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NCLB REAUTHORIZATION: MODERNIZING MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOLS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

HEARING

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS

UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

ON

EXAMINING NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND REAUTHORIZATION, FOCUSING ON MODERNIZING MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOLS FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

APRIL 24, 2007

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NCLB REAUTHORIZATION: MODERNIZING MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOLS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

TUESDAY, APRIL 24, 2007

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:00 a.m., in Room SD–628, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Edward M. Kennedy, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Kennedy, Bingaman, Murray, Brown, Enzi, Burr, Isakson, and Murkowski.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR KENNEDY

The CHAIRMAN. Good morning. First of all I want to thank all of our panelists for getting their testimony in. You know, we have a rule around here, sort of like a school day, you know, you have to get your homework in. All of you got them in at the end of last week, and I had a chance over this weekend to get through them all. They are just superb, just superb, all of them. They really capture, I think, the challenge in education with a lot of very good constructive and helpful recommendations. I want to thank all of you. I'll come back to particulars—and enormously informative. I find very, very informative information and facts that were just incredibly useful and helpful.

I'll just be very brief and put my statement in the record. The challenge that we're facing in K through 12, is the obvious focus that No Child Left Behind spent on the early years. However, we don't get into the middle schools and what's happening in the middle schools and the high schools. We spend our life in the early years and miss what is the basic and underlying, I think, goal that all of us are interested in. That is having children that are taking advantage of opportunities and developing skills and looking to a future with greater hope. If we don't really work at it, in terms of how they are getting into college, and how the colleges are relating to the job market, in terms of the future and a fast-growing world, then we're missing the continuum.

I thank so many of our members. When I talk about the future, I'm very aware—Senator Bingaman, present here, and working with Lamar Alexander and others on the Competitiveness bill that's on the floor right now. I'm enormously grateful, as well, to Senators Bingaman, Burr, and Murray for their leadership in this area, and for their legislation in this area. I thank—as always—my

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friend, Senator Enzi, who at each and every step along the way, has been an invaluable partner as we're trying to deal with these issues.

We have very good help and assistance from the Alliance for Excellent Education Foundation, Jobs for the Future, and The Center for American Progress. They've all been right on target and incredibly useful and helpful.

I have a more extensive statement, which is enormously eloquent.

[Laughter.]

I know all of you want to remain and have me read that, but I think we know why we're here. We've got some very good people that can help guide this committee on these issues and we're looking forward to their testimony.

[The prepared statement of Senator Kennedy follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SENATOR KENNEDY

I welcome our witnesses to this hearing on modernizing middle and high schools as we prepare to reauthorize the No Child Left Behind Act. The act sets lofty goals for all schools to meet, and requires States to establish strong standards, a rigorous curriculum, and reliable assessments. It's helped schools make significant progress in closing achievement gaps and helping students learn.

One of our principal priorities in the reauthorization is to ensure that the act is working for all students at every grade level in elementary school, middle school, and high school.

Recent surveys demonstrate that we still have much to do in secondary schools. Only 30 percent of 8th grade students scored proficient or better in 2005 on math assessment and reading assessment. In 12th grade, less than a quarter of students scored proficient or better on the math assessment, and only 35 percent were proficient or better on the reading assessment. It's clear that secondary school students need as much attention and help in these essential courses as students in lower grades do.

We also need to do more to assist students in the transition from middle school to high school and help them graduate. About 1,000 high schools across the country only graduate half their students. Among African-American and Latinos, only 55 percent graduate on time. It's clear that high schools need more assistance in supporting and retaining students.

Federal investment at the middle and high school level is not sufficient. The main source of Federal funds is through the title I program. Yet, only 8 percent of students who benefit from these funds are in high school. Ninety percent of high schools with very low graduation rates have very low-income students. But only a quarter of these schools receive title I funds. We need to dedicate more resources and support for secondary schools to improve academic achievement and ensure that every student has a fair opportunity to graduate.

States and cities across the country are already taking steps to address these challenges, such as offering extra help during the school day and extending learning time and other school-based interventions.

To improve Boston's high schools, the district worked with private partners to create smaller learning communities, improve instruction, and strengthen professional development. Boston high school programs now focus on business, technology, health professions, arts, public service, engineering, sciences, international studies, and social justice. Through many of these programs, students can enroll in courses for college credit or get hands-on experience in a field that interests them.

We know that proven strategies and interventions will help students make progress, stay in school, and succeed. Research conducted by one of our panelists, Dr. Robert Balfanz shows that we can identify students who are at-risk for not completing high school as early as 6th grade. Early intervention, quality teachers, small classes, and data driven instruction will strengthen schools and keep students engaged.

We also know that better alignment of standards and curricula between middle school and high school can ease the transition for many students. High school students also have to be prepared to meet the expectations of college and the workplace. We need to promote models that allow students to pursue college level work as soon as possible, such as dual enrollment, early college high schools, International Baccalaureate, and Advanced Placement programs, each of which can make a difference in students' skill level and future opportunities.

To do all this, we can't remain bound to the schoolhouse model of past decades. We need to bring our middle and high schools into the 21st century.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about the successful programs they're implementing.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Enzi.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR ENZI

Senator ENZI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate your holding this hearing today on modernizing our high schools. I would agree that your statements are eloquent.

[Laughter.]

We lose something, though, when we don't have the delivery.

[Laughter.]

You have a unique delivery that really gets the points across.

I also want to thank you for the outstanding and very cooperative way in which you've selected witnesses for all the No Child Left Behind hearings that we've had. I too, have had a chance to look through the testimony and appreciate it being available already and know that this is another group of people with ideas—ideas that I think can be transferred across the Nation and make our high schools a better place, a more educational place.

I'm sure Senator Alexander is sorry that he isn't here this morning, but he is involved in the Competitiveness debate over on the floor, which deals with a lot of the same topics that we'll be covering today.

Because we do need to find ways to encourage high school students to stay in school and prepare for and enter high-skilled fields, such as math, science, engineering, technology, health, and foreign languages. We also have to strengthen the programs that

encourage and enable citizens of all ages to enroll in postsecondary education institutions and obtain or improve knowledge and skills. The decisions we make about education and workforce development will have a dramatic effect on the economy and our society for a long time to come.

I do find the present situation to be rather discouraging. Every day in the United States, 7,000 students drop out of school. If the high school students who have dropped out of the class of 2006 had graduated instead, the Nation's economy would have benefited from an additional $309 billion in income they would have earned over their lifetimes. That's an incredible statistic. Because we couldn't reach those 7,000 students, it will cost us, and them, more than $309 billion in income. We both lose.

We simply can not afford to lose those resources. We have to deal with the situation head-on. We can't allow students to waste their senior year and graduate unprepared to enter postsecondary education and the workforce without the necessary skills and knowledge.

The future outlook is not good. Unless high schools are able to graduate their students at higher rates than the 68 to 70 percent they currently do, more than 12 million students will drop out during the course of the next decade. The result long-term will be a loss to the Nation of $3 trillion. As you can imagine, even more in terms of the quality of life for those high school drop-outs.

In addition, it's important to remember the fact that a high school diploma does not guarantee that a student has learned the basics. Nearly half of all college students are required to take remedial courses after graduating from high school before they can take college-level coursework. Each year more than one million first-time, full-time, degree-seeking students begun their undergraduate careers at 4-year colleges and universities with every hope and expectation of earning a Bachelor's Degree. Of those students, fewer than 4 in 10 will actually meet that goal within 4 years, barely 6 in 10 will make it in 6 years. Among minority students, remediation rates are even higher and completion rates are even lower.

To remain competitive in a global economy we can not afford to lose people because they do not have the education and training they need to be successful. We need a plan. We need to ensure opportunities are available to all Americans, because our future depends on widely available and extensive knowledge and training and a commitment to excellence. Strong partnerships and alignment among K–12 schools, institutions of higher education, business, and government will help us meet the needs.

In the HELP Committee we're using this opportunity to shape policy and strengthen the education and training pipeline through the reauthorization of Head Start, No Child Left Behind, The Higher Education Act, and the Workforce Investment Act. We can make sure that every individual has access to a lifetime of education and training opportunities that provide the knowledge and skills they need to be successful and that our employers need to remain competitive.

I look forward to the chance to hear the testimony and ask some questions.

[The prepared statement of Senator Enzi follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SENATOR ENZI

Thank you, Senator Kennedy, for holding this hearing today on modernizing our high schools. We need to make sure our high schools are designed to prepare our students for the 21st century.

We need to find ways to encourage high school students to stay in school and prepare for and enter high-skill fields such as math, science, engineering, health, technology and critical foreign languages. We must also strengthen the programs that encourage and enable citizens of all ages to enroll in postsecondary education institutions and obtain or improve knowledge and skills. The decisions we make about education and workforce development will have a dramatic impact on the economy and our society for a long time to come.

The present situation is discouraging. Every day in the United States, 7,000 students drop out of school. If the high school students who had dropped out of the class of 2006 had graduated instead, the Nation's economy would have benefited from an additional $309 billion in income they would have earned over their lifetimes. It's an incredible statistic. Because we couldn't reach those 7,000 students, it will cost us and them $309 billion in income we will both lose. We simply cannot afford to lose those resources. We must deal with the situation head on—we cannot allow students to "waste" their senior year, and graduate unprepared to enter postsecondary education and a workforce focused on skills and knowledge.

The future outlook is not good. Unless high schools are able to graduate their students at higher rates than the 68 to 70 percent they currently do, more than 12 million students will drop out during the course of the next decade. The result long term will be a loss to the Nation of $3 trillion, and as you can imagine, even more in terms of the quality of life for those dropouts.

In addition, it's important to remember the fact that a high school diploma does not guarantee that a student has learned the basics. Nearly half of all college students are required to take remedial courses, after graduating from high school, before they can take college level coursework.

Each year, more than one million first-time, full-time, degree-seeking students begin their undergraduate careers at 4-year colleges and universities with every hope and expectation of earning a bachelor's degree. Of those students, fewer than 4 in 10 will actually meet that goal within 4 years; barely 6 in 10 will make it out in 6 years. Among minority students, remediation rates are even higher and completion rates are even lower.

To remain competitive in a global economy, we cannot afford to lose people because they do not have the education and training they need to be successful. We need a plan. We need to ensure opportunities are available to all Americans, because our future depends on widely available and extensive knowledge and training and a commitment to excellence. Strong partnerships and alignment among K–12 schools, institutions of higher education, business and government will help us meet the needs.

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I look forward to hearing the testimony of our witnesses and to working with members of the HELP Committee in developing a sound policy to address these critical issues.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

We are joined by Senator Murkowski, and we're delighted to see you. Senator Bingaman has been a particular leader on the issue of dropouts. I was interested in those statistics that show that 15 percent of the schools have 50 percent of the dropouts. It suggests to me that this is, possibly, a manageable problem. When I look at a number of the urban areas, I see the enhanced poverty and enhanced dropout. It's a big challenge, but there's some very encouraging signs.

We'll start with introducing the individuals just as they speak, rather than everyone. Welcome Dr. Balfanz, who's the Associate Director, Talent Development Middle School Project. Dr. Balfanz is a research scientist at the Center for Social Organization Schools at Johns Hopkins, and Co-Director of the Talent Development Middle and High School Project. Talent Development works with 100 high-poverty secondary schools to strengthen curriculum, improve professional development, and provide extra help to students in developing strategies for success.

He'll discuss some of the findings from the research, as well as his work at Talent Development and talk to us about identifying students at risk of dropping out and how strong schoolwide programs, high-quality teachers, and early intervention strategies can help keep the middle school and high school students on track to complete their work.

Please.

STATEMENT OF ROBERT BALFANZ, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, TALENT DEVELOPMENT MIDDLE SCHOOL PROJECT, BALTIMORE, MD

Mr. BALFANZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee. Thank you for inviting me here today to speak about the Nation's graduation rate crisis and to talk about what we can do about it.

We are at a moment of time when a well conceived action at the Federal level can have a catalytic affect in ending the Nation's dropout crisis and, in so doing, fundamentally change the Nation for better. Pick any issue that's important besides, in addition to high-quality public schooling, economic competitiveness, reducing crime, reducing social welfare costs, improving urban and rural development, and I would even gamble to say, deficit reduction, and I can make the case that creating a system of secondary schools where everyone graduates prepared for career, college, and civic life is your issue.

More importantly, I'm here to say today that we can really do something about it. The time is now. We know the high schools kids dropout from, we know why they dropout, and we know what will make it fundamentally better, so we can really do something about this here and now. Central to this will be creating a Federal, State, and local partnership that provides these schools with the accountability frameworks, resources, technical assistance, and capacity building so we can do this soon.

Let me explain. I come at this issue from three angles. First as a researcher, who has looked at the causes of dropouts, its location, and its cures. Second, as a developer of a comprehensive whole school reform model, the Talent Development Program, which over the past decade, has allowed me to work with 30 districts—urban and rural—and over 100 high-poverty middle and high schools. And finally, as an operator of a innovation high school in Baltimore City that's a partnership between Johns Hopkins and the Baltimore City Public School System. It's a public school, it's in one of the highest poverty neighborhoods in America and West Baltimore. It takes all comers and it gives you really—nothing shows you how to do it than having to do it yourself.

Putting all those three perspectives together, what do we know? We know that about 15 percent of the Nation's high schools, about 2,000, produce half its dropouts. These are high schools where, year after year, only 6 out of every 10 students who enter, graduate. And often, it's only 3 out of 10 or 4 out of 10 or 5 out of 10. This happens year in and year out, despite often a decade of State and then National accountability efforts. These high schools are, unfortunately, the Nation's dropout factories.

Second of all, we know these schools are primarily attended by low-income and/or minority students. This is a National tragedy, but 2,000 high schools, as Senator Kennedy suggested, is a solvable number.

Second of all, we know these schools are located wherever we find concentrated poverty so, about half are in the Nation's Northern, Midwestern, and Western cities. The other half are across the South and Southwest in every State. These schools are man-made, they are not inevitable. They happen because what we've done, largely unintentionally, is concentrate, overwhelmingly concentrate needy students in a small subset of under-resourced schools.

What do I mean by this, overwhelmingly concentrated? In a high school with a high dropout rate, where only 50 percent, 40 percent, 30 percent of the students graduate, you will typically look in the ninth grade and find 400 students. Of those 400 students, 8 in 10, 8 out of 10 are repeating the grade, are overage for grade, are in Special Ed, are two or more years behind grade level, or enter high school having missed a month or more of school during middle school, meaning they're already starting to dis-attach from schooling.

Normally schools might have 5, 10, 15 percent of high needs kids and they can mobilize around them. When it's 80 percent and it's over hundreds in number, you're just overwhelmed. And second of all, instead of over-resourcing these grades in schools, they often get the lowest level of resources. That's the least desirable teaching

assignment, so they get the youngest teachers and have the highest teacher turnover rates and the highest level of vacancies.

What do I mean by under-resourced? They don't have enough skilled adults in the building that are committed to getting the job done. They don't have enough time and stability and leadership. The Principal changes every year, the Superintendent every 2 years. They don't have access to high-quality technical assistance.

We also know that 8 out of 10, maybe 9 out of 10 of these students of schools, it's highly predictable who's going to drop out. These kids actually wave their hands up and start signaling, "Help!" as early as the sixth grade when they fail math, when they fail English, when they get in behavioral trouble. Or, as a sixth grader, a 12-year-old, miss a month or more of schooling.

The system is not set up to recognize this. The system is set up to say, "It's early adolescence, it's a new school, we hope you grow out of it." But what we know, is they don't grow out of it. In fact, it just gets worse. In sixth grade, you might just have one of these things. By ninth grade, you're not coming, you're failing everything, and you're in behavioral trouble. We really need to have a systematic approach of both the high schools and the middle grade schools that feed them.

Finally, we know that students in these schools desperately want to succeed. If you ever want to affirm your faith in the human spirit, come visit our innovation high school in Baltimore and talk to the students. What these students overcome just to get to school is amazing.

So it's not the case, we have to get rid of this image in our heads of the dropout of this disaffected youth who's alienated, who doesn't care, or maybe has got pregnant, or has to work. That's a small percentage of the dropouts. We're always going to have those kids, but that's 10 percent. It's not the case when you go to 50, 40, 60 percent dropping out that that's the majority. The majority of kids that are failing in school and kids that are being failed by the schools not giving them the supports they need.

The big picture is, we know today what's going to happen tomorrow. I can point to you to the schools by district, by State, that produce most of the dropouts in those States. Within those schools we can point to the kids in need of, who need help and support to graduate. That really tells us we're in a position to have action.

Furthermore and finally, before my time runs out, and we can answer this in the questions, we know a lot about what to do. Over the past decade we've learned that comprehensive reform when well implemented makes a difference. By this, I mean organization changes that let teachers work with just a small subset of students over time so they're not overwhelmed, 4 teachers, 75 kids, in my view, is the equivalent of the platoon in the Army. It's the fundamental unit of organization. Four adults can help 75 kids, but oftentimes a single teacher is responsible for 150 kids. And so, it doesn't work.

We have to have strong instructional programs, high standards, high challenges, that relentlessly provide the extra help you need to succeed, which is just multiple and multiple layers. Because you're taking kids that are at the sixth-grade level in math and

saying, "You're going to pass algebra." They have the ability to do that, but they need intensive support for that to happen.

Finally, teachers need supports because we're asking them to do much more than teach a good lesson. We're asking them to actually make phone calls to kids. In our school, if you're not there in the first 30 minutes you get a phone call so I know where you are, we help you out. What's the story? But teachers have to have time to do that.

What's the Federal role? At a global level I thinks it's to be the grease and glue, to create the system that—the Federal, State, local system that provides the resources, the accountability systems, the capacity building, the technical assistance. It's also specifically to help provide additional targeted resources—this is the other part of the story—we can really target these resources to where they're most needed and will do the most good. In exchange for accountability, that the schools will implement the evidence-based reforms we know work.

In very specific terms, it's supporting and fully funding the Graduation Promise Act, introduced yesterday. It's getting graduation rates right in the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind, making them count as much as test scores, measured accurately and measured for everybody.

Finally, it's investing in research and innovation. We know right now how to make these schools tremendously better, but to get to the promised land of every kid, no matter where you start, graduating prepared for college, career, and civic life, we will have to learn more. We will have to figure out for extra times, is it better to extend the school day, the school year, the school week, for how many, for which kids and what to do with that time. We'll also have to think of more innovative ways to help the most neediest kids who need recovery, who are overage and under-credited. How do we take a 17-year-old with three credits and create a program where they succeed?

I believe it's in our power to do this and I ask you to work together with us so we can do this within the next decade.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Balfanz follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ROBERT BALFANZ

We are at a moment when well-conceived action by the Federal Government can play a catalytic role in ending the Nation's dropout crisis and in so doing change the Nation fundamentally for the better. Pick the issue you care most deeply about—the Nation's competitiveness, equal opportunity, lowering the crime rate, reducing social welfare costs, urban or rural development, social justice, economic growth, or unleashing the full potential of all the Nation's citizens and the case can be made that creating a system of public secondary schools which graduate all students prepared for success in college, career, and civic life is your issue. This is within our grasp, we know how to do this and we know what needs to be done to make it happen. Central to this is a focused Federal effort to create a Federal-State-local partnership which provides the accountability framework, capacity building, technical assistance, research, evaluation, and resources necessary to transform the Nation's low-performing secondary schools.

Let me explain. I come at this issue from three perspectives. First from what I have learned as a researcher who has studied the causes, consequences, and location of the dropout problem at the national level, as well as the reforms, policies, and resources needed to end it. Second from validating this learning through practice as a whole school reform model developer who has worked with over 30 diverse urban and rural school districts and over 100 high-poverty middle and high schools

across the Nation to implement the Talent Development Middle and High School's comprehensive organizational, instructional and teacher/administrator development/support reforms. Finally, my perspective is informed by first hand experience operating a nonselective, public Innovation High School in West Baltimore which serves a high-poverty student population. The Baltimore Talent Development High School is run via a partnership between Johns Hopkins University and the Baltimore City Public School System and has given me the insight which comes from having to help design an instructional program, implement a multi-tiered system of student supports, select and train a teaching staff, get facilities in working order, and do what it takes to prepare students no matter what their entering skill level and motivation for adult success in college, career, and life. From the sum of these experiences here is what I have learned.

WHAT WE KNOW

For the past decade I and my colleagues at the Center for Social Organization of Schools at Johns Hopkins and the Philadelphia Education Fund, have studied the dropout/graduation rate crisis at the school level. We have learned that about 15 percent of the Nation's high schools produce close to half its dropouts. These 2,000 high schools are the Nation's dropout factories. They have weak promoting power—the number of seniors is routinely 60 percent or fewer than the number of freshmen 4 years earlier—and year after year, often for a decade or longer, about as many students drop out as graduate. In the worst cases, 400 freshmen often produce 150 or fewer graduates.

About half these schools are in northern, midwestern and western cities; the other half are primarily found throughout the south and southwest. Whether the national graduation rate has gotten better, worse, or remained static over the last decade is unclear to us. What we do know is that the number of high schools with weak promoting power has nearly doubled in the last decade.

We also have learned that poverty is the fundamental driver of low graduation rates. There is a near perfect linear relationship between a high school's level of concentrated poverty and its tendency to lose large numbers of students between ninth and twelfth grades. In the States we have looked at in more depth, minorities are promoted to 12th grade at the same or greater rates as white youth when they attend middle class or affluent high schools in which few students live in poverty.

