

# STRENGTHENING AMERICA'S COMPETITIVENESS THROUGH COMMON ACADEMIC STANDARDS

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## HEARING BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS FIRST SESSION

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HEARING HELD IN WASHINGTON, DC, APRIL 29, 2009

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# **STRENGTHENING AMERICA'S COMPETITIVENESS THROUGH COMMON ACADEMIC STANDARDS**

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**Wednesday, April 29, 2009  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Education and Labor  
Washington, DC**

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The committee met, pursuant to call, at 10:00 a.m., in Room 2175, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. George Miller [chairman of the committee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Miller, Kildee, Andrews, Woolsey, McCarthy, Tierney, Kucinich, Bishop of New York, Altmire, Hare, Courtney, Shea-Porter, Polis, Tonko, Titus, McKeon, Petri, Castle, Souder, Ehlers, and Biggert.

Staff present: Tylease Alli, Hearing Clerk; Catherine Brown, Senior Education Policy Advisor; Alice Cain, Senior Education Policy Advisor (K-12); Fran-Victoria Cox, Staff Attorney; Adrienne Dunbar, Education Policy Advisor; Curtis Ellis, Legislative Fellow, Education; Denise Forte, Director of Education Policy; Lloyd Horwich, Policy Advisor, Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education; Fred Jones, Staff Assistant, Education; Jessica Kahane, Press Assistant; Alex Nock, Deputy Staff Director; Joe Novotny, Chief Clerk; Rachel Racusen, Communications Director; Melissa Salmanowitz, Press Secretary; Margaret Young, Staff Assistant, Education; Mark Zuckerman, Staff Director; Stephanie Arras, Minority Legislative Assistant; James Bergeron, Minority Deputy Director of Education and Human Services Policy; Andrew Blasko, Minority Speech Writer and Communications Advisor; Robert Borden, Minority General Counsel; Cameron Coursen, Minority Assistant Communications Director; Susan Ross, Minority Director of Education and Human Resources Policy; Linda Stevens, Minority Chief Clerk/Assistant to the General Counsel; and Sally Stroup, Minority Staff Director.

Chairman MILLER [presiding]. The committee will come to order.

We are going to try to move things right along, here, in the beginning, because we have a vote on the conference report on the budget—that will come sooner than later.

Good morning to everyone.

And welcome to our witnesses, and to the audience.

Today, this committee will examine the great momentum that is building for improving our schools and its competitiveness through internationally benchmarked common academic standards.

Our nation faces unprecedented challenges that threaten our competitiveness. We face an achievement gap within our schools, but we also face an achievement gap between the U.S. and other countries whose educational outcomes are surging, while ours seem to be stagnating.

President Obama and Secretary Duncan recognize that our economy's fate is directly linked to addressing both achievement gaps. They know we won't be able to build a world-class education system that our economy needs, and our children deserve, unless all students are taught to rigorous standards that prepare them for college and good jobs.

We all know the statistics; we have fallen to 21st in math achievement, 25th in science, 24th in problem solving. We used to be number one in college completion, and now we are 18th.

Our 15-year-olds rank a full year behind their peers in high-performing countries in math, and even our best math students rank behind 22 other countries.

We must reverse this trend. I am pleased to finally see major momentum building behind the effort for common state standards. There is a shared recognition that a patchwork of standards in place today is holding us back, not lifting us up. It is our students and, ultimately, our economy, that will pay the price.

So far, a core of forward-thinking states have been leading the way toward stronger common standards. I want to commend the Alliance for Excellent Education, the National Governor's Association, the Council of Chief State School Officers, and all of their partners in this effort, for their leadership. They deserve great credit on how they have already helped move the discussion forward.

Let me be clear: I want this committee and the Congress to do whatever it can to support this state-led, bipartisan effort. That is why we are here today; to learn more about this work, and to hear from you all about how the federal government can best lend its support.

We forged a good start by making historic investments in education in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. We created an unprecedented \$5 billion Race to the Top fund, that will allow Secretary Duncan to encourage states to innovate. This includes improving standards and assessments so they are aligned with career and college-readiness.

This fund will lay a foundation for significant changes we will need to make to improve our schools, make sure students graduate with the skills that they need, and cultivate a workforce that can compete globally.

The goal of the No Child Left Behind Act is to make sure that every child receives an opportunity for an excellent public education, based upon high standards. And while some states have done a good job insisting on higher standards, others have set a bar far too low.

The quality of a child's education should not be left to the luck of the draw. One of the most important things we can do to fulfill the law's promise is to develop internationally benchmarked standards that will prepare all students for the rigors of college and a career.

There is already a great deal of consensus among high-performing nations about what our students need to know to succeed. In the highest-performing countries, standards cover a smaller number of topics in much greater depth.

In the U.S., state standards typically cover a larger number of topics in each grade level, and schools end up with a curriculum that, as they say, is “a mile wide and inch deep.” This means that it is difficult for teachers to teach it for—students can’t learn it and parents can’t reinforce it.

As the NAEP results shows us year after year, the unintended consequences of a system that varies vastly from state to state is, rather than striving for excellence, states are camouflaging poor performance.

The result of it is a generation of students without complex skills and knowledge needed to succeed in the jobs of the future.

Today, we will hear from witnesses about the state-led effort underway to develop a common core of fewer, clearer, higher standards.

This hearing will focus on what we need to do to raise our standards so that students in every state have the access to world-class education system that launches the next era of American competitiveness.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses.

And, now, I would like to recognize Congressman McKeon, the senior Republican on our committee.

[The statement of Mr. Miller follows:]

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

Today our Committee will examine the great momentum that is building for improving our schools and our competitiveness though internationally-benchmarked common academic standards.

Our nation faces unprecedented challenges that threaten our competitiveness. We face an achievement gap within our schools but we also face an achievement gap between the U.S. and other countries whose educational outcomes are surging while ours are stagnating.

President Obama and Secretary Duncan recognize that our economy’s fate is directly linked to addressing both achievement gaps.

They know we won’t be able to build the world-class education system our economy needs and our children deserve unless all students are taught to rigorous standards that prepare them for college and good jobs.

We all know the statistics—we’ve fallen to 21st in math achievement, 25th in science, and 24th in problem solving. We used to be number one in college completion. Now we are 18th.

We used to produce the most PhD candidates in the world. Now, not one but, two Chinese universities have overtaken us.

Our 15 year-olds rank a full year behind their peers in higher-performing countries in math. Even our best math students rank behind 22 other countries.

We must reverse this trend. I’m pleased to finally see major momentum behind the effort for common state standards. There is a shared recognition that the patchwork of So far, a core of forward-thinking states has been leading the way toward stronger, common standards.

I want to commend the Alliance for Excellent Education, the National Governor’s Association, the Council of Chief State School Officers and all of their partners in this effort for their leadership. They deserve great credit for how they’ve already helped move the needle.

Let me be clear: I want this committee, and the Congress, to do whatever we can to support this state-led, bipartisan effort. That’s why we’re here today—to learn more about this work and to hear from you all about how the federal government can best support it.

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This fund will lay the foundation for the significant changes we'll need to make to truly improve our schools, make sure students graduate with the skills they need, and cultivate a workforce that can compete globally.

For years we've talked about how to close the achievement gap among students domestically. But that isn't enough. We've got to focus on closing the international achievement gap too.

The goal of the No Child Left Behind Act is to make sure every child receives an excellent public education based on high standards.

While some states have done a good job insisting on higher standards, others have set the bar far too low.

The quality of a child's education shouldn't be left to the luck of the draw.

One of the most important things we can do to fulfill the law's promise is to develop internationally-benchmarked standards that will prepare all students for the rigors of a college or a career.

There is already a great deal of consensus among high performing nations about what our students need to know to succeed. In the highest performing countries, standards cover a smaller number of topics in much greater depth.

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The result is a generation of students without the complex skills and knowledge needed to succeed in the jobs of the future.

This is why we've brought you all here today. We'll hear from witnesses about the state-led effort underway to develop a common core of fewer, clearer and higher standards.

This hearing will focus on what we need to do to raise our standards so that students in every state, from Mississippi to California to Tennessee, have access to a world-class education system that launches the next great era of American competitiveness.

I look forward to hearing from the witnesses.

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Mr. McKEON. Thank you, Chairman Miller, and good morning. Some people in Washington seem to think that the federal government created the states to administer its far-reaching programs and policies, but that is not the case. History tells us that the states created the federal government.

Similarly, policy-reform movements have a tendency to spring forth at the state and local level, where elected officials and community leaders are closest to the problems we are trying to solve.

And when it comes to the problem we are trying to solve today—namely, how to ensure academic standards that will keep American students competitive—it would be instructive to look to the states for leadership.

There is no reason why the states can't work together to create their own common academic standards, which should be high, so we can see real improvement among our students. In fact, the states have already begun.

About 2 weeks ago, three organizations hosted a meeting in Chicago. The organizations were the National Governor's Association, the Council for Chief State School Officers, and Achieve, Incorporated, a non-profit group. Also attending this meeting were the

representatives of 37 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.

At this meeting, the state and local representatives offered their support for creating common standards in reading and math. They are now planning a formal agreement on these standards, to be signed by the participating states.

Those three groups held a similar meeting in 2005, when they created the American Diploma Project. Under this project, governors, state education officials, high-school educators, and business executives worked together to create standard graduation requirements for high-schoolers. There are now 34 states participating in the program.

So far as I know, the federal government didn't initiate these meetings, nor dictate their outcome. And they didn't need to. The states took care of it all by themselves. They saw a common problem, came together, and took steps toward addressing it.

That is how it should be. And I urge members of this committee to encourage these efforts by staying out of their way. This is the first hearing of the 111th Congress on the No Child Left Behind Act, and I look forward to hearing from this distinguished panel about efforts underway to strengthen academic standards.

I think we are right to begin by examining an issue where leadership need not, and currently does not, come from the federal government. That is the best path to success in this case, and I am sure the founding fathers would agree.

Thank you, Chairman Miller, and I yield back.

[The statement of Mr. McKeon follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Hon. Howard P. "Buck" McKeon, Senior Republican Member, Committee on Education and Labor**

Thank you, Chairman Miller and good morning.

Some people in Washington seem to think that the federal government created the states to administer its far-reaching programs and policies.

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Thank you, Chairman Miller. I yield back.

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Chairman MILLER. Thank you.

Let me welcome all of our witnesses. We have a wonderful panel this morning that has been deeply involved in this subject. And I look forward to their testimony.

We are going to begin with former Governor Jim Hunt, who served four historic terms as governor of North Carolina. Under his leadership, North Carolina public schools improved test scores more than any other state in the 1990s. Governor Hunt's Smart Start program received prestigious Innovations in American Government Award, from the Ford Foundation and the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

He currently chairs the board of the James B. Hunt, Jr. Institute of Educational Leadership and Policy, at the University of North Carolina, which was established in 2001 to work with current and emerging political, business, and education leaders, on a national level, to improve public education.

Then, we will hear from Commissioner Ken James, who has served as commissioner of the Arkansas Department of Education since 2004. He is currently president of the Council of Chief State School Officers, and vice chairman of the Southern Regional Educational Board of Directors.

Commissioner James began his career in education in 1972. He has been a classroom teacher, an assistant principal, a principal, a coordinator of planning and assessment, and the assistant superintendent.

Well, we really don't need anybody else, right? We have got you. Okay.

Commissioner James has served as superintendent of schools in the Fayette County Public Schools in Lexington, Kentucky; Little Rock, Van Buren, and Batesville, Arkansas. In 1998, he was selected as Superintendent of the Year of the state of Arkansas.

Randi Weingarten is the president of the American Federation of Teachers, and the United Federation of Teachers of New York City, and as AFT vice president since 1997. She has been involved in many of the major AFT policy initiatives of the last decade.

As a teacher of history at Clara Barton High School in Brooklyn's Crown Heights from 1991 to 1997, Ms. Weingarten helped her students win several state and national awards. From 1986 to 1998, Weingarten served as counsel to the UFT President Sandra Feldman.

In September 2008, Randi Weingarten led the development of the AFT Innovation Fund, a groundbreaking initiative to support sustainable, innovative and collaborative reform projects, developed by members of the local unions, to strengthen our public schools.

David Levin is the co-founder of the Knowledge is Power Program, a high-performing charter-school network. In 1994, Levin launched KIPP, in Houston, Texas, along with his colleague, Mike Feinberg, after completing his commitment to Teach for America.

He then returned to New York and launched KIPP in the South Bronx. And these two original KIPP academies became the starting place for a growing network of schools that are transforming the lives of students in under-resourced communities, and redefining the notion of what is possible in public education. Today, there are 66 KIPP schools, serving 16,000 students in 19 states, and the District of Columbia.

Finally, we will hear from Greg Jones, who is the chairman of the California Business for Education Excellence, and the California Business Roundtable. He is the retired president and CEO of the State Farm General Insurance, where he led a team of almost 8,000 employees.

Mr. Jones also serves the board of directors for Junior Achievement in Southern California, the California Chamber of Commerce and California Business Roundtable, and Franklin University and the Los Angeles Sports Council, and the Los Angeles Urban League, and the National Urban League and Operation Hope.

Thank you for taking a moment of your time to be with us. That is a lot of meetings—but welcome to you all.

As the rule on the committee—you will be recognized for 5 minutes. When you begin your testimony, the green light will go on. At 4 minutes, an orange light will go on, which suggests that you might want to start thinking about wrapping up your testimony. And then the red light will go on, at which time, you should finish your testimony.

I am going to be a little tough on the time, because I am worried that we are going to get a vote, as I mentioned, on the budget resolution. And I would like to get your testimony in and, hopefully, get a few members the opportunity to ask questions before that vote takes place.

Governor, welcome to the committee. We look forward to your testimony.

**STATEMENT OF JAMES B. HUNT, JR., FORMER GOVERNOR OF NORTH CAROLINA AND FOUNDATION CHAIR, JAMES B. HUNT, JR. INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND POLICY**

Mr. HUNT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Congressman McKeon, and members of this committee.

I appreciate the chance to be here with you. And I want to speak as one who was known as an economic-development governor. You probably thought it was about education, Mr. Chairman.

Most governors—

Chairman MILLER. Pull that microphone a little bit closer to you.

Mr. HUNT. All right.

Most governors are primarily about jobs. They work at it day and night. They travel the globe trying to find jobs for their states. And the good ones figure out pretty quickly that if they are going to have the good jobs, and they are going to create new ones, they have got to have a well-educated, highly trained workforce.

Now, during the 16 years I was governor, North Carolina was ranked as the number-one state for new industry location, many of those years. And in many of those years, we led the nation in the actual dollars invested by foreign companies coming to America.

Now, I mention that just to say to you that what we are talking about here today is not just education. It is the economy. It is jobs. It is our future. And we all know today how critical that is.

And I want to speak from the point of view of a governor who really did get involved in this. And I see Congressman Castle—you have come in, my good friend, and one of the great governors who led on education, as well as in the Congress.

