

**FIXING NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND: INNOVATION  
TO BETTER MEET THE NEEDS OF STUDENTS**

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**HEARING**  
OF THE  
**COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION,  
LABOR, AND PENSIONS**  
**UNITED STATES SENATE**  
**ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS**

FIRST SESSION

ON

EXAMINING NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND, FOCUSING ON INNOVATION TO  
BETTER MEET THE NEEDS OF STUDENTS

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FEBRUARY 3, 2015  
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**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2015**

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

The Roundtable met, pursuant to notice, at 10:05 a.m., in room SH-216, Hart Senate Office Building, Hon. Lamar Alexander, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Alexander, Burr, Hatch, Cassidy, Murray, Mikulski, Casey, Franken, Bennet, Whitehouse, and Murphy.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR ALEXANDER

The CHAIRMAN. Good morning. The Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions will please come to order. This is the 27th hearing in the last 6 years on fixing No Child Left Behind or related elementary and secondary education issues. I hope we're not far from a conclusion about how to fix No Child Left Behind. We're 8 years overdue, which even by Senate standards is a long time, and I hope we're coming close to marking up a bill.

From the beginning of our work to try to look at the No Child Left Behind law, which was enacted in 2001, we tried to follow Representative George Miller's advice. He said, "Let's just fix the problems with it. Let's don't start from scratch and rewrite the whole law." That seemed like it made a lot of sense.

We tried to see if we could identify the problems, and there are really only a limited number. We identified eight or nine at that time. From my vantage point, generally speaking, we're not far from reaching a consensus on the problems where we haven't had a consensus.

Basically, the problem areas, the areas where we haven't got a consensus—or at least I don't see one at the moment—you might put under the umbrella of accountability. By accountability, I mean goals, standards, annual tests, disaggregated reporting of test results, and defining success or failure for teachers and schools as well as the consequences of that success or failure. Thanks to each of the seven witnesses here. You've addressed that in your comments.

Some of the things I just mentioned, we pretty much agree, like the need for a new goal. On other things, we still have some work to do, like on whether or not to keep the 17 annual Federal standardized tests.

This morning, we're holding a roundtable. Our aim is to make this a little different than a hearing. We have seven witnesses. We'll have several Senators coming and going, because there are other hearings going on. Our hope was that this would be more of a conversation than just a back and forth.

I'll conclude this short statement. I'll ask Senator Murray to make a statement, and then I'll begin the conversation. I'll ask Senator Murray to go next, and after that, Senator Burr, and we'll see how we do. If I were to suggest one word to the Senators and witnesses, it would be succinctness. If you'll try not to tell us every single thing you're doing the first time you speak, we'll have a chance to have a conversation about a variety of issues.

You're here at a very important time, because if I'm correct that we're not too far from a conclusion, you're coming at a time when you can actually help us figure out what to do.

The questions that Senator Murray and I asked you to address, which you did in your testimony, are: What is your State, district, or school doing to implement innovative approaches to improve academic outcomes for students, particularly low-income and at-risk students?

And, second, how can we improve the Federal law to encourage more States, districts, and schools to innovate?

When I say law, I should also draw attention to the regulations that have followed the law. For example, every State has to submit a plan to the Federal Government to receive its share of the \$14.5 billion title I program distributed to States for low-income children. That's about \$1,300 for every child who lives at or below the poverty line—11 million children. That's a lot of children and a lot of money.

These title I applications are reviewed by the Department of Education as well as by outside experts before you can spend a dime of that money. This is Tennessee's application for title I. I can barely lift it. It's got a lot of direction in it.

In addition to that, 42 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico are operating under waivers from the out-of-date and unworkable regulations in No Child Left Behind. To receive those waivers, States have to submit waiver applications. This is Tennessee's waiver application. This is an application for a waiver from this. That waiver application was 91 pages long with more than 170 pages of attachments. Since 2012, the State has had to submit eight different updates or amendments to its plan.

Tennessee happens to be a State whose goals are about the same as the U.S. Department of Education. In other words, they're doing about what the department wants them to do. Yet they still have this, waiver from this, and eight updates. In the case of Washington State, they have this revoked—this waiver. They're back operating under the No Child Left Behind rules.

In addition to all this, the U.S. Department of Education spends another \$9 billion to \$10 billion or so on about 90 different programs that are either authorized or funded under No Child Left Behind, with separate application and program requirements for those 90 different programs. These include Promise Neighborhoods and Investing in Innovation, which we'll hear about today.

The question we ask you is: Are we spending this money in a way that makes it easier or harder for you to innovate and achieve better academic outcomes? My own view is that the government ought to be more of an enabler and an encourager of innovation, not a mandater. The Federal Government has proved it can do a good job of being an enabler and an encourager.

For example, just this last year, we all supported the Child Care and Development Block Grant program that gives grants to States that allow parents to receive a voucher for the child care of the parents' choice so the children can attend school and the parent—well, so the parent can go to school or work.

Seven decades ago, the G.I. bill enabled World War II veterans to attend a college of their choice, helping them to become the greatest generation. Today, half our college students have Federal grants or loans that follow them to the colleges of their choice, enabling them to buy the surest ticket to a better job or life.

About 98 percent of the Federal dollars that go to higher education follow students to the school they attend—98 percent. K through 12 funding is very different. The only money that follows students to the school they attend that I can find is the school lunch program.

I'll now turn to Senator Murray for her comments, and then we'll begin our conversation.

#### OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR MURRAY

Senator MURRAY. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for holding this roundtable today. The topic today is innovation, and true to that, we're doing things a little bit differently with the seating and the format. I think that's good. I do want to thank all of our members and all of our participants today in this roundtable discussion. We really appreciate it.

You know, in our country, every student should have access to a quality public education regardless of where they're from or how they learn or how much money their parents make. If we're serious about making progress on that goal, we can't get stuck doing the same things we've done in the past. It's going to take some new approaches and increased investments to make sure students are ready to take on the jobs of the 21st century.

Across the country, teachers and school leaders and community partners and entrepreneurs are designing new ways to ensure that every student can graduate from high school, college and career ready. They're designing new literacy programs to reach our youngest learners. They're leveraging community resources to provide wraparound services to address the unique challenges that students and families face. They're giving students real life experience working in the STEM fields.

Supporting innovation in education is a national priority, and we have a responsibility at the Federal level to make sure our States and our districts and our schools feel empowered to design and implement and scale up innovative solutions, because we do have some very major challenges we need to overcome. We still see significant achievement gaps between groups of students. According to NAEP, 30 percent fewer students from low-income backgrounds

reach proficiency or higher on assessments compared with their peers from affluent backgrounds.

We know we're not training enough students with the skills they need for the jobs of the 21st century, particularly in the STEM fields. My home State of Washington boasts the highest concentration of STEM jobs in the country. I hear from employers who are having trouble filling jobs in those fields. By 2017, unless we act, employers in my State will not be able to find workers with the right kinds of skills to fill an estimated 45,000 jobs.

We also know that too many children across this country live in poverty today. Students from low-income backgrounds don't have access often to high-quality early learning opportunities or the healthcare or the nutrition that they need.

In the face of these challenges, teachers and schools along with districts and States across the country are designing solutions every day to meet students' needs and help them succeed. For example, in 2012, 12 school districts in Washington State teamed up and won a Federal grant to improve education from cradle to career. That project is now opening doors for more kids to attend preschool so they can start kindergarten ready to learn, no matter how much money their parents make.

Another program in my home State called STEM-LIT is aimed at increasing students' interest and achievement in STEM subjects. I know that our participants today will be able to share more details on projects they're working on to help our highest need students succeed. I really look forward to this conversation.

It's important to note that the Federal Government has an important and unique role to play in encouraging innovation by helping our schools and our districts and our States identify challenges, building partnerships between schools and community groups and developing and scaling up solutions to meet the needs of students and communities.

For example, the Federal Government can help invest in innovation that simply would not be possible at the State or local level. In many places, States and districts are already feeling a lot of tight budget constraints. Without dedicated funding for innovations in STEM or in literacy or arts or physical education or other priorities, there is no guarantee that States would invest in solutions that can help close achievement and opportunity gaps.

Another important Federal role is helping to scale up the innovative solutions that can work. The Federal Government can and should help schools and districts and States learn about innovations across the country and help them adopt successful ideas to meet their own communities' unique needs.

As we look for ways to fix No Child Left Behind, I'll be looking for better ways to spur innovation and give our States and our districts and schools the resources they need at the Federal level. I'm really proud that my State and our country have a history of leadership in innovation, and we need to find ways to continue bringing that leadership into our classrooms.

For this reason and for many others, Mr. Chairman, I hope that we can have conversations about a truly bipartisan approach in the HELP Committee to fixing this broken law.

Thank you.



The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Murray. A good start on our bipartisanship has been the witness list. All of our witnesses in our K through 12 hearings this year have been selected jointly, and that's given us a better variety of views and made them more useful.

Let me introduce the witnesses.

Senator Cassidy, would you like to introduce the witness from Louisiana?

#### STATEMENT OF SENATOR CASSIDY

Senator CASSIDY. As I was listening to Senator Murray's definition of the problem, poor access for low-income students to good teachers, lack of career training, et cetera, I said, "My gosh, Ken Bradford could be the only person who speaks today."

It is my pleasure to represent my fellow Louisianan, Ken, who brings immense expertise to this discussion. He began his career as a teacher in East Baton Rouge Parish in an inner city school—I happened to have been doing school-based clinic work there at the time—and a tough school with a high dropout rates and a lot of poverty.

At the school, he was a Sallie Mae New Teacher of the Year and a Teacher of the Year finalist. He has been on the front lines. Currently, he serves as the Assistant Superintendent in the Louisiana Department of Education's Office of School Opportunities, part of a team coordinating the implementation of college and career education initiatives, the Louisiana Course Choice program, and high school student planning.

The programs he oversees has helped Louisiana lead the Nation in advanced placement growth the past 2 years. Ken has led the implementation of Jump Start, Louisiana's new career education program, and expanded Louisiana's Course Access program to more than 20,000 student enrollments.

Ken is from Paulina, LA, which is in rural Saint James Parish, a graduate of LSU, a great Tiger, and served our country for 3 years in the U.S. Army, 5 years with the Louisiana National Guard.

Ken, thank you for your service. Thank you for being here today.

Mr. BRADFORD. Thank you, Senator.

The CHAIRMAN. I'll introduce the other witnesses.

Dr. Jim McIntyre has been Superintendent of Knox County Schools since 2008 in Tennessee. He has over 25 years of experience in education.

Thanks for coming, Dr. McIntyre.

Dr. Susan Kessler is the executive principal of Hunters Lane High School in Nashville. She is an award winning educator.

Dr. Kessler, thank you for coming.

Dr. Robert Balfanz is a research professor at the Johns Hopkins University School of Education Center for the Social Organization of Schools.

Ms. Henriette Taylor is the Community School Coordinator for the Promise Heights Program at the historic Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Elementary School in Baltimore.

Ms. Katie Duffy, chief executive officer of Democracy Prep Public Schools in New York, NY.

And Josh Davis, who is vice president of external affairs for the Delta Health Alliance.

Former Senator John Warner once told a new Senator that being a Senator was not difficult at all. All you had to do was stand up, start talking, and eventually you'd think of something to say. Some of the Senators weren't here when I said this. Senator Murray and I hope this will be a roundtable, more of a conversation, and I think the key word is succinctness.

What I'd like to suggest—I'm going to call on Senator Murray to make—well, let's see. I guess I'll ask a question, and then I'll call on Senator Murray. After that, I'll go to Senator Burr and Senator Franken. I hope what you do is initiate a conversation. If a Senator would like to interrupt and ask a question or make a comment—and I hope you'll do that succinctly—and if a witness would like to interrupt or ask a question, I hope you'll do that.

We know you all have wonderful programs in your communities. We've read about them and want to hear more about them. If we can focus in on the question and have more of a conversation, we'll continue that until about noon, and we'll see how that goes.

Let me try to begin. The testimony is excellent here. Let me ask a question from what you've said. I mentioned earlier that I believe that most of what we have yet to decide in fixing No Child Left Behind focuses around accountability and how we deal with that and what the proper balance is between the Federal and State governments.

Dr. McIntyre, you say—in answer to our question about how we can improve the Federal law to enhance innovation—fewer constraints, greater autonomy, a Federal role ensuring high standards but not dictating what the standards should be, a Federal role in ensuring an accountability system but not dictating what the accountability system should be—maintaining the annual assessment requirement, you say.

In reading Ms. Duffy's comments, she says maintain an annual testing requirement, but States and districts need to hold principals and superintendents accountable.

Ms. Taylor, you say preserve the annual assessments, but the Federal parameters should call both for State accountability systems.

Let me ask the three of you if you could succinctly say—if you were writing the law, what do you mean by that? How would you create the balance between Federal and State responsibilities in terms of accountability?

Dr. McIntyre, what don't you start.

**STATEMENT OF JAMES M. McINTYRE, JR., B.A., M.S., Ph.D.,  
SUPERINTENDENT, KNOX COUNTY SCHOOLS, KNOXVILLE, TN**

Mr. McINTYRE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and let me also thank you on behalf of Tennesseans for your extraordinary lifelong service to the great State of Tennessee and to the United States of America.

I'm delighted to be here with you today, and I guess as I think about the No Child Left Behind Act and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, it occurs to me that we sort of had it a little bit backward, in that what we were very tight on and had clear

mandates on were the structures and mechanisms of accountability, and what we were really loose on was the rigor of academic standards in the individual States.

I feel like we sort of need to flip that so that we are very rigorous—we make sure that there are rigorous academic standards in each and every State, and I’m not saying the Federal Government should dictate or suggest what those standards are, but simply that they ensure that there’s a level of rigor and high expectations for all students in every one of our States, and then allow the individual States some flexibility and autonomy around how they develop accountability systems and the structures to ensure that they meet those rigorous standards and expectations.

Senator, just in general—I think the concept that I would like to emphasize again and again—and I’m sure some of the other panelists will as well—is to maximize flexibility, to allow States, districts, schools, especially those who have proven success and a track record of great learning for students—to give them the flexibility to innovate and to do great work for our kids.

[The prepared statement of Mr. McIntyre follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JAMES M. MCINTYRE, JR., B.A., M.S., PH.D.

#### SUMMARY

#### **What are we doing to implement innovative approaches to improve academic outcomes for students?**

Several instructional and educational innovations have been embraced by the Knox County Schools in seeking to achieve the goal of *Excellence for Every Child* articulated in our 5-year strategic plan. These strategies have included:

- Embracing the concept of “multiple pathways to success” for students by developing academic options for students beyond the traditional comprehensive high school;
- Pursuing innovative practices in teacher professional development and support, such as those that have emerged from the TAP System;
- Developing a new Personalized Learning Environment (PLE) initiative that puts comprehensive instructional technology in the hands of our teachers and students at 13 schools to transform teaching and learning;
- Investing in our Community Schools effort that extends learning opportunities for students and addresses non-academic needs so that students can be prepared for success in the classroom; and
- Partnering with higher education to purposefully train and grow the next generation of effective school leaders through an intensive principal fellowship program.

These innovative practices have led to strong academic progress in the Knox County Schools, including a 10 percentage point increase in high school graduation rate since 2008.

#### **How can we improve the Federal law to enhance innovation?**

The Federal role in public education should be limited, but effectual. Recommendations as reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) is considered include:

- Fewer constraints and greater autonomy for States and districts in spending Federal dollars;
- A Federal role in ensuring high standards and rigorous academic expectations in each State, but NOT dictating what those standards should be;
- A Federal role in ensuring a reasonable accountability system in each State that is rationally related to the State’s goals and academic standards, but NOT dictating what that accountability system should be;
- Maintaining the annual assessment requirement, but allowing a small number of successful States and school districts pilot potentially innovative practices in assessment; and
- Continuing to invest in innovation through Federal “R&D” grant opportunities.

In short, the Federal Government should set high-level expectations and limited requirements for States around public education, but enable innovation, and allow broad flexibility in spending as well as absolute autonomy in educational strategy.

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Chairman Alexander, Ranking Member Murray, members of the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, and distinguished guests, my name is Jim McIntyre and for the past 7 years, I have had the privilege of serving as the superintendent of the Knox County Schools in Knoxville, TN. The Knox County Schools serves nearly 60,000 students in 90 schools and is a uniquely metropolitan school system, as we serve an urban, suburban and rural population all within a single school district. The Knox County Schools enjoys a long, proud tradition of educational innovation and student academic success. Prior to my appointment in Knoxville, I served as the budget director and later the chief operating officer of the Boston Public Schools in Massachusetts for 11 years.

I am truly honored to be invited to testify because of the importance of this dialog and the impact that it can potentially have on the learning and future success of the children of our great nation.

Before I begin my formal testimony, please allow me a moment of personal privilege to acknowledge and thank Chairman Lamar Alexander for his exceptional lifelong service to the great State of Tennessee and to the United States of America. Senator Alexander has been a strong advocate for high quality public education for literally decades, and his efforts are deeply appreciated by the Tennesseans he represents.

**What are we doing to implement innovative approaches to improve academic outcomes for students?**

We are here to talk about innovation, and I believe the remarkable work being done by our teachers, students, staff and principals in the Knox County Schools is a model of innovation that is working. Let me first say that we are blessed to reside in the State of Tennessee where the policy environment for public education is as flexible and advantageous as any in the country. Building a flexible statutory and regulatory landscape has been quite purposeful in the Volunteer State, and I believe this type of freedom allows for innovation to flourish.

What are we doing that we feel may be innovative? First, our visionary School Board has adopted a 5-year strategic plan, entitled, *Excellence for Every Child*, that articulates and embraces the concept of “**multiple pathways to success**.” We believe that every student can, and must, find academic success, but that it might take different options and pathways for individual students to get there. Therefore we have actively created alternatives to the traditional comprehensive high school.

For example, 4 years ago we opened (with the assistance of some Race to the Top seed funding) a new Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) magnet high school. With rigorous curriculum, a non-traditional setting, expert faculty, strong leadership, a wonderful school culture, and pervasive technology, the L&N STEM Academy has already been recognized as one of the top performing schools in the State of Tennessee.

In addition, this past fall, we opened a new Career and Technical Education (CTE) magnet school, called the Career Magnet Academy, on the campus of a local community college. The school focuses on four exciting potential career clusters, around which student learning is organized:

- Advanced Manufacturing
- Sustainable Living
- Teacher Preparation
- Homeland Security

With significant dual-credit and dual-enrollment opportunities built into the design of the school, we expect that most students will graduate from the Career Magnet Academy high school with an industry certification, significant college course work and/or an associate’s degree. This extraordinary partnership between a public school district, a community college, and leaders in industry has led to a school where students will make a seamless transition from high school to post-secondary education, to a meaningful and fulfilling career.

We have also put in place a variety of other engaging high-quality options, from magnet schools that offer unique learning opportunities organized around communications, the arts, and the International Baccalaureate program, to a very non-traditional school in a shopping mall storefront that caters to students who need additional flexibility and support. These “multiple pathways to success” have helped the

Knox County Schools to increase our 4-year high school graduation rate from 79.3 percent in 2008 to 88.7 percent for the class of 2014.

Of course, high quality options are only available if high quality instruction is happening in our classrooms. Therefore, the Knox County Schools has also embraced ***innovative practices in teacher professional development and support***. Several years ago our school system became acquainted with the TAP System (formerly the Teacher Advancement Program) which is a very successful teacher development and school improvement model. We began this exciting initiative with four TAP schools, and were able (with resources made available through the Federal Teacher Incentive Fund grant) to expand the formal TAP program to 18 schools in our district. The schools that we invited to participate in the TAP System were typically among our highest poverty and most academically struggling schools. The results have been very positive, and we have seen strong academic gains as a result of this productive engagement.

The expansion of the TAP System to 18 schools has been extremely beneficial, but our willingness to learn from this model and disseminate its best practices to all our schools has been truly transformational. In 18 schools we are implementing the formal TAP System, but now in all 90 of our schools, we have embraced the key strategies that make TAP successful, specifically:

- Teacher Leadership (Mentor, Master, Lead Teachers & Instructional Coaches);
- Teacher Collaboration (Professional Learning Communities, Teacher-Led Professional Development, Teacher Peer Excellence Groups, etc.);
- A Developmental Teacher Evaluation and Accountability System; and
- Strategic Compensation.

The implementation of these key tenets has led to a systematic approach to continuous improvement of instruction across our school system, and to high levels of student learning, engagement, and success. Some of these instructional strategies have been applied to support early literacy in our school system, and leading indicators are showing enhanced success in reading outcomes in the earliest grades. We are fortunate in the Knox County Schools to have extremely talented teachers who are willing to embrace any reasonable strategy that might help them better prepare our students for a bright future.

We also recognize that in order to truly meet our goal of *Excellence for Every Child*, we will need to better meet the individual learning needs of every one of our more than 58,000 students. We will need to support students who are struggling, continue to challenge students who are excelling, close achievement gaps, and help every one of our students achieve their full potential. It can sometimes be difficult to accomplish that level of differentiation in a traditional classroom of 25–30 students or more. Therefore, we have started an exciting new ***Personalized Learning Environment (PLE) initiative***, which has begun to transform teaching and learning in several of our schools with the support of comprehensive instructional technology.

Because we always grapple with limited resources in public education, we began our PLE initiative with a very small pool of dollars for technology, and so we conducted an internal competition called the School Technology Challenge (STC). Interested schools were asked to apply for the resources that would provide pervasive technology in their classrooms, and tell us how they would utilize that technology to significantly enhance teaching and learning. Teachers literally had to sign off on the school's application, signing a statement that they would agree to additional training, and that they would work to learn and integrate the technology into the classroom. Eleven schools were initially chosen from about 30 that applied.

Today, 18 months later, we have expanded to 13 schools where the instructional technology has been deployed as a 1:1 initiative (one computer for each student and one for each teacher) in grades 4–12 and a blended learning model in K–3. Surprisingly, this “technology initiative” really isn't about the technology at all: it is about what our teachers and kids can do when they have these teaching and learning tools available to them inside and outside of the classroom.

Just this past week, we hosted our first ever PLE showcase, and the instructional work that is happening in our PLE schools is truly remarkable. Teachers are able to be more creative, innovative and interactive with their instruction, and students are more engaged and their world and their learning resources have been greatly expanded. While we are still very early in this effort, leading indicators point to enhanced student learning and academic growth.

While these instructional efforts have been incredibly beneficial, we recognize that in some of our schools and for some of our children, there are distractions outside of the classroom that impact student learning inside the classroom.

Students who have health issues, family challenges, dental problems, or unmet social-emotional needs, for example, are typically not going to be as ready for success in school as their peers. We are concerned that some of these dynamics may contribute to pernicious gaps in achievement that are defined by income, race, disability and/or language.

To attempt to address these needs, we have begun what we call our ***Community Schools*** effort. This structure recognizes that the school truly is the center of the community, and that if we can extend learning opportunities for children, while also meeting the non-academic needs of our students and their families, our children will come to the classroom ready to learn and ready to succeed.

This innovative public-private partnership has been helped along by funding from the Federal 21st Century Schools grant. We have now implemented our Community Schools concept in eight of our schools. The program leverages community partners and local universities to support extended student learning opportunities, to offer fun and engaging educational activities, to ensure student health and dental needs are addressed, and to serve an evening meal to the entire family. The preliminary results are very promising, with some positive increases in attendance, some downward trends in disciplinary referrals, enhanced parent involvement, and encouraging academic progress.

Finally, none of these innovations will be effective without great school leadership. The role of the school principal has become increasingly challenging and complex, and at the same time increasingly important, as the principal has become the lynchpin in ensuring continuous improvement in our schools. Therefore in the Knox County Schools, we have been very intentional about how to identify and grow the next generation of great school principals. One of our most important strategies has been to partner with the University of Tennessee (Go Vols, Senator Alexander!) to create our ***Principal Leadership Academy***.

This highly selective, intensive 15-month principal preparation fellowship takes high potential aspiring principals, and pairs them with an outstanding and successful mentor principal with whom they work side-by-side 4 days a week. On the fifth day, the fellows attend classes and seminars at the University of Tennessee taught by both professors and practitioners, learning the theory and research behind effective school leadership.

At the end of this Leadership Academy experience, the fellows emerge from the program with a master's degree and/or a Tennessee principal license, the knowledge and skills needed to be an effective school leader, and the network and support to work through the tough challenges they will inevitably face. As school leadership has become one of the key levers of success in public education, this investment in future leaders is one of the most important strategies we have put in place.

