funding. Now with the poverty criteria it's much better. So I'm very pleased with it. I think we all would say that there is not enough money. So it's not the criteria, it's the amount of money, sir.

Mr. Castle. Although, we have been increasing the funding in a lot of areas. That's something else, by the way. The federal government in the last half-dozen years has really been increasing the funding tremendously down to the states and the school districts.

I did want to say to you, Ms. Zapata, I'm not sure I really had a question. I totally believe in what you said with respect to teacher preparation and how we're doing. I think it's something all of us who are interested in education need to pay more attention to. A lot of you had little comments about that in what you said. Please tell me very briefly about the Spalding method?

Ms. Zapata. It's just been around since the '50s. It's the most incredible program; it's inexpensive. I train teachers at night because they are crying out for a program that teaches them how to teach reading. I have had comments from teachers, ``Darn, I've been teaching for 30 years and I knew there was something missing and Spalding is it."

I had another young teacher who came to me after class and said, “Oh, my gosh, I just graduated and I'm teaching SLD and I didn't know how to teach. Every night I prayed, please God, send me a way to teach reading. Thank you to you and Spalding.” It's been research-based that this is the way children learn. It's a very inexpensive program but it's a nonprofit organization and we can't be out there glitzy and, you know, getting business.

In Hillsborough County I train about 25 teachers every five weeks and we do it at night after teaching all day long, because these teachers do not know how to teach reading.

Mr. Castle. Thank you. May I ask one more question? This is to Dr. Robinson. I want to tell you what I sort of believe in with respect to vouchers. I'd be interested in your response to what I say.

I believe in public school choice. I'm from the State of Delaware and we have built a lot of public school choice into our system. I believe in charter schools managed correctly. I've never believed in vouchers per se, because I worry about the transfer system, too, and the wealthier kids taking the money and going to wealthier private schools or whatever it may be. But the plan that the President's proposed, which I'm

looking at and I can tell you other members, both Republicans and Democrats, are looking at, is not anywhere near as comprehensive as I think some people believe.

Essentially, as we've heard here today, it says that for an actual voucher system you have to be a school, which has failed for three years, and after the first year you would receive money to get out of that failure and to improve yourself. The second year you would receive more money to do that, and then in the third year finally, the child would be allowed to transfer. By the way, it's a limited period of two years or until such time as the school improves. So you go back into the public school system in that circumstance if you elected to go to the private school system. Apparently they did this I think in Texas. Actually, I think that's correct.

The first year they had a big pool of schools, the second year they had a smaller pool of schools, and the third year they had one school where the vouchers actually went into place. At some point to me, you're no longer talking about vouchers with wealthy families transferring their kids to private schools, but all of a sudden you're talking about kids who really need help in schools that are really troubled. In that circumstance, is this something that would be worthwhile or not? You spoke very well on that subject and I was just interested in your views. I'm not trying to get you to endorse it or anything. I just want to make sure we're communicating as well as we can. I don't expect you to endorse it.

Dr. Robinson. My primary problem is that these private schools that receive the voucher money are not held accountable. The other issue, quite frankly, is that in theory, I'm not saying this has happened, but the potential is there for, say, my child to go to such a private school with a voucher and once the check clears the bank they find a reason that he can't stay. You know, you could say its behavior. I mean, that's a classic one.

Mr. Castle. That probably could be worked out, I would imagine.

Dr. Robinson. Well, okay, we could work it out. But I want to make a point; you mentioned the increase in federal resources for education over the past few years. I mentioned in my comments that the money needs to be directed to the school district and not funneled through the state. Let me give you an example.

A couple of years ago the State of Florida put up $100 million to decrease class size, teacher recruiting and retention efforts. The next year the federal government put $50 million up. The state shifted their hundred million to the capital side. So we effectively decreased the money in the pool for the next year's budget for teacher recruiting and retention and decreasing class size with good teachers by 50 percent. So we need to get it into the classroom. Too many hands on it is not a good thing.

Mr. Castle. That disconnect has been argued before. In fact, someone argued it has to go directly to the schools, not even the school district.

Dr. Robinson. I have no problem with that.

Chairman Boehner. The Chair recognizes Mr. Tiberi.

Mr. Tiberi. It sounds like we have to eliminate the Department of Education, to be honest. Of the 73 students that you identified earlier as making that choice, or their

parents made the choice, does the state have any statistical data on their socioeconomics or improvements in those students' test scores?

Mr. Crist. We do. I regret to inform you that I don't have that information with me but I can certainly provide it to the committee. I would be more than happy to do so. I can tell you this; both of the schools that participated in opportunity scholarships are from inner city schools in Pensacola.

Mr. Tiberi. Schools that have a majority free and reduced lunch?

Mr. Crist. Yes, sir. That's correct.

Mr. Tiberi. I was in the state legislature in Ohio prior to being elected to Congress and we initiated a school choice or voucher program in the Cleveland public schools. We targeted it, or limited it to low-income students always. No wealthy parents could apply. So your thought is that the 73 students more than likely are coming from poor families?

Mr. Crist. Indeed. That is correct.

Mr. Tiberi. Okay. Dr. Robinson, help me understand your comments with respect to vouchers. If indeed we as policy-makers limit it to those children who are primarily coming from, or only coming from low-income families, let me give you my bias so you know exactly where I'm coming from. I'm the son of immigrants and I didn't have the opportunity to go to a private school. I'm a graduate of the second- largest school system in Ohio, an urban school system.

When I ran for the legislature over ten years ago, I was running against people who were opposed to innovation in public schools. They all had the opportunity to go to private schools but were arguing for the status quo with public schools, and many of them had their children in private schools. They were Republicans and Democrats.

In my school system where I live today, which is the same second-largest school system, I have a teacher that was one of my teachers and was recognized as one of the best teachers in the state. She is a veteran teacher and she's teaching in the same school system, the same school that I graduated from. She's one of the best teachers in the world as far as I'm concerned; she certainly helped me. She tells me today that she's a babysitter.

Now I agree with your premise with respect to teacher preparedness. I think that's part of the equation, but she tells me another part of the equation is the inability to manage the classroom. That's a problem in many urban schools. Even though she has been offered jobs in other school systems, she has decided to stay because of location, number one, and number two, it doesn't pay for her to go to another school system because she has the years in at this particular school system for a variety of incentives that were bargained, which is another issue.

So I take that example and another example of a good friend of mine who is also teaching in that school system, who in this particular school along with most of the staff, moved out of that school district because they didn't want their children to go there.

In a sense we've had over the course of the last 20 years in America school choice. Those who could afford to move have moved; those who are poor cannot. Under that scenario how do we without having a safety valve at the end of the process of the federal government, as Mr. Castle said, provide additional resources to you as a local educator? If we do that, provide additional resources and intervention to that school, and the parent still is not seeing improvement in their child's education, and is a poor parent, tell me why we shouldn't allow for some sort of safety valve for that parent to take their child to another public school or a private school? I'm giving you my bias of where I'm coming from.

Dr. Robinson. Okay. Obviously, you want to tug at my heartstrings, right?

Mr. Tiberi. No. I'm just trying to -

Dr. Robinson. The issue is whether or not we're committed to improving the public schools. I mean, to me that's the issue. Now if you're talking about a limited program and if that private school has to accept and educate that child just as the public schools do. They cannot give them any excuses to kick them out of the door. I've got like, 10 or 15 ifs I could give you, then I could think about it, okay? My commitment is to the public school system because that's where the masses of children are.

Let me tell you, my oldest boy went to a Catholic school for kindergarten, okay? I took him out right after the Christmas program, my husband will tell you, because you know, I'm sorry I was born black in this country and that's the way I see the world. When we couldn't even have any black angels in the Christmas program, I'm thinking what are they telling my child on a day-to-day basis? Maybe that's why his eyes are dull, instead of the life that he had in his eyes when he came home from preschool. So I put my child in the public school and worked to change it, and that's where I've been ever since.

We can outline those 25 ifs, okay? But I want the parents who are afraid of private schools to have a good education for their children as well.

Mr. Tiberi. But what's the alternative if we don't have a safety valve for parents?

Dr. Robinson. You're assuming we can't fix the schools.

Mr. Tiberi. No. I'm saying that what I'm assuming is that the parent knows what's best for the child. If you do the intervention over a three-year period, you put in more money, and you allow for more local control and for some reason it doesn't work, what's the alternative for the child and for the parent who is frustrated with the particular situation of a failing school and their child not progressing? If it's not the President's proposal, what's another alternative?

