

AMERICA'S COMPETIVENESS THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL REFORM

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON

EDUCATION AND LABOR

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS

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AMERICA'S COMPETIVENESS THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL REFORM

**Tuesday, May 12, 2009
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Education and Labor
Washington, DC**

The committee met, pursuant to call, at 3:00 p.m., in room 2175, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. George Miller [chairman of the committee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Miller, Payne, Scott, Tierney, Holt, Davis, Grijalva, Bishop of New York, Loeb sack, Hirono, Courtney, Shea-Porter, Fudge, Petri, Castle, Bishop of Utah, and Roe.

Staff Present: Tylease Alli, Hearing Clerk; Catherine Brown, Education Policy Advisor; Alice Cain, Senior Education Policy Advisor (K-12); Fran-Victoria Cox, Staff Attorney; Adrienne Dunbar, Education Policy Advisor; Curtis Ellis, Legislative Fellow, Education; David Hartzler, Systems Administrator; Fred Jones, Staff Assistant, Education; Jessica Kahanek, Press Assistant; Stephanie Moore, General Counsel; Alex Nock, Deputy Staff Director; Joe Novotny, Chief Clerk; Rachel Racusen, Communications Director; Melissa Salmanowitz, Press Secretary; Margaret Young, Staff Assistant, Education; Mark Zuckerman, Staff Director; Stephanie Arras, Minority Legislative Assistant; Robert Borden, Minority General Counsel; Cameron Coursen, Minority Assistant Communications Director; Kirsten Duncan, Minority Professional Staff Member; Susan Ross, Minority Director of Education and Human Services Policy; Linda Stevens, Minority Chief Clerk/Assistant to the General Counsel; and Sally Stroup, Minority Staff Director.

Chairman MILLER. A quorum being present, the committee will come to order. I want to welcome our first panel, and say good afternoon to everyone else in attendance.

Today we are here to take a closer look at how improving graduation rates in our Nation's high schools can help strengthen our competitiveness and the strength of our economy. We are also going to take a look at what is working to help turn around the so-called "dropout factories" and their feeder schools.

Some may think twice about using the word "crisis" to define what is happening in our high schools, but the truth is we just aren't facing a crisis, the house is on fire.

The new McKinsey report says that the achievement gaps in this country are the same as having, and I quote, a permanent national recession.

Today, only 70 percent of students graduate with a regular high school diploma. Of these students, fewer than half graduate fully prepared for college level work or success in the workforce. Nearly one in five U.S. men between the ages of 16 and 24, nearly 19 percent, have dropped out.

About 10 percent of high schools produce close to half of the students who drop out. In these 2,000 high schools—so-called “dropout factories”—about as many students drop out as graduate.

These dropout factories disproportionately impact minority students, producing 69 percent of all the African American and 63 percent of the Hispanic students who drop out.

Nationally, only about a little more than 50 percent of African American students and Hispanic students graduate on time, compared to 78 percent of the white students. It is a national tragedy that if you are a minority student in this country you have a one in three chance of attending a dropout factory.

We used to be a world leader in high school graduation rates. Now we have fallen to 18th out of 24 among industrialized nations. Studies show the longer our students stay in school the more they fall behind their international peers.

Last month’s NAEP study of long-term trends show that 17-year-old students’ reading and math scores have not improved since the 1970s. This is astonishing. We cannot afford to continue this way, not for our students, our economy or our future competitiveness.

A high school dropout earns an average of \$250,000 less than a high school graduate and about a million dollars less than a college graduate over their lifetime.

Each class of high school dropouts costs the economy \$309 billion in lost wages over those students’ lifetime.

In fact, the McKinsey report shows the international achievement gap poses a greater threat to our economy than the current downturn. It found that if the United States had closed the international achievement gap between 1983 and 1998, our 2008 GDP would have been 1 to \$2 trillion higher. That is about 9 to 16 percent of our GDP.

We should be producing the most qualified and talented workforce possible. Instead, businesses say high school graduates are not ready for the workplace and colleges say high school graduates are not ready for the rigors of college.

It has become increasingly clear that addressing this dropout crisis is one of the most important things we can do to turn our economy around for good.

In its current form, No Child Left Behind doesn’t do enough to turn around low performing middle and high schools and improve our graduation rates, partly because we do not have common State standards. Each State has used different data and calculations to determine their graduation rates.

A sampling of dropout factories found that almost 40 percent had made adequate yearly progress under No Child Left Behind. It is safe to say that if 40 percent of a school’s students are not graduating, that school is not succeeding.

We need to hold schools responsible for their graduation rates so we can improve student performance. We also need to discourage schools from pushing out students who are not making the grade

and ask schools to keep their doors open to students who leave and want to return.

Earlier this year, President Obama called on Congress to take action. He said the dropout crisis in this country was bigger than any single person who chooses not to finish high school. I couldn't agree more. This crisis is a drain on our economy, it is an embarrassment to our schools, and it has to change.

The President and Secretary Duncan know that we need to give schools the means to support and encourage students to stay in school. We can no longer endorse a system of acceptable losses.

I hope that today's hearing will be a first good step as we work with the Obama administration to finally address this crisis.

Lastly, I would like to thank my committee colleagues for their outstanding leadership in this issue, including Chairman Kildee's Fast Track to College Act, Representative Grijalva's Success in the Middle Act, Representative Hinojosa's Graduation Promise Act, and Representative Scott's GRADUATES Act.

Clearly, there is great interest in moving forward with legislation to address this urgent problem.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses about what we can do to dramatically improve the educational opportunities we are providing to all high school students in this country.

And now I would like to recognize my Republican colleague, Mr. Petri, for the purposes of making an opening statement.

[The statement of Mr. Miller follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Hon. George Miller, Chairman, Committee on
Education and Labor**

Today we're here to take a closer look at how improving graduation rates in our nation's high schools can help strengthen our competitiveness.

We're also going to take a look at what is working to help turn around the so-called "dropout factories" and their feeder schools.

Some may think twice about using the word "crisis" to define what's happening in our high schools. But the truth is, we aren't just facing a crisis—the house is on fire.

The new McKinsey report says the achievement gaps in this country are the same as having, and I quote "a permanent national recession."

Today only 70 percent of students graduate with a regular high school diploma. Of these students, fewer than half graduate fully prepared for college-level work or success in the workforce.

Nearly one in five U.S. men between the ages of 16 and 24, nearly 19 percent, have dropped out.

About 10 percent of high schools produce close to half of our students who drop out. In these 2,000 high schools—so-called "dropout factories"—about as many students drop out as graduate.

These dropout factories disproportionately impact minority students, producing 69 percent of all African-American and 63 percent of all Hispanic students who drop out.

Nationally, only about 55 percent of African-American students and 52 percent of Hispanic students graduate on time, compared to 78 percent of white students. It is a national tragedy that if you're a minority student in this country, you have a one-in-three chance of attending a dropout factory.

We used to be a world leader in high school graduation rates. Now we've fallen to 18th out of 24 among industrialized nations.

Studies also show the longer our students stay in school, the longer they fall behind their international peers.

Last month's NAEP study of long term trends showed 17 year old students' reading and math scores have not improved since 1970's.

This is astonishing.

We cannot afford to continue this way, not for our students, our economy or our future competitiveness.

A high school dropout earns an average of \$260,000 less than a high school graduate and \$1 million less than a college graduate over a lifetime.

Each class of high school dropouts cost the U.S. economy \$309 billion in lost wages over the students' lifetime.

In fact, the McKinsey report shows the international achievement gap poses a greater economic threat to our country than the current downturn.

It found that if the U.S. had closed the international achievement gap between 1983 and 1998, our 2008 GDP would have been between \$1 and \$2 trillion higher—that's about 9 to 16 percent of our GDP.

We should be producing the most qualified and talented workforce possible. Instead businesses say high school graduates are not ready for the workplace, and colleges say high school graduates are not ready for the rigors of college.

It's become increasingly clear that addressing this dropout crisis is one of the most important things we can do to turn our economy around for good.

In its current form, No Child Left Behind doesn't do enough to turn around low-performing middle and high schools and improve our graduation rates, partly because we do not yet have common state standards.

Each state uses different data and calculations to determine their graduation rates. A sampling of dropout factories found that almost 40 percent had made Adequate Yearly Progress under NCLB.

It is safe to say that if at least 40 percent of a school's students aren't graduating—that school is not succeeding.

We need to hold schools responsible for their graduation rates so they can improve student performance.

We also need to discourage schools from pushing out students who aren't making the grade and ask schools to keep their doors open to students who leave and want to return.

Earlier this year, President Obama called on Congress to take action. He said the dropout crisis in this country is bigger than any single person who chooses not to finish high school.

I couldn't agree more—this crisis is a drain on our economy, it's an embarrassment to our schools, and it has to change.

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Clearly there is great interest in moving forward with legislation to address this urgent problem.

I look forward to hearing from witnesses about what we can do to dramatically improve the educational opportunities we are providing to all high school students in this country.

Mr. PETRI. Well, thank you, Chairman Miller, for convening this hearing today to help us identify the challenges facing our Nation's high schools.

The focus of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and its 2001 reauthorization through the No Child Left Behind Act was on closing the achievement gap faced by disadvantaged students as they progressed in school. As we will hear today, our Nation is faced with what this achievement gap means for high schools. These schools face not only a dropout crisis but a crisis in preparation for a student's adult life, or rather a lack of preparation for a student's adult life.

Too often, our students are entering high school unprepared to succeed in subjects such as reading, math, and science and leaving unprepared to succeed in college, trade school, or in the world of work.

High school reform is seeing increased attention in Congress and among researchers and education experts. Even the Obama administration has announced its support of the October 2008 Title I regulations that established a uniform graduation rate for all of our Nation's high schools.

However, the issue of high school reform cannot be examined in isolation. Any effort to reform our high schools must take into consideration the preparations students receive in elementary and in middle school as well. Programs that focus on reading and programs that allow students to choose schools that are meeting adequate yearly progress can all be enhanced as we reform what is taking place in the Nation's high schools.

Today our witnesses will discuss the research that illustrates these challenges and the reform efforts being driven by communities, districts, and States to attack these concerns. Our discussion will provide us with important information we will use as we move forward to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act during this Congress.

I would like to thank our witnesses for taking the time to speak to us today, and in particular I would like to thank the Members of Congress who will testify before us about their concerns for high school education.

It is an important issue for our students and our workforce and the Nation's families and communities, and I look forward to learning more about the challenges remaining and the work to be done.

And with that, I yield back.

[The statement of Mr. Petri follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Hon. Thomas Petri, a Representative in Congress
From the State of Wisconsin**

Good afternoon, Chairman Miller, and thank you for yielding.

I am happy that you have convened this hearing today to help us identify the challenges facing our nation's high schools.

The focus of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and its 2001 reauthorization, through the No Child Left Behind Act, was on closing the achievement gap faced by disadvantaged students as they progressed in school.

As we will hear today, our nation is faced with what this achievement gap means for high schools. These schools face not only a dropout crisis but a crisis in preparation for a student's adult life. Or rather, a lack of preparation for a student's adult life.

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This is an important issue for our students and our workforce and I look forward to learning more about the challenges remaining and work to be done.

Thank you, Chairman Miller. I yield back.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you. I would like to welcome the first panel of our colleagues who have been deeply involved in this issue over many years. The first witness will be the Honorable Chaka Fattah, who is from Pennsylvania, serving his eighth term in the House of Representatives, representing the Second Congressional District of that State.

A former member of the Committee on Education and Labor, Congressman Fattah now sits on the Appropriations Committee. Congressman Fattah has long been an advocate for education and was the architect of GEAR UP, the largest pre-college awareness program in this Nation's history, and has contributed more than \$2 billion to the educational advancement and college readiness of low-income students. Prior to joining Congress, he served 12 years in the Pennsylvania legislature, 6 years in the House and 6 years in the Senate.

Next we will hear from the Honorable Raul Grijalva, who represents the Seventh Congressional District in Arizona and is in his fourth term as a Member of Congress. He serves as Chairman of the Education and Job Training Task Force of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus. Before he was elected to Congress, Representative Grijalva was a member of the Pima County Board of Supervisors. He has also served on the Tucson Unified School District governing board serving as Chairman for 6 years. During his tenure on that board, he worked with the courts, superintendents, and educators on a desegregation plan and was the lead board member on implementation of the integration plan.

The Honorable Mike Castle, former Deputy Attorney General and State legislator and Lieutenant Governor and two-term Governor of Delaware. Any job you didn't hold there, Michael?

Congressman Castle is currently serving his ninth term as Delaware's lone Member of the House. Not lonely, but lone. He was born and raised in Wilmington, Delaware and is a graduate of Hamilton College and Georgetown University.

The Honorable Phil Roe represents the First District of Tennessee and is in his first term. A native of Tennessee, Representative Roe served 2 years in the United States Army Medical Corps as a physician. Congressman Roe has run a medical practice in Johnson City for 31 years, delivering close to 5,000 babies. Congressman Roe served as mayor of Johnson City from 2007 to 2009.

Welcome to the committee. You know the rules. We will give you 5 minutes to tell us what you want to tell us and if the members of the committee have questions, they will be recognized for that purpose. And we appreciate you taking the time out of your schedule to join us at this hearing on this subject that is of importance to you and to us.

Thank you.

Chaka?

**STATEMENT OF HON. CHAKA FATTAH, A REPRESENTATIVE IN
CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA**

Mr. FATTAH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and to the ranking member and to all of the members of this great committee. It is a pleasure to be back here in my old working space here in this committee. I had some great days here in the House.

I want to say a couple of things. One is that over the last couple of weeks I have been in a number of high schools. On yesterday, I was at West Philadelphia High, which would be well up on the dropout factory list. But I was there with the EPA Administrator and we were highlighting one of 111 teams in the world, an automobile design team, at West Philly High that was building a hybrid car and they have a car that can go over 100 miles on a gallon of fuel, and they beat Toyota, MIT, and all comers three times so far, and they are competing now for a \$10 million prize.

At Overbrook last week, my alma mater, we had 1,400 middle school kids for a GEAR UP kickoff. Overbrook would be on a dropout factory list by any count, but their robotics team scored number one in the State in the Defense Department's Sea Perch robotics trial.

I was at Mastery—and you are going to hear from the head guy at Mastery in a few minutes. They are doing fabulous work.

And just last week I was at the Microsoft School for the Future, which is in my district. It is a brand-new structure, been there for a few years, designed by the best thinkers that Microsoft could put together. It is now being marketed and shopped in 11 other countries in the world. There is no peer in terms of a high school anywhere in the world, and it is educating kids in one of the poorest neighborhoods and tracts in Philadelphia in the heart of my district and doing an extraordinary job.

So there is a lot of good one could say about what is happening out there, but the fact of the matter is that a lot more needs to be done.

When President Clinton came to Saltsburg and signed GEAR UP into law 11 years ago, he said that we need to transfer middle-class aspirations to working class families in terms of going on to college. We have now seen over 11 years of GEAR UP, 6 million young people, and we have seen all across the country in a variety of places hundreds of programs, 85-plus percent graduate from high school, 61, 62 percent go on to college. It has been an enormous success, and I thank all of my colleagues who worked with me on that legislation when we passed it.

But more needs to be done. And what I think ought to happen is embodied in the legislation that I have authored, the Student Bill of Rights, which calls for a particular effort to provide a comparable educational opportunity to do what we are doing in our highest achieving schools in our lowest achieving schools. Give them a qualified teacher, a classroom size of some reasonableness, and a textbook printed in their lifetime and a rigorous curriculum.

We know that it works. It works in a lot of our wealthy suburban districts, and we know it would work in our poor districts if we did it. We provide less of what we need to educate a child in the most challenging communities in our country, and then we act surprised about the disproportionate failure that follows from that.

I offered the Communities Committed to College Act, which would create a long-term trust fund invested in so young people can know with a certainty that they can go on to college. Raising the bar and expectations is very important.

So I embody some of my thinkings in the legislation that I put forward.

When President Obama went to a public school in Denver, he said we need to expand programs like GEAR UP. Things that work, take them to scale. We are all invested in making sure that these young people can achieve and if we wanted to double the high school graduation rate, we already know that there are programs that work, that make that happen, and it has happened across the country and we could take the best practices from that and go forward.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the committee for listening. I would be glad to answer any questions.

[The statement of Mr. Fattah follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Hon. Chaka Fattah, a Representative in Congress
From the State of Pennsylvania**

Chairman Miller, Congressman McKeon and members of the committee, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak before you on improving our nation's high schools and ensuring every child, regardless of life circumstances, is receiving the education necessary to succeed in college, career and life. I am also honored to join my colleagues Mr. Grijalva and Mr. Castle in offering remarks and to welcome Scott Gordon, CEO of Mastery Charter Schools in Philadelphia, to Washington.

I am excited by the opportunity we now have to improve educational outcomes and ensure a fair playing field for all students. With the leadership of this committee, President Obama and Chairman Kennedy, I am confident that we will begin to close the devastating gaps and inequities in opportunity that have contributed to under achievement among our nation's low income students and students of color.

I would like to focus my remarks on those ingredients of better high schools which have been effective in improving student achievement and sending students to higher education; effective teachers and a rigorous, college preparatory curriculum. These critical resources are available in abundance to our wealthiest families, in both public and private schools, but available only to a chosen few poor neighborhoods and communities of color.

Nationally, high-poverty districts start the year with \$938 less state and local revenue per pupil. In a class of 25 students, that \$23,000 difference means teachers with less experience and less expertise, fewer appropriate instructional materials and less access to current educational technology. 34 percent of classes in high-poverty schools are taught by teachers lacking a major or minor in their field of instruction, almost twice the rate for their higher-income peers. In high school, this often means teachers whose last academic experience with math or science was their own high school-level science or math class.

In addition to less content expertise, teachers in poor schools are more likely to be pedagogical novices with three years or less experience. The difference in teacher experience is even greater in high-minority schools when compared with low-minority schools.

Naturally, these differences in teacher experience and content mastery lead to wide variations in available curricula. In core classes, the content of which is a predictor of college success, students in high-poverty schools are 24 percent more likely than students in low poverty schools to face an out-of-field teacher. Low income students are less likely to be in a full college preparatory track and are more likely to begin post-secondary education unprepared.

These significant academic inequities are creating formidable barriers for students hoping to attend college. Graduation is delayed—if not derailed, when students must spend their first year in remedial, non credit-bearing courses. This problem only serves to enhance the financial barriers that are keeping otherwise qualified students out of our higher-education system.

There are solutions to these challenges. Early college opportunities are helping an increasing number of students prepare for post-secondary learning and graduate college early or on time. Significant progress is being made by this committee, Presi-

dent Obama and Secretary Duncan in ensuring every child has access to an effective teacher and rigorous instruction.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) will guarantee that states are working to ensure the equitable distribution of their teacher talent by enforcing previously unenforced reporting and remediating requirements from the No Child Left Behind Act that dictates low-income students and students of color not be disproportionately taught by less-qualified teachers. ARRA also shifts the way Title I funds are distributed, using the Targeted and Education Finance Incentive Grant formulas instead of the Basic and Concentration grant formulas that will direct more resources where they were originally meant to go, providing assistance to the schools in the most need.

I am also encouraged by the work of the Education and Labor Committee in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act reauthorization discussion draft, which closed the comparability loophole and required states to report on the ways in which critical educational resources were distributed. Building on the foundation for equity in ESEA, I will be reintroducing the Student Bill of Rights Act this spring which addresses disparities in educational resources and students' opportunity to learn.

This work on improving academic instruction will go a long way to make certain that students are ready to begin college work when they step on campus. The barriers to higher education are not solely academic. We have years of research that shows similarly qualified African American students are less likely than their White peers to advance to post-secondary education.

The work led by Mr. Hinojosa last year to make college more affordable addresses a critical piece in college-going. Also, the recent changes to the Pell Grant program, moving it from the discretion of the Appropriations Committee to the mandatory side of the budget and increasing the maximum grant will give more low-income students the opportunity to earn a degree.

Simply improving instruction and offering financial resources will not address other pernicious obstacles that students, many of whom would be the first in their family to attend college, face. Providing students with the certainty that their own hard work and commitment will be met by the work and commitment of their community establishes a college-going culture and builds expectations within the system that every student should have the opportunity to attend college. I have introduced the Communities Committed to College Tax Credit Act, H.R. 1579 to support local efforts that provide college scholarships to local students.

GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) has successfully put 6 million students in high-poverty schools on track for college. Students receive assistance in overcoming academic, financial and cultural barriers to college. GEAR UP increases access to college preparatory academic programs (including AP), offers scholarships to students accepted into college and provides the critical background knowledge about the financial aid and admissions processes that is particularly lacking in low-income communities.

GEAR UP is a stunning success. Over 80 percent of GEAR UP students graduate from high school, while only about half of all low-income students graduate. This shows that when students and communities set their sights beyond twelfth grade, and when they are prepared for college, a high school diploma becomes more assumed and inevitable than for the population as a whole.

Low-income students who have effective teachers, college preparatory curricula, financial aid and information about the college process are currently meeting or exceeding standards set by their higher income peers. This is our opportunity to invest in equitably and adequately distributed resources and a college-going culture. Our students are eager to do their part; the question is whether we, as policy makers and adults, are ready to rise to meet this challenge.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you very much. And thank you for all of your involvement in this issue.

Congressman Grijalva.

STATEMENT OF HON. RAÚL GRIJALVA, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF ARIZONA

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and ranking member, and all the members of the committee for this opportunity to discuss with you a very critical issue of high school graduation and the dropout crisis that the chairman so aptly called it.

In my role as Chairman of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Education and Workforce Task Force, I would like to discuss the issue of high school graduation as it relates to the priorities of this caucus and to the goals and needs of Latinos and, quite frankly, all our children.

As our Nation's fastest growing population and one of the largest groups of children in our public schools, one in five of children in our public schools are Latino, comprising somewhere between almost 11 million students enrolled from pre-Kindergarten to 12th grade, almost 3 million of those students being high school students. Another percentage is 45 percent of these students are English language learners, and 80 percent of the 5 million students enrolled in schools are Spanish speaking.

And so as you look at all those statistics you also need to see that these Latino children remain the least likely to attend preschool, the least likely to graduate from high school, the least likely to enroll in college, and the least likely to complete college. Only 15 percent of Latinos are proficient in reading by the eighth grade, and the dropout issue that we are talking about is devastating not only to our community but I believe overall to the Nation.

When only half of the Latino students who enter ninth grade graduate with a high school diploma, it just points out the kind of devastation and distress that we feel in the communities. 600,000 to 700,000 Latino students drop out of school every year. I know the data, the statistics, they are daunting and quite frankly distressing. But the task to improve the education of these children I think are feasible.

And I think Congress must work toward policies that address the dropout crisis for all students, but for Latinos in the light of the changing characteristics that I just pointed out in our schools.

So let me just some very quick recommendations. The first one is about accountability. And the chairman mentioned State standards. Let's have a definition and real data about what the real dropout numbers are in this country, and in this Nation. And that speaks to the accountability and credibility of the statistics that we are using.

We need training and support. Congress needs to make a very strong commitment to increasing support for teacher training, including English learner teachers and their commitment to these schools. Commitment to the feeder systems, I believe, as part of teacher training is essential.

The high school dropout is not a phenomenon that occurs in high school. It occurs through that feeder system. So as we look at that percentage of high schools that are dropout factories and we look at the feeder system that feeds to these high schools, you realize it is a systemwide problem and not isolated at the high school level.

Parental involvement is essential. Programs like family literacy, adult basic education, where families are learning together, where families can help their children succeed in school I think are very important.

Targeted intervention. The legislation that was talked about in the introduction by the chairman are essential as the Graduation

Promise Act will be reintroduced, and it can provide aid to schools with low graduation rates and target that aid.

Middle school intervention, and I mentioned feeder school intervention. No plan to address high school dropout crisis would be effective without an adequate middle school intervention to aid the most troubled feeder middle schools and elementary schools and the most troubled high schools.

All the research confirms that in sixth through eighth grade this work is essential to ensure success in high school. Studies show that sixth grade students who do not attend school regularly, have poor conduct scores, who fail math or English have only a 10 percent chance of graduating on time.

Human resources. The Department of Education is making a commitment, a commitment that must be followed through on its diversity, on raising its cultural linguistic competence and capacity of the professional staff from superintendent to principals to teachers.

And I want to give an example of something that works, and that is jobs. There are three programs in the area I represent, Jobs for Arizona Graduates, Jobs First, Jobs and Work. The students in those programs that are paid as part of their responsibility have a 95 percent graduation rate, and a 50 to 60 percent postsecondary experience.

This is a vital issue for the Nation, a vital issue for the Latino community, and I thank the Chairman and the committee for prioritizing this issue.

Thank you.

[The statement of Mr. Grijalva follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Hon. Raúl M. Grijalva, a Representative in Congress
From the State of Arizona**

Chairman Miller, Ranking Member McKeon and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about the critical issue of high school graduation and the dropout crisis. I welcome the opportunity to address this very timely issue, and I am grateful to the Committee for prioritizing this important discussion.

In my role as Chairman of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Education and Work Force Task Force, I would like to discuss the issue of high school graduation as it relates to the priorities of the Caucus and to the goals and needs of Latinos and all of our children.

Latinos are our nation's fastest growing and largest minority group of children. Latino children make up one in five of our public school enrollment, comprising more than 10.9 million students enrolled prekindergarten through twelfth grade. Latinos represent 17% of all secondary school students, that's about 2.9 million high school students.

45% of Latino students are English language learners. Almost 80% of the five million ELLs enrolled in schools are Spanish-speaking Latinos. The ELL enrollment in our public schools has doubled in fifteen years, and by 2025, it is expected that one in four students in U.S. public schools will be an English language learner.

Latino children remain the least likely to attend pre-school, the least likely to graduate from high school, the least likely to enroll in college and the least likely to complete college. Only fifteen percent of Latinos are proficient in reading by the eighth grade—compared to almost forty percent for non-Hispanic White students.

The dropout crisis has a devastating impact on the Latino community. Only about half of the Latino students who enter the ninth grade will graduate with a high school diploma. This is compared to 75% of non-Hispanic White students. Latino English language learners are even more at risk of dropping out, and only 41% of Latino ELLs graduate high school. Every year, between 600,000 and 700,000 Latino students drop out of school.

The data and statistics are daunting but the tasks to improve Latino education are feasible. Congress must work toward policies that address the dropout crisis for Latinos in light of the changing characteristics of our schools.

I would like to recommend to the committee six principles for inclusion:

Accountability

We must ensure that states are held accountable for accurate counts of their dropout numbers. Congress must ensure that loopholes for counting dropouts remain closed and that the definition for what constitutes graduation is a fair and accurate depiction of the state of affairs on the ground.

Training and Support

Congress should make a strong commitment to increasing support for teacher training, including for ELL teachers. An effective teacher can mean the difference of success or failure for a struggling student.

We should also increase the Federal commitment to schools serving ELLs. We must consider a commitment to graduation for all high school students in light of the ever increasing number of students who have the added struggle to succeed in their core curriculum while gaining English language acquisition. If we want graduation success, we must put resources where they are needed. Enhanced supports for schools serving ELLs will go a long way toward that goal.

Parental Involvement

Support for dropout prevention should include a commitment to parental involvement in the education of a child, since family support provides a tangible boost to success. Along this same line, we should provide increased support to family literacy programs, so that families can learn together. Such programs can reinforce the commitment to education and offer better opportunities to parents and children.

Targeted Intervention

Congress should act quickly to assist those high schools that are most critically in need of intervention to staunch the loss of students to dropping out. Legislation like the Graduation Promise Act, soon to be reintroduced, can provide the implements of aid to schools with low-graduation rates and help to roll back the dropout crisis.