Relatively few minorities attend these high schools, however. Between a third and two-fifths of the Nation's African-American and Latino students attend high schools with high poverty and low graduation rates. This is social dynamite because in modern America a good education is the only reliable path out of poverty. The fact that most of these high-poverty, high-minority high schools, do not receive title 1 funding, *the* Federal program designed to help offset the impact of poverty, is deeply problematic.

We also have been able to follow multiple cohorts of students through two major northeastern school districts. Our data show that the majority of dropouts in these cities leave high school with few credits because they failed the majority of their classes. This is not to ignore important sub-groups of dropouts who demonstrate some high school skills, persevere to 11th or 12th grade and leave school just shy of graduation in response to a life event, boredom, or frustration.

We have found, however, that graduation rates in the 50–60 percent range typical in many cities are driven by students who enter high school poorly prepared for success and rarely or barely make it out of the ninth grade. They disengage from school, attend infrequently, fail too many courses to be promoted to the 10th grade, try again with no better results, and ultimately drop out of school. Our data show 30–40 percent of students in these cities repeat the ninth grade but that only 10–15 percent of repeaters go on to graduate.

Our direct experience working to improve more than 70 high-poverty, nonselective high schools through our Talent Development High Schools program further tells us that the Nation's dropout factories are not primarily the result of students, teachers and administrators who do not care or try. Many care and try a lot, but they are often over-matched by the immense educational challenges they face. There are too many under-resourced and increasingly economically and racially segregated high schools that lack the tools and techniques needed to meet the challenges they face. In these high schools it is not uncommon for less than 20 percent of freshmen to be on-age, first-time ninth graders, with math and reading skills at the seventh-grade level or higher; in short, the type of students high schools have traditionally been designed to educate. Up to 80 percent of the ninth-graders can be over-age for grade, repeating the grade, require special education services, or have math and reading skills below a seventh-grade level. Yet increasingly, we are asking these

students to pass Algebra courses and even exams before they can be promoted to 10th grade.

These students have the ability to do this, but they need much more intensive and effective instruction and adult support than our high-poverty, comprehensive high schools, with current levels of resources, typically provided. Schools which beat these odds and have high percentages of students who succeed in challenging courses provide multiple layers of support. Strong instructional programs are matched with a schedule that allowed for double-dosing in these subjects, and extra help from caring teachers within a personalized interdisciplinary team structure. But this is still not enough for all students to succeed, some require summer school and a few need further focused instruction in the fall to earn promotion to the next grade. Pulling off this level of intensive support requires not only committed adults who refuse to give up on their students, but additional time, resources, training, and materials as well.

Finally, our most recent study reveals that many students begin to fall off the graduation track at the start of adolescence. We have been able to identify over half of four major school district's future dropouts as early as the sixth grade by looking at just four variables commonly measured in schools—attendance, behavior, and course failure in math and English. Across these districts high-poverty middle grade students with any one of the following risk factors—attending school less than 85–90 percent of the time, being identified as having behavioral problems, or failing math or English typically had less than a 20 percent chance of graduating within 5 years of entering ninth grade.

Hence, one reason that the ninth grade finishes off so many students is that many of them have already been struggling and disengaging for 3 years or more before entering high school. Along with the recent on-track measures for ninth-graders developed by the Chicago Consortium for School Research, this tells us that there are powerful and accessible indicators that schools can use to identify the overwhelming majority of students who will drop out in time to prevent it, as well as indicating the areas in which these students need supports.

Thus, States and districts can use *currently available* indicators to identify both the high schools that produce the majority of dropouts and the students most likely to drop out. This means resources and supports can be targeted to the schools and students where they will do the most good and are needed the most.

WHAT WE CAN AND MUST DO

Our research also points to concrete steps we can take *right now* to address the graduation crisis head on. At least three types of intervention are required.

First, the Nation's Dropout Factories need to be fixed or replaced. This cause should unite everyone, the urban North, and the rural South, Civil Rights advocates and policymakers concerned about competitiveness. Transforming these schools and systems is the best shot we have at ending the stubborn grip of concentrated and inter-generational poverty that engulfs too many of our citizens and their communities.

We have the knowledge to do this, but it will not be easy, fast, or cheap. A central feature of dropout factories is that they serve an overwhelming concentration of needy students. Thus, it is essential that Federal Government, States, districts and foundations bring to bear human and financial resources that are equal to the challenge. We have recently shown that high schools vary considerably in resources. Some struggling high schools can implement proven reforms by re-allocating existing resources, many need modest additional support, and a quarter or more need a substantial increase in resources. Moreover, because reforming or replacing these schools is the educational equivalent of open heart surgery, States and districts need to develop sufficient technical capacity to do the job and/or support third-party intermediaries who can.

Second, investments in more research, development, and invention are needed, particularly in curriculum, instruction, and assessment High school coursework needs to develop student's intellect and reflect tighter and more substantial connections to higher education and the workplace. It should incorporate significant experiential activities that engage our emerging adults in meaningful activities that build their skills and connections to supportive social networks. It must be adaptable enough to address diverse needs, including the increasing number of adolescents who are English language learners. Assessments need to support and encourage meaningful intellectual development and not limit learning to what is easily testable.

Finally, we must acknowledge the impact of poverty and activate "outside the box" approaches for our most vulnerable students. That means investments in improving

and integrating social service and community supports in schools that serve high-poverty neighborhoods and regions. It means providing intensive supports to help students from poverty negotiate the treacherous transitions between educational levels. It means embracing a K–16 framework, but also acknowledging that adolescence (especially combined with poverty) brings its own risk factors and that a secondary approach spanning middle and high schools is needed to keep all students on track toward graduation.

We need to transform the high schools that produce most of the dropouts and the middle grades schools that feed them. With a targeted, inventive, aligned, and integrated approach, we can do this.

THE COST OF INACTION/THE REWARD OF WELL-CONCEIVED ACTION

We must do this. The social, economic, and individual costs of inaction are high. There is essentially no viable work, work that a successful life can be built around for young adults without a high school diploma. When large numbers of young adults and adolescents from a neighborhood are out of school and out of work the social structure becomes frayed and the under-class becomes self-perpetuating. In our research in Philadelphia we have shown that students who are in foster care, who are abused and neglected, who have a child, or are incarcerated almost never graduate from high school. This creates thousands of dislocated youth within a single city which often leads to tragic results. This year one of the students at our Innovation High School, a student who had dropped out in the sixth grade, whose parents were both in jail, who was a recovering alcoholic and who was on his way to a bright future, having remarked to a visiting reporter that the best thing about our school was positive peer pressure, was tragically shot to death in random street crime perpetuated by other young adults who more than likely had themselves already dropped out of school.

Conversely, the social, economic, and individual returns to ending the dropout crisis and transforming the Nation's low-performing schools are almost staggeringly high. Recent research by economists at Columbia and Princeton has shown that cutting the dropout rate in half through proven programs and effective efforts would, even after calculating the costs of those efforts, produce $40 billion a year in economic returns via increased tax revenue and decreased social welfare costs. Once we can say to any student entering high school—rather they are from Akron, Baltimore, Worchester, Chicago, New York, Albuquerque, Los Angeles or North Carolina, Georgia, Arizona, or Florida—that if you come to school every day and work hard you will graduate prepared for success in college, career and civic life, we will have changed American society profoundly for the better and made true to its promise of equal opportunity for all. The students regardless of their circumstances will respond. If you do not believe me, come to Baltimore and I will introduce you to another one of our students—a self described bad boy gone good, he raises himself, while an aunt raises his child, and he has become a consistent honor roll student who pats himself on the back every time he makes it because there is no one else at home to do it. On his way to a successful career in advertising, he tells anyone who asks that the streets outside are mean but his school is heaven.

We can do this, make high school a transformative place for all the Nation's students and in particular those who live in poverty. We know which schools need to be fixed or replaced, we know which students within them need multiple layers of continuous academic and social support, we have learned enough about how high schools can be successfully turned around or started anew to make them fundamentally more successful, and we know what else we have to learn. Its time to get to work.

THE FEDERAL ROLE

What is the Federal role? The Federal Government in partnership with States and local school districts needs to lead the effort to transform the Nation's low-performing secondary schools. As my friend at the Philadelphia Education Fund likes to say it needs to be the grease and glue that gets the job done. It needs to insure that the accountability framework, capacity building, technical assistance, research, evaluation, and resources necessary to transform the Nation's low-performing secondary schools are put in place and sustained for the decade it will take. It needs to insure that these efforts are strong enough and directed enough to overcome the obstacles that will stand in the way—lack of will, uneven know how at school, district, and State level, limited or misallocated resources, leadership churn, and policy misalignment.

One large step in this direction is the Graduation Promise Act recently introduced by Senator Bingaman. This bill provides a means to target what we know works,

to the high schools that need it the most, and to insure that in exchange for receiving the resources and support (human and financial) necessary to introduce state-of-the-art reforms, schools and school districts are held accountable for implementing them well and sustaining them over time.

Congress also needs to help the Nation get the measurement of graduation rates, right. In the re-authorization of No Child Left Behind, graduation rates must be measured accurately, disaggregated for all groups, and count as much as test scores in accountability systems. In addition when it is re-authorized NCLB at the secondary level needs to be structure so that low-performing middle and high schools have the incentive to engage in the comprehensive, whole school reforms they need and are held accountable for implementing and sustaining effective reforms. This will require a set of intermediate on-track indicators, since it can take 3 to 5 years for effective whole school reform to show its full impact. Currently too many of the implicit and explicit incentives in NCLB push schools to focus on a few students rather than reforming the entire school.

In addition, there needs to be support for continued invention and discovery. All of my learning and experiences tell me that central to reducing poverty in America will be the creation of grades 6 to 14 combined middle, high, and community college full service (supplying integrated services) open at 8 a.m. close at 8 p.m. schools in the Nation's most impoverished neighborhoods. So students can enter in at the cusp of adolescence when they are most at risk of becoming disengaged from schooling and falling off the path to graduation and leave fully ready for successful, meaningful, and economically important employment. The Graduation Promise Act sows the seeds for this in title II by setting aside funds for the development of more effective models of secondary school for struggling students who are over age and under credited but a parallel effort in curriculum and instruction will also be needed so we can create secondary schools which fully engage, educate, and develop the Nation's adolescents.

Last, and I could no longer call myself a researcher if I did not include this, we need increased investment in knowledge building. The Federal Government needs to support a program of research designed to establish which educational inputs, implemented in what manner, in which types of schools have the greatest impact. The Graduation Promise Act begins this but over time even more support will be needed. For example, we need to know, is it better to increase the school day, the school week, or the school year and if so, how best to use this time, or in fact is increased time not worth the cost and hence lost opportunities to bring to scale more effective reforms. This can only be answered through large-scale randomized studies that will cost tens of millions of dollars to run. Currently there is funding only for small scale randomized studies that cost millions of dollars to run. So we need to increase our Nations' funding for educational research and development by an order of magnitude. But as any scientist will tell you, change something by an order of magnitude and you change the world. We are at such a moment, and with a well-conceived federally led plan of action for transforming the Nation's low-performing secondary schools, that we can do that.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you for excellent testimony. You know, what I think is fascinating is, that it is North, South, East, and West. Around here you can try and get a coalition together to do something. That's not the most important thing we're going to hear today, but something that's perked up my attention.

Governor Wise, good to see you. Governor Wise became President of the Alliance for Excellent Education in 2005, was the Governor of West Virginia from 2001 to 2005, where he implemented the PROMISE Scholarship Program, established character education curriculum, and helped increase the number of National Board-certified teachers in the State by offering financial bonuses. He'll discuss the need for stronger accountability systems at middle and high schools, including the importance of tracking and reporting graduation rates in reliable manner.

Governor Wise recommends more effective use of data, building the capacity to make school improvements possible, improving methods of measuring student progress, and anything else he wants to comment on.

Thank you.

STATEMENT OF BOB WISE, PRESIDENT, ALLIANCE FOR EXCELLENT EDUCATION, WASHINGTON, DC.

Mr. WISE. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee for your interest.

You all outlined so graphically, the problem with dropouts, the glaring statistics, when many of you will be attending commencement ceremonies and we watch those students next month, high school seniors walk happily across the stage. We also have to remember the over one million who are not walking across the stage that started ninth grade. For those one million, it will be just another day of either being unemployed or working a minimum wage job.

In all the numbers, Senator Enzi, that you will, that you said so eloquently bear out. There are two groups affected when somebody drops out. First it's the student themselves and all that befalls them, lost opportunities. The second group are the rest of us.

Let me move quickly to No Child Left Behind and how it can help high schools. First of all, we have to remember that there is a crisis. We know what to do about it. Bob Balfanz and his colleagues have illustrated and demonstrated well, both the research—through the research of the problem and the solutions. We know what to do about it, we have to have the will.

Why are we in this shape we're in? Well, first of all let me address what we call the missing middle. The missing middle is the Federal funding for our educational system. If this is an air graph, from here to here is $18 billion, which is what the Federal Government—Federal Government only—spends for pre–K to grade six, basically, Title I, Head Start, and Reading First. Let me move over here to higher education, postsecondary, this is about $16 billion, essentially Pell Grants and campus-based financial aid with—this does not include guaranteed student loans—that would go to the ceiling, so that's 18 and 16.

So what do we spend for middle and high schools? About two point five for middle schools, and about two point five for high schools, for a total of $5 billion. We can show you direct return on investment. We're making gains here in scores and reading scores and math scores in the fourth grade. Our higher education system still is one of the envies of the world. Here is where we're seeing the problem in the dropout rate that's not declining, and indeed a third of our kids that are finishing high school, but not with the skills they need for success in the workplace.

Second problem is, NCLB does not have true accountability at the high school level. The law looks at test scores, but not if students actually graduate. And so, the irony is, we run our kids a mile race, assessing them rigorously as we should, at every tenth of a mile, they cross the finish line and we don't really count it. And so, we don't, at the finish line we're not keeping track, we're not disaggregating data, we're not holding States to it.

Beyond accountability, the school improvement requirements under NCLB, such as School Choice and Supplemental Educational Services don't really apply. One reason is that 75 percent of school districts have only one high school, so choice is really not an issue in that situation.

But finally, the main reason, is what is the main carrot and stick of NCLB? It's title I dollars, and yet only 8 percent of students receiving title I services are in our high schools. What that means then, is that whether or not a school makes AYP doesn't really matter because if title I dollars don't go there—and most of the schools don't get title I dollars, high schools—then the services, supports, and sanctions won't apply.

Now, we know that there're very successful models that can be implemented to deal with this. Talent Development, which Bob Balfanz and his colleagues head up, Jobs for American Graduates, The Institute for Student Achievement, First Things First, I can rattle off a number of them. There are a number of individual high schools and school districts, as well, that have been successful.

What can we do? Well, first to turn around low-performing high schools, NCLB must include a new system of meaningful high school about accountability tied to school improvement, that also requires constant disaggregated graduation rates that count as much as test scores in determining AYP.

Second, in the improved measure of AYP, should determine whether or not schools qualify for a new high school improvement fund using proven strategies to turn around low-performing schools, the dropout factories that Bob referred to. This new system is outlined in the Graduation Promise Act, introduced yesterday by Senators Bingaman, Burr, and Kennedy. We thank all of you very much for your commitment to this.

The GPA authorizes a $2.4-billion high school improvement and dropout reduction fund to turn around America's slowest performing high schools. Remember that air graph, we'll still only be up at that point to $7.5 billion for our six secondary school grades.

In this approach, States would set up Statewide systems to use multiple measures to appropriately access high school quality. States would then use this information to place high schools in need of improvement into one of three types of differentiated school improvement categories based on—not on how long the school has been failing—but how badly the school is performing. These high school strategies would come from the local level and not be designed by the Federal Government.

Additionally, I want to thank Senator Burr for introducing The Graduate for Better Future Act, which also supports the goals of the GPA.

We also need to look quickly at some other reforms that are significant. Seventy percent of our eighth graders are not reading at grade level. Now, they're entering high school with the toughest courses. That is why Striving Readers Authorization—which would target money to the lowest performing high schools to develop these literacy skills that are so important. Senator Sessions and Murray have introduced this in the Striving Readers Act of Senate bill 958, and we also thank the co-sponsorship, the members of this committee, Senators Dodd, Burr, Bingaman, Isakson, Harkin, Murkowski, and Senator Brown.

Rather than having States differ greatly in defining proficiency, NCLB should also establish a process for developing voluntary shared education standards, to ensure that all students are held to the same high expectations aligned with the requirements of post-

secondary education in the workforce. The need for these shared standards has also been recognized by various members of this committee in legislation, various pieces of legislation introduced by Senators Kennedy, Clinton, and Dodd.

From the classroom, as well, high quality data is necessary to make important education decisions to turn around low-performing high schools. Still, too rare are quality longitudinal data systems, using individual student identifiers critical to proving student achievement. From the classroom to this committee room, we need good data to improve educational outcomes. The Federal Government assisting States to develop those, must be the main vehicle.

We would urge a major investment in grants to States to build quality data systems in accordance with the recommendations of the Data Quality Commission—or Campaign.

Again, I want to thank the chairman and the committee for the leadership on this critical issue. If, as several of you have talked about, it's not just a matter of the dropouts, it's also a matter of our economy. The $2.5 billion that we asked for in the GPA, Graduation Promise Act, I can demonstrate chapter and verse economically, a return on investment to the individual, yes to our society overall. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Wise follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF BOB WISE

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the invitation to speak with you today. I appreciate your commitment to education, as well as that of the other distinguished members of the committee.

In the coming month, millions of high school seniors will walk across the stage at graduation ceremonies to receive their high school diplomas. Auditoriums and gymnasiums around the country will be packed to the brim with proud parents and relatives. For many students, Graduation Day will be the culmination of 13 years of study; for others, it will be the doorway to postsecondary education. But for nearly 1.2 million students who started high school with these graduating students, it will likely be just another day that they are unemployed or working at a minimum wage job because they have already dropped out of school.

CRISIS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT

Forty years ago, the United States was No. 1 in the world in high school graduation rates; it now ranks seventeenth. The Nation's 15-year-olds, when measured against their counterparts in other industrialized nations, rank fifteenth in reading, twenty-third in math, and thirtieth in problem-solving skills.

This does not bode well for the future economic well-being of the Nation, nor for the continued prosperity of its people. An increasingly global, technologically based economy is demanding ever higher levels of knowledge and skills from its workers. The U.S. Department of Labor estimates that almost 90 percent of the fastest growing U.S. jobs require at least some postsecondary education.

In a world in which a meaningful high school diploma has become the minimum qualification necessary to obtain a good job and support a family well-being, far too many American students are being allowed to fall off the path to prosperity. This problem has escalated to crisis proportions in thousands of the Nation's high schools and is hampering the opportunities of millions of students.

Every school day, 7,000 students drop out—that's 7,000 students who could have become teachers or researchers, small business owners, or Senators. Of the students who enter ninth grade each fall, a third will not graduate from high school within 4 years. Another third will graduate, but without the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in college or the 21st century workplace. And only a third will graduate 4 years later with these necessary skills.

The numbers are even worse for minority communities in our country. Only about 55 percent of black students and 52 percent of Hispanic students graduate on time from high school with a regular diploma, compared to 78 percent of white students. Only 16 percent of Latino students and 23 percent of African-American students

graduate prepared for college, compared to 40 percent of white students. And the news could get worse. Based on projections from the U.S. Census Bureau, the white population is expected to grow by only 1 percent by 2020, while the Hispanic population will increase by 77 percent and the African-American population by 32 percent. If the Nation cannot do a better job of serving minority students and ensuring that they graduate from high school, the Nation's overall graduation rate will fall even further as a growing number of minority students are left behind.

The cost of a poor education is not just to the individual. Analysis by my organization, the Alliance for Excellent Education, with assistance from the Met Life Foundation, reveals that if the 1.2 million high school dropouts from the Class of 2006 had earned their diplomas instead of dropping out, the U.S. economy would have seen an additional $309 billion in wages over these students' lifetimes. And that's only for 1 year—we can expect the country to lose another $309 billion in potential earnings later this year as dropouts from the Class of 2007 fail to graduate with their classmates. If this annual pattern is allowed to continue, more than 12 million students will drop out of school during the next decade at a cost to the Nation of $3 trillion.

Recent research conducted by a group of the Nation's leading researchers in education and economics has shed some light on exactly how much a high school dropout costs the Nation in lost taxes, increased health care costs, higher spending on crime, and greater expenditure on support programs such as welfare. According to a recent report, published by Teachers College at Columbia University, male high school graduates earn up to $322,000 more over the course of their lifetimes than dropouts, while college graduates earn up to $1.3 million more.

On the flip side, the Alliance projects that if the U.S. education system could raise minority high school graduation rates to the current level of whites, and if those new graduates go on to postsecondary education at similar rates, additional personal income would increase by more than $310.4 billion by 2020, yielding additional tax revenues and a considerably improved economic picture.

While some high school dropouts might eventually find good jobs and earn decent livings, most will spend their lives in a State of uncertainty—periodically unemployed or on government assistance. Many will cycle in and out of prison. In fact, about 75 percent of America's State prison inmates, almost 59 percent of Federal inmates, and 69 percent of jail inmates did not complete high school. If we could increase the male graduation rate by only 5 percent, we could save $7.7 billion a year through reducing crime-related costs and increasing earnings.

High school graduates have better health and lower rates of mortality than high school dropouts. Individuals with higher educational attainment also are less likely to use public health services such as Medicaid. An Alliance analysis found that if every student in the class of 2005–2006 graduated from high school, the Nation could save $17.1 billion in lifetime health costs.