Good governors have really gotten deeply involved in education. They haven't just left it up to the educators. Thank goodness for them. They are the ones who are most knowledgeable. But they get out there and use their bully pulpit, and they build coalitions, and they work with business, and they do everything they can to try to make education better.

I don't have to say to you what has happened to our rankings in the world. You have already done that, Mr. Chairman. I do want to commend this Congress for what you have done, and the things you are working on now.

I don't know how often you hear this, but I want to say to you, in addition to getting us started with federal aid to education many years ago, the action you took about 8 years ago to commit our nation to high goals for our children—for all of them—for measuring how we are doing—for looking at those subgroups—was one of the best things this country has ever done. And I commend you. And I hope you will stay involved in that way.

Chairman MILLER. You can say that again, if you want—

Mr. HUNT. Thank you.

But with all we have done—and we have made some progress—let us don't say we haven't. We have. The Wall Street Journal, today, has the new NAEP results—high school, not as much—but we made some. But we have really been disappointed. We can do a whole lot better, folks, than we are doing.

I guess if there is one thing that I want to say to this committee is: Don't get the idea that America can't do it. We can do it if we work together. But we have got to have leadership from here. We have gotten some good leadership. We have got to have a lot more. We have got to act as a nation, if we are going to be competitive, and if we are going to help all of our schools do well.

One of the main reasons we haven't done better, Mr. Chairman, is the fact that the students and the teachers of America don't have a clear understanding of what they need to know and be able to do. The standards are all over the place. They are vague. There are too many. You have already talked about that.

But I just want to say to you, as a governor who served in the ways that I did, I see this as one of the great problems we have today. And we have got to do something about it.

And by the way, I have—let me mention to you a couple of things that the Hunt Institute has done. We have a publication called *Blueprint*, telling about our work with the National Academy of Sciences, that has helped us, in a very scientific way, look at these standards around the country. So we know what the situation is, and we know that it is not good.

We need to have a set of common standards for the country, for all of our schools. They need to be not all over the board, vague, teach anything you want to. They need to be fewer, clearer and higher. But we need to have one set.

Now, it is not the federal government's job—Congressman McKeon, just as you said—to do it. It is the states' job to do it. And the states are working at it already. Commissioner James will talk about it, and several of you have already mentioned it.

Let me say this to you, though: Just recently, we had a national poll done by Education Next in the Harvard Program for Education Policy and Governance. They did a first-class poll. I know a lot about polls. This one was accurate.

69 percent of the American people want us to have one set of standards for our schools—one test, or one set of tests for our schools. The great majority of the people are way ahead of us in education, and in politics. They want to see this done. I was amazed when I saw those poll figures. But they are accurate.

Now, you are going to hear about the efforts that have already begun. I am very proud of that. And, by the way, the Carnegie Corporation now has, along with the Institute for Advanced Studies at Princeton—has a big commission working on math and science education that will report soon. They will support this idea of common standards, along with other things.

But the second thing we need to do, Mr. Chairman, is to have good assessments. The assessments should measure whether or not we are learning the standards.

Let me just wrap up by saying: I suggest five things. Number one, support state-led development of common standards that are fewer, clearer, higher. Second, push us to do the same thing with science standards, not just math and language arts. Third, sponsor development of teacher-designed curriculum that aligns with the standards, and make it available to the states.

Fourth, support and fund the design and implementation of high-quality state assessments—go beyond the bubbles, the multiple choice. And, fifth—and I want to say this very clearly, and I am through—let us all stand firmly behind the very fine, knowledge, strong secretary of education we have in Arne Duncan.

I cannot tell you how good he is, and how much I think he will do for America in education and in economic growth. I am thrilled he is here. And I just hope everybody will stand behind him and help him do his job.

[The statement of Mr. Hunt follows:]

**Prepared Statement of James B. Hunt, Jr., Chairman, James B. Hunt, Jr.  
Institute for Educational Leadership and Policy Foundation Board,  
Former Governor of North Carolina**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member McKeon, and members of the Committee, it is an honor to be here today to discuss the need for common national standards that

are rigorous and relevant, and the critical role they play in strengthening America's economy on a long-term basis.

Let me be clear from the very beginning. We need a set of common state standards that are rigorous and relevant, and we must stop fooling around. Today, the variability in state standards is off the charts. There should not be 50 different versions of algebra I across the nation. It's just not logical; students in California learn the same as students in North Carolina.

We must be vigilant in our development of common standards that are fewer, clearer, and higher. The process for getting there must be based on evidence of what's necessary and sufficient for students to succeed in college and in work—not on including everyone's, or every interest group's, opinion. It should be a tight common core that teachers can teach and students can understand and master.

As governor of North Carolina for 16 years, I conducted my share of trade missions. When visiting India, China, South Korea, and other developing nations, I witnessed countries intensely focused on educating students to compete in a knowledge-based economy. These countries knew that having a well educated workforce was critical to building a strong economy, and even back then, they were working to reform education in ways that made sense for their future. For them, it wasn't about tailoring the system; it was about changing the system. Today, those same nations are eating our lunch.

The highest performing education systems in the world—Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, Canada, the Netherlands, Finland, Denmark, and Australia—consistently perform at the highest levels on international assessments such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). It is worth noting they also outperform the United States on all of these international studies. We are the most industrialized nation in the world; such results don't add up.

Assuring all students graduate prepared to meet the challenges of living and working in a global economy must be a priority of this nation, and there is no greater time to forge ahead with bold initiatives to educate our citizens. Whether we are preparing our students for college or work, they have the right to expect that the education they receive in our public schools meets the very highest standards of quality and rigor—regardless of where they live. Geography should not represent academic destiny. The world is changing, but our schools are not, and it is time for us to do something about it.

In 2006, the Hunt Institute conducted a survey among influential policy makers and education leaders to determine the feasibility of starting a national dialog focused on developing a common set of standards—world class standards that would be second to none. The overwhelming response was favorable, even among individuals and organizations that some years ago had been opposed to such an undertaking.

The following year, the Hunt Institute commissioned the National Research Council (NRC) of the National Academies to look objectively at the status of state standards—now the norm across the nation. The findings concluded that the current system of standards-based reform is not working as intended. State content standards do not provide educators with clear priorities for instruction, and state assessments have remained ineffective instruments for measuring student progress; witness the disparities in NAEP and state test scores. In addition, standards-based reform efforts have not had the desired effect on classroom instruction, and we have not yet built the political will to address disparities in educational opportunity.

Countries that excel on TIMSS have well-sequenced, focused math standards in place. This provides a strong foundation for teaching, learning, and assessment. However, the NRC found that current state content standards are repetitive and poorly sequenced from grade-to-grade. The current processes to develop state content standards are broadly inclusive—this prevents snags of opposition but yields less focused standards. And not only do our standards suffer from a lack of focus and clarity, but the variation across states is even greater than we'd expected—even when beginning from a common starting point such as National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM).

How can we expect our students to be engaged and compelled to apply themselves when we have not yet established clear goals for learning in our public schools? To share the NRC findings with governors and state leaders who can act, the Hunt Institute launched *Blueprint*, a publication that describes such research within the context of today's challenges.

Our upcoming issue will focus on key issues and resources within each system component outlined in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009. We know that standards are critical, but aren't sufficient on their own. Only a systemic approach will get us where we need to be. Standards need to be sup-

ported by an integrated system, including curriculum, assessment, instruction, teacher preparation, and professional development. Unless our efforts reach the on-the-ground activity of teaching and learning, they will have been in vain. Standards-based reform was meant to be systemic reform.

The ARRA presents a unique opportunity to re-envision standards-based education as a systemic effort. States have a short timeframe to develop plans for phase two of the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund allocation and competitive grant opportunities. And states are being encouraged to work together—pooling resources and brain power.

In this unprecedented move, governors have been given a prominent leadership role in education reform—and rightfully so. Governors are in a unique position to build and push daring education agendas at a time when it's needed most. A 21st century education governor uses the bully pulpit and political levers to solidify public support, build coalitions and position himself or herself as the driving leader. I always challenge them to do just that.

Since 2002, the Hunt Institute has brought together governors at our Governors Education Symposia to arm them with ideas and strategies to promote academic achievement in their states. An added bonus is the opportunity to talk to each other about what has worked—and what hasn't. This year's Symposium, which we're doing in partnership with NGA Center for Best Practices, is designed to help governors to better understand the intricacies of the ARRA and how it can work for their states.

Yes, our governors must be audacious and think unconventionally when it comes to education reform, but knowing what works helps them know what kind of investments to make. Many citizens and leaders understand that having a single set of expectations for all students is a crucial step to improving both student achievement and equity. Content standards must form a clear, coherent message about teaching and learning in each subject area, and we must ensure that world-class content standards form the basis of every child's education.

In 2007, the Hunt Institute began partnering with the Alliance for Excellent Education and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) to explore the potential for a common set of content standards. Findings from the Hunt Institute's project with the NRC and discussions during our 2007 and 2008 Governors Education Symposia informed this effort. The partner organizations agreed that a common set of state standards should be fewer, clearer, and higher than our current state standards. They must be internationally benchmarked and based on evidence about the essential knowledge and skills that students need to be prepared for college and work. This work must be externally validated.

It is critical that any effort to develop common standards is state-led. Earlier this month, in Chicago, the National Governors Association (NGA) and CCSSO invited state leaders to discuss such an effort. Among the 42 states represented (including the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico), there was nearly unanimous desire to be involved in a process to develop common standards. Acknowledging that assessment greatly influences what gets taught in the classroom, state leaders also stressed the need to develop assessments aligned with content standards. To accelerate this process, CCSSO has brought a number of organizations with expertise to the table: ACT, Achieve, and the College Board.

This multi-state approach is voluntary and a step in the right direction. I encourage all states to join the effort, and challenge those states that sign on to the MOU to adopt the core standards and resist the urge to expand them. This will ensure that the core is really the focus of the state's educational efforts. We can't afford to get distracted by making multiple additions to satisfy every interest group.

Evidence from the NRC studies clearly indicates what happens when states are too inclusive. This practice leads to standards that are a mile wide and inch deep. EdWeek reported last month that experts are siding with depth of knowledge versus breadth of knowledge—especially when it comes to the sciences.

The Carnegie-IAS Commission on Mathematics and Science Education, on which I serve, is focusing on new standards and assessments in math and science that are fewer, clearer, and more rigorous. We want to achieve higher levels of math and science learning for all American students and redesign schools and systems to deliver math and science learning more effectively. Essentially, we are using math and science as a lens to look at systemic reform.

The Commission will detail how weaving together strategies that are often treated a separate—developing fewer, more rigorous, common standards that are aligned to high-quality assessments; building teacher effectiveness; encouraging innovations at all levels throughout the education system; redesigning how curriculum is delivered—can create a unified plan for raising math and science achievement for all American students.

Assessment plays a critical role in determining what gets taught. Understanding this, the Hunt Institute is excited to once again engage the NRC in an effort to consider the status of our current tests and envision a new generation of assessments. If we could develop assessment systems that better evaluate the individual progress of students, we'd open the door for new measures of accountability under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) reauthorization. This is a prime opportunity for states to pool their resources to develop better tools. The benefit of such state collaboration has been demonstrated by efforts such as the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) and the shared Algebra II assessment among American Diploma Project states.

A recent study released by McKinsey & Company, *The Economic Impact of the Achievement Gap in America's Schools*, shares key findings on the international, racial, income, and systems-based gaps facing the United States and assesses the economic impact of the economy as a whole and as individuals. The study states that such "educational gaps impose on the United States the economic equivalent of a permanent national recession." Though it may seem like an uphill battle to secure a set of world-class standards and learning opportunities for every American student, it is the right thing to do.

Here's what Congress can do to promote the implementation of common standards:

- Ensure that the multi-state development of common content standards is based on empirical research and solid evidence about what our students need to know and be able to do to be successful in college and work; communicate these to the American public.
- Foster the initiation of a similar effort to address science standards; communicate the need for these to the American public.
- Sponsor the development of teacher-designed curriculum that aligns with the standards and make those available to the states.
- Support the design and implementation of high-quality, state-of-the-art assessments that reflect the newly designed content standards. Make those assessments available to all states that faithfully adopt the new content standards. These assessments should go beyond the boundaries of multiple choice and paper tests and should include opportunities for students to apply their knowledge.
- Fund the design of both formative and summative assessments that are aligned with each other. Formative assessment results must allow for quick turnaround to inform instruction.
- Fund the redesign of teacher preparation programs—both university-based and alternative programs—to prepare teachers to teach to the content standards and use the assessments to improve instruction.
- Support the creation of a national database of empirically based instructional strategies that promote high achievement for our neediest students.
- Require higher education and PK-12 systems to work together to create a seamless system.
- Fund the design of research-based models of professional development for teachers, principals and superintendents. Require that federal funding for these initiatives include rigorous evaluations.
- Stand firmly behind the Secretary of Education and the requirements of the assurances.

This is a long way from being the toughest thing America has ever had to do. Yet, I would suggest to you the risks we are facing are as great as anything we have faced in a long time. We just simply have to do it. We must be able to compete on the global stage or we will slip into a second rate nation and I fear we will never come back.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about this important change in American education reform. Having a common core of internationally-benchmarked standards is essential to the future success of this nation, and the Hunt Institute and I will continue to work to that end.

I will be happy to answer your questions.

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Chairman MILLER. Thank you.  
Dr. James, welcome.

**STATEMENT OF KEN JAMES, COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION,  
ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

Mr. JAMES. Good morning.

Chairman Miller, Ranking Member McKeon, members of the committee——

Chairman MILLER. Microphone, Doctor.

Mr. JAMES. I got it.

Chairman MILLER. Yes.

Mr. JAMES. Good morning, Chairman Miller, Ranking Member McKeon, members of the committee. Thank you for inviting me to speak today about the state-led common-standards initiative that is currently being guided by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association.

Voluntary state collaboration to develop a common core of high standards is an idea whose time has truly come. I come to you today in dual roles: As the lead education officer in my home state of Arkansas, and as president of the Council of Chief State School Officers.

In both of these positions, I have witnesses not only widespread support for state-led common standards, but a sincere belief that states must lead this process. CCSSO and NGA began to facilitate a dialogue around this topic over 2 years ago. Significant progress was made during this period, and a number of states are now poised to join a voluntary state-led standards process, which adheres to several key principles.

First and foremost, this is a voluntary state-led effort to establish a common core of standards across the states. Let me be clear: This is not an effort to establish federal standards. The effort to establish a common core will build directly on the recent work of leading states and initiatives that have focused on college and career-ready standards.

Leading states will be called upon to participate, and add their knowledge to the standard-setting process. And it is expected that these leading states, based upon that prior work, will be the furthest along in terms of the adoption of these standards.