Middle Grade Intervention

No plan to address the high school dropout crisis will be effective without an adequate middle grade intervention to aid the most troubled feeder middle schools and elementary schools of the most troubled high schools. Research confirms that success in sixth through eighth grades is imperative to ensure success in high school and college. In fact, studies show that sixth-grade students who do not attend school regularly, have poor conduct scores, or who fail math or English, have only a 10% chance of graduating on time.

Latinos in Human Resources

It is imperative that Latinos have a presence in administrative and policy positions to ensure inclusion of Latinos in the decision making process. If we want to make schools work for Latino students, we must ensure that Latinos, or those that have expertise in working with Latino students, are at the table to implement best practices.

The Department of Education is lacking in diversity, which impacts the overall interpretation and understanding of education policy in regards to Latino students. The overall education structure is missing Latinos as professors for training teachers, recruiting and retention of teachers in our classrooms, and training, recruiting and retention of Superintendents and Principals. We must work on increasing the workforce of Latinos in education if we are to improve Latino education.

These changes are an important element in improving graduation from high school. In addressing this dropout crisis, we must be aware of strategies that have been proven effective to retain and recover students on the verge of dropping out. We must be aware of the changing composition of our student body and address the changing needs of our students. These are important elements in a long term strategy for a goal of graduation for all of our students.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you. Congressman Castle.

STATEMENT OF HON. MICHAEL N. CASTLE, RANKING REPUBLICAN MEMBER, SUBCOMMITTEE ON EARLY CHILDHOOD, ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. CASTLE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Mr. Petri and members of the committee. And first of all, I agree with everything I have heard so far from the first two speakers, and I have read most of the other testimony and I agree with that too. I just don't know that we can afford everything. But these are all good suggestions that we need to do to deal with the important issue of strengthening America's competitiveness through high school reform, although that translates to individual student achievement, as we all know.

I am a strong supporter of No Child Left Behind, at least conceptually, that we passed in 2001 to address the achievement gap that did exist to improve education for all students but particularly for poor minority students with their more affluent peers. We have had some progress in that area, and we look at scores for elementary and middle school testing and we realize that great strides have been made, but not in high schools. It tends to diminish a little bit when we get there.

The long-term trend for the NAEP Report, the National Assessment for Educational Progress Report, found that 17-year-olds' test scores in math and reading haven't significantly improved since the 1970s.

At a time when students need education and job training—I think we have all touched on that—to succeed in the competitive global market, three out of every 10 students fail to finish high school. Barely one-half of disadvantaged minority students graduate from high school. Compounded by the fact that the median income for dropouts is much lower than high school and college graduates—and you touched on that, Mr. Chairman—but on an annualized basis dropouts earn \$14,000, high school graduates \$24,000, and college graduates \$48,000. Just that enough, we ought to put that on the TV screen after every show every night, I think, and let people see it and show how important graduating from high school and perhaps college really is.

As we work to reauthorize No Child Left Behind—and I hope we do that in the next few months or year or so—we must work to ensure that students are prepared for college or the workforce when they graduate. And graduation rates have concerned me for some time, and Mr. Scott, too, I might add.

Graduating from high school is absolutely significant, and virtually every employer starts with that. And yet a lot of these students that we just discussed cannot show that they have done that. But there is a lot of misleading data and contradictory calculations with respect to that. Currently “graduation rate” is defined as the percentage of students who graduate from secondary school with a regular diploma in the standard number of years. And they throw that out to the States and then the States can do pretty much whatever they want.

The governors started to look at this a few years ago. A lot of us have introduced legislation to look at it. It has been in some of the drafts of No Child Left Behind. I don't think the States should have that much latitude in defining and setting their own standard

number of years, which I have seen vary from 3 to 5 years depending on which State you are looking at and we are getting varying results from State to State, which is a problem in dealing with the overall issues of our high schools.

I introduced the Reliable and Accurate Graduation Rate Act last year, which would make these all of these statistics comparable throughout the country. It is very similar to what the governors had done a few years ago, and I think it is important to do this. Last October, the U.S. Department of Education released final regulations pertaining to graduation rate accountability that are also aligned with the NGA's recommended graduation rate and some of the legislation which we have been talking about, and I think it is very, very important that that be adopted in No Child Left Behind.

All of those regulations provide a uniform and comparable rate that attempts to capture the accurate number of high school graduates in our Nation and will hopefully motivate the individual students as well. To me that is the most important thing to do in terms of our solving the graduation crisis in our country.

The other area I would like to touch on here is the area of the academic standards and assessments. And I am not one of those who is necessarily opposed to a national standard or even national assessments, at least for discussion. I think it is a worthwhile discussion. I can understand some opposition to it, but we should be talking about these kind of things, I think.

We need to improve our State academic standards, which I think were adopted on the fly and are not high enough, and I think we need to improve some of the testing, which is basically the assessments that go into this.

I believe that we have started to do this in my State. I have seen some interesting changes. In fact, the governor's office was talking about that even today as a matter of fact, replacing our testing program with a better system for measuring performance and provide schools the necessary flexibility while holding them accountable for results.

At the high school level we are looking at instituting an adaptive testing system that will measure student progress throughout high school so that students are prepared to graduate, which I think is also important. I think the tests now generally do not reflect well enough how students are actually doing.

These are some of the things that we should be doing. There are many other programs, a lot of which have been mentioned by other speakers today, and we as a committee should focus on this as much as we possibly can as soon as we can.

I look forward to working with you, Mr. Chairman, and with Secretary Duncan and the President in order to achieve this as soon as we can.

[The statement of Mr. Castle follows:]

Prepared Statement of Hon. Michael N. Castle, Senior Republican Member, Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education

Good morning. Thank you Chairman Miller for holding today's hearing. As the Senior Republican Member of the Subcommittee that oversees K-12 legislation, I welcome the opportunity to testify before you today and look forward to hearing from my colleagues, as well as the other expert witnesses on this important issue—strengthening America's competitiveness through high school reform.

As you are aware, No Child Left Behind was passed in 2001 to address the achievement gap that exists between poor and minority students and their more affluent peers. Although we are just now beginning to see the results of the Law, studies demonstrate that America's elementary and middle school students are making great strides in closing the achievement gap in reading and math. We are not, however, seeing similar results at the high school level.

In fact, results from the most recent long-term trend report on the National Assessment of Education Progress, more commonly known as NAEP, showed that 17-year-old test scores in mathematics and reading have not significantly improved since the 1970s. Additionally, according to a recent Editorial Projects in Education Report, three in ten students fail to finish high school with a diploma, and barely half of the historically disadvantaged minority students graduate from high school. At a time when students need higher levels of education and workforce training to succeed in an increasingly competitive global economy, the number of students leaving high school without a diploma is alarming.

This is compounded by the fact that the median income for high school dropouts is \$14,000, much lower than the median income of \$24,000 for high school graduates and \$48,000 for college graduates. Nationally, high school dropouts were also the only group of workers who have seen income levels decline over the last 30 years (Cities in Crisis 2009: Closing the Achievement Gap; America's Promise Alliance).

A hallmark of the No Child Left Behind Act is its promise to provide meaningful information to parents and communities about the quality of their children's schools. Yet, for too long, a key indicator of student success—graduation from high school—has been masked by misleading data and contradictory calculations.

As Congress works to reauthorize the No Child Left Behind Act this year, it is clear that we must work at the federal, state, and local levels to ensure students are prepared for college or the workforce when they graduate high school.

Last Congress, I introduced a bill to define a national graduation rate, in order to streamline data collection and create an indicator that is comparable throughout the United States. In October 2008, the U.S. Department of Education released final regulations regarding graduation rate accountability. I believe these regulations are aligned with the National Governors Association's (NGA) recommended graduation rate as well as the legislation I offered last year.

The work of the Department helps to clarify the current definition of graduation rate under the No Child Left Behind Act. Under current law a "graduation rate" is defined as "the percentage of students who graduate from secondary school with a regular diploma in the standard number of years." States are allowed to define and set their own standard number of years and results vary widely from state to state.

The Department's regulations provide for a uniform and comparable graduation rate calculation that attempts to capture the true number of high school graduates in our nation.

Although much work remains, the establishment of a consistent graduation rate is a critical first step toward solving the graduation crisis and making certain our students are given the tools they need to succeed.

Second, I am hopeful we in Congress will look at the ways we can support state and school district efforts to improve state academic standards. High school is no longer about simply moving students from ninth grade to graduation. We must ensure all students are leaving their secondary education with the knowledge and skills necessary to reach their goals.

Finally, I am hopeful Congress will improve those programs under NCLB to ensure that they work and support students at the high school level, such as 21st Century Community Learning Centers which provide students with academic enrichment opportunities during non-school hours and mentoring programs that help foster safe learning environments, and strengthening and applying early childhood and elementary reforms that are helping younger children progress to later grades.

I hope that this Committee and Congress will continue to examine this issue very closely. I look forward to working along with my colleagues at the federal level, as well as the state and local level to prepare our nation's students, particularly those that will be graduating shortly, to compete in a global economy. The bottom line is that our children are the future of this nation and we must implement the laws that will shape our future for years to come.

Thank you for allowing me to testify today.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you. Congressman Roe.

**STATEMENT OF HON. DAVID ROE, A REPRESENTATIVE IN
CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF TENNESSEE**

Mr. ROE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and ranking member and other members. I am very pleased to be able to testify about the importance of a high school education.

I was in Nashville this past weekend to see my son get his MBA from Vanderbilt. Hallelujah. Our economy is still struggling, but after interacting with the graduates you get the sense that things are going to turn around. I think the most important reward out of investing in education is the hope for a better future for our country.

The first school I attended was a two-room country school with no running water or indoor plumbing. But I had two parents who encouraged me to continue my education, so education was not really an option in my house. I was fortunate enough and worked hard enough to graduate from college and medical school. Receiving my degrees allowed me to have a great life. So I never ever forget to remind students the importance of education. They get tired of hearing me harp on it.

When I speak to them I will ask them, in high school the other day I said how would you like to make a quarter of a million dollars in the next year? They all raise their hands up. And I said you can do that by just graduating from high school. Study. Think that is what you are throwing away.

When in front of a bunch of college freshmen who are thinking about having a party on the weekend, I say you know how you can earn a million dollars in the next 4 years? Graduate from college. That is all you have to do.

While there is a short-term cost for these kids, investment long term pays off—as we all know in this room—the rest of your life.

In Tennessee it is particularly important to remind our teenagers of the financial impact that education can have on your life. Our high school graduation rate 2004-2005 regrettably was only 68 percent, and that was an improvement of 10 percent over the past 5 years, but still way below the national average. We still have too many dropping out, some because of apathy and some because they have to pay the bills and put food on the table. Having been a rather stubborn teenager myself, I know that you cannot convince everybody to stay in school.

So while I am sure that we will want to rightly foster excellence in high schools, ensuring that fewer kids drop out, I also want to remind the committee not to forget about those people who have already dropped out, which is an astonishing number of people. I believe we should have adult education programs as effective and necessary to complement the dropout problem. And I am absolutely convinced that you have to offer adult education programs to encourage young adults who have left the system to return to get their degrees. As I said the other day, we have a No Child Left Behind, we should have a No Adult Left Behind also.

Last week, the Subcommittee on Higher Education, Lifelong Learning, and Competitiveness heard testimony from country music star Gretchen Wilson about her experience with adult education. Ms. Wilson went back to school and received her GED at age 34 for both herself and to set an example for her beautiful

child, Grace, who was here. Her reasons for going back and her experience in the program speak to the incredible importance that these serve in the overall education policy.

Programs like those offered to Ms. Wilson help us reach out to kids and adults who slip through the cracks and offer them an opportunity to move forward not only with their education but their careers. Even better, these programs are one of the most effective solutions I know of. In Tennessee, 14,600 individuals earn their GED in a year at a cost of only \$275 per student that made this happen. This results in over \$234 million in additional taxable income to the State because each individual made \$9,000 more a year just with that GED. It changed their life.

By supporting the adult education programs in conjunction with improving our high schools, I think we will find that our education system has far more successes than we give it credit for and can have a much broader reach and impact on the next generation.

Similarly, I think there has been a decline in career education. I would encourage the committee to take a look at the role that the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technology Education Program plays in reducing the dropout rate. Some students are at high risk of not finishing school because they don't think the school has any relevance for them. They want a job and a paycheck right away. A career-focused education can help them achieve this goal and make sure they get their high school diploma.

The programs offered through this act allow kids who may have disengaged from regular high school program to remain engaged through their focused programs.

Finally, I would like to note that as a former mayor, I have seen firsthand Federal programs work best when the decision-making authority is left in local officials' hands. Typically they are most qualified to fix problems that arise in their jurisdiction because they know the circumstances surrounding the problems.

So as the committee examines on how to improve high schools, I hope we consider allowing true local flexibility rather than imposing broad Federal mandates on our high schools. I think this topic is particularly timely with our present economic situation. Only with an educated workforce will we be able to compete in an increasingly global marketplace, and I thank the committee for holding this hearing and allowing me to testify.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

[The statement of Mr. Roe follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Hon. David P. Roe, a Representative in Congress
From the State of Tennessee**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am very pleased to be able to testify about the importance of high school education. I was just down in Nashville this past weekend to see my son graduate from Vanderbilt's MBA school. Our economy is still struggling but after interacting with the graduates, you get a sense that things will turn around. And that's the most important reward we get out of investing in education—hope for a better future for our country.

I grew up in Clarksville, Tennessee and went to school in a one-room schoolhouse with no running water, but I had committed parents who encouraged me to continue my education. I was fortunate enough and worked just hard enough to graduate from college and from medical school. Receiving my degrees has allowed me to live a good life, so I never forget to remind our youth about the importance of education.

When I speak to students, I always ask them, "Would you like to know how you can earn an extra \$250,000 in your lifetime?" I can see on their faces, they're think-

ing, “Well, that sounds pretty good to me.” So, I tell them, “Just graduate from high school.” I also ask them, “Would you like to know how you can earn an extra \$1 million?” “Just graduate from college.” The fact is, continuing your education dramatically improves your chances at having financial success. While there’s a short-term cost for some of these kids, the investment pays off in the long-term.

In Tennessee, it’s particularly important for us to remind our teenagers about the financial impact an education can have on your life. Our high school graduation rate for the 2004-2005 school year was 68.5 percent, and that’s improved nearly 10 percent over the past five years, but we are still below the national average. We still have too many who are dropping out—some because of apathy, some because they simply need to help pay the bills and put food on the table.

Having been a stubborn teenager myself, I know you can’t convince everyone to stay in school. So while I’m sure we will rightly focus attention on fostering excellence in our high schools and ensuring that fewer kids drop out, I also want to remind the Committee not to forget about those people who have already dropped out. I believe we should look at adult education programs as an effective and necessary complement to the drop out problem. I’m absolutely convinced that you have to offer adult education programs that encourage young adults who have already left the system to return to get their degree.

Last week, the Subcommittee on Higher Education, Lifelong Learning, and Competitiveness heard testimony from country music star Gretchen Wilson about her experience with adult education. Ms. Wilson went back to school to receive her GED both for herself and to set an example for her child. Her reasons for going back and her experience with the programs speak to the incredible importance they serve in our overall education policy. Programs like those offered to Ms. Wilson help us reach out to kids and adults who have slipped through the cracks and offer them an opportunity to move forward not only with their education but with their careers.

Even better, these programs are one of the most cost effective solutions I know of. In Tennessee, 14,662 individuals earned their GED, and it only cost \$275 per student to make this happen. This resulted in over \$134 million in additional taxable income to the state because each individual was making over \$9,000 per year more.

By supporting the adult education programs in conjunction with improving our high schools, I think we’ll find that our education system has far more successes than we give it credit for and can have a much broader reach on impacting our next generation’s lives.

Similarly, I think we’ve seen a decline in career education and I would encourage the Committee to look at the role that the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education program plays in reducing the drop out rate. Some students are at high risk of not finishing school because they don’t think that school has any relevance for them. They want a job and a pay-check right away, and a career-focused education can help them achieve this goal and make sure they get their high school diploma. The programs offered through the Perkins Act allow kids who may have disengaged from “regular” high school programs to remain engaged through career focused programs.

Finally, I would note that as a former Mayor, I have seen first-hand federal programs work best when decision-making authority is left in local officials’ hands. Typically, they are the most qualified to fix problems that arise in their jurisdiction because they know the circumstances surrounding problems.

So as the Committee examines how to improve high schools, I hope we consider allowing true local flexibility rather than trying to impose broad federal mandates on our high schools.

I think this topic is particularly timely with our present economic situation. Only with an educated workforce will we be able to compete in an increasingly global marketplace, and I thank the committee for holding this hearing and allowing me to testify.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you very much, and thank you to all of you for taking your time to come and testify. But all of you have been involved in this issue for a considerable period of time before today’s hearing. And it is our intent to address this problem in this session of Congress. We would like to move forward on this in the most comprehensive way that we can.

I think all of you have made very important points about how comprehensive that really needs to be. Whether it is adult edu-

cation, whether it is identifying and helping young people become aware of the opportunity that college can present to them and they can participate so that they can be eligible, that you worked on so hard, Chaka, in your community.

I don't have any questions, but again I want to thank you. Do any members of the committee? Mr. Scott?

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, as you know, I serve not only on the Education and Labor Committee but also on the Judiciary Committee and chair the Crime Subcommittee, and there is a very close correlation between high school dropouts and crime. Those that drop out are much less likely to get a job, make a lot more—businesses don't want to move into areas where there is a high dropout rate. Much more of those with high dropout rates suffer more welfare, and obviously those who drop out are much more likely to end up in prison.

One study showed that African Americans that drop out of high school have about a one-third chance of being in jail when they are 26 to 30 years old. Obviously much higher than those that did not drop out. It is so bad that the Children's Defense Fund calls it the cradle-to-prison pipeline.

We know that if a person graduates they are much less likely to be in jail. And when you talk about affordability, the money you save in incarceration can more than pay for any dropout prevention program that you can afford. It is hard to imagine any effective dropout program that does not save more money than it costs. Or you can just wait and save the money and spend a lot more locking people up.

Mr. Chairman, when we originally passed No Child Left Behind, we insisted that a factor of adequate yearly progress—that one factor be your dropout rate. If you don't have a dropout rate factor, then you have a perverse incentive to let people drop out, even push them out. Because they are dropping out from the bottom, the more people drop out the higher your average is, and you didn't want people to benefit from high dropout rates. Obviously as you pointed out, some of the schools have a 50 percent dropout rate. That cannot possibly be considered by any standard adequate, when half the students don't even graduate.

The bill that you mentioned that I have introduced, the Every Student Counts Act, requires an accurate count of who is graduating and who isn't and requires you to hit a 90 percent graduation rate—not 50, not 50 that we have now, but a 90 percent graduation rate or at least be making progress towards 90 percent at a rate of 3 percentage points per year or you are not given credit for adequate yearly progress.

The gentleman from Tennessee, Mr. Roe, mentioned adult education. If you do not give credit for adult education graduation, you are not going to have adult education programs. People are not going to pay money for programs that they don't get any credit for. We have to give primary credit to graduating from high school with a regular diploma, but you also have to get some credit for those adult education programs.

We cannot tolerate these high dropout rates. We have to do something. Otherwise we will continue on the trajectory that we are on now, where you have these dropout factories and it is an in-

sult to suggest that any of those dropout factories are making adequate yearly progress.

I thank our colleagues for their concern on this issue, and I look forward to working with them as we do something about this problem. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you very much. Thank you to all of you for taking your time. You are obviously welcome to join the committee.

We will now welcome our second panel. We will get you lined up in the right order here. Our second panel will begin with Robert Balfanz. Dr. Balfanz is the principal Research Scientist at Johns Hopkins University, and his team is currently working on over 100 high-poverty secondary schools to develop, implement and evaluate comprehensive whole school reforms. He is the Co-Director of the Everyone Graduates Center, which engages in efforts aimed at ending the Nation's graduation rate crisis. Dr. Balfanz is also the co-operator of the Baltimore Talent Development High School.

Michael Wotorson is the Executive Director for the Campaign for High School Equity, a partnership of 10 of the Nation's leading civil rights and education organizations focused on high school reform. He has spent his career advocating support for educational equity and civil rights and working for more than 15 years as a research advocate and policy analyst. He was at the NAACP and has held positions at the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights Education Fund, the Fair Employment Council of Greater Washington, and the Anti-Defamation League.

Marguerite Kondracke has been the President and CEO of America's Promise Alliance, an organization with more than 300 national partners currently focused on addressing the Nation's high school dropout crisis. Before joining the alliance, she served as Special Assistant to Senator Lamar Alexander and Staff Director of the Senate Subcommittee on Children and Families.

Scott Gordon is the founder and CEO of Mastery Charter Schools in Philadelphia. Mastery opened in 2001 and operates four schools serving 1,700 students. Mastery was created to close the achievement gap and ensure that all students graduate from high school ready for college. In 2005, Mastery created a unique partnership with the School District of Philadelphia to convert the most struggling middle schools in Mastery charter schools. To date test scores have increased substantially, and over 85 percent of Mastery's graduates enroll in higher education. Mr. Gordon received the New Schools Venture Fund's Entrepreneur of the Year Award for his work.

Dr. Vicki L. Philips is the Director of Education for the United States Program of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. In this capacity, she oversees work to improve early learning to ensure U.S. high school students graduate ready for success in college, career and life and improve access to college. Prior to joining the foundation Dr. Philips was Superintendent of Portland Public Schools in Portland, Oregon and served as Secretary of Education and Chief State School Officer for the State of Pennsylvania. She has worked previously at the U.S. Department of Education and as an adviser of government reforms in England and Australia. She began her career as a middle and high school teacher.

Bob Wise, former Governor Bob Wise, became President of the Alliance for Excellent Education in February of 2005. He was Governor of West Virginia from 2001 to 2005. He fought for and signed legislation to fund PROMISE Scholarship Program, which has helped thousands of West Virginia students remain in the State for college. During his administration West Virginia also saw significant increase in the number of students completing high school and entering college.

From 1983 to 2001, Governor Wise served as our colleague in the United States House of Representatives, representing the Second District of West Virginia, and he also serves on the Board of Trustees of America's Promise.

Welcome to the committee. Thank you for all of the work that you have done on this subject and all of the contributions that you and your organization have made.

Quickly, again we will give you 5 minutes to tell us what you want us to know. When you begin talking the green light will go on in front of you. After 4 minutes, the orange light will go on and then in 5 minutes the red light will go on, and we will ask you to sum up your testimony in a way that is coherent to all of us. That is the challenge.

Dr. Balfanz, we will begin with you, welcome.

**STATEMENT OF ROBERT BALFANZ, PH.D., RESEARCH
SCIENTIST, THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY**

Mr. BALFANZ. I want to thank the chairman and the ranking member and the committee for holding these hearings. They come not a moment too soon. Our Nation faces a graduation challenge that, if we don't meet, will simply leave it unprepared to prosper in the 21st century.

The good news is that I come to this issue as both a researcher, a school reformer, and a practitioner. And from all of those experiences and knowledges I believe this is not only a challenge we can meet—it is a challenge we can meet. And we have to do three things. We have to create pathways to college and career readiness for all of our students. We have to close the achievement gap.

But the hard news is that even if we did all that hard work and succeeded exceptionally well, we would still have a dropout crisis until we confront the cold hard fact that the dropout crisis is driven by the dropout factories that Chairman Miller and others have mentioned.

These are the 2,000 high schools and their feeder middle schools that reliably produce half the Nation's dropouts every year and two-thirds of the minority dropouts. They are in every State and 77 percent of congressional districts. But within these locations they are concentrations in our most neediest communities. They are in the automotive cities of the Midwest, the textile towns of the South, the challenged neighborhoods of our largest cities, and in the boom-and-bust areas that are being hit hardest by the foreclosure crisis. As such, they are simply the engines of the underclass and a collective drag on our national competitiveness.

The other piece of good news is that this is something that we can do. Two thousand high schools and their middle schools is a manageable number. It is within the bounds of human agency. This

breaks down to only 10 to 70 schools in most States and only 1 to 3 in most congressional districts. That is a number we can wrap ourselves around. That is manageable.

The second thing is that in the past decade we have made great progress in developing tools and models and proof points of success. So no one can no longer say this is unsolvable. It is too bad, it is horrible, but we can't do anything. That has been proven wrong.

Most excitingly, recently we have developed early warning and on-track indicator systems which not only can we target the schools, but the kids within the schools. The minute they first get into trouble and fall off the graduation path, we can mobilize around them.

And finally, in the past 5 years or so this has gone from being a school issue to a community campaign. And that is essential for the community to be deeply invested in improving the schools and improving the graduation rate. Because they bear the cost. And until a community is mobilized, we will not have the ability for the long haul. That is happening now.

The final missing piece of this is the Federal role. We need to create a Federal-State local community partnership, and with the Federal Government playing a critical active and in some places leading role. And they need to focus on four things: Accountability. Grad rates need to be coequal with test scores in our accountability system. Simply put, everybody has got to graduate prepared to do something, college and career, they have got to graduate. One of those is not good, you have to do both.

Second, we have to realize that high schools are unique. If you need to raise the graduation rate, the ninth grade is when kids fall off track. It will take 4 years to have really a big impact. You will have incremental improvements, but unless you have that 4 years to show big gains, you are not going to show big gains, because you have to fix the ninth grade and that takes 4 years to pay off.

Finally, the Department of Ed regulations are a good place to start. And Representative Scott's Every Student Counts helps codify that and move that forward.

Second, resources. These high schools and their feeder middle schools have the highest concentration of needy students in America. They have the most needy students and the highest number of them. Yet only half of these high schools get Title I money. How can we say that we are using Federal money to equalize the impacts of poverty?

And secondly, we have to realize that because of the crazy quilt of funding in our system of State and local, that some schools are going to need more Federal resources than others to transform. If we want a pragmatic goal of fixing as soon as possible, we have to realize that some schools will need more resources than others to get the job done quickly.

Capacity building. We have to both invest in getting the schools they resources they need, but invest in the folks that can give them the know-how and the technical assistance. The Districts, the State Departments of education, the external school formal organizations. All of these groups that have shown promise need to be strengthened so we can move from pockets of success to systematic improvement.

And finally, we need to do smart targeting and integrated efforts. We need to realize that one of the things that has held us back is we have had good ideas and applied them in the wrong places. We haven't been thoughtful about what the specific challenges of this school? What are its resources and what are its capacities? What are its needs? What are its opportunities? What are its tools?

When we put that together, what is the reform that makes sense? Not this reform works here or this reform works there. So let's be smarter about how we choose or reforms.

The other piece of good news is that we have lots of good legislation formed by this committee. The Graduation Promise Act, the Success in the Middle, Every Student Counts, the Secondary Improvement Fund. We have really good building blocks.

In closing, I want to leave you with this image. Sitting here in this beautiful room on this beautiful day, we basically know which students are going to drop out in the next 5 years. We know which schools they go to, and with a little bit of digging we can see them raising their hands and saying help. And we know how to do something about it. So that creates an obligation to act.

My argument is that by creating a Federal-State-local community effort, all together we will have the ability to meet that obligation. Thank you.

[The statement of Mr. Balfanz follows:]

Prepared Statement of Robert Balfanz, Everyone Graduates Center, Johns Hopkins University

I want to thank Chairman Miller, Vice Chairman Kildee, Representative McKeon and the Committee for holding this hearing. It comes not a moment too soon.

The nation faces a high school graduation challenge that if unmet will leave it unprepared to succeed in the 21st Century. Not only does the nation, in the words of President Obama, need to make dropping out of high school not an option, it needs to insure that a high school diploma means something and leaves all students prepared for college and/or post-secondary career training. Simply put, the world has changed and there is no work for high school dropouts. Nor are there many opportunities that will support a family for students who end their education after high school. To fully share in the nation's prosperity in 21st Century America, all students need to graduate from high school prepared for the further education and training required for adult success.