All of these innovative strategies have been developed and implemented by the outstanding teachers, staff, principals and district leaders in the Knox County Schools, and supported by our student-centered School Board and our engaged community. While we still have much work to do, we have seen extraordinary academic results, including a nearly 10-point increase in our high school graduation rate, gains on annual State assessments, increases in the number of students taking and passing Advanced Placement (AP) exams, overall district value-added academic growth scores that are at the highest attainable level, and "straight A's" in achievement on our State report card for 2 years in a row.

### **How can we improve the Federal law to enhance innovation?**

I believe that the Federal role in public education should be limited but effectual. The reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) should set some important high level expectations and requirements, and then allow broad flexibility to support and foster educational innovation in our States, districts, and schools.

Perhaps first and foremost that means greater autonomy for States and school districts in spending Federal dollars. In particular, States, districts, and schools that have demonstrated success should have very few constraints and requirements. This autonomy should apply not only to alleviating restrictions in how money is spent, but also to providing relief with regard to paperwork, reporting, and compliance monitoring.

One extreme example of the kind of bureaucratic minutiae that sometimes drives Federal spending requirements, was the summary exit meeting of a title I district monitoring visit that I attended in recent years. This is when monitors visit the district to audit your compliance with Federal law and regulations. The bulk of the hour-long meeting to report the findings of the visit was literally spent discussing the need to improve our district's procedures for inventory tags on computers bought

by title I monies. Not a word was mentioned about how to improve teaching and learning with those resources.

I feel the type of flexibility needed is analogous to when I have an extraordinary school principal in place who is leading a school toward impressive success for all students. In those cases, really I feel that my job is to support that great leader and get out of her way.

Former U.S. Secretary of Education Dr. Rod Paige recently told me a story about how as a college football coach he had a defensive back on his team who later went on the Football Hall of Fame. I asked what Coach Paige had done to support his success. Dr. Paige said the young man was so talented that his "coaching" was actually holding him back, so the best thing Dr. Paige ever did for him was to stop coaching him and let him do his thing! Given some latitude, the player continued to learn, tried new strategies, and sometimes failed. In general, as a result of this freedom, this gifted athlete obviously excelled.

Similarly, there are schools, districts and States that are making such tremendous strides in student learning and success that they should be given the broad latitude to spend funds and innovate as they see fit. That's not to say they should not be held accountable, but let's let them take their innovation and success for a spin and see what kind of superlative results they can achieve for kids!

Simply put there are too many strings attached to Federal dollars. States, districts and schools should be allowed to spend Federal dollars in any way that clearly aligns with and supports their instructional strategies and academic goals. Then they should be held accountable to make progress toward meeting those goals.

In the Knox County Schools, we recently ran into a challenge where we couldn't co-locate an innovative and successful afterschool program with one of our community partners because of regulations associated with the 21st century school grant that said two programs that utilized those dollars could not be located in the same building. Talk about a detriment to collaboration and community engagement.

More flexibility on how Federal dollars can be spent would be very helpful. (. . . and more Federal dollars to be flexible with wouldn't hurt either!)

Second, I believe there should be a Federal role in ensuring that all States have both high standards and appropriate accountability systems. Now please hear me on this: I unequivocally believe the Federal Government should NOT be in the academic standards business, and should NOT suggest or require any particular set of standards. But, I do believe that children in Mississippi and Tennessee have the absolute right to high expectations and rigorous standards every bit as much as their counterparts in Minnesota and Massachusetts. This to me is an important civil rights issue and a fundamental question of fairness and opportunity.

Therefore, while the standards themselves should not be dictated, States having to demonstrate that they have adopted rigorous, college and career-ready standards is a reasonable requirement under the law. States should have *absolute autonomy* and discretion as to the content, substance, structure and requirements of those standards.

Further, I believe that States should have broad flexibility in developing accountability systems that help them to meet their educational goals. In fact, I think the Federal Government has gone too far in dictating the structures and requirements of State accountability systems. However, I do believe that there is a Federal role in ensuring that each State adopts an appropriate accountability system that is reasonably related to meeting its individual State educational objectives and achieving its academic standards.

I would like to see the Federal law allow more flexible and less punitive accountability systems. I would also like to see a mechanism to ensure that every State has created an accountability system which will lead to continuous improvement, developmental teacher evaluation and support, and a focus on ensuring high quality education for all students. The particulars of the accountability system should be left up to the individual States, but having a reasonable accountability system in every State should not be left up to chance.

We reach perhaps the thorniest issue: assessment. I believe the Federal requirement for annual statewide assessment of students has been a necessary pre-requisite to educational improvement, and should be continued.

If there had not been the annual assessment requirement, and particularly the information it provides, the remarkable story of the transformation of Tennessee schools simply would not have happened. Tennesseans saw a grave disparity between their State assessment scores and results on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), and decided to make our schools better. We have done so . . . the rigor of our standards has been radically raised; we have put in place an annual developmental teacher evaluation system; and we have seen the effectiveness of instruction and therefore student learning improve markedly.

Annual statewide assessments have allowed Tennessee to develop measures that give a more nuanced picture of student academic progress. Rather than focusing exclusively on academic achievement at a particular point in time, having annual summative assessments has allowed our State to also consider student academic growth over time. Further, having annual testing enables statewide comparisons and benchmarking, and allows teachers, principals, superintendents and State officials to have a true picture of how ALL students are progressing academically, which can inform instructional and educational decisions.

I don't believe that some of the concern and push back regarding perceived over-testing is a function of the Federal requirement. I believe it is more a function of the combination of Federal, State and local mandates and decisions that together may sometimes feel overwhelming. This is certainly a concern that we need to carefully examine and work to address at the State, local, and even school level, but I do not believe the Federal requirement needs to be discarded.

However, I do appreciate the concept of innovation that Senator Alexander has introduced, recognizing that perhaps there might be a small number of successful, high capacity States and districts that could potentially be given some ability to pilot innovative practices in assessment. There are lots of interesting ideas out there—some that I'm not sure I'm completely sold on yet—that deserve a chance to be tried on a limited basis so we can see if they work. From competency-based models, and grade-span assessments, to cohort analysis, and even statistical sampling, these concepts seem worthy of narrow, controlled experiments in student assessment.

I don't think the Federal Government should abandon the annual assessment requirement and leave assessment completely at the whim of States and districts. I believe the default should be annual summative statewide standardized assessments, but let's perhaps allow a very limited number of successful States and districts to try out some of these intriguing practices and determine if they are beneficial. It seems to me that this type of narrow "earned autonomy" strategy would be consistent with the spirit of innovation that we are discussing today.

Finally, in addition to removing barriers to innovation as discussed above, I believe there is an important role for the Federal Government in incenting, catalyzing and investing in innovation. While not universally acclaimed, competitive grant funding programs such as Race to the Top and the Invest in Innovation (I3) grants have fostered important conversations about how best to serve our children in public schools across America. Several of the innovations in our school system noted earlier, were initiated, funded or encouraged by Federal competitive grant opportunities. While in general I would ask for more flexibility for the "formula" grant funds that are sent to States and districts (the vast majority of Federal spending on education), I do believe that a continued modest Federal investment in "R&D" grant opportunities is appropriate and beneficial to fostering innovation in America's schools.

In summary, I believe the Federal role in public education should be very limited: setting high-level expectations for States and districts but allowing broad flexibility in spending and absolute autonomy in educational strategy. The reauthorization of ESEA should enable innovation and be focused on the general principles of fairness, opportunity, investment, support, flexibility, and local autonomy.

I conclude by thanking the Chairman, the Ranking Member and the committee for the opportunity to be a part of this critically important discussion about the future success of the United States of America. I am very proud of the innovative and successful educational work that we have been doing in the Knox County Schools, and believe that there is an opportunity in this reauthorization to structure the landmark Elementary and Secondary Education Act to allow for clear expectations and greater flexibility in order to facilitate innovation and excellence in public education across this great Nation.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. That was reasonably succinct. Let me go to Ms. Duffy and Mr. Bradford, and then I'll go to Senator Murray.

**STATEMENT OF KATIE DUFFY, CEO, DEMOCRACY PREP  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS, NEW YORK, NY**

Ms. DUFFY. Good morning. Thank you so much for having me here. This is a great honor. I will do my best to be succinct.

At Democracy Prep, what we have done is ensure that all of our principals at the school level have very clear goals about what our



expectations are for kids. Then we empower our principals to get there by any means that they deem appropriate and best suited for the kids that they are educating.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me ask you: How much of that does Washington need to tell you to do?

Ms. DUFFY. Indeed. I was going to share that I thought the same level of thinking would be appropriate for the reauthorization of ESEA, so setting clear mandates about what rigor looks like in standards and accountability and empowering schools and States to figure out the best way to get there through a proposal or some sort of approved mechanism that meets the rigor bar that the Federal Government would mandate.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Duffy follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF KATIE DUFFY

SUMMARY

**Democracy Prep Public Schools** is a growing network of free, open-enrollment, high-performing, no excuses public charter schools that share a goal of ensuring that all scholars “*Work Hard, Go to College, and Change the World.*” Democracy team of teachers and staff currently educates nearly 5,000 students in pre-kindergarten through the 12th grade across 14 campuses in Harlem and the South Bronx in New York, Camden, NJ and Ward 8 in Washington, DC. A pioneer in authentic **civic education** and **charter school turnaround**, DPPS achieves remarkable academic growth for all students, especially those with special needs. By proving that all students, regardless of where they are born or their initial academic performance, can achieve at extremely high academic levels, Democracy Prep seeks to transform not only the lives of our students, but also raise the expectations for public schools across the Nation and beyond.

The animating objective of the reauthorization of ESEA should be to hold a high bar of accountability in exchange for autonomy—the fundamental theory of education reform. Decisions about what works best for students should be made at the school level by caring adults who best know the students and the community. However, and this is an important caveat, this relinquishment to the most local level of control can only work with massive amounts of transparency, data reporting clarity, and necessary accountability for adults who fail to perform for students. To that end, I humbly suggest that the reauthorization of ESEA include: (1) *expanding the Charter Schools Program*; (2) *ensuring a portable funding model*; (3) *eliminating the Federal Highly Qualified Teacher definition*; and (4) *maintaining an annualized testing requirement while insisting on local implementation.*

Chairman Alexander, Ranking Member Murray, and esteemed members of the committee, thank you for inviting me here today to speak with you about the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. In my role as chief executive officer of Democracy Prep Public Schools, I have seen how many of the previous changes in the ESEA created the conditions under which thousands of children have gained access to high-quality public school seats in traditionally underserved communities. Nevertheless, Democracy Prep’s growth reflects the urgency of the challenges facing these children and we understand that broader systemic change within our Nation’s public education system is needed in order to produce this response at scale. This ESEA reauthorization presents an opportunity to strengthen the reform aspects of this essential law for our most vulnerable children while recalibrating the balance between Federal oversight and local decisionmaking to foster innovation and accelerate the expansion of effective schools.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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#### HISTORY AND MISSION OF DEMOCRACY PREP

The mission of Democracy Prep Public Schools is to educate responsible citizen-scholars for success in the college of their choice and a life of active citizenship. Now in our ninth year, we have grown from a handful of classrooms on the third floor of a public school in Harlem, NY, to 14 schools serving 4,400 students across Harlem, the South Bronx, Camden, NJ, and southeast Washington, DC. Despite the challenges attendant to such a rapid expansion, we have refused to compromise quality. In 2010, our flagship school was the top-ranked middle school on the New York City Department of Education Progress Report; in 2014, having expanded our model in response to student demand, we operated four of the highest growth middle schools in New York City and one of the highest growth middle schools in the State of New Jersey. Our ability to grow at this pace, and with quality, would not have been possible without support from the Federal Charter Schools Program, and for that, all of our students are grateful.

Democracy Prep's schools are uniformly composed of students who fall within one or more designated ESEA subgroup. By challenging students to do their best academically regardless of socioeconomic status, language proficiency, special education classification, or the academic level at which they enter the school, while providing support and accommodation for those who need it, we have continually strived to serve as a proof-point for what is possible in public education. Our students rise to the expectations we set for them—the higher our expectations, the higher the achievement of our students. Serving a student population of which only a single-digit percentage would be expected to earn a college degree, our flagship high school has now produced two classes of graduating seniors, 100 percent of whom were accepted to 4-year colleges. Democracy Prep graduates are enrolled in such schools as Brown University, Vanderbilt University, Brandeis, Boston College, Howard University, Lehigh University, Pitzer College, Fordham University and my alma mater, Mount Holyoke College, as well as the U.S. Naval Academy. This year's seniors have already received early acceptances to Princeton University, Wheaton College, Emory University, Smith College, Trinity College, and Dartmouth College.

#### TWO HIGHLIGHTED INNOVATIONS

*Civic Engagement:* Democracy Prep's mission of preparing active citizens is animated by the awareness that the founding purpose of public education was to prepare our Nation's youth for self-government. Democracy Prep places an explicit focus on preparing students to become civic leaders in their communities: creating articulate public speakers who are able to advocate effectively for themselves, their families, and their communities; developing avid, active, and aware adults who monitor current events; and empowering citizens who are able to navigate and influence complex social and political structures.

To advance these aims, Democracy Prep cultivates civic knowledge, civic skills, and civic dispositions in our students. By infusing civic and historical content into all of our curriculum, we work to build civic knowledge cohesively and coherently in a manner that allows our students to become skilled negotiators of conflicting information, engaged community members, critical thinkers, and confident leaders. By incorporating Socratic seminars, oral presentations, and group discussions and by thoughtfully reducing the amount of teacher talk-time in classrooms, we work to develop poised public speakers who not only *can* lobby their elected officials, deliver oral testimony on the record at public hearings, and participate in Get Out The Vote campaigns, but in fact *must* do so in order to receive a Democracy Prep diploma. Additionally, we have required each of our high school seniors to pass the civics portion of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Naturalization Test with a minimum score of 83 percent prior to graduation, and we were gratified last month to witness Arizona become the first State in the union to pass legislation requiring all high school students to demonstrate that baseline level of civic knowledge before being conferred a high school diploma.

*Turnaround:* The accountability regime established by No Child Left Behind has exposed long-festered achievement gaps and laid bare the inarguable fact that many public schools serving low-income students of color are failing those children. Public charter schools rightfully have not been exempt from such scrutiny. As strong charter school authorizers have increasingly utilized this data to make high-stakes renewal decisions, some have sought innovative alternatives that place at-risk stu-

dents in excellent schools by replacing failed management with those with a track record of success. Democracy Prep is proud to be such an option for schools that are failing, indeed pioneering the approach in 2011 with our first turnaround. *At present, over 50 percent of the students enrolled at a Democracy Prep school in 2014–15 are attending a school that, in a prior incarnation, had been identified—largely thanks to Federal accountability standards—as unlikely to provide them a reliable path to success in college, career, and citizenship.*

In 2011, Democracy Prep undertook New York State’s first charter-to-charter school turnaround at Harlem Day Charter School, a failing elementary school in east Harlem, that was ranked in the 3d percentile of all public schools in the city and the lowest performing school of any kind in Harlem. In 2012, the Progress Report ranked Harlem Prep in the 96th percentile of NYC schools and in the turnaround’s first year, Harlem Prep’s scholars exhibited the greatest growth in English Language Arts (ELA) test scores in New York State and the greatest combined growth in ELA and Math test scores in New York City.

One year later, Democracy Prep was once again tapped to turnaround another failing charter school. In 2013, Freedom Academy Charter School in Camden, NJ, which had been placed on probation and slated for non-renewal by its authorizer, placed in the 94th growth percentile statewide on its New Jersey School Performance Report during its first year as a Democracy Prep school. In the current school year, Democracy Prep-led charter-to-charter turnarounds are underway in the Bronx and here in Washington in Congress Heights.

Turnarounds are painstaking efforts fraught with unique and often unforeseeable challenges. Overhauling a failing culture that has taken root within a particular building is profoundly difficult. Democracy Prep’s approach to improving academic outcomes for the low-income, at-risk students who had previously attended requires the flexibility to implement a program responsive to the specific needs of our students while continuing to serve all of them.

In each of our turnarounds, we lengthen the school day and calendar year in order to provide extended literacy and math instructional blocks while building content-rich courses in music, speech, debate, art, physical education, design, and even Korean language into our regular academic program. We utilize student-level data (including nationally normed assessments, as well as individually administered reading inventories) to allow us to meet students where they actually are and to inform all decisions around instruction, staffing, and spending. We implement a rigorous, college-prep curriculum and offer targeted tutoring and individualized support after school and on Saturdays for students who need additional attention. We focus relentlessly on school culture and maintain high expectations, not just for our students, but also for the adults charged with creating and maintain high standards with consistency and fidelity.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ESEA

Democracy Prep’s success is predicated on a model in which decisionmaking is localized and schools are held accountable for demonstrating that students are acquiring the knowledge and mastering the skills they need to be active and engaged citizens. This model should guide the ESEA reauthorization effort. To encourage innovation, schools and districts that use this flexibility to implement empirically sound programs that consistently improve academic outcomes for students—particularly low-income and at-risk students—should be incentivized to bring those programs to scale.

Consequently, the overriding objective behind ESEA reauthorization must be *preserving and strengthening* accountability measures that enable policymakers to make informed decisions about the effectiveness of underperforming schools and the scalability of successful models, while *eliminating or amending* provisions that inhibit flexibility and innovation and that prioritize adult compliance inputs over student learning outcomes. The accountability and transparency measures embodied in NCLB have catalyzed desperately needed reform efforts over the past decade-and-a-half. High standards maintained at the Federal level have indeed had the desired effect of spotlighting schools, districts, and even States struggling to educate the future caretakers of our democracy.

*Expanding the Charter Schools Program:* Democracy Prep has consistently and purposefully demonstrated that higher spending does not equate to better results. Inadequate resources are not the challenge; Democracy Prep operates its schools on public funding, and our turnarounds have yielded significantly better outcomes than have the district turnaround efforts funded by School Improvement Grants. As a charter network, Democracy Prep receives a significantly lower per-pupil allocation than do the district-run schools that produce worse results for the same families,

often—by virtue of New York’s innovative approach to allocation of space in public school facilities—on the same floors of the same buildings.

Democracy Prep’s growth has depended on access to the Charter Schools Program funding. Nearly every school that Democracy Prep has opened has received the funding, whether via a State Education Agency or directly. In contrast, our turn-arounds are not generally eligible for SIG funding, due to overly unwieldy definitions of “failing.” The CSP program has allowed Democracy Prep to grow from an idea to a national proof point, with nearly 5,000 students on the path to college and citizenship in 2015.

Charter schools and charter management organizations should be eligible to apply for competitive Federal grant programs that are open to local educational agencies. This funding stream offers networks and schools like Democracy Prep an opportunity to equitable funding without private philanthropy.

*Ensuring a Portable Funding Model:* Democracy Prep strongly believes in a funding framework tied directly to the school students attend. Charter schools should receive the same per-pupil allocation for each student they educate, including all title funding. Any opportunity to ensure that every State has an equitable funding model for charter schools is of paramount importance.

*Eliminating the Federal Highly Qualified Teacher Definition:* Given the pace at which Democracy Prep has expanded, doubling in size as a network prior to the start of the 2014–15 school year, the need to identify, develop, and retain talented adults with the mettle to thrive in our demanding *no excuses* environment has become increasingly pressing. Such a challenge would be daunting enough were we simply assessing each applicant on his or her mission alignment, content knowledge, classroom management, lesson plan execution, team orientation, and ability to engage and inspire children. Layering on an additional bureaucratic consideration is unnecessary, as each State has its own licensing requirements that must also be met. This additional requirement does not enhance outcomes for students and is ultimately a compliance-based checkbox.

Although grappling with HQT designations is not preclusive for an operator like Democracy Prep, it may indeed be so for others who understand the importance of the work but cannot reconcile doing what they believe to be best for kids with creeping compliance obligations that thwart those efforts.

*Maintaining an annualized testing requirement with local implementation:* The students who have benefited most from having access to a seat in a Democracy Prep school would be the ones most ill-served by any dilution of Federal accountability measures, including any weakening of the annual testing mandate for grades 3 through 8. Testing drove demand for market-based reforms; parents who had previously lacked access to information about their children’s schools started advocating more insistently for higher quality school choices. Reverting to the previous regime, loosening the reins on annual testing, and depriving parents of this information would harm the same students who have benefited from access to schools like those operated by Democracy Prep.

The annual testing regime provides a mechanism to arm policymakers with the information they need to make high-stakes decisions about intervention, closure, and replication. In exchange for this meaningful and tough accountability for student outcomes, policymakers should relinquish decisionmaking authority around what to teach and what to test to the individual most intimately familiar with a specific environment. States and districts need to hold principals and superintendents accountable while empowering them to make curricular choices, structure their own internal assessment calendars, and determine who should be at the front of their classrooms.

In closing, the reauthorization of ESEA offers us all a chance to recommit to the most important aspects of public education—our children. I encourage this committee to recommend legislation that preserves policies that promote high standards and accountability for student outcomes. I also recommend considering revisions to those policies that support local decisionmaking authority. In fact, this is what Democracy Prep attempts to do in every school we operate. Decisions about what works best for students should be made at the school level by caring adults who know the kids and the community the best, but only when there is necessary accountability for adults who fail to perform for children.

Thank you for allowing me to join you today. It is most certainly an honor to speak with you today about the work of Democracy Prep and the work of ensuring that we have a bright future for every one of our children.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Bradford, what we’re really talking about here is if you keep the tests and you disaggregate the results, then

somebody has to decide what is success, what is failure, and what are the consequences. Who ought to decide that?

**STATEMENT OF KEN BRADFORD, ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT, LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, BATON ROUGE, LA**

Mr. BRADFORD. Senator, in Louisiana, we feel that we need to preserve the annual assessments, because it's the annual assessments that are helping us evaluate our innovative programs to determine those that are working. Our accountability system in Louisiana has evolved to a point now where it's not measuring just student grade level proficiency and high school graduation rates. In our accountability system, we are also measuring student attainment and advanced placement scores, student attainment of industry-based credentials.

It's annual testing with accountability that's aligned with State level goals, not necessarily singular programmatic goals of a particular program. We're seeing the results in Louisiana as a result of this by including this in our accountability, because this is a Louisiana goal.

We're closing the achievement gap. In the last 2 years, some of our most historically disadvantaged students are starting to see academic success in areas that they didn't previously do, and I'll give two examples.

Advanced placement—in the last 2 years, we have seen a 137 percent increase of African American students in Louisiana taking the advanced placement exam. We've seen an 89 percent increase in African American students attaining a 3 or higher. We've led the Nation 2 years in a row.

Relative to the ACT exam, which is part of our accountability formula, we now offer the ACT to every junior in the State of Louisiana.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Bradford follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF KEN BRADFORD

SUMMARY

*Louisiana Course Access*

Louisiana's education legislative reform package in 2012 included student Course Access legislation. Course Access (called Course Choice in our State) enables Louisiana families and students to select from hundreds of online and face-to-face courses not traditionally offered by high schools and middle schools. Course Access makes sure that all students have access to the courses they need to succeed in college and career.

*Louisiana's Jump Start Career Education Model*

Jump Start is Louisiana's new program for school districts, colleges, and businesses to collaborate in providing career courses and workplace experiences to high school students. Through Jump Start students can earn industry-valued credentials that qualify them for entry-level employment in high-wage career sectors. Course Access courses help Louisiana students attain these Jump Start industry credentials.

*Appropriate Federal Role*

Looking ahead to the next iteration of the ESEA, many at the State and local level agree that the Federal role in a range of education policy decisions should be reduced. We would also agree that there are certain things that the Federal Government does well, including providing support for research and innovation.

*Coherent Planning*

There is a need for a simpler Federal framework that provides a coherent plan for schools and clear direction for States. States need to be able to focus on achieving large statewide goals versus singular programmatic goals.

*Funding Flexibility*

States need flexibility in managing the way Federal funds are allocated. States should be given the authority to combine and utilize Federal title funds to meet agreed-upon goals. Progress starts with allowing educators the independence to innovate subject to accountability standards. Congress should streamline grant requirements. ESEA should give States greater flexibility to use Federal funds through competitive grants that allow districts, charter schools and non-profits to scale their most innovative practices but allow States to define which innovations best serve their students.

*Preserve Annual Assessments*

While innovation and testing may seem anathema to one another, in fact measurement is what allows us to determine which innovative programs work. Measurement also allows us to terminate low-performing Course Access course providers, while expanding the number of students with access to great teachers, great courses and great schools. Annual assessments enable us to track performance. Course access, school choice, and career education all rely on valid, regular measurement.

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Chairman Alexander, Senator Murray, and members of the committee, I thank you for the opportunity to be a panel member today and provide some thoughts on innovative approaches to improved academic outcomes for students. This is an extraordinary opportunity that Congress has in considering Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), re-authorization.