Dr. Robinson. I'll write a proposal for you if you want me to. I mean, but the issue is we have to save the public schools, okay? My mother is probably rolling over in her grave, but I could try to list those 25 ifs for you that would allow me to consider public dollars going to a private school. But I'm going to tell you; it would include the open-armed acceptance of any child that walks in there. Just as the public schools have to open their arms and accept any child that walks in there, okay, as well as the accountability.

I just want to make another point. You are assuming that the parents know what their children need to do. The fact of the matter is that all too many of the students who are not doing well in our system have parents who were failed by the educational system as well. Are you telling me to stop talking?

Chairman Boehner. No. His time is up.

Dr. Robinson. Okay. May I finish my point?

Chairman Boehner. Yes, you may.

Dr. Robinson. All too many of those children's parents were failed by the educational system as well. They are intimidated by the school system. I'm on the school board; I go to meet with my child's teacher and I'm like, "Yes, ma'am." Okay? I mean, you are intimidated by the authority figures and then you don't know what your child is supposed to do. So when they say that your child is doing well, or that the best thing for your child is to go to the emotionally handicapped program, you just walk down that path.

So let's not assume that the children that I'm trying to save, the ones that make me cry, let's not assume that their parents really know what the benchmarks are. Those benchmarks are hard, okay? My baby is studying for FCAT now. That stuff is hard, and I can imagine them being overwhelmed if they even see it. It's our job, it's your job, to support the people who are in that classroom in whatever way we can. I'm telling you its teacher preparedness; we have got to support them. Do you want to give me $12 million? I need two weeks' staff development added to my calendar.

Chairman Boehner. The Chair recognizes our host, Mr. Dan Miller.

Mr. Daniel Miller. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you again for coming to Manatee County. I'm not a member of this committee, so I appreciate the opportunity to sit on this panel. I'm on the appropriations side, so I do get involved in the education issues.

I'm glad to see George Miller here. George is my neighbor on Capitol Hill, but we have different legislation and we agree on a lot of different things. We have a Miller and Miller Bill in Congress. It's the Sugar Bill. Some of you all have known me to take on the sugar industry.

Mr. George Miller. I was going to mention that when I left the state.

Mr. Daniel Miller. We didn't publicize that we were coming here because we had a limited audience capacity, but I see four members of our school board from Manatee County here. There was a mention of charter schools. I see Vicki Marlboro, who runs a charter school that's run with the sheriff's office. It's designed for middle school students who are going down the wrong path. They're not adjudicative problems, but it has been very effective. Vicki is sitting right behind Ms. Trejo. We have some very good charter schools here that I think have had some success.

Let me ask a question. This continues with what Dr. Robinson said, but I'm going to ask Ms. Trejo first and then if anyone else wants to chime in they are welcome.

One of the concerns about education is, the kids are in your schools 200 days a year, seven hours a day or something like that. I mean, it's not a lot in terms of total time; they are outside and the parents have that influence. We can't legislate good parents. You obviously are really motivated to take care of your kids and I think most people in this room are, but what can we do to help motivate parents to participate? I mean, maybe you can't. I was here Monday to visit the school and they were talking about one child who has both of her parents in prison, so you can't do anything. The people who are on the ground see these types of problems. What can we do to help the parents to be motivated to be good parents, to get good quality education? I mean, I'm not sure we can legislate it.

Ms. Trejo. I don't know. As far as I'm concerned my son, who came from a public school where his grades were very low, it was the one-on-one education that he got that made me feel good that my he was progressing. I can't speak for anybody else, you know, but as a parent I thought that seeing all this turn around within a few days made me really want to get involved. My son was 11 or 12, and all this time in public schools they were saying, "Your son needs to be on medication, your son is this, your son is that." It got to a point where I believed that, too.

Mr. Daniel Miller. You deal with other parents because of your kid's friends. What would help motivate them to be better parents and better support the education of their children? Or, let me see if anyone else - Dr. Till?

Mr. Till. Well, first off, the population you're talking about is the most difficult population we have in America. I think if we're all honest, it's the population that truly is falling through the cracks. It is probably the population in which the child is being left behind.

I think what we have to begin to do is look at our community. Very seldom have I ever met a parent who was initially anti-school. They may have had a bad experience in school. We've got to begin to work with our community agencies and things such as that to start saving some of the parents and getting them involved. You can't have a parent have that child ready for school unless that parent knows how to read. So Head Start, the preschool programs and those kinds of things like that.

For example, in the Title I's that you've talked about in President Bush's proposal; some of the preschool money in Title I can be used to begin to bridge those gaps. But we also need to have a parent program to give them the skills, because they're not in the workforce or are in our low-level jobs in Broward County. As the economy slips down, those are the jobs that are going to go away and they are not transportable to other jobs.

We really have to have an economic base in this country that makes sure those parents can get jobs and skills, and we don't leave any parent behind.

Ms. Zapata. At my school we have a very open-door policy. I work primarily with bilingual parents who speak no English. They know they can come to my portable any time they want. I help them fill out college applications, I take them to doctor's appointments, I have a breakfast for them, and we just fill the need that's there. They will do anything I ask of them because they totally trust me.

The reason we have so many parents that don't know how to parent is that it is just a vicious cycle. We have to get to every child by teaching them to read. No child comes to school wanting to fail. However, it's the result of year after year of not being taught and them thinking it's their fault. That is why we have so many failing students, because they have not been taught. I see it every day.

Mr. Daniel Miller. What can we do legislatively? Is there anything Congress can do?

Mr. Till. Excuse me. I think you have to make sure that the dollars coming are targeted for those kinds of kids. For example, in our district for America Reads and the America Programs, we have made a commitment with our universities that students in those programs will teach our foster kids how to read. That's an example where another program is falling through the cracks. I think that's the kind of thing for targeting assistance to these kids.

Ms. Zapata. And we need good programs. Spalding is so inexpensive, but the thinking is that because it is so inexpensive it must not be good. You know, we're not glitzy, we just teach every child. We are perfectly capable of teaching every child.

Mr. Warford. I would like to share with this committee that my passion for this issue stems from the fact that my mother was a 14-year-old school dropout. I come from a very poor section of Kentucky.

There is only one institution in this society that is capable of breaking this cycle as it has been identified, and those are our public schools. I am a passionate advocate for our public schools. I am a more passionate advocate for those poor children within those schools. I want to leave this committee with one thought. It was the threat of vouchers that forced the school district in my county and the people in my county to come to terms with that problem. Because of the increased accountability, we could no longer just push those schools and those students aside. Don't miss that point; it's very easy to get sidetracked here.

The voucher law in Florida was masterfully written. I don't want vouchers in my county because I don't want failing schools, because I don't want children like myself to continue that cycle of poverty and ignorance. Our schools and our teachers need our support. I really appreciate the opportunity to share with you today.

Chairman Boehner. I think there are several more questions then we'll wrap up. I recognize Mr. Miller from California.

Mr. George Miller. Thank you. A couple of questions for the superintendents. What is it that you want to do in your school that Title I doesn't allow you to do, or that ESCA doesn't allow you to do?

Mr. Till. I think the biggest thing when we look at the barriers around Title I is simply the requirements around the paperwork and the planning. I would be more than willing to be held accountable for Jeb Bush's plan. I'm not afraid of vouchers. I'm not afraid of the President's plan; very honestly, I wouldn't have any under his plan either. I don't have any under Governor Bush's plan; I don't have any. I think the real key is if we really could be held accountable and then freed up to simply focus on a few things like reading; where we really could begin to say that as a nation, that no child would leave the third

grade without reading. Then we put the resources there and we don't underfund it. We don't just talk about it but we begin to fund it. I would be more than willing to be held accountable based on that assessment, for my third graders being able to read.

Mr. George Miller. Can I just ask you to elaborate on - you used the term - what did you say? Paperwork and -

Mr. Till. My poor building principals and my poor teachers, through things I impose on them, things Commissioner Crist imposes on them, things that we, a collective symbolism impose, spend a good deal of their teaching time and prep time doing paperwork. My principals spend a good deal of their time dealing with paperwork. It's not just for me; it's the collective group.

If we could really begin to focus on teaching, and as you've heard from my left so passionately, a lot of my time when my teachers are not with my students they are doing paperwork. My teacher contract is loaded with language to give them more planning time to do the paperwork. I'd like to see us get rid of the paper burden and simplify the accountability around student achievement for reading. So they can spend that time learning how to teach reading, whether it's this method or not, and that we would focus on it.