Furthermore, no state will see their standards lowered. And I think that is a key piece that each and every one of us need to clearly embrace. Oftentimes, the perception is when you come about a common effort, then the net effect is lowering of standards. That is not what this topic and conversation is about.

Rather, the purpose of the common state standards is to raise the bar for all states, by drawing on the best research and evidence from leading states and experts, regarding, among other things, college and work readiness, rigorous knowledge and skills, and international benchmarking.

In March, President Obama made a visit to the Council of Chief State School Officers, our annual legislative meeting here, in D.C. The state chiefs were not only honored by the President's appearance, but, more importantly, were enthused by his support of a state-led common-standards movement.

This support of a state-led approach, and addressing this important issue, was also echoed later in that same meeting, by Secretary of Education Arne Duncan.

Two weeks ago, in a monumental event, in my opinion, after serving in as a chief for years—41 states gathered in Chicago, to begin to talk about what this might look like, looking at the areas of mathematics and English-language arts.

I am pleased to report that my colleagues, after a great deal of conversation, and with representatives from their governors' offices, were excited to be engaged in this conversation. We were also joined by representatives from Achieve, the College Board, ACT and the National Governor's Association. That makes 41 states, and many key stakeholders, expressing a strong interest in the pursuing of this goal of common standards.

Realizing that not all states will be able to immediately commit to this endeavor, I was still extremely impressed and encouraged by the breadth of interest across this country.

As the Arkansas commissioner of education, I have witnessed another level of support for common standards. On April the 10th, we gathered in Little Rock to talk about the American Recovery Act. We had 1,100 people gathered to talk about that, and to look at ways to spend that money.

After 2 hours of intense dialogue, I am happy to tell you that after I announced I was going to Chicago to talk about state-led standards, the room erupted in applause. That was really the only applause we had during that entire conversation, even though we were talking about a sizeable amount of money. But I think that tells you, and is very indicative, of the broad-based movement in our state, as well as other states across this country.

Clearly, state-led common standards have the support and excitement of the president, the secretary of education, and all the states that I have mentioned to you, in terms of the collection that we had in Chicago.

Here is why I think people are ready to embrace this initiative: The most basic way to impact student achievement is to meet the demand to guarantee that what is being taught in classrooms in every zip code across this country is both rigorous and relevant.

Over the last several years, we have seen states come together, with the American Diploma Project, and a variety of different things. Fifteen states have now completed this work. And I am happy to tell you that Arkansas is one of the eight states that is a part of the second Career and College-Ready Policy Institute that is working diligently right now, with Achieve.

Every summer, we get teachers together in the state of Arkansas, which is a very, very indicative process across this country, where we bring them together to talk about state standards. What I have done—we had scheduled, this summer, to talk about English-language arts. I have now put that process on hold, given this effort that is underway, because we would be premature to engage in that process before we have a clear-cut direction in terms of what these next steps are going to be.

So I am very excited about that, and our folks in Arkansas are very excited about that.

Perhaps, you also see the inefficiency of replicating such efforts at least 50 times across this country. This redundancy is another compelling reason for states, and for my local educators, to want to move forward in this endeavor. Not only is this time-consuming, but each state also has the unnecessary cost that is associated with this time-consuming effort.

Let me end by paraphrasing something I heard Intel's chairman, Craig Barrett, say on numerous occasions: "Business knows no bor-

ders; business and industry will go to a state—to where the talent pool is located.”

Our governor, as well, Governor Hunt, talks about economic development and education being inextricably linked. And we need to clearly understand that if we are going to grow our state in Arkansas, we are going to grow this national economy.

We have to have an educated workforce. We need to clearly understand that our students need a set of standards that will make them competitive not only in our states, but across this country, and internationally.

I thank you for the opportunity, again, to be with you this morning. And we look forward to engaging in this conversation further, as this conversation continues to escalate. Thank you so much.

[The statement of Mr. James follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Dr. Ken James, Commissioner of Education,  
Arkansas Department of Education**

Chairman Miller, Ranking Member McKeon, members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to speak today about the state-led common standards initiative being guided by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association (NGA). Voluntary state collaboration to develop a common core of high standards is an idea whose time has truly arrived.

I come to you today in dual roles: as the lead education officer in my home state of Arkansas and as president of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). In both of these positions, I have witnessed not only widespread support for a state-led common standards setting process, but a sincere belief that states must lead this effort for the good of our young people and for the good of our country.

CCSSO and NGA began to facilitate a dialogue between state leaders about the state-led common standards initiative more than two years ago. Significant progress was made during this period and a number of states are now poised to join a voluntary, state-led standards setting process, which adheres to several key principles.

First and foremost, this is a voluntary, state-led effort to establish a common core of standards across the states. Let me be clear, this is not an effort to establish federal standards. The effort to establish a common core will build directly on the recent work of leading states and initiatives that have focused on college- and career-ready standards. Leading states will be called upon to participate and add their knowledge to the standards setting process, and it is expected that leading states, based on their prior work, will be furthest along toward adoption of the common core. Furthermore, no state will see their standards lowered as a result of this collaboration. Rather, the purpose of the common state standards initiative is to raise the bar for all states by drawing on the best research and evidence from leading states and experts regarding, among other things, college- and work-readiness, rigorous knowledge and skills, and international benchmarking.

In March, President Obama made a visit to the Council of Chief State School Officers’ annual legislative meeting here in Washington, D.C. The state chiefs were honored by the President’s appearance, but more importantly were enthused by his support of a state-led common standards initiative. His support of a state-led approach to addressing this important issue was echoed heartily later at the same meeting by Secretary of Education Arne Duncan.

Two weeks ago, CCSSO and the NGA hosted a meeting for state chiefs and governors’ education advisors whose states might be interested in formally joining a coalition to commit to engaging in a process that would ultimately deliver the first sets of common standards in the areas of mathematics and English language arts. That meeting occurred on April 17 in Chicago; and I am pleased to report that 40 of my colleagues along with representatives from their governors’ offices attended. In addition, we were joined by representatives from Achieve, the College Board, ACT, and the National Governors Association. That makes 41 states and many key stakeholders expressing a strong interest in pursuing this goal of state-led common standards. Realizing that not all states will be able to immediately commit to this important effort, I was still extremely encouraged by the breadth of interest across the country. And I do believe that we will have a strong showing of states ready to continue the next stage of the standards development process during the coming weeks and months.

As the Arkansas Commissioner of Education, I have witnessed another level of support for common standards that I must share with you. On April 10, I met with superintendents, school board members and other school officials from across my state to discuss the education provisions of the Recovery Act. We had more than 1,100 people present, all anxious to learn about the stimulus funding, including how the money could be most effectively spent. After nearly two hours of discussing that topic, I mentioned that I would be flying to Chicago the following week to meet with my colleagues about creating state-led common standards. That was the first time the room erupted in applause.

Clearly, state-led common standards have the support and excitement from folks all the way from the President of the United States to superintendents and school board members in rural towns of Arkansas. I'd call that a broad base of support, indeed.

Here is why I think people at all levels are ready to embark on this initiative. Foremost, we are all well aware of the economic imperative for this country to take drastic steps in the realm of education to create a competitive workforce and maintain our role as a world leader. The most basic way to impact student achievement to meet this demand is to guarantee that what is being taught in classrooms in every ZIP code of this nation is both rigorous and relevant.

Over the last several years, many individual states have made great strides in developing high-quality standards and improving their assessments. These efforts provide a strong foundation for further action. For example, a majority of states (35) have joined the American Diploma Project (ADP) and have worked individually to align their state standards with college and work expectations. Of the 15 states that have completed this work, studies show significant similarities in core standards across the states. States also have made progress through initiatives to upgrade standards and assessments, for example, the New England Common Assessment Program.

Let me tell you how that standard-setting process works in Arkansas. Every summer, we convene educators from across the state for two, intensive weeks to tackle the standards for whatever subjects are to be updated. This summer Arkansas was supposed to update English language arts. You may have detected the strain in my voice when I say "was," as I have decided to put that process on hold with the expectation that this coalition of states will move forward in the state-led common standard-setting process.

Nevertheless, typically when those educators come to Little Rock, they engage in a process that requires rigorous hours over two weeks ensuring that they have considered the most current and relevant research and evidence leading to the delivery of the most appropriate standards for the subject at hand. Those two weeks are followed by several weekend sessions throughout the year until the standards are approved by the State Board of Education. It's a good process.

But perhaps you too see the inefficiency of replicating such efforts at least 50 times—once in each state and the territories. This redundancy is another compelling reason for states—and for my local educators—to want to move forward in the effort of state-led common standards. And, again, building on the work in many states, we already have evidence that key aspects of commonality among state standards already exist and that repeating standard setting efforts for each subject in each state is unnecessarily costly in terms of time, energy and money.

Let me end by paraphrasing something I heard Intel's chairman Craig Barrett say: business knows no borders, and business and industry will go to where the talent is.

States are not preparing our students to compete with students in the neighboring school district or even the neighboring state. We are preparing them to compete globally and, in order to do so, we must make sure that we equip students across this nation—in areas rural and metropolitan, mountainous or Delta flatland, rich or poor—with the learning blocks to reach the same high standards. That is the only way we, as a nation, will thrive.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today.

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Chairman MILLER. Thank you.  
 President Weingarten?  
 Ms. WEINGARTEN. Thank you.  
 Can you hear me now?  
 Chairman MILLER. Yes.

**STATEMENT OF RANDI WEINGARTEN, PRESIDENT,  
AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS**

Ms. WEINGARTEN. Thank you, Chairman Miller. Thank you, Ranking Member McKeon. Thank you, members of the committee.

Chairman MILLER. We are going to ask you to drag it a little bit closer to you.

Ms. WEINGARTEN. Is that better?

Chairman MILLER. Yes, that is better.

Ms. WEINGARTEN. And I also appreciate the opportunity to testify on the need for common state academic standards.

As Chairman Miller has already noted, the enactment of the stimulus bill is preventing cuts in vital education programs in the midst of this current economic crisis. And we thank you, we thank the Congress, and we thank the president for that.

But, as the other panelists have also already noted, we must do more to meet the president's goal, and this Congress' goal of ensuring that all students receive a rich, rigorous education that prepares them for college, or for the workforce after high school.

And, as this committee well knows, for too long, we have taken a triage approach to public education. This is not a solution, and it is no longer sustainable.

Education, when done correctly, follows a continuum, each piece building on each other, and responding to the next. Unfortunately, in the quest for the magic reform, we have let our system of education ignore the interrelationship of these pieces.

Important components, such as standards and assessments, teacher recruitment and retention, professional development, curriculum, improved working and learning conditions, and accountability can no longer be treated separately; nor can we think about early childhood education or wraparound services—programs that help level the playing field for poor kids—as extras. If we are not addressing all of these issues, we are just tinkering around the edges of true sustainable education reform.

And, like the other panelists have already said, we must start with the development of rigorous common state standards; I mean, like many of the others who have testified—particularly, Governor Hunt, and Chairman Miller said the same thing—core standards—what kids need to know and be able to do—fewer, clearer and higher standards.

We live in a highly mobile, instantly connected world in which knowledge travels on highways we can't even see. Our students must be able to navigate through that world. And their ability to do so will be limited if we don't change our current patchwork of varying state standards.

The AFT has been in the forefront of the standards-based education movement, which grew out of two imperatives: One, the need to ensure that our students are prepared to compete in the global economy, or in the global economy; and, second, the need to address the intolerable achievement gap.

And since 1995, the AFT has judged state standards on their clarity and their specificity. We have found too little evidence of progress in developing standards that improve teaching and learning. In fact, in the 2006 AFT survey, we found that just 11 states had all of their reading and math tests clearly aligned to strong

standards. And, in addition, a report issued earlier this year by the Fordham Institute, detailed the variability of NCLB's system of accountability, while also reinforcing the argument for common state standards.

The report found, "Schools that make AYP in one state, failed to make AYP in another," and that, "many schools would fare better if they were just allowed to move across state lines."

Imagine the outrage if, during the Super Bowl, one football team had to move the ball the full 10 yards for a first down, while the other team only had to go seven. Imagine if this scenario was sanctioned by the NFL. Such a system would be unfair and preposterous. And it is unfair for kids as well.

So, bottom line, while developing strong core standards, we need to ask, "What else do schools and teachers need to succeed with kids?" They need a content-rich sequenced curriculum aligned with assessments. They need instructional support such as professional development, standards-based guides, and model lesson plans for teachers.

What about survey that asks teachers what conditions they need to help children reach these standards? And how about ensuring that any accountability measures track whether teachers actually were provided with what was needed?

Ultimately, we have a lot that we would like to say, and have already said, to Secretary Duncan, in a letter on this issue, that we sent to the secretary this week, in terms of how to create these standards, what the teacher input should be, and how to align accountability with that, as well.

We think that the Race to the Top Fund, that the secretary now has, because of the Congress, is a perfect way of trying to leverage states doing, and creating, common state standards.

But the bottom line is this: We need to do this. It is a daunting task. We know that. I am not so naive to think that it will be easy to reach consensus on common state standards. But few things worth achieving are ever easy. The time has come for a serious consideration of common state academic standards, and to align a better, fairer accountability system with those standards. We, at the AFT, are willing and want to help in this regard. Thank you.

[The statement of Ms. Weingarten follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Randi Weingarten, President,  
American Federation of Teachers**

Chairman Miller, Ranking Member McKeon and members of the committee, I am Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers. I am also president of the United Federation of Teachers in New York City. Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to present the views of the AFT on the issue of common state standards.

Let me begin by expressing, on behalf of the AFT's more than 1.4 million members, our thanks to President Obama and the Congress for supporting state and local governments, so they are not forced to make cuts in vital education programs in the midst of our current financial crisis. The AFT strongly supports the president's commitment to ensuring that all students receive a rich, rigorous education that prepares them to go from high school to higher education or directly into the workforce. The investment reflected in the stimulus package will help achieve that goal.

But to address the challenges and seize the opportunities presented by this new century, we must do more. We must invest our intellectual capital in developing and implementing policies and programs that make our education system work—for all our children and, yes, for the teachers charged with educating them. Too often, and

for too long, we've taken a triage approach to public education. But it's not a sustainable response or a lasting solution.

Education, when done correctly, follows a continuum, each piece building upon and responding to the next. But our "system" of education is not really a system, following a logical progression. Instead, in the quest for the magic reform, we have divvied up or isolated the components that comprise public education and have treated each as if it were in a vacuum. That is a mistake. We can no longer treat these components—such as standards; assessments; teacher recruitment, retention and support; professional development; curricula; improved working and learning conditions that students and teachers need to succeed; and accountability frameworks—as separate policy silos that need not be integrated. Nor can we think about early childhood education, or wraparound services like after-school programs and healthcare—which help level the playing field for poor kids—as ancillary or extra. To put a finer point on it, if we're not addressing all of these issues, looking at the whole picture when we think about education policies, we're just tinkering around the edges of true education reform.

We should start with standards.