Our State has attempted innovative approaches to a number of its most significant problems. These include turning around low-performing schools and the Recovery School District in New Orleans, as well as early learning and our Early Childhood Networks.

I am here to share two specific examples from within my area of work, College and Career Opportunities. In our State, only 20 percent of adults have a 4-year degree and only 8 percent have a 2-year degree. Incremental growth will not solve the problem. We need scalable solutions like the Louisiana Course Access program and the Jump Start Career Education Initiative.

## LOUISIANA'S JUMP START CAREER EDUCATION MODEL

For generations our country has perpetrated a stigma against career and technical education, fearing—in some cases rightly—that apprenticeships and courses taught in workplace settings were becoming cellars to which the most disadvantaged students were perpetually consigned.

That stigma has had an unfortunate cost, perhaps nowhere more than in Louisiana, a State rich in natural resources, offering abundant job opportunity to its citizens. Too often a singular focus on the 4-year university degree as the lone path to prosperous work has steered Louisiana graduates away from lucrative job opportunities in technical fields requiring a 2-year associate degree or a workplace certification. In turn the economic gap has grown between those with a university degree (only 20 percent of Louisiana's population) and those with no degree or credential at all.

Jump Start is our State's new and unprecedented career education program that calls for school districts, colleges, and businesses to collaborate in providing career courses and workplace experiences to high school students, certifying them for the career fields most likely to lead to high-wage jobs. Every district in the State has launched Jump Start allowing them to continue their education after high school, certifying them for the career fields most likely to lead to high-wage jobs.

Jump Start will ensure Louisiana students have access to state-of-the-art facilities, equipment, and professionals to prepare during their high school schedules for careers in Louisiana's high-growth job sectors. Regional Jump Start teams comprised of Schools, Business and Industry, Post-Secondary institutions, State Economic Development and Workforce Commission representatives will identify career opportunities important specifically to each region of the State, for which students may earn industry credentials. By offering credentials that give graduates a leg up in Louisiana's economy of today and tomorrow, Jump Start will prepare our high school graduates for a productive adulthood. Jump Start closes this opportunity gap

by offering not just an alternate path to prosperity and employment, but a pathway for every young adult.

First, Jump Start ends the longstanding practice of labeling students entering high school as “career” or “college”. All students—from those with perfect ACTs to those with significant cognitive disabilities—can pursue a career pathway under Jump Start. These pathways, designed by teams of experts in every region of the State, involve courses taught in high schools, community colleges, and workplaces—no longer are the bureaucrats in Baton Rouge prescribing the course sequences and pathways. They culminate in credentials that will allow graduates to continue their professional training after high school, either in community colleges or within workforce training programs.

Last year the State Legislature and Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) created a Career Development Fund to finance the expansion of technical courses in the high schools and a Course Access Allocation to finance course providers outside of high schools, including community colleges.

Louisiana rewards high schools in their letter grade ratings when students achieve industry credentials. Advanced students earning construction trades certifications, for example, generate just as many points for their schools as do students passing challenging Advanced Placement tests.

In an effort to increase our instructional capacity in the State we train career educators statewide at summer academies to receive the professional they need to help students achieve their industry certifications. Additionally, the State has implemented teacher certification policies to facilitate industry professionals’ entry into teaching positions, giving greater credit to workplace experience and expertise while providing these workplace experts with essential training on instructional strategies.

#### LOUISIANA COURSE ACCESS

Ensuring our students have access to the appropriate coursework is necessary to make Jump Start work. Louisiana’s education legislative reform package in 2012 included student Course Access legislation. Course Access (called Course Choice in our State) enables Louisiana families and students to select from hundreds of online and face-to-face courses not traditionally offered by high schools and middle schools. In this age of innovation in education, we can’t accept these limitations on the growth of our children. If Louisiana and the rest of the Nation are to compete in the 21st century, we have to get beyond the limitations of the traditional schoolhouse and provide each student with an education that meets with their vision of life beyond 12th grade.

Course Access is a critical component of *Louisiana Believes*, our State’s plan to allow every student a pathway to college and a professional career. These Course Access courses offer students opportunities to pursue college coursework, Advanced Placement courses, and career training that prepare them for opportunities after high school. Louisiana high school students now have access to hundreds of dual enrollment courses at the State’s 4-year universities. Course Access also allows middle and high school students the ability to earn course credits via the Internet. The State has over 20 online providers that offer an array of courses geared to preparing students for 2-year and 4-year college.

Students are also gaining access to career courses leading to valuable Industry-Based Credentials through the Louisiana Community and Technical College System campuses. There are thousands of student enrollments through the LCTCS including Welding, Occupational Orientation and Safety, Oxyfuel Systems, NCCER Core Training (construction), General Electrical System Diagnosis, and Introduction to Industrial Instrumentation. Other course providers include LSU, districts, Florida Virtual School, Sparx Welding.

Louisiana students now have access to:

- Foreign language courses impossible to staff and offer in rural areas;
- Career and technical education courses culminating in industry-valued certifications for high-paying jobs (e.g., welding);
- AP and college courses to get a head start on a college degree (e.g., Bard College offers liberal arts seminars for high school kids in New Orleans);
- ACT prep courses to increase chances of qualifying for a State scholarship; and
- Math courses using Khan Academy.

Louisiana’s Course Access legislation passed with—and continues to enjoy—bipartisan support. We’re seeing broad support for course access around the country, from Texas to Utah, Florida, Rhode Island and Minnesota.

As a result of these programs Louisiana has seen nation leading results the past 3 years:

- For the 2014–15 school year, students have enrolled in 20,000 courses to date through Course Choice, an increase from 2,362 course enrollments in the 2013–14 program pilot.

- Thousands of students in Louisiana are currently pursuing a high school diploma through 1 of 34 approved Jump Start graduation pathways. Jump Start Regional Teams are currently developing 20 additional pathways to submit for approval this spring.

- Data from the College Board shows the number of Louisiana students scoring three or higher on Advanced Placement (AP®) exams, earning college credit, has increased 24.6 percent, the highest in the Nation from 2013 to 2014. The rising number of students participating in AP® is leading to dramatic increases for African American students, who have realized increases of more than 30 percent in tests scoring three or higher from 2013 to 2014, and 89 percent increase over the last 2 years. Likewise, the number of African American high school students taking AP® tests increased 137 percent over the last 2 years.

- Research from Columbia University shows that many students who otherwise had not planned to take the ACT, especially those from low-income backgrounds, score unexpectedly well when given access to the test. Since Louisiana began requiring all public high school students to take the ACT series in 2013, the State has seen a dramatic increase in the number of seniors earning qualifying scores for a State scholarship. The number of seniors earning a qualifying score has increased by more than 6,000 since 2012.

#### APPROPRIATE FEDERAL ROLE

Looking ahead to the next iteration of the ESEA, many of us at the State and local level would agree that the Federal role in a range of education policy decisions should be reduced. We would also agree that there are certain things that the Federal Government does well, including providing support for research and innovation.

I know I speak for Superintendent White and the rest of my colleagues from Louisiana when I express my hope that a reauthorized ESEA will support States' ongoing work with 21st-century models of teaching and learning while also finding ways to stimulate new innovations that can ensure all of our students have access to the world-class education they deserve.

#### COHERENT PLANNING

There is a need for a simpler Federal framework that provides a coherent plan for schools and clear direction for States. States need to be able to focus on achieving large statewide goals versus singular programmatic goals.

Louisiana State's plan "Louisiana Believes," is built on the premise that all children can achieve high expectations for learning and that those closest to children—parents and teachers—know better than government how to help students achieve those expectations.

Louisiana's plan has guided our State's efforts to strengthen the State accountability system, providing increased clarity for parents and educators in the form of an A–F school grading system. This accountability grading system promotes standards and assessments that align with our ultimate goal of preparing every student for success in college and career, including factoring in Advanced Placement results, dual enrollment credit, and career education Industry-Based Certificates aligned to high-wage high-demand jobs.

#### FUNDING FLEXIBILITY

States need flexibility in managing the way Federal funds are allocated. States should be given the authority to combine and utilize Federal title funds to meet agreed-upon goals. Progress starts with allowing educators the independence to innovate subject to accountability standards. Congress should streamline grant requirements. States should propose how to distribute Federal dollars in ways that align with their own funding formulas. ESEA should give States greater flexibility to use Federal funds through competitive grants that allow States, districts, and non-profits to scale their most innovative practices but allow States to define what innovation truly is rather than restricting the applications.

#### PRESERVE ANNUAL ASSESSMENTS

While innovation and testing may seem anathema to one another, in fact measurement is what allows us to determine which innovative programs work. Measurement also allows us to terminate low-performing Course Access course providers, while expanding the number of students with access to great teachers, great courses



and great schools. Annual assessments enable us to track performance. Course access, school choice, and career education all rely on valid, regular measurement.

The Federal parameters should both call for State accountability systems that commit to results, especially among historically disadvantaged students, and allow States to innovate on measures themselves. States need flexibility in designing and implementing State-developed accountability systems that will remain committed to transparent reporting of data for all students and focus on supporting on the lowest-performing schools.

In Louisiana, our accountability system has evolved to include not just grade level proficiency and graduation rates, but also real-world college and career attainment measures such as Advanced Placement results, dual enrollment credit, and Industry Based Credential attainment. Federal parameters should compel States to design systems in line with these principles, but States should have freedom to craft measures.

The CHAIRMAN. You know, everybody's got great programs here. What we'd like to know is how do we write this law to have the programs. Let me go to Senator Murray.

Senator FRANKEN. I'm sorry. I just wanted to ask a question, which is you've led the Nation in AP—what did you lead the Nation in?

Mr. BRADFORD. Advanced placement growth.

Senator FRANKEN. Growth.

Mr. BRADFORD. Louisiana was 50th in the Nation in advanced placement participation and students attaining 3s or higher. Now Louisiana has moved up, and we have—two years in a row, we have increased the number of students attaining a 3 or higher on an advanced placement program—25 percent.

Senator FRANKEN. Where are you now?

Mr. BRADFORD. We have moved to 38th in the most recent college board report.

Senator FRANKEN. Thirty-eighth.

Mr. BRADFORD. I'll tie it back to what Senator Alexander was saying, that where we're going is we would like the States to have that flexibility to set programmatic goals, and then we need the annual assessments so we can see if what we are doing innovation-wise, we are seeing results with.

Senator FRANKEN. You've led the Nation in growth of minority students who have taken the AP and gotten a 3.

Mr. BRADFORD. We have led the Nation in the number of students attaining a 3 or higher. We have increased by 25 percent each of the last 2 years. The subset of demographics of students—with African American students over the last 2 years we've had an increase of 137 percent taking the exam and 89 percent achieving a 3 or higher.

Senator FRANKEN. OK. I don't want to belabor this. So we'll stop.

The CHAIRMAN. Thanks, Al. That's very helpful.

Dr. Kessler has a comment before we go to Senator Murray.

**STATEMENT OF SUSAN KESSLER, EXECUTIVE PRINCIPAL,  
HUNTER LANE HIGH SCHOOL, NASHVILLE, TN**

Ms. KESSLER. I support maintaining standardized assessments at some level. We must remember that what is the most important thing that we do with children is we teach children. Not the most important thing that we do is testing children.

There really has to be an inverted pyramid, where the people who are closest to children are the most important voice in any kind of amendment to this legislation, because teachers and prin-

cipals and district personnel—these are the people who stir the drink in education. We want to be able to test students to see where we are, but to use that only as one benchmark in a portfolio type approach.

Kids are more than a test score, and how a student performs on 1 day, on one test, should not be used to determine whether or not that child is failing, the school is failing, the district or the State. We don't want to continue to have an over-emphasis on standardized testing. What our emphasis should be on is high-quality teaching.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Kessler follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SUSAN STONE KESSLER

SUMMARY

**What is your school doing to implement innovative approaches to improve academic outcomes for students, particularly low-income and at-risk students?**

- Focus on school climate, creating a welcoming environment for students and having organized structures for communicating with students, parents, staff members, and business/community partners.
- Implementation of the Academies of Nashville, a career academy concept modeled after the *10 National Standards of Practice* from the National Career Academy where every child selects an academy based on a career pathway that creates smaller learning communities within a large high school.
- Structuring the school day to provide one lunch for students to participate in clubs, get tutoring, use computer labs, eat lunch, socialize and develop relationships with peers and adults.
- Revolutionize learning by providing a Blended Learning model where all students are taught in a hybrid structure of both in person and online instruction using technology provided by the school and personal devices owned by students.
- The combined innovations have produced higher student attendance rates, lower disciplinary incidents, and have made our school the most improved in students earning proficient and advanced status on standardized tests over the past 3 years when compared to the 11 other zoned high schools within our district.

**How can we improve the Federal law (No Child Left Behind) to encourage more States, districts, and schools to innovate?**

1. Revise the Federal law to show a commitment to the whole child including a change in the use of testing to be developmentally appropriate and only one part of a child's, school's, and district's assessment.
2. Incentivize States and communities to offer universal, free pre-K to all communities.
3. Include mental health support offered in schools during the school day, pre-K-12.
4. Incentivize the community schools model.
5. Invest in the professional development of educators.
6. Incentivize States and communities to allocate funding for anytime internet access for all.

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As a career public school educator, I am honored to appear before you today to share my experiences implementing innovative approaches for students. I would like to thank Senator Alexander, Senator Murray and the members of the committee for the opportunity to participate in the panel and contribute to the roundtable discussion about innovative approaches to improving education. My suggestions about fostering innovation in schools is based on my experiences at Hunters Lane High School within Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools (Tennessee) over the past 7 years. By improving the school climate, focusing on communication with key groups and implementing innovations such as one lunch, the academy small learning community model, and blended learning, we have personalized our school to a place where student engagement is the central focus. This engagement has produced higher student achievement as measured by standardized tests, student attendance

rates, reduction of disciplinary incidents and increased post-secondary education rates.

**What is your school doing to implement innovative approaches to improve academic outcomes for students, particularly low-income and at-risk students?**

I became principal of Hunters Lane High School, an urban high school in Nashville, TN in July 2008. Our school was in “corrective action” status due to failing to meet benchmarks for several consecutive years under No Child Left Behind. As a title 1 school with over 80 percent of the student body receiving free or reduced lunch, our students come to us with many academic deficits caused by unstable housing, frequent changing of schools resulting from a high mobility rate, lack of parental engagement, and violence within the community. It has been our philosophy to approach education in a systemic way by providing supports to parents and families as well as students.

Over the past 7 years, we have been able to make many improvements as we have worked to turnaround our school. Our efforts have fallen into the following categories.

SCHOOL CLIMATE

*Reduction of Student Disciplinary Incidents*

In 2008, disciplinary incidents were out of control and there was little faith in the school within the community. We immediately re-instituted the “fun” things about high school that had been removed; pep rallies, dances, spirit weeks and informed the students that each one would be held accountable for his or her own actions, rather than a group penalty. What occurred was the “ultimate paradox” where we actually regained control of the school by giving more freedom to students. There was an immediate reduction in disciplinary incidents that has continued each year so in 2014 there were 57 percent fewer disciplinary incidents than in 2008.

*Communication with Key Groups*

A principal has many groups of stakeholders. When I was appointed in 2008, I knew that I needed to invent a way to connect with 1,700 students if I was to be successful in changing the school from a place where group fighting and gang problems were common place to a school where academic progress and being a community of learners was valued. I gave every student my personal cell phone number to “text” me. Students were intrigued by the novelty and tested me to see if I would, indeed, respond to every text as I promised. Students texted dress code questions and suggestions and would warn me if they “heard” there would be trouble at dismissal. Students immediately began to approach me in the hall and say, “I am the one who texted you about x” and by responding to each student, my credibility as a leader was established. Parents began texting me as well, as the banner with my phone number hangs prominently above the main office in the school lobby. One of the concepts I emphasize to principals when I talk about this method of communication is that this is not another thing for principals to do; it is simply a smarter thing.

To increase parental involvement and input, we developed the Parent Academic Achievement Team (PAAT) which is designed to provide input and ideas from a parent’s perspective about how our school is serving our students. While we use annual anonymous surveys as part of our formal assessment process, the opportunities to get parents and the principal around the same table to talk about the quality of education has provided valuable insight to me and a great opportunity to build a communication pipeline for parents.

To communicate with school staff, we developed the HAWD? (How Are We Doing?) process that seeks to provide an avenue for honest dialog about the things happening within our school. I conduct the process four times a year. The HAWD? system has provided a structured method for collecting information and for fostering trust among professionals. It allows school staff to collaboratively solve our problems.

In the spirit of gathering groups to meet to improve our school climate, we launched the G2BAW (Great to Be A Warrior) team. This group of students completed an application process designed to ensure a representative sample of students different from student government who would have a chance to weigh in about improvements to our school. Students have found these meetings that are scheduled twice per month to be a powerful example of how to be active within our democratic system.

*Cultivating Business Partnerships*

Under the academy model that all zoned schools in Nashville use, we have a specific, aligned, authentic priority to develop meaningful business partnerships. These businesses do not simply donate supplies under the typical model; rather, they are genuinely invested in the academic programming within our schools. We have over 30 partners that are aligned with our academies to provide our students with real world professionals in the field who work alongside our teachers to teach about the industry they represent. They also lead field trips and conduct teacher externships and student internships.

## INNOVATIVE PRACTICE

*Academy Concept*

Our district embraced the small learning community concept almost a decade ago, but the Academies of Nashville, a now, nationally recognized model for organizing large high schools began to thrive 6 years ago. Hunters Lane is 1 of 12 high schools that are organized into career-based academies where teachers work in teams with one counselor and one assistant principal to personalize the learning environment, provide more intensive instruction, and connect real world business professionals to assist in teaching the curriculum through organized partnerships. Our academy concept follows the 10 National Standards of Practice from the National Career Academy Model<sup>1</sup> with fidelity. Every student selects an academy based on his or her particular interests.

Each of our academy teams has business partners who have signed a formal agreement to support our students in their career academies. I work alongside our academy coach to recruit and explain our school vision and focus to our larger business partners. One of the aspects of all of our academies that we are most proud of is their feeling of social responsibility and their great desire to give back to our school and community.

*One Lunch*

Six years ago we restructured our schedule to allow the entire student body to go to lunch at the same time, just as college campuses do. Our students—all 1,700 of them, in grades 9–12 go to lunch. Students may eat in the cafeteria, at one of the picnic tables in the courtyard, or in a hallway. We also use this period to engage students in activities of their choice, to promote school spirit, and to encourage interactions between students and faculty—all steps that have proven to forge positive connections throughout the school. This also provides time for intramurals, student performances, tutoring, club activities, and even detention for those who get into trouble. We have an internet café and several computer labs available for students who need to use technology they may not have access to at home.

*Blended Learning*

In 2012–13, my district decided to implement blended learning for all advanced classes at the high school level. We are an International Baccalaureate (IB) school so our advanced placement (AP) and IB classes were taught under a hybrid model where students receive and participate in instruction in both an online and traditional in-class experiences. Almost immediately, my teachers began reporting that the blended model was providing higher levels of student engagement. When students become engaged with the curriculum and do their work, authentic learning takes place. The blended learning structure was so compelling and powerful that the teachers began selling other teachers on this idea and we decided to offer all classes under the blended environment during the 2013–14 academic year. Now that we are in our third year of using blended learning, our students are very accustomed to going to the online classroom to view video clips, download presentations and even take tests. We have technology that students can check out of the library to take home and we have many computer labs available at lunch. However, we have found that most students prefer to use their phones to access the online classroom. I would love to see anytime internet access offered across the country so those who live in poverty can have an expectation to internet, just as we enjoy clean drinking water as an expectation in our country.

What blended learning allowed us to do was access the learner who is ignored in the traditional classroom; the technological learner. While we have learned to address the needs of visual, auditory and tactile learners, the technological learner, typically has his needs ignored. In the blended environment, this type of student thrives. They are active in online discussions and are motivated to learn the curriculum at a deeper level. It is not unusual for my students to continue online discussions about the content into the weekend or late into the evening because they

are connected to one another and their teacher in a structure that is safe and feels very natural to them. As easy as the world has made online shopping, banking and online communicating, the teenagers of today want to learn online as well.

## RESULTS

### *Attendance*

Our school level attendance has increased nearly every year since 2008 with a low of 91 percent to a high in 2014 to 92.3 percent. The increases in attendance have been a direct result of the focus on social emotional learning, commitment to making our school a positive place and a haven for students and have resulted from the academic progress that students have seen that they can make.

### *School Level Performance on Standardized Assessments*

In Tennessee, we have increased our standards and have added more high stakes courses at the high school level. Among our six high stakes courses, we have increased the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced each year in five out of six courses. Of all of the zoned schools within our district, Hunters Lane has had the highest 3-year average of gains in students being proficient and advanced. These gains have been a direct result of using student performance data to guide our instruction. Our teachers of core subjects meet with the administration weekly to review student performance data, plan interventions, and review student progress and this continual assessment has helped to push our students forward.

### *Post-Secondary Education Rates*

Thirty-eight percent of the high school graduates in Tennessee go on to post-secondary education. We are very proud that our post-secondary education acceptance rates have surpassed 70 percent every year for the past 3 years. In May, 75 percent for the class of 2014 was accepted into the college of their choice with those students earning nearly \$4M in scholarships.

### **How can we improve the Federal law (No Child Left Behind) to encourage more States, districts, and schools to innovate?**

According to a January 16, 2015 article published in the *Washington Post* by Lyndsey Layton<sup>2</sup> “Majority of U.S. public school students are in poverty” the majority of pre-K through 12th grade public school students have financial circumstances that make them extremely vulnerable. This startling statistic means that we have to reconsider the demands and expectations of what we want schools to accomplish in order to prepare high school graduates to be well-equipped to meet the demands of being intelligent, educated contributors to our communities.

There is an old adage that states, “What gets measured, gets done.” There is no place where that is more evident than in schools. No Child Left Behind brought some improvements to education in the sense that we all began tracking our data, working to ensure equity between different groups of students, publishing results for families and communities to review and an understanding that “every kid counts” in terms of test scores. Unfortunately, the over reliance on test scores has led some schools to be so concerned with testing, that what is getting done, is in essence, only what is getting measured. This is one of the most destructive unintended consequences of a well-intentioned public policy in the history of our country. The reality is, kids are more than a test score. When parents take children to the pediatrician, physicians also track data on the child and report to parents that their baby is measuring in a certain percentile for height and weight and head circumference. They use this data to evaluate if the child is showing signs of an undiagnosed illness or developmental problem or to report that the child is developing as expected. Regardless of the data the parent receives, the parent loves the child anyway. Parents are not concerned with helping a child grow so he can measure in the 60th percentile rather than the 30th percentile. The parent wants growth for the purpose of the child developing, evolving into who the child will become instead of who the child is now. This should be the only purpose of testing.

Unfortunately, we have used testing to blame children, communities, teachers and schools and have been quick to condemn schools as failures or successes based on a child’s performance on 1 day or a series of days when we know that child development is a continually moving target and testing is merely a “snapshot” of a child’s progress that should be used as part of a bigger picture of the child’s development. Rather than evaluating schools and student achievement on a test on 1 day or week, adopting a more summative, portfolio approach, would give students an opportunity to demonstrate what they know, rather than a standardized test that only measures what they have not learned yet.

There is a place for testing and I do not advocate the abolishment of standardized assessment; however, it must be part of a comprehensive view of a child's development and one part of what makes a teacher and school successful. If we truly want schools to be centers of innovation where school personnel can develop new answers to problems then we must re-focus our emphasis on serving students rather than testing them. Until we stop publishing lists of so-called good school or failing schools, we will not provide an environment where educators have freedom to innovate, to learn from best practice, to approach things differently, because they are held captive by the fear of how every initiative will impact test scores.

Innovation and creativity result from safe environments. When educators are given an opportunity to think meaningfully about what students need, rather than on how to get them to score well on a test, we will begin to see an explosion of innovation. In my 21-year career, I have worked in two Tennessee districts within the same 50-mile radius. I have served children in six different schools including schools classified as rural, inner city, suburban, affluent and poor. What these communities need is flexibility to do what is in the best interest of their youth and as amazing as it sounds, there are significant differences in what children need who are literally only miles away from one another. No Child Left Behind needs to allow communities to decide how to spend funding to close achievement gaps and advance student achievement, rather than schools and districts trying to fit their square needs into circular funding holes.