To meet its graduation challenge, the nation must find a solution for its dropout factories. These are the 12 percent of the nation's high schools, about 2,000 in number, that year after year, produce more than half of its dropouts and close to three-quarters of its minority dropouts. In these high schools graduation is not the norm and is often at best a 50/50 proposition.

These high schools are found in every state and 77 percent of congressional districts, but are concentrated within them in a sub-set of urban and rural low-wealth communities. In these locales, dropout factories are often the predominant or only public high school. This puts the entire community at risk of being cut off from a modern economy, which is driven by human capital or know-how. These high schools are the engine of the under-class and collectively place a significant drag on the nation's competitiveness. They usually exist, moreover, in communities that are already struggling, places where industry has left, like the automotive cities of Michigan and the textile towns of South Carolina, or the broken neighborhoods of Philadelphia and Los Angeles. This is why the dropout crisis has been called a silent epidemic. Yet, there is no way for these cities, towns, and neighborhoods to reinvent themselves without high schools that prepare all their students for post-secondary schooling or training.

The intense concentration of the nation's dropout factories, in a limited number of locales across the nation, however, is in fact what makes this problem solvable. It enables us to focus our efforts in a relatively few schools, where they will have maximum effect on the nation's progress. It is much more likely that we can trans-

form or replace 2,000 low-performing high schools, than 20,000. In most states, the number is between 10 and 70. In most congressional districts, outside of the nation's 10 largest cities, there are commonly one to three such schools.

Moreover, in the past decade we have learned much about what it will take to transform the nation's dropout factories, developed evidence-based tools and models, and generated ample proof points that it can be done. Ten years ago, if you asked people to name some of the nation's most intractable school districts, New York and Chicago, would come to the top of the list. Yet these are the very districts that have made notable progress in graduation rates in recent years and have pioneered innovations that are spreading across the nation. At the state level, it has been in what were once some of the nation's poorest states, such as North Carolina, Arkansas, Alabama, and Kentucky that the most improvement have been made. This tells us that progress occurs when will and know-how are combined with sufficient capacity and accountability systems that encourage effort and innovation.

Also in the past five years, notable advancements have been made in developing early warning and on-track indicator systems, enabling us to identify, while there is still time to intervene, the students within the nation's dropout factories and their feeder middle schools who will need the most support to graduate. This means we can target our efforts to both the most challenged schools and their students most in need. Early warning and on-track indicator systems also give us a powerful accountability tool to make sure schools are getting the right intervention to the right student at the right time.

One essential finding of this research is that it is often possible to identify as early as sixth grade up to half of the students who, absent effective interventions, will not graduate, and up to 80 percent by the ninth grade. This speaks to the need to reform both our nation's high schools with low graduation rates and the middle schools where their students come from.

Finally, both the national importance of the dropout crisis and the realization that it can be solved has led a growing number of prominent non-profit organizations that collectively have deep reach into the communities most at need to step up and make the graduation challenge one of their top priorities. These include United Way, Boys and Girls Clubs, Communities in Schools, City Year, and the Chamber of Commerce. The America's Promise Alliance, founded by Colin and Alma Powell, is organizing multi-sector efforts uniting business, faith-based efforts, mayors' and governors' offices, community organizations, and school systems behind evidence-based action plans. Dropout prevention summits are being held in all 50 states and 55 cities over two years. Meeting the nation's graduation challenge is no longer seen as just a school issue, but a community-wide campaign.

In short, meeting the nation's graduation challenge is a big enough issue to matter, but a manageable enough problem to solve.

The Challenge We Face in Transforming the Nation's Dropout Factories and Their Feeder Middle Grade Schools

Although we know that to meet the nation's graduation challenge we must transform the nation's dropout factories, and recognize that the know-how and tools exist to do this, we must also acknowledge that progress in transforming these high schools, beyond a few leading districts and states, has been slow.

A brief examination of why this is so demonstrates the need for a federal role in helping communities transform their dropout factories.

First, high schools with consistently low graduation rates often face extremely high degrees of educational challenge. In these high schools, it is typical for the majority of students to enter the ninth grade with math and reading skills two or more years below grade level, and/or already beginning to disengage from school as witnessed by worsening attendance rates and increased behavioral problems. In a high school of 1,200 to 2,000 students, this can translate into hundreds of students in need of extra support, beyond good everyday teaching.

Second, by and large, these schools do not have either the financial or human resources to meet this degree of educational challenge. The nation's dropout factories almost exclusively educate poor and minority children. Yet despite having among the highest concentration and largest number of needy students, close to half of these schools receive no federal Title 1 support. Moreover, the crucial ninth grade, because it is typically seen as an undesirable teaching assignment, is often staffed by the least experienced and skilled teachers. These teachers are not supported by strong professional development nor assisted by sufficient numbers of skilled and committed adults in support roles. The result is frustration, burn-out, and high levels of transiency, making it difficult for reforms to take hold and build their impact over time.

Third, local, state, and federal accountability systems have not been designed to require, guide, and support the transformation of these high schools. By and large, high schools have been the orphan of accountability systems. Their unique needs have not been fully considered. Because the majority of students who dropout fall off the path to graduation in the ninth grade, it will take four years for the full impact of school reform efforts to translate into increased graduation rates. Most accountability systems, however, demand results within one or at most two years.

This encourages schools to focus on the smaller number of dropouts who fall off-track in the later grades, rather than implementing the fundamental reforms needed to transform the entire school. At the federal level, moreover, No Child Left Behind heavily weights high school accountability to the results of achievement tests given in a single grade. This encourages schools to focus all their efforts on the subset of students who are close to proficient, rather than the larger number of students who entered ninth grade two or more years below grade level. In some cases, schools even push these students out before they reach the tested grade.

Fourth, we have not paid enough attention to developing mechanisms to get the right reform and transformation strategies to the right school, with sufficient capacity building and technical assistance to enable effective implementation and to sustain it. Too often good reform strategies have been applied in the wrong places or without enough intensity and fidelity to succeed. This, in turn, has led to disappointment with the results, fed the erroneous belief that nothing works, and shifted reform attention elsewhere.

To meet the nation's graduation challenge and transform the secondary schools that drive the dropout crisis, we need to create a federal-state-local-community partnership dedicated to the task. The federal government needs to play four crucial roles.

First, accountability. Simply put, a high school's graduation rate and achievement levels need to have co-equal weight in federal accountability frameworks. Every student needs to graduate and all students need to earn diplomas signifying that they are prepared for post-secondary schooling or career training. It is only when high schools understand that both goals need to be achieved that they will not be tempted to trade off one for the other. The graduation rate regulations issued by the Department of Education in 2008 go a long way toward establishing both the accurate measurement of graduation rates and raising their importance in federal accountability systems. They need to be fine tuned and codified. The Everyone Graduates bill sponsored by Representative Bobby Scott (D-VA) achieves this and should be passed.

Second, resources. The federal government needs to insure that the most challenged secondary schools have the resources they need to succeed. Increased investment in pre-k education, as well as existing Title 1 funding, will see its impact muted if students in the most vulnerable communities continue to attend dysfunctional middle and high schools. Adolescence, in communities of concentrated poverty, carries its own set of risk factors that cannot be fully eliminated by more positive early education experiences. Up to one-quarter of the students who fall off the graduation path in ninth grade, for example, enter high school with grade level skills.

Ensuring that a secondary school's resources match its educational challenge will involve two steps. First, full and fair Title 1 funding for secondary schools. Second, as is envisioned in the Success in the Middle and Graduation Promise Acts, targeted funds based on a careful and peer-reviewed analysis of the needs and capacity of each dropout factory and its primary feeder middle schools. Some of these schools, because of variability in local and state funding and the intensity and size of their educational challenges, will need more resources than others. There needs to be a mechanism to enable this.

Third, capacity finding and building. Federal legislation needs to be sensitive to the fact, that across the nation the capacity to transform dropout factories and their feeder middle schools will rest in different places. In some locales, it will be the school district that has the wherewithal to transform these schools. In other locales, state departments of education can and will need to play a stronger role. In still other areas, external technical assistance from experienced non-profit providers with a track record in similar schools will be required. In addition, federal support will be required to increase the capacity of school districts, state departments of education, and external school reform organizations and support providers to transform low graduation rate high schools and their feeder middle schools at the scale required. This is what will enable us to move beyond pockets of success to systematic improvements.

These capacity building efforts could take several forms. These could be competitive grants to enable partnerships between states or districts and consortia of tech-

nical assistance providers, as envisioned in the Secondary School Innovation Fund Act or an expansion of the community investment boards found in the recently passed Serve America Act. For the most impacted communities, we may also have to look seriously at the idea of federal Graduation Bonds, which would provide the upfront capital needed to replace or re-configure large schools of 2,000 or more students that are relics of another era, and provide the intensive and large scale teacher training and support required to prepare all students for success in post-secondary schooling. States would then use the increased tax revenues and lower social service costs that would result from dramatically raising the graduation rate in communities where dropping out is the norm to re-pay the bonds. In addition, federal R and D efforts may be required to increase the range of solutions for two particularly challenging sub-sets of dropout factories: high schools with 2,000 or more students and high schools with low graduation rates that are the only high school in a district (25 percent of the nation's dropout factories are such).

Fourth, smart targeting and integrated efforts. Finally and perhaps most importantly, the federal government through both its funding and accountability mechanisms should enable and promote smarter choices in the strategies selected to transform the secondary schools that drive the nation's dropout crisis. The good news is that over the past decade we have learned that there are multiple ways to successfully transform dropout factories and their feeder middle schools. Evidence-based whole school reform models have worked, as has replacing failed large schools with several smaller new schools. Different governance models, from charters to pairing public schools with external operators from school reform organizations and universities, have shown promise in some locales, as have data-based multiple pathways to graduation within large and medium-sized school districts. But nothing has worked everywhere it has been tried, which tells us that context matters.

Before a secondary school receives additional funds to support the needed reforms, it should be required to work with its school district and, where appropriate and needed, external technical assistance providers to develop both needs and capacity assessments. These would detail its educational challenge, analyze why prior reform efforts have not worked, and identify the capacity it will need. These assessments would also show how the school would implement and sustain reforms that are comprehensive, sufficiently robust and intense to meet its educational challenges and tailored to the specific needs, opportunities, and circumstances experience by the school. The schools' and districts' needs and capacity analyses, as well as their school improvement plans, should then be subject to real and rigorous peer review, with technical assistance being provided to the schools and districts that need more support to both select the right strategy for their circumstances and implement it well.

The good news is that good legislation is already or soon to be introduced into the 111th Congress. These bills collectively go a long way toward addressing the nation's graduation challenge and should form the cornerstone of federal efforts to transform the secondary schools that produce most of the nation's dropouts. The bills include the Every Student Counts Act—H.R. 1569—introduced by Representative Scott (D-VA), The Graduation Promise Act sponsored by Representative Hinojosa (D-TX), the Success in the Middle Act sponsored by Representative Grijalva (D-AZ), and the Secondary School Innovation Fund sponsored by Representative Loebsack (D-IA).

In conclusion, sitting here today, we can identify most of the students in your districts and across the nation, who absent effective interventions, will not graduate in the next seven years. We know which schools they attend and, with a little attention and effort, we see the signals they are sending, signals that clearly say "help." We also know how to do something about it. This creates the obligation for us to act, to not only make dropping out not an option, but also to provide all these students with a pathway to adult success and full economic and social participation in 21st Century America. The federal government must play a key role in this effort.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you.

**STATEMENT OF MICHAEL WOTORSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
CAMPAIGN FOR HIGH SCHOOL EQUITY**

Mr. WOTORSON. Thank you, Chairman Miller, ranking member and distinguished committee members. Thank you for inviting me to testify today, and I also want to express my thanks to the Mem-

bers of Congress who just testified earlier for their leadership on raising critical issues related to high school reform.

My name is Michael Wotorson, and I serve as the Executive Director for the Campaign for High School Equity, otherwise known as CHSE. We are a coalition of 10 civil rights organizations representing communities of color focused on high school education reform. Our partners are united in the conviction that it is every student's right to receive a high quality high school education that will expand opportunities for success in life.

I just want to spend a little bit of time talking about the education crisis from the perspective of civil rights. To say that the state of education in America is a disappointment would be an understatement of vast proportions when we consider some facts. Black and Latino 17-year-olds read at the same level as white 13-year-olds. Of incoming ninth graders, a third will drop out and another third will graduate lacking college or work-ready skills. African American, Latino, American Indian, and Alaskan Native American high school students have, at best, a six in 10 chance of graduating from school on time with a regular diploma, compared to a national rate of 70 percent. And for Asian Americans the situation is equally bleak. About 50 percent of Cambodians and Laotians and about 60 percent of Hmong age 25 and older have less than a high school education. These facts alone illustrate the reality of the crisis and dramatic need for reform.

I join Secretary Duncan and other education leaders when I say that education is the most important American civil rights issue of the 21st century. As a consequence of persistent inequity and segregation we have two different school systems in America today.

Recently I visited Halifax County in North Carolina, where I witnessed firsthand the duality of the American education system. First of all, the majority of the residents of Halifax County represent communities of color, and this county has the highest percentage of families living in poverty. Of the more than 23,000 students who dropped out of North Carolina high schools in the 2006-2007 school year, students of color, those from low-income families were disproportionately represented.

Halifax County offers a clear picture of the vulgar realities that so many children must confront. The fact that children in Halifax County are not faced with a challenge, they are quite literally faced with an onslaught of challenges, as they try to learn basic skills to be successful in life. Lack of rigorous curriculum. Lack of access to effective teachers. Low expectations, et cetera. The list goes on.

The situation in Halifax County is quite frankly emblematic of the unfinished legacy of the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. While *Brown* ensured children would have unfettered access to public education, it did not ensure equity in public education.

So clearly American education policy must change and it must change now. We at CHSE believe that the Federal Government can help the Nation make great strides towards achieving these goals by adopting the following policies:

First, make all students proficient and prepared for college and work. Access to equal opportunity can only exist if all students are challenged to reach the same high expectations. To that end, we believe states should align high school standards, assessments, cur-

riculum and instruction with college and work-ready standards; B, we should guarantee that all students have access to rigorous and engaging classes in core subjects; and C, States should be required to publicly report on access to college preparatory classes and course taking patterns by income, race and ethnicity, both among and within schools.

Second, we should hold all high schools accountable for student success. As it stands, there are very few mechanisms for making sure that high schools are held accountable for the success of all students. So a well-designed accountability system would include, A, codifying in law the current graduation rate regulations; B, ensuring that every State makes progress on developing longitudinal data systems and allow them to measure student progress over time; C, publicly reporting disaggregated racial and ethnic data to highlight subjects of students; and D, using high quality, valid, and accurate assessments for all students.

Third, we should redesign the American high schools. The Federal Government can encourage, incentivize, and require systems at the poorest quality high schools by urging the following policies be adopted:

A, integrated student supports that utilizes both in-school and community-based services; B, instructional practices such as culturally competent learning techniques; C, consistent standards and practices such as improved identification and assessment systems to facilitate English language learners' integration into the public education system; and D, access to computers and other learning technologies.

So clearly there is a lot of work to be done and we must gather the collective will to do it. The will should be driven by need as well as likely return on our investment. If we can implement these policies that will drive reform in high schools, we can make a difference.

Reform works. One only has to speak to the students from Gaston College Preparatory High School, a charter school in Gaston, North Carolina, that serves a high percentage of low income students and is just down the road from Halifax County. Every student in this high school, a high school that boasts 100 percent graduation rate, has been accepted to at least two colleges or universities. This should not be the exception in American high schools. Frankly, it should be the rule.

CHSE urges swift passage of an improved ESEA that strengthens the accountability as a core element of reform and includes critical supports for high schools. Only then will we graduate every high school student prepared for college and the modern workforce.

Thank you again for the opportunity and privilege to testify before you. The full text of my testimony has been submitted to the committee, and I am happy to answer any weighs. Thank you.

[The statement of Mr. Wotorson follows:]

Prepared Statement of Michael Wotorson, Executive Director, Campaign for High School Equity

Chairman Miller, Ranking Member McKeon, and distinguished Committee members, thank you for inviting me to testify today. And, thank you to Congressman Fattah and Congressman Castle for their testimony and leadership in raising critical issues related to high school reform.

My name is Michael Wotorson and I am the executive director of the Campaign for High School Equity, otherwise known as CHSE. CHSE is a coalition of leading civil rights organizations representing communities of color that is focused on high school education reform. It was formed to address the unequal American public education system, which does not provide high-quality education to students of color and youth from low-income neighborhoods.

CHSE partners are united in the conviction that it is every student's right to receive a high-quality high school education that will expand opportunities for success in life.

CHSE partners include the National Urban League, the National Council of La Raza, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights Education Fund, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, the League of United Latin American Citizens, the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials Educational Fund, the Alliance for Excellent Education, the National Indian Education Association and the Southeast Asia Resource Action Center.

Our goal is to raise awareness of solutions to close the achievement gap for students of color and to build public will and support among policymakers, advocates and community leaders for policies that will increase high school achievement and graduation rates for minority and low-income students.

The Education Crisis

To say that the state of education in America is a disappointment would be an understatement of vast proportions.

Let's consider the facts:

- In 2003, our students ranked 15th among 29 countries in reading literacy, and 25th in mathematics.
- Seven out of 10 8th graders are not proficient in reading, and most will never catch up.
- Black and Latino 17-year-olds read at the same level as white 13-year-olds.
- Of incoming 9th graders, one-third will drop out, and another third will graduate lacking college and work-readiness skills—only about one-third will be adequately prepared for life after high school.
- Contrary to the model minority myth, many Asian Americans also face barriers in education. About 50 percent of Cambodians and Laotians, and about 60 percent of Hmong aged 25 and older who are living in the United States have less than a high school education.

Student achievement overall is low, but some students, the majority of which are students of color and low-income students, never get the chance to demonstrate their capabilities. Seven thousand American kids drop out of school every day, which adds up to 1.2 million dropouts each year. African-American, Latino, American Indian and Alaska Native high school students have at best a six in 10 chance of graduating from high school on time with a regular diploma, compared to a national graduation rate of more than 70 percent of all students. Unfortunately, without disaggregated data to account for the 48 Asian American ethnic groups, it is currently impossible to accurately measure student achievement among Asian Americans in our country.

Research shows that about 2,000 of America's 17,000 high schools produce approximately half of America's dropouts. In these schools—commonly called “dropout factories”—less than 60 percent of ninth graders are enrolled as twelfth graders four years later. The nation's students of color are four times more likely than the nation's non-minority students to attend one of these low-performing schools, and three times less likely to attend a high school with very high graduation rates. In fact, dropout factories produce 81 percent of all Native American dropouts, 73 percent of all African American dropouts, and 66 percent of all Latino dropouts.

The fastest growing segment of the American public school population is comprised of more than 5 million English language learner (ELL) students, primarily Spanish-speaking students closely followed by students speaking Vietnamese and Hmong. This fast-growing segment of students, with the highest growth rates occurring in grades 7 through 12, is among the lowest performing in the country. In 2007, only 4 percent of 8th-grade ELL students could read at or above a proficient level, compared to 31 percent of non-ELL students. More than 59 percent of Latino ELL students ages 16-19 are high school dropouts.

The facts alone illustrate the stark reality of the crisis and the dramatic need for reform in our high schools. Yet communities of color and low-income neighborhoods continue to be torn apart by the tragic consequences of an unequal public education system that fails to provide high-quality education to all.

A Critical Civil Rights Issue

I echo the likes of Secretary Duncan and other education leaders when I say that education is the most important American civil rights issue of the 21st century. As a consequence of persistent inequity and segregation, we have two different school systems in America. On the one hand, we have a system that emphasizes high academic quality and serves the nation's privileged students. Yet another system exists that emphasizes academic mediocrity and largely serves low-income students and students of color. The one consistency in our education system is in our high schools that fail to provide students of color and youth from low-income neighborhoods with the high-quality education they need to succeed in college and in the modern workplace.

On a recent visit to Halifax County in North Carolina, I witnessed firsthand the duality of the American education system. Before I address the problem facing these students, let me give you a snapshot of Halifax County.

- In a county where the majority of residents represent communities of color (52 percent of residents are black, 3 percent are Native American, and 1 percent are Latino), nearly a quarter (23.9 percent) of Halifax County's population is below the poverty level, giving it the status as the county in North Carolina with the highest percentage (19.4 percent) of families living in poverty.

- In the 2007-2008 school year (the most recent data available), only 25.5 percent of children grades 3-8 are at or above grade level in reading, compared to 55.6 percent statewide; and only 39.7 percent are at or above grade level in math, compared to 69.9 percent statewide.

- No schools in the county—zero elementary, middle or high schools—met Adequate Yearly Progress standards under the No Child Left Behind Act.

- Of the 23,550 students who dropped out of North Carolina high schools in 2006-2007, students of color and those from low-income families were disproportionately represented. A recent report submitted to the North Carolina joint State Legislative Oversight Committee found that the counties with the highest dropout rates were also the counties where the per capita income was significantly lower than the state average.

Upon my arrival in North Carolina, I was struck, again, by the vulgar realities that so many children face. The children in Halifax county are not faced with a challenge—they are faced with an onslaught of challenges as they try to learn the basic skills they will need to be successful in life.

Nearly one-third of the middle and high school teachers in Halifax have less than three years of teaching experience and almost one quarter of the middle school teachers left the school district (the state average is 15 percent) in the 2006-2007 school year. This makes it nearly impossible for the school district to build capacity among its teaching force. These children are not only growing up in poverty. They are growing up in a school system that expects little of them and they get little in return.

These students lack access to effective teachers and teachers in the county lack access to the ongoing support they need to succeed in the classroom. Low achievement expectations are furthered by classroom curriculum that is not nearly as rigorous as it should be to encourage excellence. In communities nationwide with similar demographic and socioeconomic profiles as Halifax, each high school student enrolled in a different high school is learning quite different skills, which, against their will, will predetermine the direction of their future. With so many factors working against them, it is hard for these children to envision a future; it's hard for them to have dreams much less fulfill them.

Too many American high schools fail to provide a high-quality education to the youth who should become our next generation of business and political leaders, yet ensuring that all students graduate from high school well-prepared for the future is necessary to the nation's global competitiveness and economic security. It is our moral responsibility to strengthen and improve our schools so that every child has the opportunity to meet high expectations and graduate high school prepared for work and college, and to fulfill dreams.

We know that dropouts are more likely than high school graduates to grow up in poverty, experience poor health, and be incarcerated. Unless trends in minority student achievement and high school graduation are reversed, our high schools will be complicit in creating a permanent underclass of individuals who cannot provide for themselves and their families, and are prevented from actively participating in our democracy. It is, unfortunately, the unfinished legacy of the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. While *Brown* ensured that all children would have unfettered access to public education, it did not ensure equity in public education.

Policy Solutions That Will Make a Difference

American education policy must change now. CHSE advocates for policies that support making all students proficient and prepared for college and work, holding high schools accountable for student success and redesigning the American high school. College and work readiness must be a top priority, and we must create an environment in which all children can achieve that goal. CHSE believes that the federal government can help the nation make great strides towards achieving these goals by adopting the following policies.

Make All Students Proficient and Prepared for College and Work

Access to equal opportunity can only exist if all students are challenged to reach the same high expectations.

- States must align high school standards, assessments, curriculum and instruction with college- and work-ready standards. Teaching and testing should be based on what will lead to success in the future;
- We should guarantee that all students have access to rigorous and engaging classes in core subjects. Coursework should impart the knowledge and skills needed to excel in postsecondary education and career, and assessments should measure student learning against these criteria;
- States should be required to publicly report on access to college preparatory classes and course-taking patterns by income, race and ethnicity, both among and within schools; and
- Federal education policy that promotes culturally based teaching, a practice wherein teachers align instruction to the cultural practices and experiences of their students, is critical to helping all students succeed.

Hold High Schools Accountable for Student Success

If the purpose of high school is to prepare students for college and work, then high schools should be held accountable for meeting this expectation for all students equally. As it stands, there are few mechanisms for making sure that high schools accomplish this mission. A well-designed accountability system should help communities ensure that their schools are serving their children well.

There is a significant need to hold schools accountable for getting students successfully to graduation by including meaningful graduation rates in federal school accountability standards.

The appallingly low rate at which American high schools graduate minority students could be reversed by increasing the accountability of states and school districts to adhere to standards that promote positive outcomes, including graduation and college. A strong system of accountability would include:

- Codifying in law the current graduation rate regulations to make a significant difference in holding high schools accountable for the success of all students, particularly students of color and youth from low-income neighborhoods, and as a critical factor in determining the quality of a high school and effective use of resources;
- Ensuring that every state continues to make progress on developing longitudinal data systems that will allow them to measure student progress over time. Improved data systems will not only improve the fairness and accuracy of accountability systems, including ensuring increased accountability for groups that are often marginalized, such as Native Americans and Southeast Asians, but will also allow schools to target services such as professional development where they are needed most;
- Publicly reporting disaggregated racial and ethnic data to highlight subgroups of students;
- Investing in technical assistance and evidence-based school improvement tools;
- Using high-quality, valid and accurate assessments for all students; and
- Disseminating high school data and other information through media and other information channels that reach communities of color.

I would like to underscore that a critical element of any accountability system is to ensure that states and districts have quality data systems capable of collecting disaggregated data, that they publicly report disaggregated racial and ethnic data that include subgroups of students, and that all data is used to inform educational decision making. Making decisions without the benefit of fully disaggregated data ignores the unique needs of students of color and ill prepares school administrators to allocate resources based on the needs of students and teachers. While many states disaggregate data, inconsistencies in collection and reporting standards leave entire groups of students out of the equation. For example, without fully disaggregated data, the needs of whole segments of the Asian American and Pacific Islander population are neglected. As a result, entire groups of these young people end up falling through the cracks.

Redesign the American High School

Implementing a variety of quality high school models shown to support different learning styles, cultures and student situations is critical to achieving success for all students. The federal government can encourage, incentivize and require systems that support high-quality high schools by urging the following policies be adopted.

- Integrated student supports that utilize both in-school and community-based services can enhance the rate of success for minority and low-income students;
- Instructional practices such as culturally competent learning techniques should be designed to meet the needs of diverse learners. More students thrive in the classroom when culture is integrated into their coursework, creating an environment where all students can excel, regardless of race or socioeconomic status. Data reveal that learning in an environment that incorporates native language, culture and traditions increases student mastery of and achievement in science and math;
- Legally and educationally valid criteria to appropriately inform decisions regarding student eligibility for services in special educational, services for English language learners, college preparatory curricula and gifted and talented programs;
- Consistent standards and practices such as improved identification and assessment systems to facilitate English language learners integration into the public education system; and
- Access to computers and other learning technologies that can be used to complement in-class instruction.

Provide Students with Excellent Leaders and Teachers They Need to Succeed

Secondary schools designated as needing improvement tend to have fewer school resources and poorer working conditions; they also disproportionately serve students of color and are located in areas of concentrated poverty. Schools with these challenges require especially strong leaders. And, it is often difficult to recruit high-quality teachers to low-performing schools.

The federal government can support programs that establish incentives to recruit, train, support and retain effective leaders and teachers in high-poverty high schools.

Invest Communities in Student Success and Provide Equitable Learning Conditions for All Students

Creating high-performing high schools that can give all students the support they need to succeed is no small task, and it requires changing the school as well as an investment from the community. Community-based organizations (CBOs) play a critical role in providing much-needed wrap-around services, particularly for students of color. The federal government should support the creation and expansion of multilingual parent centers, CBO-based afterschool and summer programs, business-school partnerships and other community-based support services needed to help students stay in school and graduate.

Moreover, high schools in the poorest communities deserve an equitable share of resources. In addition to adequate targeting of federal funds, we must ensure that the neediest schools have access to effective teachers, the best research and practice and services to meet the needs of all students, particularly English language learners.