The AFT supports the development of rigorous common state standards. Our reasons are straightforward. We live in a highly mobile, instantly connected world in which knowledge travels on highways we can't even see. Our students need to be able to navigate through that world—to study, work and live in states other than the one in which they were educated, if they so chose or if circumstances demand it. Their ability to do that, and to do it well, will be limited if we don't change our current patchwork of varying state standards.

This is not a position we've reached only recently, although we feel the urgency now more than ever. The AFT has been at the forefront of the standards-based education movement, which grew out of two imperatives: the need to ensure that our students are learning what they need to know to compete in a global economy, and the need to address the intolerable achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students, and between minority and nonminority students. Those imperatives have not changed. If anything, they have become more striking.

Since 1995, the AFT has judged state standards on their clarity and specificity, and here's what we've found: As a nation, we have made too little progress in developing standards in a way that will improve teaching and learning. Despite the decades of work starting from the admonitions of Goals 2000 to the testing requirements of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), there simply is not enough coherence, rigor or alignment in the standards presently in place in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. For instance, standards are not aligned to the demands of college and work, and standards among states vary widely in quality and quantity. Further, although there may be standards for the core subject areas, often the standards for each subject are written separately and distinctly from the others; the disciplines are not integrated as they should be. These problems have had a ripple effect throughout the system.

AFT members know firsthand that the typical state's standards are not nearly comprehensive enough to serve as the foundation for a well-aligned, coherent education system. Knowledge builds on knowledge. The more you know, the more you can learn. Teachers know this better than anyone. It is, therefore, imperative that standards offer carefully sequenced content from the beginning of kindergarten (or, better yet, pre-K) through the end of high school. But most state standards don't. As a result, we are left with the following:

- Students, especially those who change schools frequently, end up with gaps and repetitions in their schooling.
- Textbook developers try to "cover" the standards by creating books that have a little bit of everything and a lot of nothing.
- Guesses as to what will be on the state assessment often end up driving instruction.
- Professional development too often is about pedagogical fads.
- Too many districts don't even try to flesh out the state standards, much less their own curricula and lesson sequencing, which leaves teachers to face these challenges on their own.

All of these problems could be addressed if we had clear, specific, content-rich, grade-by-grade standards. But unfortunately, we seem to have fallen off a logical continuum and into a belief that what gets tested is what gets taught. All too often, state tests and state content standards don't match up. In fact, in one of the AFT's surveys, we found that just 11 states had all of their reading and math tests clearly aligned to strong standards ("Smart Testing: Let's Get It Right," July 2006). The AFT research gives us the information we need to develop standards the right way.

In addition, a report issued earlier this year by the Fordham Institute detailed the variability of NCLB's system of accountability, while also reinforcing the argument for common state standards. The Fordham report concluded that "Schools that make AYP in one state fail to make AYP in another. Those that are considered failures in one part of the country are deemed to be doing fine in another. Although schools are being told that they need to improve student achievement in order to make AYP under the law, the truth is that many would fare better if they were just allowed to move across state lines."

Imagine the outrage if, during the Super Bowl, one football team had to move the ball the full 10 yards for a first down while the another team only had to go seven. Imagine if this scenario were sanctioned by the National Football League. Such a system would be unfair and preposterous.

While developing strong core standards, we also need to ask: What else do schools and teachers need? Strong standards are just one piece of a foundation that, at a minimum, also should include a content-rich, sequenced curriculum and aligned assessments. As for other instructional supports, how about standards-based guides for teachers that provide essential background knowledge? How about model lesson plans that new teachers could teach from and more experienced teachers could draw from as they see fit? How about pre-service teacher education and in-service professional development that prepare teachers to teach the specific content for which they are responsible? How about textbooks that, because they are based on clear standards of a reasonable length, are slim and focused? How about a survey of teachers that asks them what conditions they need to help children reach these standards? How about then ensuring that any accountability measures track whether teachers actually were provided what they said they needed?

Developing a new system of standards at first blush seems like a daunting task, but it must be done. There are a number of ways to do it: One way, as I have previously suggested, is by creating partnerships—made up of educators, elected officials, community leaders, and experts in pedagogy and particular content—to take the best academic standards and make them available as a national model. Teachers then would need the professional development, and the teaching and learning conditions, to make the standards more than mere words. Toward that end, the AFT was glad to see that Secretary of Education Arne Duncan proposes using the "Race to the Top" funds to help develop these standards. The "Race to the Top" program presents a historic opportunity to move toward common state standards by providing funds to get the job done. It would be the best possible use of that funding, and could and should guide all future reform efforts.

Regardless of the process by which a comprehensive, standards-based system is created, we believe the following guidelines should help guide that work. I shared these criteria with Secretary Duncan in a recent letter:

1. Federal funds are needed to support the partnerships that agree to develop this comprehensive, standards-based system, and to ensure both the coordination and the alignment of this work. No single group could or should address all these components on its own, nor should any group work in isolation on any one piece. The issue of standards is much larger than producing good written documents. To expect students to meet high standards, systemic changes must occur. Assessments must be developed that reflect what students should know and be able to do. Curriculum resources must be developed that help bring the standards into the classroom. Professional development must be provided to help teachers deliver the content, differentiate instruction as needed and adjust delivery as needed, based on data analysis. Federal funds should be distributed to those groups that establish partnerships that can fully address all of these areas.

2. The focus should be on fewer, deeper and clearer standards. We are all familiar with the stacks of standards that teachers are expected to teach to and students are expected to meet. The sheer volume of material is not realistic in any setting. We must learn from our international peers, and focus on a manageable set of standards that emphasizes the most important content and skills that all students should learn and that provide the foundation for additional learning.

3. Teachers must be involved in creating and implementing not only the standards, but the assessments, accompanying materials and professional development activities as well. All too often, the educators who are responsible for helping students progress toward mastery of the standards have no input into both what to teach and how to teach it.

4. Finally, policymakers should take the steps necessary to coordinate work in different subject areas, to strike the right balance and prioritize the standards. We must move past the days of the English teachers creating their own expectations for students and the math teachers creating their own. This "my group" thinking leads, not surprisingly, to each creating plans that would require the use of the

lion's share of instructional time. In such a situation, teachers are left to decide what should be taught. Instead, teachers from each subject area must come together and identify the critical set of standards that covers all grades and subject areas.

The countries that consistently outperform the United States on international assessments have education systems that include all these features: national standards, with core curricula, assessments and time for professional development for teachers based on those standards. Can we afford to do any less here?

Getting the standards right will not be enough. We also have to fix the fundamentally flawed accountability system in NCLB. We need a system of accountability that is built around standards and recognizes that student, teacher and school success means much more than producing high scores on two tests a year. We need a system of accountability that is meant to fix schools, not fix blame. And we need an accountability system that gives credit for progress and holds everyone responsible for doing his or her share—in other words, an accountability system that results in the well-rounded education we all want for our children.

More specifically, inadequate tests and a flawed accountability system have gotten dangerously out in front of the other elements of standards-based reform, threatening the very educational quality we're trying to build. Too many communities have inadequate curricula, and most school districts have not addressed the huge challenge of building faculty and school capacity to lift student achievement dramatically. If we are not testing the right information, or the accountability system is flawed, or the tests are inadequate, or teachers are not supported, we will not reap the rewards a standards-based reform system offers. As we look ahead to NCLB reauthorization, we need to address these issues in order to fulfill the promise of offering all students a high-quality education.

In addition, data collection and usage needs to be about more than just keeping score. It must be used to proactively improve teaching and learning. When used well, data can be a powerful tool to inform classroom instruction, focus professional development opportunities and evaluate curricular programs. Only then will it fulfill its promise of helping to improve instruction and student learning.

As I wrote in a recent Washington Post op-ed, I'm not so naive as to think it will be easy to reach consensus on common state standards. But I believe that most people agree there is academic content that all students in America's public schools should be taught, and that it should be taught to high standards. And I would expect near-consensus on the opinion that today we are failing in that important mission. It won't be easy to reach a national agreement on what every well-educated child in every American public school should learn, but few things worth achieving are ever easy.

High standards improve teaching and learning. If we really believe that all children can and should reach high levels of achievement, it only makes sense to define those benchmarks. The time has come for a serious consideration of common state academic standards, and for the development of a richer and fairer accountability system to measure our progress in reaching them.

The AFT is ready to assist in any way we can to help move in this direction.

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Chairman MILLER. Thank you.  
Mr. Levin?

**STATEMENT OF DAVID LEVIN, CO-FOUNDER, KIPP:  
KNOWLEDGE IS POWER PROGRAM**

Mr. LEVIN. Thank you, Chairman Miller and Ranking Member McKeon, and fellow committee members. I am honored to be here with the panel, to discuss something that is very dear and near to our heart at KIPP.

As the chairman mentioned, we currently operate 66 schools, serving over 16,000 kids, in 19 states and the District of Columbia. So we have a firsthand look at the sort of maze and patchwork nature of the current state standards.

Many of our schools are the highest-performing public schools in their districts, cities and states. And, yet, when you look at them side-by-side, they are not performing at a similar level, because the standards—very similar to the Super Bowl analogy—aren't the same.

I would like to give a couple of analogies of why we think common core standards are so essential, and that they should be fewer, clearer and higher.

Imagine if you needed a passport to go between states in this country, and then you had to go through customs every time you wanted to go from one state to another. Imagine if you needed to exchange your money—that the money you used in New York, when you go over to New Jersey, you can't use, and so on, down the coast and across the country. Imagine if the languages weren't the same from state to state.

And this is, fundamentally, the reality that faces our kids if they move from school in one state, to the next. The language isn't the same. The expectations aren't the same. The materials that are used aren't even the same.

Take it down one other level: Imagine a school where one classroom gave one test; the classroom next door gave another test at the end of the year. They were using different textbooks. This was actually the situation that confronted me 17 years ago, when I started my teaching career.

It is impossible to share, to learn, or to hold people accountable. And, yet, this reality is what our country faces, with the nature of our current state standards.

If you do look at the NAEP, as the chairman mentioned, and you compare it to state results, you will see that the vast majority of state results are higher than when given the national assessment.

There are many studies done right now that have 75 percent, 80 percent, 85 percent of high-school seniors in a given particular state that are considered by those state standards to be performing at or above the state standards. And, yet, independent studies show that less than half of these students are prepared for college.

So they may be performing at what the state says is the adequate standard. And, yet, when colleges look at their performance, less than half of these kids are college-ready. And these statistics are even worse if you take a look at low-income kids, and at kids of color in this country, where the college enrollment rate and college completion rate are significantly lower.

So, why the need for state standards, from our point of view? First and foremost, without common core standards, there really is no way to share and learn what is working, and what is not working, from one state to the next. Second, there really is no way to have real accountability for student results.

It is, unfortunately, way too easy to take advantage of this system. And to give you another example, since the states in which we work in have different testing requirements, at KIPP, we elected to give a common national test. When you compare the results of that common national test to the state results, you will have states—our schools—where you have 100 percent of kids on grade level. And, yet, when you look at the common assessment, they perform in the middle of our schools nationwide.

And, finally, common core standards will allow for a collective vision for this country to compete again in the 21st century. And we need that vision to shift from K-12 to preK-16 and beyond.

Our standards can no longer pretend that a high-school diploma is the good-enough end goal for our education system. What they

should look at, I think, has already been talked about. They should be fewer; they should be clearer; they should be higher.

They should include content, as well as skills. And, most importantly, they should be linked to assessments. Common standards without common assessments will not do the trick.

Finally—and I would like to sort of point out sort of the reality we have learned, in our perspective, over the last 15 years of KIPP—there really is no silver bullet for the challenges that face our educational system. Common core standards will be a significant improvement in the system. But at the heart of every grade school are outstanding teachers and principals.

And as we push for common core standards, that will make teachers and principals stronger. But we cannot lose sight of the fact that it is one piece of the broader puzzle. Thank you very much.

[The statement of Mr. Levin follows:]

**Prepared Statement of David Levin, Co-Founder, KIPP Schools**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and distinguished committee members for inviting me to testify before the House Committee on Education and Labor. I am pleased to represent KIPP (Knowledge Is Power Program) and our parents, students, and staff. I appreciate the opportunity to talk about the need for common standards in the United States, as it is an issue that I have thought about a great deal as an educator and co-founder of a national public charter school network.

I want to begin by describing my experience in starting KIPP and explain why I am passionate about raising expectations for all children. In 1992, I started in education as a teacher in a Houston public elementary school through Teach For America. As a new teacher, I was surprised to see how little guidance I received about what to do in my classroom. I struggled to use the textbooks I was given as they only worked for the handful of students who were already motivated and performing on grade level. Another Teach For America teacher in Houston, Mike Feinberg, found himself in the same frustrated situation.

Determined to be successful as teachers, we sought out the ‘master teachers’ in our respective schools and hounded them relentlessly to teach us what they knew about lesson planning and implementation. We knew our students would be assessed on the Texas standardized test and that seemed important, but ultimately we were concerned that our students would learn the content—math and reading skills—they needed to thrive in the grades ahead.

Drawing on what we learned from these master teachers about how to motivate students, we started KIPP as an alternative program with 50 fifth graders at Garcia Elementary school in Houston. In 1995, KIPP became a public school in Houston and, while Mike stayed in Houston to be its principal, I went to New York City to start KIPP Academy in the South Bronx. Both KIPP Academies soon became the highest performing schools in their respective communities.

Based on the success of these first two schools, KIPP began to grow. There are currently 66 KIPP schools serving 16,000 students in 19 states and the District of Columbia. By this summer, there will be over 80 KIPP schools in operation, and by 2011, 100 KIPP schools will be open across the country.

KIPP schools are open-enrollment public schools and all but one are public charter schools. Over 80 percent of KIPP students qualify for free or reduced price meals, 63 percent are African American, and 33 percent are Hispanic/Latino. KIPP started by establishing public middle schools, but we have now grown to open high schools and pre-K/elementary schools.

KIPP has grown because our schools are producing results that prove that demography need not define destiny. According to test score data gathered in 2008, KIPP students start fifth grade at KIPP schools scoring on average at the 41st percentile in math and the 31st percentile in English language arts. By the end of eighth grade, they score at the 80th percentile in math and the 58th percentile in English language arts. Of the students that have completed eighth grade with KIPP, 85 percent have matriculated to college, a rate more than four times the national average for similar students.

When the KIPP network reaches 100 fully grown schools, it will serve the same number of students as the public school district in Atlanta, Georgia. And yet, as a

national network the lack of common standards makes it difficult to gauge how well KIPP is meeting its ultimate goal: preparing all of our students with the character and academic skills for success, self-sufficiency, and happiness in college and in life.

Currently, states set their own standards and determine how hard or easy it will be for students to pass. The result? We have passing hurdles that are very high in some states and close to the ground in others. According to Education Next, which reviews the rigor of state standards each year, only three states—Massachusetts, South Carolina, and Missouri—have established world class standards in reading and math. Some states, like Georgia and Tennessee, have established such mediocre expectations that nearly every student is considered to be on grade level.