If we want to serve children, particularly children who live in poverty who comprise the majority of those in public schools then we need to follow the tenets of best practice in child development and provide an education that meets the needs of children wherever they are. There is research-based, proven programming that should be incentivized through No Child Left Behind to help communities advance including the following six suggestions:

(1) *Commitment to the Whole Child*: The demands of the 21st century require a new approach to education, one that recognizes that academic achievement is but one element of student learning and development, and only a part of any complete system of educational accountability. A comprehensive approach to learning recognizes that successful young people are knowledgeable, emotionally and physically healthy, motivated, civically inspired, engaged in the arts, prepared for work and economic self-sufficiency, and ready for the world beyond their own borders. A whole child approach to education is one of the best ways to prepare students for this challenging future, and to be college-, career-, and citizenship-ready. Such an approach seeks to ensure that each child, in each school, in each community is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. It includes access to a challenging and engaging curriculum, safe and trusting classrooms and schools, and a climate that supports students and their families. A whole child approach starts with the earliest learners and continues through high school, and promotes the long-term development and success of each student.<sup>3</sup> It is also consistent with assessment by a portfolio approach where students are assessed throughout the school year rather than on one, or one series of end of course tests.

(2) *Universal, free pre-K*: We must develop a way to offer incentives to States and districts to provide universal, free pre-Kindergarten. Some children enter kindergarten without being able to identify letters and colors while others are already beginning to read. What we know about children who live in poverty is that they are often exposed to fewer words, they hear less language and so their vocabulary may be limited. Universal, free pre-K would provide children with opportunities to learn the structure of school, be exposed to text-rich environments, engage in developing the skills to prepare children to be literate and begin the complex task of meeting a young child's social, emotional needs. Universal pre-K allows children to begin to explore their world with other children and to learn ways to communicate, share, develop relationships and even solve conflict in a warm, friendly setting with teachers who are trained to meet the needs of young children. Universal pre-K would help to ensure that every kindergartner has the pre-requisite knowledge to be successful in school from the first day. Once kids get behind, it becomes very difficult for them to ever catch up. As a high school principal, I am held accountable for the drop-out rates of my students; however, the reality that few want to admit is that some of our children begin the process of dropping out long before high school and every drop out becomes disengaged long before they become truant.

(3) *Mental health Support Offered in Schools During the School Day*: Many children have serious mental health needs that often go undiagnosed, untreated and unchecked. According to the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention:<sup>4</sup>

“Based on the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine report (Preventing mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders among young people:

progress and possibilities, 2009) that gathered findings from previous studies, it is estimated that 13–20 percent of children living in the United States (up to 1 out of 5 children) experience a mental disorder in a given year and an estimated \$247 billion is spent each year on childhood mental disorders. Because of the impact on children, families, and communities, children’s mental disorders are an important public health issue in the United States.”

It is often difficult for families to access providers who specialize in childhood psychiatric and psychological treatment and transportation and other barriers often delay treatment. To prepare children to be successful when they graduate from high school, we must treat those who suffer from mental health issues as part of educating the whole child.

(4) *Community Schools*: Schools are often the central point of a community and they house the most important resource a community has for sustaining its future; children. The Coalition for Community Schools is an alliance of over 200 national, State and local partners all committed to uniting schools, families, and communities for young people’s success.

The research is clear that many factors impact academic achievement, including the effects of poverty; school climate; school discipline; and chronic absence. Under The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), the development of the whole child (including cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and civic capacities) has suffered. The narrowed curriculum under NCLB caused budget tradeoffs that often eliminated non-tested subjects and funding for specialized instructional support personnel. Teachers and principals have taken on more responsibility and accountability with fewer supports at a time when student needs are increasing. Standards were lowered, achievement gaps have stayed stagnant, and the U.S. remains mediocre in math and reading compared to other developed countries. (Coalition for Community School Practices<sup>5</sup>) We need for the community school structure to be implemented in districts as a way to make the schools a resource for not only schools, but families, as well.

(5) *Investment Professional Development for Educators*: Educators are being charged “to do more, with less” in a social environment that in many ways has been openly hostile to them. We must stop blaming teachers and schools and recognize that schools are a reflection of the communities they live in. Where there is violence in the community, those children, through no fault of their own, know that violence, experience it, own it, and sometimes emulate it. Educators need professional development funding included in every initiative, not as an after-thought or a “if we can afford it” line item. Those on the front lines, who leave their own children every morning to teach other people’s children need the benefit that advanced professional development provides. Good teaching is about integrating new strategies with current, effective practice and not merely replacing old with new. If we want teachers to be able to serve the kids of the future, with all their strengths and their many challenges, then educators must be a partner in the selection and implementation of professional development initiatives.

(6) *Anytime, Internet Access for All*: The demand for internet services and WiFi is strong for Americans across the country; however, the lack of access to the internet often creates barriers for those who live in poverty. Since our communication has become very dependent on using online resources, those without access do not have the same opportunities as others to communicate with teachers, apply for jobs, research, pay bills, and even engage in higher education. If we could offer financial incentives to States and communities to encourage them to provide low or no cost internet to all families, we would reap the benefits of no longer having a digital divide.

In conclusion, we have a critical opportunity to revise ESEA to provide schools with more supports to serve students and less focus on testing them. This begins with a commitment to the whole child. To immediately stop standardized testing being used to sort and select children and blame or demonize schools, and rather include testing, at a developmentally appropriate level, as one of many tools used to measure student achievement and school performance. By eliminating the digital divide by providing anytime internet access for all, implementing universal, free pre-K, addressing the mental health needs of children with trained professionals during the school day, incentivizing the community school model and providing comprehensive, meaningful professional development to educators, you will open the door to creating conditions that foster innovation while eliminating the fear of how every implementation dip will impact the test scores for that year. This will not occur without respect being given for the professional educator. If school and district personnel are not seen as a resource, a partner, as the literal “straw that stirs the drink” in districts and schools, we will not see the groundswell of innovation that

is possible. Educators have been maligned, criticized and blamed in communities across the country in political circles. This can be stopped with a recognition that what teachers contribute cannot be measured by a mere test score. Teaching is not factory work. It is dynamic and it is individualized and our country's commitment to public education is the absolute cornerstone of what has made the United States of America great. I would like to thank Senator Alexander, Senator Murray and the members of the committee for considering my perspective and thank you for the work you do in leading for all citizens.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> National Career Academy Coalition. (2014) "The National Standards of Practice." Retrieved from <https://www.ncacinc.com/nsop>.

<sup>2</sup> Layton, L. (2014, Jan 16). Majority of U.S. Public School Students are in Poverty. The *Washington Post*. Retrieved from [http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/majority-of-us-public-school-students-are-in-poverty/2015/01/15/df7171d0-ce9-11e4-a7ee-526210d665b4\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/majority-of-us-public-school-students-are-in-poverty/2015/01/15/df7171d0-ce9-11e4-a7ee-526210d665b4_story.html).

<sup>3</sup> ASCD. (2015). "The Whole Child Initiative." Retrieved from <http://www.ascd.org/whole-child.aspx>.

<sup>4</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2014, May 16) "Children's Mental Health—New Report". Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/ChildrensMentalHealth/>.

<sup>5</sup> Institute for Educational Leadership. (2015) "Coalition for Community Schools". Retrieved from <http://www.communityschools.org/>.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Dr. Kessler.

Senator Murray.

Senator MURRAY. I, too, want to thank the witnesses. I read your testimony. It's really excellent. I come from the point of view of somebody who's been a preschool teacher, a school board member, a State legislator, and a Federal legislator. There's a lot of people who have impact on what happens in classrooms, and it is oftentimes hard to discern who made the decision where. Schools do need to have the ability to make decisions.

As a Federal voice on this, it's important that we set goals as a country to make sure that we are achieving. That's why I've always really felt it's important that at the Federal level, we do have targeted funding on national goals so that schools have the opportunity to do that, whether it's literacy or early childhood education or STEM education. These are goals that, as a country, we want to make sure that our students have access to.

I wanted to ask our witnesses today, in your experience, what are the areas in which targeted supports have really made a difference for children?

Ms. Taylor.

**STATEMENT OF HENRIETTE TAYLOR, MSW, LGSW, COMMUNITY SCHOOL COORDINATOR, THE HISTORIC SAMUEL COLERIDGE-TAYLOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, BALTIMORE, MD**

Ms. TAYLOR. Good morning, everybody. My name is Henriette Taylor, and I just wanted to thank you first for inviting me here. I'm a Community School Coordinator, so let me just put it out there.

I'm the five-foot view, right? I'm the person when we have all of these policies and procedures that are put in place to see how they work.

The CHAIRMAN. Could you move the mike a little closer, please?

Ms. TAYLOR. Sure. I'm used to speaking to children fifth grade and under. My concern is, and my challenge is, right—we talk



about testing, we talk about assessments, but we talk about it just as if they were just little academic creatures. They're more than that? I need assessments. I need scores and—for instance, to talk about health, to talk about mental health, to talk about wellness.

I need for my principal who I work—an amazing—and I'm privileged to work with a principal directly who—we talk about the needs assessment of our community. I can give you the stats of the community, and you have them there. We work in a community of extreme poverty, right? Most of my families make \$15,000 a year and less. We talk about opportunities, right?

I don't need to fix poor people. Let me just be real blunt. I need to give them opportunities. I need to give them—when we talk about assessments, when we talk about academics, it's more than that.

If I brought to you, a child that's struggling in class, I need to talk about all of the programming, the after-school programming, the breakfast, the dinners. We need to talk about programming, such as B'more for Healthy Babies, that deals with the families. We are from cradle to college and career. It's not just a one-stop shop—OK, here you are. You're in class. You're going to learn.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Taylor follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HENRIETTE TAYLOR, MSW, LGSW

SUMMARY

Since 2009, the University of Maryland, Baltimore, through the Promise Heights initiative, has been working for and with one community in West Baltimore through the implementation of a cradle-to-college-to-career pipeline of services. These services are delivered through the community school model, a strategy to align school and community resources for student success, positive enrichment of families, and community cohesion. A community school is not just a neighborhood school, but also acts as the hub of a community—open before and after regular school hours, including nights and weekends—so that the school becomes the center of the community where everyone belongs, works together, and thrives. Each school creates this environment for itself, depending on its own strengths and needs, through the leadership of the community school coordinator working closely with the school's principal.

Promise Heights is a 2012 U.S. Department of Education Promise Neighborhood grantee and has been the lead agency for the community schools in Upton/Druid Heights for the past 5 years. In Baltimore, community schools are specifically tasked to work on attendance, school climate, and parent engagement. Community school coordinators work closely with the administration and teachers at each school to find out what students and their families need and want, and then recruit the right set of community partners in a very intentional way. The goal of facilitating these partnerships is to provide sufficient supports to students and to connect them with learning opportunities beyond the school day that match their unique interests, so that teachers are able to focus on academics. We act as a bridge between a family's needs and a student's academic success so that families experience less of the stress of poverty and can more effectively participate in their student's academic success. These partnerships have produced outcomes such as a 40 percent decrease in Medicaid NICU costs for our zip code, an increase in enrollment for Early Head Start and Head Start, 20 percent increase in school readiness scores, significant reductions in chronic absenteeism, 100 percent compliance in school immunizations, 270 students participating in high quality after-school programming, and the filing of over 200 tax returns resulting in \$377,000 in refunds.

The community school movement is growing as evidenced by reports that more superintendents are pursuing this approach as they recognize we need to be smarter and do more to give students the full range of opportunities and supports they need and deserve. Promise Neighborhoods and community schools have a very similar approach in that they address the development of the "whole child" and they leverage community resources for students and families through intentional school-community partnerships. Therefore, we fully support and recommend the ESEA recommendations included in the letter to the Chairman and Ranking Member from

the Coalition for Community Schools that has been signed by 45 national organizations. These recommendations if adopted would not only strengthen the work we do in Baltimore City, but would provide the right incentives and frameworks to expand this innovative approach to other schools and districts.

Chairman Alexander, Ranking Member Murray, and members of the committee, thank you for inviting me here today to discuss how the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) can better meet the needs of students and families through innovation. My name is Henriette Taylor. I am a licensed social worker employed by the University of Maryland, Baltimore's School of Social Work (UMB), which is proud to claim Senator Mikulski as a most distinguished alumna. We are a U.S. Department of Education Promise Neighborhood planning grantee working with five public schools in the West Baltimore neighborhood of Upton/Druid Heights. Within the Promise Heights initiative, I work as a community school coordinator at The Historic Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Elementary School.

Upton/Druid Heights is located about a mile and a half from the UMB's professional campus and Baltimore's Inner Harbor, yet is one of the poorest neighborhoods in the city. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, it is currently home to approximately 10,342 residents, 28 percent of whom are children. There is little racial and economic diversity in the community as 93 percent of the population is African American and 53 percent of households have an income less than \$14,999. Nearly 58 percent of children live in poverty, as compared to 28 percent in Baltimore City, and 10 percent in Maryland overall. As is the case of many poverty stricken communities, the educational attainment for neighborhood residents is weak, with 49 percent of the residents 25 years of age and older having obtained less than a high school diploma or equivalency. Nearly 6 out of 10 adults were either unemployed or not in the workforce during the last census. Just over 1,800 students attend the five neighborhood public schools—from pre-k through 12th grade—and half are not proficient in reading, almost 70 percent are not proficient in math, and more than 20 percent are chronically absent. At the three elementary schools and the middle school, the FARMS rate is over 95 percent. At the high school, it is over 80 percent. This is a neighborhood experiencing the stress and trauma of extreme poverty.

Since 2009, the University of Maryland, Baltimore, through the Promise Heights initiative, has been working for and with the community through the implementation of a cradle-to-college-to-career pipeline of services. These services are delivered through the community school model, a strategy to align school and community resources for student success, positive enrichment of families, and community cohesion. A community school is not just a neighborhood school, but also acts as the hub of a community—open before and after regular school hours, including nights and weekends—so that the school becomes the center of the community where everyone belongs, works together, and thrives. Each school creates this environment for itself, depending on its own strengths and needs, through the leadership of the community school coordinator working closely with the school's principal.

Promise Heights has been the lead agency for the community schools in Upton/Druid Heights for the past 5 years and my school has been a community school for the last 2 years. The Historic Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Elementary is a school that has 467 students, from age 3 through 5th grade. We have 26 partnerships with community organizations that provide both supports and enriching learning opportunities for students. In Baltimore, community schools are specifically tasked to work on attendance, school climate, and parent engagement. In my role as a community school coordinator, I work closely with the administration and teachers to find out what students and their families need and want, and then recruit the right set of community partners in a very intentional way. The goal of facilitating these partnerships is to provide sufficient supports to students and to connect them with learning opportunities beyond the school day that match their unique interests, so that teachers are able to focus on academics. We act as a bridge between a family's needs and a student's academic success so that families experience less of the stress of poverty and can more effectively participate in their student's academic success.

These partnerships may be nationally recognized organizations, such as Laureate Education and KaBOOM!, whose employees came together last summer to help community residents build a 4,000-square foot playground at the school, as the neighborhood had nowhere for children to play. If you drive by the school tonight at 7 p.m. or on a Sunday or during a school holiday, you will see children and their families playing, having a picnic, or talking about neighborhood events. Laureate employees also built a community room for us so that parents can have a place of their own in the school and community groups can have a place in the neighborhood to gather, whether for a personal interaction or to take a workshop or class. It may

be a partner such as the Maryland State Department of Education, which provides the school with a Judy Center, where families with children from birth to age 5 can attend classes on early learning, access developmental assessments, visit the school's food bank, or take a GED course, all for free. We partner with all six UMB professional schools. Social work students work directly under me providing case management to students and families, including making home visits around attendance and programming such as Mom's support groups. Nursing students assist with asthma education, health learning parties for parents of pre-k and kindergarten students, and mentor 4th and 5th grade girls. Dental students provide education and dental services. Medical students partner with our after-school provider to provide education around nutrition and obesity. Pharmacy students tutor middle and high school students in math, science, and SAT prep. Law students hold clinics several times a year for neighborhood residents to address issues such as expungement, landlord/tenant issues, and small claims. Of course, we also have neighborhood partners, such as Union Baptist Church, which has provided funds to assist funeral expenses, whose members volunteer in the school, and whose senior pastor is co-leader of our Promise Neighborhood Community Advisory Board. We also partner with Pearlstone Center to provide outdoor education to our students, ranging from farm animal care, planting, and nutrition.

The community school strategy has produced several exciting outcomes at our school. For example, in connection with the Judy Center, Promise Heights employs another social worker who engages with the pre-k and kindergarten students on social emotional learning. Last year, our Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR) scores increased from 58.2 percent to 79.4 percent. This was done through one-on-one work with students, families, and teachers, group lessons in the classroom, and learning parties with families after school. We also focus heavily on attendance with myself, social work interns, a Public Ally, and other school staff conducting home visits to families whose students are on track to miss 20 or more days of school in 1 year. Last school year, we visited over 100 homes, and were able to address barriers such as lack of uniforms, homelessness, food scarcity, and funding for evictions or electricity bills. We provided families with education around bedtime and morning routines, why school every day matters even for 4- and 5-year-olds, and how to communicate with the school. Inside the school, we celebrated attendance achievements and improvements with photographs, bulletin boards, and incentives. All these efforts enabled us to greatly improve the attendance at the school and decrease the chronic absenteeism rate, and we were subsequently given the Mayor's award for the greatest reduction of students at-risk for chronic absenteeism.

This year, with the addition of new immunizations needed for kindergarteners and seventh graders, my school and the middle school found themselves with 77 students missing those shots and, so, at risk of being barred from school. Through my role as community school coordinator, I was able to recruit UMB's doctors and nurses to volunteer their time to provide those immunizations right in the school nurse's office during school hours. Myself and other Promise Heights staff went door-to-door to bring parents to the school so they could consent, thus keeping those 77 students in school. Holidays can be hard for our families. Trick-or-treating is not necessarily safe in our neighborhood. A church partnered with us to create an alternative event with jewelry making, face painting, dress ups, cotton candy, cupcakes, games, photos, and a backpack for every student. For the past 25 years, the UMB School of Medicine has provided a full Thanksgiving dinner at our middle school which any community resident may attend. At Christmas, many of our families find themselves without any resources for gifts. Through the leadership of the Promise Heights family stability program director, every family who contacted us was able to receive clothes, toys, and even furniture.

I have visited community school initiatives in Cincinnati and New York City and have learned from their work. Community schools exist in nearly 100 places across the country and in 34 States and can be found in urban, suburban, and rural schools. In Baltimore, our community schools are supported by an intermediary organization, the Family League of Baltimore, which trains and supports community school coordinators. Baltimore community schools are supported by a combination of funds: Federal funds including title I and 21st Century Community Learning Center, and State, district and city funds. Each lead agency also provides some funding for their respective schools. Community schools in Baltimore have been able to get \$4 of programming for every \$1 spent by the city through the leveraging of partnerships and resources provided through the lead agency. The costs associated with the community school initiative allow for a more effective use of existing funds for public education. Any cuts to the school budget (like the \$35 million cut proposed by Maryland's Governor) are devastating to maintaining the minimum conditions

for success as they mean larger class size, fewer teachers and support staff, and eliminating after-school and summer programs.

Promise Neighborhoods and community schools have a very similar approach in that they address the development of the “whole child” and they leverage community resources for students and families through intentional school-community partnerships. Promise Heights is also funded through Federal, State, and city funding, as well as private foundations. These include Promise Neighborhoods from the Department of Education, early childhood education funding through Administration for Children and Families, 21st Century Community Learning Centers through the Maryland State Department of Education, family stability funding through the United Way of Central Maryland, and several family foundations in Baltimore. This funding has allowed us to sustain the work we do in Upton/Druid Heights for the last 5 years and has meant significant positive change for the neighborhood including:

- Implementing an infant mortality reduction program called B'more for Healthy Babies, housed at another elementary school, which has contributed to a 4 percent decrease in teen pregnancy rates, an 11.8 percent drop in infant mortality rates, and a 40.1 percent decrease in Medicaid NICU costs for the zip code from fiscal year 2010 to fiscal year 2012.
- Creating Parent University to enhance parents' sensitivity to their infants and toddlers cues, discourage negativity, lessen reliance on spanking, promote reasoning with toddlers, increase the number of age-appropriate materials around the house as well as the amount of time spent reading and talking to children, and increase the number of toddlers enrolled in Early Head Start and Head Start.
- Improving MMSR scores at one elementary school from 34 percent to 96 percent in 3 years, by bringing Early Head Start and Head Start into the building to provide students with a curriculum aligned to the regular day school program.
- Obtaining funding for over 270 students to attend a literacy and enrichment based after-school program.
- Training over 200 teachers, staff, mental health consultants, and residents in trauma-informed behavior management skills.
- And, providing over 200 families with free income tax preparation and collected over \$377,000 in Federal and State tax refunds.

The Federal Government has a very important role to play to support innovative approaches like community schools, and to ensure that each student is getting equal opportunity for an excellent education. From my work in a community school, I know that partnerships with community organizations are essential to provide students the full range of opportunities and supports they need and deserve. Schools cannot do it alone: they need strong community partnerships to give students the level of education they need for the 21st century workforce.

That's why I fully support and recommend the ESEA recommendations included in the *letter* to the Chairman and Ranking Member from the Coalition for Community Schools that has been signed by 45 national organizations. These recommendations if adopted would not only strengthen the work we do at the Historic Samuel Coleridge-Taylor and in Baltimore City, but would provide the right incentives and frameworks to expand this innovative approach to other schools and districts.

There are issues which are particularly relevant to me at the school level. As a Community School Coordinator, it is imperative that I be able to access student data in a real time setting. In order for me to bring in the right partnerships to obtain the best academic and social outcomes for students, I must be able to identify and report results beyond academic achievement to include indicators for health and wellness, discipline, attendance, and family engagement. By providing non-traditional training and professional development for teachers, principals, specialized instructional support personnel and other school-employed staff, they can work more effectively with families and community partners during and outside the school day. We should ensure that before school, after-school and summer learning is not considered an add-on, but is seen as integral to a student's success and well-being. While I understand that educational funding is dwindling at an alarming rate, it is imperative that our students be given the opportunity for learning within the arts, such as music, theater, and visual arts. Many of our students lack a safe space for physical activity at home and the school is often the place where families can feel secure that children are not at risk. Finally, even if other school-based staff or partners are addressing a child's social emotional learning and well-being, teachers should be trained on how deficits in the areas of health, mental health, or family stability can and do affect a child's behavior and learning. Therefore, we support dedicated and increased funding for Full-Service Community Schools to help more schools and communities connect more strongly for student success and to grow the

best practice of a full-time coordinator to manage and sustain these school-community partnerships.

As a Promise Neighborhood grantee, we also believe that connecting community and school to family and student is the only way to gain strides for both the individual and the community as a whole. We support dedicated and increased funding of that program so that grantees can have the opportunity to transition to full implementation and new communities can begin the planning process. While I cannot guarantee that when students arrive at school each day they will have had breakfast or have packed a lunch or have clean clothes or have had a good night's sleep, I can guarantee that they are bringing their homes, their families, and their neighborhoods into the classroom. If we don't ensure that those homes, families, and communities are as healthy, productive, and stable as possible, then we know that students will not only fail, but will also create chaos for those around them. If we want students who achieve and schools that succeed then we must have families and communities that function well. Promise Neighborhoods and community schools are two successful strategies in creating that change.

Thank you so much for this opportunity to tell you about my work, my students, my school, and our community. Please think of them as you work to improve and reauthorize the ESEA.

Senator MURRAY. Let me refocus the question again. There is targeted funding and always has been at the Federal level for specific things.

Mr. Davis, I think you're the recipient of some funds like that. I want to know if it's important for our country to have some of that targeted funding for districts. If we didn't target some specific goals, like early childhood or STEM, would that be lost at the local level? Is that an important role for the Federal Government?

**STATEMENT OF JOSH DAVIS, VICE PRESIDENT, EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, DELTA HEALTH ALLIANCE, STONEVILLE, MS**

Mr. DAVIS. I absolutely think so. I represent a Promise Neighborhood who's just near the third year of our 5-year grant, and our early successes are in early childhood. What we're able to see is that those children who are between the ages of 0 and 8 have had the longest exposure to our programming. They've had multiple opportunities to be involved in different experiences, and that's where we see some of our strongest outcomes.

If we look at the model that we know has been proven to be successful with the Harlem Children's Zone—sort of setting the standard for the Promise Neighborhood's model. We started at the foundation, working with children and families 0 to 8, and so if you mean targeted with regards to subgroups and student populations, it's exactly where we see our strongest outcomes.