FEDERAL ROLE AND NCLB REAUTHORIZATION

The good news is that, although there is a significant crisis, we know much about how to respond. The reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) offers an opportunity for you as the education leaders in the Senate to put the "Secondary" into the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and take some critical steps toward improving our Nation's middle and high schools. The realities of global competitiveness, the rapidly-diminishing prospects of those students whose high schools fail to prepare them for college and work, and the resulting widening opportunity gap all make middle and high school reform an imperative issue from an economic, national security and civil rights perspective.

The time is right for the Federal Government to take bold leadership in advancing secondary school reform—leadership that is appropriate to the crisis and in line with the Federal Government's tradition of intervening to assure the security of the Nation, reduce poverty, increase equity, and advance research to inform effective practice. The increasing urgency to address the trouble plaguing secondary schools has been bolstered by an avalanche of reports recognizing the link between improving secondary education and increasing and maintaining competitiveness. Such reports include ETS's *The Perfect Storm* and National Council on Economic Education's *Tough Choices-Tough Times*.

For education reform to truly take hold and be successful, it must happen at all levels of education, from the schoolhouse to Capitol Hill. As a Nation, we will never reach the goals of No Child Left Behind or make every child a graduate without significantly increasing funding to improve America's high schools—making levels of investment equal to the levels of reform. But I am not interested in making the

current dysfunctional system just more expensive. Reforms must be targeted and research based and investment should match that reform.

Currently, 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 $16 billion and that is without taking into account student loans or other tax incentives. However, funding for grades 7–12 is only about $5 billion.

WHY NCLB DOESN'T WORK FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Unfortunately, the focus of NCLB reflects the current Federal funding priorities in education—NCLB was just not set up for secondary schools. I am not here to criticize NCLB. I am here to tell you why it does not work for high schools and how you can fix them in reauthorization. However, I believe it is critical for us to remember all of the core reasons NCLB was written and became law when we discuss the crisis in our Nation's high schools. The law was written to provide all children, including poor and minority children, with access to a high-quality, standards-based education; the same reason Federal action must occur at the high school level. NCLB, despite its shortcomings, has put a spotlight on the achievement gap—a startling gap that is illustrated in the shocking graduation rates I described earlier.

NCLB was designed to address grades K–8—generally it did not even really contemplate the law's interaction with secondary schools. For example, the original Bush administration proposal was 28 pages and only mentioned high schools twice. In addition, NAEP, known as the Nation's report card, is only required in 4th and 8th grades so there is no on-going national measure of student achievement. And despite low literacy rates in the upper grades, Reading First, the Federal investment in reading skills, is only a K–3 program. As a result, NCLB policy is often neglectful of or even at odds with the needs of America's 14 million high school students, particularly the 6 million students who are at risk of dropping out of school each year.

NCLB at its core is about accountability for improving student achievement. However, there is not true accountability at the high school level—the law looks at test scores but not if students actually graduate. It's as if we are clocking runners in a race every mile but then do not pay attention to whether they cross the finish line. Because Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is focused solely on test scores, there is a perverse incentive to push out the kids who do not score well. Further, these tests generally measure proficiency in the 10th grade, not preparedness for graduation and beyond.

Despite calculation of graduation rates being part of the law, there is no accountability tied to those rates. States calculate high school graduation rates in different and, in many cases highly inaccurate and misleading, ways. Subgroup graduation rates do not count for NCLB and therefore the graduation gaps and the low graduation rates of poor and minority are not reflected in AYP determinations. Even if the graduation rates were accurate and accounted for students in subgroups, NCLB does not require schools and States to make meaningful progress in increasing graduation rates. While States, districts and schools are held accountable for getting all students proficient in math and reading by 2014, there is no such ultimate graduation goal for graduation rates. The consequence is that most States do not have meaningful goals for improving graduation rates each year and schools can make AYP while showing little to no progress on graduation rates.

In 2005, the National Governors Association (NGA) took an important first step in recognizing this problem and moving toward a solution. The NGA Graduation Rate Compact was originally signed by all 50 of the Nation's Governors pledging to adopt accurate and consistent measurements for reporting high school graduation rates. However, two States have since backed out of the commitment; only a few States have yet implemented the Compact rate; and because the Compact did not address accountability, definitions, rates, and growth goals for accountability are still not consistent State to State. NCLB should operationalize the Compact by requiring that graduation rates are disaggregated and increase over time as part of accountability.

Beyond accountability, the school improvement requirements or sanctions under NCLB (which only apply to title I schools thus missing the vast majority of high schools) namely school choice and supplemental education services (SES), simply do not work at the high school level. School choice often is not applicable at the high school level. Seventy-five percent of school districts have only one high school. In

cases where districts do contain more than one high school, they are often concentrated urban districts with many low-performing high schools. And in the cases where such districts do contain high performing high schools, those schools only have a handful of transfer slots available, thus ensuring no real improvement for a failing high school. In the case of SES, because title I funding is extremely limited, very few students in high schools actually receive the services. Further, given extracurricular, social and work demands, high school students are not likely to opt-in to extra tutoring. Finally, regardless of whether or not SES and school choice even could work for high school students, neither provide the research-based improvement strategies that will increase turn around low-performing high schools.

At the root of why NCLB does not work for high schools is the fact that of title I funds almost never even reach high schools. Title I is both the "carrot" and the "stick" that gives NCLB impetus. NCLB requires all schools to report on their assessment performance every year, however sanctions only apply to and are funded for the schools receiving title I funds. Yet only 8 percent of title I participants are high school students. Other major funding streams are also not reaching high schools. Seventy percent of entering freshman cannot read at grade level. However, the major Federal investment in reading, Reading First, stops in third grade.

Given the problems facing our Nation's secondary schools, secondary schools need systemic reforms that NCLB simply does not provide or require. Much is now known about how to renew and revitalize the country's middle and high schools so as to ensure that more students succeed. Local school districts and the States have an undisputed and critical role to play in redesigning the Nation's secondary schools to meet the needs of the 21st century, and many of them are working hard to implement effective reforms. Schools such as JEB Stuart High School in Falls Church, Virginia or Granger High School in Yakima, Washington and programs, such as the Institute for Student Achievement (ISA) or Talent Development, in communities scattered across the Nation are proving that with high expectations and the necessary support, today's students—even those who are most highly at risk of dropping out—are up to the challenge. These schools are successfully keeping students in attendance, improving their achievement levels, and graduating them prepared for success.

NCLB REAUTHORIZATION AND HIGH SCHOOLS

For all of the reasons I described earlier, the Alliance believes NCLB reauthorization must look at multiple means to improve the Nation's high schools from accountability and improvement to literacy to critical data systems. First, I will discuss accountability and school improvement, the cornerstone of Federal school reform policy.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND IMPROVEMENT

To turn around low-performing high schools, NCLB must include a new system of meaningful high school accountability system that is tied closely with school improvement. While the current structure of NCLB does not work for high schools, it can be built upon to leverage the student achievement gains and improved preparedness and graduation rates needed for students and the Nation to succeed.

As discussed earlier, AYP currently does not include the appropriate indicators of a high school's performance. An appropriate measure of AYP at the high school level must include high-quality assessments that are performance-based and aligned to college and work ready standards not administered before 11th grade and consistent, disaggregated graduation rates. Both assessment performance and graduation rates should be required to increase over time. In this new system of accountability and improvement, such a measure of AYP would act as a "thermometer" to see if schools are meeting appropriate goals. In other words, it would tell us something is wrong but further diagnosis and treatment are needed.

This improved measure of AYP would determine whether or not schools enter a new school differentiated improvement system. This new system is outlined in the Graduation Promise Act (GPA), which I am pleased to say, was introduced yesterday by Senators Bingaman and Kennedy. GPA authorizes a $2.4-billion High School Improvement and Dropout Reduction Fund to turn around America's lowest performing high schools and give students attending those schools a chance to graduate ready for college and work. The High School Improvement Fund would support more comprehensive State accountability and improvement systems at the high school level.

As stated in the GPA, under this new system of improvement, States would set up new statewide systems that utilize multiple measures or indicators to appropriately assess high school quality. Formula grants would be distributed to the

States, based on poverty and graduation rates, to establish and/or expand statewide differentiated high school improvement systems guided by research and best practice. These systems would be approved by the Secretary as part of a rigorous peer-review process. States would then develop a set of school performance indicators to be used, in addition to the new measures used to determine adequate yearly progress (AYP), to analyze high school performance, determine the amount and type of support each school needs, and guide the school improvement process. States would also define a minimum amount of expected growth on each school performance indicator to demonstrate continuous and substantial progress.

States would then determine how data from the school performance indicators and AYP data will be used to place high schools in need of improvement into one of three school improvement categories. Unlike current law, how schools fit into the following categories is not determined by how long the school has been failing, but by how badly the school is performing. The first category is schools needing targeted assistance, which are schools that have just missed making AYP and are performing well on most indicators, but a targeted intervention, such as improved instruction for ELL students or a schoolwide literacy plan, is likely to improve student outcomes. The second category is schools needing whole school reform, which are schools that have missed making AYP by a significant margin or for multiple subgroups and are struggling on most other indicators. Such schools could benefit from a schoolwide strategy to address the multiple layers of school improvement demonstrated from research and best practice. The third category is schools needing replacement which are schools that are failing large numbers of students by most or all measures and likely have been for some time. Improving student outcomes in those schools would call for replacement with more personalized, rigorous and well-designed school models.

Under this new system, development and implementation of the improvement strategies would come from the local level. For each high school that did not make AYP and was placed into one of the three categories I just discussed, district-led school improvement teams would use the school performance data, a school capacity audit and needs assessment, and data about incoming ninth graders, to develop appropriate school improvement plans. The high school improvement plans would lay out the evidence-based academic and nonacademic interventions and resources necessary to improve student achievement, reduce dropout rates, meet annual benchmarks, and make adequate yearly progress. Districts would then apply to the State on behalf of their high schools, for funds necessary to implement the high school improvement plans and complementary district-wide strategies. States would award subgrants to districts with approved applications, with funds going first to those districts serving high schools needing whole school reform or replacement.

Districts and high school improvement teams would implement the high school improvement plans, directing funds first to implement the plans for schools in need of whole school reform or replacement. In subsequent years, high schools that meet the annual benchmarks on school performance indicators, even if they do not make AYP, could continue to implement the school improvement plan. High schools not meeting the annual benchmarks for 2 years would be redesignated into a different school improvement category and required to develop a new school improvement plan with State involvement.

Research, evaluation and technical assistance are critical for this system to work. States would be able to reserve 10 percent of funds to implement the requirements of the statute and also to build the capacity to support the school improvement efforts. The Secretary would also reserve funds to provide technical assistance and regional training programs; to develop and implement or replicate effective research-based comprehensive high school reform models; and to evaluate the program and determine the most effective interventions.

Consider a new, more appropriate measure of AYP and the High School Improvement Fund provide the foundation for true, systemic high school reform. However, alone, a new accountability and improvement system will not be successful in preparing students to graduate with the skills to succeed in postsecondary education and the workforce. NCLB must include other measures that will inform teaching, support students and provide the interventions that will ultimately improve student achievement.

GRADUATE FOR A BETTER FUTURE ACT

I want to thank Senator Burr for introducing the Graduate for a Better Future Act, which specifically targets the dropout factories. The legislation, authorized at $500 million, provides States, districts, and schools with the resources and tools necessary to target interventions to high school students at risk of dropping out, im-

prove graduation rates, and provide the rigorous curriculum necessary to high school students to succeed in postsecondary education and the workforce.

STRIVING READERS

As I mentioned earlier, 70 percent of 8th graders cannot read at grade level. Unfortunately, the Federal investment in reading, the Reading First program, disappears after third grade, which is exactly the point at which expectations for student literacy increase. This lack of basic reading skills contributes greatly to students failing to master the knowledge they need to succeed after graduation, or simply dropping out entirely. In the last year, Congress has repeatedly discussed improving our Nation's competitiveness. Clearly education plays a critical role in how economically competitive we are as a Nation. I understand the Senate may soon consider legislation on this very topic. While the conversation has focused tightly on math and science, I ask you to consider the role literacy plays in the success students have in math and science. A 2006 report by ACT found that high school students with higher level literacy skills performed better in math, science, and social studies courses in college, had higher college GPA's, and returned to college for a second year at higher rates.

In response to the need, Senators Sessions and Murray have introduced the Striving Readers Act, S. 958, which would improve literacy skills by helping every State, district, and school develop comprehensive literacy plans that would ensure every student reads and writes at grade level. Authorized at $200 million for fiscal year 2008 and increasing to $1 billion over 5 years, the bill would support training teachers to use assessments and literacy strategies to help struggling readers, train leaders to support teachers, and provide reading materials for schools that lack them. NCLB must include Striving Readers so that low literacy is no longer a reason students fail to succeed in high school. I want to thank Senators Murray and Sessions for introducing this legislation and the numerous other members of this committee who have cosponsored this bill—Senators Dodd, Burr, Bingaman, Isakson, Harkin, Murkowski, and Brown.

VOLUNTARY NATIONAL STANDARDS

To be competitive, students need to leave high school with a college- and work-ready diploma. Our students and the Nation are spending billions of dollars at the college level and in the workplace on remediation because our students are not leaving high school with the necessary skills. The Alliance estimates that the amount that could be saved in remedial education costs at U.S. community colleges if high schools eliminate the need for remediation would be $3.7 billion a year. This figure includes $1.4 billion to provide remedial education to students who have recently completed high school. This figure also includes the almost $2.3 billion that the economy loses because remedial reading students are more likely to drop out of college without a degree, thereby reducing their earning potential.

NCLB should establish a process for developing shared education standards to ensure that all students are held to the same high expectations aligned with the requirements of postsecondary education and the workforce. The Federal Government should also offer States high-quality performance assessments to regularly measure student progress toward those standards and fulfill the testing requirements of NCLB. This action would remove a significant financial burden from States and increase the quality of assessments. In addition, the Federal Government should provide States with incentives and supports for adopting such standards and aligning them with their key systems, such as their curricula, graduation requirements, and professional development. The need for such shared standards has been recognized by various members of this committee in legislation introduced by Senators Kennedy, Clinton, and Dodd.

DATA SYSTEMS

To turn around low-performing high schools, educators and policymakers need accurate information about how students are doing in school. High quality longitudinal data systems using individual student identifiers are critical to improving student achievement. However, most States and school districts have not yet fully implemented such systems. The Federal Government must help States build the infrastructure needed for data to be collected, reported to the public and used by educators to improve education. NCLB should include a major investment in grants to States to build such systems in accordance with the recommendations of the Data Quality Campaign, as well as grants to build the capacity to use data to improve teaching and learning through professional development, effective data collection and other key functions. NCLB should include $100 million in competitive grants

to build those systems, and $100 million in formula grants to every State to align those systems with district systems and build educator capacity at State and local levels to use the data to improve teaching and learning.

THANK YOU

Again, I want to thank the chairman and the committee for their leadership on this critical issue. I urge you to seize the opportunity of NCLB reauthorization to take our Nation's high schools into the 21st century. The quality of high school education is increasingly central to national concerns, including securing the Nation's global economic position, reducing threats to national security, and assuring equal opportunity for a population that is growing increasingly diverse. By appropriately extending its education focus to include the needs of students in middle and high schools, the Federal Government can move the Nation from "no child left behind" to "every child a graduate."

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

We'll hear now from Tony Habit, who's the President of the New Schools Project in North Carolina. The New Schools Project is a public-private partnership focusing on improving North Carolina's high schools. The Project works to create small autonomous high schools across the State. Their work includes redesigning high schools, while creating technology-enabled high schools, early college high schools, and high schools focused on international studies, and on health and life sciences.

He'll discuss the importance of the small school model, data-driven instruction, quality teachers, improving student achievement and graduation. He'll share the challenges North Carolina's faced in making high school a priority, as well as some of the successes that they're beginning to see.

Let me just say, I've listened carefully about the importance of data. We have the IES—now it's called the Institute of Education Science. We spend $335 million in research on education. I'm going to ask the panel to consider recommendations on the type of research and data conducted by IES. Our committee will need to have a hearing on "IES Reauthorization in the Future." I want your opinions about where we are on some of that material, and whether we ought to spend more, or do better. Perhaps some of you who are familiar with it can give us a little bit of information on the issues.

We want to thank you so much, Mr. Habit. Again, thank you for your testimony, which was enormously helpful about what's happening in North Carolina. Please.

STATEMENT OF TONY HABIT, PRESIDENT, NEW SCHOOLS PROJECT, RALEIGH, NC

Mr. HABIT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Enzi and members of the committee. I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today and to consider the changes that are much needed and overdue in our Nation's secondary schools. It's an honor to be able to talk about the work that's taking place in my home State, North Carolina.

In our State, we're very fortunate to have leaders who appreciate the urgency for change and the magnitude of change that must take place in the very near term. As has been referenced earlier this morning, Senator Burr—working with Senator Kennedy and Bingaman—have introduced the Graduation Promise Act, aimed at raising high school graduation rates. We're also very pleased that

our Governor, Governor Mike Easley, has really championed secondary innovation and transformation during his two terms in our State. He has repeatedly connected that process to the need to ensure future economic vitality for North Carolina.

We've also been very fortunate as an organization, to benefit from the remarkable philanthropic support of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and their vast network of schools around the country who are learning, quite frankly, from a lot of research that's taking place in the field. Our State, like most States, and many States have really been punished handsomely by the unprecedented restructuring in our economy. And yet, when we look at what's happening with our students, there's very strong evidence that we are graduating students who are unprepared for the workforce that's before them and, of course, the students who are not graduating are being punished handsomely for that.

In a poll we commissioned recently, half of North Carolina graduates, graduates who went on to enroll in college, reported that they felt there were major gaps in their preparation to do high-level college academic work. As I've referenced, far too many of our students never see graduation day and only 68 percent of our students who enter the ninth grade in 2002 will walk across the stage in 2006. For our minority students and our poor students, the results are far, far worse.

My organization, the North Carolina New Schools Project was established to accelerate the pace of innovation in our State, to ensure that all students have access to high-quality schools that will prepare them fully for college, for work, and for life. We have an aggressive three-pronged strategy for this work. The first, is to establish more than 100 focused and academically rigorous new high schools across the State. Second, help to create a sense of urgency and momentum around this change process for every member of our society in North Carolina. And third, advance funding and policies that will ensure that the change that's underway in our State will be sustainable and that it will ultimately benefit every single one of our communities.

Since 2003, we have designed over 58 innovative new high schools across our State. That number will move toward 90 by September of this year. We engage with school districts and with schools in a 6-year process, a process that really recognizes the complexity of change, especially if that change is to be meaningful and sustained over a longer period of time.

I'd like today, to offer four observations from our work in the field and working with these schools. The first, is that changing teaching in our schools really means changing belief systems.

Stated simply, low expectations prevent effective teaching. In a typical high school, some students are tracked into demanding courses, which prepare them for a future beyond high school, while others are tracked into classes that offer little challenge, and even less future. In our partner schools we work to instill the notion that preparation to tackle new demanding content is the responsibility of the teacher more than that of the student. Teachers and administrators typically do not believe that all students can achieve at high levels, especially poor and minority children.

To overcome this, we've taken hundreds of educators from North Carolina across the country, to sit in the classrooms of schools that are getting remarkable results with their students. While it seems counterintuitive, with greater challenge, students put forth greater effort and perform at higher and higher levels. Our students know this to be true.

In a survey we conducted of recent graduates, 77 percent said that high school graduation requirements were not very demanding or were too easy, one of those two categories. Eighty percent of our graduates said they would have worked harder, had the demands been placed in front of them while they were in high school. As adults, the message is very, very clear. We have to expect more from all children, while we're addressing this need to transform our secondary schools.

Second, being ready for college and being ready for work are now exactly the same. The overarching goal for North Carolina's innovative high schools is to ensure that every student graduates college-ready. We're even more explicit in asking that all students meet our State university graduation admission requirements. And second, that every student, as a goal, should earn college credit before they walk across that stage to receive their high school diploma.

According to research by ACT, and others, the math, reading, and writing skills that graduates need to be ready for the new economy are really the same between that historically expected of a 4-year university and those of students who are going directly into the workforce. This means that students must all take more demanding courses. We know that they can meet these higher expectations.

For example, in our early college high schools in North Carolina, these are schools that are based on the campus of a college or university where students in grades 9–12, or 9–13, are expected to earn both their high school diploma and 2 years of credit toward a 4-year degree. We're seeing a consistent pattern of poor children who are under-prepared for high-level academic work, being able to master those courses to lead to those college degrees.

Third, changing schools to graduate all students to be college-ready means fundamentally rethinking how resources are applied in our schools. This means primarily the roles of adults. Most schools and districts lack the expertise or organizational structure with which to manage change and innovation or with which to effectively and meaningfully engage their communities. Current funding and professional development programs reinforce a piecemeal approach to change that typically fails to support a coherent, sustained, and focused model for schools.

Our organization, the New Schools Project, supports clear supports, provides clear supports for new schools that deviate from this norm. That includes a commitment to professional development for teachers, principals, district administrators, and school-change coaches, which are all aligned along the same framework and the same targets. We believe that it is this alignment that is essential to success in changing the schools.

Finally, on the notion of leadership—the creation of new kinds of schools requires new kinds of leaders. This requires a proactive effort to identify, recruit, place, and support principals who have the

knowledge about school design, not just about pedagogy, and they understand their role to facilitate learning among teachers in that new school.