Mr. George Miller. Where would you - this isn't meant to be flippant because I don't - where would you move the paperwork to? Would you move it to the district level?

Mr. Till. I would move it to the district level, but I'd also make it accountable where we would not have plans. We in the school system have shelves full of plans that we spend the resources to plan. I would talk about -

Mr. George Miller. The argument obviously is, and I don't know that it has been fully achieved because let's not pretend like anybody at the federal level is enforcing this law. You may be filling out the forms but there is nobody reading your answers.

Mr. Till. Right.

Mr. George Miller. Obviously we're talking about a population here, and certainly the President is talking about it. A lot of people are going to look to see whether this is real or not at some point in this legislative process, about many of the most difficult and the poorest children from the most difficult environments, and the target in these funds is obviously very important if you are going to have a chance.

Mr. Till. Correct.

Mr. George Miller. And that's why this argument continues to break down. It's not as simple as consolidation versus targeting. It really is about, are we all using this money for the same purpose? You know, if you backed up from the district level, you could argue that in a number of states somebody is allowing huge disparities in effort and monies to these districts. If you go to the district level in the district I represent, I have one of the best schools in the state and I have the worst school in the state. Well, they are both elementary schools here and they're both in the same district, but there's a huge disparity between what's going on in both of these and the School Board's tolerating it for

whatever reasons.

So you know, I think it's crazy. When I talk to principals I'm surprised they don't all just walk off the job, okay? There are people on their school site that they don't even know why they are there. Because somebody started a Healthy Start Program, a Youth Start Program, a Behind Start Program, this program they say, ``We didn't ask for this. The other principal asked for this, and now I'm here and I've got to administer this program."

Where do you go and get the level of paperwork that makes some sense and holds you accountable? Now in my state, don't hold me to this but I think I'm pretty close to true, my state superintendent of schools is funding 70 to 80 percent of her operation out of Title I. I don't think I'm getting those kinds of services, but I'm sure as hell funding it. So where is that place where you slot it in the right place so we don't continue the status quo, which is this massive disparity between rich and poor schools, not just districts but schools? I'd be happy to take a written answer because it's absolutely crucial to this debate.

Mr. Till. I will do that.

Mr. George Miller. It is absolutely crucial to this debate, in terms of the allocation of resources and where some of us come down on the issues that many of you have raised here today.

Mr. Till. I tell people if I, speaking for myself, could get the burden off my principals and teachers I would increase my educational dollar without a new dollar. However, I need more. I'm not going to say I don't need new dollars. I think that's the real key. We need more dollars and we in the public school system are willing to be held accountable. But hold us accountable based upon student results, not based on paperwork. That's the transition we're making in Florida, California, where I came from, and Washington, D.C. A lot of the results have been around paperwork. Even though people don't read them, sooner or later they came and looked at them. So you knew you did them by some form.

I kid the people in Florida, being from California, that sometimes I questioned where the rules were coming from because people make up different rules. You appointed me and I see different rules. We've got to get the bureaucracy on which I'm committed to, and then be held accountable for teaching students how to read and make a national commitment to put the dollars behind that.

Chairman Boehner. I certainly am in agreement with Mr. Miller, and I'm on the other end of the political spectrum. We want the federal dollars, and the small role that we play in K-12 education, focused on the kids who most need the help. So if you look at the President's proposal, there is a great deal of accountability and the tradeoff is more flexibility. We need to have some comfort zone when we talk about flexibility so that the money will actually get to the students where it's necessary.

If you use the example of the two schools in George's district, one is very good and the other is the worst one in the entire state. I would not feel comfortable allowing something like that to exist. So we need your help, we need your input, and -

Mr. Till. Could I say something?

Chairman Boehner. Yes.

Mr. Till. I support what President Bush is doing about state accountability. The reality is with Commissioner Crist to my right, in the State of Florida, I cannot get my low-achievement schools off the "D"' to the "C" list, which is our goal, without federal dollars. There is not enough money coming to me from the State of Florida.

So if you hold us in Florida accountable even by the A-Plus Plan and give us the dollars, we will be held accountable by our state standards, and I support that.

Chairman Boehner. Mr. Crist?

Mr. Castle. Can I just follow up on all that? I was going to ask this, anyway. It's what you said, Dr. Till. I'd like to hear from any of the superintendents briefly if we could. You said something to the effect that federal dollars should be targeted for those kinds of kids, referring to poorer kids and kids that move around, etcetera.

If we get into this argument on an ideological basis in Washington, on flexibility with respect to these funds, that means non-targeting. That means we will return the funds to you almost in the form of a block grant, or something close to that, as opposed to targeting for particular kids.

Does that accommodate what you're saying, because you're confident that the state and the local districts would still make that decision? Are you saying something very different, which is, you need to focus it even more to make sure that these kids get the funds? Do you want to comment on what we talked about a little bit earlier, the state getting the money versus the local districts and even schools getting it? I get confused about what exactly the expectations in the local area, states on down, are with respect to what we should be doing in Washington.

Mr. Till. In Broward County our position is that we want the dollars targeted to the students, but with flexibility to deliver the accountability. We aren't looking for a broad block grant that goes over to hold us accountable. We want to target it to the students, because if you don't target it to the disadvantaged students there is a potential that it could be used in other ways.

We have no problem with targeting for the most disadvantaged of our students, but please give us the flexibility to determine the methodology to meet the accountability. We believe that if you tell us how to do it, then you should be held accountable, not us.

Mr. Castle. Do you agree with that?

Mr. Warford. Absolutely. I want to make it absolutely clear that in Marion County it was Title I dollars that allowed us to improve our three lowest-performing schools, our three "F" schools. Make sure that those dollars are focused on low achieving students, and then give us the flexibility to decide how we spend them. But don't give us the flexibility to decide where we spend them or we'll be spending them on some of the rich schools in his district, or to support his commissioner.

It was only the Florida accountability system that focused our attention on those low-performing schools to begin with, so accountability and flexibility.

Chairman Boehner. I want to thank all of our witnesses for their testimony, and thank you for your willingness to answer our questions. I also want to thank the audience who has come out to show their interest.

Again, I want to thank Ms. West, the principal here, for all of her hospitality. And if there is no further business, the committee will stand adjourned.

Whereupon, at 11:55 a.m., the Committee was adjourned.

APPENDIX A - WRITTEN OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN JOHN BOEHNER, COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE, U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OPENING STATEMENT OF REP. JOHN BOEHNER (R-OH),
CHAIRMAN

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FIELD HEARING ON "FLEXIBLITY, ACCOUNTABILITY AND
QUALITY EDUCATION"

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2001

WAKELAND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
1812-27TH STREET EAST
BRADENTON, FLORIDA

Good morning. My name is John Boehner and I am the Chairman of the Committee on Education and the Workforce in the House of Representatives. I extend a warm welcome to all those in attendance, to the Ranking Member--Congressman George Miller, to my other colleagues, and to our witnesses. I would especially like to thank Ms. Jackie West, the principal here at Wakeland Elementary School, for making the media center available for our hearing. I know this hearing involves a lot of work for you and your staff and we are grateful to you for your hospitality.

This is the first of several education reform hearings our committee will be holding over the next few weeks. As Congress begins a new legislative session, our committee will be traveling around the country to hear from parents, teachers, school administrators and many others about state and local reforms that are improving academic achievement.

These hearings will help lay the foundation for legislative action later this spring on our major K-12 federal education law---the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Just a few weeks ago President Bush announced his education reform plan---a plan with academic accountability as its centerpiece, and a plan that ensures no child is left behind.

Despite nearly a decade of uninterrupted economic growth during the 1990s, the achievement gap between disadvantaged students and their peers remains wide. Today, nearly 70 percent of inner city fourth graders cannot read at a basic level. I believe that President Bush's emphasis upon closing the achievement gap for disadvantaged students

puts the attention of federal education policy where it should be----upon ensuring that every child learns.

Our hearing today will focus upon accountability, flexibility, and other measures that ensure a quality education for all our nation's schoolchildren. I am very interested in Florida's "A Plus Plan for Education" which was enacted into law in 1999 and which has been at the cutting edge of academic accountability. Central to the accountability system are school "report cards." Under this system, schools are assigned a grade between A and F based on how well they perform on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test. Schools that do well receive cash rewards and those that are low performing are given additional resources to help them improve. However, if a school receives an "F" for two years in a row, then parents are given tuition scholarships to pay for the attendance of their children at a better performing school of their choice.