We have the evidence, and we believe that it is important to have some targeted funding and targeted supports for subgroups of students.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Davis follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JOSH DAVIS

In December 2012, Delta Health Alliance was awarded a 5-year Promise Neighborhoods grant by the U.S. Department of Education totaling approximately \$29 million to significantly improve the educational and developmental outcomes of Indianola, Mississippi's most distressed children and serve as a catalyst for transforming their communities by developing a "pipeline" or continuum of academic, family, and community resources, from prenatal care through high school graduation, creating a path for students to gain meaningful careers and earn financial independence.

The overall mission of the Indianola Promise Community (IPC) is to ensure all children are ready for school, that students who need help get help quickly, and that young people stay in school through graduation and transition to postsecondary edu-

cation. The IPC employs innovative and coordinated approaches with agencies and services complementing each other and working together to improve the school system, build early childhood and meaningful college & career options, and provide family skills training. We follow a disciplined approach for implementing each program in the IPC, whereby we establish unique program performance measures, collect relevant data, frequently monitor and analyze their outcomes, communicate with individuals contributing efforts, and make corrective decisions collectively. This iterative process has established the foundation for ushering into Indianola a new approach to improving academic outcomes for students, which is based on a framework of results and accountability.

After only 2 years of Promise Neighborhoods' implementation funding, our most encouraging efforts have resulted in positive academic trend data for Indianola's children ages 0–5 because they have been exposed to IPC programming longer than other subgroups of children in the community. Other early successes are evident throughout our continuum of services and have created opportunities for us to strengthen the practices of our disciplined, decisionmaking based on data. As we forge these practices into the fabric of our community and school intervention processes we are addressing the sustainability of systems' changes beyond the life of the grant.

No Child Left Behind's focus on accountability is consistent with the IPC effort to review individual-level student data in real time and use that information to improve intervention efforts. The congruency between this aspect of the law's focus and our methods to create a clear picture of what works to move from talk to activities to desired outcomes is met by the innovations we have put in place in Indianola, MS, with the intent to scale and replicate our initiatives.

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In December 2012, Delta Health Alliance was awarded a 5-year Promise Neighborhoods grant by the U.S. Department of Education, authorizing \$6 million in the first year and about \$23 million in the subsequent years. I serve as the day-to-day manager for this project.

I was asked to respond to two questions:

- What is your State, district, or school doing to implement innovative approaches to improve academic outcomes for students, particularly low-income and at-risk students?
- How can we improve the Federal law (No Child Left Behind) to encourage more States, districts, and schools to innovate?

Our promise neighborhood grant is being implemented in Indianola, MS, a town of about 10,600 in the Mississippi Delta county of Sunflower. The town's population is 80 percent African American and its municipal school district is about 98 percent African American with nearly every student eligible for free or subsidized school meals. Our partners include the Sunflower County Consolidated School District, city of Indianola, Delta State University, B.B. King Museum in Indianola, Urban Child Institute in Memphis, University of Memphis, and the University of Tennessee Health Sciences Center. The cross-State collaboration offers opportunities to implement promising practices and lessons learned throughout the region.

Our overall mission is to ensure Indianola children are ready for school, that students who need help get help quickly, and that young people stay in school through graduation and transition to postsecondary education. The Indianola Promise Community (IPC) offers a collective approach, with programs and services complementing and building on each other in a coordinated fashion.

Innovation guides our process by using data to rigorously assess each of our programs against objectives and goals, making changes—innovations—in real-time when the data show results are not being delivered. Our commitment is to results-based accountability which calls for decisions to be rooted in data. For each program, there is baseline data (where we are) and target data (where we need to be). At the beginning of each program, the data team leads the development of performance measures with program staff. After the performance measures are developed, a program scorecard is developed, and on a monthly basis, IPC data and program staff meet to discuss progress on performance measures. The program's scorecard drives this conversation. This process allows program-level staff to make decisions about the intervention in real-time, as opposed to waiting until a program ends to evaluate it. We collect performance data on over 30 programs and 10 partners, using a universal case management data system. In addition, we have 11 family advocates who work with individuals and families at most risk. At-risk families are identified using data collected from the school district through our case management system.

From our perspective, innovation is relatively easy once everyone agrees that data, not anecdotes, not personalities, not local politics, should drive decisions about the effectiveness of programs. Once all of our partners adopted that position, and have collaborated with us in developing the objective benchmarks and the data to measure those benchmarks, we have been able to make the changes we have needed to make. That is the key to innovation.

One of our innovations is using a computer-based study program called Classworks to not only help students master skills but also to allow us to monitor the achievement level of each student and intervene with tutoring when needed. Once all of the May 2014 year-end State test (MCT2) results were provided to us, we determined that Classworks usage in Indianola was associated with higher MCT2 scores. Specifically, when students mastered more Classworks lessons, they were more likely to score higher MCT2 scores. Likewise, when students mastered less Classworks lessons, students did not perform as well on the MCT2. This also means students' MCT2 scores can be estimated long before the end of the school year. By calculating a student's Classworks mastery score, staff can reasonably predict how well a given student will do on the MCT2. This has major programming implications: we can use Classworks data to identify which kids need the most help quicker than ever before.

Across all tested grades (3d–8th) in Indianola, proficiency rates improved by a relative 8 percent from 2013 to 2014. Third grade proficiency rates in both math and English were actually on par with the State averages. This is key because a large portion of our resources since 2010 has been devoted to the children in the earliest years of school and pre-school.

Additional innovative approaches have produced early outcomes in Indianola including:

- Kindergarten readiness measures increased 19 percent from fall 2013 to fall 2014. We credit this increase to the overall alignment of our early childhood programs among all of our participants and ensuring that children are enrolled in multiple programs.
- Of the 350 students attending our camps during summer 2014, more than 73 percent demonstrated no summer learning loss in reading, whereas nationally low-income students typically lose more than 2 months in reading achievement.
- Supplemental teacher training by academic coaches across all English & Language Arts classrooms is associated with rising 9-week achievement scores for high school students in 2013 and 2014.
- Since full implementation of key programming and evidence-based outcomes, the gap between Indianola 3d graders and Mississippi 3d graders performing at proficient and advanced levels in reading and math on State tests has virtually been closed.

To answer the second question, we have never found the NCLB law to be an impediment to the innovations we have developed in Indianola. As long as the provisions of NCLB are tied to analysis of programs based on real-time data and objective goals, it can help foster innovation. NCLB's focus on accountability is consistent with the IPC effort to review individual-level student data in real time and use that information to improve intervention efforts. By building a clear and truthful picture of what programs are working, and for which groups of children, it becomes possible to scale, replicate, and sustain successful initiatives. In this way, innovations have the capacity to drive real, positive and lasting change.

One of our clear findings is that it takes multiple programs operating over a significant period of time to create desired outcomes. It takes time to build community buy-in, to fashion programs to fit the particular characteristics of a community, and to overcome the natural resistance to upend the status quo. If Congress is willing to fund this kind of sustained innovative program, we can deliver outcomes that will make you proud.

Mr. MCINTYRE. Senator Murray, I think that there's a balance to be struck here as well. The vast majority of Federal dollars that go to districts and schools are formula grants, and I think it's important to have lots of flexibility when it comes to those. I really do believe it's important to have some clear investments in innovation that spur and incent innovation.

Some of the innovations in our school district that I talked about in our testimony, whether it be multiple pathways to success or talking about teacher professional development and support; personalized learning environment for kids; community schools, which

Ms. Taylor will talk a lot about; or principal preparation—when I think about each and every one of those, we’ve benefited in some way from some Federal funding that has been meant to spur innovation and to support innovation.

Whether it’s Race to the Top or the Teacher Incentive Fund grants or 21st Century Schools, there are lots of different particular investments in innovation that have been very useful, and we need to continue to invest in innovation in that way.

Senator MURRAY. Dr. Balfanz.

**STATEMENT OF ROBERT BALFANZ, Ph.D., RESEARCH PROFESSOR, CENTER FOR SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF SCHOOLS, JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, BALTIMORE MD**

Mr. BALFANZ. One area where targeted funding has made a huge difference has been with low-graduation rate high schools. There’s been Federal money going all the way back to the comprehensive school reform money, small learning community grant money, SIG money, and that, combined with grad rate accountability is actually—local innovation, has led to a really remarkable achievement, which is, there’s been a decline in the number of lowest graduation rate high schools from 2,000 to 1,200, and there’s 2 million fewer students attending these schools now than a decade ago.

That would not have happened without that targeted funding combined with the Federal grad rate accountability and local innovation. It’s one area where those three things have come together and worked really well together and made a huge difference in lots of kids’ lives.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Balfanz follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ROBERT BALFANZ, PH.D.

SUMMARY

Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray and members of the HELP committee, thank you for inviting me to testify and participate in a roundtable on “Fixing No Child Left Behind: Innovation to Better Meet the Needs of Students.” I want to begin by commending you for focusing on the inter-connection of innovation and accountability. Each of these needs the other to better meet the needs of students. The applied research and development work which I and my colleagues at the Center for Social Organization of Schools, School of Education, Johns Hopkins University have been engaged with during the past 20 years to keep all students on the path to high school graduation college and career ready, in partnership with hundreds of high poverty schools, scores of high poverty school districts, and over a dozen States, has made it crystal-clear that neither innovation without the guidance of accountability nor accountability without the support of innovation will get us the student outcomes we need. We have observed the greatest progress and gains in student outcomes, particularly among low-income, minority and at-risks students, have occurred when the talents and insights of those closest to work—the teachers, administrators, and student support personnel—have been unlocked to find and/or implement innovative solutions that work for their students. We have only seen this occur at scale and be sustained, however, when external accountability has consistently directed the schools’ attention to the most significant challenges their students face, nudged them to use evidence-based approaches, and provided support for implementation, training, and the time and person power to do the work. Thus, getting the inter-play between innovation, accountability, and support right and finding the most productive balance between Federal, State, and local roles in this interplay through the re-authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) is crucial to enabling all children in the United States to receive the education they need.



What is the Federal role in strengthening the innovation, accountability, and support nexus? The evidence reviewed here, including two examples of innovations which have worked to better meet student needs and in particular for low-income and at-risk students—the Diplomas Now model which combines whole school improvements with enhanced student supports guided by data and the spread of Early Warning Indicator and Intervention Systems at the State level indicates that it will be important to keep what has worked, i.e., graduation-rate accountability and annual testing, as well as a Federal stewardship and investment in reforming the lowest performing schools. Where there is need for fresh insight is in creating accountability systems which push attention and innovative responses to the places, educational challenges, and students who need them the most, while providing the room and space for people closest to the challenges—the teachers, administrators, and student support personnel—to innovate. The ability of those closest to the challenge to successfully innovate, in turn, needs to be nurtured with wide dissemination of existing evidence-based practice, seed capital, and training and support to help develop, implement, validate, and spread the innovations.

Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray and members of the HELP committee, thank you for inviting me to testify and participate in a roundtable on “Fixing No Child Left Behind: Innovation to Better Meet the Needs of Students.” I want to begin by commending you for focusing on the inter-connection of innovation and accountability. Each of these needs the other to better meet the needs of students. The applied research and development work which I and my colleagues at the Center for Social Organization of Schools, School of Education, Johns Hopkins University have been engaged with during the past 20 years to keep all students on the path to high school graduation college and career ready, in partnership with hundreds of high poverty schools, scores of high poverty school districts, and over a dozen States, has made it crystal clear that neither innovation without the guidance of accountability nor accountability without the support of innovation will get us the student outcomes we need. We have observed the greatest progress and gains in student outcomes, particularly among low-income, minority and at-risk students, have occurred when the talents and insights of those closest to work—the teachers, administrators, and student support personnel—have been unlocked to find and/or implement innovative solutions that work for their students. We have only seen this occur at scale and be sustained, however, when external accountability has consistently directed the schools’ attention to the most significant challenges their students face, nudged them to use evidence-based approaches, and provided support for implementation, training, and the time and person power to do the work. Thus, getting the inter-play between innovation, accountability, and support right and finding the most productive balance between Federal, State, and local roles in this interplay through the re-authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) is crucial to enabling all children in the United States to receive the education they need.

Lets look at some specifics. In 2001, at the very moment NCLB was being authorized, the Nation’s high school graduation rate hit its modern low at 71 percent and for low-income and minority students was in the upper 50s and low 60s. In short, at a time when it was already clear that there was no work in the economy that would let a high-school dropout support a family, more than one-quarter of all students, and close to half of low-income and minority students, were leaving school essentially unable to become successful adults. Yet at this time, the imperative for schools, and in particular those with large populations of low-income, minority, and at-risk students, to focus on raising high-school graduation rates, was not consistently apparent, and hence the need to devote their limited time, energy, and innovative spirit to this challenge was not on most schools’, school districts’, and States’ radar screens. In fact, the available, but as it turned out quite inaccurate data, seemed to indicate that, on the whole, graduation rates were a bright spot on the student achievement landscape.

A close examination of the evidence and our experience working with hundreds of high-poverty middle and high schools, and scores of high-poverty school districts over the past 14 years, shows that in three key ways Federal accountability and support help spur the innovation which has led the Nation’s graduation rate to rise by 10 percentage points from a modern low to an all-time high through the course of NCLB and resulted in close to two million more students graduating from high school. What were these ways?

First, Federal accountability to continually raise graduation rates provided local and State education leaders who sought to implement innovative means to confront the dropout crisis with a crucial tool to prompt principals, teachers, and student

support personnel to devote their most precious assets—their time, energy, thought, and focus—to figuring out and implementing what was needed to enable more of their students to graduate. In short, Federal accountability to raise graduation rates communicated to schools that, among all the competing demands they face, it mattered. The States and districts which made the biggest gains over the past decade were diverse and ranged from places like Tennessee to New York City. They all took different paths based on their local circumstances, but what they shared in common was that local innovation became paired with a Federal imperative to improve, and in so doing created the conditions to bring improvements to a meaningful scale.

Second, the Federal focus on and support for the lowest performing schools through mechanisms like school improvement grants and later priority schools nudged and enabled school districts to focus their innovative efforts on a key driver of the dropout crisis—the relatively small subset of high schools (15 percent) which produced half the Nation’s dropouts. If the accountability goal had simply been to raise school-district graduation rates, short-term gains would have been most easily obtained by focusing on stronger schools with capacity that had small subsets of students who struggled. By instead saying that the high schools with graduation rates below 60 percent and their feeder middle schools—or those that accounted for half the dropouts—needed to be a core focus of improvement efforts, Federal accountability directed innovation to where it would have its greatest leverage and impact. Moreover, by recognizing that these are the schools which face the highest degree of educational challenge because they essentially only educate at-risk and high-needs students, and as such, typically require an infusion and/or re-allocation of resources to enable the development and implementation of evidence-based innovations, the Federal Government also helped solve a critical dilemma of the Nation’s school improvement efforts: who will be the steward for the highest need schools and the highest need students who attend them? The combination of Federal accountability and support and local innovation has led to a remarkable decrease in the number of the lowest graduation rate high schools in the Nation over the past decade—from around 2,000 to 1,200 and in so doing has been a key reason why high school graduation rates have improved so much.

Third, direct Federal support to spur, grow, validate and spread local innovations has been important. Through competitive grants, most recently exemplified by the Investing In Innovation program (I3), the Federal Government has served as an able-venture capitalist in fostering the innovation needed to improve the American education system. States and school districts have faced declining budgets over the past half-decade and perennially face tight budgets. In this environment it is very difficult for them to invest in innovation without Federal partnership. Moreover, for innovations to achieve their full potential they need to be validated, and who they work for, and under what conditions established. Local school districts, typically do not have the ability, resources, or patience to do this work. Their concern is focused on if it works for them, not if it continues to work under other circumstances. Yet if we don’t know this, much time and effort may be wasted implementing reforms that are not likely to succeed in a different environment.

#### TWO EXAMPLES OF INNOVATIONS TO BETTER MEET THE NEEDS OF STUDENTS

Now let’s look at two examples that tie this all together. The first is called Diplomas Now. This is innovation aimed at the most challenged middle and high schools which drive the dropout crisis. These are schools in which nearly all the students, not just a few, need first and foremost a good lesson from a skilled teacher in every class, every day but also additional supports to enable them to attend school regularly, stay focused in class, and get their schoolwork done. These are schools where often a quarter to a half of students are chronically absent—missing a month or more of school, where more students are suspended in a year than graduate, and where the typical student has a D average. Diplomas Now was created to meet this challenge head on, by combining evidence-based whole-school improvement focused on teaching and learning, with enhanced student supports which are guided by an early warning system so that, in a much more efficient and effective manner, the right support can be gotten to the right student at the right time. Diplomas Now is also an innovative partnership between school districts, middle and high school principals, teachers, and student support staff, and three experienced non-profits with evidence-based approaches: Johns Hopkins University’s Talent Development Secondary School Improvement model, City Year’s Whole School, Whole Child student support program and Americorps members, and Communities In Schools integrated student support model. Talent Development works with the school leaders and school teachers to create more effective ways to organize the school day, accel-

erate the learning of students who enter school multiple years below grade level, and provide teachers and administrators with the training and support they need to lead and drive school improvement. The City Year programing and Americorps members help solve the scale problem of student need. What do you do when, as is often the case, there are hundreds of students in a high-needs secondary school who need tutoring, mentoring, role models, and someone to check in how they are doing and how their school work is coming every day? The infusion of 10 to 15 corps members, each nagging and nurturing 15 or so students through the school day, enables schools to provide these supports at the scale needed. Communities In Schools enables schools not to be overwhelmed by the intensity of student need. In high poverty environments, it is beyond astounding the circumstances some students must overcome just to get to school every day. The impacts of homelessness, food insecurity, exposure to violence, and/or the absence of stable adult support can be immense. Schools are often ill-equipped to respond to them, and, as a result, can respond in manners which ultimately consume a lot of adult time and attention and make matters worse. In the Diplomas Now model, Communities In Schools directly case-manages the highest needs students but also increases the school's capacity to handle them by developing a web of community supports tailored to the specific needs of students in the school. All of these efforts are glued together in weekly Early Warning Indicator and Intervention meetings organized initially by a Talent Development school transformation facilitator in which a team of teachers who share a common set of students, the City Year Americorps members who work with them, the Communities In School site coordinator, and school administrators and student support staff, continually monitor students to see who needs additional supports, pool adult knowledge to design the most impactful intervention, look for patterns to guide preventative efforts, and examine and fine-tune the effectiveness of on-going whole school, small group, and individual interventions.

Diplomas Now shows how impactful innovations are developed, validated, and scaled when the private and public sectors work hand in hand. Diplomas Now was launched and provided ongoing support by a number of private funders, most notably, the PepsiCo Foundation. However, it is has been scaled to 10 of the largest city school districts and is being validated by undergoing the largest randomized field trial of a secondary school innovation in our Nation's history as the result of a Federal Investing in Innovation (I3) grant. Its local implementation in a number of schools has then been further supported by school improvement grant (SIG) funds. Most importantly, it's working. On average, across over 40 high-needs middle and high schools, over half of the students who have signaled they are falling off the path to graduation by poor attendance, behavior, or course performance have been put back on track. Just as significantly, in nearly every one of the major city school districts where the model has been implemented, some of the most iconic low performing schools in the district are breaking away from similar schools and becoming flagships for school improvement in their districts. In short, Diplomas Now is an example of an innovation which is leading to significant improvements in student outcomes in some of the most challenged schools and school districts in the Nation.

A second example comes from the States. Over the past decade we have worked with or learned from many States, including Tennessee and Washington State, as they sought to implement and scale a powerful new innovation: Early Warning Indicator and Intervention Systems to Keep Students on Track to High School Graduation College and Career Ready. The core idea of an early warning system is that students signal early and often that they are or are not on the path to high school graduation, college and career ready. Research conducted at CSOS and by the Chicago Consortium for School Research, among others, has shown that in high-poverty environments it is often possible to identify between 30 to 50 percent of the students who will drop out, absent effective interventions as early as the 6th grade, and 75 percent or more by the end of 9th grade. It is also possible to see who is on track to success in college by the end of 9th grade as well. These on- and off-track signals can then be used to closely monitor students' progress and enable intervention at the first moment students show signs of falling off-track, rather than after they have failed so many courses or missed so much school that they need to repeat a grade or even dropout and then need to be re-connected. What makes early warning systems a truly powerful intervention is when they are used to tap the insights and innovative intervention ideas of the adults who know students best, i.e., their teachers, administrators and student support personnel, and when these adults organize the school into a multi-tiered intervention system with schoolwide prevention activities (to enable students to come every day, stay out of trouble, and get their work done), targeted small-group interventions for students who need more support, and, finally, case-managed and professionally provided supports for the highest needs students. The final power is provided when the interventions are regularly evalu-

ated for their effectiveness and when the adult early warning systems team uses the data to identify the most strategic level of intervention, which is often not the individual, but the classroom, grade, school, or even district.

One place where the power of local innovation and Federal accountability came together with powerful results was with early warning systems in Alabama. Alabama was an early innovator and early adopter of early warning systems and became one of the first States to develop a statewide early warning indicator system called the Alabama Graduation Tracker and make it available to all school districts. Alabama invested in dropout prevention training and dissemination of evidence-based practices. Efforts to raise the State's graduation rate were also promoted and endorsed by the Governor, State legislature, business community, and chief State school officers. All these efforts had impact, but it was not until Federal accountability in the form of the U.S. Department of Education 2008 graduation rate regulations, which led to all States adopting substantial graduation rate targets and annual improvement goals as part of their accountability systems, that every high school principal in the State received the signal that raising high school graduation rates mattered. It was then that the State-led innovations combined with the nudge of Federal accountability to result in Alabama having one of the largest recent gains in graduation rates, moving it from behind to ahead of the national graduation rate.

USING ESEA RE-AUTHORIZATION TO STRENGTHEN THE POWERFUL NEXUS OF  
INNOVATION, ACCOUNTABILITY AND SUPPORT

It is an exciting time to be re-authorizing ESEA. We know so much more today than we did in 2001 about what works, for whom, under what circumstances, and how best to address the needs of low-income, minority, and at-risk students. If we are able to follow the evidence and push through our frustrations with what did not work with NCLB, we will be able to craft an ESEA that unleashes the innovative spirits of our Nation's educators at the local and State level, while keeping the focus on the students, schools, and districts most in need of improvement and support. More innovation is clearly needed. Substantial progress has been made in improving the outcomes of low-income and at-risk students; over a million more are graduating and millions fewer are found in the lowest levels of achievement. Many more are succeeding on advanced placement tests and graduating prepared to succeed in college. Innovation and improvement have not visited all schools nor reached all students during the past 14 years. Half of the African American students who continue to fall off track to high school graduation do so in about 600 unreformed high schools, concentrated in 15 States. In the least effective of these schools, a third or more of students are still retained in 9th grade, suspended, and/or identified for special education services, and the percent scoring proficient on achievement test can be in the single digits. Similarly, while most States have shown progress in raising graduation rates, a few are going in the wrong direction. Moreover, in the knowledge economy of the 21st century, the bar will continually rise on what our students need to know and be able to do. Hence all our schools will need to become institutions of continuous improvement. The exciting news is that recent advances in evidence-based practices and the learning sciences indicate that we have barely begun to scratch the surface of what is possible in terms of teaching and learning. This means the ability of our students and teachers to improve is no impediment to the Nation's ability to achieve the outcomes it needs.

What is the Federal role in strengthening the innovation, accountability, and support nexus? The evidence reviewed here and our experience working with hundreds of schools over the past 20 years indicates that it will be important to keep what has worked, i.e., graduation-rate accountability and annual testing, as well as a Federal stewardship and investment in reforming the lowest performing schools. Where there is need for fresh insight is in creating accountability systems which push attention and innovative responses to the places, educational challenges, and students who need them the most, while providing the room and space for people closest to the challenges—the teachers, administrators, and student support personnel—to innovate. The ability of those closest to the challenge to successfully innovate, in turn, needs to be nurtured with wide dissemination of existing evidence-based practice, seed capital, and training and support to help develop, implement, validate, and spread the innovations.

This can be achieved in part by improving, maintaining, and even expanding the existing Investment in Innovation (I3) program. Federal efforts need to go beyond this. The tiered evidence approach to funding, which provides graduated funding levels to enable both development of new innovations and the validation of existing innovations, and as well as the scaling of proven evidence-based strategies and programs needs to be built into most competitive grants. At the very least, a nudge

needs to be built into the competitive process so that applicants gain an advantage by implementing evidence-based innovations.