Urgent Call to Act Now

Clearly, there is much to do, and we must gather the collective will to do it. The will should be driven by need as well as a likely return on our investments. If we can implement these policies that will drive reform of high schools, we can make a difference. Reforms work. One only has to speak with students from the Gaston College Preparatory high school, a Knowledge is Power Program charter school in Gaston, North Carolina, that also serves a high percentage of low-income students, just down the road from Halifax County. As a result of innovative and effective approaches to high school education, every senior in this high school, which boasts a 100 percent graduation rate, has been accepted to at least two colleges or universities. This should not be an exception in American high schools. Frankly, it should be the rule.

The pending reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) is a critical opportunity to institutionalize the reforms we all know are so important. Congress can ensure better support for high schools and ensure strong accountability for improving results for high school students, particularly for students of color and those from low-income families.

Waiting any longer to reauthorize ESEA amounts to shutting the door on thousands of American high school students and their dreams of a successful future. And as important, the high cost of dropping out is borne not only by the individual but by all Americans, who pay an economic and social price when students leave high

school without a diploma. CHSE urges swift passage of an improved ESEA that strengthens accountability as a core element of reform and includes critical support for high schools. Only then will we graduate every high school student prepared for college and the modern workforce.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity and privilege to testify before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Chairman MILLER. Ms. Kondracke.

**STATEMENT OF MARGUERITE KONDRACKE, PRESIDENT AND
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, AMERICA'S PROMISE**

Ms. KONDRACKE. Chairman Miller, ranking member, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify and thank you for holding this important hearing on what I believe is one of the most pressing issues of our Nation.

America's Promise Alliance was founded by General Colin Powell and is chaired today by his wife Alma. Our alliance, with over 300 national partners, is dedicated to ending the Nation's dropout crisis. As General Powell says, this is not a crisis, it is a catastrophe. When half of our young people of color and a third of all others are not graduating on time, this truly is a nation at risk.

And many of those who do finish high school are not prepared for college or the 21st century workplace. Employers tell us they cannot find qualified or even literate employees. Colleges tell us too many entering students need remedial work. The military tells us they cannot find enough qualified recruits. Even dropout students tell us that they were not challenged and saw no relevance to the world today.

I applaud the President when he said a long-term, sustainable economic recovery is only possible if we strengthen our education system and invest in our children.

For a young person dropping out, it is a million dollar mistake. For our country, cutting in half the dropout rate would contribute over 45 billion to our economy.

Mr. Chairman, the best stimulus package is a diploma. Our children and their education deserve to be our highest priority. They are the only future we have.

But there is hope. We do know what to do, and we know where we should focus our resources. We can start by focusing on those 2,000 dropout factory high schools and their communities.

There are two influences in a student's life that impacts achievement: What happens inside the classroom and what happens outside. Both must be addressed if we are to raise graduation rates and close the achievement gap.

Our report, *Cities in Crisis*, found that there was a 20 percent difference in graduation rates when you compared urban to suburban districts. We must address these inequities to give giving to the promise of America for all of our young people. In this great democracy, the opportunity to succeed must not be an accident of birth.

It is what happens outside the classroom that often gets overlooked, Mr. Chairman. I believe this is where the real difference can be made.

Too many of our young children are going into the classroom without the basic supports in their lives that we all take for grant-

ed. Not appreciating the role that these supports place in our child's life is why I believe so many education reform efforts have not achieved the gains we have expected. The Educational Testing Service recently outlined 16 factors that drive student achievement.

Over half happen outside the classroom. A child can't learn if he is hungry, has health problems, maybe has no caring adult in his life, doesn't feel safe in his neighborhood, has nowhere to go for the kind of after-school enrichment programs and tutoring that we would arrange for our own children.

Inside the classroom we know we must have more rigor and relevance. We need stronger, internationally benchmarked standards. We have fallen behind almost every country in the developed world. I commend the committee for recently holding a hearing on this, and I support the administration's efforts to make rigorous standards a priority.

Secretary Arne Duncan has ably outlined what he believes is needed for schools, starting with clear standards defining world-class excellence, teacher quality, better data, and effective ways to track students and measure success.

But also important is what is happening outside the classroom. To solve the dropout crisis we need an integrated solution. Research proves that if a young person has four of five core resources, he or she will be successful in life. We call these the five promises.

An effective education that gives our young people marketable skills is one of those promises. But our children also need caring adults, safe places, a healthy start, and opportunities to serve, which builds their confidence and self-worth.

Having at least four of these five promises closes the achievement gap across race and income. Having at least four of the five means a young person is twice as likely to do well in school and stay out of trouble.

These are at the heart of our dropout prevention campaign. We are holding summits in all 50 States and in 55 cities with the highest dropout rate. Every summit is producing an action plan.

Mr. Chairman, there is a role for Congress, as well. Locally, these initiatives are spreading across the country, but because of the depth of the crisis there must be a larger role for the Federal Government. Mr. Chairman, we do not have time for incremental change. Congress and the administration can play an important role in bringing solutions to scale.

The Graduation Promise Act is must-pass legislation. Complementing it is the Secondary School Innovation Fund from Congressman Loeb sack and the Every Student Counts Act from Congressman Scott; again, Congressman Loeb sack, the WE CARE Act; and Leader Hoyer, the Full-Service Community Schools Act. These are great bills.

Additionally, I urge Congress to fund the High School Graduation Initiative proposed by the President and Secretary Duncan. The administration is requesting a \$1 billion increase, and 40 percent of these school improvement grants will go to the dropout factory schools.

In conclusion, we should not tolerate living in a country where three out of 10 students do not graduate on time. We should not

tolerate living in a country where on-time graduation for minority students is a 50-50 proposition.

We have solutions on the ground, legislative proposals that will bring them to scale. Congress can go a long way to solve this problem and fortify our economy. We know what to do, we are ready to help, and this can be done. Our future depends on it.

[The statement of Ms. Kondracke follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Marguerite Kondracke, President and CEO,
America's Promise Alliance**

Chairman Miller, Ranking Member McKeon, members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on the most pressing issue facing our nation. I am Marguerite Kondracke, President and CEO of America's Promise Alliance. Founded by General Colin Powell, we and our 300 partners are committed to bringing an end to the dropout crisis.

Magnitude of the Problem

General Powell characterizes the dropout crisis as a national catastrophe. A new report commissioned by America's Promise Alliance found that only about half (53 percent) of all young people in the nation's 50 largest cities graduate on time.

If altruistic reasons do not compel you, economic ones should. McKinsey and Company found that the educational challenges we face impose "the economic equivalent of a permanent national recession."

I agree with the President and Secretary Duncan when they say that a long-term, sustainable economic recovery is only possible if we strengthen our education system.

Contributors to the Crisis

There are two influences in a student's life that impact achievement: what happens inside the school building, and what happens outside of it. Both must be addressed if we are to successfully raise graduation rates.

First, we need stronger, internationally benchmarked standards. Students deserve standards and curricula that will help them succeed in college and careers and compete in the global economy. We are making progress in this regard. I commend the Committee for holding a hearing on the topic of common national standards just a few weeks ago, and support the administration's efforts to make rigorous standards a priority.

Integrated supports are also crucial. "There are a set of foundational things we need to do to meet * * * students' social and emotional needs * * * the more we work together * * * the more we create an environment where the students can maximize their academic potential."

These are not my words; they are the words of our Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan.

The Educational Testing Service (ETS) recently outlined 16 factors that correlate with student achievement—over half of these factors are present in a child's life beyond the classroom. Such factors include forced mobility, environmental hazards, hunger and nutrition, health care, and the summer learning gap, which puts students so far behind by the ninth grade that the prospect of on-time graduation is dim.

If schools just had to deal with one, or maybe two of these issues, they could probably handle it. The problem is that these and many other factors accumulate and are concentrated in our schools with the least capacity to address them.

The Solution: A Comprehensive Approach

The dropout crisis calls for a comprehensive solution. Research demonstrates that young people need five core resources to be successful in life. We refer to them as the "five promises"—caring adults, safe places, a healthy start, effective education, and opportunities to serve. These promises provide a simple but powerful framework for a robust national strategy to end the dropout crisis, and are at the heart of the Dropout Prevention Campaign launched by the America's Promise Alliance last year.

The campaign began with high-level summits, one in all 50 states and 55 cities with the largest dropout rates. Within 60 days of each summit, states and communities develop action plans that include a cross section of stakeholders—educators, the business community, nonprofit organizations, and students.

Locally, initiatives are spreading across the country that combine academic and community-based supports to strengthen student achievement. Rather than describe these efforts in detail, I will discuss the potential role of the federal government in bringing them to scale.

- The Graduation Promise Act is “must-pass” legislation. The federal government should not have a heavy hand in high school reform. Introduced by Representative Ruben Hinojosa in the 110th Congress, this legislation is comprehensive, data driven, and strikes the right balance between federal support and local control.

- Complementing this proposal are the Secondary School Innovation Fund Act (H.R. 2239) introduced by Representative Dave Loebsack, and the Every Student Counts Act introduced by Representative Bobby Scott (H.R. 1569). These proposals would support research and accountability so that we can use taxpayer dollars in the most effective ways.

- Additionally, I urge Congress to fund the High School Graduation Initiative proposed by the President as well as his proposed increase for School Improvement Grants in order to turn around the nation’s lowest performing high schools.

Broadly speaking, the administration has outlined five pillars for education reform: early childhood; world-class college- and career-ready standards and assessments, teacher effectiveness, innovation/excellence with a focus on low-performing schools, and higher education. To these five items, I suggest adding a sixth: Schools as Centers of Community. We must address both what happens inside the classroom and outside of it in order to strengthen graduation rates and prepare our students for college. As a potential first step, I encourage Congress to fund the President’s proposal for “Promise Neighborhoods” to address the effects of poverty and improve educational achievements and life outcomes for our children.

Conclusion

We do not have to live in a country where three out of 10 students do not graduate on time, and where on-time graduation for minority students is a 50-50 proposition. We have solutions on the ground, and legislative proposals that will bring them to scale. By passing these proposals, we will solve this problem, fortify our economy, and provide our students with the opportunity to experience the promise of America.

Full Testimony

Chairman Miller, Ranking Member McKeon, members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on the most pressing issue facing our nation: the high school dropout crisis. My remarks will cover several key issues: First, I will discuss the compelling magnitude of the high school dropout crisis. I will then provide an overview of the factors in our schools and in the lives of our students that contribute to the crisis. Finally, I will conclude with a discussion of ways this issue can be addressed and recommendations for the federal role in strengthening graduation rates.

The Dropout Crisis: America’s New Silent Epidemic

America’s low graduation rate is our most pressing issue as a nation and the culmination of years of failure. Everyone with a stake in the future of our children and the nation—schools, parents, businesses, community and faith based organizations—have a role to play in the resolution of this crisis. We all must work together in new and unprecedented ways in support of our children.

In addition to its significant social implications, the potential economic impact of the dropout crisis shows why this issue is our most critical national challenge. A recent report by McKinsey and Company, *The Economic Impact of the Achievement Gap in America’s Schools*, concluded that the persistent achievement gaps facing our country impose “the economic equivalent of a permanent national recession.”¹ When President Obama and Secretary Duncan say that a long-term, sustainable economic recovery is only possible if we strengthen our education system, they are precisely correct.

The dropout crisis may not be as visible or swift as other important issues problems facing this Congress and our new administration, but its implications are just as severe and lasting. The dropout crisis, persisting without acknowledgment or resolution, has emerged as America’s “silent epidemic.” The current recession is in the headlines every day, and has demanded action both because of its severity and the public attention it has received. Whether or not you voted for the Housing and Economic Recovery Act, the Troubled Asset Relief Program, or the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, one cannot disagree with this simple point: action is being taken to address the economic crisis.

With the dropout crisis, we have a different story. Although we are working diligently to raise public awareness of this issue, it has yet to permeate the national

agenda. This makes it easier for our actions to be slow, inadequate, or even worse, nonexistent. States and school districts are rising to the challenge, and they need the federal government to be a strong partner in their struggle to provide our nation with an educated population, a strong economy, and a stable society. Strengthening our graduation rate will take historic focus, unprecedented collaboration, and significant resources. The required investments in our young people are the most cost-effective investments we can make. We must understand that our future is at stake, and we must resolve that failure is not an option.

Magnitude of the Dropout Crisis

General Colin Powell, founding chairman of America's Promise Alliance, characterizes the dropout crisis as a "national catastrophe." The issue is both broad and deep, creating new economic and national security problems as many potential skilled workers and military recruits are found to be ill prepared and unsuitable for those professions.

Between 25 to 30 percent of high school students do not graduate on time. For young people of color, on-time graduation is a 50-50 proposition, the flip of a coin. A new report commissioned by America's Promise Alliance and developed by the Editorial Projects in Education Research Center finds that only about half (53 percent) of all young people in the nation's 50 largest cities graduate on time. Despite some progress made by several of these cities between 1995 and 2005, the average graduation rate of the 50 largest cities is well below the national average of 71%, and an 18 percentage point urban-suburban gap remains.²

Ten Year Trends: 1995 to 2005

While the nation's 50 largest school districts educate one out of eight high school students; they produce one quarter of the nation's students who do not graduate on time.³ Fortunately, 31 of the nation's 50 largest cities have increased their graduation rates between 1995 and 2005, ranging from a modest 0.7 percentage point gain in Jacksonville, Florida, to a 23 percentage point gain in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.⁴ On the other side of the coin, 19 cities have experienced a decrease in their graduation rate, ranging from a decline of 0.3 percentage points in Louisville, Kentucky to a 23 percentage point drop in Las Vegas, Nevada.⁵ On average, the nation's 50 largest cities had an increase of four percentage points over this ten-year window.⁶

Of course, many factors contribute to these figures, and the devil is truly in the details. For example, some of the largest gains come from cities with very low graduation rates to start with. Ten of the fifty principal school districts began with a graduation rate of less than 39 percent in 2005 making significant, mostly double-digit improvements over this ten year period.⁷

Further, although improvements extend across most of the 50 nation's largest cities, only three of the primary school districts within these 50 cities (Mesa, Arizona; Santa Fe, New Mexico; and Tucson, Arizona) meet or exceed the national average. In fact, three of the principal school districts within the 50 largest cities have graduation rates below 40 percent (Cleveland, Ohio; Detroit, Michigan; and Indianapolis, Indiana).

Urban-Suburban Gap

A significant graduation rate gap exists between urban and suburban school districts: 18 percentage points separate the metropolitan areas of the 50 largest cities from their suburban counterparts.⁸ Fifty-nine percent of high school students in urban school districts graduate on time from high school versus 77 percent of their suburban counterparts. The urban-suburban gap is most prominent in the Northeast and Midwest, with Baltimore, Cleveland, Columbus, and Milwaukee experiencing the largest differentials. In some cases, on-time graduation is half as likely for urban students as for suburban students.⁹

But there is good news: although the urban-suburban gap is large, it is on the decline. Between 1995 and 2005, 14 of the 41 metropolitan regions analyzed by the Editorial Projects in Education Research Center saw decreases in the urban-suburban gap, though on average, the gap closed by less than a quarter percentage point per year. Many of the declines (for example, Philadelphia, Atlanta, Chicago, Columbus, El Paso, and New York) resulted from increases in graduation rates among urban school districts; however, some resulted from decreases in graduation rates on the part of suburban school districts.

Economic Impact

The economic significance of the nation's low graduation rate cannot be overstated, and the message of McKinsey and Company's recent study bears repeating:

the persistent achievement gaps facing our country impose “the economic equivalent of a permanent national recession.”¹⁰

On the macro level, McKinsey estimated the economic impact in 2008 if the United States had closed the achievement gap fifteen years after A Nation at Risk’s 1983 release across four permutations: the difference between the U.S. and foreign countries, low income and upper income students, white and minority students, and America’s high and low performing states. Their findings amount to nothing less than a multibillion dollar lost opportunity:

- Closing the international achievement gap would have produced a 9 to 16 percent gain in GDP (\$1.3 trillion to \$2.3 trillion);
- Closing the racial achievement gap would have produced a 2 to 4 percent gain in GDP (\$310 billion to \$525 billion);
- Closing the income achievement gap would have produced a 3 to 5 percent gain in GDP (\$400 billion to \$670 billion); and
- Closing the achievement gap between high and low performing states would have produced a 3 to 5 percent gain in GDP (\$425 billion to \$700 billion).¹¹

On the micro level, high school graduation is a determining factor of a student’s future income. High school dropouts are less likely to be steadily employed and earn less income when they are employed compared with those who graduate from high school. Only one-third (37 percent) of high school dropouts nationwide are steadily employed and are more than twice as likely to live in poverty.¹²

Between 1975 and 2006, income for the workforce as a whole grew, with larger income gains accruing for those with additional education. High school graduates gained 6 percent, those with some college education gained 10 percent, those with a Bachelor’s degree gained 23 percent, and those with a graduate degree gained 31 percent. Earnings only dropped over this time period for one group: those without a high school diploma had a 10 percent decline in earnings.

High school dropouts account for 13 percent of the adult population, but earn less than six percent of all dollars earned in the U.S. In the 50 largest cities, the median income for high school dropouts is \$14,000, lower than the median income of \$24,000 for high school graduates and \$48,000 for college graduates. The Editorial Projects in Education Research Center estimates that earning a high school diploma would increase one’s annual income by an average of 71 percent, or \$10,000.¹³

Contributors to the Crisis

There are two major influences in students’ lives that impact their scholastic achievement: what happens inside the school building and what happens outside of it. A number of factors contribute to the high school dropout crisis, ranging from the quality of standards and rigor in our high schools to the issues impacting students before they ever step foot into the classroom. I will highlight several of these issues, as they all must be addressed in order to strengthen student achievement.

Standards and Expectations for Graduation

In 1983, A Nation at Risk recommended that schools, colleges, and universities adopt more rigorous, measurable standards for academic performance and higher expectations for student conduct. This call for increased rigor has been carried forth by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and the Obama Administration. We need stronger, internationally-benchmarked standards, so that students, teachers, parents, and administrators understand the purpose and effectiveness of the educational system in which they are part. I was glad to see that Congress and the Administration made rigorous standards a priority in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, and I commend the Committee for holding a hearing on the topic of common national standards just a few weeks ago. We should all be encouraged by the work of the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers in their efforts with 41 states to begin developing voluntary common standards.

Today, few disagree with the need to raise expectations of student performance. We must offer our students challenging curricula and standards that are internationally benchmarked and aligned with the expectations of college and the workforce. The American Diploma Project (ADP) reports that 23 states have aligned their high school standards with the expectations of postsecondary education, and that 21 other states and the District of Columbia are in the process of moving towards such alignment. Additionally, 20 states and the District of Columbia require a college- and work-ready curriculum for graduation with eight others planning to do so. Ten states include college-readiness tests as part of their statewide assessment system, and 23 others are moving in this direction.¹⁴

Complex Challenges in the Lives of Students

We must address the quality of the educational experience for our students. Equally important, though not duly recognized, is the importance of a student's living and learning environment in affecting how he or she performs in the classroom. According to Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, "There are a set of foundational things we need to do to meet students' social and emotional needs. The more we open our school buildings to the community the more we work together, not just with our children but the families, the more we create an environment where the students can maximize their academic potential."¹⁵

For our students to be successful, we must ensure that our schools are adequately funded, our students are taught by high quality teachers, students have the opportunity to achieve rigorous standards, and schools are held accountable for student success. However, schools cannot shoulder the responsibility of educating our children and youth on their own. Every year, our students spend about 1,150 waking hours in school, and nearly five times that number (4,700 waking hours) in their families and communities.¹⁶ Today's teachers have to act as mothers, fathers, social workers, and sometimes even police officers, in addition to the central task of educating our students.

In its recent report, *Parsing the Achievement Gap II*, the Educational Testing Service (ETS) outlined 16 factors that correlate with student achievement; over half of these factors are present in a child's life before or beyond the classroom, including forced mobility, hunger and nutrition, and summer achievement gain and loss.¹⁷ Another study from the School of Education at the University of Colorado and the Education Policy Research Unit at Arizona State University outlined six "out of school" factors that limit what schools, on their own, can achieve for our students, including inadequate medical, dental, and vision care, family relations and family stress, and neighborhood characteristics.¹⁸ For example:

- **Forced Mobility:** One out of six 3rd graders has changed schools three or more times since first grade. These students are one and-a-half times more likely to perform below grade level in reading, nearly twice as likely to perform below grade level in math, and two-and-a half times more likely to repeat a grade than their more stable peers.¹⁹ With the recession and foreclosure crisis, the issue of student mobility is on the rise. Last year, a group of 330 school districts enrolled 31,000 homeless children throughout the entire school year. In just the first three months of this school year, that same group of school districts identified 41,000 homeless students, an increase of 10,000 homeless students by Thanksgiving.²⁰

- **Hunger and Nutrition:** One out of six children lives in a "food insecure" household, and minority households are 2.5 times as likely as white households to be food insecure.²¹ While a number of studies have linked improving student nutrition with measurable gains in test scores,²² Secretary Duncan states the simple fact clearly and to the point: "If children are hungry, they can't learn."²³

- **Health:** An analysis of health problems and their impact on education published by Princeton University and the Brookings Institution in *The Future of Children* estimates that differences in health problems and maternal health and behaviors may account for a quarter of the racial gap in school readiness.²⁴ A simple example of the gap in access to health services lies in the critical role played by adequate vision in the learning process. Seeing the chalkboard, being able to read the words in books, and other vision-related activities are prerequisites for learning. However, 50 percent or more poor minority and low-income children have vision problems that interfere with their academic work; and poor children have severe vision impairment at twice the normal rate.²⁵ Again, in the words of our Secretary of Education: "If a child can't see the blackboard, they can't learn."²⁶

- **Summer Achievement Gap:** Research from Johns Hopkins University found that lack of summer learning opportunities explains about two-thirds of the 9th grade achievement gap between high and low income students. Therefore, low income youth are much less likely to graduate from high school or attend college.²⁷ Here's how the summer learning gap works: The achievement gap is present once students enter school in the first grade. The gap narrows slightly during the school year, but then grows each successive summer. By the time a student reaches the 9th grade, they are often so far behind that the prospect of on-time graduation is dim.

If schools had to confront only one or two of these environmental factors, the challenge could be addressed with relative ease. However, educators must address the confluence of many of these factors at the same time, which are disproportionately concentrated in the nation's poorest schools. Less than 4 percent of white students attend schools where 70-100 percent of the students are poor. However, 40 percent of black and Latino students attend such high poverty schools. The average white student attends schools with 0-30 percent poor students; the same can be said for only one out of six black students and one out of five Latino students.²⁸ We must

“super-resource” these schools with the best teachers and comprehensive supports to address the academic and non-academic needs of these future leaders.

It is important that we have a thorough understanding of the prevalence and importance of the larger environmental factors in a student’s life that influence their academic success. Unless we address these foundational issues, not even the best teachers with the highest quality curriculum will be able to ensure that every student graduates ready for college.

This is a systemic challenge that can only be solved through innovative thinking and unprecedented partnerships. We must openly acknowledge and comprehensively address the role played by race, poverty and the host of related non-school factors in student achievement. Demographics are certainly not destiny, but we ignore them at the peril of our students and their achievement.

The Youth Voice

The youth voice is often overlooked and not included in the national dialogue on dropout prevention. In order to determine effective solutions to the crisis, their voices must be heard. America’s Promise Alliance, along with Gallup and the American Association of School Administrators, recently launched the Gallup Student Poll, a groundbreaking survey of students in grades 5–12. Gallup will conduct the poll twice annually, in March and October, and the findings will be part of the largest-ever survey of American children. The poll will help school systems and communities benchmark progress and determine solutions to the dropout crisis.

In March 2009, the Gallup Student Poll surveyed more than 70,000 students located in 18 states and the District of Columbia, and more than 330 schools and 58 school districts participated. The results were verified by polling a nationally representative sample. The poll measured three key metrics—hope, engagement and well-being—that research has shown have a meaningful impact on educational outcomes and more importantly, can be improved through deliberate action by educators, school administrators, community leaders and others. Questions focused on:

- Hope: the ideas and energy students have for the future;
- Engagement: the level of student involvement in and enthusiasm for school; and
- Well-being: how students think about and experience their lives.

Findings from the poll include:

- Half of those surveyed (50 percent) reported answers indicating they are not hopeful, with one-third (33 percent) indicating that they are stuck, while 17 percent feel discouraged.
- Nearly two in three students in grades 5–12 surveyed (63 percent) are thriving; more than one-third are struggling or suffering. Struggling and suffering students evaluate life in negative terms, struggle to meet daily demands in life and lack some of the resources needed to succeed.
- Eight in 10 (80 percent) said they smiled or laughed at school yesterday, while seven in 10 (70 percent) said they learned or did something interesting at school. Just half (52 percent) said they were treated with respect all day.

The findings from this and future Gallup Student Polls will highlight causes of the dropout crisis from the perspective of students themselves. The youth voice is a critical part of the ongoing dialogue on dropout prevention and the results can help communities across the country develop initiatives that dramatically change outcomes for our young people.

The Solution: A Comprehensive Approach

The dropout crisis calls for a holistic solution, driven by national leadership and local action. Research demonstrates that young people need five core resources to be successful in life. We refer to them as the “five promises:” caring adults, safe places, a healthy state, effective education, and opportunities to serve. These promises provide a simple but powerful framework for a robust national strategy to end the dropout crisis, and they are at the heart of the Dropout Prevention Campaign launched by America’s Promise Alliance in April 2008.

America’s Promise Alliance Dropout Prevention Campaign

The campaign begins with high-level summits in all 50 states and the 55 cities with the largest dropout rates in order to raise the visibility of America’s “silent epidemic.” Within 60 days of each summit, states and communities are required to develop action plans that include a cross section of stakeholders: educators, the business community, nonprofit organizations, and students. Communities receive technical assistance from the Alliance, utilizing Grad Nation, a comprehensive resource described in more detail below. A concentrated effort will take place in twelve communities leveraging the collective resources of the Alliance’s strongest partners.

To date, 36 high-level summits have been held in cities nationwide—bringing together more than 14,000 mayors and governors, business owners, child advocates,

school administrators, students, and parents to develop workable solutions and action plans. An additional 50 are planned before the end of the year and all 105 will be completed by April 2010. The presenting sponsor for the Dropout Prevention Campaign is the State Farm Insurance Company, and other major sponsors include AT&T, The Boeing Company, Ford Motor Company Fund, ING Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, The J. Willard and Alice S. Marriott Foundation, The Wal-Mart Foundation, Simon Foundation for Education, Chevron, Peter G. Peterson Foundation, Casey Family Programs, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, Carnegie Corporation of New York, Bank of America, The Annenberg Foundation and Capital One.

Already, cities and states that held summits last year have started implementing changes based on the discussions and early results are promising. One of the most significant success stories hails from Detroit, the first district to host a summit. The city set a ten-year goal to graduate 80% of its youth from the 35 high schools with significant dropout rates. To support this effort, the local United Way announced the creation of The Greater Detroit Venture Fund, a \$10-million fund to assist these schools and improve ACT scores so students are better prepared to apply for college. Since this summit, the city has shuttered, reconstituted, or clustered together eleven of those 35 schools as part of a comprehensive turnaround process. The effectiveness of the summits is also seen in Louisville, Kentucky, which set a 10-year goal to cut dropout rates in half, and Tulsa, Oklahoma, where as a result of their summit, an innovative career exploration program has been implemented.