While transforming schools in North Carolina is relatively recent, in the last few years, there are some promising results and I'd like to conclude with those results. More students are staying in school, more ninth graders are being promoted to the tenth grade, more students are coming to school, and most importantly for us, the early warning signal that teachers are saying that they see their new school as a place, a good place to teach and learn. In fact, teachers in new schools are twice as likely to say their new school is a good place to teach and learn, compared to the traditional high school in our State.

These recommendations and considerations are really a tall order for us, to think differently about resources and about leadership. We bear dual responsibilities in this regard. We know what it means to take students and help them to be fully prepared for the new economy. We also know the cost to them and to society when they are not adequately prepared. The task in front of us is clear. All of us are very grateful for the work of this committee and the United States Congress in bringing forth solutions so that some of these important recommendations can be implemented.

Thank you for the opportunity.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Habit follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF TONY HABIT, ED.D.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Enzi and members of the committee, thank you for the invitation to testify today. I am pleased to be with you to consider the urgency for change in our Nation's middle and high schools. My name is Tony Habit, and I am president of the North Carolina New Schools Project.

We in North Carolina are fortunate to have leaders who appreciate both the urgency for change and the magnitude of the change that must occur. As you know, your colleague Senator Burr, along with Senator Bingaman, has introduced the "Graduate for a Better Future Act" aimed at raising high school graduation rates. Our governor, Mike Easley, has championed innovation in our State's secondary schools, repeatedly drawing the connection between that work and our State's continued economic vitality. As Governor Easley has said, North Carolina must create the most skilled, most educated workforce in the world, not simply in the United States.

North Carolina also has benefited from the unparalleled philanthropic leadership of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to transform the Nation's high schools to meet the demands of this century.

By many traditional measures, North Carolina is fortunate to have high schools that in relative terms have succeeded over the last century in moving from institutions that served very few to ones that strive to serve all students. At 59 percent, North Carolina is ranked first in the country in the percentage of high school students taking advanced math courses.[1] Ninety-three percent of our State's public high schools offer at least one Advanced Placement course.[2] Seventy-four percent of our State's 12th grade students took the SAT in 2005, and North Carolina had the second largest 10-year gain in SAT scores among States with over 50 percent of the population taking the SAT.[3]

At the same time, North Carolina has felt acute pain from an unprecedented restructuring of the economy of our State and, for that matter, of our country and

[1] National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education (2004). *Measuring Up 2004.* Available at *http://measuringup.highereducation.org/default.cfm*.

[2] Southern Regional Education Board (2003). *Progress in Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate in SREB States.* Available at *http://www.sreb.org/main/HigherEd/readiness/ap-ib.pdf*.

[3] Public Schools of North Carolina (2005). *The North Carolina 2005 SAT Report. http://www.ncpublicschools.org / docs / accountability / reporting / sat / 2005/sat__report__2005__part1 .pdf*.

across the globe. In the first 5 years of this decade, for example, North Carolina lost nearly one-quarter of its manufacturing jobs—184,200 jobs in all. Over the next 10 years, the "Big Four" of our State's manufacturing base—tobacco, textiles, apparel and furniture—which account for one in three jobs are projected to lose another 18 percent of those jobs.

North Carolina lost 1,000 farms in 2005 alone, leading the Nation in that category according to the United States Department of Agriculture. Our State has lost more than 10 percent of its farms since 2002.

The State, however, has rebounded strongly. Investments in education led North Carolina to stronger employment growth in the last 12 months than any other State east of the Mississippi.

As low-skill, high-wage jobs have vanished, some communities are left bereft of opportunity. Idled middle-aged workers often are trapped in a string of low-skilled, low-wage jobs or are required to return to college for retooling without the preparation in high school required to succeed.

There is strong evidence as well that our most recent high school graduates are under-prepared for the demands they are facing in the "real world." In a poll commissioned by our organization earlier this month, half of recent North Carolina high school graduates in college reported gaps in their preparation for college academic work and half of recent graduates in the workforce report gaps in their preparation to get a good job. A quarter of the recent graduates in college reported having taken a remedial course.

In addition, far too many high school students never reach graduation. North Carolina recently released cohort graduation rates for the first time. They showed that only 68.1 percent of the students who entered 9th grade in 2002 graduated with the Class of 2006. For African-American students, the graduation rates was only 60 percent. For Hispanics, it was only 51.8 percent—a particularly troubling statistic given our State experienced nearly a five-fold increase in Hispanic enrollment from 1993 to 2003, according to the Pew Hispanic Center.

My organization, the North Carolina New Schools Project, is an independent, not-for-profit corporation that serves as the nexus of the leadership of Governor Easley and our State Board of Education; the strong interest in change among the Gates Foundation and other philanthropies, public and private colleges and universities and the private sector; and the pressing economic need that North Carolina faces.

While impressive in relative terms, the incremental gains of our high schools are insufficient both in terms of scope and in terms of pace to address a changing economy. North Carolina must graduate *more* students with *more* skills and knowledge than ever before. The New Schools Project was established to accelerate the pace of innovation in our State and to ensure that all students have access to high-quality schools that will prepare them fully for college, work and life.

As a private-public partnership with our State's various education sectors, elected officials and the private sector, the New Schools Project can be nimble without sacrificing meaningful impact. We can work across institutional and political boundaries so that innovation is not frustrated by real or perceived barriers.

In pursuing change and innovation, and with the leadership of Governor Easley and the State Board of Education, we have an aggressive three-pronged strategy:

- Establish more than 100 focused, academically rigorous and effective innovative new high schools across the State;
- Foster greater urgency for higher standards and schools that will make achievement of these standards feasible; and
- Advance policies and funding to ensure that all North Carolina communities benefit from the promise of new schools.

LESSONS LEARNED ON THE ROAD TO MEANINGFUL CHANGE

Since 2003, New Schools Project has partnered with local school districts and, in some cases, with national partners such as the Asia Society, the New Technology Foundation, and the KnowledgeWorks Foundation to open 58 innovative, highly effective high schools across North Carolina. We engage with a school and its school district for 6 years—a planning year followed by 5 years of implementation. This timeframe recognizes both the scope of the change we are pursuing and its complexity. This day-to-day, on-the-ground experience in working to foster innovation—along with what we have gleaned from the experience of others in the field—has offered us important insights into what it takes to, in the vocabulary of this hearing, modernize high schools and middle schools. Let me offer you four specific observations to consider:

Changing Beliefs

Simply put, low expectations are a cancer that can weaken a school enough to make significant changes in teaching impossible. It is clear how this occurs in a typical high school—some students are tracked into demanding courses which prepare them for a future beyond high school, while others are tracked into classes that offer little challenge and even less future. The usual justification is that "those" students were not "ready" for Algebra II or honors English. Some parents reinforce these beliefs by advocating that certain students be discouraged from enrolling in advanced courses.

If I do not believe that all students can do the work, I do not feel obligated to assume responsibility for changing the way my school is organized or the way resources are allocated to ensure that all students succeed. In the schools we partner with, we work to instill the notion that preparation to tackle new demanding content is the responsibility of the teachers, not the students.

In our partnership with schools, we insist that they be fully representative of the student population of their district; we do not allow access to innovation to be limited to the best and brightest. This is one of our stakes in the ground to enforce what we believe as an organization about who can do the work. Notably, 12 of our 16 partner schools subject to No Child Left Behind's growth provision last year made Adequate Yearly Progress.

Teachers and administrators typically do not believe all students—particularly poor and minority students—can master the knowledge and skills that lead to true opportunity until they see it first hand. As part of our work, we have taken hundreds of educators from across North Carolina on study visits to schools in other parts of the country whose results are irrefutable. Educators study some of the country's most successful high schools to learn how changed instruction and high levels of student support combine to improve student outcomes. This includes direct classroom observation that leads to deeper reflection about changing instruction. More than 20 schools such as University Park Campus High School in Worcester, Massachusetts, and Urban Academy at the Julia Richman Education Complex in New York City are used for these site visits. We are working with our partners across the State to establish these kinds of "schools of promise" within our State to make these transformative site visits even more accessible.

By way of example, we are working with a school on the western edge of our State and meeting some resistance. Two teachers who were themselves graduates of the school went on a site visit to University Park and saw the possibility as well as the gaps in their own work. They have become our strongest advocates and have brought their colleagues along in moving forward.

While it seems counter-intuitive, there is strong evidence supporting the premise that with greater challenge, students put forth greater effort and perform at higher levels. This is particularly the case when schools and students focus on the most important content and skills and when the material relates to students' own aspirations. The term "comprehensive high school" speaks to the difficulty of achieving this kind of focus in the traditional setting. We work to create high schools of no more than 400 students that provide focus either through an academic theme, an instructional approach, or their location on a college campus in the case of our Learn and Earn early college high schools. Additionally, a school's focus represents one strategy to enable teachers in the core courses to work together to make connections between courses and the world of work. The intent of a focus is not preparation for a specific career, but rather preparation for a lifetime of learning and workplace changes.

As adults, we should not shy away from expecting more from all students. In our survey of recent graduates, 77 percent said that high school graduation requirements were easy to meet. Eighty percent said that they would have worked harder had the expectations been higher. And 68 percent said that they would have worked harder in high school had they known then what they know now about real world demands. As adults, we must bear the burden of our knowledge of what preparation for college, work and life requires and must act on that knowledge.

Setting College as the Goal

Often, the limitations of beliefs about students' capabilities emerge around the notion of making every graduate "college-ready." Inevitably, someone raises the challenge that not every graduate will go to college.

The overarching goal of North Carolina's innovative high schools is to ensure that every student graduates college-ready. We are even more explicit in asking, first, that students meet the admission requirements of the University of North Carolina system and, second, that every student earn college credit before leaving high school.

This college-ready imperative is intentionally provocative. It becomes a point on which a faculty must agree and collaborate. Another value to the small scale of our innovative high schools is that they allow teachers to be flexible in meeting the academic needs of students, to alter what is offered and for how long in ways that a 2,000-student high school cannot.

At the same time, this imperative is based on a growing body of research that shows that the skills high school graduates need in order to be ready for college and ready for the 21st century workplace are the same.[4]

The most recent such study, conducted by ACT, analyzed data and items from its college and work readiness tests, found that 90 percent of jobs that do not require a bachelor's degree but that do provide a "self-sufficient" wage require the same level of mathematical and analytical reading and writing skills as those needed by students who are planning to enroll in a 4-year university.[5] The report goes on to state that this finding suggests that:

> "all high school students should be educated according to a common academic expectation that prepares them for both postsecondary education and the workforce. This means that all students should be ready and have the opportunity to take a rigorous core preparatory program in high school, one that is designed to promote readiness for both college and workforce training programs."[6]

However, another ACT study released this month showed that high school teachers' view of college-ready content misses the mark in terms of focus.

Voters in North Carolina, perhaps intuitively, understand this convergence. In a poll we commissioned, 70 percent agreed that the skills to succeed at work and in college were the same. Eighty-four percent said it was important for nearly all high school graduates to move on to a 2- or 4-year college, with 69 percent calling it very important.

We have good reason to believe that students can meet this higher expectation. Last year nearly three-quarters of students in North Carolina's early college high schools, from which students graduate with both a high school diploma and 2 years of college credit, took at least one college course. Their passing rates in those courses ranged from 76 percent to 100 percent. Nine high schools recorded passing rates of 90 percent or better.

And the Governor's budget proposes to dramatically change this landscape by creating Learn & Earn Online opportunities for all students across the State, with a goal of enrolling 40,000 high school students in college courses by next school year. This coupled with his new EARN Scholarship opportunities, will provide students the opportunity to complete a 4-year degree debt-free.

Managing for Significant Change

Meaningful change in high schools is essential *and* elusive; it is worth remembering that *A Nation At Risk* was a report about changing secondary education. Schools and school districts are rewarded for maintaining the status quo and for adding new programs. For example, rather than consider the absence of personalization and effective student supports within a school, districts will add a dropout prevention program or a specialist for that problem. At its heart, however, changing schools to graduate all students to be college-ready means redirecting all of the resources of a school to provide greater student support and to address highly focused targets for achievement. This is especially true in using the resources represented by the role and responsibilities of adults in the school.

While the private sector has experienced decades of organizational restructuring in which workers are displaced in one function and then rehired in another to adapt to changing market conditions, the education sector possesses no such history. Changing the roles of adults in schools typically results in conflict and undermines the overarching school change process—if not derailing it altogether. Most schools and districts lack the expertise or organizational structure with which to manage change and innovation.

Further, since communities and educators must embrace the need for change, the absence of resources and expertise for most schools and districts to effectively engage their communities means that well-intentioned efforts can be undermined by relatively few, well-organized citizens or disgruntled educators.

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[4] See ACT, *Ready for College and Ready for Work: Same or Different?*, 2006 and Achieve, *Ready or Not: Creating a High School Diploma That Counts*, 2004.

[5] Examples of jobs cited in the report that do not require a bachelor's degree but do provide a "self-sufficient" wage include electricians, construction workers, upholsterers and plumbers. From ACT, *Ready for College and Ready for Work: Same or Different?*, 2006.

[6] ACT, 2006, page 2.

Current funding and professional development programs reinforce a piecemeal approach to change and typically fail to support a coherent, sustained and focused model for schools. It stands to reason that if tools and plans for school change are not supported by high-quality and aligned training that the likelihood of success will be greatly diminished.

The New Schools Project and its partners provide specific supports for new and redesigned high schools that deviate from this norm. They include:

• **Teaching for Results:** This annual series of intensive professional development sessions for teachers supports the use of protocols and other tools to sustain the focus on instruction, academic rigor and professional learning communities. The sessions stress differentiating instruction, teaching literacy across the curriculum, facilitating meaningful learning, and providing effective student support.

• **Leadership Institute for High School Redesign:** In cooperation with the University of North Carolina Center for School Leadership Development and the Principals' Executive Program, the Leadership Institute for High School Redesign offers a peer support and professional development network for principals in new and redesigned high schools. The network promotes effective instructional leadership.

• **Coaching:** Each new school also benefits from coaching services in which experienced educational leaders and master teachers assist with facilitating the overall change process and with the development of instructional strategies such as differentiation of teaching to meet individual needs of students; lessons and units which engage students in learning; and the improvement of literacy and mathematics skills.

Investing financial resources and expertise in building the capacity of schools and districts to manage change is essential. Schools and districts must be expected to define a single, comprehensive model for change regardless of what that model might be and sustain the work over time.

Further, within the broader model for change, strategies for professional development of teachers and school administrators and district office personnel must be tightly aligned and integrated so that they are connected at all levels to point in the same direction. In our work this year to help schools define rigor, the sessions involved both principals and teachers; in essence, they debated within their school the definition after visiting other schools in North Carolina thought to offer rigorous instruction. Expectations of teachers and principals must be aligned with those of district administrators for high school innovation to be sustained.

Rethinking Leadership

Finally, a new generation of student-focused schools calls for a new model for school leadership. The principal in a traditional high school is a building manager first and an educator second. Schools which place teaching and learning above all else are led by principals who understand both school design and who facilitate among teachers an unrelenting focus on high quality teaching and learning.

One element of our partnerships aimed at ensuring the sustainability of innovation is our expectation that our partner schools are completely autonomous, with its own principal and school budget, an essential step to create more entrepreneurial faculties with both the responsibility and accountability for the success of all students. This increases the demand for capable leaders.

New, proactive initiatives to identify, recruit, place and support principals to lead schools are required. Leadership preparation programs should emphasize both school designs that support achievement and the role of principals as facilitators of adult learning in schools intended to strengthen teaching.

Since most district administrative staff begin as principals, creating a new generation of school leaders who believe and act as though all students can succeed will inevitably change districts over time.

EARLY, BUT PROMISING RESULTS

In the 2005–2006 school year, 24 redesigned high schools and Learn and Earn early college high schools were open serving 3,000 high school students. This was the first year of operation for nearly all 24 schools. While transforming a school in meaningful ways that actually change teaching and learning is hard work, there are some initial results emerging that indicate that high school innovation is taking hold in North Carolina.

• **More students staying in school.**—Nine of the 24 innovative high schools last year had no dropouts. In the crucial 9th grade year, where research has shown that most high school students either dropout or choose to dropout, 14 of the 24 innovative high schools had no 9th grade dropouts. Overall, the 24 innovative high

schools had a combined dropout rate of 3 percent (compared to the statewide high school dropout rate of 5 percent).

• **More 9th graders are being promoted.**—To graduate, a student must complete required courses and be promoted from grade to grade. Research has shown that promotion out of 9th grade is an especially strong indicator of a student's likelihood to graduate. Last year, 15 of the 24 innovative high schools promoted more than 90 percent of their 9th graders, with seven schools promoting 100 percent. Overall, the 24 innovative high schools had a combined 9th grade promotion rate of 88 percent (compared to the State 9th grade promotion rate of 85 percent).

• **More students come to school.**—Student attendance in the first group of 11 redesigned high schools topped that of their comparison schools by nearly 1 percentage point. The initial 13 Learn and Earn Early College High Schools had attendance rates that surpassed their districts' rates by nearly 2 percentage points. Even fractional increases in high school attendance are considered significant.

• **More teachers believe in their schools.**—The percentage of teachers in innovative high schools who "strongly agree" that their school is "a good place to work and learn" is nearly double the percentage in traditional high schools (48 percent compared to 26 percent). In fact, teachers in redesigned and early college high schools are significantly more satisfied in every area measured by the State's Teacher Working Conditions Survey.

• **It's early, but some schools do better than expected.**—In the first year of implementing their planned transformation, a third of the innovative high schools met or exceeded the expected academic growth projected for them in the State's ABCs accountability system. Nine of twenty-four schools outperformed the other comprehensive high schools in their districts.

I know first hand that the observations I have made today place a tall order before our schools and our educators. They will not be able to meet this test alone. It will take sustained and strong support evidenced by political will and committed leadership. We bear dual burdens in this regard. We know what it means for students to be fully prepared for the demands of the 21st century—and the cost to them and to society when they are not. We also know, based on our work in North Carolina and on the work of our peers in other States, what it takes to create schools that can graduate all students ready for those challenges. We all must put our shoulder to the task of carrying that load on behalf of this Nation's children as Americans always have. They deserve nothing less.

Again, I thank you for this opportunity to speak with you. I welcome any questions you may have.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

Edna Varner, who's the Senior Program Consultant, of Hamilton County Public Education Foundation. Ms. Varner's works on middle and high school reform in Hamilton County Public Schools in Chattanooga, TN. Previously, she has been both a middle school and a high school principal. She'll discuss how Hamilton County has worked to improve high schools, middle schools by strengthening teacher workforce, improved data systems, and creating rigorous standards and curriculum. Edna will also discuss more Federal and State support could assist districts in these efforts. I'm sure we'd extend a warm welcome to you from our colleague and friend, Senator Alexander. Edna, thank you.

STATEMENT OF EDNA VARNER, SENIOR PROGRAM CONSULTANT, HAMILTON COUNTY PUBLIC EDUCATION FOUNDATION AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS, CHATTANOOGA, TN

Ms. VARNER. Thank you, Chairman Kennedy, Senator Enzi, and members of the committee for this opportunity to speak to you again. I was a part of the roundtable, and that was a wonderful experience. Time is short, it's hard for the teacher and principal to talk for 5 minutes, but I will attempt it, as my colleagues did.

They have done an excellent job of giving a lay of the land and I don't want to repeat what they've said. I want to spend the time

I have talking with you about some work we've done in Hamilton County and why we're making the recommendations we have.

At about the time No Child Left Behind legislation was being written into law, we were already thinking about how to modernize our high schools. We were fortunate, in that, we had just gained some support from the Carnegie Corporation, Annenberg, Bill and Melinda Gates, and two local foundations, Benwood and Lyndhurst. They gave us the opportunity for some possibility thinking. Not only did they give us that opportunity, they also said, "We will give you financial support and we will also give you technical assistance."

Our little group came together and our little group was made up of teachers, principals, community leaders, a public education foundation, and Hamilton County Schools Partnership. We may have been naïve, but we just started thinking about some "what ifs." What if, for example, we started in Hamilton County to monitor what matters? And then we started thinking about what matters to us. It matters to us that all of the students of Hamilton County graduate, prepared for college and prepared to accept any of the opportunities of the 21st Century.

It was important to us that all of our students get a rigorous, relevant education. It was important to us that the students in the lowest-performing schools would no longer be in low-performing schools. That all of our teachers would have the skills to teach all of our students.

We decided, again maybe being naïve, to act on those. One of the things we decided to do was to look at who was graduating and how students were graduating. We realized in 2001 that we had several diplomas for students. We had special ed diploma, then we had a diploma for students who merely showed up for 4 years. We had a diploma for students who graduated meeting State requirements, but they weren't eligible for college. Then we had a diploma for students who would be eligible for college.

We decided that that was not acceptable. And so, this was hard to do, and we talked about it at the roundtable, we decided—what if we had one diploma? And that one diploma guaranteed all of our students all of the opportunities? It was difficult to do, but our school board, our community—we had lots of conversations—and our school board passed that. After we achieved that, we thought now we've got to deliver on that. Because in talking to people the greatest concern was this. We would fail more students, we would have more students dropping out. We had to realize, we're already failing students, we already have large numbers of students dropping out.

What do we do to make sure that we can deliver on the promise of all students graduating with the kind of diploma that would give them all of the choices available to any student?

We established academies to replace our vocational courses. Our vocational courses, in the past, did a good job of training students for some jobs that would be available. We realized that in the 21st century, we don't even know what jobs will be possibilities for our students when they graduate.