However, to really unshackle the American genius for innovation and help usher in an era of sustained educational improvement, the Federal Government needs to get serious about supporting an innovation and evidence agenda in both how title I funding gets spent at the school level and how it invests in developing the evidence base for Federal education programs. Some percentage of title I funds should be directed toward the development and implementation of evidence-based practices at the school and district levels. The Federal Government, in turn, could greatly expand the range and type of evidence-based practices schools could use with their title I money on to support by allocating one penny of every Federal dollar spent on education toward an evaluation system of Federal education programs to establish what works, for who, and under what circumstances. Taken together, all these actions would create a powerful continuous improvement ecosystem in which innovation, accountability, and support catalyze each other to provide all students with the learning environments and opportunities they need to become successful adults, productive workers, and engaged citizens.

Senator MURRAY. Thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Murray. Let me go to Senator Burr.

#### STATEMENT OF SENATOR BURR

Senator BURR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also want to welcome all of our witnesses today.

I want to go off of the line that Senator Murray has pursued, which is funding, and just say I've got a slightly different take, because targeted funding means no flexibility. It says, "You need this. Here's some funds to do it."

We're asked to write Federal legislation that encompasses everybody in the country. One of the proposals that the Alexander draft clearly states is an opportunity to plus-up title II by \$500 million, to fund title IV at \$1.6 billion, and to take 67 programs that are currently in those and collapse them into one pot of money, and to say to you, as superintendents, principals, educators, whatever you need in your particular school, your district, your State, we empower you to have the flexibility to do it.

If it's innovation, you can devote all the money to innovation if you want. Between title II and title IV, you can move them back and forth, so you're not limited.

Today, the way we've got it, if in North Carolina—and we do a pretty good job in North Carolina—if for some reason there's Federal money for a program we don't need, we lose out. A system is compelled to try to create that program to get that Federal money. Dedicated funding is fine, as long as it comes with flexibility, which is you decide how to best use it.

We go a step further and we decrease the burden of proof on your part, which is not dissimilar to the application that Senator Alexander has shown up there. I'm only worried about three words: innovation, creativity, and outcome. Most of you would probably agree that I probably said it in the reverse. We ought to be most concerned with outcome, and the other things contribute to a successful outcome for as many as possible.

I'd ask you to only—if you'd like to comment, comment specifically about the collapsing of 67 programs into two pots of money that are fungible and you have the flexibility to use that as long as it's used to educate children.

Ms. KESSLER. Well, Senator—

The CHAIRMAN. Let me make one suggestion. One way to bring a little order to the responses would be if you want to say something, why don't you put your name up like that.

Dr. Kessler, we'll start with you and then we'll keep going.

Ms. KESSLER. Senator Burr, I completely agree with what you're saying, and part of the reason why it's so important is because we don't want practitioners in the field to be trying to fit square needs into round funding holes, so to speak.

I have spent my entire 21-year career in two Tennessee school districts in middle Tennessee, with a 50-mile radius, so they're very close to one another. Within just that 50 miles, I've worked in a rural school, inner city schools, suburban schools, both high socio-economic levels and with many families who live in poverty. Each of the individual communities have very different needs based on the children that they serve.

I would so like to see that there is flexibility, so that way, the communities closest to children can serve their needs, even though the people next door may have different needs.

The CHAIRMAN. Ms. Duffy.

Ms. DUFFY. Competitive government grants have a huge role to play in funding innovation. Democracy Prep has benefited from the Federal CSP grant and, hopefully, others in the near future, that have allowed us to grow at a rapid pace to educate more kids on the path to college. Making them competitive allows a way for you to focus on outcomes and innovation so you can propose a way to get to the outcome that everyone agrees is the right outcome for kids. We've been able to do that.

I do think that as all of our schools qualify for title I funding that makes our program possible at the school-based level, I do think that there's a way to do both. Flexibility is incredibly important when you're talking about funding innovation.

The CHAIRMAN. Dr. Balfanz.

Mr. BALFANZ. I'm wondering if somewhere between 67 and two is the sweet spot. To get from innovation to outcomes, there needs to be just a—especially when we're spending Federal money—be a little Federal direction, not on what you do, not how you do it, but the problems you work on. For the Nation, we have to graduate all our kids from our high schools, ready for some sort of postsecondary schooling or training, or the Nation is just not going to succeed.

We're not doing right by those families, because if you can't—if you don't have that, you won't be able to support a family. If our public education system doesn't graduate you into a position to support a family, we've failed.

To do that, we have to worry about what it takes to get kids to graduate college and be career ready. We have to worry about achievement gaps, and we have to worry about the lowest performing schools, because they may or may not rise to the level of attention at any given point in time with all the local variables being weighed by people under a lot of demands to meet a lot of constituencies.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Bennet, I can tell, is ready. If I could just say it seems so sensible that a little Federal suggestion or nudge might be helpful. A Federal suggestion or nudge often ends

up in this. This is your title I application, and this is your waiver from that. It just seems to be human nature, in my view.

Senator Bennet and then we'll go to Mr. Davis.

Senator BENNET. Let Mr. Davis go first.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Davis.

Mr. DAVIS. Thank you. I come from a little different standpoint, because I don't represent a school district. We are a nonprofit organization, and I think that the Promise Neighborhoods model addresses exactly what you're talking about, innovation, outcomes, and flexibility. It was absolutely necessary that the Department of Education sort of hand down the guidelines of—these are the 10 goals that we want you to address that impact outcomes within the school setting as well as those family and community outcomes, because we know our students do not solely learn inside the school.

The results-based framework that has been provided to us and technical assistance that has helped us acquire so that we drive the alignment between the programs that we select back toward those goals—that's—and the iterative process that we follow in making sure that the performance measures for each of these programs ensure that there's some growth and trajectory toward meeting the goals that you want to is where that structure is absolutely necessary, because there have been well-intentioned people in the Mississippi Delta for a very, very long time who were doing the best they could with the resources they had and thought they were doing great jobs, but the outcomes were not there.

The flexibility that has come into play with this program and with ourselves in the Mississippi Delta is that we've been able to choose those programs that are based in evidence or promising practices and select those that are culturally competent to our geographical region and our culture and select—where is our community ready to actually embrace and implement a program across all of our partners.

The other strong component of this is a universal case management system. We use a universal data base system that's shared across all 10 of our partners, and it captures data on all 30 of our programs. Without those resources and without that sort of structure being mandated, suggested but mandated, I don't know if we'd be able to talk about our entire population, which is the goal of the Promise Neighborhoods. It's not just to impact a small segment of your community, but the entire population, and that's what we're able to do, is talk about our entire population because of the families and the high percentage of students who are enrolled in our pipeline and the outcomes that are being met through those.

The CHAIRMAN. I've got Senator Franken, but we'll let Senator Bennet make a comment, and then I'll see if—Senator Burr, do you have any followup on any of these questions or answers or responses to your question?

Senator BURR. Let me just say all of this is helpful, and, Dr. Balfanz, maybe there is a number somewhere in between. What I question is whether we're the ones to determine what those programs are. Is it four? Is it six? Is it eight?

What Ms. Taylor needs is something totally different. Dr. Kessler hit on the key that within a 50-mile radius, every school you go to, the need is a little bit different, and somebody is cheated if they

weren't included in the number that we chose or the service that was offered.

Many of the things that were talked about are outside of the funding for title II and title IV competitive grants. We're talking about a real specific 67 programs that the only way that you get money is if you offer the programs, whether you need it or not. I would tell you that that's not necessarily a fiscally sound thing to do, to say create the program so that you get the money because every superintendent or principal is pushed to.

All of this is very helpful to us.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Bennet had a comment and Senator Mikulski as well. Then we'll go to Senator Franken.

#### STATEMENT OF SENATOR BENNET

Senator BENNET. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is a very, very helpful conversation.

One of the things I worry about in the grant department here is the rural school districts who simply don't have the capacity to fill out forms like that. We shouldn't be asking urban school districts to fill out forms like that. If you're a rural school district, it's even harder. To the extent that we actually end up holding onto some of these programs, we need to figure out what it is we're going to do for rural districts to make sure they have some access to this kind of money.

I will say to Senator Burr's point that I am unaware of a connection between title II and student achievement in this country. It's not visible to me if we haven't done a good job with title II money, we haven't spent it well, and that's not to say we shouldn't have flexibility. I'm all for having flexibility, and I'm all for reducing the programs.

I guess the question I would ask the panel is of the programs that we have, which are the ones that the evidence shows have actually made a difference? We heard Mr. Davis talk about Promise Neighborhoods. I'm interested in people's thoughts on I3 grants and other kinds of grants and which of the grants and the programs have actually made a difference, because that number is somewhere below 67, and it's somewhere above zero.

You're the practitioner, so in the end, maybe we're the ones that decide which programs are there, but tell us which ones we should keep—tell us which ones we should keep is my long-winded question.

The CHAIRMAN. Ms. Duffy, do you want to—and then Senator Mikulski has a comment.

Ms. DUFFY. I3 and CSP, anything that is, again, competitive in nature that allows people to make a proposal about what they're going to do to hit a specific goal, whether it be growing the number of schools or investing in innovation, is the right vehicle. I would agree—please reduce the amount of paperwork, particularly for the consolidated application. Having filed them, everyone should probably—getting it down to 10 pages would be ideal, but unlikely.

Anything that is short and allows a school district or an operator like Democracy Prep to propose a manner to get to an outcome that we all agree is important would be the things that I would want to see increased funding for.



The CHAIRMAN. Maybe what we should do is say that every State's application for title I should be submitted by the State's U.S. Senator, and we'd have to fill this out, and then every State's application for a waiver should be submitted by the other U.S. Senator, and they'd have to fill this out.

Senator Mikulski and then—Senator Franken has been very patient. Let me go to Senator Mikulski and get Mr. Bradford's comment and go to Senator Franken.

#### STATEMENT OF SENATOR MIKULSKI

Senator MIKULSKI. First of all, Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for the wisdom of including two Marylanders today to comment, Ms. Henriette Taylor, a sister social worker working in Baltimore's very hard neighborhood, and, of course, Dr. Balfanz from the great Johns Hopkins Center for Social Organization of Schools. We thank them for coming.

I want to get to my question, but I'd like to ask Ms. Taylor a question, because in reading her testimony—and it goes to all those papers there. You said let's have a Senator submit them. Well, I would venture to say that the application would be one inch thick, and the speech accompanying it would be another 320,000. I don't know if that'll be a good idea.

[Laughter.]

Ms. Taylor, when I read your testimony, I read about 26 partnerships and all of these partnerships—I know the neighborhood very well that you're working in. It's very much where they film that show, *The Wire*, and one of the most poignant things was the children of *The Wire*.

My question to you is: With all of these partnerships, who funds all of this work? In other words, you're a community school coordinator. To do 26 partnerships—and I have an idea as another social worker here what that takes—that's a full-time job just to do the partnerships. Is that the way we want to go?

I have a reverse idea—not that we don't need you—but that we really look at something called the so-called wraparound services, which sounded like they're a luxury service—the school social worker, the school nurse. Should we then begin to think that they're integrated services and become a mandatory part of title I? You can opt out of having one, but you wouldn't have to forage and do grants, and 26 partnerships and so on, to have the basic services. What do you think? Do you need a school nurse?

Ms. TAYLOR. Desperately.

Senator MIKULSKI. Do you need a school social worker?

Ms. TAYLOR. Desperately.

Senator MIKULSKI. Do we need you?

Ms. TAYLOR. Desperately.

[Laughter.]

From my, once again, five-foot view, title I—well, let me back up—how my position is paid. It is paid through, from what I understand—and that is not my role in my partnership—but it is paid through 21st Century Grant. It is paid through also partnerships with the Family League.

If, from what I understand—if we had flexibility in funding, my principal could say, "Listen, for our school, we need this model. We

need this Promise Heights partnership. We need this community school model,” and pay for it that way. In that services, from my five-foot view—for instance, for every dollar that I understand is contributed by the State and Federal funding, I bring \$4 in in partnerships.

When we say partnerships, we are talking about, yes, the University of School Social Work, who—I have interns who I oversee, who are doing mental health—

Senator MIKULSKI. But you’re not going to have that everywhere.

Ms. TAYLOR. No.

Senator MIKULSKI. My question is that it goes to—that we need to think about a core set of programs that are available—

Ms. TAYLOR. Yes.

Senator MIKULSKI [continuing]. Through flexibility, because you’ve got several grants. You’ve got the Promise Neighborhood.

Ms. TAYLOR. Yes.

Senator MIKULSKI. I’ve yet to see where Promise Neighborhoods deliver on the promise, other than Harlem Park, and I’m being a little harsh here. It’s this grant, that grant, to then get more grants. Isn’t that our responsibility anyway? Do you see where—

The CHAIRMAN. If I may, you’re on a—the Promise Neighborhood grant is outside title I, so it’s a specific grant that you competed for and got, if I understand right.

Ms. TAYLOR. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. There’s a lot of money in title I, and there are a lot of other programs. Let me ask you this question. There is a proposal that would say you could take all your title I money, which is \$14.5 billion—well, let me ask how many children in your school, Ms. Taylor, are below the poverty level, would you say? What percent of the kids, more or less?

Ms. TAYLOR. My neighborhood is below the poverty level, so every child—

The CHAIRMAN. Every child?

Ms. TAYLOR [continuing]. Four-hundred and sixty-five students.

The CHAIRMAN. OK. What if you could take your title I money, which would average, then, \$1,300—that would be the amount of the Federal dollars for every low-income child, someone below the poverty level—and each one of those children that came to your school had pinned to them \$1,300 which you could decide how to spend in that school for that child?

Or, even more, what if you took 80 or 90 of the Federal programs and consolidated them? That would permit you to give a \$2,100 scholarship—I’m just talking public schools now, just public schools—and let each child that comes to your school have \$2,100 attached to them that you and that school could decide how to spend. That would be your Federal support for that school. How would that work?

Ms. TAYLOR. Giving some thought, once again, this is—I use the term—it’s a muddy area, right? If you’re telling or asking me how I would spend those funds, that’s not my purview. My purview is to follow the direction of my principal, to follow the needs assessments of what’s going on in that community. I couldn’t give you an answer right now.

The CHAIRMAN. Would you trust your principal to spend that money wisely for those children?

Senator MIKULSKI. Yes.

Ms. TAYLOR. Absolutely. We work in partnership, absolutely. What I provide him is to do the needs assessment, because also providing for programming that isn't needed in that school or that community, if I can be blunt, is a waste of money. What I'm trying to do is being very specific.

Let's just use the example of a daycare in my neighborhood. My neighborhood may have great afterschool care. Maybe in a different district, that's not what they need. Maybe they need a wellness clinic. Working in this partnership with my principal, with the Family League, clearly, and in my situation, Promise Heights—I could speak to it like that. Telling me, "OK. Here's X amount of dollars. What would you do with it?"—I can't honestly give you a straight answer.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, I appreciate the response.

Let me go to Mr. Bradford, Dr. Kessler, and the patient Senator Franken and then Senator Murphy. Well, let's go—Mr. Bradford, Dr. Kessler, then Senator Franken.

Mr. BRADFORD. I would just like to add to the framework piece and the Senator's 12-inch tall stack of title I and Federal NCLB applications there. Remember, this also—like in Louisiana, we have 70 school districts, and each school district is also filling out title I paperwork.

I'm going to put my teacher hat on from years back when I was at an inner city title I school for 7 years. I remember there was a day and time where I went to the principal's office and I was seeking to get a set of class magazines, like Newsweek, Time, U.S. News. It was election season, and I was teaching civics.

I remember the principal and the title I director coming back and referencing that, no, the money is in supplies and it's for printer cartridges. I said, "No, I don't need printer cartridges. I need magazines." I was told, "No, you can get toner or printer cartridges," and I said, "No, it's civics. I am engaging the students." It's a level of complexity even deeper than the State level. For our locals, it's a level of complexity.

To Ms. Duffy's point, we would just further emphasize that, also, we are in full support of competitive grants to scale the innovations in the States that are working, and perhaps with the funding, also, some flexibility around the timing of the funding, whereby we can distribute those funds to the school districts in alignment with our State dollars that flow to the school district so they could have one coherent plan.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. Bradford.

I see several things up here, but I'm going to go to Dr. Kessler and then to Senator Franken. There'll be time for everyone.

Ms. KESSLER. Senator Mikulski's point about wraparound services is essential, because there are estimates that 20 percent of the children who are in our public schools, K-12, suffer from a mental illness. It is very difficult to access providers who are psychiatric providers for children or psychological providers for children, and school social workers, school nurses, school counselors—all of those key people are in short supply.

As a principal who would be able to make some funding decisions, I would love to be able to bring more mental health professionals into my school to help work with my students.

There's also the other part about title II that I want to bring up, which is—professional development is something that is a key part of title II. As teachers are growing and evolving over their careers, we have got to provide them with up-to-date, valuable professional development, so that way, they can meaningfully integrate all of the innovation and changes that they're able to implement.

We can't do professional development as an afterthought or a line item if there's enough money, because teachers are the ones who are there with our children every single day. If you're looking for—how do we encourage innovation, professional development is how we make teachers evolve from who they are to who they will be.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Franken.

#### STATEMENT OF SENATOR FRANKEN

Senator FRANKEN. Did you get the toner, or did you get the magazines? That's my question.

Mr. BRADFORD. After a lengthy process, we got some magazines.

Senator FRANKEN. That's how I'm going to use my time here.

[Laughter.]

Boy, there's nothing more important than our kids' education. There really isn't. This conversation is both exhilarating and frustrating, because anything anyone says sparks about a million things in each of our minds. My suggestion is just get the script together, go to Camp David, like the Begin-Sadat thing, and hammer out something over several weeks. We just have to ask the president for Camp David.

I'm just going to focus on Ms. Kessler for a second, because you said so many great things. One, I can't agree with you more on mental health, and I have a mental health in schools thing that we got some—about \$55 million for. In Minnesota, I've seen mental health in schools—really important having a mental health provider in the schools—so important.

You talk about universal pre-K—love that. Here's one thing you said in your testimony, which I love. There is an old adage that states what gets measured gets done. It reminds me of something called McNamara's Fallacy, and, basically—McNamara is after Robert McNamara, and this is sort of a summary of it. The first step is to measure whatever can easily be measured. Because we're talking about these tests and just the whole—No Child Left Behind is about testing and assessment and accountability.

The second step is to disregard what can't be easily measured. We're measuring—we have these tests that aren't measuring really a lot of the stuff we need to measure, which is critical thinking, creativity, working with others.

The third step is to presume that what can't be measured easily really isn't important. My question is—and this is a different question than what we've been asking—how should we do assessments? You're saying we should keep the annual tests. I agree with that. I believe we should measure growth. I actually am for—what I've

seen in Minnesota is three tests during the year so you can measure each kid's growth, but make them low-stakes tests, in a way.

Ms. KESSLER. Right.

Senator FRANKEN. OK. You talk about portfolios, and I think that people get nervous about portfolios because portfolios are not as objective as a score. What should we be measuring? Can we create assessments—can we create tests that measure more of what we want to measure, that aren't measuring discreet little skills that get drilled and killed in the kids—the teachers have this incentive to bore kids to death, and not only that, but bore themselves to death, so that teachers aren't engaged and kids aren't engaged.

Can we design tests, can we design accountability measures that reward the kinds of teaching and the kinds of curriculum that excite kids and make kids excited to learn?

Ms. KESSLER. Senator Franken, you have several really good points in what you just said. The problem is we have so much riding on these tests that don't necessarily measure even what we value, but they do measure something, and to be honest, a standardized test measures what you don't know. It doesn't measure what you do know.

And because we have those, and there's so much riding on it, it actually can interfere with innovation, because everyone is so concerned about the implementation dip that happens when you start a new initiative—well, how will that impact this year's scores, because what we want to do with these scores is use them for judgments about children, about teachers, about schools, when, really, they're merely a snapshot of how that child performed on 1 day.

Senator FRANKEN. Yet you say that you want to keep the yearly tests.

Ms. KESSLER. I do, as a part of how we evaluate progress, in general. Just like when you take a child to the pediatrician, and they tell you, "Well, here's where they rank on their height and their weight and their head circumference as a 6-month-old"—the parent loves the child anyway, and the parent doesn't go home and say, "You're only in the 38th percentile for your head circumference. We're really hoping we get to 60th percentile by the 9-month visit."

Senator FRANKEN. I want my kid to be in the 99th percentile in head circumference.

[Laughter.]

Ms. KESSLER. The parent wants growth for the purpose of growth, not so they can say—you never hear a parent saying, "Look at my wonderful baby. He's in the 85th percentile for head circumference." They love them for loving them, and that's what we need to do more of in schools.

When you talk about ways for teachers to not bore kids, that's one of the reasons innovation is so important. One of the things that we do at Hunters Lane High School is we're addressing not just visual and auditory and tactile learners, but the technological learner, using a blended learning model where every child, every class is taught on a hybrid approach of both in-class and online, because kids want to communicate online, they want to do online shopping and online banking, and they want to be able to learn online.

There's a risk to principals and to teachers for doing any of that kind of innovation, and the risk is if there are consequences when the scores come out, then maybe we should just sit with kids and do drill and kill, and nobody's really learning anything, and that's where they get disengaged. Children drop out of school intellectually way before they drop out physically.

The CHAIRMAN. Dr. Kessler, let me give someone else a chance to respond to Senator Franken's line of questioning—who else?

Dr. McIntyre.

Mr. MCINTYRE. I'm glad to. I also wanted to jump in on the community schools conversation. Very briefly, it's really important that we have flexibility. I also think it's important that we have real local investment in programming like that, and that that buy-in is incredibly important.

When we think about the Federal investment overall, it's—Federal spending is something like 8 percent or 9 percent of overall spending on education. What you want to do is, ideally, leverage that spending for a longer and wider impact that you might have beyond just the dollars that you put in place. Personally, some of the competitive grant programs on a limited basis have been helpful in doing that.

I think Senator Franken is correct in terms of we need better assessments that really do measure what we are hoping our students are learning—critical thinking and problem solving and great writing and things of that nature. We're sort of moving in that direction. We need tests and assessments that are better aligned to the standards that we are seeking for our students to achieve.

We need to better utilize the results of those assessments in a multiple measures approach, as Dr. Kessler has suggested. I also think that there's an opportunity here for certainly keeping the Federal requirement for annual assessments, but maybe finding some opportunities for innovation. There are some interesting ideas out there, and I'm not sure I'm completely sold on all of them yet.

In some successful States, some high capacity districts, maybe we should try some different things, some of the innovative ideas around assessment or accountability that may be the type of earned autonomy that is the spirit of innovation that we're talking about.

The CHAIRMAN. These are very helpful comments, really helpful comments. I want to reemphasize the word, succinctness, as we go through, and before—Senator Casey, if you have a comment that you want to make, I'm going to go to Senator Murphy in just a minute, but—

Senator CASEY. Maybe we'll finish this thought. I was going to introduce something new.

The CHAIRMAN. OK. Well, let me go to Dr. Balfanz, and then Ms. Duffy, and Senator Murphy is next among the Senators.

Mr. BALFANZ. Just a quick thought on the testing, succinctly said. We might make progress if we think about what we should do to know if schools are on track and doing the right thing and which schools might need more help and what is right by kids, and understand we could do both, but they might not happen at the same time.

The grades that really tell us if a school is doing the right thing are the end grades of each grade level, fifth grade, eighth grade, eleventh grade. Has this school got this kid ready to succeed at the next level? That's the key question. If you're not ready to succeed at the next level, the kid is going to be in trouble. They're going to struggle.

The key is for a kid, developmentally—will I succeed as an adult—are first grade, third grade, sixth grade, and ninth grade. First grade, do I transition to school? Do I get the fundamentals of reading? Third grade, do I have my basics instead? Sixth grade, can I make the transition through adolescence and come to school and believe schooling is for me internally, not something I just do to endure? Ninth grade is when kids, if they don't make it through, they fall off track to graduate.

We need to have lots of data and lots of information in those years, but not using it for hard accountability but for things saying, like, if a lot of your kids are struggling, you should really do something about it. That's a flag, whereas maybe the fifth grade, eighth grade, eleventh grader—saying for us to know if you're doing your job, your kid should show us on a very complex test—because we're only doing it three times.

We can have a richer test, a more varied test. The reason we don't have those more varied tests is because we've got to do it every year. States had more challenging, interesting, demanding tests before NCLB because they didn't do them every year. When they had to do them every year and turn the results around really quickly, they had to go to simple tests.

Senator FRANKEN. What I heard in Minnesota from teachers, superintendents, principals was we like testing three times a year so we can see each kid's—so they're computer adaptive tests so they get the results right away so that teachers can use the results to inform their teaching—

Mr. BALFANZ. Absolutely.

Senator FRANKEN [continuing]. Which is the same as a teacher just giving a lot of quizzes.