Schools as Centers of Community

Across the country, schools and communities are partnering to meet the comprehensive needs facing students and increase their achievement in the classroom. I will highlight two such initiatives that demonstrate measurable results and should be brought to scale:

- While Chief Executive Officer of the Chicago Public Schools (CPS), Secretary Duncan supported 150 “community schools” that offered a range of community-based services to students including health care and after school programs, creating the nation’s largest district-led “community school” effort. An evaluation of this initiative found that nearly half of the students in “community schools” had increased math and reading grades, and that between 2001 and 2006, “community schools” had greater gains in math and reading than “regular” CPS schools.²⁹ Secretary Duncan recently said, “The money that I spent on this to open our schools longer in Chicago was arguably the best money I spent because it was so highly leveraged.”³⁰ CPS invested in both instructional improvements and support services, leveraging resources from the community into schools, and producing measurable results. This strategy should be expanded throughout the country.

- Communities In Schools (CIS) is the nation’s largest dropout prevention organization, serving 1.2 million students in 27 states. CIS partners with schools and school districts to provide at-risk students with the five core resources: caring adults, safe places during non-school hours, access to health services, marketable skills, and opportunities to give back to peers and the community. A national evaluation found that CIS schools have lower dropout rates and higher graduation rates than comparison schools.³¹ Additionally, the graduation rate increase of CIS Performance Learning Centers, offering targeted academic and support services in small settings, was three-and-a-half times greater than that of comparison schools.³²

Grad Nation

Grad Nation is a first-of-its-kind research-based toolkit for communities seeking to reduce their dropout rate and better support young people through high school graduation and beyond. With more than one million students dropping out of high school each year, Grad Nation is specifically designed to offer solutions and tools for every size community and presents a compelling case for all sectors of society to get involved. The guidebook is part of the Alliance’s Dropout Prevention Campaign, which launched in April 2008, and is sponsoring 105 Dropout Prevention Summits in all 50 states through 2010.

Commissioned by the Alliance and authored by Robert Balfanz, Ph.D. and Joanna Honig Fox from the Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University and John M. Bridgeland and Mary McNaught of Civic Enterprises, Grad Nation brings together—in one place—the nation’s best evidence-based practices for keeping young people in school. It includes information on everything from making the case to the community on the need to act to establishing “early warning” systems, implementing effective school transformation strategies, and building proven “multiple pathways” to graduation, as well as wrapping the most appropriate services around students so they can surmount the challenges they face.

Grad Nation gives communities a comprehensive set of tools necessary to rally collective support to end the dropout crisis, understand and communicate the dimensions of the dropout challenge in a particular, develop effective action strategies to improve graduation rates, prepare youth for advanced learning after high school, and build strong, lasting partnerships that involve all sectors of a community.

Federal Policy Recommendations

The federal government has the opportunity and the responsibility to be a strong partner with states and communities in addressing the dropout crisis. Federal education policy currently does little to support the nation's high schools, and that must change. I recommend the following:

- **Schools as Centers of Community:** The administration has outlined five pillars for education reform: expanding access to early childhood; world-class college- and career-ready standards and assessments, teacher effectiveness, innovation/excellence with a focus on low-performing schools, and increasing the number of people pursuing higher education. To these five items, I suggest adding a sixth: Schools as Centers of Community. We must address both what happens inside the classroom and outside of it in order to strengthen graduation rates and prepare our students for college. By making schools the centers of our communities, we can leverage the resources of a wide range of stakeholders in supporting the success of our students. This must be a priority for the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). As a potential first step, I encourage Congress to fund the President's proposal for "Promise Neighborhoods" to address the effects of poverty and improve educational achievements and life outcomes for our children.

- **Turnaround Low Performing High Schools:** Important legislation was introduced in the previous Congress that would create an appropriate federal role in the improvement of the nation's high schools. The Graduation Promise Act (H.R. 2928/110th Congress), introduced by Representative Ruben Hinojosa, authorizes \$2.5 billion annually in order to target resources toward those high schools producing substantial numbers of high school dropouts. This legislation is comprehensive, data-driven, and strikes the right balance between federal support and local control.

- **Promote Innovation:** Every high school is different, and although they face similar challenges, there is no "one size fits all" solution to the dropout crisis. Congress should pass the Secondary School Innovation Fund Act (H.R. 2239), introduced by Representative David Loebsack, in order to support and evaluate innovative approaches to turning around the nation's lowest performing high schools. We must learn more about the most effective strategies, and bring them to scale.

- **High School Accountability:** As we provide additional resources to turnaround low performing high schools, we must hold them accountable for results. The Every Student Counts Act (H.R. 1569) codifies into law and strengthens much of the policy that the Department of Education has recently implemented through regulation regarding graduation rates, including a common definition of the graduation rate and reasonable requirements for growth in order for schools to make adequate yearly progress under No Child Left Behind.

- **Comprehensive Student Supports:** Several bills have been introduced that support the vision of "schools as centers of community." The WE CARE Act (H.R. 3762/110th Congress), introduced in the previous Congress by Representative David Loebsack, inserts the notion of schools as centers of community throughout Title I, Part A of ESEA. The centerpiece of the proposal is an incentive fund to support "community involvement policies" at the local level that would support partnerships among school districts and community organizations to leverage local resources in order to meet students' non-academic needs and prepare them for success in the classroom.

The Full Service Community Schools Act (H.R. 2323/110th Congress) was introduced by Majority Leader Steny Hoyer and would fund partnerships between schools and community organizations to provide student support services in schools. The Department of Education received a \$5 million appropriation for this purpose and last year received 400 applications but was only able to fund 10 proposals.

The Keeping Parents and Communities Engaged Act (S.1302/110th Congress) was introduced by Senator Edward Kennedy and would provide grants to school districts for parent and community engagement coordinators, for community based organizations to leverage services into schools, and for partnerships among mayors, school districts, and community organizations to renovate schools so they can be more effectively used as centers of community.

- **FY 2010 Appropriations:** I urge Congress to fund the High School Graduation Initiative proposed by the President, as well as his proposed increase for School Improvement Grants, to turn around the nation's lowest performing high schools.

Conclusion

We do not have to live in a country where three out of 10 students do not graduate on time, and where on-time graduation for minority students is a 50-50 proposition. What I hope you take away from this testimony are four key points:

- You are right to focus on the high school dropout crisis; it is our most pressing national challenge and we don't have time for incremental progress.
- The crisis results from a combination of factors in schools and in the lives of our students; we must address both in order to increase graduation rates.
- We have solutions on the ground, and legislative proposals that will bring them to scale.
- By passing these proposals, we will solve this problem, fortify our economy, and provide our students with the opportunity to experience the promise of America.

ENDNOTES

¹McKinsey and Company (2009). The Economic Impact of the Achievement Gap in America's Schools. Retrieved May 6, 2009 from <http://www.mckinsey.com/client/service/socialsector/achievement-gap-report.pdf>.

²Christopher Swanson (2009). Cities in Crisis 2009: Closing the Graduation Gap: Educational and Economic Conditions in America's Largest Cities. Bethesda, Maryland: Editorial Projects in Education Research Center.

³The principal school districts of America's 50 largest cities collectively educate 1.7 million public high school students and produce 279,000 of the 1.2 million high school students who do not graduate on time (Ibid., p. 13).

⁴Swanson, 2009.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰McKinsey and Company (2009).

¹¹Swanson, 2009.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴American Diploma Project Network, Closing the Expectations Gap. Washington, DC: Achieve, Inc., 2009. Retrieved May 6, 2009 from <http://www.achieve.org/closingtheexpectationsgap2009>.

¹⁵Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education, Interview with Charlie Rose, available at <http://www.charlierose.com/view/interview/10140>

¹⁶David Berliner (2009). Poverty and Potential: Out-of-School Factors and School Success. Boulder and Tempe: Education and the Public Interest Center and Education Policy Research Unit. Retrieved May 6, 2009 from <http://epicpolicy.org/publication/poverty-and-potential>.

¹⁷Paul Barton and Richard Coley (2009). Parsing the Achievement Gap II. Princeton, New Jersey: Educational Testing Service. Note: This report uses the term "frequent school changes." I use the term "forced mobility" because it more accurately describes the living circumstances of our most at-risk students that, in turn, causes reductions in school performance. For additional information, see Duffield and Lovell (endnote 20).

¹⁸Berliner, 2009.

¹⁹General Accounting Office. (1994). Elementary school children: Many change schools frequently, harming their education (GAO/HEHS-94-45). Washington, DC: Author.

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²²Barton and Coley, 2009.

²³Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education, Interview with Charlie Rose, available at <http://www.charlierose.com/view/interview/10140>

²⁴Janet Currie (2005). Health Disparities and Gaps in School Readiness. *Future of Children*, vol. 15, no. 1, 117-138. Retrieved May 6, 2009 from <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/future-of-children/v015/15.1currie.pdf>.

²⁵Richard Rothstein (2004). *Class and Schools: Using Social, Economic, And Educational Reform to Close the Black-White Achievement Gap*. Washington, DC and New York: Economic Policy Institute and Teachers College Press.

²⁶Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education, Interview with Charlie Rose, available at <http://www.charlierose.com/view/interview/10140>

²⁷Karl Alexander, et al., "Lasting Consequences of the summer learning gap." *American Sociological Review*, v72, April 2007. Retrieved May, 6, 2008 from <http://www.asanet.org/galleries/default-file/April07ASRFeature.pdf>.

²⁸Berlin, 2009.

²⁹Samuel Whalen (2007). *Three Years Into Chicago's Community Schools Initiative: Progress, Challenges, and Emerging Lessons*. Chicago: College of Education, University of Illinois at Chicago.

³⁰Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education, Interview with Charlie Rose, available at <http://www.charlierose.com/view/interview/10140>

³¹Communities In Schools (2008). Communities In Schools and the Model of Integrated Student Services: A Proven Solution to America's Dropout Epidemic. Alexandria, VA: Author. Retrieved May 6, 2009 at <http://www.cisnet.org/about/NationalEvaluation/Normal.asp?Segment=5.0>. The evaluation found: "For every 1,000 high school students, 36 more students at high implementing CIS schools remain in school" (p.5).

³²The Performance Learning Center: Communities In Schools Small Schools Model Promoting Graduation and College Readiness. Presentation for the Alliance for Excellent Education on April 22, 2009. In author's possession.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you.
Mr. Gordon?

**STATEMENT OF SCOTT GORDON, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,
MASTERY CHARTER SCHOOLS**

Mr. GORDON. Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for inviting me here. My name is Scott Gordon. I am the CEO of Mastery Charter Schools in Philadelphia.

Mastery operates four schools, serving 1,700 students in grades 7 through 12. Three of those schools were turnarounds of failing school district middle schools. As a turnaround, Mastery enrolled the existing students and continued operating the school as a neighborhood school.

So, in many ways, these turnaround schools are perfectly controlled experiments for school reform: the same students, the same neighborhood, the same buildings. The only variable that changed were the adults.

So why is this important for us today? To answer that question, I want to put the problem we face in secondary education in context. Take a moment and examine how the current system is serving the children in my hometown of Philadelphia.

Every year, approximately 20,000 first-graders will enter Philadelphia public schools. In a globally competitive, knowledge-based economy, most of us would agree that, 12 years later, we want to see those 20,000 first-graders enter college and graduate. So how are we doing?

Philadelphia's dropout rate is 47 percent. So 9,400 of those 20,000 students will never even make it to their high school graduation. Of the 10,600 students who remain, two-thirds will not be able to score "proficient" on the Pennsylvania State Standardized Assessment. This assessment is a basic competency test, essentially the minimum a high school student should know, and it is statistically correlated to college graduation.

That leaves just 3,500 students with a shot at graduating college, 3,500 students of 20,000 who began, a failure rate of 82 percent.

It gets worse. The national college persistence rate for African Americans is just 40 percent. So it is likely that less than half of the students who graduated from high school will actually persist and obtain a college degree.

An absolute catastrophe, year after year. As educators, our job is to educate young people as citizens who are productive participants in our economy. We are not even close. Our house truly is on fire.

We do not need to tolerate this failure. In Mastery's three turnaround schools, average scores on the Pennsylvania assessment increased 35 points per grade in every subject, violence decreased 85 percent, student turnover decreased by a third.

And these were Philadelphia's most difficult schools. To give you a snapshot, the Shoemaker Middle School, which we turned around in 2006, was the city's second most violent school. That means two police officers for just over 300 13-, 14-, and 15-year-old kids, yet those police officers were unable to prevent eight adults from being assaulted.

At the Pickett Middle School, which we converted just last year, 7 percent of seventh-graders were proficient in reading and 9 percent were proficient in math.

Yet, at the Shoemaker School, it took Mastery just 2 years to close the achievement gap between the low-income, minority students we serve and their statewide peers. At the Pickett School, Mastery increased test scores over 40 points in just 1 year.

It can be done. And I am here to represent a proof point that we can turn around failing urban schools. It can be done, it can be done quickly, and it can be done at scale.

How? First, we need urgency and accountability. Set the bar high. Without high standards in No Child Left Behind, there will be no pressure for change. You will hear critics say that standardized tests do not appropriately assess a child's learning or preparedness for college, that it will result in teaching to the test. Why don't we hear the same outcry about AP tests or SAT tests or ACT tests? As knowledge jobs move across the globe to places that have a highly educated workforce, I don't imagine our peers in Beijing or Seoul or Warsaw suggesting that the test is the problem.

According to the OECD, our Nation has slipped to 18th in reading and 28th in math in international rankings. It is not because we are teaching to the test; it is because our students can't pass the test. We need more accountability, not less.

Second, we need to ruthlessly focus on outcomes. Grow what works, and eliminate what doesn't. We exercise this common sense in every aspect of our society except education. In education, there are ongoing conversations about process and means. At high school levels, conferences are filled with lively debates about making curriculum more relevant, about making it more project-based, about learning communities, about whether the charter school growth is good or bad. Don't listen. Instead, as policymakers, I urge you to focus on outcomes and accountability only, not the means. The house is on fire. Reward those who produce results now.

In education, we have the notion that schools operate differently from the rest of the economy; schools are not like the private sector because kids are not like widgets. Fair enough. But adults are still adults. And the commonsense management practices that drive successful organizations, be they hospitals, software companies, or schools, are still the same: High-performing organizations set clear goals. They hold management and employees accountable for results. They hire high-quality talent. They promote the best. They supervise staff and monitor their performance.

In contrast, at public schools, pay and promotion is based on seniority or educational degrees and certification that have no proven relationship with student outcomes. Teachers are observed twice a year for 45 minutes. Imagine running an organization where you do not set goals for your staff, you do not supervise them, you do

not reward good performance nor react to low performance. An 82 percent failure rate would not be a surprise.

You can accelerate change by rewarding what works and penalizing what doesn't. Encourage failing schools to be closed, and turn them around. In Philadelphia, under the leadership of our new superintendent, Arlene Ackerman, we are going to close 35 schools over the next 4 years. Turnaround managers, such as Mastery, as well as internal district turnaround teams, will be contracted to manage these schools. Managers who do not produce results will lose their contracts: Simple.

Support bold initiatives like this. By creating an accountability system, we can leverage what works and create pressure for real systemic change. Thank you.

[The statement of Mr. Gordon follows:]

Prepared Statement of Scott Gordon, CEO, Mastery Charter Schools

Mr. Chairman and Distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to be here.

My name is Scott Gordon and I am the CEO of Mastery Charter Schools in Philadelphia. Mastery operates four schools serving 1,700 students in grades 7-12. Three of those schools were turnarounds of failing School District middle schools. The turnarounds were initiated at the request of the School District of Philadelphia, under then Superintendent Paul Vallas. The structure of the turnarounds required that Mastery continue operating as a neighborhood schools and enroll all of the students currently attending. So, in many ways these turnaround schools are perfect controlled experiments on school reform. The same students, the same neighborhood, the same building—the only variable that changed was the adults.

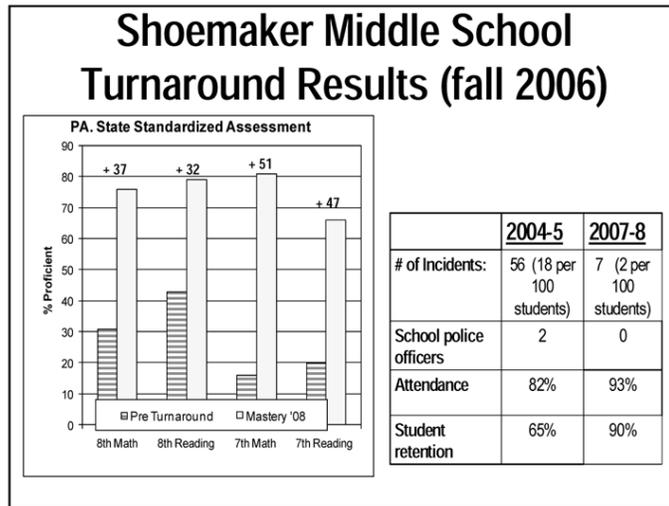
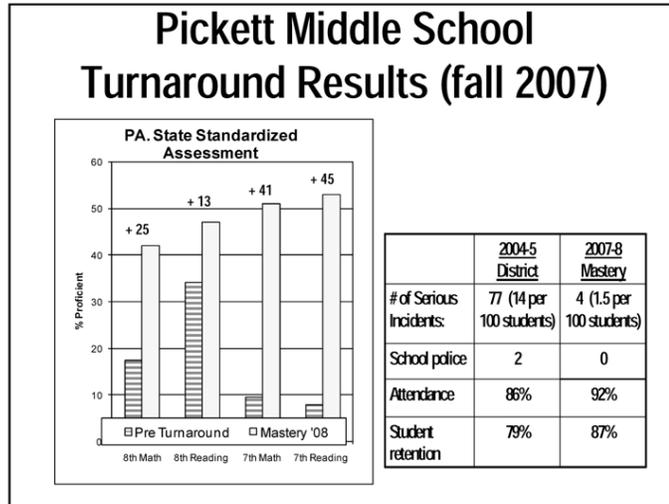
So why is this important?

To answer that question, I want to put the problem we face in secondary education in context. Let's take a moment and examine how well the current system is achieving its goals in my hometown, Philadelphia.

Every year approximately 20,000 first graders enter Philadelphia's public schools. In a globally competitive, knowledge-based economy, most of us would agree that 12 years later, we need the overwhelming majority of those 20,000 first graders to enroll and graduate from college. So, let's look at how well we are doing * * * With a drop-out rate of 47%, 9,400 of those students will never even make it to their high school graduation. Of the 10,600 students who remain, two-thirds will not be able to score proficient on the Pennsylvania State Assessment. This assessment is a basic competency test—the minimum a high school student should know—and is statistically correlated with college success. Essentially that means that two-thirds of students who receive a high school diploma will not have the skills required for post-secondary education. That leaves just 3,500 students with a shot at graduating college. 3,500 students of the 20,000 who began—a failure rate of 82%. And unfortunately the national college persistence rate for African Americans is just 40%—so it is likely that less than half of the students who start as college freshman will actually graduate with a degree. 20,000 students go into the system, less than 3,000 students come out of the system ready to compete in today's economy. An absolute catastrophe. Year after year. Our house is on fire. As educators, our job is to prepare young people as citizens who are productive participants in our economy. We are not even close. We are failing generations of youth in urban schools across our nation.

We do not need to tolerate this failure. In Mastery's three turnaround schools, average scores on the Pa. assessment test increased 35 percentage points per grade in every subject. Violence decreased 85%. Student turnover dropped by a third. And these schools were Philadelphia's most difficult. Let me give you a snapshot. Shoemaker Middle School, which we turned around in 2006, was the city's 2nd most violent school. There were 2 police officers for 300 13, 14 and 15 year olds. Yet those officers were not able to prevent 8 adults from being assaulted. At the Pickett middle school, which we turned-around in 2007, just 7% of 7th graders scored proficient in reading and 9% in math. Yet, at Shoemaker it took Mastery just two years to close the achievement gap between our low-income, minority students and their state-wide peers—in fact our students are now closing the gap with the highest performing suburban schools. The school recently won the EPIC award for value added

academic achievement. At the Pickett school, Mastery increased test scores over 40 percentage points in just one year.



It Can Be Done. I am here today to represent a proof point that we can turnaround failing urban schools. It can be done and it can be done quickly at scale. There are no excuses.

How?

First, we need urgency and accountability. Set the bar high. College readiness must be the bar for nearly all of our youth. Without high standards in NCLB, there will be no pressure to change our schools. You will hear critics say that standardized tests do not appropriately assess a child's learning or preparedness for college—that they result in “teaching to the test”. Why don't we hear the same outcry against AP tests? Or the SAT or ACT? As knowledge jobs move across the globe to the places that have a highly educated workforce, I don't imagine our peers in Bei-

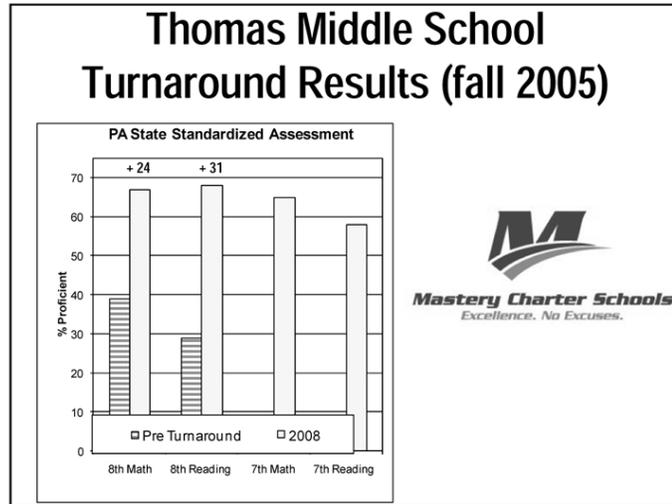
jing, or Seoul, or Warsaw, suggesting that the test is the problem. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development our nation has slipped to 18th in reading and 28th in Math in international rankings of education. It is not because we are teaching to the test. It is because our students can't pass the test. We need more accountability, not less. Do not water-down NCLB requirements.

Second, we need to ruthlessly focus on outcomes. Grow what works and eliminate what doesn't. We exercise this type of common sense in every area of our society—except education. In education, there is an ongoing conversation about process and means. At the high school level, conferences are filled with lively debates about making the curriculum more “relevant” and “project-based” and about creating “learning communities”. Endless debates continue over the growth of charter schools. Don't listen. Instead, as policy makers I urge you to focus on outcomes and accountability and not the means. The house is on fire. Reward whoever produces results now.

In education, we have the notion that schools operate differently than the rest of the economy—schools are not like traditional businesses because “kids are not widgets”. They are not. But adults are still adults—and the common sense management practices that drive successful organizations—be they hospitals, software companies, or schools—are the same. High performing organizations set clear goals. They hold management and employees accountable for results. They measure progress continually and adjust to meet changing conditions. They hire the highest quality talent, and promote the best. They supervise staff, monitoring and supporting their performance. They promote the high performers and exit non-performers—basic functions of management. In contrast, at most public schools, pay is based on seniority or educational degrees that have no proven relationship with student outcomes. Folks are promoted based on their certifications, not performance. Teachers are observed for 45 minutes twice a year. As a field we don't attract the best and brightest. We don't fire the worst. We quibble over whether we should extend teachers' contract to an 8 hour day. We have an 82% failure rate—I can assure you it will take an 8 hour day to put out this fire. Imagine running an organization where you do not set goals for your staff, where you do not supervise them, and you do not reward good performance or respond to low performance.

By setting the bar high and by demanding accountability, you will force education to change. You can accelerate that change by rewarding what works and penalizing what doesn't. Encourage failing schools to be closed and turn them around. In Philadelphia, under the leadership of our new Superintendent Arlene Ackerman, we are going to close up to 35 schools over the next four years. Turnaround managers such as Mastery, as well as internal District turnaround teams, will be contracted to turnaround these schools. Those who succeed will have the opportunity to manage additional schools. Those who don't produce results, will lose their contract. Simple. Support bold initiatives like this. By creating an accountability system, we can leverage what works to put pressure for systems change.

Thank you for your time.



It Can Be Done.

Mastery Charter Schools
Excellence. No Excuses.

Scott.Gordon@Masterycharter.org

Chairman MILLER. Thank you.
Dr. Phillips?

STATEMENT OF VICKI L. PHILLIPS, ED.D., DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION FOR THE U.S. PROGRAM, BILL AND MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION

Ms. PHILLIPS. Chairman Miller, members of the committee, thank you so much for continuing to confront some of the most im-

portant challenges of American education and for the privilege of being here.

The crisis in American high schools is brutally simple: Too few students are making strong academic gains during the high school years. For too many students, academic performance remains flat or even declines in high school. And this is especially true among the populations that are of special concern to our Foundation. The result is that too few of our high school graduates are prepared for the rigors of college or the demands of competitive jobs.

You heard several people in this hearing refer to the NAEP scores that have remained essentially flat for 17-year-olds since the 1970s. Darv Winnick, chairman of NAGBE, the board that oversees NAEP, said it best: “If you asked me what is the single most perplexing problem since I have gotten involved in education, that is it. The data is not only flat, but it is flat while kids are taking more math.” We need to face the fact that too many students are frozen in high school; they are not graduating ready for the demands of college, work, and life.

At the Foundation, we have learned about this crisis from research, as well as from our own work over the last 9 years. Our early investments focused on small schools, and we found some success in improving graduation rates. But much more rarely did we see the significant gains in academic performance or increases in college readiness.

Our next-generation strategy to radically increase the number of low-income students who graduate from high school college- and work-ready has three parts based on the evidence we have gathered: the primacy of effective teaching; the importance of a common core of standards that are fewer, clearer, and higher; and the pursuit of innovative approaches that would lead to breakthrough performance. I want to comment briefly on all three.

Effective teachers play the single most important role in accelerating student achievement. No other factor within our power to change has this great an impact. We can’t fix this just by recruiting teachers with stronger credentials. After numerous studies, we can say with confidence that master’s degrees in education, high SAT scores, high scores on certification exams, and other credentials do not predict effective teaching very well.

The Foundation has made a centerpiece of its strategy increasing the number of effective teachers teaching low-income children. We are investing heavily in developing measures to determine reliably which teachers are effective and which are not. We are also researching the most promising ways of making the teachers that we have be their most effective in the classroom.

As you know from your recent hearing, there is a lot of discussion about national standards these days. And those national or core standards are key to our strategy, as well. But the real question is not whether standards will be local or State or national, but whether they will be focused enough on what the evidence shows is most central to student success. Everybody knows that standards is not enough; there is also a need for assessment—not just assessment for accountability, which is important, but also assessment for teaching and learning, which is what teachers need in the classroom but which has not had nearly the same level of investment.

Beyond standards and assessment, we will support the building of a spine of excellent materials to support excellent classroom work, built on technology that allows easy access and sharing of students and teachers alike.

The hard part of the standards process will be making the radical leap from the vast numbers of standards States have today to a focused core that can really accelerate performance. Everyone can posture about whose standards are higher. What takes real courage is making the tough choices about the fewer things that demand students' and teachers' attention and that lead students to be college-ready.

The other benefit of common standards and the last piece in our strategy is that they will foster innovation across classrooms, districts, and States. With a common focused core, we can broadly share innovations that most accelerate performance in specific areas and skill sets.

The evidence is clear that the combination of high schools as currently constructed and the current tools in our hands are simply not sufficient. We cannot make a leap in performance without a leap in innovation that much more directly and productively engages students and accelerates their learning.

As a Foundation, we will continue to fund school models that break the mold and achieve results and next-generation models that support teaching and learning that really accelerate, dramatically, performance.

For all three elements of this strategy, we will need data systems and assessments that tell us clearly which students and which classrooms are making gains. Today, despite hundreds of millions invested in data systems and assessments, we do not have the crucial information we need: which teachers are already effective, which are not, which teachers are becoming more effective, which teachers are teaching which kids. This progress will only be possible if we have common data standards to drive sharing of information and reduce costs.

I want to end with just three quick messages that I am most concerned to convey to this committee. We must shift our focus from credentials to demonstrated effectiveness in the classroom, from teacher quality as measured on paper to teacher effectiveness as measured by student outcomes.