In addition to accountability, the Florida "A Plus Plan" includes a key flexibility initiative for school districts. Under this pilot program, public school districts are given flexibility to improve student achievement and school management without the usual constraints placed upon them by the state. Under the program, a school district may submit a proposed agreement to the state that exchanges statutory and rule exemptions, for an agreement to meet certain performance goals.

It is my hope that the federal government can learn from these accountability and flexibility initiatives in Florida. In fact, President Bush's education reform proposal would establish a rigorous accountability system much like that in Florida, with annual testing and rewards and sanctions that are tied to the academic performance of school districts and states.

His plan also incorporates a flexibility component, which creates new options for states and school districts that are committed to accountability and reform. Interested states and districts will be able to

enter into an agreement with the Secretary of Education if they choose. The agreement would offer freedom from current requirements placed on federal education programs in exchange for submitting a five-year performance agreement with specific goals for increased student performance. During the course of the agreement, states and districts would be subject to strict accountability for improving student achievement, and for regular review during the course of the agreement, and sanctions for failing to meet the terms of the agreement.

I would also note that the House of Representatives passed a bill in 1999 known as the Straight A's Act, which would have provided just this kind of accountability and flexibility. Unfortunately, it did not become law. I look forward to the renewed interest that the Bush Administration has shown in this approach to federal education policy.

While there are many other exciting education initiatives here in Florida, time does not permit us to explore all of them. So today we will

focus primarily upon accountability and flexibility as two key components of a quality education.

In all of our discussions, the important thing to remember is that education reform is not simply about boosting student test scores. It's about closing the growing achievement gap between students---Anglo and minority---and healing widening divisions within our society. It's about granting freedom to schools, school districts, and states. It's about making sure that the American dream is within the grasp of all of our nation's children---not just some of them.

At this time, I will yield to the Ranking Member, Congressman George Miller for any statement he may have.

APPENDIX B - WRITTEN STATEMENT OF CHARLIE CRIST, COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION, FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA

CHARLIE CRIST, FLORIDA EDUCATION COMMISSIONER
TESTIMONY BEFORE THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE
WAKELAND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, BRADENTON, FLORIDA
FEBRUARY 16, 2001

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. It is a pleasure and honor to be here today to discuss some of the most important elements of Florida's education reform efforts. Let me also thank you for choosing our great state and this wonderful school as the location for your field hearing.

As Florida's Education Commissioner, it is my responsibility to ensure that all of Florida's students receive the highest quality education possible. With the passage of Governor Jeb Bush's A-Plus Plan for Education in 1999, our schools and communities have shown a renewed commitment to education by initiating reforms that are truly impressive in substance and scope. Reforms such as allocating additional resources, reductions in the teacher-student ratio, extending the school year, and a dedication to the traditional core subjects of reading, writing, and arithmetic will ensure that no child is left behind.

My Greek immigrant grandfather, Adam, was a living testament to the uplifting power of education. He never went further than the third grade and at one point in his life, shined shoes for a living. Yet he was able to educate all his children, including my father, who became a doctor of medicine. My grandfather never stopped preaching the virtues of education, even to me. That's why I have such a passion for making sure each child receives the opportunity to gain the life-long benefits that come from a high quality education.

Last week, I was honored to join with other state education leaders from around the country to discuss education issues with President Bush at the White House. His desire to improve our schools is driven by the deeply-held conviction that children should be at the center of our efforts. Congressional leaders also recognize the same impetus.

Earlier this week, Governor Bush and I were in Collier County to advance his Family Literacy Initiative. I read to third grade students at Vineyards Elementary School in Naples and discussed the importance of reading and education. It was so rewarding to see young faces excited about learning. If we make children, and not institutions, the beneficiaries of education reform, then how can we not succeed?

My personal commitment to our children and the future of our state is why I chose to make a difference as Education Commissioner. Allow me to explain some of our major reform initiatives that will help ensure a high-quality education for Florida's students:

1. Sharpening the Pencil

Accountability is one of the themes of this field hearing. My strategy for directing more education dollars to our classrooms is based on the fact that too much tax money is absorbed by a burgeoning education system bureaucracy. Our spending choices must be child-centered, not institution-based. Accountability - for spending, for decisions, for outcomes - provides the foundation for our reforms. I propose that Florida school districts undergo independent financial management audits to evaluate the effectiveness of programs. Cost savings through contracting or outsourcing would ensure resources are used to achieve the core mission of providing children with the highest quality education.

2. Safe Passage

Children must be safe to learn. We are too often faced with the specter of school violence and its devastating effects on the lives and well being of our children and families. I propose requiring school districts to undergo safety audits designed to address problems and recommend improvement. Schools and districts would be given a safety grade on a scale of A to F. When a school receives an F grade two years in a row, parents would have the right to move their children to another school.

3. Teach Florida

One of the greatest challenges facing public education today is the shortage of quality teachers. I propose establishing a four-year scholarship program to cover tuition, fees, books, and housing for entering college

freshmen. In return, scholarship recipients would teach for four years in a Florida public school.

4. Elimination of Portables

Learning cannot take place under sub-standard conditions and in facilities where students feel unsafe. That's why I've proposed that portable classrooms be completely eliminated from our schools by July 1, 2003.

We must commit ourselves to improving every facet of our children's learning experience. How successful we are at achieving this goal depends on the value we place on our future welfare and prosperity. Our students deserve every opportunity to excel and it is our responsibility to make sure that happens.

SETTING THE STANDARD

In 1996, Florida adopted a rigorous set of achievement expectations known as the Sunshine State Standards that tell us what students should know and be able to do from kindergarten through high school. To measure students' mastery of the Standards, the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test, known as the "FCAT," was developed. It was first administered in 1998.

Florida's system of education accountability also includes holding schools accountable for that learning. To that end, Governor Bush in 1999 proposed the A-Plus Plan, which was enacted by the Florida Legislature. Public schools are assigned a grade, A through F, based on student performance on the FCAT. Students attending schools that receive two F grades in four years are eligible to receive opportunity scholarships. The scholarship enables them to choose a higher performing public school or a participating private school.

One of the myths surrounding opportunity scholarships is that only the best students would choose to attend another school. This, as well as the theory that public schools would be "abandoned," and that the children who attend them would be "left behind" has been proven wrong. Roughly

even numbers of high-performing and low-performing students chose to attend another school. In addition, school districts throughout the state have implemented changes with remarkable student achievement results.

Just yesterday, the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research issued a report evaluating the effectiveness of Florida's A-Plus Plan. In addition to validating the FCAT as a reliable measure of student achievement, the report concluded that opportunity scholarships clearly motivate failing schools to improve. It also found that schools which received failing FCAT grades in 1999 and whose students could be offered opportunity scholarships if their schools failed a second time achieved test score gains more than twice as large as other schools.

CONCLUSION

Florida's students have made remarkable strides in their academic success. Even with these dramatic advances, there is much work to do as we continue to implement comprehensive education reform. We are in the midst of an exciting time in education and we have the opportunity to continue the necessary reforms that will impact us well into the future.

While we have begun to make Florida's educational system performance-based and child-centered, much of the federal budget is regulation-based and system-centered, taking away our ability to truly make lasting changes. President Bush's philosophy for education reform that addresses the federal role in education is welcome and needed. For too long we have allowed student academic performance to wallow in low expectations.

With this Committee's help, there can now be a meshing of state and federal policy that ensures every student will achieve academic success.

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for offering me the opportunity to testify today. I would be happy to answer any questions.

Committee on Education and the Workforce
Witness Disclosure Requirement – "Truth in Testimony"
Required by House Rule XI, Clause 2(g)

Your Name: CHARLIE CRIST, FLORIDA COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION		
1. Are you testifying on behalf of a Federal, State, or Local Governmental entity?	Yes XX	No
2. Are you testifying on behalf of an entity other than a Government entity?	Yes	No
3. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) which you have received since October 1, 1998:		
4. Other than yourself, please list what entity or entities you are representing:		
5. If your answer to question number 2 is yes, please list any offices or elected positions held or briefly describe your representational capacity with the entities disclosed in question number 4:		
6. If your answer to question number 2 is yes, do any of the entities disclosed in question number 4 have parent organizations, subsidiaries, or partnerships to the entities for whom you are not representing?	Yes	No
7. If the answer to question number 2 is yes, please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) which were received by the entities listed under question 4 since October 1, 1998, including the source and amount of each grant or contract:		

Signature: Charlie Crist Date: 2-16-01

Please attach this sheet to your written testimony.