Ms. DUFFY. That's right, absolutely, Senator Franken.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, we had testimony at the last hearing that in Florida, for example, there are only 17 Federal tests required. In Florida, there were between 8 and 200 additional tests required by State and local agencies. Senator Baldwin made the point of trying to put the spotlight on those tests.

Ms. Duffy.

Ms. DUFFY. Yes. Growth matters most. Democracy Prep has been able to take some hits on absolute proficiency in honor of growth, because that's who we want to educate. If we just look at an absolute proficiency once a year, we're not actually going to be able to meet the needs of our kids, because we won't know until June what they didn't know in January, and that doesn't make any sense.

We actually use more assessments than are mandated because we actually do want to see where kids are at various points in the year. What that allows you to do is actually use a variety of different assessments. We use the NWEA's MAP assessment, we use the State assessments, we use teacher designed assessments, exter-

nally created assessments, and they give us a better picture of where our kids are and what our teachers need to do.

Senator FRANKEN. But are low stakes.

Ms. DUFFY. I would argue that they're not entirely low stakes. They're tied to promotion and retention decisions for students, and they're tied to salary decisions for teachers in the aggregate. We always focus on growth, not absolute proficiency, and I think that that's the key indicator.

Senator FRANKEN. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Franken.

Senator Murphy, and then we want to get pretty quickly to Senator Casey.

#### STATEMENT OF SENATOR MURPHY

Senator MURPHY. Thank you very much. This is really a fantastic discussion. Most educators in my State of Connecticut would love this concept of flexibility, the idea that Washington should just send a chunk of money down to the States and let them decide what to do with it, and the natural extrapolation of that would sort of put us back where we were before NCLB.

We need to remember what was happening before NCLB was put into effect. The reality was that the act is named what it's named because there was a whole cohort of kids, millions of them, who were being left behind, who, because of the natural political pressures that play out in State capitols, weren't getting the attention that they deserved.

This is all about a midpoint and figuring out where we've gone way too far in terms of prescriptive funding, but also admitting that there are a lot of things that play out in States that aren't so good for kids who are in low performing school districts. I guess that's where I would love this discussion to go for just a minute.

My question is this: One of the things that I'm concerned about in the draft that we're working with today is that it essentially removes the idea that States should make sure to target the 5 percent or 10 percent or 15 percent of lowest performing schools and direct their efforts at trying to make those schools better. We sort of trust that States are going to do that on their own. My worry is that a lot of States weren't doing that beforehand, and we know that because the results have gotten a lot better for those schools, a lot less dropout factories.

What about the concept of preserving in a new ESEA draft—and maybe I'll ask it to Dr. Balfanz, because you talked a little bit about this in your testimony—preserving the idea that States should still have a focus on those lowest performing schools, maybe not a mandate that a specific amount of innovation funds get spent on those schools, but there should at least be some expectation that there's going to be a strategy to think about innovation in those school districts in a way that's different than how you think about school districts where, frankly, parents might be crawling around State capitols asking for the dollars to go to them.

What about that idea?

Mr. BALFANZ. Absolutely. I've been working on this problem for 20 years, and, as I said, there was lots of local innovation. Lots of people cared, lots of Governors and mayors and people did really



profound work. It was sort of the coalition of the willing, and that was sporadic over time and place. It was only really when we merit—the graduation rate accountability became real—and one great example is we worked with the State of Alabama a lot.

Everyone was—they did innovative stuff, doing this—early adopters of early warning systems. They had State PD and training. It wasn't until Federal accountability came along and said that every high school has to improve their graduation rate and, particularly, if you're below 60 percent, we're going to do something about it that that signaled to every single principal in the State that grad rates were something that mattered.

They had that infrastructure in place, but the accountability and the focus led to an incredible sense of progress. They've now made some of the biggest gains of any State over the past 4 or 5 years, because they had the local innovation, but it was married with Federal accountability, which directed them to a set of kids, a set of problems, and a set of schools that, absent that targeting, would not have happened at that scale and at that level.

Senator MURPHY. I think there was a natural political dynamic that played out, in which these kids just didn't get represented. They didn't get the focus that they needed. For all of the warts of the law, that is one of the successes, that there was some targeted investment in these kids. As we talk about this conversation around how we spend innovation dollars, I just hope that we structure this in a way that makes sure that those school districts still get the lion's share of the funds.

Mr. BALFANZ. There's one group, actually, that's going to really be in trouble if we don't do that, which are the inner-ring suburbs that have had a big gain in concentrated poverty, because they don't have the local infrastructure in place for student services. They don't have nonprofits, and they don't have any tax base. They're all decaying industrial outer-ring suburbs where people have tried to get out of the inner city to go there for a better life and are just overwhelming them with an unmet need and no capacity absent some support and direction to get better.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Casey, I'd like to get a comment on that point, if I may, from Senator Bennet and Dr. Kessler, and then maybe—do you have time for that?

Senator CASEY. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Bennet and Dr. Kessler

Senator BENNET. I would just say it's a very important observation, Senator Murphy, and also say it's not just about low performing school districts. It's also the case that NCLB has allowed us to look into high performing schools that have subpopulations of students that were being left behind, and we've got to make sure in our disaggregation of the data that we don't lose that. I think you're right, geographically, but it's also important to look into schools that are not serving folks well.

The CHAIRMAN. Dr. Kessler, and then we'll go to Senator Casey.

Ms. KESSLER. We do agree, Senator Murphy, that it has been helpful for No Child Left Behind to be able to report the data, to have everyone comparing the same exact thing with groups. However, I do challenge you and all of us to stop using terminology like

low performing schools. Schools are buildings. They house children, and there are no low performing children. There are children who have greater needs than other children for a wide variety of reasons, most compelling because they live in poverty.

Every child counts. Before we say—I wouldn't say a child is a low performing child any more than I would say that someone is a low performing politician.

[Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. Well, we have some of those.

[Laughter.]

Ms. KESSLER. I'm just saying we have to realize all children are our children, and what we do to children, they do to society. We do not, as a society, want to walk around categorizing the schools where children attend as low performing, because what we're actually doing is pointing the finger at the children whose needs we are not meeting.

Senator MURPHY. Regardless of the terminology, we've got to figure out some way to have accountability. There has to be some labeling.

Senator MURRAY. How would you make sure that we are really looking at the greatest need students for a Federal goal of making sure that every child has access to education?

Ms. KESSLER. No. 1, growth, absolutely, instead of comparing children who live in poverty to children who do not live in poverty when we know there's differences. Using the tests merely as one level—part of the community schools model is also trying to meet the needs of children's social and emotional needs—the whole idea of educating the whole child and looking at that from a wide variety of lenses and not simply through the testing lens.

What's happened is, just like Senator Franken said, because you can test something and you can do it easily and you can get the data back, it makes people think, "Well, that's worth measuring." There's so much that's going on in American schools that's wonderful, and we're not capturing any of that, and that's how kids are being saved.

Teen pregnancy, dropouts—those are the kids who didn't get saved. We have no data on the millions of kids who are saved every day in American public schools.

Mr. MCINTYRE. I would suggest that if we have rigorous standards in all 50 States, if we have good information about how students are progressing toward those standards, if we have clear accountability systems that are aligned to those standards in all 50 States, it's going to highlight where we are being successful and where the challenges are. I think in that context, then we can give broad flexibility around educational strategies and solutions to States and local districts, but make sure that we're shining a light on how all kids are progressing.

The CHAIRMAN. I want to go to Ms. Taylor and then to the patient Senator Casey.

Ms. TAYLOR. Just to followup with Dr. Kessler, I often hear about testing, testing, testing. We're testing the children against—children who have and the children who have not, and I absolutely think Dr. Kessler—we use the words, low-income, low-achieving, right? These aren't how our children are defined.

One thing I want to talk about is that we have these community school models, these Promise Neighborhood models, who address some of those issues, who talk about these wraparound services, who—if we had testing to talk about social-emotional needs, we could then—people like myself—we have little Taylor in class who maybe, academically, isn't doing so well.

A community school model talks about a community school coordinator working together with the principal, with the teacher, seeing, well, maybe it's because there has been a change in the family dynamic. Maybe mom has had a surgery. That way, this community school model, the community school coordinator can come in and assist with that so that we're meeting the needs of those children, not just academically, but socially and emotionally.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Ms. Taylor.  
Senator Casey.

#### STATEMENT OF SENATOR CASEY

Senator CASEY. That couldn't have been a better segway—thank you, Mr. Chairman—because I was going to direct my question to you, Ms. Taylor. In the interest of—we have limited time, and we're charged to be succinct. In the interest of commendation in connection with your work, I noted on page 4 of your testimony—I know a lot of you didn't get a chance to—it's not the setting to go through all the testimony.

You're talking about significant positive changes in implementing infant mortality reduction programs—

Ms. TAYLOR. Yes.

Senator CASEY [continuing]. Increasing the number of toddlers enrolled in early Head Start and Head Start, improving test scores at one elementary school from 34 percent to 96 percent in 3 years by bringing in Head Start and early Head Start, all of that under the broad umbrella of developing the whole child and getting results.

I was struck by what you said, though, on page 5 of your testimony when you talked about other indicators, and you said in that second full paragraph, and I'm quoting here,

“I must be able to identify and report results beyond academic achievement to indicators for health and wellness, discipline, attendance, and family engagement.”

Just on those four—more of a narrow question—what would you hope that we would do in this reauthorization that would get at or support what you presented there in terms of those other indicators, in terms of how you measure them, and how you support growth in those indicators?

Ms. TAYLOR. If you could clarify, what you're asking is how would we go about measuring the attendance, the health and the wellness?

Senator CASEY. In other words, if you say that these indicators are important, how do you think we can help when we're working on reauthorizing this bill or this law to help you do that?

Ms. TAYLOR. Well, it's to talk about those services, right? Attendance, health and wellness—those are barriers, and so to talk about addressing the barriers of those things. We know that—for in-

stance, attendance—that attendance from kindergarten—so we have a kindergarten student, little Taylor, who is having trouble with attendance. That affects third grade reading scores, and we know third grade reading scores can—there’s a direct correlation with high school dropout.

If we have services, wraparound services, programming, we talk about attendance then from a family dynamic, because we know kindergarteners and Pre-Ks—they’re not bringing themselves to school. It’s a family issue.

Models like the models I work with and community school models and community school coordinators—we then go in, and we help families. Maybe it’s a bedtime routine, or something so simple as mom has had twins and now she has a new baby. How do we get a bedtime routine? Talking about services that provide more than just the school being an academic place, that the school is the hub of the community.

To talk about health—using the example of immunizations, this year, kindergarten, seventh grade in Baltimore City, we had new immunizations. We had 77 students in my community who weren’t immunized. What does that mean for wraparound services?

As a community school coordinator, I was able to call my partners, the school of medicine, get doctors and nurses to come in, and then to provide those immunizations at the school—had my school of social workers go knocking on mom and dad’s door—“Hey, you know what? Little Taylor needs her shots. Can you come in so we can have consent?” Those children were allowed to continue to go to class, because without those immunizations, they wouldn’t have been allowed in. So we talk about these wraparound services.

How do you measure wraparound services? One of my challenges is we need to talk about real time data, so that’s my term. It’s not a fancy term. I need to be able to access the school’s data so that when I know those immunizations are due, and if by September 26th they’re not in, and those children haven’t been immunized, then I’m going to be able to go the week before and not the week later or that day, scrambling.

When we talk about the wellness, we’re talking about social-emotional wellness. Those wraparound services don’t just happen for the children in my school. They happen for the families. If mom, unfortunately, had a moment and is incarcerated, and little Taylor has to go move in with grandma, but grandma is in a different district, how do I make that transition work? Once again, wraparound services.

With the partnerships like Judy Center, with the partnerships, for instance, like KaBOOM! and Laureate, that gave us playgrounds, those services, then, is how we can really focus on that such critical piece, not just the academics.

Senator CASEY. I’d just make one more point, because I know we have to move on. The points in your testimony that you make about early learning are critical. They’re part of what we’re trying to do here as well. It’s been a new venture for some people. I believe that if kids learn more now, they’re going to earn more later, and that’s not just a rhyme. It happens to be true.

I’m grateful that you’re showing how this works on the ground. We’ve just got to figure out ways to support what you’re doing.

Senator MIKULSKI. We need wraparound services.

The CHAIRMAN. Thanks, Senator Casey.

Why don't we go for a quick comment to Mr. Davis and Dr. Balfanz, and then let's go to Senator Whitehouse. We have about 20 or 25 minutes, and I'd like to conclude by giving all the witnesses a minute to summarize and say what they have wanted to say but haven't had a chance to say, and then Senator Murray and I will finish. We'll conclude before noon.

Mr. Davis and Dr. Balfanz.

Mr. DAVIS. Sure, and this might use my minute right now. This is the perfect segway, because I was additionally going to respond to Senator Murphy and Dr. Kessler and the question by Senator Casey and then the followup by Ms. Taylor. I couldn't concur with her more.

You spoke about innovation and what could be done for those schools that some would term low performing, others would term as students in need. In a rural community, similar to the urban communities Dr. Balfanz is talking about, a lot of times, we don't have the resources in place in our school system. The personnel is not there.

If you gave the money directly to the schools and allowed them or expected them to make the changes, we can't do it by ourselves in a small community. We have under 11,000 people in our community. It takes this collaborative approach, which is embedded in the Promise Neighborhood model. It sounds like it's very similar to community schools with Ms. Taylor. It takes this collective body of faith-based organizations, local government, the school district, nonprofits, the healthcare community to actually come together as a community to make some real changes, because standing alone, the district cannot do it by themselves.

To answer your question about what should you do in terms of reauthorization of the bill, you should take into account communities that look like ours, that look like Baltimore's, where those resources in the school district alone are not going to make the difference, and it does take a collective approach.

I came to talk about data today and outcomes. That is the entire framework of the Promise Neighborhoods community. Everything that we do is data-driven.

You talked about real time. We use one universal case management system, as I talked about, which is a directive that's shared across all partners, and we're able to make the same sorts of referrals out, where a healthcare provider that knows that a child has not had their followup visit can reach back out to someone on our staff, so that our family advocate goes to that home and makes sure that that child has that visit. By the time they get to kindergarten, they are prepared and in a healthy enough balance.

That's my response to your question, and I think there's a resemblance between the urban sort of challenge as well as the rural challenge.

The CHAIRMAN. Dr. Balfanz.

Mr. BALFANZ. Yes. I just have a very quick comment to say what also might be done in the reauthorization to help with these wrap-around supports and meeting the nonacademic needs of students. One thing for title I schools would be to say that to nudge them

to collect data just for themselves, not to share, not for accountability, but to say you need to know the health and wellness needs of your students.

Above all, you need to know what their chronic absenteeism rates are. We don't measure chronic absenteeism, just missing a month or more of school. In our high-needs neighborhoods, in kindergartens, 20 percent, 30 percent, 40 percent of the kids are missing a month or more of school. In the high-needs high schools, half the kids are missing a month or more of school.

We all get that if you miss a month or more of school, how can you succeed in that school year. We don't measure that, because all we're asked to measure is average daily attendance—how many kids in the building on a given day. It's one of those crazy places where our numbers fail us.

You can have a 90 percent ADA. You think that's pretty good. I'm in the 90s—hard wire—90 is an A, right? A 90 percent ADA, and a fifth year kid could be missing a month or more of school, and we don't know it because we don't measure it. Those kids that are missing a month or more of school are the kids that need those services. Until we know exactly what it is at each school, we don't know how many services we need.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Whitehouse.

#### STATEMENT OF SENATOR WHITEHOUSE

Senator WHITEHOUSE. Thank you, Chairman. Thank you for hosting this. I'll start by acknowledging what Senator Murphy said, which is that this whole exercise began with the recognition that there were kids who simply weren't being heard, particularly in State legislatures. Their voices weren't coming through the politics, and they were, in fact, getting left behind.

Solving that has created a second set of problems. That's life. You move forward to your next set of problems. The set of problems that I see and hear about a lot in Rhode Island is how inefficient the testing burden is. My last meeting with educators—testing gone mad was one phrase, 42 days of testing in 1 year, and January is hell month in schools because of testing. Those are the kinds of feedback phrases I was getting.

I don't think we've done a very efficient job of picking out of the testing problem when we're testing kids, when we're testing the testing of kids to make sure it's legit, when we're testing schools, when we're testing populations through disaggregation, and when we're testing States. I would urge anyone who is concerned about this and wants to be in touch with me offline to let me know of any ideas they have either to better use existing testing or to take questions and embed them in classroom testing so you don't have the discrepancy between a test that the kids know counts for them versus one that they know only counts for the school.

We've got to do a lot better. The testing burden not only has the problem of taking away class days and shutting down computer bandwidth on the days of the testing for all classes and putting that burden on the school, but then it has the secondary effect of everybody tracks toward passing the oxymoronically named English language arts literacy part test or the mathematics part test.

As Dr. Kessler pointed out, there are kids who you don't reach if you go right at them with "Here's your English language arts literacy curriculum, and here's your mathematics curriculum." Some of them you get to because they've got a gift for music. Some of them you get to because they've got a gift for drawing. Some of them you get to because they've got a gift for building things or working in a lab. When all that gets stripped out so that people can focus entirely on the other things, that combination has created a huge sacrifice on the part of those kids that we need to address.

I don't want to take more time on this. We've done a lot of talking. I wanted to invite any comments and recommendations that people have, because this is a big part of our task in this bill.

The second thing that I'd say, particularly with respect to what Dr. Balfanz was saying about kids who simply don't show up for 30 days in a year—in Rhode Island, we were seeing that starting to take off in middle school. I don't know of any way that a kid who has gone 30 or 60 days truant in middle school or has become pregnant in middle school or has joined a gang in middle school or has ceased development in reading in middle when they get to high school is going to succeed.

I hope that one of the things we can look at in this bill is the Success in the Middle Act, which we've had for this committee and has passed it once already, to push back to the feeder schools and try to get those kids before they get lost to truancy and some of those other threats, because for some kids, unfortunately, getting to them in high school is just too late.

The CHAIRMAN. May I ask as you respond to Senator Whitehouse's first question, why is there all the concern about over-testing when the Federal Government only requires 17 tests? The superintendent of Denver was in here a couple of weeks ago, and he said that if you have one test in reading and one test in math for a third grader, it shouldn't take more than 4 hours. Yet we have this explosion of resistance to over-testing.

Where is that coming from? Is it coming from the setting up of the what is success, what is failure, and what are the consequences, or is it coming from the tests?

Anyone who would like to respond to Senator Whitehouse, including Senators?

Mr. BALFANZ. Where a lot of those tests exploded on the ground was people's nervousness about the accountability, because if I'm going to be accountable at the end of the year for all my kids and all my subgroups meeting these targets, which are getting bigger every year, how do we know we're on track unless we do lots of testing in front of that with the benchmarks to let us know if we're making progress. If I don't do any testing in between, it feels like a crap shoot at the end of the year if we're going to make it or not.

The CHAIRMAN. You're saying that the concern about testing comes from the requirements about here's what a definition of success is, here's what a definition of failure is, and here's what the consequences of that are.

Mr. BALFANZ. People feeling that in many cases they are being asked to make a miracle happen and, therefore, to make sure they had a chance, they want to do lots of testing before that.

Senator WHITEHOUSE. A lot of lead-in testing, a lot of preparatory testing, a lot of training testing to get people ready for the big one that might take the school down if they got it wrong.

Mr. BALFANZ. Right.

Senator FRANKEN. Teaching to take a test.

Mr. MCINTYRE. It's important for us to acknowledge that there's a Federal requirement, there are often State requirements, there are local district requirements, and there's sometimes school or classroom assessments that are happening. A lot of the concern or pushback on over-testing comes from not just a single—any one of those single requirements, but from the combination of those.

We have a responsibility at the local level, at the State level, to really take a hard look at that and to make sure that we aren't over-testing. There is a real value to assessment in the broad sense in the teaching and learning cycle. We teach children a particular concept or a skill, and then we check to see if they understood, and if they got it, and if our teaching is effective.

We do need to be careful and look very closely at whether the combination of all those requirements is having a detrimental effect at the local level and the State level.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Murray.

Senator MURRAY. Can I ask this question a little differently? We have spent a lot of time on this testing question because it's kind of like the icon of No Child Left Behind. Yet No Child Left Behind is about a lot of other things, as Senator Murphy talked about, making sure that we don't leave kids behind, truly, that we do teach to all kids. We've heard a lot about all the social services and different circumstances that get us there.

We've heard a lot of people say it's important to keep the annual testing so we have that knowledge, but without the high-stakes consequences that if you don't reach some mandate that you can't reach, your school is a failure. How do we keep in Federal law that focus on making sure we have the knowledge, whether it's teachers or parents or us as a country, that we're reaching really important goals without some kind of consequence? What is that key there that keeps us from fighting this?

Ms. KESSLER. Well, I agree with what you're saying. I don't think the consequence is what should be motivating the actions of teachers and schools and districts. One of the things that we do in metropolitan Nashville is we have what's called the Academic Performance Framework, which takes into account a school's test scores, a school's growth. There are several factors, including survey data from students and from parents and from teachers, so that way, it provides a more holistic approach.

Part of the reason why there's so much resistance across the country and discussion about this over-reliance on tests is because in many communities in different States, the tests are being used as a weapon, and they're being used as a weapon against schools, against teachers, against principals and districts, even if it's only in social circles. Even organizations—realtors will try to sell you a home based on, oh, this school because of this versus this school.

None of that was intended in No Child Left Behind. You can have the testing without the sanctions, because the testing is the benchmark we need to help measure student growth as one way.



We don't need sanctions and lists of failing schools or successful schools. We don't need weapons against the educators who are working so hard to get kids to be proficient.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Murray, do you have anything more?

Senator MURRAY. It's the battle we're fighting here, which is the original bill put in the testing and accountability because a lot of kids were being left behind, and nobody here wants to go back to that. We want the knowledge, but what's the key to make sure that we are using the knowledge that we get in a way that makes sure we're helping our students and not leaving a lot of kids behind.

Senator FRANKEN. Didn't Dr. Balfanz basically say—I'm sorry.

The CHAIRMAN. No, go ahead, Senator.

Senator FRANKEN. Didn't you basically say that all this talk is well and good, but the fact of the matter is that when that accountability came into place, that's when this action happened? Isn't that what you sort of said?

Mr. BALFANZ. Well, but on the other hand, the flip side of it is the accountability has led to really massive progress among kids who were ignored in the past. The number of low-income and minority kids graduating is way up. The number of low-income and minority kids scoring at the lowest levels of achievement is way down. The number of kids, minority and low-income, getting an AP test is up.

So that's the balance. It actually had significant impacts for the kids it was intended to, and it had significant unintended consequences for a lot of other folks. It's getting that balance right, and that's what I was trying to—the idea that we need to keep that accountability, but maybe it's not the every year, every group, which was just the unending pressure that just wore people down, but saying if the key accountability years are like fifth grade, eighth grade, eleventh grade, but we still keep collecting the data all the other years for all its good purposes.

Senator MURRAY. We don't get so—

Mr. BALFANZ. Maybe even expand more collecting data, so some this stuff about chronic absenteeism and health and wellness. It's all used much more formatively to help kids and help schools. Instead of saying you're in trouble, it's just saying which schools need extra help. That's legitimate to say you've been identified as in need of extra help, because probably the needs of your kids outweigh the capacities you were given. Everyone's got to know that and rally around it.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, Dr. Balfanz, who, then, is going to say—assuming you give the tests, collect the data, publish it, disaggregate it, everybody knows it, who, then, is going to say, "This is success. This is failure. This is the consequence for this school and this teacher." That's all in this. That's the Federal definition.

Mr. BALFANZ. With some gentle guidelines and not that level regulation, it could be left to the States to do largely with their State university systems, because the end goal for the kids who graduate from a public education system in a State—are they prepared to succeed in their State's university education system. That's democracy. Go to a public school. You're ready for a public university.

The States can use that to figure out—that’s where we need our kids to be to succeed in our public universities. What do they need to do at the end of high school, at the end of middle school to be ready for that, and even at elementary school? That gives the States the thing to say what it is, but just some Federal nudging and guidelines along the way to make sure that all kids are in that.

The CHAIRMAN. As I said earlier, this is what you give Federal—

Mr. BALFANZ. Ten pages, not a thousand.

Mr. MCINTYRE. Senator, we expect our teachers to—

The CHAIRMAN. Let me go to Ms. Duffy.

Mr. MCINTYRE. Oh, I’m sorry.

Ms. DUFFY. A couple of things in this, and I’m sorry that we’re getting to this so late as I get more and more animated. I agree with so many of the points made. In New York City, the DOE has a performance—or had a performance metric that looked at growth, absolute proficiency, school environment through surveys and other data that really captured a whole picture of how a school was doing.