The common core of standards must be based on evidence as to what is truly and demonstrably necessary for college work, not political or ideological turf battles. The standards must be focused enough to make mastery possible for more kids and to support teachers in developing their craft in teaching their subject.

Finally, support the innovations that can demonstrate performance leaps. Be even bolder in models that break the traditions of seat time and credits. And keep your eye, as Mr. Gordon said, keep all of our eyes, on the academic growth of students.

When I was the State Secretary of Education in Pennsylvania, we chose to call our high school reform agenda Project 720. Given that there are roughly 180 days in a school year and 4 years of high school, you have only 720 days to prepare students for the demands of college work and life. Those days and years are far too short and far too precious to continue to waste.

Thank you for giving this issue your attention.
[The statement of Ms. Phillips follows:]

Prepared Statement of Dr. Vicki Phillips, Director, Education, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Chairman Miller, Ranking Member McKeon, Members of the Committee, thank you for allowing me to speak to you today about the crisis in American High Schools. It is a privilege to join this group of friends and partners you have convened to inform your work on this issue. Educators across the country are grateful to this Committee and its members for their past work, and present commitment, to addressing the most important challenges of American education.

The Problem

The crisis in American high schools is brutally simple: too few students are making strong academic gains during the high school years. Indeed, for too many students, academic performance remains flat or even declines in high school—and this is especially the case among those student populations which are of special concern to our Foundation. The result is that too few of our high school graduates are prepared for the rigors of college or the demands of competitive jobs.

The flatline of high school performance is well-documented by NAEP as well as other indicators (see attached Figures 1 and 2 for the NAEP trends in reading and math). Flat scores in math and reading for older students have persisted since the early 1970s—despite the fact that in math for example, the proportion of 13-year-olds taking algebra has more than doubled from 1986 to 2008. Darv Winnick, Chairman of NAGBE, which over sees NAEP said it best:

If you ask me, What is the single most perplexing problem since I've gotten involved in education, that's it * * * The data is not only flat, but it is flat while the kids are taking more math.¹

We need to face the fact that too many students in high school are frozen; they are not making nearly the academic progress they need to make to be ready for the demands of college, work and life.

What We Have Learned and Implications for Strategy

We have learned about this crisis from the research as well as from our own work over the past 9 years. Our early investments focused on small schools—and we found some success in improving graduation rates, but much more rarely did we see significant gains in academic performance or increased college readiness.

We realized that students needed to make a breakthrough in performance. The structural and design changes in schools we focused on in our earlier work simply did not yield those gains. So we reviewed the evidence in an effort to determine what would contribute most. We took a close look at the schools that were most successful. We took at critical eye to our track record. But we also looked outside of our work to what worked elsewhere as well as what the research says.

Our strategy to radically increase the number of low income students who graduate college and work ready—who actually learn in high school—has three parts based on the evidence we gathered: the primacy of effective teaching; the importance of a common core of standards that are fewer, clearer and higher; and the pursuit of innovative approaches that would lead to breakthrough performance.

I will address each of these components briefly.

1. Teacher effectiveness and empowerment

A. Effective teachers play the single most important role in accelerating student achievement. The data here are overwhelming. A body of research spanning 30 years has demonstrated that the differences between top quartile and bottom quartile teachers account for vast differences in student growth, as much as a quarter of the achievement gap per year.

No other factor within our power has this great an impact on student achievement. Different teachers within schools make twice the difference that different schools make. An effective teacher is far more important than smaller class size; even in the earliest grades (k-2), where the effects of class size are strongest, it is five times more important to have an effective teacher than a small classroom. Our considered position is that we cannot narrow the gap or substantially raise performance for all without dramatically increasing the percentage of effective teachers.

B. We can't fix this just by recruiting teachers with stronger credentials. After numerous studies, we can say with confidence that master's degrees in education in

¹Older Students Less Successful on Math NAEP. Education Week, April 28, 2009

no way predict which teachers will be effective in the classroom. Likewise high SAT scores, high scores on certification exams, and other impressive credentials fail to predict effective teaching very well. Because we don't know how to predict who will be effective in the classroom and who won't, credentials are a very blunt instrument and will not take us very far.

As a result of those findings, the Foundation has made a centerpiece of its strategy increasing the number of effective teachers teaching low income children. We are investing heavily in developing measures to determine reliably which teachers are effective and which are not.

We are also researching the most promising ways of making the teachers we have more effective. It is essential that we develop and distribute proven mechanisms to improve the effectiveness of teachers. Through several in-depth district partnerships, we will work on realigning policies and practices to better measure and increase the numbers of effective teachers. We will announce those partnerships later this year.

2. Supporting standards that are fewer, clearer and higher, and meaningfully assessing them

As you know from your recent hearing, there is a lot of discussion about national standards these days. But the real question is not whether standards will be local or state or national, but whether they will be focused enough on what the evidence shows is most essential.

Once again the evidence is clear. In both math and English language arts, the standards process is asking students and teachers to undertake too much that is not central to success. In mathematics, it has long been known that high performing countries focus their curriculum far more than we do in this country.

My own commitment to standards that are fewer, clearer, and higher comes partially from my work closer to home. When I was Secretary of Education in Pennsylvania, we drove the development of anchor standards which for the first time gave teachers and students a much more vivid view of the core that really mattered for achievement.

In English Language Arts, students are overwhelmed with complex requirements, when what they really must do in order to be successful is to read complex texts of all types—in history and science, not just English. Without a strong reading core, students cannot gain knowledge through reading and must be spoon-fed by simplistic presentations that don't mirror the demands of college and good jobs.

Likewise, without mastery of essentials in mathematics they are limited throughout their work in math, science, and even social science, and they get passed along to the next math course without a secure footing in the last one. We at the foundation are excited that state governors and chief state school officers have embarked on a process to define a core set of common standards in Reading, Writing and Math.

Now we all have to ensure that the core that emerges is truly based on what students need to be college and work ready. The core needs to be demanding enough so that students have the mastery to apply these core skills to diverse courses and tasks. For the past two years, we have funded the collection of specific evidence as to what are the core skills most essential for college and work success, and we aim to ensure that evidence plays a strong role in producing standards that are truly fewer, clearer, and higher.

Everybody knows that standards are not enough. There is also a need for assessment—not just assessment for accountability, which is important, but also assessment for teaching and learning, which is what teachers need in the classroom but which has not had nearly the same level of investment.

Beyond standards and assessment, we will support the building of a spine of excellent materials to support excellent classroom work, built on technology that allows easy access and sharing by students and teachers alike

The hard part of this standards process will be making the radical leap from the vast numbers of standards states have today to a focused core that can accelerate performance. Dedicating ourselves to the fewer standards of what students really need for college and career readiness will require courage. Everyone can posture about whose standards are higher—what takes courage is making the tough choices about the fewer things that demand students and teachers attention.

3. Support for breakthrough innovations and school models that dramatically accelerate performance

The other benefit of common standards—provided they are focused—is that they will foster innovation across classrooms, districts and states for the first time. With

a common focused core we will share innovations that most accelerate performance in specific skills and skill areas.

The evidence is clear that the combination of high schools as currently constructed and the tools in our hands will not be sufficient to meet our goal of 80% of low income students ready for college by 2025. We cannot make a leap in performance without a leap in innovation that much more directly and productively engages students in accelerating their learning.

We are going to continue to fund school models that break the mold and achieve results, and next generation models of teaching and learning. The measure for the success of any innovation will be true acceleration of performance—as measured by student achievement.

Over the next few years, we will be particularly focused on driving innovations that accelerate academic performance in 9th grade. 9th grade, a transitional year, is particularly critical—students' achievement in 9th grade is remarkably predictive of their later performance. If students fall behind in this crucial year, it is very hard to catch up. The good news is that if students in 9th grade make sufficient academic progress they are often on their way to success. I saw how important 9th grade performance was to my students in Portland, and from my seat at the foundation can see it is a national issue. Of course, we need kids to accelerate earlier, especially in middle school as well.

Data systems and assessments that make progress in high school classrooms visible are essential

For all three elements of the strategy, we are going to need data systems and assessments that tell us clearly which students in which classrooms are making gains. Today, despite hundreds of millions invested in data systems and assessments, we do not have the most crucial information we need: which teachers already are effective, which teachers are not, and which teachers are becoming more effective. Among many other things, this requires linkages between students and teachers, which today are often incomplete; we do not know which teachers are teaching which kids. Recently there has been increased focus on the importance of data and measurement systems at the federal, state and local levels. The Foundation is preparing a data strategy to improve demand and use, and advance an architecture of common data standards that would enable states and districts to implement these systems in a cost-effective way. We would be happy to brief the Committee on this strategy as it evolves.

Conclusions and Recommendations

That is an outline of the Foundation's strategy to accelerate academic performance in high school. I would like to end with the messages I am most concerned to convey in these remarks to your Committee:

1. We must shift our focus from credentials to demonstrated effectiveness in the classroom: from teacher quality as measured on paper, to teacher effectiveness as measured by student outcomes.

2. The common core of standards must be based on evidence as to what is truly and demonstrably necessary for college and work, not political or ideological turf battles. The standards must be focused enough to make mastery possible for more kids and to support teachers in developing their craft in teaching their subject.

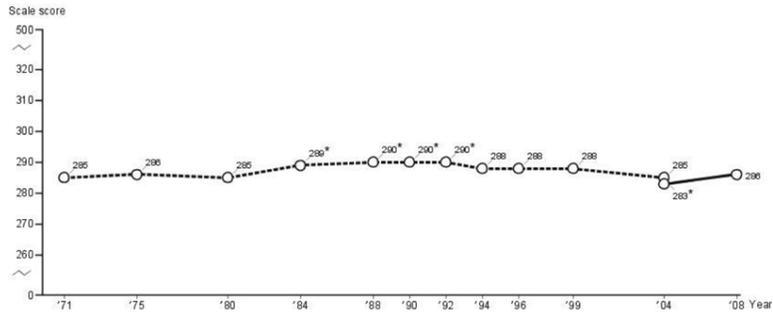
3. Support the innovations that can demonstrate performance leaps. Be even bolder in models that break the traditions of seat time and credits and keep our eye on academic growth of students.

We cannot succeed if high school is a stopping point. But we all know it doesn't have to be. When Socrates taught, through his famous conversations, he preferred to talk to young people, most of them adolescents who would have been in high school. He knew that if you spark a young person's mind during the critical period in which they are becoming an adult, you can change forever how they will develop as students and citizens.

When I was in the State Secretary of Education in PA, we chose to call our high school reform agenda Project 720. Given there are roughly 180 instructional days in each school year, in four years of high school you have only 720 days to prepare students for the demands of college, work, and life. Those days and years are far too short and far too precious to waste.

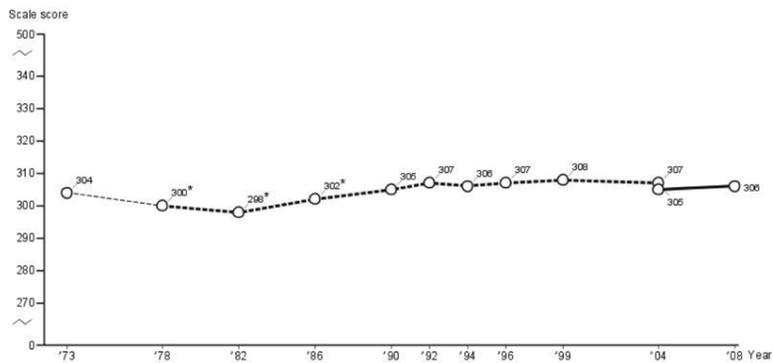
ATTACHMENTS

Figure 1. Trend in NAEP reading average scores for 17-year-old students



Source: http://nationsreportcard.gov/ltt_2008/ltt0003.asp?subtab_id=Tab_3&tab_id=tab1#chart

Figure 2. Trend in NAEP mathematics average scores for 17-year-old students



Source: http://nationsreportcard.gov/ltt_2008/ltt0002.asp?subtab_id=Tab_3&tab_id=tab1#chart

Chairman MILLER. Thank you.
Governor Wise?

STATEMENT OF BOB WISE, PRESIDENT, ALLIANCE FOR EXCELLENT EDUCATION; FORMER GOVERNOR OF WEST VIRGINIA

Mr. WISE. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee. It is good to be back in front of you.

You have called this hearing at just a critical time, and it is titled exactly right, "America's Competitiveness Through High School Reform."

As I was coming up here today, I was listening to the radio. The market was dropping somewhat. By 5 o'clock, who knows whether it will be down, it will be down a few points. But before we go home from this hearing today, the human capital market will have

dropped 7,000; 7,000 kids will have dropped out of high school before we go home. And they will drop out each and every school day of the year. That is about 1.2 million, is the human capital cost.

And so, my colleagues at this panel have spoken eloquently and well and have made the case—and taken a lot of my testimony—about the moral impact of dropouts. So I am going to talk some about the economic impact, as well. Because 60 percent of current jobs today—today—require education beyond high school, postsecondary education. The nation, our Nation's economic competitiveness is inextricably linked to how well we educate our citizens. And in an information-age economy, education is the main currency.

Now, this committee has been the leader—and I want to thank you—you have been the leader in putting high school and high school issues and dropouts on the national agenda, starting several years ago.

The most recent scream for help for high schools came last week with the release of the National Assessment of Educational Progress, or NAEP, long-term trends. Despite education performance gains by 9- and 13-year-olds, essentially no progress has been made since 1971 by 17-year-olds. If this flat trend line were an electrocardiogram, the emergency room doctor would be applying the defibrillator. And perhaps that is what the education stimulus package is about.

The state of our high schools, as has been noted already, is reflected in international comparisons. Our 15-year-olds are 25th in math, 21st in science, 15th in reading literacy, 24th in problem solving, supposedly our strong suit. And that is compared with the 30 other industrialized nations that we compete with.

The reason we have declined in these comparisons isn't because we are educating worse, it is because other nations are now educating much better. And make no mistake, how we fare in international education comparisons will soon correspond directly to how we fare in international economic comparisons.

Now, there are two groups affected when someone drops out: first, the individual, himself or herself; and then the rest of society. We know that, according to the Department of Labor, in the coming years, 90 percent of new high-growth, high-wage jobs require some postsecondary education. Sixty percent of current jobs, as I mentioned, already do.

Before I left office in 2004, I visited many of the industries, traditional industries in West Virginia that I had worked with since I graduated from high school in 1966. I didn't need a high school diploma to get a good-paying job in coal mines, the steel mills, or the chemical plants. Today I couldn't get in any one of those without postsecondary education.

So, currently, this Congress is grappling with massive economic problems. And, quite frankly, they seem intractable, the enormous costs. But I have to point out, the enormous costs of restructuring the financial institutions, the banks, the auto industry, even AIG, total all of those up, it is still less than the combined cost of 5 years of dropouts in this country.

And as my colleagues here on this panel have pointed out, and as many members on this committee have pointed out, in this case,

this economic problem of dropouts, we know what to do. It is whether or not we have the will.

The first thing I would suggest is reauthorizing ESEA. High schools aren't in the ESEA. And until ESEA is reauthorized, they won't be. Only 10 percent of Title I dollars end up in high schools. The carrot and the stick is gone. Secretary Spellings pointed out in a recent op-ed high schools really weren't a part of the current NCLB.

We also believe we have to get accountability right. That means the State-led efforts to develop common standards so now there is an overarching set of standards that the States have agreed to, internationally benchmarked. Now everybody is on equal footing as to what it is our kids are supposed to learn. And, incidentally, and Congressman Scott has introduced this and Congressman Castle has spoken to it, the need for true graduation rate accountability, so that all kids' graduation is measured the same way.

To address the needs of middle and high schools, we believe that, as I say, in the ESEA reauthorization, high common standards, the Every Student Counts Act. To drive high school improvement, supporting Congressman Hinojosa's Graduation Promise Act. Targeting the lowest-performing high schools, Bob Balfanz's dropout factories, where there are plans at the school and district level to turn them around.

The Alliance also supports the Secondary School Innovation Fund introduced by Congressman Loeb sack in part of the existing stimulus package. NAEP scores show literacy is so critical. And so, that is so important that Congressman Yarmuth's, Polis's, and Platts's bill to bring comprehensive literacy to secondary students, and, of course, middle schools in Congressman Grijalva's bill. And dare I forget, and I can't forget, Congressman Holt's bill on metrics. We have to have good data so we know what we are doing.

And so, all of this is to say we know and you know what to do. This committee has the opportunity to truly make a difference in what has been as intractable or even moreso a problem than many of the others that you face. But this year, this time, we could actually do something. And this time, instead of losing another decade, as the NAEP trend lines say, we could make sure that no generation is left behind.

Thank you very much.

[The statement of Mr. Wise follows:]

Prepared Statement of Hon. Bob Wise, President, Alliance for Excellent Education, Former Governor, West Virginia

Thank you Chairman Miller and Ranking Member McKeon and the other members of the full committee for asking me to testify today. As you all well know, our nation is facing a severe economic crisis—one our nation has not seen for upwards of seventy-five years. As a former member and governor, I understand how heavily the state of our nation's economy weighs on each of you. I applaud you for holding this hearing and believe you have the title exactly right—America's Competitiveness through High School Reform. With 60 percent of current jobs requiring education beyond high school, the nation's economic competitiveness is inextricably linked to how we educate our citizens. In an Information Age economy, education is the main currency.

Given the state of high schools in the United States, it is imperative that we focus attention on the six million students most at risk of dropping out if we want long-term economic stability. Addressing the crisis in high schools is a civil rights and economic imperative.

For the last several years, I have traveled the country trying to inform people about the urgent need for secondary school reform. From the testimony that others have given here today, I think it should be clear why the need is urgent and why I have been traveling the country sounding the alarm. Equally important is knowing that we know what to do—we just have to do it.

High School Crisis

The most recent scream for help for high schools came last week with the release of the federal National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) long-term trends. Despite education performance gains by nine- and thirteen-year-olds, essentially no progress has been made since 1971 by seventeen-year-olds. If this flat trend line were an EKG, the emergency room doctor would be applying the defibrillator. The nation's high schools are not meeting the needs of individuals or our economy. One third of all students do not graduate from high school. Only half of those that do, graduate prepared for college and the workforce. The numbers are far more staggering for the poor and minority students. Only roughly half of minority students graduate while high school students from the wealthiest families are about seven times as likely to complete high school as their classmates from the poorest. By 2050, half of our population will be comprised of minority populations. From a civil rights or economic perspective, we can't afford to ignore the education needs of the fastest-growing populations in this country.

Part of the challenge we face is that our high schools were set up for a different time. When I graduated from high school, you could earn a decent wage to support your family working in the mines in West Virginia. When I was governor, I visited one of the mines and found almost all miners had at least an associate's degree. When asked why, the miner owner replied, "I am not letting anyone work a mile underground with a half million dollar piece of technical equipment who doesn't at least have a postsecondary education."

The state of our high schools is reflected in international comparisons. Currently the United States ranks twenty-fifth in math, twenty-first in science, fifteenth in reading literacy, and twenty-fourth in problem solving when compared with thirty other industrialized nations on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) assessment. For high school graduation rates, the United States ranks eighteenth. Sadly, the United States' rank has been declining in these comparisons, not rising. The reason we have declined in these comparisons isn't because our education system has gotten worse; it's because we haven't kept up with the quality of education being provided in other nations. How we fare in international education comparisons will soon correspond directly to how we fare in international economic comparisons. President Obama recently laid out the goal of returning the United States to number one in the world in college graduation rates. Given the inextricable links between preparedness and college success, that goal will not be reached without significant changes to our high school system.

Economic Costs

There are two main ways that the economic impact of our dropout problem presents itself: as a cost to individuals and as a cost to society.

What are the individual costs of this problem?

Individuals who fail to earn a high school diploma are at a great disadvantage when it comes to finding good-paying jobs. The U.S. Department of Labor estimates that in the coming years 90 percent of new high-growth, high-wage jobs will require some postsecondary education. Individuals without a high school diploma will earn significantly less than their better educated peers if they do find a job: high school dropouts earn, on average, \$10,000 a year less than high school graduates. Over a lifetime, the difference between the earnings of a high school dropout and a college graduate is more than \$1 million.

What are the societal costs of this problem?

If the students in the Class of 2008 who dropped out had stayed in school and graduated, the nation would have benefited from an additional \$319 billion in wages, taxes, and productivity over the course of their lifetimes. Individuals with less education are generally less healthy and die sooner than those with more education. Individuals with less education are also more likely to become parents at very young ages, become incarcerated, or need social welfare assistance. All of these consequences are both tragic for individuals and families, and costly for governments and taxpayers.

According to a report recently released by the McKinsey Corporation, if black and Latino student performance had caught up with those of white students by 1998, GDP in 2008 would have been between \$310 billion and \$525 billion higher, which is roughly 2 to 4 percent of GDP.

Currently this Congress is grappling with massive economic problems. But the enormous cost of bailing out the banks, financial institutions, the auto industry, and AIG is still less than the economic cost of just five years of dropouts in the United States. Yet we also know that just cutting the number of dropouts in half would begin yielding \$45 billion annually in new federal taxes revenues or cost savings. That is why I believe that the ultimate economic stimulus package is a diploma.

Current Federal Policy

So how did we get here? As I stated earlier, the education provided in high schools has not kept pace with the changing needs in the United States. That is in part due to the fact that federal policy has failed to address the needs of high schools.

The main federal education law, Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), now known as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, was mainly written with elementary schools in mind. Title I, which is the primary federal instrument for supplementing local education funding, is the policy lever for the improvement and accountability provisions of the law. However, very little Title I funding reaches high school students—only 10 percent of students benefitting from Title I funds are high school students despite high schools enrolling 31 percent of all students and 23 percent of all low-income students.

What's more, adequate yearly progress (AYP) has been an ineffective tool to drive accountability and improvement at the high school level. Unlike elementary and middle school students, high school students are tested only once in four years. Most often that testing occurs in the tenth grade and does not measure what students need to graduate; instead the testing measures ninth grade proficiency.

Until recently, graduation rates—despite being a clear measure of the success of a high school—were not appropriately or adequately used as part of AYP. When NCLB was being written, there was an awareness and fear that the testing accountability provisions would create a perverse incentive to “push out” low test scorers absent accountability for graduating students. NCLB included language that required graduation rates to be an accountability measure in AYP. Given the weak and meaningless implementation of those provisions, the “push out” has indeed occurred and was most recently documented in a study from Rice University and University of Texas, Austin. In fact, an analysis done by Dr. Robert Balfanz found that 40 percent of dropout factories make AYP, therefore preventing some of the nation's lowest-performing schools from entering the accountability and improvement system.

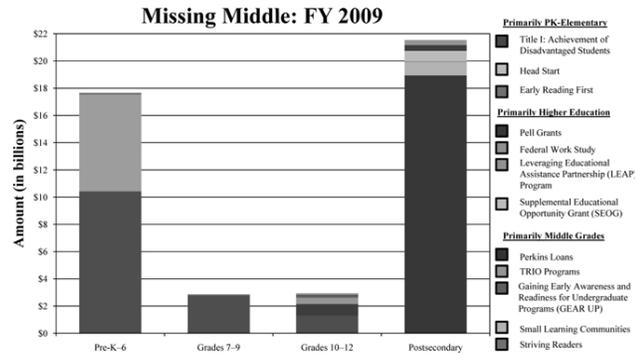
Why was implementation weak? Graduation rates were inaccurately and inconsistently calculated across states. The Department of Education approved numerous, inaccurate calculations that underestimated the problem. Independent analysis has shown that the difference between state and independent analysis was as little as eleven points and as much as thirty points. There was no meaningful requirement to increase graduation rates over time. States were allowed to propose very weak graduation goals—as low as 50 percent and only three states proposed graduating 100 percent of its students. Most states were approved to make as little as 0.1% growth annually to make AYP. There was no requirement to disaggregate graduation rates by student subgroups for determining AYP. Thankfully, the Department of Education recognized the need to make a correction on this issue and released new regulations strengthening graduation rate accountability last year. I will further discuss this issue later, but I want to thank Congressmen Scott and Hinojosa for their leadership on this issue and Chairman Miller and Ranking Member McKeon for their leadership as well.

NCLB's prescriptions for schools that fail to make AYP for multiple consecutive years are not effective at the high school level. Seventy-five percent of school districts only have one high school rendering school choice meaningless. And less than 5 percent of high school students participate in supplemental education services.

In fact, even the laws original drafters feel that the high school provisions need to be strengthened. Earlier this week, in response to the release of the latest NAEP results, Margaret Spellings said, “It's not an accident that we're seeing the most improvement where NCLB has focused most vigorously. The law focuses on math and reading in grades three through eight—it's not about high schools.”

Lastly, there is little federal investment in our nation's high schools and we are getting what we pay for. As of now, the federal funding in education targets the bookends of the education system—concentrating on grades pre-K—6 and higher education. The “missing middle” is our nation's secondary schools, which receive little to no funding from the federal level. Funding for grades pre-K—6 totals nearly \$18 billion. Funding for postsecondary education totals nearly \$22 billion and that is without taking into account student loans or other tax incentives. However, funding for grades 7—12 is only about \$6 billion.

The Missing Middle



Source: U.S. Department of Education Budget FY2009; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Budget FY2009

Federal Policy Solutions

Luckily, we know what to do and we look forward to working with the committee to ensure a reauthorization of ESEA includes measures to drive high school reform.

Dr. Balfanz spoke very eloquently about which schools are low-performing and who attends them. One of the results of his research—that over half of the country's dropouts come from less than 2,000 high schools (or about 10 percent of all high schools)—strikes a chord for me, since it shows that the dropout problem is not unsolvable. If we could improve only those 2,000 lowest-performing schools, we would be making significant progress towards the goal of every child a graduate.

I am going to speak specifically about each of the policy solutions to this crisis, but I want to thank the many members of this committee who are leading the federal effort to reform our nation's high schools.

To drive high school reform, we must first get accountability right so that we know where the problems are and how to drive resources and supports to those schools. Under current law, the federal approach is to leave it up to the states to determine academic standards and, up until recently, to determine graduation rate calculations and accountability measures. Then, once a school has entered the school improvement system, federal policy drives a very prescriptive, "one-size-fits all", or timeline-based approach to improvement.

Common Standards

The Alliance for Excellent Education believes this approach is backwards and that we need to flip the federal role. We believe that high, common standards that are tied to college- and work-readiness and are internationally benchmarked, and consistent graduation rate calculations with meaningful growth targets and goals should drive accountability. This system of accountability should be followed by a system of differentiated school improvement that targets reforms to the needs of the schools, not a timeline of how long a school has been "failing."

I want to applaud the committee for holding a hearing a few weeks ago on establishing common standards. We exist in a global economy. Fifty different state standards does not cut it anymore. Students are no longer just competing within their hometown or state for jobs. Students from Montgomery, Alabama are competing with students in Mumbai, India for jobs and we need education standards that reflect that reality.

Graduation Rates

As I stated earlier, also critical to accountability are graduation rates. In the last Congress, Representative Scott, with support from Congressman Hinojosa and many members of the Congressional Black Caucus and Congressional Hispanic Caucus introduced the Every Student Counts Act (ESCA). The principals of this act were reflected in the Department of Education's regulation finalized last year. These principals include establishing a common calculation, requiring meaningful graduation goals and growth targets, utilizing the rate as an equal part of AYP, and maintain-

ing a strong four-year graduation rate while recognizing some students take longer to graduate. In March, Congressman Scott reintroduced ESCA to codify the regulation and provide further detail where the regulation provides state flexibility on areas such as specific goals and growth targets. The Alliance believes that the regulation must be maintained and strengthened through inclusion of ESCA into a reauthorization of ESEA.