APPENDIX C - WRITTEN STATEMENT OF JAMES WARFORD, SUPERINTENDENT, MARION COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS, OCALA, FLORIDA

James Warford
Superintendent, Marion County Schools
Marion County, Florida

Testimony
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE
Bradenton, Fl.
2/16/01

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is James Warford. I am Superintendent of the Marion County School District here in Florida. I am a businessman and an educator with a passion for public schools and school reform. I was born into poverty and a troubled home. I am sitting here today because of what teachers did for me. I know that teachers don't just change lives... they can save them. Teachers are the only hope some young people will ever have. So I'm very proud of the fact that as a former teacher, I was named "Teacher of the Year" four different times in my district.

As Superintendent of Schools, I have fully embraced the Florida A+ Education Plan and its philosophy of accountability. I am following the lead of Governor Jeb Bush and Lt. Governor Frank Brogan, not because it is politically popular or easy, but because it is right and because it works. It is based on the very simple philosophy that is accepted without question in the business world... what gets measured gets done.

If you take anything away from my remarks today, I would want it to be this: the A+ Plan has *already* made a difference in the lives of the people that matter most to me, my students. Today, in Marion County, our students are reading, writing, and calculating much better than they were just three years ago. You will find attached to my testimony some of the gains that we have already made in our district.

But let me retrace our steps. In 1997, before I was Superintendent I might add, we identified three of our lowest performing elementary schools. In these schools almost 80% of the fourth graders tested below grade level, many by more than two years. The data showed they had been that way for years. It is no surprise that the students in these schools were also poor, often minority, spoke other languages, and had a high mobility rate. These were the exact reasons given by our district for their poor performance. I refused to accept it. I agreed with Frank Brogan who was, at the time, our Commissioner of Education. He believed these were just excuses.

Here's what was really happening. The parents of these students were also poor. They paid few or no property taxes, they often had little education themselves, they did not know how to access the "system," or help their children, and here's a point this committee might appreciate. They tended not to vote. But more importantly, I believe these parents and students were victims of the most damaging form of racism in our country... the racism of low expectations.

I was asked here today to address the issue of accountability. The simple truth is that failing schools like the ones I've described can exist only where there is no accountability. The Bush/Brogan A+ Education Plan put in place a system of accountability that made the conditions in our failing schools impossible to hide.

The components of the plan are very simple. It establishes a set of high standards, ***The Florida Sunshine State Standards,*** that determine what our children should know and be able to do at each grade level. It uses a meaningful test, the ***FCAT***, to measure how well they have done. Most importantly, it holds each school accountable by grading them from A to F on how well

their students perform. Make no mistake about it, the A+ Plan provided a much needed wake-up call for our district.

When the scarlet letter "F" was given to the three failing schools and the glaring spotlight of media attention was focused on our failure... that is when things began to change. It has been said that large organizations don't change because they suddenly see the light, but because they feel the heat. With three "F" schools and eight "D" schools... it got plenty warm in Marion County. Failing schools meant the threat of vouchers and that really lit a fire under folks.

As a result, attention was focused on the problems of our low performing schools. A district and school intervention plan was created. Training, tools, and time were provided to the teachers in those schools, and higher expectations were set for everyone. What were the results?

All three schools improved dramatically. Two schools went from an "F" to "C" and one school, Fessenden Elementary, was one of two schools in Florida that actually went from an "F" to and "A" in one year. I have furnished you with copies of the improvements these schools made. They made tremendous gains across the board in reading, writing ,and mathematics. I am very proud of those students. They proved that all children can learn and that they will reach any goal we set for them. However, we are forced to ask why it took the threat of failure to force us to do what we should have been doing all along and might not have done otherwise.

In closing, the story of these three schools illustrates exactly why I support both Bush Education plans, my Governor's and my President's. It works and it's not rocket science. Set high standards for what children should learn, test them to see if they've learned it, and have

meaningful consequences for those schools that fail to make adequate progress. What gets measured gets done. As a state and as a nation, we can no longer afford to leave any child behind.

Only with meaningful accountability can we make sure that does not happen. Thank you.

Committee on Education and the Workforce

Witness Disclosure Requirement – "Truth in Testimony"
Required by House Rule XI, Clause 2(g)

Your Name: JAMES WARFORD		
1. Are you testifying on behalf of a Federal, State, or Local Governmental entity?	Yes ✓	No
2. Are you testifying on behalf of an entity other than a Government entity?	Yes	No ✓
3. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) which you have received since October 1, 1998: NONE		
4. Other than yourself, please list what entity or entities you are representing: MARION COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD MARION COUNTY, FLORIDA		
5. If your answer to question number 2 is yes, please list any offices or elected positions held or briefly describe your representational capacity with the entities disclosed in question number 4: N.A.		
6. If your answer to question number 2 is yes, do any of the entities disclosed in question number 4 have parent organizations, subsidiaries, or partnerships to the entities for whom you are not representing?	Yes	No
7. If the answer to question number 2 is yes, please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) which were received by the entities listed under question 4 since October 1, 1998, including the source and amount of each grant or contract: N. A.		

Signature: James M. Warford Date: 2/15/01

Please attach this sheet to your written testimony.

APPENDIX D - WRITTEN STATEMENT OF FRANK TILL, JR., SUPERINTENDENT, BROWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS, FT. LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA

Testimony of Dr. Frank Till
Superintendent of Schools
The School Board of Broward County, Florida

Thank you Mr. Chairman and Committee members for inviting me here today to share with you my perspective on the issues of accountability, flexibility and quality education, from my vantage point as superintendent of the 5th largest school system in America, the Broward County Public Schools.

In a school district our size, with 215 schools and centers, 255,000 K-12 students, 13,000 teachers we face many challenges. Some challenges arise in dealing with our extraordinary growth of about 9,000 new students each year, 4,000 of whom come to us from foreign countries; in recruiting and retaining the 1,500 new teachers we need each year; from the need to build new facilities to relieve critical overcrowding and maintain the buildings we have; in providing quality special education services to the nearly 32,000 exceptional students; and in meeting the needs of students from our most impoverished communities where our 79 Title 1 schools are located, with poverty rates ranging from 50% to 98%. Perhaps the greatest challenge, however, is to reinvent the system of schooling in low performing schools through the alignment of resources, teachers and facilities to meet the needs of students.

Florida's development of the Sunshine State Standards set the stage for reform in the Broward County Public Schools. With input from parents, students, teachers, principals, district staff, business and community partners, and higher education representatives, the school district began crafting policies to raise expectations and drive instruction, professional development, and student support services toward achievement of the state standards.

These policies, which include: *School Accountability and Improvement, Standards of Service/Pupil Progression, Professional Pathways* and *Standards of Student Service,* define Broward's infrastructure for systemic reform, which promotes success at each level of the educational experience.

These policies guarantees a comprehensive accountability system at all levels of the organization to improve student achievement and school effectiveness. Since its adoption in 1995, the policy has been amended seven times, responding to the dynamic vitality of a growing and diverse community.

With these policies in place, Broward was ready to respond to more stringent accountability criteria required by the State. In 1998, Florida implemented the new, more challenging state assessment, the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT), and tightened the accountability system by assigning all public schools a letter grade based largely on FCAT results. Anticipating these changes, Broward developed – with stakeholder input – its own local standards – delineated by each grade level - for *all* content areas, called ***Critical Content*** which describes what all students need to know and be able to do. Broward then developed its ***Essential Teacher Knowledge*** which describes the content knowledge and teacher competencies necessary for teachers to exhibit in order to teach each specific standard. These were aligned with Broward's redesigned professional development system to assure that teacher training is aligned with content and/or pedagogical deficiencies teachers identify through self-assessment. In September 2000, the U.S. Department of Education named the Broward County Public Schools as a recipient of *the National Award for Model Professional Development* in recognition of its staff development program.

In 2000, the district adopted its ***2000-2005 Strategic Plan***, again, with extensive community input. The plan sets forth goals and objectives tied to raising student performance; aligning resources, operations, and support systems to address student needs and maximize achievement; improving teacher competency; and engaging the public to ensure broad-based support. Now in the implementation stage, the Strategic Plan is proving to be a roadmap to educational excellence. An Executive Steering Committee, composed of business, civic, and education leaders, monitors progress and provides resources to ensure that Broward County Public Schools will become the premier school district in America.

To be even more accountable to our community, the ***Sterling Quality Process*** *(Baldrige National Quality Program)* is being introduced in the district. This process provides a framework that will allow Broward County Public Schools to examine the key areas of its operations to ensure that stakeholders are identified and served throughout the organization. The Sterling Quality Process will help to ensure that all elements of the operation are linked and working toward the same goals. The implementation of the Sterling Quality Process is supported, in part, with federal Title VI funds.