With states held accountable for meeting the standards they set, there's an unfortunate incentive for states to set the bar low. It's just too easy for states to take advantage of the system using this strategy. In Texas, for example, 75 percent of schools were deemed to have made Adequate Yearly Progress in 2008, with more than 80 percent of high school students passing state reading and ELA assessments. And yet, according to a study by the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, only 43 percent of high school students in Texas are graduating with college-ready transcripts.

I share this with you not to blame specific states, but only to illuminate the challenges posed by our current approach. Given the current patchwork of state standards, KIPP has chosen to require that all of our schools also administer a national, norm-referenced assessment in addition to the state assessments their students must take. Using data from this assessment, KIPP schools can compare performance and readily share what is working.

And let me emphasize the importance of this last point. As a founder of a high performing national network, perhaps most frustrating is to see the ways in which the maze of state standards and tests keeps great teachers from sharing ideas, inhibits innovation, and prevents meaningful comparison of student, teacher and school performance. In sum, we are not only creating a system in which academic performance means fundamentally different things in different states, we are also creating a system in which little can be learned or shared.

However, common national standards will only be useful if they are fewer, clearer, and higher. We need to be careful not to replicate the vast and vague standards we see in too many states today. The standards should be identified based on proven evidence of what is necessary for students to know and do in order to succeed in college and in work. Most importantly, these focused common standards should be something that teachers can teach and students can understand and master.

To be clear, common standards and assessments will not be the silver bullet for all the challenges that are facing our nation's public schools. At KIPP, we have learned that running great schools requires remarkable principals and teachers, sustained dedication, hard work, and an attention to detail that no one policy or program alone can ensure. When it comes down to it, the presence of top quality teachers in the classroom continues to be the most important ingredient in promoting student achievement. That being said, common standards and assessments would be one of the best ways of maximizing the effectiveness of all of teachers and principals.

KIPP schools are held to high standards but they are free to meet those standards using the curriculum, instruction, and teaching tools that are most effective for their students.

KIPP's success across 19 states is not only opening doors of opportunity for kids, but also creating a ripple effect in the larger public school system. High common standards for all students would provide a call to action for all public schools across the United States.

Before the Civil War, when talking about our country people would say, "The United States are \* \* \*" After, it became "The United States is \* \* \*" It is time that we do the same in education and adopt one set of common standards.

Thank you Mr. Chairman and committee members for your time and consideration

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Chairman MILLER. Mr. Jones, welcome.

**STATEMENT OF GREG JONES, CHAIR, CALIFORNIA BUSINESS  
FOR EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION**

Mr. JONES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member McKeon, members of this committee. Thank you for inviting me to testify today.

Since I approach this issue from a business perspective, having been a senior business executive for the last 25 years, I want to share, first, a few facts about my former employer, State Farm.

The company operates in every state and countless communities across the United States. It is constantly being recognized for its caliber of its workforce. It is no accident, because every applicant that comes to State Farm must first pass an entry-level skills test. That test—job descriptions, standards that are used—are the same in Illinois, where our company is headquartered, as they are in California, where I currently live. That is because our customers' expectations are the same from one state to the next.

The company, like, really, every company, now, today, needs people with strong computational, analytical and communication skills, measured consistently, regardless of where they are employed. That is critical because employees, like many of our students, find themselves moving from state to state. Today's students are tomorrow's workforce. And they must compete with their peers worldwide. We must benchmark our standards internationally, to enable a business to compete in a global economy.

On a personal note, having two sons who attended schools in five different states because of my job transfers, you know, I have witnessed firsthand dramatic differences in the rigor and the quality of standards and expectations that teachers have for my kids to meet them. And while they were fortunate to attend schools in good neighborhoods, we, as parents, had to make sure that whatever our kids were learning, and in whatever school they were learning it, they had to be of a quality and caliber of rigor to assure us that they were adequately prepared to succeed in college.

Now, my kids were fortunate to have two parents who intervened.

So my point is that expectations—

Chairman MILLER. Sorry. I don't know if the mic went off or not.

Mr. JONES. I am sorry.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you.

Mr. JONES. My experience with California education policy—and I should say that I am a member of the California State Board of Education, but I am not representing them today—also, I think, sheds some light on the topic of today's hearing.

According to Achieve and other respected organizations, California has high quality and rigorous standards. Yet, as you know, we continually face legal and legislative challenges to lower those standards, and to make our state tests easier.

Watering down our standards and lowering our expectations might result in more meaningless high-school diplomas. It would not serve our students well, who must compete with in-state, out-of-state and international peers.

I think that there are three important lessons that we have learned from the California experience. First, it is not enough to have excellent standards. They have to be aligned test, meaningful

accountability and high-quality instruction, as well. Second, holding all students to the same expectations, and reporting results publicly revealed disturbing achievement gaps based on race and economic levels. And, third, we have data that demonstrates irrefutably that these achievement gaps can be closed without lowering standards or expectations to meet them.

As a result of my experience in business, and also as a parent, I take the following approach to the question of whether common academic standards can strengthen America's competitiveness. And my response is this: "Yes, if every student is held accountable to the same expectations; yes, if that common core, starting with reading, writing, math and science leave time for students to learn other critical-content skills."

However, all additional standards must be commonly excellent. They must not become commonly mediocre in order to reach consensus on a common core of academic standards. They need to be benchmarked against the best nationally and internationally.

Yes, if everyone understands that common standards are necessary, but not sufficient, they will not result in any improvement without aligned tests, real accountability and high-quality instruction for all of our kids.

What is the best way to get the best common academic standards? I, personally, believe that states working collaboratively is certainly the way to go. As some have already mentioned, organizations like Achieve, and the governors and CEOs of that board have concluded from past history that top-down, federal approach will not produce a quality product or politically acceptable results.

There is already a bottom-up process that has been talked about already this morning, and a way to that has led states to begin the process of developing a common state academic standard. And, as we know, Secretary Duncan is seriously considering using Race for the Top Fund to provide incentives for states to collaborate on the development of common standards.

Common academic standards will strengthen United States competitiveness, I believe, and individual success, if states commit to rigor and quality, if federal funds only support states committed to rigor and quality, if teaching and instruction are aligned with high-quality, common standards in tests, and if students received the instruction and inspiration they need to graduate from high school to succeed in college and work.

Watered down and alone, we will waste our time, because they will not, I believe, make a difference.

So thank you for allowing me to testify this morning.

[The statement of Mr. Jones follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Greg Jones, President & CEO, State Farm General Insurance (Retired); Chairman, California Business for Education Excellence; Chairman, California Business Roundtable**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member McKeon, Members of the Committee. Good morning. I am Greg Jones, most recently retired after working 40 years for State Farm, and currently Chairman of both the California Business Roundtable and its education arm, California Business for Education Excellence.

Thank you for inviting me to testify before you today on the critical issue of common academic standards.

Since I approach this issue from a business perspective, I want to share a few facts about my former employer, State Farm Insurance. The company operates in

every state and thousands of communities across the U.S. and Canada. State Farm has always prided itself on, and been recognized for, the caliber of its workforce. This is no accident. In order to be considered for a position, every applicant must first pass an entry level skills test. That test, the job descriptions, and the work expectations are the same in Illinois where State Farm is headquartered as they are in California where I currently live.

The company needs people with strong computational, analytical and communications skills measured consistently regardless of what part of the country in which they are employed. Consistently high standards are critical because employees, like many students, often move from state to state. Today's students are tomorrow's workforce and they must compete with their peers worldwide. We must benchmark our standards internationally to enable businesses to compete in a global economy.

We are not only concerned about the caliber of State Farm's workforce. The company is also concerned about the need for customers to have the analytic skills to make wise choices about insurance products. And as taxpayers, State Farm and other companies understand the return on investment that comes from a quality education. That is why State Farm has made a long-term commitment to ensuring that education policies and practices result in high expectations, high standards, and high quality teachers for all students—no matter where they live.

On a personal note, having two sons who attended schools in five different states because of my job transfers from one insurance office to another, I've witnessed firsthand dramatic differences in the rigor and quality of standards and the expectations that teachers had for my kids. And while my kids were fortunate to attend good schools, we as parents had to make sure that whatever our kids were learning in whatever school they were attending was of a quality and caliber of rigor to adequately prepare them to succeed in college. My kids were fortunate to have two parents who intervened on their behalf. My point is that expectations for excellence should not depend on luck or where you live because many of our nation's kids are not as fortunate as my own.

My experience with California education policy (full disclosure—I'm also a member of the California State Board of Education but I am not representing the Board today) also sheds some light on the topic of today's hearing. As many of you know, if California was a country, its economic engine would be the fifth largest in the world. According to Achieve and other respected organizations, California has high quality and rigorous standards. Yet, we continually face legal and legislative challenges to lower our content standards and make our state tests easier. Watering down our standards and lowering our expectations might result in a higher number of meaningless high school diplomas, but how would that help the students who will have to compete with in-state, out-of-state and international peers? There are three important lessons from California's experience:

- First, it's not enough to have excellent standards. Aligned tests, meaningful accountability and high-quality instruction are also critical.
- Second, holding all students to the same expectations and reporting results publicly reveal disturbing achievement gaps based on race and economic levels.
- And third, we have data that demonstrates irrefutably that these achievement gaps can be closed without lowering standards or expectations to meet them.

As a result of my experience in business and also as a parent, I take the following approach to the question of whether common academic standards can strengthen America's competitiveness—YES, IF \* \* \*

YES, IF every student is held to the same high expectations.

YES, IF the common core—starting with reading, writing, math and science—leave time for students to learn other critical content and skills. However, all additional standards must be commonly excellent; they must NOT become commonly mediocre in order to reach consensus on a common core of academic standards. They need to be benchmarked against the best nationally and internationally.

YES, IF everyone understands that common standards are necessary, but not sufficient. They will not result in any improvement without aligned tests, real accountability and high-quality instruction for all of our kids.

What's the best way to get the best common academic standards? That's both a substantive and political question. In business, we benchmark best practices and then we do it. But I realize that the Nike "Just Do It" slogan is not the way the education policy world works!

Ed Rust, the CEO of State Farm, is on the Achieve Board, and the Governors and CEOs on that Board have concluded from past history that a top-down, federal approach will not produce a quality product or a politically acceptable result. There's already a bottom-up process underway led by the states to develop common state academic standards, and Secretary of Education Duncan is seriously considering

using the Race to the Top Fund to provide incentives for states to collaborate on the development of common standards and tests.

Common state academic standards will strengthen U.S. competitiveness and individual success:

- if states commit to rigor and quality;
- if federal funds only support states committed to rigor and quality;
- if teaching and instruction are aligned to high quality common standards and tests; and
- if students receive the instruction and inspiration they need to graduate from high school prepared to succeed in college and work.

If standards are watered down, or individual states refuse to join the common state standards effort, we will not succeed in creating the globally competitive workforce of tomorrow.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

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Chairman MILLER. Thank you.

Thank you to all of you for your testimony, and for your involvement. I find it very encouraging. And I know that when we wrote and past No Child Left Behind, there was sort of a background discussion about setting standards, and the federal government setting standards. And it was, I think, a pretty clear consensus that that is certainly not what we should have done at that time, given everything else we were asking states and others to do with No Child Left Behind.

But I think that also has evolved into a consensus, now, that the existing set of state standards is unacceptable and is, in fact, damaging our educational future, and our students, and our economy. And I think that that is fairly widely arrived-at through the entire hierarchy of the education system, but, certainly, I think, also in the public.

Mr. James, you mentioned, when you met locally with your people across the state, the idea that you were coming to discuss these issues, you found great enthusiasm with them. They also must know, in the back of their minds, that it isn't just about standards. If you do this, you have to drive other changes in the system, with personnel and management.

Do you think that they fully understand that, in their enthusiasm?

Mr. JAMES. Yes, sir—and good question.

Absolutely, they do, because this is the next step in our process. We have been engaged in reform efforts for the last 5-plus years. And that has been driven, to a great degree, by legislation that is been passed in our state, with high-stakes accountability; also, with a heavy infusion of resources. We are fortunate to be one of the states that is not having budget cuts at this point in time.

So they fully understand that this will align and be the next step in our process. And I think that is why they are so excited about it, because they see this as that necessary next step, and they see it also as really maximizing their efforts and maximizing the state's resources, as we continue to move forward as well, so—

Chairman MILLER. Good.

Mr. JAMES [continuing]. As we look at the federal government, and ask what things that we can do in terms of this piece—and you have heard common assessments mentioned—that is a necessary by-product of this conversation, as we move forward, as well.

Chairman MILLER. I ask that question because—and Governor Hunt has been present at many of these. And, as I haven't been present, but I have been in the Congress while it happened over the years—we have gotten educational leaders together across this nation from time to time, with the president and others in different parties, at different times.

And we have made these pronouncements about how we were going to achieve these goals, and we were going to have a world-class education system for every kid. And we are still—now we are coming back—the next generation of that discussion. And I think what is clearly laid on the record this morning, and has been laid on the record with the Chicago meeting, and by a lot of the work that the various organizations involved in this effort, is that the current system is unacceptable.

So, in a sense, we are placing a very big bet on the states to come up with the solution to that—to that problem, as it speaks to common standards, and what flows from that decision. And my sense is that we are placing the bet in the right place, to get this done.

But, again, having gone through a lot of fanfare and—over the years, at all different levels—I am not saying just this—I am talking about the national—all about these pronouncements. You know, my concern is that the Chicago meeting really mature into an effort of the willing.

You know, states can make their own decisions. And better they make their decisions not to participate, than to drag the process down. But, at the end of the day, this is a big bet by this country, on those states, about getting standards that will really reap us the benefits that every parent and grandparent wants for their kids in school and, certainly, we want, as leaders, for our economy, and for those young people's future.

Governor Hunt, I don't know if you want to comment on this, and maybe President Weingarten wants to comment on it.

Mr. HUNT. I do, Mr. Chairman, if I may.

These organizations are taking the lead in doing this for America. It has to be done, really. We could just keep going down, if we don't folks.

Chairman MILLER. I will be okay.

Mr. HUNT. So I would hope that you all, here, would want to be kept posted on exactly how they plan to do it. I have got great confidence in them. But I would hope that they be talking with you regularly, as they will with all the states.

It is going to be hard work. It is going to be tough. Everybody is going to want to do it. Everybody is going to be a part of it. Everybody wants to put their six standards in. By the time you get everybody is in, you have got nothing.

Chairman MILLER. I assume everybody went to Chicago with their eyes wide open. This isn't a question of first impression. This has been discussed throughout organizations.

And President Weingarten, you mentioned in your testimony—I think it is important—that the standards also have to develop within a system that supports the success of meeting and achieving those standards.

Ms. WEINGARTEN. When you looked at—

Chairman MILLER. I am going to ask you to pull the microphone.