School Improvement

To create a system of high school improvement that would solve many of the issues that high schools currently face under NCLB's Title I provisions, Congressman Hinojosa introduced the Graduation Promise Act (GPA). GPA creates a system of differentiated school improvement that targets reform efforts to student and school needs not to a timeline approach as is under current law. States and districts would be provided flexibility to create systems of improvement and specific school improvement plans based on rich data. Such systems would focus on building the capacity of secondary schools to reduce dropout rates and increase student achievement, and would target resources to help the lowest-performing high schools implement evidence-based interventions. Importantly, GPA is authorized at \$2.5 billion to address the current federal funding deficits faced by high schools.

Innovation

In order to continue to improve education in the long term, we need federal investment in discovering what innovative programs and models being introduced at the local and state levels can turn low-performing high schools into high-performing high schools. The Secondary School Innovation Fund Act seeks to do just that by capitalizing on a unique American strength: the locally designed and driven innovation that has made our economy the largest in the world. The Secondary School Innovation Fund was reintroduced last week by Congressman Loeb sack.

Just as small businesses need venture capital to reach their full potential, local educational innovators need resources to invest in innovative practice, determine its impact, and replicate best practices. This legislation would support research and development of successful school models and program that are both replicable and systemic. Authorized at \$500 million, the Secondary School Innovation Fund Act would give educational innovators—who are doing important work across the country—the opportunity to evaluate and expand upon their strategies for increasing student achievement and graduation rates.

Literacy

As seen in the recent NAEP scores, students in our nation's middle and high schools are not achieving adequate literacy rates. Yet we know how critical literacy is to high school turnaround and academic success at the high school level and beyond. To support literacy in all grades, (including the upper grades), help students who are below grade level in reading and are, therefore, significantly more likely to drop out of high school, and to teach students the higher-order literacy skills that they need to read complex texts, Congressmen Yarmouth, Polis, and Platts will be leading the effort on a comprehensive literacy bill to address the reading and writing needs of students from before Kindergarten through high school.

Middle Schools

While this hearing is focused specifically on high schools, it is critical to discuss the needs of middle school students. We know that the high school students who are unprepared to succeed in high school come from somewhere. To ensure that students are no longer entering ninth grade off track for graduation, Congressman Grijalva, in the last Congress, introduced the Success in the Middle Act. The Success in the Middle Act would authorize \$1 billion a year in grants to states to improve low-performing middle grades. The bill would fund critical activities such as developing early-warning data systems to identify students who are most at risk of dropping out and intervene to help them succeed. Interventions could include extended learning time and personal graduation plans that enable all students to stay on the path to graduation.

Data Systems

Finally but possibly most importantly, we believe that the federal government must invest in quality data systems and use of data. In the last Congress, Congressman Holt introduced the METRICS Act, which are grants to states for the development and implementation of statewide longitudinal data systems. The stimulus bill also contained substantial funding and requirements around development and use of data systems and we applaud the efforts of the Secretary of Education to advance policy based on quality data.

Schools of Excellence

Luckily, we know that we can succeed in providing a high quality, college- and work-ready education for the exact students we are trying to serve. There are examples of schools doing just that all over the country. Schools such as:

Animo Inglewood Charter High School in Inglewood, California. Animo primarily serves low-income, minority students and over 60 percent of the graduating students attend a four-year college. They provide intensive summer programs for incoming freshmen to help them catch up academically. Teachers make home visits to build relationships with students' families.

The Metropolitan Regional Career and Technological Center in Providence, Rhode Island. The Met is a charter school run by the Big Picture Company that prepares students for college by offering strong support in and out of the classrooms, provides opportunities to travel and intern with local companies and organizations, and encourages parents to get involved in their children's educations.

Stanley E. Foster Construction Tech High School in San Diego, California. Construction Tech is a charter school serving a high number of low-income, minority students. Students at Construction Tech participate in curriculum that integrates classroom and real world training in architecture, construction, and engineering. The school partners with local businesses to offer internships and to evaluate classroom projects.

Manhattan Hunter Science High School in New York City, New York. Hunter Science is an early college high school with high enrollment of low-income, minority students in partnership with Hunter College within the City University of New York (CUNY) school system. At the time of high school graduation, students have the option to continue their studies at Hunter; their first full year of tuition is covered and all college credits earned while in high school apply towards their college degree.

Conclusion

Thank you for holding this hearing at such a critical time for our nation. Thank you Chairman Miller and Ranking Member McKeon for holding this hearing, and I want to thank all of the members of the committee for their support of these issues. We look forward to working with all of you to advance high school reform in an ESEA reauthorization. I would like to thank you for your support in the last Congress and we hope that we will have your continued support as you move forward with reauthorization. Thank you.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you.

Thank you very much to all of you for your testimony and your expertise.

Dr. Balfanz and Mr. Gordon and Dr. Phillips, so now we have identified 2,000 schools here, and the urge is to rush on in and close them and open them. But we have done that before. There is no shortage of school districts that have closed poor-performing schools, or for other reasons even, and then reopened them and sort of ended up in the same place 2 or 3 years later.

So I guess what I am interested in is in your histories of being involved here. You have each suggested we know what to do, and I would like to hear what you think that plan is. Because, you know, when we passed No Child Left Behind, everybody was aghast at the sanctions, except they had all been using those sanctions all over the country for many years. They had fired principals, they had fired teachers, they hired people, put in new teams, closed schools, opened schools, consolidated schools, back and forth. The results just never changed.

So we have been through that sort of—the theory is, I guess, that this is going to be smarter, this is going to be our surge on the high schools. So how do we scope this out? And one of the questions is, is this really about additional resources? Is this about a better organization of those resources? Or is it both?

And so I don't use all your time in my talking, well, let's leave it there for a minute.

Mr. BALFANZ. Sure. It is both a better allocation and in some places—

Chairman MILLER. The three of you are sharing what time I have left, you know.

Mr. BALFANZ. Okay.

It is both a better allocation and better use of resources.

And what I was saying is that each of those things we mentioned—charter schools, firing and rehiring, comprehensive whole school reform, creating small schools—have all worked in some places and not others. So what we really need to do is just take that step back and analyze that school. What are its needs? What are its capacities? How many kids come in 2 or more years below grade level? How many kids come in with weak attendance? Do the planned reforms actually address that educational challenge? Because too often we propose a reform that doesn't meet the educational challenge, and therefore it doesn't work.

So I think we take a half-step back and require schools to do a really intense analysis of why they are not succeeding, what their challenges are, and then make the case for why that particular reform will work in that circumstance, and then resource it to succeed.

Chairman MILLER. Mr. Gordon, did you get that opportunity when Philadelphia asked you to take over?

Mr. GORDON. I am not sure we have done this before, because, certainly, in Philadelphia's case—

Chairman MILLER. We have gone through these motions before. What most people equate with the reform, we have gone through a lot of them before.

Mr. GORDON. We have gone through reform, but the complete turnaround, at least in Philadelphia, Green Dot in California, some schools in Chicago, it was the staff and management that changed. So while certainly analyzing the problem and coming up with new programs is part of the solution, fundamentally it is a people and management problem. And I would suggest that if we create rewards, you create high standards, you reward if you hit those standards and, if not, you lose the contract or the management team loses, you will get results over time.

I have seen lots of programs, wonderful programs being executed by poor management teams and not qualified staff, and they fail; and mediocre programs being implemented by great teams and great management, and eventually they succeed. I think you set the bar and you will incent the right folks to get there.

Chairman MILLER. Dr. Phillips?

Ms. PHILLIPS. I would echo that we believe that one of the single most important things we can do is ensure that a student has an effective teacher every single year of their high school career. Unfortunately, right now we make that determination on certification, with limited evidence about whether that is the real thing that helps you understand whether the person is an effective teacher and whether they are making gains in the classroom on a daily basis.

That, coupled with common standards from which you can build out good curriculum and instructional tools and good assessments, along with the kind of data to really let us know what works and doesn't work.

We would also say that innovation does play a factor here, that the fact that we have not gotten dramatic gains, only marginal gains, over the last few decades should tell us that we have to do something fairly dramatically different, in combination with those elements.

Chairman MILLER. When I spend time with what I call educational entrepreneurs who have had success that mirrors the kinds of success that you have had at Pickett and elsewhere, Mr. Gordon, what they really talk about is the ability to assemble a team and develop a mission and people sort of heading all in the same direction with the same purpose and, in many instances, with the same enthusiasm and sense of urgency about this.

And what they have run into, in many instances, they have stepped outside of the existing systems and constraints on assembling that team. They are not taking people—I remember going through up at Harlem's Children School how many people were interviewed to work in that school, thousands of people, you know, literally, before you found the team that you wanted to run that school.

Because you were making a bet—at that time, the woman that was running it was making a serious bet about her career and about what she thought she could deliver in her organization. And the people who were funding that organization were making a bet on her. So, I mean, there was a lot of risk-taking and entrepreneurial work being done in this direction.

Mr. GORDON. I think you are right on the money. It is about people; it is about teams. It is not about certifications. You will not have innovation coming out of schools of education. They are part of the problem; they are not part of the solution.

I think you create, again, what is the bar? And then quality folks will eventually assemble teams and figure it out and remove the barriers that prevent them from doing those things. Within the school district, it is zero-basing the staff so they can assemble the right teachers. Charter schools have the ability to draw talent from outside the school district.

But I think it is, in some senses, relatively simple, a clear mission, a clear way of conducting the school. And there are many ways to operate a successful school, but it is the right people and the right leadership.

Chairman MILLER. I am sort of enamored with the idea that a lot of entrepreneurs who have been successful in other walks of life, in their own businesses, have been drawn to many of these organizations, have, in fact, invested their own personal money.

And you see the risk-taking where they bet that they can take this same population of kids that we are so deeply concerned about in this country—and we know the risks that we are running if they are not successful—and they are betting that they can be successful with that identical population that we lament in most contexts, that, you know, the schools just aren't performing, all the things

we wring our hands about, and they are making that bet in that direction.

Thank you.

Mr. Bishop?

Mr. BISHOP OF UTAH. In fairness, Mr. Chairman—

Chairman MILLER. Oh, Mr. Castle was here before you.

Mr. BISHOP OF UTAH. Mr. Castle is senior to me, as well. Can I yield to him and then come back?

Chairman MILLER. You guys are going on that seniority stuff?

Mr. BISHOP OF UTAH. Hell, somebody has to.

Chairman MILLER. Mr. Castle?

Mr. CASTLE. Well, I thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank you, Mr. Bishop. I am honored to go early.

Let me ask a question. I am going to start with Governor Wise and just go across the board, if you are willing to try to answer this.

We have heard a lot of very good suggestions here today. And, you know, if we compiled them all, they may number in the dozens or whatever. But one of my concerns is, what can we do as a Congress in order to make improvements in schools? We have talked about, for example, graduation rates. We have talked about higher standards. Obviously, funding is an issue. We have talked about some particular programs and effective teachers and a whole variety of things.

My question is to each of you, could you—and the reason I want to start with Governor Wise is he is familiar with things around here—but could you pinpoint what you think is the most significant issue that we should be looking at, either broadly or narrowly, from our point of view?

We can't do some of the things that you have talked about. We can't change neighborhoods per se or whatever it may be. But there may be things either in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act/No Child Left Behind or some of these other issues we have talked about that we should be doing that you would rate as the high priority.

We don't have a lot of time for each person, but I would just be interested to see if you could highlight whatever you think we could be doing, say, in this next year, during this congressional session, that would actually be able to be carried down to the local level and hopefully improve education.

Governor Wise?

I am only looking for one suggestion. I am not looking for—

Mr. WISE. One suggestion to set the climate.

As you know better than anyone, having been a governor, every State is on its fiscal back right now, and it is pretty hard to be doing restructuring and the kind of innovation that is so critical at a time when you are simply trying to keep school buses running.

But the Federal Government—the stimulus package can be a start, but the Federal Government can help set a direction and a climate. And by looking at the OECD models, which tend to be successful, where you have high common standards and then a lot of flexibility at the local level to do the innovation necessary, with the Federal Government being a partner. And when I say a partner,

I don't mean large sums of money, but I am talking about that which will drive systemic reform and permanent change.

Mr. CASTLE. Thank you.

Dr. Phillips?

Ms. PHILLIPS. I would say you could support the State-led common academic standards and the data systems work that would allow us to understand better across this country what works and what doesn't.

And then you have the opportunity to incent, I think, innovation, better assessments, a number of the entrepreneurial things that are happening across the country.

Mr. CASTLE. Thank you.

Mr. Gordon?

Mr. GORDON. I would certainly agree with the standards. I would say for corrective action to schools, providing incentives for school districts to turn around the schools, to zero-base staff, and to create incentives or penalties based upon a timeline of 2 to 3 years.

Ms. KONDRACKE. Make the schools more of the hub of the community, where schools become places that parents go, parents get engaged, services can be found. There is no shortage of services and organizations, but they are all in silos and they are scattered. We need to bring the community support, especially in these low-income neighborhoods, to the schools, where the children are, where the families are, pull them in, make the schools the hubs of the communities.

Mr. WOTORSON. I would say make accountability an absolute centerpiece of anything, any education reform effort that you push through.

Keep in mind, however, that part of the reason why we are where we are is because students are not facing one or two or three problems; we are facing, really, a comprehensive problem. So, at the end of the day, we are going to need a comprehensive solution that addresses lack of effective teachers, lack of a well-defined curriculum, the whole range of things.

But if I were to pinpoint one thing, I would say strong accountability must be a centerpiece.

Mr. BALFANZ. And I would say invest in capacity-building of the organizations, States, and districts that have actually shown they can turn these schools around already, so they can then turn around more schools.

Chairman MILLER. You are talking about the existing, those that have been successful.

Mr. BALFANZ. Yes.

Chairman MILLER. Excuse me. Would with the gentleman yield?

Mr. CASTLE. Certainly. I have already yielded.

Well, I appreciate all that. I think your suggestions are excellent, holistically and otherwise. I think we have a lot of work ahead of us. I think you have been an excellent panel. I would hope that you will stay with us as we try to address these issues and try to make changes.

Some of what you said, some of what we have to do is very challenging to existing bureaucracies out there. It is not going to be easy to do. But if we don't it, we are never going to get the uplifting that we want. So I thank you for your suggestions today.

Chairman MILLER. Mr. Scott?

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Phillips, you mentioned talked about effective teachers. Cambridge College reports excellent results with mid-career teachers in professional development. They take the courses, then they go back and do better.

Is it your understanding that teachers can, by professional development, improve their effectiveness?

Ms. PHILLIPS. If it is a very focused professional development. And a lot of it, if it is school-embedded and on-the-job. You mean as teachers enter schools or districts?

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you.

One of the things that—as I indicated in my opening remarks, I serve on the Crime Subcommittee, Chair of the Crime Subcommittee, and one of the things that happens with dropouts is they are very likely to end up in jail. And in some of these, you can identify a school where half the kids are going to be dropping out. And if you just do the back-of-the-envelope arithmetic, 100 kids dropping out are going to end up costing you about \$5 million in incarceration.

Now, Mr. Wotorson, if you had an adequate budget—how adequate a budget would you need to get the results that you are getting, where virtually everybody is graduating?

Mr. WOTORSON. I do recall, Mr. Congressman, I believe a couple of years ago or so there was a piece of legislation introduced that proposed somewhere in the neighborhood of \$2.5 billion of turnaround, specifically geared towards turning around low-performing schools or those dropout factories.

But I think part of where you are going is, essentially, if we don't arrest this problem, we only succeed in expanding the school-to-prison pipeline. And the Campaign for High School Equity actually had an issue forum on that issue a few months ago. And we actually were pleased to have someone from your staff join us at that discussion and share some of her knowledge.

Mr. SCOTT. Well, about how much—what kind of budget would you be talking about to virtually guarantee that everybody is graduating, as opposed to a 50 percent dropout rate?

Mr. WOTORSON. I don't know that we could guarantee that everyone is graduating. What I do know is that hitherto we have not tried any of these things in a comprehensive fashion. I do know that hitherto we have not simply said we are going to put our resources where our mouth is, we are going to, you know, put the time and effort towards addressing the problem. I know that we haven't done that.

Mr. SCOTT. Well, like I said, if you got a 50 percent dropout rate, 100 children, 50 percent drop out, that is 100, that is going to cost you about \$5 million in prison expenses in, at least, many identifiable States. If you spent half of that on the program, you could probably eliminate—it is hard to imagine you are not saving more money than you are spending.

Ms. Kondracke, you indicated a process by which you are—a holistic approach, where you bring the community together. I have introduced the Youth Promise Act, which is very similar, to reduce youth violence, where you bring in law enforcement, education, fos-

ter care, the probation department, churches, after-school programs, anybody that has anything to do with children in trouble, bring them together and come up with a plan.

Is there any question in your mind—you have done this for school dropouts—is there any question in your mind that if you have a good dropout prevention program that it would also reduce crime and reduce teen pregnancy and reduce drug abuse?

Ms. KONDRACKE. There is no question that a good dropout prevention program will do all of those things. If a young person is engaged productively, believes in their future, they are going to avoid risky behavior. And so, therefore, you are saving social costs.

And to your point, I would say one of the reasons, Mr. Chairman, that some of our other earlier reform efforts have not gotten the results we would like is we have ignored some of these social issues. And this, the community supports based at the school, easy for the family to access, that has got to be part of the solution for these most vulnerable students in those neighborhoods.

So I commend you for the act you have introduced.

Mr. SCOTT. Now, most of the programs that we have seen by research have shown that they can save more money than they cost. What kind of budget do we need to start the process of cost savings?

Ms. KONDRACKE. You know, I think you could easily envision taking the 2,000 dropout factory high schools and the feeder middle schools, and if you had something that would catalyze the community to come together—you don't have to invent the programs at the community level; they are already there. You just have to pull them together.

So, take \$100,000 per school, just to pick a number, to create a catalytic effect to pull these services together, you could actually have a real impact pretty quickly.

Mr. SCOTT. Mr. Chairman, I would point out that in some of those dropout factories the prison costs that we are generating would be in the millions. And Ms. Kondracke just talked about \$100,000 to solve that problem. So, obviously, we are doing something wrong.

Chairman MILLER. Mr. Bishop?

Excuse me, Mr. Wise, did you want to—

Mr. WISE. I just wanted to offer a couple quick statistics.

A recent economic study, I believe that was cited earlier, cut the dropout rate in half, would add \$45 billion in increased Federal tax revenues or cost savings. We estimate that you could do that for about \$5 billion a year. That is \$2.5 billion with the Graduation Promise Act, plus the literacy programs.

And to your crime question, Congressman, a study that we did showed that simply if you increase the high school graduation rate of males alone 5 percent, it would add about \$8 billion in both new wages and reduced crime costs.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you.

Mr. Bishop?

Mr. BISHOP OF UTAH. Thank you. I think I have seniority on my side now.

I appreciate the testimony that has been given. In fact, you have generated in my mind so many questions, I am not going to get it in my time allotted. So let me try to go through as many as I possibly can quickly with you.

Let me start with Dr. Phillips, if I could. Let's assume—and I don't assume; you cannot do that—you can identify an effective teacher. How do you attract and hold that teacher once he or she is identified?

Ms. PHILLIPS. We believe that we really have to look at the whole spectrum of things, from how many people we get to enter, to how we help them meet performance milestones. But once you get them there, they have to be compensated appropriately. And it can't wait until they are 10, 12, 13 years into their career. We need to make it a viable profession earlier on.

Mr. BISHOP OF UTAH. Talking money and time?

Ms. PHILLIPS. Money and time.

Mr. BISHOP OF UTAH. Can I just ask you, just philosophically, for whom are we trying to reform these schools? Who needs to be satisfied? Is it the State, the school officials, parents, a college? Who is the person that is going to say, "Okay, you have arrived"?

Ms. PHILLIPS. Oh, I think—well, first of all, we have to do this for students, but we need some kind of objective way of saying, what is it that it really takes for students—

Mr. BISHOP OF UTAH. Good. But I want to know, who is the one that is going to make that decision? Who has to be satisfied?

Ms. PHILLIPS. Who is going to make the decision in the end?

Mr. BISHOP OF UTAH. State, school, parents, administrators?

Ms. PHILLIPS. I think, in the end, you know, parents and students have to be satisfied. But, certainly, school districts and States have to have some objective measure by which they can determine, and some objective standards by which they can determine, whether kids are actually graduating high school ready for college without remediation and able to enter the workforce.

Mr. BISHOP OF UTAH. I have more questions for you. Let me come back.

Ms. PHILLIPS. So there are multiple consumers in this.

Mr. BISHOP OF UTAH. Mr. Gordon, if I could, you talked about rewarding those who produce results. That is the phrase that you used. Can you give me some specific details on how you do that?

Mr. GORDON. Well, I would say, in a turnaround context or in a charter school context, you can reward by enabling those organizations to operate additional schools. You can create financial incentives so they have the wherewithal to operate additional schools.

Mr. BISHOP OF UTAH. For the ones who are actually operating the school, though, what is the reward mechanism?

Mr. GORDON. The opportunity to do more. I don't know if this is where you are leading, but the financial incentive to the organization, I think the incentive to be able to do more is sufficient. Let me just stop there.

Mr. BISHOP OF UTAH. You gave me—you started going down with accountability and governance. Can you give me three top keys for success in very specific details? I mean, all of you have talked about accountability, you have talked about governance. I want something down in the weeds more than that, if you would, please.

Mr. GORDON. I would say, when we hire a principal, I want them to be able to hire fantastic staff. We need to have benchmark assessments, assessments meaning that we every 6 weeks know where students are. We need information to be able to track that data so that we can respond competently to that data.

Mr. BISHOP OF UTAH. That is legitimate. Thank you.

Ms. Kondracke, if I could ask you a couple of questions, you talk about the parents' role as one of the factors that is in here. Could you just explain very briefly, because I don't have a lot of time here, how you envision the parents' role and how you envision the Federal Government's relation to building that parent role?

Ms. KONDRACKE. Well, I think that is always the conundrum, how do we get parents to care more and be more involved. And I think, very practically, we have to make it easier.

In Spanish Harlem, there is a school that was inside a housing project. It was the worst-performing school, the scene of violence, it was a mess. And Joel Klein turned that school around by turning it into a community center. Parents went there on Saturday to have cooking classes and a green grocer experience. Students did service projects through City Year there.

So if parents have a reason to go to school, and if we can make it easier for them by having time for parent-teacher conferences that makes sense for their working lives, we have got to make it easier for these struggling, stressed parents to be involved.

Mr. BISHOP OF UTAH. I appreciate that. And I am not trying to cut you off, but I realize my time is running down here very quickly.

Could I just ask once again, Dr. Phillips—you know, you were in charge of a system within a State. How would you get teachers like me, who know I can outlive you and your programs, to become excited about what you are attempting to do?

And I was noticing one thing—Mr. Wotorson, there were some questions I really had for you. I am sorry I am not going to get even close to them.

There were a couple of you that talked about—you don't even have to answer this. I just ran out of time. You talked about the 720 number. I am amazed that no one is actually talking about the amount of time that we put into public education or the organization of the day, what the kid has to go through, as part of the equation that needs to be part of this question as well. I was surprised at that.

And, Mr. Chairman, I realize we will allow these questions—if I ever get organized enough to write them down, I will send them to you. And I will be looking for it, because I did enjoy the presentations. Thank you.

Ms. KONDRACKE. We all want to answer.

Chairman MILLER. Mr. Tierney is next, Mr. Loeb sack, Ms. Fudge, Mr. Courtney, Mr. Bishop, and Ms. Hirono.

Mr. TIERNEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank for having the hearing.

And thank the witnesses for their testimony, as well.

So, Ms. Kondracke, you talk about outside influences, half of the 16 factors that make for a successful student being outside the classroom.

And, Mr. Gordon, you talk about, forget all that, just give me a good staff and a couple of bucks and I am ready to roll, I am going to make this work.

Can you two work out the conflict in that for me?

Ms. KONDRACKE. You know, it is both ends. It is inside the classroom and outside the classroom. We have to have an integrated approach.

I believe just as strongly in great teaching and high standards and accountability and measurement. And I also believe there are lots of at-risk kids that cannot learn because they bring too many deficits into the classroom.

Mr. TIERNEY. Well, maybe Mr. Gordon is the one that doesn't agree with that.

You just want—I think your words were, give me good staff, you know, and people, and I will take care of the rest. People and management was the problem, you said. Give me qualified staff, and we are all set.

None of those factors that Ms. Kondracke talks about—

Mr. GORDON. Good staff and good management can address those problems.

Mr. TIERNEY. How?

Mr. GORDON. Good staff and good management—our staff and management goes out into the community, finds community-based mental health organizations, contracts with them.

It is not that we ignore the outside problems, but the accountability—what I would encourage this committee to focus on is the outcome. We are accountable for results. Therefore, I am going to do the right thing if I need to hit that outcome. If you legislate what programs I need to follow, everyone is going to follow them and you will get nothing at all. It is the outcome and accountability.

Mr. TIERNEY. All right.

Then, Dr. Phillips, let me turn to you. You cite that there is an issue or problem, at least, with the credentialing that we now have, that they are not indicative of who is a good teacher and who is not.

Do you have ideas into what we are going to do that would allow us to select teachers based on some past experience that they have had or some credentialing? Otherwise, I suspect we are going to be doing this case by case for the rest of our lives. Bring a person in, watch their experience, see how they do, dump them if they are no good, keep them if they are not. It is going to take a long time to get all the good teachers we need up to scale.

So, as opposed to the current credentialing system, what do you recommend?

Ms. PHILLIPS. We are actually investing considerable amount of money in the next few years on research to make that determination, to say, what does it take, in addition to student achievement, to give a fair view of what is an effective teacher? And can we come to some consensus about that?

So we realize that that is a huge problem, that teachers have a legitimate issue, and it is not just a single look at their performance over a year but that student outcomes need to be the core. What other things, when added to that, will give us a better pre-

dictor? And then how do you entice people into the profession, help them hit those performance milestones, reward them when they do, and keep them in front of the kids who need them the most?

Mr. TIERNEY. Thank you.

Governor Wise, nice to see you.

Mr. WISE. Nice to see you, sir.

Mr. TIERNEY. Governor, look, we have a lot of really tremendous educators out there today in our public school system. And I think probably everybody will acknowledge that. I hope they would acknowledge that.

So how do we go about making these changes and motivating people and challenging them and give them the kind of job security that I think they are afraid of? They are afraid of going back to the old days where politics makes it, the school committee decides, you get a four-to-three vote, this person doesn't have the job and somebody else does.

How do we get to the point where all of the people are talking about being not so risk-averse, taking challenges, moving in that direction on that, with allowing people to still understand that this is a job that, if they do a good job, they are going to be able stay on and not be out at somebody's arbitrary whim?

Mr. WISE. And particularly at a time when we are going to see probably half of our teachers eligible to retire in the next 5 to 7 years. So we are going to have to really accelerate that pipeline.

I think it is giving them the opportunity to teach in a place that is exciting, where they know that they are going to be rewarded, and not just monetarily but rewarded and given the flexibility to do what they need to do, that there will be standards set. And there are outcomes, yes, but there will be a lot of flexibility in how to get there. They will be working as a team approach.

And also, it may well be, Congressman, that this economy is going to encourage some people to think, you know, I can be as creative and earn an income in teaching. And so we need to make sure that the doors are open to them, not only through the traditional means of teacher preparation, but also looking at some alternative means as well.

Mr. TIERNEY. Thank you.

Dr. Balfanz, what would you tell our teaching colleges and universities they have to do with their students to work into a program that really makes this all work?

Mr. BALFANZ. Well, they have to prepare teachers for the actual conditions they are going to face, which is, in our most challenged schools, it is not 10 to 15 percent of kids that need extra help, it is 50, 60, 70 percent. So they have to build within them skills to not just teach one good excellent lesson, but to be able to teach kids with multiple different levels of preparation to succeed.

Mr. TIERNEY. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yield back.