We decided that maybe what we ought to do is teach kids, not how to fix a car or to build a building, but how to be entrepre-

neurial in their thinking, how to solve problems. What kinds of questions do you ask when you're really curious? What does it mean to really be persistent? We decided that, while it's important to monitor whether students can define and spell those words, it is more important to determine the extent to which we're helping students be those words. It's a tall order, but it's really doable and we're showing that in Hamilton County.

We also looked at our dropout rate and you've described it. We were shocked. We had not, we knew the numbers, but when we decided to sit down and spend whole evenings looking at them, because it was just unacceptable. We decided to do something simple. What if we call the students who had recently dropped out and ask them if they would come back to school, if we could find ways to help them graduate with a regular diploma? What if when students went to their guidance counselors and said they were thinking of dropping out, we talked to them about that and offer them that? What if we invested in a high school that could help students who were three or four credits short?

I have a brother who dropped out of high school in his senior year and he's spent a lifetime as a college dropout. This has a personal meaning for me. What if we talked to students and offered a way for them to take those two or three credits and not be at a school with—they don't have to do cheerleading or whatever.

We actually established an adult high school. We were hoping to lure 100 dropouts back. We're having to open other schools to meet the needs, to meet the demand. These are students who would have been dropouts for the rest of their lives.

What if we tackled the issues of equity? I'm talking about issues of equity for promises that were made as early as 1954. What if in our district, we decided to do something about that? One of the best ways to achieve equity is to make sure that all students have access to a highly qualified teacher. This is not just highly qualified in the paperwork. Right now we have schools that can say, "Check that off. We've got highly qualified teachers," but many of them are teachers who just graduated a month ago. They will be wonderful, but they're still working on that.

Let me share this with you. Suppose I wanted my seniors to spend their senior year, instead of cruising through it, to learn about how our Government works, to learn, for example, how the Senate works. I couldn't hire you to. I'd have to, I can hire you now, a year ago I could have hired you, but I would have to send a letter home that says, "Senator Kennedy and Senator Enzi are——

The CHAIRMAN. We got some Republicans you can hire, over here.

Ms. VARNER [continuing]. Are not highly qualified."

[Laughter.]

That is not to say we don't believe teachers should have the credentials. There are teachers in our schools who have their teaching credentials. There are subjects that schools can't offer because they're not highly qualified in those areas, even though they have all the talent and experience. We're advocating for broadening the definition of highly-qualified teacher.

In our districts we've set up networks. Some schools have great principals. Some schools have great teachers, and they produce great thinking. Some schools are not as fortunate. They have principals and teachers who are getting there.

We have a series of networks, and our principals come together and they learn together, and so that every school benefits from the collective wisdom and knowledge in Hamilton County. We have change coaches. These are folks who are in the schools to help provide instructional, professional development. Those folks come together and learn together, so every child in our district benefits from the collective wisdom there. We have literacy coaches, and literacy is a big issue. The Striving Readers Act is a great step in the right direction.

When you hear the numbers about students who are not reading well, and you visit a school you think, "That can't be true, they sound as if they read well." Well, Cris Tovani, in her novel, in her book, "They Read It, But They Don't Get It" detailed a problem.

We have kids in school who are fake readers. They seem to be reading well. They can call words, but the reason we aren't doing well in science and all those advance level courses is they're fake reading. They really don't comprehend. When do we find out? When they take the ACT, and we see those scores. Well, by the time we see those scores, we're doing what Doug Reeves calls, we're just doing, reading an autopsy report. They're already juniors and seniors and we've wasted middle school years, and we've wasted high school years, that we could have been addressing that.

I'll stop now by just saying this. I'm proud of my district. We've done a lot to act on our "what ifs," but not to suggest you can do it without the resources you need. You do need the resources. What if we had great data systems? What if we had support beyond the length of these grants? What if we had all the support that we could get from No Child Left Behind to act on the expertise that our schools have? I agree with my colleagues. What if we had that? Our recommendation is to help us make that "what if" a reality.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Varner follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF EDNA E. VARNER

Chairman Kennedy, Ranking Member Enzi, and members of the HELP Committee, thank you for the invitation to give testimony about middle and high school work and make recommendations on behalf of my colleagues for NCLB reauthorization.

My name is Edna Varner. I am presently a senior program consultant for the Hamilton County Public Education Foundation and Public Schools' partnership, working primarily on middle and high school reform. I am also a leadership associate for Cornerstone, a national literacy initiative. In my previous life I was a teacher, a middle school principal, and a high school principal, serving students in schools with poverty as high as 98 percent. I am a product of Chattanooga public schools; in fact, my K–12 education was in segregated public schools in Chattanooga. In my experience working with schools in Hamilton County and across the country, I have had an opportunity to see some of our worst public schools and some of our best.

In 2001, the Public Education Foundation in partnership with Hamilton County Schools began two major multi-million dollar initiatives aimed at transforming our 9 lowest performing elementary schools and reinventing all 16 of Hamilton County's high schools. These 5-year initiatives joined existing long-term programs in leadership development, highly effective teaching, and community engagement. In 2005, PEF launched a multiyear, multimillion-dollar project to boost achievement in Hamilton County's 21 middle schools, bridging the gap between successful elementary

and high school work. In partnership with the school district, we have built support for students from kindergarten to college.

Hamilton County Schools and PEF welcomed the promise of NCLB. We developed rigorous standards, engaged faculties in the training necessary to deliver appropriate instruction, and jumped at the opportunity for resources and technical support from the Carnegie Corporation, the Annenberg Foundation, the Gates Foundation, and local Foundations, Benwood and Lyndhurst. Even before the NCLB Commissions affirmed it, we understood that our students must be able to compete globally, that our standards must take us there, and that our assessments and data must give us confidence that we are reaching our goals.

At the time NCLB came into existence Hamilton County Schools received a generous grant from the Carnegie Corporation and matching funds raised by our local Public Education Foundation to provide resources for *possibility*. We are proud to say our schools have been good stewards of the resources, using them to experiment with what ifs—what if we encouraged principals to build knowledge and capacity and to work in collaboration instead of competition and isolation? What if we provided schools with expert teachers to work as on-site professional developers and instructional coaches? What if we asked students how they learn best and engaged them as colleagues to help us achieve rigor and relevance through new career academies? What if we beefed up support for 9th grade and focused on 9th grade promotion rates? What if we made it possible for high school drop *outs* to drop back *in* to school and finish with a regular diploma? What if we invited outside evaluators to come into our schools and tell us what they see as strengths and weaknesses of our implementation practices? What if we strengthened the roles of parents on school leadership teams so that they can help inform curricular decisions? What if we held ourselves accountable for closing the achievement gap and for providing opportunities for all students to learn at higher levels? What if we used data routinely to guide our work? What if we held all our students to high standards and offered only one diploma that would make all our graduates eligible for postsecondary education? And what if we learned ways to sustain *possibility* at the end of the grants, knowing we can not go back once we have developed the habits of moving forward. And what if we are determined to do this *and* comply with NCLB.

SCHOOLS FOR A NEW SOCIETY IN HAMILTON COUNTY

Reinventing 16 High Schools With 16 Unique Blueprints for Success

Every high school in Hamilton County is reinventing itself to create a more engaging, more challenging, and more personalized learning experience for all students.

In 2001, PEF and Hamilton County Schools jointly received an $8 million Schools for a New Society grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the largest private grant in the history of our schools. PEF committed to raise a matching $6 million, making a total of $14 million dedicated to high school reform.

Because Hamilton County high schools are unusually diverse—urban, rural and suburban, as well as magnet and conventional zoned schools—each school has developed its own blueprint for reform while addressing four basic goals: to establish a more challenging, relevant and engaging curriculum; to improve teaching by providing more professional development for teachers, leaders and staff; to create a more personalized and engaging experience for students; and to allow more flexibility to meet student needs more effectively.

A key element is a new single-path diploma for all students. Beginning with students entering ninth grade in 2005, the single path diploma will raise graduation requirements for all students and put them on a track that will prepare them to graduate with a diploma that qualifies them to enroll in a 4-year college or obtain a higher skill job.

Eleven high schools have now established career academies. The goal is to create interest-driven, challenging learning experiences and to increase student achievement by fostering small learning communities. Academies at different schools include business & technology, engineering, environmental sciences, global studies, transportation, health sciences, and construction. Some schools have several academies. All academies combine college preparatory courses with a career theme to make academic learning more engaging and challenging. Ninth grade can be a make-or-break year, often ending in dropout or setting a long-term pattern of low expectations and low achievement. That's why all schools are addressing the ninth grade year through summer transition programs and some are creating ninth grade academies that give students more individual attention in this critical year.

Other important strategies include eliminating low-level courses, increasing the number of low-income and minority students who take rigorous academic courses,

providing advisory classes for all students and expanding the use of literacy coaches to increase reading skills of all students.

Building a working partnership between PEF and the school system on the scale required by this initiative has been vital. The school system has supported the efforts of individual schools by taking many steps to create a decentralized environment in which new ideas can be nurtured and practiced.

So that every student has access to the best Hamilton County has to offer, we have created networks of principals, change coaches (established at schools to provide on site expertise), college access counselors, and literacy leaders. Networks meet monthly to learn together and share best practices to take back to individual schools.

In 2005, we launched a planning year of work to build on the success of the high school initiative and bridge the gap with Middle Schools for a New Society.

This has been the work of Hamilton County Schools and the Public Education Foundation since 2001. In some areas we are succeeding. Some of our data are included in this testimony to show our progress. We have momentum and evidence to support it, but we have not reached the high goals we have set for ourselves—all of our students achieving at high levels and graduating with the knowledge and skills to pursue any opportunity available to students of the 21st century. This is why we are here today to ask for your help.

NCLB IMPLEMENTATION: PROMISES, PROMISES

While much of the discourse on the subject of NCLB is around closing the achievement gap for subgroups, a gap that needs equal attention is the gap between overall intention and reality. One reality is that NCLB is attempting to deliver on an unkept promise made years ago in the form of a 1954 landmark decision declaring separate but equal schools inherently unequal. The separate but equal schools for that century were visibly black and white. For the 21st century the distinctions are less obvious because students of poverty come in all colors. More than 50 years since that decision, it should be impossible to walk into an empty school on the weekend and tell who it serves by looking at the children's environment and their work. The broken promises are even clearer if one visits a school when children are present.

With No Child Left Behind, we received another promise: that public schools would now be held accountable for at least the promise of having students bloom where they are. But blooming in spite of overwhelming challenges is reminiscent of an era we hoped to leave behind. Children in the lowest performing schools do not get the same education as their peers in schools with resources, access to large numbers of highly skilled adults, and diversity. The climate and performance of a school is very different when the school is constantly faced with heavy sanctions if the scores are not up, when the school can not attract the best teachers (teachers who are creative and innovative and find no time for their talents in "schools in improvement") or the best principals (the heads are the first heads to roll). These schools are inherently unequal, and that is not what we promised.

Children in the lowest performing schools can transfer to other schools where their poor test scores are unwelcome (a few poor test scores can mean the difference between AYP success or failure) and so unwelcome test scores translate into unwelcome children. When they are welcomed, their teachers may feel unprepared for the challenges they bring, so these children are pulled out for special "remedial classes" where they remain—not just left behind, but left out.

Schools want the promises of accountability, but they want to feel equal to the challenges accountability brings. That requires resources—as predictable as interventions and sanctions. Educators are frustrated, of course, by poor test scores, but they are equally frustrated by scores from low-level tests that say their students are making great progress when teachers know they are not. (Compare published State test scores to NAEP scores).

Educators want to prepare students for life and work as well as for tests. We understand the challenges of modernizing for the 21st century, especially preparing our students for jobs and opportunities that we may not imagine at this moment. We can be globally competitive with populations that far outnumber us, just one more reason to leave no child behind. That is a promise we can keep, but not until we confront the realities of NCLB implementation and work harder to make them reflect the intent.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

We concur with many of the recommendations by the NCLB Commission. The following three are high priority for middle and high schools.

Recommendation 1: Support Highly Qualified and Effective Teachers and Principals

We must invest in teacher capacity, and that costs money.

We especially recommend greater investment in building teacher capacity at the secondary level. The overwhelming percent of title I funds go to elementary education, yet data show increasing need for support at the secondary level. We are not suggesting that elementary schools do not need these funds and we know that trying to use existing funds more creatively only shortchanges our children. We need additional funding to support more capacity building for secondary teachers and principals who need high quality professional development that prepares them to prepare their students for a world that is rapidly changing.

We also recommend using NCLB to break the log jam on differentiated pay or incentive payments for shortage area teachers (math and science) to teach in hard-to-staff schools, for example, high poverty middle schools. We need increases in funding for principal and teacher leadership development.

Recommendation 2: Support Fair Accountability and Improved Data Systems to Track Student Performance

We encourage support of the following recommendation by the NCLB Commission:

• Improve the accuracy and fairness of AYP calculations by allowing States to include achievement growth in such calculations. These calculations would enable schools to receive credit for students who are on track to becoming proficient within 3 years, based on the growth trajectory of their assessment scores, when calculating AYP for the student's school. Including growth as a factor in AYP will yield richer and more useful data on student performance—both for the classroom and for school accountability purposes.

• To determine growth, it is crucial that States have in place sophisticated, high-quality data systems that can track student performance over time and assessment systems that can monitor student growth from year to year. Therefore, we recommend that States be required to develop high-quality longitudinal data systems that permit the tracking of student achievement over time.

Recommendation 3: Increase Funding for Literacy and Numeracy

Whether students remain in low performing but improving schools or they transfer to higher performing schools, their ultimate success depends on their level of literacy and numeracy. Research is telling us that even high performing students are able to mask weak skills until they begin testing for college. The Federal Government spends $1 billion (or $72 per child) for literacy in grades K–3, but it only spends $30 million (or 13 cents per child) in grades 6–12. We get what we pay for—4th grade NAEP scores have risen significantly in the past 5 years. Unfortunately, 8th and 12th grade NAEP scores have remained flat or even declined.

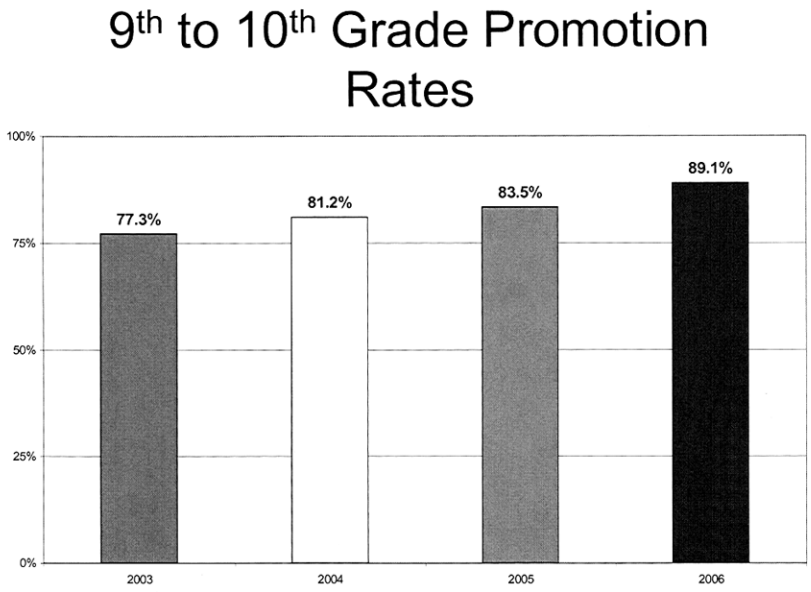
Without the literacy skills needed to succeed in all subjects, students will be left behind. The Federal Government must invest in literacy in NCLB. We appreciate the Federal Striving Readers program for older students. We also urge you to support the Striving Readers bill introduced in the Senate that would expand and strengthen Federal efforts in adolescent literacy. The Striving Readers Act is a step in the right direction for improving the achievement of all students:

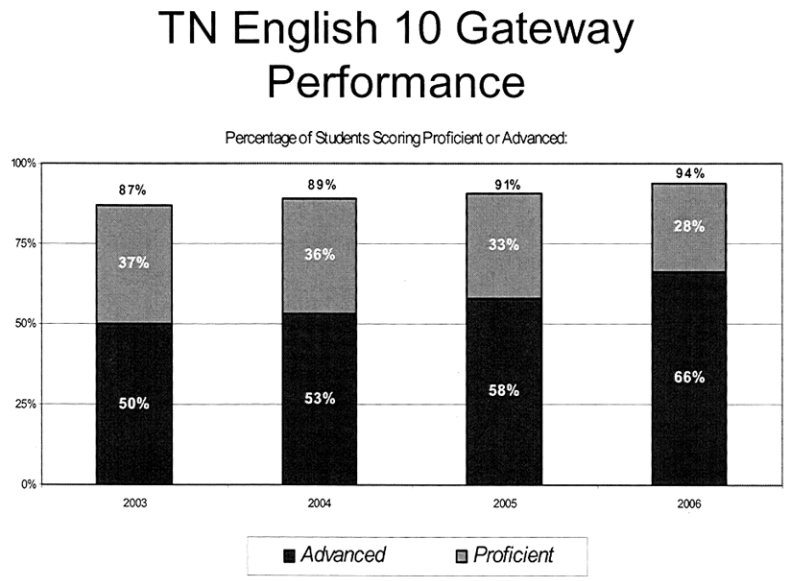
• The bill would provide targeted intervention to students far behind;
• The bill would train teachers in all core subjects to use literacy strategies; and
• The bill would include grades 4 to 12 so that all grades (K–12) are served.

The Striving Readers Act can also help all States improve literacy. The current Striving Readers program serves only 8 cities across the country; 150 districts applied, and Memphis schools in Tennessee received one of the grants. The proposed Striving Readers Act would ensure every State is served.

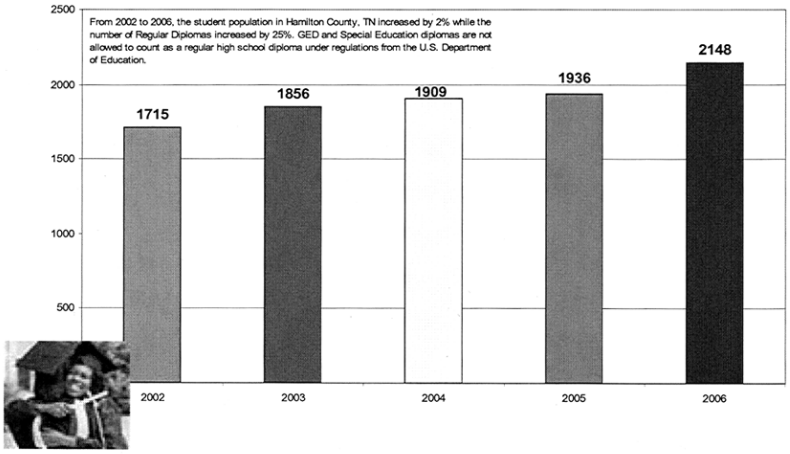
In conclusion, all of our children deserve our best, and our teachers and principals deserve the training and resources to offer nothing less. Accountability helps us confirm that we are doing our best work. We welcome that. We appreciate the opportunity to share our experiences and make our recommendations to the committee. America has always been a land of promise. If we continue to work to improve the model, NCLB can be a promise kept. Again, thank you for this opportunity.

HAMILTON COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL DATA

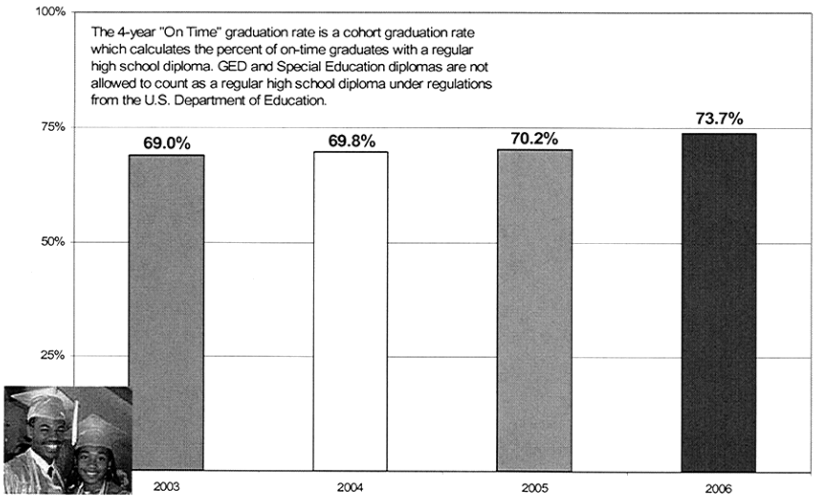




Number of Regular Diplomas Granted



4-year "On-Time" Graduation Rates



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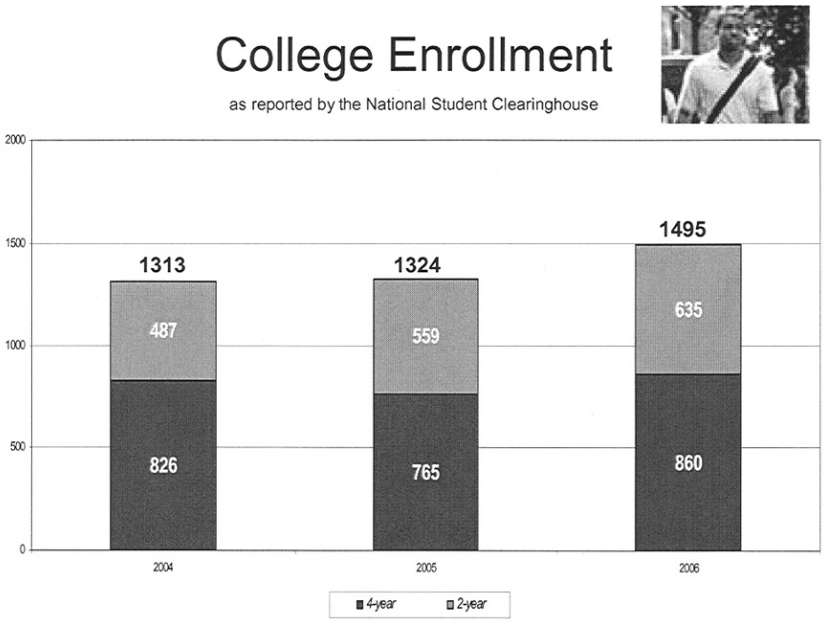

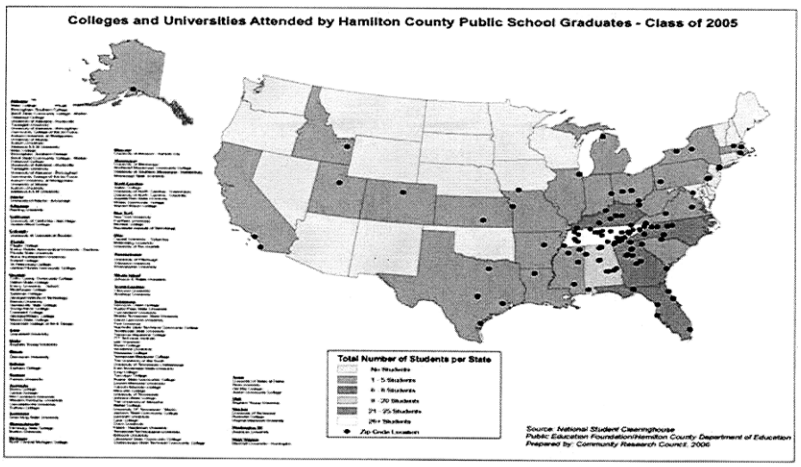

The CHAIRMAN. Good for you. Thank you so much.