Ms. WEINGARTEN. Is that better?

Chairman MILLER. It is hard to believe you can't be heard by anybody.

Ms. WEINGARTEN. That is probably the funniest thing I have heard.

When you look at what happened in the aftermath of Goals 2000, as well as the aftermath of the initial stages of NCLB, we have seen two things: One—and I think Dave Levin said it as well—that the states, in some ways, had a vested interest in making their assessments look good.

And so that drove a lot of the development of standards in a different way—not that they wanted to dumb-down their standards. I don't think they wanted to do that for 1 minute. But it just—it—there was a lot of cross-currents, here.

And so that is part of the reason I think you see this huge consensus on, "Let us raise and lift standards, but do it in—you know, not just a common way, but a real thoughtful, deep, clear, rich way." I may actually just put civics as part of those standards, as well; not simply math and science and English—but civics or social studies as well.

But the key—I think the key trip-up we have had in the last 8 years, or the last 10 years, is that system—that interrelationship didn't exist either, in terms of knowledge being built in each other. And that is part of what—I think that is interesting that—that the two school-based people on the panel, without talking to each other first, both said the same thing, because the "hows" of how to do this, as well as the "whats" are so important.

And that is why we have asked to have teachers involved in it, because if we can help figure out the "hows" as we are doing the "whats," we think that this next iteration of school reform will be far more robust.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you.

Mr. McKeon.

Mr. MCKEON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

This is a very interesting subject. And I can see us going round and round at trying to resolve all this. But there are a couple of things that I would really like to have your input on.

In your testimony, most of you discussed the importance of establishing a core set of academic standards across the states, not federal standards. What role do you see the federal government playing in, or after, the development of common standards?

For example, would the federal government become the clearinghouse for the standards? Would the U.S. Department of Education be responsible for determining when the common standards would need to be updated? Would the department support the development of assessments based on the common standards?

If the answer to any of these questions is, "Yes," then how do we ensure that these common standards do not become federal standards, once the federal government gets involved?

Mr. JAMES. I would be happy to take that.

First of all, I think, with respect to this, we need to underscore just what we have all said: This cannot be perceived as being federally imposed. I think that is key for the success of this effort.

I think, from the federal government—the key ask, in terms of coming away from this meeting today—through your reauthorization process with ESEA, I think there is going to be key elements in that conversation, as we move forward, to look at how the federal government can support, and not hinder, this entire process, as we move forward.

I think, as we look at state innovation, building capacity across states—and that is going to be key in each and every one of us—and I can tell you, from a state-agency standpoint, the things that we have to do under the current laws and things of that nature—it is very important that we have state capacity to be able to do those kinds of things.

But I think, as we continue to move this conversation forward, also, we need to clearly understand that this is going to take significant professional development for our teachers. And those resources have to be there.

And as we look toward these common assessments—and it has been mentioned here, today, with respect to the Race to the Top—I think that is going to be a key potential resource for us to look at, without it being perceived to be federally imposed. But I think that is what these kind of innovation funds should be used for, as we look toward these assessments.

Then, really, as I think we look at the assessment conversation, we need to look much deeper and much broader than we ever have in the past, as to what the new generation of assessments is going to look like, because there are many, many things that we can do in the area of assessment, that we have not done before, that can really give us that snapshot view of where a youngster is in his or her daily preparation.

And the teachers can take that, and they can put in the appropriate prescriptions, from that standpoint, and engage that student in a higher level of learning. And the assessment is the end product of that.

So I see the federal government being paramount and instrumental in that process, as we move forward. And I think it can be done without the perception that the federal government is driving this train.

Mr. JONES. From my perspective, that is key. And I think the federal government does, clearly, have a role. And I would hope that that would be primarily, in terms of incentivizing the states for creating the—the—the standards that—that we need, and providing funds for those states that—that do set high standards in rigor and quality. And so I think that is a very important role.

I also think there is a role that needs to be defined that will help states share best practices. Because we will learn a lot as each state integrates standards into their curriculum. And I think there is a need for a greater degree of sharing in terms of what works; what doesn't work; what are the kinds of things that are best helping kids achieve.

Mr. MCKEON. Let me go on to the next question.

I understand that the overall goal of developing a common academic standards across states is to improve the rigor of state standards, so that all students can learn to read and perform basic

math skills, and the other—English and the other things that we would be looking at.

I believe that Dr. James even made the point that, “No state will see their academic standards, as a result, lowered, as a result of their participation in this common core initiative.”

You know, as I think about that—and you have all—it is—I think you all alluded to that same thing—no state would see their standard lowered. And, then, the point was made this would be really hard work.

It seems to me it would be easy. You just take all the states; see which has the highest standard. That would become the standard. And, then, all the states would have to accept the higher standard, because nobody would lower their standards. Is that correct?

Mr. JAMES. Well, I think that the standards conversation—let me answer it this way—is much deeper, and needs to be much deeper in terms of this, as it evolves.

I understand the premise from where you come, in terms of looking at what the perceived best standard is in the country right now, and ratcheting everybody up. But I also think we need to understand that the importance of this is the dialogue and the conversation, but, yet the understanding that this must move—we can’t just put this off forever.

Let me point to one clear example that I think you can hang your hat on, and that you can look to see what has happened with the Achieve work.

There were a set of states that came together, because we felt we needed a common Algebra-2 examination across nine states. And at the beginning of that conversation, I would say to you that, probably, those that began that conversation, really didn’t know if that was going to happen or not.

But I will tell you: It happened because we set the expectation at the beginning—at the end of this dialogue—“We are not going to have lower standards. This is going to be high rigor, because we have to hang our hat on it. And, at the bottom line, at the end of the day, we are going to have a common Algebra-2 assessment.”

And the first results of that examination—the results were not real good. But the bottom line is this—is that no state lost any level of rigor through that process, because that was the expectation. And we need to clearly understand that our kids need that level or rigor, if they are going to be competitive members of the global society.

Mr. McKEON. Then the result would be the way I stated it. If you take that nobody is going to lower their standards, and you take the highest standard, and everybody just raises their standards to that—and we would have it done.

Mr. JAMES. Well, I—and if I could—and I don’t want to hog the conversation here, but I think we need to understand that just raising it to the higher standard or the perceived standard that is in the United States right now—all of us are collectively saying that that is not high enough, either.

We—

Mr. McKEON. Okay.

Mr. JAMES. These need to be internationally benchmarked and—

Mr. McKEON. But that would be a starting point.

Mr. LEVIN. I think that the—I think the people who are experts on sort of where our individual states are currently would argue that, if—even our top state standards are inadequately preparing our kids.

And I think the—there are many of us who would like to see the standards discussion shifted from basic skills, to this idea of life readiness in college and beyond, so that for—and I think Mr. Jones mentioned this, as well—for families who college and beyond is the goal—basic proficiency in reading and math is but one very small piece of that.

And so the common standards that people, when they say, “Fewer, clearer and higher”—they are talking about fundamentally re-conceptualizing where the standards currently are, to prepare our kids in a totally different direction.

Chairman MILLER. We are going to continue this discussion, but we are going to let Mr. Polis ask questions now.

Mr. Polis?

Mr. POLIS. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman.

In this rapidly globalizing economy, it is critical that we do a better job preparing kids for college and success, in an increasingly information-based economy.

I appreciate all of your work in this regard. It is great to see such a diverse panel, from many different stakeholder and practitioner perspectives, coming to a common conclusion, with regard to the direction we need to move.

My question is for Mr. Levin—first question.

With regard to KIPP, KIPP has really focused, successfully so, on getting students ready for college, and to succeed in college. And my question is: In—do most state standards, in the states that you operate in, align with the college expectations, and what kids need to succeed in college in those states? And if they don’t, how do you set the bar so that your students are prepared to succeed in college?

Mr. LEVIN. Thank you. It is a great question.

And I think just to clarify one thing about KIPP—so, we are very focused on kids going to, and completing college, but also recognizing that, for kids who don’t complete college, meaningful career preparation is essential.

And I think what we have found in most of our states—that the standards are a starting point. But that in order for our kids to be successful, we have to go outside of state standards, and look at what top-performing public, private and parochial schools—and what the universities are expecting.

So, for most of our high schools, the way we are doing it is we start with the state standards, and then we take a look at what the freshman requirements are.

So you will take—in North Carolina, where we have our first graduating class from Gaston College Prep, which is one—in the top five public schools in the entire state—100 percent of our kids are going to college. And the high-school curriculum was designed by looking at the University of North Carolina curriculum, and working backwards.

Mr. POLIS. Let me ask: In the 19 states that you operate in, including Colorado, that I represent—we certainly appreciate your presence—but my question is: Do any of those states—would you point to any of those states as having rigorous college-ready standards and aligned assignments, or do you have to go through this kind of similar process that you just indicated, in pretty much every state that you are in?

Mr. LEVIN. Yes. We—the—the process I just described, we are going through in every state, including states that have strong standards.

Mr. POLIS. Thank you.

My next question is for Ms. Weingarten.

You discussed how common standards would increase the ability of children to be successful in a very mobile society. And so my question is, in a very similar vein, and parallel sense: Do you feel that the lack of common standards places limits on the mobility of teachers in our country.

Ms. WEINGARTEN. Look, we, and I think, Dave Levin said it in his testimony as well—what ends up happening is that, all too often, teachers end up making it up every day, as they go along, because of the absence of common standards, the absence of curriculum—not in every place. I mean, we have—there are some states—we actually have a lot of learning these days that we can build on. It is not like starting from scratch, whether you look at the Arkansas standards, you look at the Massachusetts standards, you look at North Carolina.

There is a body of knowledge now that we can learn from, which is different than 10 years ago. But—

Mr. POLIS. But do you see sort of potential—I mean, very mobile society, of course—teachers are no exception to that. Many might leave the profession when they move, rather than—I mean, does this have an opportunity to keep people in?

Ms. WEINGARTEN. It has a huge opportunity, as a starting point, because what then happens is that, just like a great—take a great pianist. You can be using the same music between a great pianist, and a not-so-great pianist. What does a—what makes the difference?—a lot of the practice, a lot of the polishing of it, a lot of the work, work, work.

And so when you start with common standards, and then you have some curricula work that is based upon that, then what happens—and we see this in countries that we compete with—what teachers, then, do, is they polish their lesson. They think about it. They think about their kids being different, instead of, every single day, trying to figure out the content.

So, to start with common rigorous standards—it will give teachers a huge ability to polish that work. And also, on the mobility question you are asking, it will be huge as well.

Mr. LEVIN. And if I could add one thing, Congressman Polis, about the teacher-mobility point—and President Weingarten was right about this, in terms of the polishing—it also allows for sharing across states—

Ms. WEINGARTEN. That is right.

Mr. LEVIN [continuing]. Which, right now, is virtually impossible.

So an outstanding teacher in California—the idea of sharing it with an outstanding teacher in New York—the curriculums could be totally different, because the standards and assessments are totally different. And that is a real challenge.

Mr. POLIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MILLER. Mr. Castle?

Mr. CASTLE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Anybody who has been a governor in the last several decades looks upon Governor Hunt as being the great guru of education. We appreciate his being here today. And I would like to direct a question to him.

From my own experience, and your experience, I am sure—and I was told in law school never to ask questions you don't know the answer to. And I don't know how you are going to answer this, but I will ask anyhow—it seems to me that the competition between the states is vitally important.

And when we would have a low ranking in Delaware, when I was governor, be it infant mortality or an education issue or whatever, we would usually do everything in our power to overcome that and improve it in some way or another.

It seems to me that when you have these different sets of standards and assessments, and you have states which seem to be doing well, when they are not really doing well, you don't have that so much. But when you have the NAEP tests come out, and they show that one state is not doing as well as another, all of a sudden, you galvanize the states into some sort of activity.

And if we were to have common standards and assessments amongst the states, I assume that that would motivate the states to do even more, if they are not well ranked, with respect to the other states—and, as you say, for jobs and whatever it may be.

Do you agree with that? Do you think that would be helpful, in terms of improving education in general; focusing the states and the legislatures and the—to do even more than they are doing now?

Mr. HUNT. I think that would be immensely helpful, Congressman.

You know, there is an awful lot of pressure. By the way, many of the states started these measurements on how students were performing well before No Child Left Behind. And we did it for a decade in North Carolina before it came along. We had a growth model—the kind you ought to have, in my opinion.

But I think governors would welcome this. And they want to, obviously, be involved in it, along with the commissioners of education and so on. But we know we have got to raise these standards. We have got to have standards that work.

Every day, I talk to business people who are moving plants to Asia. And, by the way, some back to Europe, now. I used to go out and just clean Europe, recruiting pharmaceutical plants to North Carolina. And many of your governors have done the same kinds of things.

But we aren't winning now, folks. I mean, you know, we are still doing pretty good. But they are getting a lot more of the new stuff than we are. So I think this would be very helpful.

And if I may add here, Mr. Chairman, and Congressman Castle, I would really urge—we are talking here about an approach that

is a good approach—state-led efforts to have common standards of the kind we are talking about. And we need the assessments, too.

But I want to urge this committee—in my opinion, this is the most important committee in the Congress today, and going forward—and I really mean that, now. We need to look at what it is going to take for America to compete and win. And it has been moving this way, by the way. It hadn't always been that way.

But I would urge you all to have the folks come in—the CCSSO, the NGA, Achieve—whoever is going to be involved in this—and regularly share with you the progress they are making. What is their plan? Who is going to be involved in setting these standards? What is the timetable going to be; because it is going to be so easy for this to get off the track?

People are going to be in there—everybody wants to be in it. Everybody wants to do it. And so I really hope you all will have that kind of involvement with them.

I think the Congress needs to pay for some of this work—certainly, assessments. I think that is an appropriate thing to do.

And I want to say one more thing—and this is going to raise some hackles—but, folks, America has got to do this. Now, if the states—I hope the states' effort is going to work. It is the way to do it. It is the best way to do it. But if folks get in there, and they can't agree, and they won't work together, and we don't get it done as a state-led effort, I think we are going to have to do it as an American-government effort, because, if we don't, we are going to fail economically in this country.

I just want to say that, Mr. Chairman. I really believe it is that important.

Mr. CASTLE. Thank you, governor.

Ms. Weingarten, the AFT has been pretty advanced in this, but I worry about education opposition to all this, if it were to start to happen—other unions—education hierarchy, in general, or whatever—Dr. James, perhaps, could speak to this to.

But what are your views with respect to that? In other words, I am concerned that educators are going to say, you know, "We don't want, necessarily, comparisons with other states, or whatever it may be. And we don't want to be ranked lowly. And, therefore, we are opposed to this"—that kind of thing.

Are we going to have that opposition, or do you think we will have cooperation among educators?

Ms. WEINGARTEN. Look, I certainly can't speak for every single teacher in the United States of America, or every single union in the United States of America. But in my travels around the country, people are yearning for working together, in a collaborative way, building capacity, so that we actually prepare kids in a way that is going to allow them to be prepared for life, and compete in this economy.