Chairman MILLER. Mr. Loeb sack?

Mr. LOEBSACK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for having this very informative hearing. I really do appreciate this very much.

And the witnesses have all been wonderful, learned a lot from you today. I appreciate that. And thanks for the shout-out for some

of my legislation, too, for those of you who did. I do appreciate that very much.

If I could start with Ms. Kondracke, I just want to mention one example of a school that was a community center before massive flooding hit on June 13th of last year, Taylor Elementary School in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

Ms. KONDRACKE. Absolutely.

Mr. LOEBSACK. It was a wonderful—and in a low-income area of Cedar Rapids. There were a lot of different offices there; there was a WIC office, for example. And it was really wonderful. It is going to come back, it is going to reopen in the fall. There are going to be fewer students, maybe significantly fewer students, but it is going to come back.

So I really appreciate your focus, obviously, on the community aspect. And if you want to, I would like you to elaborate a little bit more. You weren't able to go perhaps as far as you would like in response to Mr. Bishop's question.

Ms. KONDRACKE. Thank you very much, Congressman.

I am aware of that school in Cedar Rapids, and it is a fantastic example of what can happen when a community rallies around a school, turns the school into a community, cares about the outcomes for kids, cares about quality teaching, but also cares about each other's lives. It is about that simple.

And there are 14 million kids who need after-school care in this country today. What are they doing when they are not in school? Somebody mentioned the school calendar, I think it was Congressman Bishop, that we are out of school all summer because that is left over from the agricultural model. What are they doing with that time? Our school day is too short, our school year is too short to catch up with the rest of the world. So what are we doing with out-of-school time?

We need enrichment programs in the after-school hours. Kids need chances to serve and find the resilience that comes with giving back. There are 9 million kids who don't have health care. Congress has taken steps to reauthorize CHIP and to expand that coverage. This is the kind of thing we have to pay attention to.

And one last thing is truancy. You have asked what we can do. The data systems that we have all referenced here should include attendance. It is so fundamental. Nobody is following up on attendance and truancy. And what kids tell us is that that tells them nobody cares if they are in school or not. So, caring adults—this is part of the community supports we were talking about—and following up, very simply, on attendance. That is the best early-warning indicator of a dropout.

Mr. LOEBSACK. Thank you.

Mr. Wise, Congressman Wise, Governor Wise, didn't have a chance to serve with you here, obviously, in this body, but thank you for being here today.

I guess I am very fortunate as a Member of Congress in that there is no dropout factory in my particular district. We do have nine of them in Iowa, I saw from the data that were provided. But I want to thank you, too, for mentioning my Secondary School Innovation Fund.

I have gotten around my district a lot in the 2-plus years that I have been in Congress, and there are a lot of good things happening in Iowa, as I am sure is the case around the country, in terms of trying to come up with innovative programs that folks around the country can model, I would guess, or replicate, if you will.

Can you elaborate a little bit on that particular aspect of your testimony?

Mr. WISE. Certainly. Because your bill and, actually, Congressman Holt's as well, as you know, portions of it are included in the stimulus package, but we want to make it permanent.

For instance, what is happening in a number of examples, whether it is what Mr. Gordon is talking about, or if we are looking at something such as a High-Tech High or we looking at another high school in San Diego that has very successful initiatives, what is it that works for 500 students here or 50,000 across 10 school districts and can be replicated?

And that is a very appropriate role for the Federal Government, particularly at this point, to be able to help States replicate what works. No State has, I think I can say safely, I know in my State, no State has the ability to do the kind of research, to do the kind of analysis of what is taking place in other areas. It is anecdotal. The Federal Government does have that ability. And so, the combination of not only providing the research capability, the dissemination of that research, but also the ability to replicate innovative approaches, that is what is so critical.

What we want to do with your legislation is take what clearly was established in the stimulus package and make it a permanent fixture.

Mr. LOEBSACK. Thank you very much. And I just might comment, my idea is not, obviously, to have an overly intrusive role on the part of the Federal Government. It is really to provide seed money, in some ways, and to leverage local funds as well.

Mr. WISE. Yes.

Mr. LOEBSACK. So thank you very much, and I will yield back the balance of my time. Thanks to all of you.

Mr. SCOTT [presiding]. Thank you.

The gentlelady from Ohio, Ms. Fudge?

Ms. FUDGE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank all of you for being here. I do just have a couple of questions.

I would like to first ask Mr. Wotorson, what would a redesigned American high school look like?

Mr. WOTORSON. I would go back to my theme of approaching this in a comprehensive fashion. First of all, a redesigned high school would take into account a lot of the things that you have heard all the witnesses talk about today.

You know, I also go back to my experience just a couple of weeks ago visiting with kids at a school in Gaston, North Carolina. The discussion was just held about the school day. Well, here was a school where kids arrive at 8 o'clock in the morning and they don't leave until 8, 9 o'clock at night. The instruction period actually ends at 5:00. Why do these students stay so long? Well, they stay so long because they are absolutely and utterly turned on about

learning, they love the staff, they love the teachers, they feel cared for and listened to. That is a fundamental change, I think, that should be brought to scale in a lot of schools.

And that is not to say that teachers, by and large, don't do this, but it is a recognition of the fact that teachers face an enormous amount of pressures. You heard Mrs. Kondracke talk about some of the deficits that kids bring to the classroom that teachers have to contend with. In a school where teachers feel supported, where they are appropriately rewarded, where they are allowed to be fairly flexible and all those sorts of things, what you see happening is a translation of an atmosphere where the kids are performing better, the teachers are happy to be there, the administrators are happy to be there, and overall you have a much more engaging learning environment.

That is a fundamental change or a redesign of the American high school. And there are lots of different ways to do it.

Ms. FUDGE. So could you tell me one?

Mr. WOTORSON. Oh, well, all of the above.

Ms. FUDGE. No, how would you do it? I mean, I understand, but how would you go about doing it?

Mr. WOTORSON. So one thing would be the way we pay teachers; increase the way we pay teachers.

Another would be around the way we recruit teachers and bringing them into the classroom. As you well know, in many situations, in many cases, when we bring new teachers into the classroom, we fail to provide them the kind of professional development that they need, and so many new teachers cycle out after a year, 2 years, 3 years.

Ms. FUDGE. Okay. So does that mean—and anyone can answer this question. I have heard that a number of times today. How do we change the process in our colleges and universities? I mean, you know, I know we need to have better teachers. How do we do it? We talk about how the certification process doesn't work. How do we do it?

Anybody can answer it.

Mr. WISE. I will defer to the specialists.

Ms. PHILLIPS. So, part of it is that we have to start looking at teacher effectiveness against student outcomes, as opposed to whether they just meet the paper credential, because we know that, no matter how teachers enter the system, whether they come through an alternative education program and come in mid-career or whether they come through traditional certification, that there is a distinct difference between teachers in schools. And having that effective teacher has more of an impact, year on year, than almost anything else we can do. And lots of the other pieces are critically important, but that is one that is prime.

So, one thing we have to do is start to get away from the sort of paper credentialing and look more at: Who is really producing student outcomes? And can we help those who continue to do so and keep them in the system? Can we help those who aren't get better over time? Can we make the tough decisions?

Ms. FUDGE. Well, I mean, can something work as simple as just having a master teacher or someone with new teachers over a period of time that prepares them to get better and better?

It is my understanding, Mr. Chairman, that from 1 to 5 years, that is the time in which most teachers really—you determine whether they are going to be good teachers or not.

How do we work with those persons? Because what you are talking about now is after the fact, after they have come out of school, they have gotten into an institution or into one of the schools. And so, then what do we do with them, at that point?

Anyone can answer it.

Mr. GORDON. I would say certainly one thing that could be done is create a value-added system. In Pennsylvania, we are beginning to create a system where we can track whether a school and then individual teacher adds value. And I would say that would be the path that you could follow to certify a teacher.

Schools of education are not adding value. All right? Teachers that come through schools of education are no more effective than teachers we hire without that credential. So I would say your instincts that it can be done internally by schools or school districts more through an apprentice model, I think, is right.

Ms. PHILLIPS. So, I think there are a variety of ways and a variety of models out there. The key is that, as long as our policies are all based around credentialing, we are going to get what we have continued to get.

As we change those policies and make them more about student outcomes and whether, in fact, we are accelerating student learning and we let that drive the way that we prepare, the way that we reward, the way that we keep, the way that we compensate, the way that we performance-manage teachers, then we will get the change that we are looking for.

But just continuing to have our policies not reflect what we really know about research now is going to get us more of the same, not something different.

Ms. FUDGE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My time has expired. I yield back.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you.

The gentlelady from Hawaii, Ms. Hirono?

Ms. HIRONO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank the panel. It is a very interesting discussion.

The students who go to these dropout factories are attending elementary schools and middle schools where, I think, that it is also characterized by low test scores and generally from communities where there are a preponderance of low-income and minority students.

So my question has to do with, when do we start the turn-around? When do we start arresting the problem when you are in a community where the elementary school, the secondary schools, the high school, they are all exhibiting these problems?

Mr. BALFANZ. I think there are actually two key points. One is, obviously, early education, getting kids prepared to succeed when they are first experiencing schools.

The other thing we have to remember is that there is a developmental progression people go through. When you become an adolescent, you make an independent decision to be engaged in school again. And so you can have a good early experience, and if we don't pay attention to your adolescence and create an environment that

is good for you then, some of that investment will walk out the door.

So I think it is both the early years but then also the secondary years. And we need interventions at both those points to keep you, sort of, on track to success. If we do either one, we are going to lose a bunch of kids.

Ms. HIRONO. So there is a whole continuum that we have to pay attention to. And it is not as though we can just go and direct all our resources to these dropout factory high schools and hope to turn things around.

Ms. PHILLIPS. No, but we have actually made more progress at the elementary level in this country and much limited progress and flat-line progress for high school students over time. And there are critical things that we know. So when kids hit middle school and they are 2 or more years behind, having ways to accelerate their learning there becomes more important. It also turns out that the ninth grade is a very important year and a very important predictor of whether students can continue to be successful.

So there are places to intervene along the way. And we believe breakthrough innovations, some of which already exist, around how do you accelerate students' learning as they hit those upper grade levels much more rapidly? Because it is true that high schools still are the most, sort of, inequitable level of our education system.

Ms. HIRONO. I think those are really important distinctions to make, that there are critical points of the students' development where intervention can really make a difference.

Ms. KONDRACKE, I note that you said that you had hosted high-level summits in 50 States, so that includes Hawaii.

Ms. KONDRACKE. Yes, absolutely.

Ms. HIRONO. So what was your experience? Would you tell us what schools or what communities you had these meetings in in Hawaii? I am curious.

Ms. KONDRACKE. You know, I don't think we have held our summit yet in Hawaii. But it is coming up.

Ms. HIRONO. A-ha. You will have to come and let me know.

Ms. KONDRACKE. It is being scheduled.

So we have a summit in every State capital and in the 55 cities that are contributing the most to the dropout crisis.

And there is a way to go about this. We sort of have a formula and a cookbook that we give the community. We encourage it to be owned by the community. But we ask for the business leaders to be involved, the civic leaders to be involved, parents, students themselves.

Mississippi was our first State summit, and we had over 1,500 people there. And then they are asked to produce an action plan. So it is more than just one more summit; it really is about action.

And we have pulled together as much as we know, and most of the people at this table have contributed to what we give them in the way of a workbook. We give them a workbook of best practices and just these indicators we have talked about—early preschool readiness, middle school performance and attendance and scores, ninth grade transition.

And one interesting fact that contributes to this problem is 35 States allow students to drop out at age 16. Now, that is something

that we can raise as a policy issue, and State by State we can tackle that. So part of it is raising awareness that these are contributing factors.

Each of these summits so far has been incredibly successful. And the people feel that they are part of a national movement, and that is the exciting part.

Ms. HIRONO. So when are you coming to Hawaii?

Ms. KONDRACKE. I will find out and let you know.

Ms. HIRONO. All right.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. KONDRACKE. Thank you.

Ms. HIRONO. I yield back.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you.

Ms. Kondracke, you mentioned the ninth grade. What about the third grade as an indicator?

Ms. KONDRACKE. Yes, third grade or fourth grade reading scores, wherever that is measured, is another important indicator. I would add to Dr. Balfanz's, too, early childhood readiness, school readiness can be best measured by the time they get to the third grade. Did they hold on? And are they reading at grade level? And that is a huge predictor. In fact, that is a predictor for prison beds, if you will.

And then, middle school, we have talked about the transition to ninth grade is fundamental.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you very much.

The gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. Holt?

Mr. HOLT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I thank all the witnesses today. This is really very useful.

A number of you have spoken about the need for better data, the misleading data that currently exists. Mrs. Kondracke talked about including attendance data. I would like to explore this idea of how we can actually use the data.

Let's go beyond just asking whether we can collect data, recognizing that we are not even doing that well yet. But I would like to not just get a retrospective diagnosis to see how much damage has been done over the past 4 years or even over the past year, but see if we can really get diagnostic information that can be used to make adjustments in each school, in each class, for each student.

Not just an autopsy of what killed the student's academic growth, but something that will allow a school district, a principal, a teacher to know which students in which classrooms are making gains or not making gains, not just in general but on specific concepts and with specific standard skills.

I know this is possible because some schools in New Jersey are actually doing it. My question for you is, is it asking too much that this be done everywhere?

Ms. KONDRACKE. We absolutely must have—

Mr. HOLT. And I would like as brief a comment from as many of you as we can get.

Ms. KONDRACKE. I will make one quick comment.

We absolutely must have real-time data. And technology allows that, and so that is fundamental.

We just worked with Gallup to produce a student poll, giving the students' point of view, in real time, that day. And we can meas-

ure, to the student and to the school level, where the kids are engaged, where they are doing well, and where they feel hopeful.

And the sad part is, half the kids in this country do not feel hopeful. This was a 70,000-student sample. That is real-time data. So if you learn that half the kids in your school don't feel hopeful, you can begin to work on some solutions that get them re-engaged and believing in their own future.

Mr. HOLT. Thank you.

And let me say to Governor Wise, since he referred to the METRIC Act that Representative McCarthy and I had in the last Congress, because it didn't pass we thought we would make it even more difficult by making it more comprehensive. And we will introduce a more comprehensive version of it in this Congress.

Mr. WISE. Which is critical, because you are going to be—whether it is the teacher in the classroom making day-to-day decisions with hopefully good real-time data all the way to the decisions that you are going to make here in this committee room that will involve billions of dollars and millions of lives, you have to have good data. If we are going to have an outcome-based, standards-based, and empirically based system of education, we can't do it without good data systems at every level.

Mr. HOLT. Thank you. Thank you very much, Governor Wise.

If there is time—

Mr. BALFANZ. Yeah, I think that the other thing—

Mr. HOLT. Dr. Wotorson actually had some things to say earlier in his testimony.

Please.

Mr. BALFANZ. Okay.

I think, quickly, the thing that makes it go from a few schools to a lot of schools is recognizing that teachers are going to have been to be trained to use the data and given time to do the data analysis. So that is going to have to factor into our redesign of the school day.

We can't ask them, "Well, just in your free time, look at the data and figure it out." We are going to have give them training structure and ability to use the data effectively, as well as just putting it in their hands, but then giving them the ability to actually act upon it and figure it out.

Mr. WOTORSON. I was just going to offer really quickly, in response to your question about whether or not we are asking too much of authorities, I absolutely think we are not. We don't have the luxury, quite frankly, to continue to allow the vast majority of our kids to no longer be successful and to drop out of school.

And so, given the fact that historically we have tried a number of things in other areas in our country and in our economy, we have spent an incredible amount of money on wars, on any number of things, but the most critical thing that sits before us right now is the future of this country as it relates to what is going to happen to these young kids. And so it is about time that we devote the resources, we make the hard choices, commit the energy to roll up our sleeves and do the hard work.

Mr. HOLT. Do any of you know of any school systems that have implemented data systems that have, you know, found the teachers

and the school systems that would actually know how to use the good data systems and applied it to student learning?

Mr. GORDON. Absolutely. Certainly, that is why, every 6 weeks, Mastery closes down and the grown-ups get together and review the data and plan for the next 6 weeks. Uncommon Schools, which operates schools in Newark, in New Jersey, does the same. We learned a lot from them. There is, I think, a lot of work being done.

But, again, I would re-emphasize that none of this work would have occurred had not the outcome been clear that we are accountable for. Because if I am accountable for that outcome, of course I am going to try to collect data; of course I am going to try it make sure that data is useful; of course I am going to train my staff to respond to the data. Unless that goal is set at the end of the road, everything else is not going to follow.

Ms. PHILLIPS. There are a number of places, and we can share them with you. The problem is that part of what prevents us from being able to scale what really works in this country and to share practice is that it happens in individual places and everybody is having to reinvent their whole system. Not that systems can't be different, but as long as they don't share common standards and are able to talk to each other, then we continue to get these isolated pockets rather than teachers being able to lift up and share their practice.

I was in a school last week where teachers came together on an ongoing basis to share real-time data and talk about student performance. It happens in classroom after classroom, but we aren't able to lift it up and share it across this country. And that is a sad thing.

Mr. HOLT. Thank you very much.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you.

The gentlelady from California, Ms. Davis?

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you very much.

To the panel, I appreciate your being here and also citing San Diego as having some programs that do work. They are, just as you described, though, pockets. And that is what is difficult.

You haven't spoken too much about the training of principals and the role that they play. Clearly, leadership, we know, is a big factor here. How do you see that, then, as scaling up? I mean, is it the kind of academies that make a difference? Are they just wonderfully gifted people who just really know how to put these teams together? There are barriers to putting teams together; we know that.

So where does the leadership of the key individual there play? And how do you see that in terms of what we as Congress can do?

Any of you, all of you.

Mr. WISE. I think you have just touched on what is one of the fastest emerging discussions about the role of leadership. Quality teachers need good leaders, and it makes it much easier for a quality teacher to be a quality teacher.

And so, one role that Congress could be looking at—I mean, there are examples of efforts to prepare principals. But one area that Congress could be looking at is, A, what is the best research?

Second is the academy concept. It may be that we are going to be needing to look at so-called West Point-type approaches for

school leadership. I also know that other organizations are also looking to see how they can assist in this.

Mrs. DAVIS. Excuse me. Can I ask you, Governor—and I will let you continue—but we do have some, certainly. Harvard has an exceptional school. Have we gone back to see, what are those outcomes? I mean, the principals trained under those programs, are they somehow able to do what other principals cannot do? Or do they face the same barriers in creating the highly enthusiastic teams that come together?

Mr. WISE. Let me turn to Dr. Balfanz or Dr. Phillips, if they want to jump in on this one.

Mr. BALFANZ. The one thing I think is important to keep in mind, especially when we are trying to turn around sort of large middle and high schools—like, California has many large middle and high schools, and those schools have easily 150 teachers in them. And we make a mistake when we think that one lone principal can ride in there with the best training in the world and transform 150 adults.

So I think we also have to think about training leadership teams together, the principal and his leadership team, his assistant principals, his counselors, and actually put some of the money in our school transformation things to give them the time to be trained together and even have a residency in a successful similar school.

There is no better training than real training on the ground, not theoretical but be in a building that has the challenges that you are going to have, that is working, and spend time therewith your leadership team so you can all have a common vision and a common experience. And then when you go to your school, you are already working together with common understanding.

Mrs. DAVIS. I mean, there is a medical model that we know does work in training exceptional people licensed. The national board certification, for example, tends to look at that. I know you have suggested that, well, certification doesn't exactly matter. Reflective teaching probably matters a great deal, but that doesn't have to necessarily be a national board-certified teacher.

We are all searching, I think, for how to do this. And, again, getting back to the Congress, when we are looking at accelerated learning, if we had better ninth-grade transition teams that actually really thought through that period for those students who are entering who are truly, you know, two, three, four grades below level, do we bring those folks to a central place to learn from someone?

Ms. KONDRACKE. I think the genius of the American education system is there is local innovation. And we have seen that in our college system. We have the greatest postsecondary system in the world, but we have failed to introduce that kind of innovation, creativity, flexibility, measurement, accountability. We have somehow failed to introduce that or expect that of our secondary schools.

And so, Congress can incentivize by offering innovation grants, opportunity grants. They can motivate. Dollars count, and we are cash-strapped for our education system. And so I would just be sure that the moneys that you decide to allocate reward outcomes, and then that you use your power to set some national standards.

So you can set a framework and you can incentivize more excellence and more creativity by offering resources.

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My time is up.

Mr. GORDON. If I could just give a snapshot, at least in terms of the schools that we operate, the leadership training that is done by the traditional schools of education does not add value at all. And I think your instincts of looking at the medical model and apprenticeship model is certainly a lot more helpful, in our experience.

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you.

The gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. Payne?

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you very much.

I guess I have a question that we know that the better-trained teachers certainly generally perform better. And I just wonder if anyone—and you may have mentioned it in your testimony, and, as you know, I came late, or I will tell you I came late if you didn't know it anyway.

But the question is, how do any of you have any suggestions on how we can try to attract real quality teachers to the poorer schools and in the difficult parts? I mean, human nature and even the educational system, you know, after you get tenure and you can move up, you know, you have an opportunity to move to a school where the higher performers—generally speaking, I guess. That is the way it used to be when I taught.

Is there any way that we can try to keep—or do you have suggestions how we can keep the top teachers in the toughest schools? It kind of is counter-human-nature, I guess.

Mr. WOTORSON. If I may, one of the perhaps easiest and perhaps most obvious would be to really incent those teachers going into those particularly needy areas, incenting their going in terms of paying, in terms of innovative things like assistance with home purchasing. Any range of things that have been tried but on a relatively small scale that are really critically important that we scale up and start doing now.

Mr. BALFANZ. I think the other thing to consider, though, is that that can get them in the door, but to keep them you have to fix the school. What drives teachers out of these schools is not so much the pay and the hours, it is the craziness. "The school doesn't work; my efforts are in vain."

So I think there is both a strategy to get them in, but to keep them we have to realize we have to transform the school. If the school works, the teachers will stay. They have the passion, they are feeling successful. They will want to be there. What drives them out is when they feel the school is crazy.

Ms. PHILLIPS. It is one of those very difficult and complex problems for which we don't have a magic bullet or a ready answer, but it is around things that people have said.

It is not only the compensation, which is an issue and the fact that you need to incent teachers to do that; it is also about some of the other conversations. Do they have a good school leader that they can rely on? Do they have access to their colleagues? Do they have access to the kind of materials and things they believe they need when they walk in the classroom every day?

But all of those things are within our power to change.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you very much.

Also, in our schools, we find that there are, you know, absenteeism. And I don't know if the, you know, the level of the school have increased absenteeism.

But what do we do about the substitute question? I mean, the school is going to get substitutes. Is there any suggestion on how that system could be improved so that there is real education going on if there is a substitute for that day or week or if a teacher gets sick and is going to be out for a long period of time?

Ms. PHILLIPS. As a superintendent, I had to try a variety of things, because—and the first district where I was a superintendent, I had high substitute rates often and a difficulty in recruiting teachers in. So, over time, I had to try all the things we have talked about today in order to create an environment in the district where teachers wanted to be, and wanted to be on an ongoing basis.

But then I had to do a number of creative things, like create a more permanent pool of substitutes and train those and assign those out to buildings, so that when a teacher was absent there was a familiar face that was familiar with the school in an ongoing way.

So there are a number of solutions, a variety of sort of creative and innovative solutions that people use. Part of the key, then, is giving schools and school operators and school principals and stuff flexibility to use those.

Mr. PAYNE. And how important do you think class size is? Would anybody like to touch that?

Ms. PHILLIPS. There is no doubt that, you know, there are certain points at which class size becomes untenable. But the problem we have in the country is that there is very limited evidence about the impact of class size except in some of the early years. And, in fact, there is some growing evidence that having an effective teacher is far more powerful than reducing class size not by one or two students, but actually by several students.

And so, I think as we think about how we are allocating dollars in this country and we think about things from master's degrees to class size, we should take a really hard look at what the evidence says and decide if that is the most effective way to allocate our dollars, or when, in fact, it is the most effective way to allocate our dollars, and clearly bears a really hard look.

Mr. BALFANZ. And to answer that, one of the best uses of the stimulus dollars, to really at the secondary level do the studies to figure out what is the best way to use extended time and what is the best way strategically to use class-size reduction.

Mr. PAYNE. Since my time has expired, one last question before it totally expires, just about the—we are having this new surge in the movement for charter schools. I mean, charter schools are here, and some of them are very good, and et cetera and et cetera. But it seems like there is a new national movement, especially on the East Coast, to almost make it all charters.

If everyone could just give me a quick answer on the question of, are public schools, the way they are performing, are they still relevant today? Or is this charter avalanche that is coming down,

which is certainly well-orchestrated and well-funded, is that going to be the wave of the future?

And if we could just go right down.

Mr. BALFANZ. Sure. I think they are an important tool in the tool basket, and in certain places they have been very successful. But when we look at the data nationally, we see just as many dropout factory charter schools as we see other high schools. So just charter schools alone doesn't solve the problem.

Mr. PAYNE. Yes?

Mr. WOTORSON. I would largely agree with Dr. Balfanz. We should look at charters, particularly those that have been successful and that are successful and give us good models, we should look at those for implementing things in the regular public schools.

But we shouldn't look at charters as the panacea to the problem. We ought to commit ourselves to fixing our public schools and learning where we can.

Ms. KONDRACKE. Building on that, the lessons to be learned from great charter schools—and there are uneven successes, but there are some great charter schools—the lessons to be learned is—I think the genius behind charter schools is the innovation that is allowed, the autonomy, the management, the opportunity to make decisions and be the master of the destiny of your school and your environment, and to drive results and feel pride and build a team and feel pride. And if we can take that kind of a lesson and that kind of a genius breakthrough and infuse that into the public school system, we could have something.

Mr. GORDON. I think we should be encouraging schools that work to grow in scale, be they charter or district. And I wouldn't place a value on one or the other. I think the value of having a system like that is that you create an accountability-based system that serves taxpayers and serves students.

So I would avoid the question of charter versus district and focus on: Are we expanding schools that work and are we eliminating schools that don't?

Ms. PHILLIPS. Yeah, the key issue is schools that work. We funded charters as a Foundation for a period of time, as well as districts and States. And we will continue to try to put high-quality choices in front of students, high-quality public school choices.

I think the key is, if you look at schools that work across this country, whether they are in districts or whether they are independent charters, they all carry a set of ingredients that we have talked about today, from being really clear about their standards and curriculum, to having good data systems, to enticing really effective teachers and leaders.

And when we talk to innovative school district leaders, when we talk to charter leaders, when we talk to anybody who is really getting outcomes for kids, they will say those are the things we need, and we need the flexibility to carry them out, as well as we need to continue to push the edges of innovation.

Mr. WISE. The key, to me, isn't whether or not you call it charter or public; it is what are the elements in it. And just as Dr. Phillips said, every time we look at a school that is beating all of the odds, we see the same elements, whatever it is called.

And another couple of those elements: personalization, there is a direct personal relationship for students in that school; and engagement. Those students are engaged; it is not “drill and kill.”

So it is the elements that are important.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SCOTT. Well, thank you very much.

And I want to thank our witnesses for their testimony. You know, this is really a case of pay me now or pay me later. We have heard that you can predict from the third grade which direction, which trajectory the children are on.

And you really have to wonder what kind of people would look at a child in the third grade that can't read, knowing that that problem will put them on a trajectory towards prisons, and start building prisons rather than come up with some literacy programs to get them back on another trajectory. That other trajectory is not only more civilized, but it is also less expensive. And that is essentially what we have been doing. And the testimony we have heard today outlines the fact that we could do a lot better.

So I want to thank all of our witnesses.

And, without objection, members will have 14 days to submit additional materials or questions for the hearing record.

And, without objection, the hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 5:24 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