Final witness this morning, John Podesta, the President and CEO, Center for American Progress. John Podesta was Chief of Staff and Policy Advisor to President Clinton. He will discuss the

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Center's recommendations, how to increase graduation rates, including increased Federal support, promoting State and local initiatives, investing in research and strategies of work, building State and district capacity, developing and implementing proven models.

He's an old friend. We welcome him to the committee. Thank you, John.

STATEMENT OF JOHN PODESTA, PRESIDENT AND CEO, CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS, WASHINGTON, DC.

Mr. PODESTA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Senator Enzi and members of the committee. I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you this morning.

My written testimony lays out the specific arguments about why I think the Bingaman, Burr, Kennedy bill that was recently introduced, the Graduation Promise Act, is a necessary and vital step toward improving our Nation's graduation rates. This morning, I'd just like to make three brief points.

First, the detrimental effects of our Nation's graduation crisis, coupled with the overall poor State of our children's educational proficiency, really just can not be overstated. Simply put, I think we're headed, as a Nation, toward a significant erosion of our economic well being and our way of life, unless we find more effective ways to keep our kids in school, increase their ability to compete with others in a turbulent, globalized economy.

In America today, two and three students leave high school unprepared for college or the modern workplace. While at the same time, the Department of Labor estimates that almost 90 percent of the fastest-growing jobs in the United States require at least some postsecondary education. In the shifting global economy where knowledge and skills are crucial to good-paying jobs, too many of our students are falling off the track to economic independence and advancement. We know that's much worse for poor kids and children who are members of racial minorities.

That hinders our Nation's overall competitiveness, as students in other nations become better prepared for the jobs of the future. In turn, the lack of basic educational attainment, unduly consigns millions of young people to a life of low earnings and poverty, as the other panelists have talked about.

The graduation crisis in our schools must, therefore, be seen as a genuine threat to our Nation's prosperity. I just would note that that is the heart, I think the heart of the reason why the strange bedfellows of the Center for American Progress and the Chamber of Commerce, Tom Donahue and myself, came together recently to propose a joint platform for education reform, whose targets for reform include the 2,000 high school dropout factories that Bob's talked about.

I raise that because, for those of note, who know me and Tom, we don't agree on that much. This is not a left-right issue, this is not a partisan issue. I really want to take a moment to commend this committee for approaching this issue in a bipartisan way and finding the right solutions for our Nation's kids and our Nation's economy.

Second point I want to make, as some of the other panelists have made, is that there are innovative and proven solutions to address

the graduation crisis and increase the academic readiness of our students. We know they exist. We recently did a report with Jobs for the Future, which highlights approaches like expanded learning time, rapid response, intervention, and intensive focus on language and math skills in the ninth grade, which all help to better prepare students for advancement to the sophomore year, which is a strong predictor of future on-time graduation.

We also know the importance of creating more challenging academic environments, developing more direct connections between academic standards and college or job readiness requirements, and making explicit the links between high school and postsecondary opportunities. States and cities from New York to Chicago to Portland, Oregon, as the chairman noted, all across the country, have all created successful policies and programs to increase graduation success, and many have, of those programs have been successful.

Let me just note one, the Multiple Pathways to Graduation Program in New York City, which replaced 20 of the lowest-performing high schools with 189 new small schools. Many of those schools are now graduating two to three times as many students who have fallen off the normal path than other high schools that they replaced.

Third, the Graduation Promise Act that, as I mentioned, I think is a critical tool to help lower the dropout rates, improve academic readiness, and support proven models to keep kids in school and on the path to educational success. There's a clear role for the Federal Government in addressing our Nation's dropout crisis. I love the Gates Foundation. You see some of their grantees here, but it's not enough to just rely on the Gates Foundation to fund innovative means of improving school graduation and performance. Worthwhile State and local efforts deserve Federal support, as well, and that's why I think this committee is considering what they need to get done.

The Graduation Promise Act provides a critical set of Federal tools to assist States as they fight high school attrition. It seeks to directly interrupt the dropout crisis in the worst performing schools. In addition to the Federal, State, local partnerships for improving low-performing high schools, title II of that act will offer new grants to schools, higher education institutions, non profit organizations, and other partnerships to develop specific ways to help current dropouts, perspective dropouts, and older students, and those facing English language barriers, better navigate high school toward the goal of on-time graduation and solid preparedness for college or a career. Title III of the Graduation Promise Act also authorizes additional competitive grants to States to devise successful policies to align the twin goals of higher graduation rates and maintaining high academic standards.

In 1989, Congress set a goal that America's schools should have a 90 percent graduation rate. We still haven't bumped up over 70 percent. Seven in ten students only, graduate from high school. If you look at racial and ethnic minorities, only about half are graduating on time. That's unacceptable, it's detrimental to our Nation's long-term economic competitiveness. I think the efforts that this committee is undertaking will prove practical, cost-effective, and reasonable steps toward improving life expectations of our

young people and reversing that, that potential for economic tragedy for our country.

I strongly encourage the committee to move both the Graduation Promise Act and the other initiatives that have been discussed this morning.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Podesta follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JOHN D. PODESTA

Thank you, Chairman Kennedy, Senator Enzi, and members of the committee. I am John Podesta, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Center for American Progress. I am also a Visiting Professor of Law at the Georgetown University Law Center.

I appreciate the opportunity to be with you today to discuss the serious and growing graduation crisis in American schools. As the committee considers the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act, it is imperative for our Nation's economic success—and for the life chances of our children—that you examine ways to not only improve school standards and accountability but also increase the ability of States and localities to keep kids in school and move them successfully through to graduation.

I would like to talk with you today about the Graduation Promise Act (GPA), introduced yesterday by Senators Bingaman, Burr, and Kennedy, and developed with the support of the Center for American Progress, Jobs for the Future, the Alliance for Excellent Education, and the National Council of La Raza. I believe the GPA is a necessary and vital step toward improving our Nation's graduation rates. It will provide critical Federal resources to aid States in their efforts to develop, implement, and expand proven methods for keeping a diverse range of students in school and on the path to economic success.

It is well established that our students have fallen behind past generations of Americans and young people in other nations in terms of on-time high school completion rates. For decades now, the United States on-time graduation rate has failed to top 70 percent. This is below national graduation rates recorded in the middle of the twentieth century and well below current graduation rates in other countries. The United States ranked first in the world in terms of secondary school graduation rates 40 years ago. Today it ranks 17th.

For racial and ethnic minorities, the statistics are even grimmer. Graduation rates for African-Americans and Hispanic students today range between 50 percent and 55 percent. Every year we lose more and more of these students in schools that are essentially "dropout factories," a term used by Johns Hopkins University researchers Robert Balfanz and Nettie Letgers to describe the 2,000 worst performing schools in terms of graduation rates.[1]

In a rapidly shifting global economy, where knowledge and skills are crucial to good paying jobs, too many of our students are falling off the track to economic independence and advancement. In turn, the lack of basic educational attainment unduly consigns millions of our young people to a life of low earnings and poverty. High school dropouts are twice as likely to be unemployed as those with diplomas; working dropouts are far more likely to have low-wage jobs and fewer health and retirement benefits than others.

It is clear that a high school diploma is the bare minimum requirement for decent work and economic security in today's world. It is thus incumbent upon all of us to do more to ensure that our students stay in school and on the path to greater intellectual achievement and improved job skills. In a nation with the resources and talent of ours, graduation should never be a "fifty-fifty" proposition for anyone.

In November 2006, the Center for American Progress and Jobs for the Future originally proposed the Graduation Promise Act as a way for the Federal Government to support States in their efforts to boost graduation rates.[2] In a report entitled, "Addressing America's Dropout Challenge," Adria Steinberg, Cassius Johnson, and Hilary Pennington describe a range of successful State programs for improving

[1] Balfanz, Robert and Nettie Letgers, "Locating the Dropout Crisis: Which High Schools Produce the Nation's Dropouts? Where are They Located? Who Attends Them?" Report 70, Johns Hopkins University, September 2004.

[2] Steinberg, Adria, Cassius Johnson, and Hilary Pennington, "Addressing America's Dropout Challenge: State Efforts to Boost Graduation Rates Require Federal Support," Center for American Progress and Jobs for the Future, November 17, 2006. [*http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2006/11/graduation.html*]

school completion rates and propose several policies that serve as the basis for the exact bill we are discussing today.

The CAP/JFF report highlights how extended learning time, rapid response and intervention when students fail or fall behind, alongside intensive focus on language and math skills in the 9th grade, all help to better prepare students for advancement to sophomore year—a strong predictor of future on-time graduation. Other research featured in the report highlights the importance of creating more challenging academic environments for potential "off-track" students, developing more direct connections between academic standards and college or job readiness requirements, and making more explicit links between high school and postsecondary college or job opportunities through greater college exposure and internships.

Modeled on these and other efforts, the authors of the report feature a number of current State-level policies and programs to increase graduation success. For example:

• Indiana enacted the Dropout Prevention Act in 2006 to require schools to identify 9th graders who are falling behind and then advise them on ways to catch up and get additional tutorial help.

• New York City has created a program to increase "multiple pathways to graduation," by offering students of various ages and academic achievement different options for getting back on track, including transfer schools that provide small, targeted aid for at-risk students. These schools are now graduating two to three times as many students who have fallen off the normal path than other high schools.

• Other school districts in cities from Chicago and Boston to Milwaukee and Chattanooga have put in place a range of methods for predicting which students are most likely to dropout and devised effective strategies for keeping these kids in school and improving their college and job preparedness. Graduation rates are showing signs of improvement in all of these cities.

As these State and local efforts have shown, identifying potential dropouts and then executing strategies for keeping students in school should not be an episodic process. It requires sustained monitoring, creativity, and specialized intervention in order to succeed. Researchers and practitioners know that we can dramatically improve graduation rates, but they need more support in order for the strategies to take hold and work over time.

The Graduation Promise Act, therefore, proposes a set of Federal efforts to assist States in fighting high school attrition in three primary areas: more directly interrupting the dropout crisis in the worst performing schools; developing new strategies for improving graduation rates while maintaining academic standards; and investing more in proven methods for increasing graduation rates and supporting State policies in this area.

Since Bob Wise has addressed the general problem of low-performing high schools that is the core challenge addressed in the first part of GPA, let me focus on the second and third aspects of the bill.

Title II of the Graduation Promise Act authorizes the Secretary of Education to award $60 million in competitive, peer-reviewed grants for the development, execution, and replication of promising and innovative methods to help schools prevent dropouts. In devising this provision, the goal was to provide seed money for empirically-driven, methodologically rigorous pilot programs that will help schools increase graduation rates without sacrificing their academic standards.

As the authors of the CAP/JFF report describe, there is a useful precedent for this type of experimentation in the National Science Foundation's Statewide Systemic Initiatives Program of 1991:

> Having determined that it was critical to enable dramatic changes in the way mathematics, science, and technology were taught, Congress seeded efforts in 25 States to align policy, develop new standards and assessments, and set up research and demonstration schools that would serve as models for statewide reform. The results: demonstrable improvements in hands-on school work and small-group work in motivating student inquiries; better instructional materials; and more standards-based policies for curriculum improvements, student assessments and teacher preparations.[3]

Like these past efforts, Title II of the Graduation Promise Act will offer new grants to schools, higher education institutions, nonprofit organizations, or other partnerships to develop specific ways to help current dropouts, prospective dropouts, older students, and those facing English-language barriers better navigate high

[3] Steinberg et al., p. 17.

school toward a goal of on-time graduation and solid preparedness for college or a career.

In determining the ultimate viability and success of these programs, and the potential worthiness for future replication, Congress and the Secretary of Education will want to explore a number of important criteria for success. For example:

- Does the intervention program lead to improvement in achievement, graduation rates, and other key school outcomes above and beyond what would have occurred without the intervention?
- Why and how were these effects achieved?
- What aspect of the reform drove the effects?
- What was the role of enabling conditions (including new policies)?
- Was the cost worth it in terms of outcomes? [4]

To help answer these and other questions, any recipient of GPA grants will be required to collect and analyze relevant data on the success of various programs and disseminate this information to school districts and State and local education agencies. The Secretary of Education will also have the authority to commission outside, independent evaluations of these programs to measure and assess the impacts of these programs.

In addition to providing grants for innovative new programs, Title III of the Graduation Promise Act authorizes another $40 million in competitive grants to States for devising successful policies for aligning the twin goals of achieving higher graduation rates and maintaining high academic standards and college/career readiness.

In order to avoid more "dropout factories" in America, title III requires that each participating State first conduct a so-called gap-and-impact analysis of the policies, regulations, and laws affecting the following areas: school funding; data capacity; accountability systems; interventions in high priority secondary schools; new school development; and dissemination and implementation of effective local school improvement activities throughout the State.

Following this analysis, States will then use their grants to develop policies to align their school systems with the methods that work best to keep students in school and better prepare them for the future.

As Indiana, New York, Louisiana, and other States have shown, there are proven methods for moving "off-track" students into alternative learning environments such as small schools and other recovery models for struggling students. States are also implementing stronger policies to align higher graduation rates with better college preparation and career-readiness targets.

But these efforts require more sustained funding in order to be given a full chance to work for consecutive generations of students. Title III of the GPA will allow more States to address the policy gaps between innovative models for graduation success and the current structure of their school systems.

Congress set a goal in 1989 that America's schools should have a 90 percent graduation rate. Eighteen years later, roughly 7 in 10 students—and only half of racial and ethnic minority students—graduate on-time from high school. This is unacceptable and detrimental to our Nation's long-term economic competitiveness.

Equally important, there is no reason for our Nation's schools to continually return such paltry graduation numbers. Educators and policymakers know more than ever about how best to close the "graduation gap" and better situate our students in the global economy. The Graduation Promise Act would provide critical support to these efforts and would signal a strong Federal commitment to prevent millions more American students from dropping out of school and limiting their opportunities in life.

The Graduation Promise Act represents practical, cost-effective, and reasonable steps toward improving the life expectations of our young people. I strongly encourage the committee to move this bill forward.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and the members of the committee, for inviting me today. I'd be happy to take any questions you may have.

The CHAIRMAN. I want to thank the panel. This has been an extraordinary, helpful panel. They've outlined the challenges in a very informed way and have all made a series of very constructive recommendations about what our roles are in improving middle and high school education. It's been a very, very positive, very helpful, tough-minded, but useful.

[4] Steinberg et al., p. 22.

I want to thank Senator Murray for joining us here. She's been particularly concerned about these issues as a former teacher herself, and a school board member. She brings to our committee a very special insight and has been extremely active and involved in policy matters, particularly in the areas of dropouts and education issues. We thank her.

We're joined by Senator Burr, who has been mentioned with Jeff Bingaman, I was delighted to join with them on this targeted program to deal with middle schools. Thank Senator Isakson, who's enormously interested in this issue, these issues of education.

Senator Bingaman, I know has to go to the floor on the consideration of the America Competes Act, so I'll ask him if he'll be our first questioner.

Senator BINGAMAN. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I don't have questions. I did want to just say a word, though, and thank you for your leadership, and Senator Burr for his leadership and, of course, Senator Enzi, and all the others on this committee that have worked hard to try to focus on this problem.

I do think around here is, my observation over the time I've been here is that, you can only take action, significant legislative action, when you've got a critical mass of awareness and concern about a problem. I think we are to a point where there is a critical mass of awareness and concern about this dropout problem, that we can do something significant in No Child Left Behind's reauthorization this year to deal with it.

I think this Graduation Promise Act, which you co-sponsored with Senator Burr and myself, is a good proposal in that it would try to target funds on the exact schools Bob Balfanz talked about and many of the other witnesses talked about.

I do think the other key point is obviously, that we now know enough to know how to do something significant. I think for a long time it was just anecdotal and there, everyone had their story about some school or some principal or some teacher that was making a very major difference in keeping students engaged, and in school, and making progress. Now I think we know enough that, we know enough about where the problem's concentrated, as you pointed out—50 percent of the dropouts concentrated in 15 percent of the high schools. Bob mentioned that statistic as well. That gives us the opportunity to really concentrate on solving the problem and we do know how to solve the problem. I hope we will take this great opportunity and do so this year in the rewrite of No Child Left Behind.

But again, thank you for letting me be here and thanks for the great hearing.

The CHAIRMAN. Good.

We welcome Senator Brown, who was here at the beginning of the hearing. I thank his long-standing interest in education, health matters, and we're so grateful that he's been here through the course of matter.

Senator Enzi, would you like to follow, since Jeff has spoken for our side. Would you like to be recognized? And then we'll resume the order, but going back and forth.

Senator ENZI. If you want to ask some questions first, that would be fine.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, I'd just take one, maybe if I could, please. We've had very constructive suggestions and ideas.

If the other members have a particular scheduling time, we try to cooperate and deal with those.

I'm interested in, and some of you have referenced this, about, what is our responsibility in this whole process? You know, we can listen to the different witnesses and you can hear about these responsibilities—the Federal level, State, and local communities, I mean, it's going to take a combination—we hear what's going on in North Carolina. You've mentioned it's had a very proud tradition with a series of Governors going way back to Terry Sanford. Going back to even before, there has been long-committment to education issues and having been down, myself, to the university to listen to things that were happening 2 or 3 years ago, it was enormously impressive.

We've seen in some of these communities and in Chattanooga what's been happening there. Governor Wise talks about it at the State level. Mr. Podesta talks about the hope that's out there. We listened to Bob Balfanz who told us, very eloquently, about what keeps happening, particularly in the Baltimore school systems.

Just very quickly and then we'll move on. I'll recognize Senator Enzi. If you could apprise me, we've got the legislation that's there, but there has to be more. We've talked about how the support we're going to give is going to help the States to move, and we've got to try and work with the teachers to get them up to speed. Could you talk a little bit about what you think is a fair responsibility for us here at the Federal level to try and, maybe each one will take a quick crack at it. Then I'll recognize Senator Enzi.

Mr. BALFANZ. I'll start. I think a prime role is to be the steward of the reform for these dropout factories, for lack of a better word. Right now, we can ask ourselves, why haven't we brought reforms to scale? Why haven't we brought the successful things where they need to be? We know some things stand in the way.

Occasionally, not often, it's a lack of will. That's where I think No Child Left Behind is important, by saying, "We're not going to let you wait 5, 10 years to reform these schools. Every year you're losing kids, you could do better. Do better now."

Second of all, there's uneven resources and know-how at school levels, district levels, State levels. There's a role to help even that out, to making sure everyone has access to the high-quality technical assistance they need, that it's not the luck of the draw, that you happen to have a good superintendent, or you happen to live in a progressive State that's invested in education. That every kids knows that where they go to high school, there's that support mechanism.

Finally, it's helping to even out the resources, because many districts have made, sort of, this Hobbesian choice between investing in early education or secondary education. What happens is, they put it in the front end, which makes a lot of sense, but then when the kid drops out, all those resources and investments walk out the door. Those are some of the key areas.

The CHAIRMAN. Good. Mr. Wise.

Mr. WISE. Senator, I would argue that the Federal role can continue to be what it is, which is targeted, but recognizing it's re-

sponding to a truly National compelling need. This is a silent Sputnik. When you see the statistics that are laid as they are, we're losing, in terms of our international competitiveness, 80 percent of current jobs require postsecondary.

What's the Federal role? I would suggest where, since we know 71 percent of our eighth graders are reading below grade level, the Striving Readers Authorization targeted—Senator Murray, thank you very, very much for your leadership in introducing that here. Data and research, Senator, best bang for the buck to help everyone make decisions, once again, from the teacher to the Senator in making sure the States have good systems.