Low performing schools, referred to as "Upward Bound" schools in Broward County, are provided with additional resources and support through the process outlined in of my statement. Cross-functional Support Teams, comprised of district specialists meet with the schools' Leadership Team to assess school needs and provide the necessary support to schools. The Division of Curriculum and Instruction/Student Support has been realigned to work directly with the Upward Bound schools. The focus has been to improve instruction in reading, writing and mathematics and to work with the instructional leaders in the school to build their capacity to sustain improved teaching and learning. Many schools have received on-site training for their teachers and additional diagnostic/prescriptive work for their students. The Eisenhower Professional Development Program (Title II) has been a tremendous boon to the district in supporting staff development efforts in low performing schools.

Our greatest successes with low performing schools have been demonstrated by the elimination of "F" schools in the district in 2000. Our most prominent success has been in the area of student writing. Broward also continues to show strides in mathematics through improved achievement in 67% (elementary) to 85% (high school) of the low performing elementary and high schools, and a 100% of the low performing middle schools. Advances are also seen in reading with improved achievement in 75% (elementary), to 100% (secondary) of the lowest performing schools.

One of the challenges we face in assisting schools is maintaining excellence when district support is withdrawn. Not all low performing schools have been successful in developing an in-school system for assuring that improved student achievement is sustained over time.

Broward provides students and parents with many choice options. While we do not support vouchers or portability of Title 1 funds to private schools, we have in place a liberal reassignment policy which permits parents to request and obtain reassignment (choice) for a variety of reasons. In the 1999/2000 school year, over 10,000 reassignment requests were received and 79% were granted. Theme schools, 41 magnet schools and charter schools– Broward has 12 charters– provide parents choices in addition to the reassignment policy. Title 1 is currently serving only one third of the children eligible to receive services. Transferring Title 1 funds with students going to private schools would only diminish the resources available to serve the most needy students.

In conclusion, we believe that Broward is making good progress in improving student achievement in low performing schools and implementing accountability measures beyond those the State requires. We believe that federal government has a vital role to play in helping us to meet the challenges we face. We hope that the Committee will support increased funding for Title 1, Bilingual Education and full funding of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. We hope that the reauthorization of ESEA will continue to target funds to the neediest students and neediest schools, and that local school districts will be provided with maximum flexibility in use of federal funds to meet local needs.

I thank you for your attention.

Committee on Education and the Workforce

Witness Disclosure Requirement – "Truth in Testimony"
Required by House Rule XI, Clause 2(g)

Your Name: Franklin L. Till, Jr.		
1. Are you testifying on behalf of a Federal, State, or Local Governmental entity?	Yes X	No
2. Are you testifying on behalf of an entity other than a Government entity?	Yes	No X
3. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) which you have received since October 1, 1998:		
4. Other than yourself, please list what entity or entities you are representing: The School Board of Broward County, Florida		
5. If your answer to question number 2 is yes, please list any offices or elected positions held or briefly describe your representational capacity with the entities disclosed in question number 4: N/A		
6. If your answer to question number 2 is yes, do any of the entities disclosed in question number 4 have parent organizations, subsidiaries, or partnerships to the entities for whom you are not representing? N/A	Yes	No
7. If the answer to question number 2 is yes, please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) which were received by the entities listed under question 4 since October 1, 1998, including the source and amount of each grant or contract: N/A		

Signature: Date: 2/15/2001

Please attach this sheet to your written testimony.

School Board of Broward County, Florida
Funded Federal Grants Report
from 10/1/98 to 2/14/01
Source: GRANTS Database

Title of Grant Program	Amount Funded
Adult Education & Family Literacy - Geographical Allocation	$1,100,175
Adult Education & Family Literacy - Geographical Allocation Section 231	$1,100,175
Carl D. Perkins Additional Funding for Areas with the Highest Percentage of Vocational and Technical Students (Supplemental)	$29,383
Charter School - Charter School Institute Training Center (Messianique)	$90,000
Charter School - City of Coral Springs Charter	$70,000
Charter School - City of Coral Springs Charter School	$91,000
Charter School - City of North Lauderdale Charter School	$91,000
Charter School - City of Pembroke Pines Charter High School	$70,000
Charter School - Smart School	$50,000
Charter School - Smart School	$91,000
Charter School -Pembroke Pines Elementary School	$91,000
Charter School -Pembroke Pines Middle School	$90,000
Charter Schools - Sunshine Charter School	$70,000
Comprehensive Family Literacy Services - Florida's Families as Educators Program - Read with Me	$50,000
Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program - High Schools that Work	$50,000
Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program - ATLAS	$50,000
Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program - ATLAS	$87,350
Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program - High Schools that Work	$87,350
Corrections Education Grant	$50,000
Early Head Start Program	$653,249
Education for Homeless Children and Youth	$95,000

School Board of Broward County, Florida
Funded Federal Grants Report
from 10/1/98 to 2/14/01
Source: GRANTS Database

Title of Grant Program	Amount Funded
Elementary School Counselor Demonstration Grant	$397,851
Environmental Education Grant - Reviewing the methodology of restoration of wetlands	$4,991
Even Start Family Literacy Program	$156,765
FDLRS Assistive Technology Educational Network	$93,750
FDLRS Assistive Technology Educational Network (ATEN)	$153,750
Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS) - REACH - General Revenue	$80,535
Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS) - REACH - IDEA, Part B, Preschool	$128,563
Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS) - REACH - IDEA, Part B	$791,846
Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources Systems (FDLRS) - REACH - General Revenue	$80,535
Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources Systems (FDLRS) - REACH - IDEA, Part B - Preschool	$131,792
Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources Systems (FDLRS) - REACH - IDEA, Part B	$817,670
Florida Inclusion Network	$250,000
Florida Inclusion Network	$400,000
Florida Learn & Serve	$4,029
Florida Learn & Serve	$5,257
Florida Learn & Serve	$6,210
Florida Learn & Serve	$6,425
Florida Learn & Serve	$9,325
Florida Learn & Serve	$13,546

School Board of Broward County, Florida
Funded Federal Grants Report
from 10/1/98 to 2/14/01
Source: GRANTS Database

Title of Grant Program	Amount Funded
Florida Learn & Serve - A SMART Program	$6,161
Florida Learn & Serve - Helping Hands II	$5,364
Goals 2000 - Local Education Reform For Overall Low Performing Schools	$249,295
Goals 2000 - Local Education Reform Grant	$426,370
Goals 2000 - Local Education Reform/Locally Determined Reform	$100,000
Goals 2000 - Staff Development for Teachers	$371,045
Goals 2000 Preservice/Inservice	$189,000
Goals 2000: Broward Educational Curriculum Planning Tool	$270,000
Goals 2000: Secondary Reading Proficiencies	$117,476
Goals 2000: Staff Development, Technology and Distance Learning	$176,000
Goals 2000: Staff Development/Teachers	$199,484
Goals 2000: Staff Development/Using Student Gains Data	$300,000
Head Start - Basic	$2,550,000
Head Start- Basic	$10,065,538
IDEA, Part B, Discretionary Fund Supplement Grant	$1,084,139
IDEA, Part B, Entitlement - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act	$17,919,727
IDEA, Part B, Entitlement - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act	$14,301,292
IDEA, Part B, Preschool Entitlement	$1,414,433
IDEA, Part B, Preschool Entitlement	$1,429,787
Impact Aid	$17,034
Magnet Schools Assistance Program - Magnet Choice Zone for North Area Middle Schools	$1,959,327

School Board of Broward County, Florida
Funded Federal Grants Report
from 10/1/98 to 2/14/01
Source: GRANTS Database

Title of Grant Program	Amount Funded
Magnet Schools Assistance Program -Technology Focused Families Program	$284,045
Magnet Schools Assistance Program-Technology Focused Families Program	$199,741
Reading Excellence Act - Reading Improvement	$750,000
Reading Excellence Act - Tutorial Assistance	$100,000
Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities Program	$1,006,600
Safe and Drug Free Schools Set-Aside Program	$953,058
Safe and Drug Free Schools: State and Local Educational Agency Drug and Violence Prevention Data Collection	$159,973
School Health Programs to Prevent Serious Health Problems	$224,258
School Health Programs to Prevent Serious Health Problems	$244,258
School-To-Work (Enhancement)	$273,214
School-to-Work: Urban/Rural Opportunities Grant	$325,000
School-to-Work: Urban/Rural Opportunities Grant (Supplemental)	$600,000
Severely Emotionally Disturbed Network - SEDNET	$95,502
Targeted Assistance Program	$365,621
Technology Literacy Challenge Grant	$843,000
Technology Literacy Challenge Grant - Project Infusion 2	$1,200,000
Technology Literacy Challenge Grant: Statewide Impact	$320,000
Title I - Delinquent or At-Risk Students	$176,244
Title I - Delinquent or At-Risk Students	$176,244
Title I - Migrant Education	$320,758
Title I - Migrant Education	$320,759