And I am often asked this question. I was asked it after I gave my November speech, after I did the op-ed about standards, about the opposition within the ranks. I think if you involve teachers in a way that they want to be involved, they yearn to do this. They yearn to ask the questions that they yearn to be asked.

And I think that you will be surprised at how much they sincerely want to make a difference in the lives of kids. And they dis-

like, as much as everyone on this panel, that education is different, depending on the zip code in which they live.

Mr. CASTLE. Okay. I hope you are right.

And I yield back, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman MILLER. Mr. Kildee?

Mr. KILDEE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Governor Hunt, we all, up here, recognize that your influence on education goes well beyond North Carolina. It has reached into Michigan, my own state. And we, truly are grateful, because you have really made this a national issue. And this country is better off because of you. And I, personally, want to thank you for that.

Back in 1994, I was the chairman of this subcommittee, as I am now, and I was chief sponsor of the Improving America's Schools Act, if you remember that. And Governor Riley was secretary of education, your southern neighbor at that time.

And we played a lot with, you know, test standards and testing, and who would be in charge of the standards, who would be in charge of the testing. And we kept resolving that we would not make it a federal mandate that the states would do their own standards and test against those standards for their own tests.

But we are moving towards an idea of trying to have some uniformity. How do we have that uniformity? Can you picture a modality—have a uniformity on standards—should be standards, but testing—standards and testing without some type of mandatory—and who would impose the mandate, Governor?

Mr. HUNT. Well, Congressman, I believe that the Chief State School Officers and the governors and Achieve and others are on the right track. I think this is doable, by them coming together, and forming a group.

And I don't know, Commissioner James, how far along you all are, and exactly how you are going to do this—maybe you could talk a little bit more about that—but people have now said, "We want to do it." That is a big step—have 41 states, including some territories, come together—say, "We want to do this." They would never have done that 5 years ago, would they, Commissioner?

So that is a big step. But, when you get into it and start really doing it, that is when it gets tricky. And a lot of people are going to pull back—"You didn't let me do it my way," and all of that. That is why I hope you all will ask for regular information and reporting, and keep the pressure on the states to do it.

But I think, maybe, Commissioner James could share how they think they are going to do it, as of now, though I know it is going to come together.

Mr. KILDEE. If you could, with the idea in mind of, "How do you avoid the federal mandate, and still get uniformity?" If you could address that.

Mr. JAMES. Well, I think, Congressman, that, as the governor indicated, having 41 states, now come together, and at least express some level of interest in this dialogue, is a monumental move in this country.

I would say to you—I have been in this business, now, at the end of this year, 36 years, in a variety of different capacities. And I will say to you in all candor—and members of this committee—I have

never seen or witnessed the level of excitement and energy around education in this country, that we have right now.

We have a wonderful opportunity and window of time, here. We must seize that moment and continue to move forward.

How we do that without a federal mandate, I think is that, as we collectively talk about this across the country, involving teachers and involving the stakeholders and everyone that is engaged here—we all have to keep at the forefront of our decision-making process, the kids of this country—what they need to be successful, to bring home a livable and competitive wage in today's marketplace, clearly understanding that if they are going to do that, in contrast to what their parents were able to do with a high-school diploma or maybe 1 or 2 years of college—they are going to have to have the skill sets that we are talking about in English-language arts and math, and all subject areas, to be competitive and bring home that livable wage.

The high-school diploma, we all clearly understand and know, will not provide youngsters, in this world and this global marketplace, a livable and competitive wage.

So, as we talk about this collectively among the various groups, at the forefront have to be the students. We have to understand that, for the betterment of their lives, for the betterment of this country—most importantly—and if we are going to continue to be the world power that we expect and want to be, this is something we have got to continue to do with the international benchmarking. If not, we are going to miss this wonderful opportunity. And I am not sure we will have it again in the very near future.

The time is right for this, in my opinion. And I think you see that demonstrated and echoed by the number of states that have come together. And, again, yes, there is going to be some knock-down, drag-outs. There is going to be dialogue and conversation. But if we can keep the forefront at the kids and what we need to do in the best interest of this country, that will drive the conversation. And that is what we have to be about, in my opinion.

Mr. KILDEE. Well, if you can keep us informed of the progress you are making to get this uniformity, but also have it really take effect—because there has to be some type of agency that, at least, gives them a scarlet letter if they don't do it, right?

Mr. JAMES. Understand.

Mr. KILDEE. Governor?

Mr. HUNT. Congressman Kildee, I think the agency to stay in touch, primarily—obviously, we want all of you and your staffs to be in touch with all this, regularly get information about how it is going, what is happening—you know, “When are you going to get it done?”

But secretary of education would be the person to stay in touch with it on a regular basis, give help to it, encourage it, see those people who are going to be doing it, on a regular basis.

And there is going to be some money involved.

Now, it could be that Gates would fund it. I don't know. They are doing great things in America. But it takes some money to develop new standards. It is sure going to take some money to do new assessments. And we have got to have those, too.

So I would urge you all to figure out what it is going to take to really make it work, because this is the best way to do it.

Mr. KILDEE. And you help us figure it out. Okay. Thank you. Thank you, Governor.

Thank you, Commissioner.

Chairman MILLER. Mr. Souder?

Mr. SOUDER. Well, let me openly acknowledge I don't fit with these times. Somewhat, I feel like I woke up in the morning, and missed the big meeting where the federal government was declared God.

Mr. Chairman, you said earlier that—

Chairman MILLER. Change.

Mr. SOUDER [continuing]. We are placing a very big bet in giving this to the states. Who is the "we"? We don't have the power to give it to the states.

There is no "we" here. Education starts with the parents and the local, moves up to the state. And the federal government is a minor player. We are not supposed to be driving the states. Nobody is banning the states from cooperating right now. Nobody is saying you can't get together and do this.

It is kind of cute to say, "Well, you should use your federal funds to, basically, drive this, drive that, do that—because those of us who were, quite frankly, maybe a little overly paranoid at the time about national tests, when the governors came in, led by Mr. Hunt—and Governor Hunt, who has been a leader in this for many years and said, "Oh, we are just going to work the states together. This is going to be voluntary. The federal government is not going to mandate anything." This was governors joining together.

Now, he freely admits that—and I appreciate your honesty, saying that, "Look, there is no way to make this happen, unless the federal government makes it happen"—those of us who worried about this test said it is going to lead to a national curriculum, and that it is going to lead to assessments.

It is going to lead to how teachers are supposed to do instruction. It is going to lead to how teachers are prepared. It is going to lead to a federal standard on how teachers are going to be professionally developed. And everything was going to be run out of the all-knowing, all-wise, as if there is agreement in education—by the way, I don't see the NEA here today.

I suspect they differ a little. I am not a big defender of the NEA. They spent tens of thousands of dollars to try to knock me from my seat in Congress. At the same time, let us just suggest that there are differences.

What I hear in my district is constant complaints from the teachers about the standards, about too much rigidity—about complaints from the federal government. And, quite frankly, I am kind of mixed on that.

I absolutely believe in standards. This was my first choice as a committee, because I believe—may have been a mistake—that I believe education is the key to our country recovering. But I believe diversity is the key. I believe that we don't have, and know, every answer.

And there isn't a common consensus. Yes, some of the things that were said here—for example, "Textbook developers try to cover the

standards by creating books that have a little bit of everything, and a lot of nothing." Well, that was predictable.

As we went to federal standards, they, all of a sudden, had to wash down their books. But we partly caused that in the way we were going—to what will be on the state assessment—end up driving instruction.

If you are teaching kids what they need to know, then, you don't have to worry about what is going to be on the test. Professional development—too often about fads—yes, that has gotten worse, not better, under national testing. Now, by having more federal control, we are supposed to alleviate the very things we warned that were going to happen when we went this direction.

We have inconsistencies in our schools. And, particularly, I believe the federal government has a role for special-needs kids and for minority kids, where they don't have the assets in their community to fund those schools. And we have an obligation to help those particular schools.

But when we get beyond and try to tell every school district in America, and every state in America that, somehow, there is one plan—that, "If we just did this plan, we would fix America"—and with all due respect, Governor Hunt—and I know you have been an advocate for this, for years, and for the pharmaceutical industry—to suggest that our education system is the reason India and China, who steal our patents, who have totally different guidelines on pharmaceuticals, has anything to do with our education—I am struggling in a manufacturing district with Eli Lilly in our state, to try to meet the standards and get people in who do that—we are not losing the pharmaceutical industry to India and China because of our education.

And in Europe, they have different patent rules. There is a whole complicated thing here. And to try to say, "Oh, if we just had a national test, the pharmaceutical industry wouldn't go," I would suggest the reverse will occur; that we will have a national test—by the way, how do the home-schoolers fit into this? How do Christian schools fit into this? How do colleges fit into this? Do we need a national tests for college?

Are we going to have—how does vocational education fit in this? But when you start to look at the complexity and the diversity—letting 1,000 bloom, with standards developed in the communities and the states, is far better, in my opinion, than a straightjacket, which will be politically manipulated—the longer and more power—is concentrated in one place—every group that has a special interest will start to say, "But we are not covering this. This ought to be in the test. We are not focusing on this as much."

And we only have on alternative that can be manipulated by the political forces of this country—we will not advance education. We will advance whatever the political agenda is of those who are in power. And I have tried to keep my blood pressure down during this hearing. I know you are all committed to education. We don't differ on our commitment to education. But we surely disagree on how best to achieve it.

Chairman MILLER. Where are we? No.

Mrs. McCarthy?

Mrs. MCCARTHY. Thank you.

Chairman MILLER. Just let me say, if I might just before the gentlewoman begins—to say that NEA is, in fact, a member of this coalition.

Mrs. MCCARTHY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I appreciate it.

And I thank the members, the panel, for putting their ideas forth.

One of the things that was not mentioned, and which I happened to think is one of the most, probably, extremely important things—is that we are not going to be raising the scores of the children in the under-served areas, unless we make sure that those kids are ready when they come to school.

How is the community going to be involved in this?

Right now, during this recession we are going through, we are seeing even worse issues going into school. We are seeing, unfortunately, child abuse going on more frequently. Kids are not coming into school and getting the meals that they need.

So before we even think about trying to bring the scores up into these under-served schools—and some of my schools certainly have come up a little bit—but there are certain children that are not performing, mainly because, to be very honest with you, they have nothing. And that is a problem. And until we solve that problem, no matter what we do here, there is a certain percentage of our students in this country that will not excel, even though they have the possibilities.

But with that being said—last year, in the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind, I supported language in the last Congress discussion draft that would have allowed us to better compare different state standards. The bill would have directed the National Assessment of Educational Progress and the National Academy of Sciences to study how best to compare standards across states, and directs the secretary to develop a common scale, using the results of the NAS study.

This would help us develop sound policy based on the results of a non-partisan think-tank.

To the panel: Assuming that you think it is a good idea, how do you propose that we come up with a common academic standard?

And that is to the panel.

Mr. JAMES. I will take it.

I mean, in terms of how we come up with a common academic standards. And I think, clearly, we need to—I will go back to what I said earlier. We need to clearly understand that our kids are going to need skill sets to be competitive in this global marketplace.

So as we look at what kids are going to have to know and be able to do, to be successful—as we look at what most of us in the states that have been involved with Achieve—looking at English-language arts and math, specifically, initially—and looking at those areas in terms of what kids' skill sets needed to be, whether they were going to the world of work, or whether they were going to the first year of college—we need to clearly understand that those skill sets, now, are one in the same.

As they look at the manuals in the workforce—as they look at what they have to read, and how they need to be able to compute—those skill sets that they need, going into that first year of work,

are the same set of skill sets that they need to be able to go into that freshman year of college.

We need to make sure—I want to go back to one other key point that I think you hit on very succinctly. In our state, we have done this over the last 6-plus years—investment in pre-K education, because—and we have found, in that last 6 years, that that investment—now we are putting in \$111 million a year from our state, into pre-K education.

We have seen that investment pay great dividends, as those youngsters that have gone through pre-K—that did not have the support systems, and had the kind of needs that you are describing—are now, at the third and fourth-grade level, getting to the level of proficiency. And we had a difficult examination.

It aligns very well with NAEP. And that was one of the things that we made sure that we did when we went through that process.

Pre-K education, giving the kind of opportunity—the support systems that are needed to provide those youngsters with the kinds of things that you were talking about, I think, is essential across this country.

We need to make sure that we clearly understand that is the only way our kids are going to get to the level that we need to get to. Thank you.

Chairman MILLER [continuing]. Smart.

I don't know—Mr. Levin, did you want to respond, quickly?

Mr. LEVIN. Do you want to go first?

Ms. WEINGARTEN. Let me just, to the Congresswoman—

Chairman MILLER. Quickly, because we have got a vote going on, here, so—

Ms. WEINGARTEN. Okay.

Let me just say that one of the things we are trying to push at, as well, is we agree with the president and the Congress about early-childhood programs, and trying to make sure that they actually get embedded into school districts. But there is a notion of community, or schools or wraparound services, as a way of trying to level the playing field for kids are really disadvantaged or underserved.

Chairman MILLER. Mrs. Biggert?

Mrs. BIGGERT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will try and be brief.

On—and not having been here for the testimony—one of the things that really bothered me as—with the NAEP test and the—all the states' tests—and we had a hearing on this—it showed that, as I recall, the state that had accomplished the most, according to their state, and had the most—the average yearly progress was the highest—turned out, on the NAEP test, to be the lowest.

And I think that shows that the diversity in how the states were ranking themselves—and on the NAEP test—so I think that shows that it really is something that we need to do to make sure that that doesn't happen.

The other thing is that we ranked so low on the international side. And I think that—so all states really have a lot to do, I think, in these things.

One of the—and I have also had professionals that have come in and talked to me about textbooks. And I think they are very upset with the quality of textbooks. They are not updated. They are fac-

tually incorrect in so many instances. Is this part of something that should be done on a federal level, to look at those textbooks, and make sure—I think most of us agree we really don't want to have a federal standard.

But we want the states to have something that will—I mean they will match each other—would that include the textbooks?

Ms. WEINGARTEN. One of the good ramifications or consequences of having a set of voluntary common standards is that, attached to that, you would have a federal clearinghouse, for example, of recommended textbooks that are aligned with it, or recommended professional development that is aligned with it.

So it is not a mandate. But what would then happen is that there would be a lot of incentives, both in the marketplace, as well as in our field, to actually align materials with that common set of standards.

Mrs. BIGGERT. One of the problems right now is that we have fewer and fewer textbook companies, too. Do you think that would increase competition for that?

Mr. JAMES. I think it, potentially, could.