Finally, as Bob has illustrated, as everyone here has, we know where these schools are. States don't have the resources to go in and do the job completely themselves. They need the assistance of the Federal Government, but having said that, States must also build the capability, the turn-around teams, for instance, the administrators, and so on. There's a partnership there, but it can be targeted, it can be laser-like, but it meets a National need.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Habit.

Mr. HABIT. Senator, my response would be a little bit different. I agree with what's been said prior to me, that we need to be very clear-eyed about the resistance to changes. Everybody wants change, no one wants to change. And so, as we think about the structures and the intent of legislation to affect change within systems, within communities, I think it's a matter of looking at ways to accommodate the need, to shift those beliefs, and to expose those beliefs, so that they're really, quite frankly, is nowhere to hide. I hate to put it in those terms, but that's the way it occurs to me at this particular moment.

We see educators who deeply, deeply believe that all children can not achieve at high levels. When we take them through a very thoughtful process of looking at what happens in classrooms, when all children, especially poor children, can do high-level academic work? It's quite often a very emotional event. The wall falls, and these individuals are very impacted by what they see and recognizing that in many ways they've cheated their children, thinking they were doing what they knew to be the best. Hard working, committed people who don't have that first-hand experience. As a result, don't own the process, the need to make change in their schools.

The CHAIRMAN. Ms. Varner.

Ms. VARNER. I think the sanctions with No Child Left Behind have certainly made States figure out ways to comply, but complying is not living up to the intentions of No Child Left Behind. I would recommend supporting States to really monitor and hold their districts accountable for what matters. And we've laid out some of the things that really matter. To recognize districts for the growth they're making, even if they're not there yet, but mostly to help States, help support States so that they're just not complying to avoid the sanctions.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Podesta.

Mr. PODESTA. Just a couple of words. I think that, I mentioned the work we've done with the Chamber, and I think if you look across the States, what you see is those States that have sustained

the effort, make the biggest improvements, from Massachusetts to North Carolina. I think one of the roles of the Federal Government, much as Bob said, is to try to shepherd and use the Federal resource in partnership with State and local resources to get them focused on the right set of goals, to try to create the right kind of systems, that will keep these States moving forward. And again, focusing on the real problem of these dropout factories, but giving them the incentives and the sustained capacity to align their policy, so that we can make real improvements over time.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Enzi.

Senator ENZI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Great testimony, great ideas, even some great phrases that we'll use and probably credit you with the first time.

[Laughter.]

Mr. Habit, I'm particularly interested in your high expectations and how you achieve that. In Sheridan, Wyoming we have an institute for teachers, for Native Americans, Alaskans, and Hawaiians. It's in conjunction with Stanford University and it is making some amazing differences for that subgroup. When I asked them what the key was, they said, "High expectations." There's a little more to it than that. Can you explain a little bit about how you develop these high expectations?

Mr. HABIT. We spend a year in planning with a team before they launch a new school and the emphasis of that time is to explore. What does a classroom look like when children are required to take only the high level courses? We, in North Carolina, have had a history of tracking children and we have some courses that, quite frankly, place little demands on children. In these schools, asking teachers to design their schools where the default, the default course of study are these high-level courses. And then, provide teachers with the training for how to support the students to master that high-level work.

The experience we have again and again is, as the teachers move toward opening their schools, they themselves are surprised to see how students stretch. As one teacher said to me last week, "I'm seeing students who are taking physics that I never would have thought would be suitable for that particular course."

Senator ENZI. Thank you.

Ms. Varner, you've successfully built that sense of high expectations in your schools and you've been able to bridge the gap of everybody stressing change, but nobody actually wanting to change. You know, I really commend you on offering one diploma. At the roundtable we had, you mentioned the career academies and how that brought relevance to what the kids were learning. Could you tell us a little bit more about the career academies and ways they may have affected students in every grade?

Ms. VARNER. Well, as I said, we were looking to do more than just offer vocational education. We weren't sure how we should go about it, but one of the smartest things we did was we started sitting down with members of our business community. And so, at the table we had people from the business community, principals, teachers, we had students at the table too, and we were talking about the kinds of skills students need for the 21st Century. As I said, the first thing we realized is we're preparing students for jobs

we don't even know will exist. And so, what are the skills they need for any job?

With those conversations, we decided that, when we develop curriculum, the curriculum for these courses, we need to co-construct them with our business partners. That's exactly what we've done. They've been a part of constructing the curriculums, they have been co-teaching—not violating any laws—and they have been part of the assessment teams, as part of the assessment, we have students take the traditional tests and we're happy to say that our students who are learning math, for example, through our construction academy are scoring as well or better than students who are not in that construction academy.

We are also having them assess those skills we were talking about, persistence, curiosity, independence, collaboration. I mean, these are some of the skills—entrepreneurial thinking—these are the skills we're hearing that students will need in the 21st century.

Our students are graduating and competing for jobs in America and some of their competitors don't even live here and will never have to live here. And so, there's a sense of urgency around that. We're continuing to read as much as we can, talk as much as we can to our business partners, and to make sure that the academies meet the needs of our smartest students, as well as the needs of our strugglers who are getting there.

That's another thing that was important to us. We have what we call "Circuit Breakers" and so we are constantly sitting down looking to see who's enrolling in which academy. And if we see, for example, that this academy has a disproportionate number of minority students or special ed students, or gifted students, that's a "Circuit Breaker" for us. We need to do something, and we need to something with what we're offering. That each academy has something to attract students with all their talents, with all their interests, with all their passions.

Senator ENZI. As I recall, you also said that you found that some students that go into, for example, the construction academy wanting to be a carpenter, decide instead that they can be the architect.

Ms. VARNER. Right. Right, I forgot I said that last time. One of the things we say to students, is the most frustrating thing is to be working in a company and realize you're smarter than the people you're working for, but you don't have the credentials to do that. And so, that's part of our preparation, to make sure they can offer any opportunities. If they want to be on the ground floor just laying the bricks, I applaud them. Some days I wish I were doing that, and didn't have to go home and do the kind of thinking that I'm demanded to do. Wherever they want to be in any organization, we're preparing them for that.

Senator ENZI. Then what you learned from the career academy you applied to the lower grades some way too, by preparing the younger students for middle and high school—how does that fit in?

Ms. VARNER. What we're doing with our middle schools, actually what we did with our, we took our ninth lowest performing elementary schools and our Foundations helped us to provide some support there, so that they would enter middle school with the basics. We, in the networks that we have—elementary, middle, and high schools meet on a regular basis to talk about what's needed at the

next level or what kind of preparation the students aren't coming with.

For the academies, our high schools are meeting with our middle schools and talking about the kinds of skills we want to begin developing as early as middle school, and the kind of course work. There was a time where we had students in Chattanooga who could go all the way through high school with remedial math and graduate with Algebra I as their highest math. Now what we're doing to make sure that the students can excel in what we're offering in the academies is—we want Algebra I in middle school, so that students have opportunities, more students are on track for courses like calculus.

Will they all get there? No, they won't, the good thing is we don't know who's going to get there so we're pushing everybody in that direction.

Senator ENZI. Thank you for your passion and your entrepreneurial skills in school.

Ms. VARNER. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Murray.

Senator MURRAY. Mr. Chairman, thank you so much for having this hearing.

I had an opportunity in my office to hear much of your testimony and it was very compelling and really excellent, and I'm delighted that we are focusing on this middle and high school age level. Obviously with No Child Left Behind, a lot of focus went into what we were doing in elementary education. There's no doubt that it is absolutely critical, but looking at the whole picture of what happens when they get to middle school and high school is also critical. The dropout rate is obviously what we all look at as the factor that says how we're doing there. None of us likes where we are with the dropout rate.

I started looking at this a number of years ago to find out why kids are dropping out of school and it is very complex. There's no simple, single issue we can point to. But it seemed to me there were a number of factors that we needed to address and that's why I introduced legislation called the Pass Act for High School reform and have been working to implement parts of that since then.

One of the things I heard from many students as I went out to work on this in high schools was, "Well, no one ever told me in seventh grade that I needed 4 years of math to get into college. No one ever talked to me about the fact that I needed a foreign language." Kids in middle school often don't have a strong family support. They may be the first person to look at graduating. They may not have anybody in their own community that is talking to them about what they need. Part of what I put into this was academic counselors, to begin to focus our kids in middle school on making sure they have a plan.

Washington State has a program called Navigation 101 that really helps parents and students set goals to map their progress and know what they need to do. I wanted to ask some of you today, how you think we might be doing better if we started reaching down into the middle schools to help our kids plan for what they needed to do, not just to graduate, but to get into our colleges?

Maybe, Governor Wise, if we could start with you?

Mr. WISE. Sure. Middle schools are a vital part of it and your Pass Act, led the way, I think, to showing us a lot of it through the counseling, through the recognition of math and literacy coaches, through the calculation of graduation rates, as well. Bob Balfanz can speak, and I won't speak for him, about the indicators that are already in middle school for whether or not you're going to succeed in high school.

What I would urge, though, is that, as you have in your Pass Act, as you have in Striving Readers, that you continue, as well, to recognize the importance of literacy. That we have, essentially at the Federal level and most States, stopped doing literacy, reading instruction by the fourth grade. That's when children are learning to read in middle, beginning with middle school and high school, it switches to, they need to read to learn and they don't have the skills, as Edna Varner so well described. That's critical.

Now, middle schools are a vital part of it, and once again, the chart, the air graph I drew, shows that the Federal contribution and effort in middle schools, it drops off sharply after about the fifth grade.

Senator MURRAY. That's correct. The other part of my legislation really looks at the fact that once a student gets into middle and high school there is no targeted teacher who's there to help them with learning how to read or how to do math. We sort of get them out of sixth grade and say, "You're on your own," and there's no teacher teaching reading skills.

Mr. WISE. The common elements are here and, Senator Burr, you attended and spoke at a function with Senator Bingaman about 6 months ago, where MDRC did an evaluation of programs such as Talent Development and others. It's the common elements, and one of them is the personalization. A personal graduation plan starting at least in the seventh grade for every student, that recognizes their strengths and their challenges and maximizes them, to put them on a pathway to success. Also having a direct relationship with an adult in the building. What ninth grader raises his or her hand to say, "I can't read very well, help me out." That's why we need to have a restructuring, as well as additional resources.

Senator MURRAY. Other comments from you?

Mr. PODESTA. I would just add that the sorting process, as you alluded to, a center is well established by middle school and middle school counselors are making important decisions for and with young people. Training and supporting counselors that think differently about academic rigor is critically important.

Senator MURRAY. Yes, and that's one of the things I've found, is that students themselves identified counselors as the person you go to if you have a personal problem, not as someone you would go to who would help you plan your academic career. That's why, in my bill, I called them academic counselors to change the focus.

Ms. VARNER. Remember also, that in many schools a guidance counselor has 500 students to see. One of the things we're trying to do is have our guidance counselors work with teachers who have small advisory groups of about 15. Those teachers review the student's instructional plan. As students move on to high school, they meet with other advisors. Because guidance counselors can't do it all, but guidance counselors have been very helpful in helping other

teachers build the skills to keep up with that plan, to revise it each year with parents, and students, and the school, and the child's records there.

Senator MURRAY. I think it's important to point out, that doesn't preclude parents. Guidance counselors are there to give support.

Ms. VARNER. Absolutely.

Senator MURRAY. Correct? It does take resources to provide those counselors.

Ms. VARNER. Absolutely.

Mr. PODESTA. I'd just like to add one thing on the middle grades connection and that is, in many ways we keep forgetting about middle schools. This is when students independently decide to engage or disengage from schooling. You do well in elementary if you just like to go to school, and you like kids, and you're good at follow the leader. You do what they tell you, you do fine. In the middle grades, they start asking you to think for yourself. I mean, the mathematics gets more difficult, you have to comprehend what you're reading, and answer questions. If no one builds that bridge for you, you start feeling lost, and you start feeling, maybe this isn't for me. You start disengaging.

On the opposite hand, if somebody reaches out to you, if a teacher grabs you and pulls you along, you become engaged and excited about schooling. We sort of just ignore that, and we sort of leave it up to the kids, believe it or not. And especially, in high poverty environments, they disengage in huge numbers. Once they disengage, it's very hard to get them back.

Senator MURRAY. I would agree. Well, I think we have a lot of work that we can move toward.

We've got a lot of good research out there and I hope, Mr. Chairman, we can really focus on this area and really work to make sure that all kids can succeed. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Isakson, is giving me the long and distant look. Senator Isakson, you're recognized.

Senator ISAKSON. I have a staffer back there at the door, who's telling me I've got to leave.

The CHAIRMAN. OK.

Senator ISAKSON. I want to thank my neighbor from North Carolina because I wanted to make two points. The Hamilton County story is a great story. That's a neighboring county to my State of Georgia, just on the other side of the line from Dalton and Lookout Mountain. When I chaired the State Board of Education, I was, from time to time, in some groups that shared information. If you look at those growth charts and the improvement they've made, I mean, they've made substantial improvements and it's because of two things. One, is intervention, and the other's innovation. So I just wanted to make a statement.

One, I want to help you with the bill. The biggest mistake we make is by trying to think that at the high school level that there's a cookie-cutter solution to what is a complicated problem. Mr. Podesta made the statement that 70 percent of the kids graduate, 30 percent don't.

I'll tell you another interesting number. I was with the head of the Army, recruiting for the last 3 years. General Van Antwerp, who's now been nominated to head the Corps, he's been in charge

of Army recruiting for the last 3 years. Seventy percent of the eligible 18- to 24-year-olds to volunteer for the military can't get in.

They can't get in because of two reasons. One, is half of them haven't graduated from high school or, this is that 30 percent, and the other is obesity. That tells you what a huge problem we have in this country, in terms of the effects of the dropout rate. Not just on the lives of those children as they hopefully go to some post secondary work, but for our own country's ability to attract, in a voluntary service, the people we need for our military.

I commend you on what you've done. I have one suggestion. One of the things we never do up here enough, is create within our legislation, a best practices center for the consolidation of the information so when the grants go out and somebody like Hamilton County innovates a system that works and there are other Hamilton Counties in the country but every county's different. Our Department of Education, should be a best practices center where—through the web we can post and, principles and systems can go on that site and say, "Hey, my county's like Hamilton County," and this worked in Hamilton County and it can be a catalyst for reform.

Now, I am making a speech and not asking a question. I apologize. This is a great bill. I want to help you with it, and I thank my colleague from North Carolina for letting me interrupt.

Senator MURRAY. It sounds like we need to put physical education back into our high schools, too.

Senator ISAKSON. Oh, absolutely, I'm all for that too, especially because of the obesity.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Very good. Thanks very much.

Senator Burr.

Senator BURR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank the entire panel for their willingness to come and to share their knowledge, and I want to particularly thank John Podesta, who has a tremendous amount of valuable information and, John, we appreciate that.

To my good friend, Governor Wise—Mr. Chairman, what you don't know about Governor Wise is he has higher aspirations than being Governor of West Virginia. He wants to drive for NASCAR.

[Laughter.]

Mr. WISE. We've been there, Senator.

Senator BURR. It is a very scary thing that I envision, but that would be true for me, as well.

Bob, it's great to see you and an old colleague, Tony Habit, to have somebody here who can talk about some of the things that we're actually getting right in North Carolina. The fact that we're not arguing about process, we're focused on outcome. I would tell you that that's at the heart of everything from what Bob Balfanz said at that end and John Podesta said at this end.

There's a measurement tool. It's what is the outcome of our educational system. I think the thing that shocks me the most about the high school graduation rate is, who in the hell is outraged? Why is the Nation not screaming about this?

I, you know, Mr. Chairman, I want to make an observation. I want to thank you because this is a No Child Left Behind reauthorization hearing, and that we've spent much time talking about

graduation rates. I think we make a real mistake when we take up NCLB in a vacuum of K–8, because, really the buy-in when you talk about K–8, is on this side you have parents of people in K–8 and on this side you have a lot of teachers who are finding every reason not to like No Child Left Behind. There is your audience.

When all of a sudden you go to graduation, your audience becomes every parent in education, every parent who will have children in education, every employer in the country who's relying on that funnel for its next generation of the workforce. All of a sudden you have a nation outraged about the graduation rate. I truly think this is the start of something really good. Yes, we've got some good bills, some creative approaches. Is it the silver bullet? There isn't one.

I want to concentrate on a couple of specific areas and ask those who would like to comment, to comment on those. You know, I've had the opportunity to go in some Gates High School classrooms. I've seen the investment, I've seen the transition that happens in a year. I've gone to a high school that, to accomplish the part that wanted to go into Gates and the part that wanted to stay in traditional Gates, in Camden County. The Gates kids, for this year's ninth grade and next year's ninth and tenth grade are actually in trailers. Now, Governor, most Governors say kids can't learn in trailers. Both of those classrooms are over 20 kids, and most Governors say they can't learn if there are that many kids. They have already broken the mold in 1 year. They've got kids whose attendance went up, whose involvement went up, whose excitement went up about education. And it's, in fact, that excitement that will keep them in when the going gets tough. What do they do? They've approached things in a different fashion than what they were used to.

Gates is one example, but I think the unique thing here that I see is that we've got two private citizens, Bill and Melinda Gates, who are willing to invest their money in the reform of high school education in this country.

My first question is this, and I want to pose this to John Podesta, and anybody else. If we came up with a Federal fund that is available to match the private sector dollars that funnel to reform of a high school, but those dollars don't go just because somebody says they're going to reform. They don't go just because they wrote a good grant. They go because they have convinced private entities to invest in the reform. That's Bill and Melinda Gates, that's any specific instance where you can find where there's a private investment. That we would turn around as a Federal Government, we would match the investment in that school. What do you think of that approach?

Mr. PODESTA. Well, Senator, as I said in my oral presentation, I love the work that the Gates Foundation is doing, but there's also an important Federal role. I think that you see across the country now, for exactly the reasons that you mentioned, employers being interested in schools, adopting schools, moving money into schools, etc. You're onto something, in the sense, that it shows that people who can, in the marketplace, attract money because there's innovation that, that's an important, one important factor.

The heart of the reform effort really has to be aimed at understanding what's working, trying to, you know—there's not going to be one cookie-cutter solution that fits all, but we can find effective models, research them, try and replicate them. It goes along with what Senator Isakson said—find those models that work and try to replicate them across the country. Some of that will involve foundation support, some of it might involve business support, some of it should involve, I think, Federal support. Obviously, the bulk of the money still is going to come from State and local communities. I think those things—viewing this, you know, it's maybe an overused word, but viewing this as a partnership is an important concept. That's what we should push for.

Senator BURR. Well, we do an awful job up here of disseminating success, irregardless. It's not limited to education.

Mr. PODESTA. If I could, one more word. Senator Kennedy, at the beginning, raised the Federal research money. If you think about it, there is a lot of money being spent, but if you think of the challenge the country faces, and we think about the research dollars that are spent on technology, on medical research, etc.

Then that number seems rather small by comparison, given the challenge of reforming the educational system. If we're going to spend research money, it can't be just kind of one off, it's got to be targeted on what real improvements we need that are going to begin to reform how we deal with the—literacy has been mentioned in this program, how much we are going, how we're going to deal with low performance schools.

When I was in the White House, the President's Committee on Science and Technology actually focused on this question and found a lot of the education research that was being done wasn't double-blind, didn't read the results, wasn't disseminated. A lot of research dollars were going out, but there was no strategic focus to it and there was no strategic focus to improving schools across the board. And that, I think, is really what needs to happen with the dollars that are being spent.

Senator BURR. Let me say, in the context that I asked that question, I'm not talking about substituting this for the money that's currently going in. I'm talking about—can Federal dollars leverage private dollars?

If the answer is yes—and I think it is—then the question is, who determines a genuine commitment to change and reform? We traditionally have not done that well. Private entities, corporations, foundations go through a rather extensive review of whether somebody's serious about really changing something.

It seems like if you're talking about, over and above the traditional partnerships that we have with Federal dollars and State and local dollars, if you talk about opening a new door, then you open a door that allows those private sources to identify real genuine commitment, and use Federal dollars to leverage, whether it's business, a foundation, or individual support of those efforts.

Mr. PODESTA. Actually, Senator, in some ways it is a mutual leveraging going on. Because, I think, and let me just say as a disclaimer, my organization is also a Gates grantee, but I believe that the Gates Foundation is helping to leverage local, State, and Federal dollars. Because they have jumpstarted the high school by, in

the last 10 years, they've probably moved it 30 years because of the number of projects they've started that we can get best practices from, that we see what works, what doesn't work. And so, now they've created interest at various levels of Government.

By the same token, come back around where you are, and now maybe we can leverage each other to improve best practices. I can tell you, no State has money for the kind of research that's necessary to do best practices. And so, to the extent that this committee can get the Department, work with the U.S. Department of Education to make it a true repository of good research and best practices that every school district from small, 5,000 people in Gilmore County, all the way to New York City, can access to find what works for them. That would be a great assistance.

Senator BURR. It shocks me when you look at the national statistics, 70 percent graduation rate on time, 30 percent are not making it, 32 percent in North Carolina. Yet, in some of the underlying statistics, 88 percent of those are not academically lost.

When I asked Bill Gates if our expectations were too low, his answer to the HELP Committee was, "My fear is we lose more gifted children than we're losing academically challenged kids." Bob, I think you stated it well. Those of us who do look at the jobs that are being created in West Virginia, in North Carolina, around this country, realize very quickly—without a high school diploma, you may fill out an application, but you will never get invited for an interview. The likelihood is you won't get picked in the interview if, in fact, you haven't got some additional higher education.