School Board of Broward County, Florida
Funded Federal Grants Report
from 10/1/98 to 2/14/01
Source: GRANTS Database

Title of Grant Program	Amount Funded
Title I - Migrant General Revenue	$49,748
Title I - Migrant General Revenue (State Migrant Early Childhood)	$49,748
Title I - Migrant Supportive Services and Data Center	$149,112
Title I - School Improvement	$68,111
Title I - School Improvement	$68,112
Title I - School Improvement	$235,259
Title I - Targeted Assistance and Schoolwide	$25,871,689
Title I - Targeted Assistance and Schoolwide	$26,265,675
Title II - Dwight D. Eisenhower Mathematics and Science Education Program	$1,157,520
Title II - Dwight D. Eisenhower Professional Development	$1,439,732
Title II, Dwight D. Eisenhower Professional Development	$1,071,046
Title VI - Class Size Reduction	$4,498,885
Title VI - Class Size Reduction	$4,132,530
Title VI - Innovative Education Program Strategies	$1,554,594
Title VI - Innovative Education Program Strategies	$1,558,515
Title VII - Development and Implementation Grant: Project READ	$158,958
Title VII - Empowering the Language Minority Population with Educational Reform: Project EMPOWER	$187,015
Title VII - Foreign Language Assistance Grant Project AMIS (Friends)	$106,393
Title VII - LEA Grants: Project Success	$128,434
Title VII - Program Enhancement Grant: Project NET	$136,488
Title VII - Project Gateway to Learning In a Gifted and Talented and Creative Program (GLITTER)	$150,000

School Board of Broward County, Florida
Funded Federal Grants Report
from 10/1/98 to 2/14/01
Source: GRANTS Database

Title of Grant Program	Amount Funded
Title VII - Systemwide Improvement Grant - Project Communities, Schools, Parents, and Students Connecting Through Education (CONNECTION)	$595,524
Title VII - Teachers and Personnel Grants: Project BEST	$222,488
Title VII - Teachers and Personnel Grants: Project BEST	$228,089
Title VII, Part C - Emergency Immigrant Education Program	$4,565,024
Title VII, Part C - Emergency Immigrant Education Program	$4,752,044
Title IX - Indian Education	$10,452
Twenty-First Century Community Learning Centers Program	$403,908
Vocational and Applied Technology Education - Postsecondary Education (Section 232)	$321,161
Vocational and Applied Technology Education - Secondary Education, Section 231	$1,559,428
Vocational and Applied Technology Education - Tech Prep., Section 341	$297,752
Vocational and Applied Technology Education--Postsecondary Education (Section 132)	$307,523
Vocational and Applied Technology Education-Project ACCEPT-Single Parent/Displaced Homemaker, Section 221B	$63,437
Vocational and Applied Technology Education-Secondary Education, Section 131	$1,598,401
Vocational and Applied Technology Education-Tech Prep., Section 204	$291,104
Workforce Development Capitalization Incentive - Marine Industry	$199,979
Workforce Development Capitalization Incentive Heating, Air-Conditioning and Refrigeration Technology - Expanded	$199,882
Total Funded Amount	**$154,433,029**

APPENDIX E - WRITTEN STATEMENT OF BERTHA ZAPATA, TEACHER, BROWARD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, TAMPA, FLORIDA

Testimony of Ms. Bertha Zapata
Teacher
Broward Elementary School
Tampa, Florida

Before the Committee on Education and the Workforce
Field Hearing on "Flexibility, Accountability, and Quality Education
Wakeland Elementary School
Bradenton, Florida
February 16, 2001

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee,

I am Bertha Zapata an ESOL Teacher at Broward Elementary School in Tampa. Broward is a Title 1 school. 80% of our students qualify for the free and reduced lunch program and 65% are categorized as highly mobile. I teach students who speak little or no English. The majority are Hispanic and Asian but I also have Russian and Bosnian students. By the end of one year, the vast majority of my students are speaking, reading and writing English.

It is not magic, it is not because all these children are extremely bright, though many of them are. It is because *The Spalding Method*, which I have been using to teach non-English speaking children since 1994, incorporates research-based components essential for all children to become accurate spellers, fluent readers, and accomplished writers.

The worst mistake teachers make is to underestimate their students' abilities. (Can you show papers or quote excerpts from students, the Russian 5 year old you mentioned and then include them in your enclosures?)

Quality Education

Quality education depends upon high expectations. Students of all ability levels must be challenged to produce quality work that fully develops their intellect. When teachers have high expectations, children are more likely to set high standards for their own work.

No child need be left behind if they are taught the alphabetic code. English is a phonetic language. Researchers have discovered that the ability to read and comprehend text depends upon rapid and automatic recognition and decoding of single words. That skill in turn depends upon letter knowledge, vocabulary, and comprehension skills which *must also be taught.*

I start by teaching my students the 70 phonograms that represent the sounds of the English language. Phonics instruction takes place in the spelling lesson. Students *say* and *write* the sounds used in spoken English. That connects written symbols to their spoken sounds. Also included in the spelling portion are precise techniques for good, easy handwriting because researchers have found that improving the speed and accuracy of handwriting frees up students' minds for the higher-order thinking needed for writing better compositions.

I begin writing instruction in kindergarten and first grade by teaching children to use spelling words in oral sentences. Learning to construct good oral sentences prepares children for writing and reinforces the meaning of unfamiliar

words. By using the words they have written to compose and write two or three sentences daily, My students learn how words and sentences are constructed . They begin *reading* by reading their original sentences.

I do not neglect literature. Students first listen to and then read good literature. I incorporate comprehension strategies, such as teaching students to check their understanding, make connections with prior knowledge, predict, and summarize so children *understand* what they read. The mental work involved in applying knowledge of reading, writing, and spelling engages students' minds and interest. Quality education is research-based instruction.

Accountability

Without accountability for results, children will be left behind. I am certain that my students are succeeding because daily assessment of progress is built into the Method I use. Therefore, I have a clear indication of what my students know and what they still need to learn. However, that is not the case with many programs. For too many years, we have not been accountable, therefore teaching fads come and go. Assessment instruments and careful observation of student progress guide teachers in planning appropriate instruction and adjusting instruction to meet student needs. To improve accountability, annual standardized or performance-based testing is essential.

Flexibility

As long as schools are held accountable for student progress, local school districts must have the flexibility to choose instructional programs that meet their students' needs. We do not need a national reading program. Holding schools accountable for results is the way to demonstrate that whatever program is selected does work. The National Reading Panel Report documented that systematic instruction in phoneme awareness, phonics, and comprehension strategies significantly improved students' reading across kindergarten through eighth-grade. Some existing programs already incorporate these essential components. For example, the reading program that I have used successfully with my ESOL students has a 45-year history of teaching children to read. Unfortunately, programs such as this have not been widely implemented because of the prevailing philosophy at colleges of education.

If we are really serious about leaving no child behind, attention needs to be focused on teacher preparation. Teachers cannot teach what they do not know. Underlying the debate about reading methods is disagreement about the value of explicit instruction and skill practice. Too many education professors believe that

instruction and practice stifle creativity and higher level thinking. I am here to tell you that nothing is further from the truth. No one is able to think of more than one thing at a time and children can't either. If they can't decode the words, they cannot get meaning from them.

Professional preparation programs have a responsibility to teach a defined body of knowledge, skills and abilities based on the best research in the field. I, like most teachers I know, recognize the need for better training. I went to a private provider to obtain the knowledge and skills to help my students be successful.

APPENDIX F - WRITTEN STATEMENT OF SONIA TREJO, PARENT, BRADENTON, FLORIDA

Testimony of Ms. Sonia Trejo
Parent
Bradenton, Florida

Before the Committee on Education and the Workforce
Field Hearing on "Flexibility, Accountability, and Quality Education"
Wakeland Elementary School
Bradenton, Florida
February 16, 2001

Good Morning! My name is Sonia Trejo and today I want to talk to you about school accountability and high standards for all students. I am a parent of 4 school-aged students. Two children attend elementary school, one child attends middle school and the other child attends high school. In our family, education is a top priority for all. Only one of my children attends their home school. That is my high school daughter. My two elementary school children attend this school because we had decided to apply for school choice. We chose this school because of the increase in test scores as compared to their neighborhood school. My middle school son attends a charter school, because of the smaller class size and individual attention that he receives.