Ultimately, there’s another metric that is even more compelling out of New York City, and it’s the aspirational performance measurement, and it looks at exactly what you’re saying, Dr. Balfanz. It looks at your scores on regents tests and predicts how you will do in the SUNY and CUNY schools across the State and the city and says, “Will you require remediation when you get to college when you have graduated a New York City public school?”

If you, indeed, require remediation, then we have to be able to say and be willing to say that that school is not successful with that kid yet. It doesn’t mean that it’s a binary proficiency or not proficiency, but it does mean that we have to measure outcomes, because without those outcomes, we know what happens to our kids. They are not successful in college, and then they’re not successful in life.

We have to be prepared to say, “This is not meeting expectations. This is, in fact, failing our kids.” Not that our kids are failing, but our adults are failing our kids. Looking at a sophisticated data metric that doesn’t just honor proficiency but looks at growth, looks at attendance, looks at the softer data that actually represents a school community will do so much good for our schools and our kids.

The CHAIRMAN. I’m going to ask Senator Murray if she has any—would you like to wait until the end?

Senator MURRAY. I’ll wait until the end.

The CHAIRMAN. Why don’t we ask each of the witnesses if you had one more word you’d like for us to remember as we go away from here today—and I’ll invite you after you’ve heard this, or after you go home and say, “I wish I had said X, Y, or Z,” to write it down and send it to us, and we’ll read it. This has been very helpful to me, and I imagine to every one of the Senators.

If you had one more word to say to the Senators that are around the table today—and I’d like to ask you to especially think about—if we have the tests, if we have annual tests, and if they’re disaggregated, and so we know all that, then who decides what is

success, what is failure, and what you do about it? Do you do that here? Do you do it in Nashville? Do you do it at the school level? That's the thing we don't have a consensus about yet. Why don't we just go around the table?

Ms. KESSLER. Well, it's my belief that innovation results not only in having vision for the future, but feeling some level of safety in the present. If the purpose of school is to educate our youth, then we have to stop using one test on 1 day to sort and select kids or to burn teachers or schools or districts, because all of those people who are involved in the education of children have good intentions. They leave their own children every day to take care of the children of the American people.

We've really got to work on making sure that we recognize their contribution and that we continue to work with teachers and not use social pressure to blame them.

The CHAIRMAN. Dr. McIntyre.

Mr. MCINTYRE. Thank you, Senator. It's important that the Federal Government ensure that each and every one of our 50 States has rigorous expectations and standards, not that they dictate what those are, but every State has those. Once we do that, if we continue to have a requirement for annual assessments that we have—data and information about how our kids are doing—and then making sure also that States have reasonable accountability systems that aren't necessarily punitive, but developmental, that are reasonably tied to those standards and reasonably tied to the State objectives.

That's probably the structure that we would like to see happen so that we could allow for the kind of flexibility that we want to see in our schools, in our districts, and in our States. That will enable the kind of innovation that we want to see and that we see across the country in terms of great things happening in schools and in classrooms across the country, and want to make sure that that innovation is there to support great teaching and great learning for our students.

The CHAIRMAN. Dr. Balfanz.

Mr. BALFANZ. Well, first, I want to say that I think it's actually a very exciting time to be reauthorizing ESEA, not so much for the stuff going on around it, but the sheer fact that we know so much more now than we did 15 years ago, and that can really help us create a much more impactful ESEA that really spurs the innovation spirits of our teachers and administrators, but also focuses them to the biggest challenges and highest needs.

My biggest learning in this thing is that we know there's this subset of middle and high schools that fundamentally are over-matched for the challenges they face, and they need to combine evidence-based, whole school improvements in teaching and learning with evidence-based enhanced student support. First, they have to have a good lesson every day, and that's really hard to do in that environment. If the kids aren't there, if they can't focus, if they can't do the work, like so much of that effort has dissipated—it's both/together. It's not either/or.

My magic wand would say what we would do is we would go right to where the money is, go to title I, and say that some portion of that, in exchange for a lot of this freedom from regulation, to

pare that way down, you're going to get a lot more freedom to solve the problem as you know best, because you know it best. Some portion of that money has got to be used to support evidence-based strategies for teaching and learning and evidence-based strategies for student supports.

The bound is the evidence base. Within that, you can pick anything that works for you, but you can't pick anything you think works with a portion of that money, because there's a lot of wisdom and a lot of knowledge that's been built, and we need to fast forward into the knowledge frontier and not have you reinvent the wheel by just being innovative.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Dr. Balfanz.

Ms. Taylor.

Ms. TAYLOR. From my lens, with the innovative approaches like Promise Neighborhoods and the community school approach, allowing those wraparound services to support the child's well-being, mental health, nutrition, and so forth—so that the educators can then do their jobs, which is educate. Right now, we're asking them to do a Herculean task. Providing those supports, providing those models that offer those wraparound services so that when little Taylor gets into her third grade math class, her teacher can then teach math.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Davis.

Mr. DAVIS. Well, again, our position as a nonprofit—I don't think we are in a position to say who defines the success or how many assessments. The truth is we're going to work within the confines of when the assessment is taken. We're going to collect the data, and we're going to make decisions that are based on the data.

What I do want to say is in those communities that are rural—in their settings that look like ours, and they're small—it has to be a collective approach. It has to be a framework that is based on outcomes, that is based on evidence-based practices, and very strong leadership in these communities in order to drive their populations toward real goals and real changes that are embraced by the whole community.

Whatever the assessment is, we're just committed to collecting that data and making decisions based on that data so that we're driving toward our trajectory of growth.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. Davis.

Ms. Duffy.

Ms. DUFFY. Thank you for this roundtable. It's been an honor and a privilege. The students who have benefited most from Democracy Prep are the same ones who benefited most from the ESEA and its original iteration. Any future iteration has to be mindful of ensuring that we don't leave our students that are in urban centers, in rural districts, that are right now projected to have single digit rates of graduation—we don't leave those kids behind because we're afraid to push forward for accountability and data.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Bradford.

Mr. BRADFORD. I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to be here today, Senator. As a parent of three children in the public school system and an educator, I'd like to say that we should preserve the annual assessments and the accountability. The measure-

ment is what's going to allow us to know whether or not our innovative programs are working. We need to stay committed to the results. We need to stay committed to supporting and helping our students with needs, especially those that are in disadvantaged situations.

I wouldn't categorize the assessments as weapons. Rather, I'd categorize them as a tool that's driving innovation for school choice, course access, and transparency for parents and students so that they're going to get the education that they deserve.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Franken, Senator Whitehouse, do you have any last words before we go to Senator Murray?

Senator WHITEHOUSE. Only one of appreciation for the helpful way in which this roundtable has enabled us to have this conversation, and I look forward to continuing to work with the committee going forward.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Franken.

Senator FRANKEN. I just like what the doctor said, that this is a good time to reauthorize this because we know so much, and so much more than we did 13 or 14 years ago, and that we should really be cognizant of what we have learned as we do this.

Thank you all, and it's a privilege to be here. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Murray.

Senator MURRAY. Well, this has been a really excellent conversation, and we focused a lot on the testing. There isn't anybody who wants to have that pile of paper in front of them. I do think that this has really highlighted one of the important factors we can't forget, that if we just say forget it, all has been bad under No Child Left Behind, we could end up at a place where those kids who are the most disadvantaged, who have the toughest time at home or—and all the wraparound services that you're talking about that they need, or whether they came to school, or what happened at home last night—will get lost once again. We do not want to go back to that.

The balance and how we get there and how we define real American goals, those goals that every child—no matter who they are or where they come from or how they learn or what happens at home at night—has the opportunity that's so important to that American ideal. It's something that we all have to continue to strive for, and in redoing No Child Left Behind, we have to keep that goal in mind and how we achieve that. This conversation has been very, very important.

Mr. Chairman, you will note that our Democratic members are very interested in getting this right, and we want to work in a bipartisan way. We want to really incorporate those really important goals and do it in a way that we can have a good conversation after this reauthorization runs out 10 years from now that doesn't take us back to 30 years ago.

The CHAIRMAN. Thanks, Senator Murray. I think we all want that. You've said it very well, and I appreciate the way that you and your staff have worked so that we can move along on this.

Our job as Senators is to try to narrow the issues and see if we can develop a consensus about what to do. It's good to make a speech, and we've been doing that for 6 years now on the subject,

and I think we've narrowed the issues, and we need to come to a conclusion about it.

For me, the biggest area where we need to get a consensus is on the question of accountability. If we were to have the Federal tests, if we were to just aggregate the results and publish them, if we take an idea like Senator Baldwin's and put the spotlight on all the extra tests that State and local governments may be requiring, then the question remains who decides what to do about the tests. What is success, what is failure, and what do you do about that success or failure?

My very strong bias is you can't do that from here. It has to be done in the community where the children are. While there are a great many good things that have come out of No Child Left Behind, one thing that hasn't worked very well is the Federal definition of what succeeds, what fails, and what the consequence is. It sounds to me like that may be the source of a lot of the problems. We have a ways to go before we finish it.

Let me invite all of the witnesses to submit additional information if they would like.

Senators, if you'd like to submit additional information and questions to our witnesses for the record, please do that.

Next Tuesday, at 10 o'clock, our committee will hold a hearing on the Reemergence of Vaccine Preventable Diseases: Exploring the Public Health Successes and Challenges. In other words, what do we do about the measles outbreak, and what does that mean for us in terms of public health, public schools, and our community?

Thank you for being here today. Thank you, Senator Murray.

The committee will stand adjourned.

[Additional Material follows.]

## ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS OF SENATOR HATCH AND SENATOR MURKOWSKI  
BY JAMES M. MCINTYRE, JR., B.A., M.S., PH.D.

SENATOR HATCH

*Question 1.* Today I am introducing the “21st Century Classroom Innovation Act of 2015” with my colleagues Senator Rubio and Representative Rodgers. This bill would amend title II to allow States to use a portion of their funds to award grants to local education agencies that have applied to use the funds for blended learning projects. For districts that do not have the technological infrastructure, these funds could be used as a one-time investment in the necessary tools. This is an extremely exciting and promising model for ensuring we catch all of our children in the classroom, and I am glad we have witnesses here who have real experience with this in their schools. I am especially interested in how blended learning models may be used to provide real-time feedback to teachers on students’ understanding of subject matter.

Dr. McIntyre, I believe the ability to harness technology in a classroom can lead to great changes, but as we have seen, it is only as beneficial as it is understood. That is why my bill allows funds for blended learning implementation to be used for ongoing professional development for teachers and training them in new programs and software. How important are professional development strategies specifically to support blended learning, and which approaches have teachers in high-performing blended learning schools found most valuable?

Answer 1. Senator Hatch, you have really hit the nail on the head here. I would contend that pervasive instructional technology (such as is available in a blended learning or “1:1” environment) can be incredibly beneficial and even transformational academically, because it allows our teachers to provide even more creative, innovative, engaging and effective instruction. Ironically, such technology implementations are not really about the technology at all . . . they are about what our teachers and what our students can do with the technology! These types of electronic learning devices (computers or tablets in the classroom) are, at their best, a powerful teaching tool and a powerful learning tool. Therefore, it has been our experience in the Knox County Schools that professional development and support is absolutely critical to the success of any instructional technology implementation. It is particularly important to have professional development experiences that are facilitated by educators themselves who are experts in technology, pedagogy and content knowledge. Therefore, I would enthusiastically support the concept that you have outlined for your bill.

SENATOR MURKOWSKI

*Question 1.* What if Congress gives States free rein to innovate, but the innovations do not work? Should Congress ask States or school districts to show progress toward meeting the goals of the innovation within a certain specified timeframe?

Answer 1. Senator Murkowski, I believe there must be both rigorous academic standards and expectations in each State, and an accountability system that is reasonably related to achieving those standards. When schools or districts do not meet their expectations, the specific interventions or consequences should be defined in the individual States’ accountability systems. I believe the Federal role should be to ensure high standards in each State (but not dictate what those standards should be), to ensure an accountability system is adopted by each State that is appropriately aligned to achieving the State’s standards (but not dictate what that accountability system should look like) and to provide some assurance that the States are actually implementing the accountability system that they adopted.

*Question 2.* Please provide one or more examples of a requirement in ESEA or a rule promulgated by the U.S. Department of Education that has made it impossible for you to implement an innovative action that you believe would be helpful to the children you serve. How would you propose that the committee change or eliminate that requirement?

Answer 2. Senator, My written testimony to the committee contains two examples: (1) a challenge we had because two partner agencies could not use 21st century grant dollars to serve kids in the same physical location, and (2) a lamentable bureaucratic focus on compliance monitoring rather than supporting innovation and educational success. The proposed solution to both is simply to provide greater flexibility to States and districts to spend Federal funds in ways that best support the education of their children. At a minimum, this kind of flexibility should be offered

to States and districts with a demonstrated record of effective use of funds and academic success.

RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS OF SENATOR MURKOWSKI BY KATIE DUFFY

*Question 1.* What if Congress gives States free rein to innovate, but the innovations do not work? Should Congress ask States or school districts to show progress toward meeting the goals of the innovation within a certain specified timeframe?

Answer 1. Congress should absolutely mandate that States, school districts and charter operators demonstrate progress toward meeting goals within a certain timeframe in exchange for the funding to be innovative. In the proposal, much like in the competitive grants process, like Charter Schools Program, it should be clear that part of any successful proposal would be interim metrics that demonstrate progress toward goals.

*Question 2.* Please provide one or more examples of a requirement in ESEA or a rule promulgated by the U.S. Department of Education that has made it impossible for you to implement an innovative action that you believe would be helpful to the children you serve. How would you propose that the committee change or eliminate that requirement?

Answer 2. Democracy Prep has not found that any of the rules or requirements promulgated by the U.S. Department of Education made it impossible to implement innovative action, but there are several that have hindered innovation. In addition to the Consolidated Application for title funding being unnecessarily onerous, there are also several specific rules, requirements and/or definitions that challenge innovative implementation.

***Supplement not supplant***

The requirement that all funds supplement but do not supplant existing funding is unnecessary; giving operators the freedom to manage their budgets in a way that best serves their students is essential. Insert example!

***Title III Threshold for Disbursement***

Charter Schools are defined as LEAs for the purposes of title funding, and as such, student populations can be as small as 50–100 students in certain years. This is problematic because there is a \$10,000 threshold for disbursement of title III funding and in the event that a district or LEA does not meet the threshold, they are unable to avail themselves of any funding to support English Language Learners. Elimination of this threshold would allow small districts and charter schools to better educate ELL students.

RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS OF SENATOR MURKOWSKI BY KEN BRADFORD

*Question 1.* What if Congress gives States free rein to innovate, but the innovations do not work? Should Congress ask States or school districts to show progress toward meeting the goals of the innovation within a certain specified timeframe?

Answer 1. States should deliver on student achievement, and Federal funds awarded should in part be predicated on demonstrated student outcomes. To that end, States should also articulate long-term performance objectives and annual benchmarks along the way. *States that cannot achieve the performance goals entailed in their plans should receive fewer funds.* The Federal guidelines should both call for State accountability systems that commit to results, especially among historically disadvantaged students, and allow States to innovate on measures themselves. In Louisiana, our accountability system is evolving to include not just grade level proficiency and graduation rates, but also real-world college and career attainment measures such as Advanced Placement results, dual enrollment credit, and post-secondary employment attainment. Louisiana's system is also evolving toward greater incorporation of individual student progress as a way of measuring school and district performance.

*Question 2.* Please provide one or more examples of a requirement in ESEA or a rule promulgated by the U.S. Department of Education that has made it impossible for you to implement an innovative action that you believe would be helpful to the children you serve. How would you propose that the committee change or eliminate that requirement?

Answer 2. There is currently a fragmented Federal structure that gives each title and grant program its own bureaucracy that gets replicated in every State agency and district school office in the country. This fragmentation is one of the greatest barriers to progress. There needs to be continued work that provides a coherent plan for schools and clear direction for States. States need to be able to focus on achiev-



ing large statewide goals versus singular programmatic goals in silos of work. In Louisiana, we have condensed 26 Federal grants into one common application for dollars from school districts. *Focusing on large statewide goals with spending flexibility allow States and districts to spend on critical services central to their plans for change.*

RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS OF SENATOR HATCH AND SENATOR MURKOWSKI  
BY SUSAN KESSLER

SENATOR HATCH

*Question.* Today I am introducing the “21st Century Classroom Innovation Act of 2015” with my colleagues Senator Rubio and Representative Rodgers. This bill would amend title II to allow States to use a portion of their funds to award grants to local education agencies that have applied to use the funds for blended learning projects. For districts that do not have the technological infrastructure, these funds could be used as a one-time investment in the necessary tools. This is an extremely exciting and promising model for ensuring we catch all of our children in the classroom, and I am glad we have witnesses here who have real experience with this in their schools. I am especially interested in how blended learning models may be used to provide real-time feedback to teachers on students’ understanding of subject matter.

Dr. Kessler, teachers are not often able to utilize what they learn about individual students from the traditional testing system to inform real-time adjustments in their classrooms. Do you have any information on how teachers are utilizing what they learn about student achievement as a result of the blended learning model? Have you seen this lead to more personalized learning in the classroom?

Answer. Blended learning is an effective tool for teachers to make real-time adjustments with certain assessments. Multiple choice type tests provide a quick way for teachers to assess; however, assessments that require short answer or essays will still take the time for teachers to read, review and grade. Blended learning has led to more personalized learning because it allows teachers to communicate to the class and to specific students in a way that seems more permanent because it is in writing. The benefit of blended learning is that students still get the face to face interaction with their instructor as well as the online component.

SENATOR MURKOWSKI

*Question 1.* What if Congress gives States free rein to innovate, but the innovations do not work? Should Congress ask States or school districts to show progress toward meeting the goals of the innovation within a certain specified timeframe?

Answer 1. Innovation for the sake of innovation is unlikely to be helpful. I could suggest we change school hours to 12am–7am which would be innovative; however, we know brain research on circadian rhythms of the human body would indicate that young growing bodies are designed to be asleep during those hours and despite its innovative schedule, it could be a harmful innovation. Goals are important as long as they are realistic and allow for adequate time to attain them. Anytime we try something new there is an implementation dip where sometimes, progress takes a step backward as teachers and students learn new ways to do things. It is important that there is time to “stay the course” so that schools can get through that implementation dip and make progress toward their goals.

Genuine improvement efforts will take 3–5 years to become habits. Allowing adequate time for schools to innovate and develop effective systems to support that innovation is of prime importance.

*Question 2.* Please provide one or more examples of a requirement in ESEA or a rule promulgated by the U.S. Department of Education that has made it impossible for you to implement an innovative action that you believe would be helpful to the children you serve. How you would propose that the committee change or eliminate that requirement?

Answer 2. I do not have an example that would meet the criteria described above.

RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS OF SENATOR MURKOWSKI BY HENRIETTE TAYLOR,  
MSW, LGSW

*Question 1.* What if Congress gives States free rein to innovate, but the innovations do not work? Should Congress ask States or school districts to show progress toward meeting the goals of the innovation within a certain specified timeframe?

Answer 1. If the ultimate goal is academic improvement, then innovations should be modeled and evaluated in tiers—short, intermediate, and long-term outcomes—

with academic improvement being a long-term outcome. In our experience in low-income schools, particularly, you have to address basic needs, school/community cohesion, and parent engagement around their child's education first. Academic improvement cannot happen just by improving teacher skills, or curriculum, or classroom management. Students need to have basic needs met and families need to understand why education is relevant in their lives before academic gains will be seen. In our schools, it took a year for families to see us as a resource, trust us, and then use our services. That will show up in their children's performance, but it will take time. Perhaps there are other outcomes—such as improved attendance, reduction in negative behavior, number of resources provided to families—which are early and intermediate indicators of academic success. Stability comes first.

Congress can also look to best practices, particularly around community schools, as to a set of outcomes with realistic timeframes which could be used to guide districts in expected results. In addition, it makes sense to shape a tiered evaluation which is specific to different types of districts. High-income is different from rural is different from urban is different from low-income. Districts cannot be expected to perform at the same levels with different populations.

*Question 2.* Please provide one or more examples of a requirement in ESEA or a rule promulgated by the U.S. Department of Education that has made it impossible for you to implement an innovative action that you believe would be helpful to the children you serve. How would you propose that the committee change or eliminate that requirement?

*Answer 2.* If there are items which can be paid for by title I or ESEA funds, then that list either needs to be broad categories or so exhaustive as to cover various innovations being done by different districts. For example, if a district can use title I or ESEA funds to pay for a community school coordinator (CSC), then that needs to be made clearer. Is a CSC the same as partner development? Is a CSC the same as wrap-around services? These are questions on which districts need guidance.

#### RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS OF SENATOR MURKOWSKI BY JOSH DAVIS

*Question 1.* What if Congress gives States free rein to innovate, but the innovations do not work? Should Congress ask States or school districts to show progress toward meeting the goals of the innovation within a certain specified timeframe?

*Answer 1.* There is no question but that programs based on "innovation" should be time limited and that States should be required to show objective results within a specified period of time. If outcomes are not met, the program should be shut down. That being said, it is important to define what we mean by "innovate."

For us in the Delta, it has meant developing processes to ensure each partner is held accountable for their contributions to achieving our shared targets and overall goals, along with placing a heavy emphasis on improving the quality and frequency of individual student interventions. In order to arrive at the point where all partners understood their individual contributions, committed to participating, and were willing to make programmatic shifts, we needed strong guidance to develop formal accountability processes, funding to support efforts and technology, and most importantly, an appropriate amount of time to usher into our community a transformative approach to conducting business in a whole new manner.

The Promise Neighborhood model is based on the idea that we are collecting and reviewing as much meaningful information as we can on student achievement as frequently as possible and modifying our programmatic efforts in response to what that data is showing us. In other words, we are keenly interested in student achievement, not in sustaining programs. It follows, then, that the programs we implement are strategies for improvement. They are chosen based on the strongest evidence of their success, need to be implemented carefully, and are evaluated in terms of their effectiveness in helping children and youth succeed. If children are not meeting developmental benchmarks and students are not meeting academic achievement benchmarks, then the strategies need to be modified or replaced. Keeping a careful record of both—what works as well as what does not work—to improve student achievement helps to build a fund of knowledge about effective interventions.

*Question 2.* Please provide one or more examples of a requirement in ESEA or a rule promulgated by the U.S. Department of Education that has made it impossible for you to implement an innovative action that you believe would be helpful to the children you serve. How would you propose that the committee change or eliminate that requirement?

*Answer 2.* Since the implementation of our Promise Neighborhoods grant in January 2013, we have not encountered a circumstance when the U.S. Department of Education was unwilling to consider our requests to modify our proposed course of

action and grant us permission to make changes during the project implementation in order to incorporate innovative approaches we believed would help us better serve Indianola's children.

For example, the Department considered our request to purchase enough laptops for students in the school district to gain access to a web-based tool, which we utilize to assess student growth on a bi-weekly basis and make decisions regarding the need to assist students. After explaining the necessity of our need to frequently assess student achievement and how this technology would allow us to do so without interrupting classroom instruction, they granted us permission to use funds for this expenditure. Moreover, the Department allowed us to make the transition from implementing a project designed to improve student behavior to another evidence-based project with the same outcome but with more cultural appropriateness regarding our community's demographics and norms.

We have yet to encounter an ESEA provision or a DOE rule that have prevented us from fully implementing the promise neighborhood grant.

RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS OF SENATOR MURKOWSKI BY ROBERT BALFANZ, PH.D

*Question 1.* What if Congress gives States free rein to innovate, but the innovations do not work? Should Congress ask States or school districts to show progress toward meeting the goals of the innovation within a certain specified timeframe?

Answer 1. Yes innovation and accountability need each other. Accountability both helps direct innovation to where it's most needed and also tells us if the innovation worked. It would be important for States or school districts to report on the impact of the innovation—to either show that it worked or if it did not, how they intend to modify it based on what they have learned. If after a cycle of attempting the innovation, seeing it did not initially work, then modifying it and trying again and still not getting positive results, then it would be reasonable and prudent for Federal funding of the innovation to cease.

*Question 2.* Please provide one or more examples of a requirement in ESEA or a rule promulgated by the U.S. Department of Education that has made it impossible for you to implement an innovative action that you believe would be helpful to the children you serve. How you would propose that the committee change or eliminate that requirement?

Answer 2. In our work, working with over 60 schools across 12 school districts, our ability to innovate has not been limited by Federal laws or regulations.

[Whereupon, at 11:59 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]