I can't think of a better investment in higher education than to begin to fix the high school graduation rate. Because it puts more kids in the queue, not only to be able to consider it, but to do it in a way that the value of it is big to them.

Tony, let me turn to you for just 1 second. I thank the chairman for his indulgence on time.

You stated extremely well that under the New Schools Project, that when you engage a new high school in this transition, that this is a secure program. It's 1 year of planning and 5 years of implementation. I think we all understand that we probably don't focus enough on the 1-year planning and we may shorten the implementation over too short a period of time. Let me ask you what happens at the end of that 6 years?

Mr. HABIT. What happens at the end of the 6 years? In terms of, how is that school different than the conventional school?

Senator BURR. In terms of all the things that you brought to the table to accomplish that.

Mr. HABIT. OK.

Senator BURR. Additional State money, additional local money, additional Federal money, incentives for teachers, whatever it is. As Johnny Isakson said, "Every school's a little bit different, so every configuration's going to be a little bit different." Does that all go away? Is it no longer needed now, because you've made this transition? The question is, at what point do we consider a school a success and we move on to try to do more and more with others?

Mr. HABIT. Certainly, that's an excellent question, Senator. I think that, first of all there are many different approaches to redesigning schools and thinking of schools differently, and—to your

earlier comment about an innovation fund, the notion of being clear about what are those designs which get markedly different results is an important process in looking at that.

What we would expect to see in a school that is funded with external resources and the external capacity of our organization and our school development team during that 6-year process, we plan for sustainability from the very beginning, so the resources that are brought to our team are committed primarily to teacher training and development and coaching services and the training and development of that principal. Every single action we take and every tool we develop is vested in the idea of sustainability beyond our relationship with that school.

We would expect, for example, that the State of North Carolina, their funding would sustain some things we've initiated in that school through the design process. But at the tail end of that, let me just mention some of the, kind of, key elements that should be a part of every single school.

Every school, first of all, should have a focus. It doesn't matter, necessarily, what that focus is. It could be biotechnology, it could be entrepreneurship, as we heard from Edna, it could be many different areas, but that focus gives the teachers a way to connect the curriculum and to work together as peers. If they're going to have that kind of connection, what happens is, they begin to establish norms in their school for what good teaching means. That focus continues beyond our relationship.

They should have a relationship with a college or university so that they have a plan within that school for, "How am I going to be sure my kids get 12 hours, 15 hours of college credit before they walk across that stage to get their high school diploma?"

They should have, in that school, created deeper partnerships with their community and institutions in their community. I know you visited Camden recently, not far from Camden in Dare County, we're creating a school of maritime studies. And to use that example in that school, they're connecting with the research being conducted in Coastal North Carolina and the Maritime Museum and other sorts of institutions. Changing relationships with universities, with the private sector, with resources.

The last two things that I would mention is that, teaching should look very different in these schools, in every school. When we talked today, we're talking so much about dropouts and children who are at risk of failure. Your observation about Mr. Gates and what he shared earlier, kind of rings true for us. We know that our most advanced students need a different kind of teaching. They need teaching that is very active, that's engaging, that is applying content to real world problems and needs, so that when they leave high school to go into college and go into the workforce, they have developed the judgment, the motivation, the kinds of soft skills Edna talked about in her comments a few moments ago. Teaching should look really different.

Then, the last thing that I would mention is that, these schools would have a system of student support, a design to, into that campus. We will never, as a country, be able to afford enough counselors and social workers to provide for the emotional and affective needs of children. In these schools, teachers step into that role and

they know they're there to teach and monitor teaching, but they're also there to grow young people into fully formed adults, prepared for a future beyond that high school.

Senator BURR. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I think all of our witnesses today had a common thread relative to college preparation. That was the ability for students to get college-ready courses in high school. I think one of the biggest challenges that we have is, how do you make sure that rural America has the teachers that it needs to teach AP courses. At a time where it's pretty tough for rural America to attract teachers that meet the qualifications, much more so for the AP side. I don't ask that as a question. Mr. Chairman has been awfully kind with the time.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Thanks very much. Maybe we've covered this, but just to make it somewhat clearer to me, about the difference between the middle schools and the high schools. Most of the lessons which you've talked about here, probably, are generally applicable in terms of a seamless web. Would you make a distinction? Or do you see what we're doing up in the high school level all starts in the middle school and carries on through? Maybe you could just comment.

Mr. BALFANZ. I think there's, actually, some very important commonalities, that at both levels you need to create, sort of, a strong bond between a subset of teachers and subset of students, so students know there's a subset of teachers that really care about them. Teachers know that this is, these are my 75 students and we—with my colleagues, not on my own—have got to do what it takes to make them succeed. That creates a very tight relationship at both the teacher and student level.

You need that at both levels because this is when students are disengaging. You need a force to draw them back. What draws them to school is their relationship with their teachers. They come to school for their teachers, not because they're taking Spanish. You have to make sure you enable the organization of the school to give teachers time to do that.

Second of all, you have to have these high standards, but you have to have the intensive extra help needed to make it real for everyone. It's fine enough to say, "Everyone will learn algebra in eighth grade," but many of us in this room struggled with algebra in eighth, ninth, or tenth grade. It's just not saying, "We'll offer it to you, it's there." It often means giving extra time, it often means having extra help labs, if often means, we found our high school, but I think this works for middle school, that for certain kids it's almost social-emotional issues, it's a fear of failure. To solve that you have to know their story. To know their story, maybe for that subset of kids, that's just the 10 kids you need a small class size for, not everybody.

Then finally, I think at common levels, is you have to realize we are asking teachers and administrators to do more than just teach a good lesson. You have to have support systems built up for them.

Also, I think there's this idea that we've found in both the middle and high school level, that there's key indicators you have to pay attention to. When a student fails sixth grade, we found, in a high poverty environment, they do not recover, absent intervention. If a

student is starting to miss a month of school in sixth grade, they will not miss less school in the future unless you do something. I think those are some of the common——

The CHAIRMAN. Good.

Mr. BALFANZ [continuing]. Elements we find.

Mr. PODESTA. Senator, it is a seamless web, and if I could just, the analogy I've came to grips with as I got into this, is the importance of building a strong foundation, which is what we do pre–K to in the elementary grades. I'm not a carpenter and you can build a strong foundation for me, I can't finish the house on my own.

The recognition has to be, that as we build that critically strong foundation, early childhood development for instance, and then the early grades and reading initiatives and so on, we have to recognize that in each stage of a child's life, they have different needs, different learning mechanisms, and that we're going to have to keep building that house for them. Which is why, we can't simply say, "We stop reading in fourth grade, we stop these programs in fourth grade, if they, by fifth grade they ought to have it and now they're on their way."

Clearly, early childhood initiatives provide the foundation and we have demonstrated results, but what we're also demonstrating is, if you simply take children that have had a good early childhood experience and then put them into dysfunctional middle and high schools, their success is not going to be anywhere near what it ought to be.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Habit, is there anything more that you'd like to add?

Mr. HABIT. No, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Good. Then that went well. Well, we want to thank you all for your very helpful comments and recommendations. I think what we're going to do is, as we draft the legislation, we're going to call on you to give us your reactions and responses to it and hopefully we'll be worthy of the kind of challenges you've put out there. It's been enormously helpful and valuable. We're very grateful to all of you.

Mr. BALFANZ. Thank you.

Mr. WISE. Thank you.

Mr. HABIT. Thank you, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. The committee stands in recess.

[Additional material follows.]

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE NATIONAL MIDDLE SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

National Middle School Association, which represents more than 180,000 educators through individual and institutional memberships, is committed to making middle grades the pride of the American education system. As an organization, NMSA has established longstanding partnerships with national, State, and local groups interested in improving the lives of young people. But our efforts must be matched with financial and policy support from all levels of government. We believe that only by working together can we achieve the ambitious agenda to provide all young adolescents with a quality education that develops their skills and talents to the fullest extent.

Thoroughly preparing all American students to succeed in a demanding and evolving global economy makes the transformation of middle level education an imperative. Thriving in the 21st century requires more than a basic understanding of reading, writing, and mathematics. It requires the ability to apply sophisticated skills in a variety of settings, solve complex problems individually and collectively, and learn throughout a lifetime. While effective middle level schools provide this strong foundation for young adolescents, most schools serving 10- to 15-year-olds have not implemented the full range of structures and supports that more than 30 years of research and practice have shown to work with this age group.

Unless we take action now to change these patterns, millions of young adolescents will be unable to compete in the world they will encounter in high school and beyond. For example, while middle level students steadily improved their mathematics performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in the past decade, only 29 percent of U.S. eighth graders demonstrated competence with challenging subject matter in both reading and math, and one-fifth of those students scored below the basic level. In addition, while U.S. eighth graders improved their math and science scores on international assessments from 1995 to 2003, they still compared poorly to students from other nations. One-fourth of eighth graders lack fundamental reading skills, according to NAEP. Eighty percent of U.S. eighth graders say they plan to obtain a bachelor's degree or higher, but many do not have access to rigorous classes that provide the stepping stones to higher education. Even when poorly prepared students gain admission to college, they typically need so much remediation that they fail to progress.

The national movement to "leave no child behind" has largely bypassed students in the middle. Squeezed between the competing interests of elementary and secondary education, middle level students continue to fight for attention, respect, and financial equity. Under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), 57 percent of the students tested annually are in grades five through eight. Yet only about 15 percent of all title I funds, the program that drives NCLB, are allocated to both middle and high schools. Promising Federal programs, such as GEAR UP and TRIO, which help disadvantaged middle level students prepare for college, reach only 10 percent to 20 percent of those who are eligible for assistance (see Addendum #1).

Successfully preparing the next generation of Americans means significantly improving support for middle level schools. The middle grades represent the most critical period in education because so many decisions made during this stage determine whether children will reach their full potential. Sixth graders who do not attend school regularly, exhibit poor behavior, or fail math or English are very likely to drop out before graduation from high school—many as early as ninth grade. Only 1 in 10 of these students graduate on time and one in five graduate in 5 years. By the eighth grade, many students have decided whether they will drop out or graduate from high school, whether they will take algebra and other "gatekeeper" courses that predict success in college, and whether they will engage in risky behaviors such as drug use and unprotected sex.

Although we fully support legislation to turn around failing high schools, we urge you to consider turning around the failing middle schools that feed into the 2,000 "dropout factories" identified in the Graduation Promise Act. Given that we now know the warning indicators that can identify [as early as sixth grade] students that need more support and academic interventions, it is imperative that we provide the necessary support and interventions immediately. It makes no sense to wait until ninth grade to make sure that students stay in school.

The reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act presents an excellent opportunity to establish national middle level policy and help raise student achievement in the middle grades. While we fully agree with the basic goal of NCLB, that every child in our Nation deserves an excellent education that enables him or her to be

successful in college and the workforce, we do not believe the legislation fully addresses the needs of students in grades five through eight.

Federal policy affects all aspects of middle level education and can strengthen or hinder State and local efforts to improve schools. We urge Congress and the Administration to consider the following recommendations to strengthen the reauthorization of NCLB and create a national middle level education policy necessary to help young adolescents achieve their fullest potential.

The following eight recommendations are supported by NMSA as part of a coalition of national organizations committed to improving middle level education. The first five recommendations would establish a national middle level education policy to help all students succeed. The next three recommendations are necessary to improve student achievement across grades K–12 and are critical in supporting student success at the middle level.

A National Middle Level Education Policy Supported by the Following Organizations: ACT; Academy for Educational Development; Alliance for Excellent Education; The College Board; Education Development Center, Inc.; International Reading Association; Learning Disabilities Association of America; National Association of Secondary School Principals; National Council of Teachers of English; National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform; National Middle School Association.

1. Authorize and expand Striving Readers as part of NCLB and fund it at $200 million in the first year and increasing to $1 billion over a period of 5 years. The Striving Readers Act (S. 958), new legislation to help ensure that older students who are struggling can read and write at grade level, will give students the literacy interventions they need to succeed in school and graduate from high school with a meaningful diploma. Every State would receive a grant to help teachers in the content areas improve reading and writing achievement across the curriculum in grades 4 through 12.

• As educators and policymakers examine the data from their State and district reading assessments, they are concerned that eighth grade reading scores remain flat, and twelfth graders on average have shown no reading improvement in the last 30 years. ACT reports that over 50 percent of high school graduates in 2005 did not have the reading skills they needed to succeed in college. Middle school students who are not on target in reading are significantly more likely not to be on target in English, Math, and Science. In fact, ACT's latest research suggests that if students do not achieve a minimum level of academic preparation by middle school, high school may be too late to make up for these deficits.

• Closing the achievement gap and ensuring that every student is proficient in reading requires an intense focus on literacy teaching and learning in the middle grades.

• Struggling readers exist in every school. In our inner cities and rural poor areas, it is not uncommon to find 50 percent of our eighth graders reading at "below basic" levels. Scaling up effective literacy instruction and support for struggling students in the middle grades requires a significant investment beyond the funding currently available under title I.

• Federal reading policy essentially stops after third grade. Students need more intensive reading curricula and support for the remainder of their primary and secondary education in order to achieve academically and in a postsecondary world.

2. **Include the "Math Now" proposal included in the Senate version of the America Competes bill (S. 761, Title II, Section 3201). This necessary and important initiative would help strengthen teacher preparation and professional development in math in the elementary and middle grades.**

• Although eighth grade math scores have improved, we are still far from preparing all students to take algebra by the end of eighth grade so they can go on to higher level math courses in high school. In fact, test data show the middle grades as the point when average student achievement begins to lag. For example, the national average mathematics score at grade four increased by 3 points from 2003 to 2005. But the score at grade eight showed only a 1-point increase in that same time period.

• The National Academy of Sciences has pointed out that "students who choose not to or are unable to finish Algebra I before the ninth grade—which is needed for them to proceed in high school to geometry, Algebra II, trigonometry, and pre-calculus—effectively shut themselves out of careers in the sciences."

• A full 86 percent of math and science teachers in the Nation's highest minority schools are teaching out of field.

3. **Amend the definition of Highly Qualified Teacher. Highly qualified middle level teachers should demonstrate that they are subject-matter com-**

petent by obtaining either a major or its equivalent in one or more subjects that they teach or by passing a State-approved competency measure or assessment, as well as demonstrate a solid understanding of pedagogy for young adolescents.

• Ensuring that all young adolescents have highly qualified teachers and administrators is an essential first step in moving toward the ultimate goal of "highly effective" teachers in every classroom supported by "highly effective" school leaders.

• If we expect all middle level students to succeed, we must eliminate the disparities in their education starting with the quality of the teachers and administrators hired to work with them. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 left out a specific definition of a highly qualified teacher at the middle level and did not speak to the qualifications of school leaders.

• Although an increasing number of States offer some type of middle level certification or endorsement, fewer than half require specialized, middle level preparation before teachers can work in the middle grades. Only seven States insist that middle level administrators know and use research-based leadership and instructional practices to increase the academic performance and healthy development of young adolescents.

• According to The College Board, 40 percent of middle school students in the physical sciences (including chemistry, biology and physics) are taught by unqualified teachers, with the proportion in biology approaching 30 percent. In math, these numbers exceed 20 percent.

• New teachers should be required to obtain a middle level certification and have a major in their subject area as the first step to becoming a highly qualified and highly effective teacher. Funding should be provided so teachers already in the workforce can earn a middle level certification within 5 years through recertification course work and/or personalized professional development growth plans that include work in both content knowledge and pedagogy.

• Furthermore, we recommend strengthening and expanding the incentives for highly qualified administrators and teachers to lead middle level reforms in our highest-need schools and school districts.

4. **Provide adequate funding and support for ongoing, State-administered technical assistance programs for all middle level schools identified as "in need of improvement." Funding should be allocated for the development and implementation of school improvement plans.**

• According to the Center on Education Policy, about 10 percent of all schools (a majority of which are middle schools) have been labeled in need of improvement. In the last 2 school years, however, nearly two-thirds of the States reported receiving insufficient Federal funds to carry out the NCLB-imposed duty of assisting schools identified for improvement.

• Technical assistance to help low-performing schools is not widely available, leaving many middle level schools without support.

• Funding to implement school improvement plans is critical. For these plans to succeed, they need the financial resources to provide supports such as school improvement facilitators, adolescent literacy programs, professional development, extended learning time and personal graduation plans.

5. **Promote research and dissemination on effective policies and practices in middle grades education. While there is a growing body of research on middle grades education, the knowledge base is still relatively small and not well understood. To ensure that educators make wise decisions based on the latest scientific evidence, we recommend that Congress do the following:**

• Encourage IES and other educational research agencies to develop a strand of research designed to enhance the performance of middle grades schools and students, including those who are most at risk of educational failure. Research could target specific issues such as effective practices in math, science and literacy; school-improvement programs; and strategies for closing the achievement gap.

• Encourage the Department of Education (through IES or NCES) to develop a national database at the middle level that will enable researchers to identify school and classroom factors that facilitate or impede student achievement.

• Establish a National Center on Middle Grades Education, modeled after the National High School Center, that can synthesize and disseminate the available research on effective middle grades policies and practices.

K–12 Recommendations Necessary to Support a National Middle Level Education Policy.

• **States should be required to provide ongoing, job-embedded professional development for principals and teachers that support school-based collaborative problem-solving and decision-making activities to improve student achievement. Due to current national needs, specific professional development in math, science, literacy, formative and summative assessment practices, and English language learning must be ongoing, especially in our highest need schools.**

- The traditional "one-size-fits-all" method of advancing educators' skills by offering professional development to all the teachers in a school or school district without regard to individual needs is both inappropriate and ineffective. Generic staff development does not improve instruction and learning. We must ensure that all middle grades teachers, both new and experienced, participate in quality professional development that includes deep understanding of their subject areas and sound instructional methods to teach young adolescent learners.
- Data-informed instruction is essential for high achievement. Research indicates that formative assessment is one of the strongest interventions schools can make to raise test scores for all students with the greatest gains occurring among the lowest performing students. Delivering this staff development requires a wide range of professional development opportunities.
- In today's achievement-focused atmosphere, it is imperative that principals be effective instructional leaders and that they know how to collaborate with staff members to establish the school's learning goals.

• **Because some States do not have data management systems in place to track each student's progress, the Federal Government must provide incentives and guidance to ensure that all States develop effective procedures for collecting and analyzing such information. Further, improving the quality of assessments so that they are both valid for accountability purposes as well as a tool for improving instruction is critical for the success of America's students.**

- The most valuable achievement measures provide information about each student's development over time. Called the "growth model," this method uses individual assessments to determine adequate yearly progress and should become the standard for determining progress in middle level schools.
- These State longitudinal data systems are a prerequisite for implementation of "growth models" and are a more accurate measure of school quality because they follow students' academic progress over time.
- Once-a-year, norm-referenced tests that focus on groups of students for school accountability purposes do little to help teachers diagnose specific learning needs and design appropriate interventions for individual students. Although such assessments of learning are important, they must not be the only criteria by which we evaluate students' achievement. Formative assessments must be put in place to help teachers differentiate and improve instruction.

• **Provide the necessary resources and support for students who need to accelerate their academic learning through practices that include extended instructional time during the regular school day, an extended school day, Saturday and summer classes, and after-school programs with highly qualified and knowledgeable educators.**

- Educational standards for our youth in America have increased substantially over the last two decades, yet we have not provided students with the additional time or support they need to achieve those higher standards.
- Children in the United States have summers without school for up to 13 weeks, while most industrialized countries average only 7 weeks off. Shorter periods of time off can prevent learning loss by students, particularly those who do not have access to summer enrichment activities provided by families.
- Extra learning time provides an opportunity to reinforce the relevance of the subjects students are studying and to keep them engaged in school.
- The addition of high-quality teaching time is of particular benefit to certain groups of students, such as low-income students and others who have little opportunity for learning outside of school.

Addendum #1:

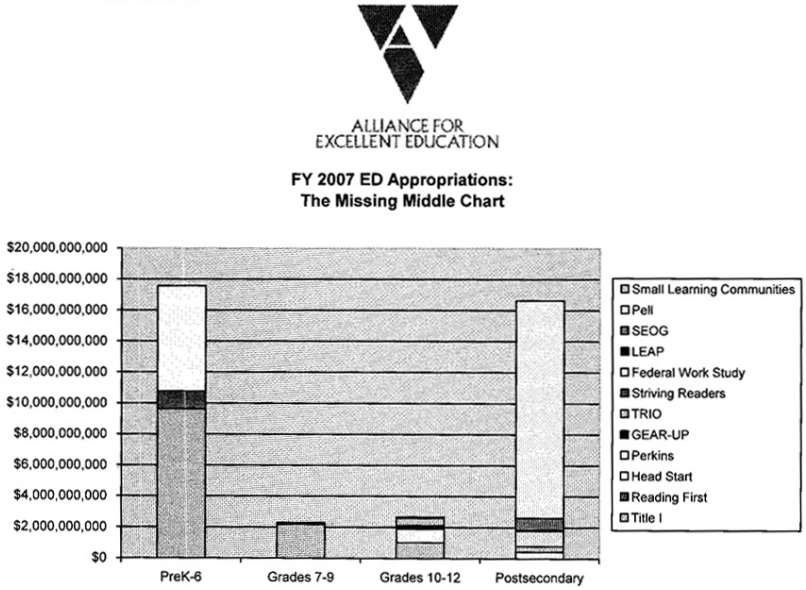

Figure 1: The Missing Middle Chart shows the Department of Education's program funding level. The government makes its smallest investment in secondary education.

[Whereupon, at 11:40 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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