I want and desire much more for my children that I was able to achieve myself. I only finished seventh grade and attended vocational training to be a cosmetologist. Presently, my husband and I have our own roofing business. High standards for my children and school accountability remain first and foremost for us as a family. I am glad that the public schools that my children attend continue to strive for excellence. I also am very glad that I have had the opportunity to exercise school choice and make the decision where my children are to attend school.

Committee on Education and the Workforce
Witness Disclosure Requirement – "Truth in Testimony"
Required by House Rule XI, Clause 2(g)

Your Name: Sonia TREJO		
1. Are you testifying on behalf of a Federal, State, or Local Governmental entity?	Yes	No ✓
2. Are you testifying on behalf of an entity other than a Government entity?	Yes	No ✓
3. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) which you have received since October 1, 1998:		
4. Other than yourself, please list what entity or entities you are representing:		
5. If your answer to question number 2 is yes, please list any offices or elected positions held or briefly describe your representational capacity with the entities disclosed in question number 4:		
6. If your answer to question number 2 is yes, do any of the entities disclosed in question number 4 have parent organizations, subsidiaries, or partnerships to the entities for whom you are not representing?	Yes	No
7. If the answer to question number 2 is yes, please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) which were received by the entities listed under question 4 since October 1, 1998, including the source and amount of each grant or contract:		

Signature: Sonia Trejo Date: 02-13-01

Please attach this sheet to your written testimony.

APPENDIX G - WRITTEN STATEMENT OF DEBRA ROBINSON, SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER, DISTRICT 1, WEST PALM BEACH COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT, WEST PALM BEACH, FLORIDA

Testimony of Debra L. Robinson MD
Before the U. S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and the Workforce
"Flexibility, Accountability and Quality Education"
February 16, 2001

First I want to thank Chairman Boehner, Ranking Member Miller and the other members of the Committee for giving me the opportunity to share my thoughts on Florida's accountability system.

I am the daughter of a civil-rights attorney and an educator. I am a proud graduate of Michigan State University and the Howard University College of Medicine. I am a practicing Internal Medicine physician, a wife, and most importantly the mother of three sons. My sons are members of the group most likely to be undereducated in this country. That is why I responded to the call for public service and ran for the Palm Beach County School Board. I was elected in September 2000 and was seated in November 2000.

While I believe that Florida's accountability system is essentially a sound system, it does have some shortcomings. I recognize that not all of the problems with our state's accountability system can or should be addressed at the federal level. The State of Florida must address some of our issues. Other accountability issues need to be addressed at the local level, as we are undertaking to do in the Palm Beach County school district. The federal government, however, has an important role to play in establishing a strong foundation of bottom line accountability upon which states and school districts can build. That bottom line accountability should ensure higher achievement for all students, not just some. And it should ensure that every state, school district and school eliminate the achievement gap that separates low-income students and students of color from others.

1. **The Federal Government should require that states use disaggregated student achievement data for accountability. The Florida accountability system no longer uses disaggregated student achievement data.**

I understand that there is growing consensus in Washington about the need to use disaggregated student achievement data for accountability. I want to applaud this common sense step. Quite simply, averaging together the achievement data for all groups of students masks the gaps between groups of students. If we are ever to eliminate the achievement gap that separates low-income students and students of color from others—and eliminate it we can and must—we have to expose the gaps and hold ourselves accountable for closing them. Again, the achievement of each child matters. Under the current federal accountability system, which allows for the averaging of achievement data across student groups, the achievement of too many of our children doesn't matter enough.

2. **<u>However, disaggregation of test results by student groups alone isn't enough. We also have to ensure that all student groups are counted.</u>**

When Florida did require the use of disaggregated data for accountability the state left a loophole that undermined attempts to boost overall achievement and to close the achievement gap. Under our old system schools only had to test and be held accountable for the achievement of student groups that had at least 30 students per grade level. For example, if there was a school in which only 27 Black students were enrolled in the 4th grade the achievement of those students would not be factored in when measuring the progress of the 4th graders.

Considering this example, I think that it is important that the federal government design an accountability system that not only requires that the achievement of various groups of students be counted separately, but that also requires all groups and all students within groups be counted.

3. **<u>The Federal government has to provide a standard for school failure.</u>**

My understanding is that the federal government currently allows each state to establish their own definition of a failing school. Thus there is great state-to-state variation in school failure rates. According to a recent report, only 1% of the schools in the state of Texas have been identified as needing improvement while 76% of the schools in Michigan have been so identified. I believe that there needs to be strong federal guidance to states on what it means to be "in need of improvement". I believe that such guidance should come with federal support for effective school improvement strategies. Let me be clear that I don't want the federal government to reward school failure. However, I think it is nonsense to expect that struggling schools can improve without an investment of additional resources on those things that we know work to boost student achievement.

4. **<u>Vouchers make no sense in a strong public accountability system.</u>**

From what I understand about the discussions in Washington, the fundamental principle around which there is broad consensus is that the best way to raise achievement for all students and close the achievement gap between groups of students is by creating a system in which schools *<u>supported with public dollars</u>* are held *<u>accountable to the public</u>* for helping all students meet a set of *<u>publicly articulated goals</u>*. I believe that as well. And that is why I oppose the Florida voucher program and why I oppose a federal

voucher program based on the Florida model. Such a scheme would send public funds into institutions that have no publicly articulated goals for their students and therefore cannot be held accountable to the public. So in fact, private school vouchers are anti-accountability.

More than that vouchers are an empty promise. There are not enough spaces in private schools to accommodate the students to whom we owe a good education. There is not enough money under any of the voucher proposals to give poor parents the resources that they need to afford the ever-increasing tuition at private schools.

Instead of offering empty promises to parents, we need to invest our time and resources in upgrading our public schools.

5. **Accountability is only a buzzword without effective teacher preparation.**

The most important variable affecting student achievement is not family income or the number of children in the classroom. The most important variable is the content knowledge and teaching skills of the teacher in that classroom. In large measure, the low performance in urban and low-income schools is the result of the disproportionate numbers of uncertified teachers and teachers teaching without a college major or minor in the area in which they are instructing.
Too many colleges of education do not prepare their graduates to teach reading or manage the challenges of teaching in an urban classroom. The federal government must outline the minimum course content for degrees in education. K-16 initiatives can assist with this curriculum correction and outlining of necessary competencies.

We must institute a system of accountability that not only clearly articulates the benchmarks for students and defines proficiency, but also provides teachers with the tools to impart knowledge to our most challenged students. Teacher staff development must be focused on the benchmarks, job-imbedded and ongoing. Additional resources are necessary to replicate best practice models for staff development in every District and every school.

We will only lure the best and brightest into the teaching profession if we start to treat teachers as the professionals that we expect them to be in a system of accountability. There must be more scholarships for high performing students to enter Colleges of Education and greater financial rewards when they graduate and enter our classrooms. Students will benefit greatly if the federal government provides funds directly to school districts to provide incentives for bright minds to teach.

In closing, accountability for adults that impact the education of our students is necessary. Accountability without strategic planning will only serve to identify schools that have reached the mark.

END

Committee on Education and the Workforce
Witness Disclosure Requirement – "Truth in Testimony"
Required by House Rule XI, Clause 2(g)

Your Name: Debra L. Robinson M.D.		
1. Are you testifying on behalf of a Federal, State, or Local Governmental entity?	Yes	No ✓
2. Are you testifying on behalf of an entity other than a Government entity?	Yes	No ✓
3. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) which you have received since October 1, 1998: None.		
4. Other than yourself, please list what entity or entities you are representing: None		
5. If your answer to question number 2 is yes, please list any offices or elected positions held or briefly describe your representational capacity with the entities disclosed in question number 4: I am elected to the Palm Beach County School Board but I am not representing the Board at this time.		
6. If your answer to question number 2 is yes, do any of the entities disclosed in question number 4 have parent organizations, subsidiaries, or partnerships to the entities for whom you are not representing?	Yes	No
7. If the answer to question number 2 is yes, please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) which were received by the entities listed under question 4 since October 1, 1998, including the source and amount of each grant or contract:		

Signature: [signature] Date: 2/15/01

Please attach this sheet to your written testimony.

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