I think the issue, though—as we look at the countries that are leading in performance, and what they are doing over time, and what they have done over time—you look at their textbooks, and you look at our textbooks—and, Chairman Miller, to your comment earlier about being “a mile wide in”—you know, in all these kinds of things that we try to cover in this country—we need to clean—I think you guys all understand this—that textbooks—the adoption of those—they are really driven by the largest states in this country. And everybody else is buying them—

Chairman MILLER. We are going to interrupt this part of it, because we are going to come back to textbooks in this context.

But, Mr. Ehlers, just have a chance to ask a question before, because we are running out of time on the clock on the floor.

Mr. EHLERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I would like to—

Chairman MILLER. Sorry, Judy. I just want to give everybody a chance.

Mr. EHLERS. I would like to change the tone just a little bit, particularly—

Chairman MILLER. Quickly.

Mr. EHLERS [continuing]. Particularly, since my Republican colleagues seem to say that the federal government shouldn't have anything to say; I think we should, in certain areas.

And, in fact, Senator Dodd and I have put in a bill to establish voluntary national standards for math and science. I happen to be a scientist. And, of course, I have a degree in math.

The way we are doing it now makes no sense. Particularly, we aren't recognizing the mobile society we have. And so a child may learn about fractions in one semester. If his parents move at Christmastime to another school that has reversed order, he may get a double dose of fractions, and may not learn anything about percentages. This makes no sense.

If there is any area where you need agreement on national standards—and it is because of sequence, not because of content—certainly in math and science—we should adopt standard se-

quences of how materials are going to be taught, and at which grade level.

The content is not an issue to me, and I don't think, to anyone. But if you don't teach things in the right sequence, you are not going to teach the students well, and you are going to have a mess.

So I would hope whatever we come up with—in fact, I would like to see Senator Dodd's bill and my bill passed. That would at least be a start. But——

Chairman MILLER. So ordered. We are going to interrupt here. We have got to go to the floor.

Thank you very much. This has been a wonderful opening discussion between the Congress and your collaborative organizations, here, on this topic. I think we will take the suggestion of Governor Hunt. We will ask you to come periodically, and give us a round-table discussion; maybe not a formal hearing, but an update on how you think best delivered to us, to keep the members informed.

As I said, I think we are placing a very big bet. I also think we are placing what could be a very good bet on this effort, from here.

So thank you so much for your time, your testimony and your expertise.

[Additional submissions of Mr. Miller follow:]

**Prepared Statement of Dr. Jerry D. Weast, Superintendent of Schools,  
Montgomery County (Maryland) Public Schools**

We all know the old adage, "If you don't know where you are going, then any road will take you there." It's an apropos summary of our nation's sojourn with the issue of national standards. We all keep hoping to get "there," and by "there" I mean a nation where all of our children are ready for college when they graduate from high school. Alas, we are nowhere near "there" as a country. In fact, it appears that we continue to slip further and further behind our industrialized rivals. We rank near the bottom in math and science education among the top 30 industrialized nations according to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

If we are going to get "there" as a nation, then we must get serious about setting voluntary national standards that are rigorous in nature and, if met, will show that a child is ready for college level work and the 21st century workforce. Our national leaders, and state leaders for that matter, have been loath to ever get truly serious about setting national academic standards. Does it make any sense that our country has a standard for the size of fire hoses but not for the algebraic concepts an 8th grader should know before entering high school?

It's not as if our national leaders don't want to improve educational outcomes for all students. They do, and I know that everyone wants to find the silver bullet that will fix all that ails our education system. The reality is that there is no one silver bullet and we as a nation must come to understand that it will take time, a steady course and a clear sense of where we need to go to strengthen our nation's schools. The closest thing there is to a silver bullet is the concept of putting an excellent, well-prepared teacher in every classroom. And in Montgomery County, Maryland, we have spent the last 10 years investing in building the capacity of our staff to deliver high quality instruction based on a challenging curriculum aligned with high standards. We're seeing results because we have both an exceptionally trained workforce and a strong, standards-based curriculum. A quality workforce can only be as good as the material they have to deliver. If a school system is not focused on college readiness standards, then it is not likely that its students will reach the level of success we need to keep our nation strong.

The "No Child Left Behind Act" was a valiant effort to attempt to force change and the idea of accountability on the many states and school districts who had no history with either concept. It was, and is, appropriate for school leaders to disaggregate data by subgroups so that they can assess the performance of every child and every school in order to measure their progress. But that's where it breaks down—measure their progress compared to what? With no national standards of what kids should know and be able to do by grade level or content area, states were left to their own devices to come up with their own standards. Because they were afraid of federal sanctions for not making adequate yearly progress, some states in-

tentionally set low bars so that the vast majority of their children could clear them and “pass.” What a disservice we have done to our nation’s youth in allowing low expectations to drive the agenda in these states. We all know the example of the state of Mississippi where a vast majority of students can show progress and be deemed proficient at the state level but when you look at their National Assessment of Educational Progress scores you find them at the bottom of the pack.

We cannot continue to fail our children. We are in a national education crisis with barely one-quarter of college students complete a bachelor’s degree within six years. We must act and act quickly, lest we lose another generation of students to mediocrity.

For those who question the need or wisdom of national standards, I offer a few reasons and examples of why we must set aside such thinking and get on with the important of business of making sure our children are college ready. I ask you to think back to when President John F. Kennedy told our nation that we were going to the moon. We didn’t know how to go about doing that, but the president set a clear target about where he wanted to go and then it was up to the scientists and engineers it figure out how to get there. In essence, landing on the moon became the standard and it was the job of the scientists to align everything to meet that standard. And lo and behold, on July 20, 1969, we achieved that standard with the first moon landing. It shows what can be done when you lay out a clear target and then align your systems to reach it.

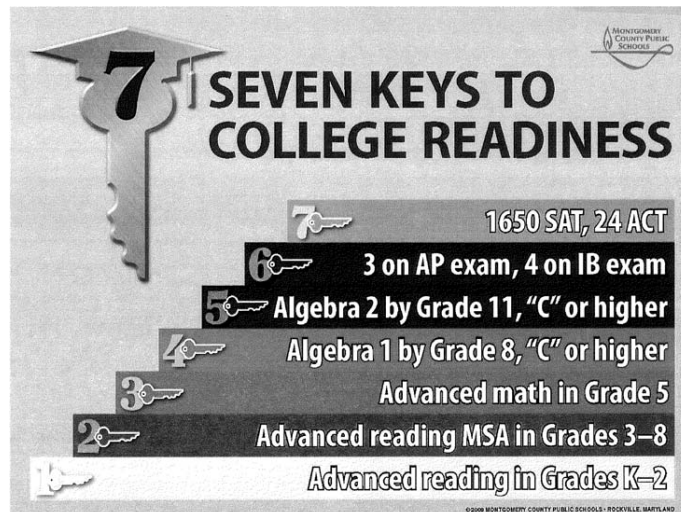
Fast forward 30 years to Montgomery County, Maryland. When I arrived in 1999, Montgomery County Public Schools was a high performing school district, but its demographics were changing rapidly and there was great concern that its exalted reputation might deteriorate with an influx of poor and minority students. We set out to prove that academic quality did not have to stagnate just because of a changing landscape. We believe all children can succeed and succeed at high levels so we set out to build a school system to show just that. What was one of the first things we did? We set a high rigorous standard of what our children needed to achieve. We aligned our curriculum with the College Board’s Advanced Placement program because we knew it was rigorous and had a proven track record of preparing children for college level work. It’s probably the closest thing we have to a de facto national standard for college readiness in America today. It is critical that as a nation, we choose standards at least as rigorous as the College Board’s AP standards or those of the International Baccalaureate programme. I think the only thing more harmful for our students than no standards, would be low standards. Low standards create a mirage of rigor for those who need to improve and penalize those already working at high levels.

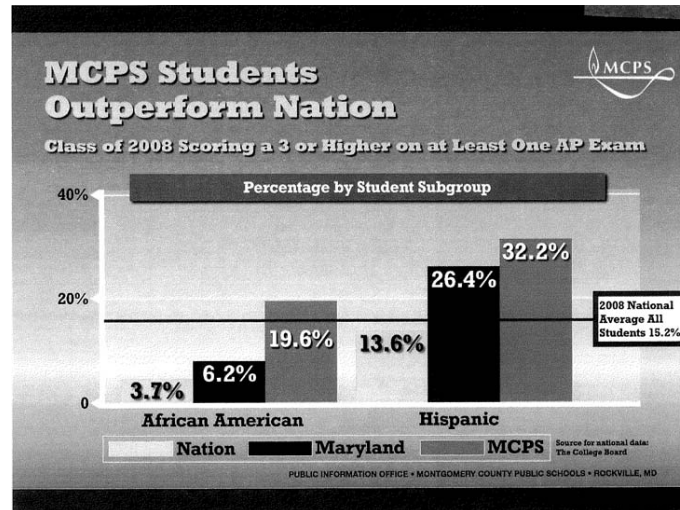
We picked a clear target. We call it our “North Star.” We then began to systematically align our work and our structures to reach the target. We backmapped our curriculum from AP English and Calculus all the way down to pre-school so that we would know what our children needed to achieve at each level to keep them on the pathway to college readiness. We’ve been at this so steadily that we now have the research to show how certain data points at each level support and reinforce the requirements at other levels. We call it the “Seven Keys to College Readiness” and we are now teaching all of our parents about these keys so that they can monitor their own child’s progress against these standards. The keys start with reading simple text in kindergarten and progress through AP/IB in high school to reach college readiness. Each of the Seven Keys builds upon the previous key. (Attachment A). Our college graduation data provides remarkable proof that show that if you achieve the keys, you can be successful. For example, for graduates in the class of 2001 who earned an 1100 on the SAT or a 24 on the ACT, 77 percent of them earned a bachelor’s degree. For African American and Latino students, 68 percent and 67 percent earned bachelor’s degree.

After 10 years of hard work, I’m proud of the progress we have made. I dare say that we may be one of only a few systems who have switched from majority white to majority minority and have still seen student performance rise each and every year. We see extraordinary academic achievement in places where others would not expect it. We do not have a single Title I school at risk for sanctions under NCLB. All are showing remarkable growth in achievement and none more so than Highland Elementary, which has a poverty rate of more than 80 percent and is nearly 75 percent Latino. This is a school that was on the verge of state takeover. However, Principal Ray Myrtle has turned it into a “Blue Ribbon” winner in Maryland and, perhaps, a national “Blue Ribbon” winner this fall. At Highland, nearly 80 percent of their 5th graders are now scoring in the advanced category on state reading tests. Mr. Myrtle and his team have shown what a difference it makes to have high expectations for all students and to have a rigorous curriculum pegged to high standards to produce a college readiness outcome.

We have seen steady progress in the number of students taking and succeeding in AP courses. In fact, African American and Latino students in the Class of 2008 outscored the national average for ALL students, including Whites and Asian Americans. (Attachment B) I am both proud and troubled to say that we are second only to New York City in the number of exams taken by African American students who earned a 3 or better last year even though New York City has 9 times more African American students than we do. Our African American students passed nearly 1,200 tests while New York had a little more than 1,300 passing tests. I'm proud that we are outdistancing the country, but I am distressed that we have such status with only about 1,200 passing tests. One could say that we are a tall tree in a short forest.

It's a wake up call for every state and this nation that we had better get serious about increasing the performance of all students regardless of their race, ethnicity, language, socioeconomic status or disability. If we want to truly leave no child behind, then we'd better show them where they need to go and that is college. The only way we can show them the pathway is if we create it. We can do that by setting some common, rigorous academic standards that everyone can aim for and that will, if followed with fidelity, lead to a better prepared workforce to keep our nation strong and competitive.





[From the Washington Post, December, 18, 2008]

### County Stays Strong in AP Scores Despite Increased Participation

By DANIEL DE VISE, *Washington Post Staff Writer*

Montgomery County high schools remain among the nation's elite in college-level Advanced Placement testing, even after dramatically expanding the number of disadvantaged students involved in the program, according to a review of score reports over several years.

The number of students taking AP exams nearly tripled between 2000 and 2008, from 4,626 to 13,568, according to annual reports published by the school system. School Superintendent Jerry D. Weast released 2008 data last week during a visit to Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School.

The number of disadvantaged students taking AP tests has increased at a greater rate, from 160 students in the 1999-2000 academic year to 1,112 in 2007-08. Disadvantaged students, or those who qualify for federally subsidized meals because of low family income, make up 8 percent of AP test-takers in the county, up from 3 percent at the start of the decade.

"Race should not be a predictor," Weast said, addressing students and staff at Bethesda-Chevy Chase. "Socioeconomics should not be a predictor. And the teachers of Montgomery County are proving that."

The larger presence of low-income students in the college-level testing program reflects two factors, school officials said: increased poverty in the community and the recruitment of disadvantaged students into advanced study. Under Weast, the school system has abandoned barriers to AP study that kept the program small in previous decades, reflecting an expansive philosophy toward college-level testing across the region. AP, International Baccalaureate and other programs expose high school students to college-level work. Students who score well on the end-of-course tests can qualify for college credit.

By several measures, Montgomery's high schools are among the most successful in the nation at AP study. Every county high school with a graduating class last spring earned a spot on the Challenge Index, a measure of participation in college-level testing created by Washington Post staff writer Jay Mathews. That means every county high school, including high-poverty Albert Einstein and Wheaton, ranked among the top 5 to 10 percent of high schools nationwide for AP and IB testing.

Six county high schools ranked among the top 100 on the index, which measures college-level tests taken per graduating senior: Richard Montgomery (32), Wootton (60), Bethesda-Chevy Chase (64), Walt Whitman (69), Walter Johnson (76) and Winston Churchill (98). No school system had more schools in the top echelon, Montgomery officials said. Three Montgomery schools placed on a competing list of 100

top schools published recently by U.S. News & World Report, based partly on AP performance, and again the county was unsurpassed.

Rapid expansion of AP testing has brought some decline in pass rates, a correlation common in AP and SAT testing. The percentage of county AP tests earning a score of 3, the minimum to earn college credit, or higher on the 5-point scale has dropped from about 80 percent to the low 70s in the past decade. Just more than half of disadvantaged students who took AP tests this year passed, compared with 57 percent five years ago.

But the yield of passed tests has grown tremendously. The number of successful AP tests taken countywide reached 18,306 this year, up from 14,508 in 2004.

Weast has drawn attention to the participation of poor and minority students in AP study by fostering what he terms a healthy competition among school systems, particularly toward the achievement of African American students.

African Americans in Montgomery high schools produced 1,152 passing AP tests this year, up from 859 in 2006 and 725 in 2004. A Washington Post analysis two years ago found that only one school system, the million-student New York public school system, generated more passing AP tests from black students than Montgomery, a system of 139,000 students.

African American students passed 1,313 AP tests in New York schools this year, a city schools spokesman said.

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[The publication, "Ensuring U.S. Students Receive World Class Education," by the National Governors Association, may be accessed at the following Internet address:]

*<http://www.nga.org/files/pdf/0812benchmarking.pdf>*

[Whereupon, at 11:32 a.m., the committee was adjourned.]

