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Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
Hearing on ESEA Reauthorization: Meeting the Needs of the Whole Student
April 22, 2010

Context: The Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions held a hearing yesterday, April 22, on Meeting the Needs of the Whole Student as part of a series of sessions on the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The hearing was conducted in a roundtable format with the Senators and ten witnesses engaged in a discussion focused on meeting the needs – social, emotional, academic, physical, etc. – of the whole child.

Testimony Summary: In opening remarks, Chairman Harkin (D-IA) and Senator Isakson (R-GA) agreed that the academic achievement, while centrally important, does not reflect the sole measure of student success. Chairman Harkin noted the narrowing of curriculum and the reliance on drill-and-kill under No Child Left Behind. Senator Isakson (Ranking Member Enzi had a scheduling conflict) discussed the importance of recrafting ESEA to ensure a flexible federal framework that would not constrain schools' ability to meet the needs of students, including nontraditional students.

The ten hearing witnesses and their areas of focus in two-minute presentations were as follows:

- **Geoff Canada** (President and CEO, Harlem Children's Zone, New York, NY) spoke about the Harlem Children Zone's (HCZ) work in a 97-block area of Harlem. HCZ begins working with children at birth and continues until they graduate from college, providing services including health, dental, social work, and schools that are open 11 months per year.
- **Karen Pittman** (Co-Founder, President and CEO, Forum for Youth Investment, Washington, DC) urged Congress to formalize the roles of community organizations and families and look for funding to support these partners. She also noted the need for a quality learning environment.
- **Eric Schwarz** (Co-Founder and CEO, Citizen Schools, Boston, MA) discussed Citizen Schools, which partners with schools to expand the learning day (to 9-10 hours), providing high-quality, real-world learning opportunities in the additional time. Schwartz stated that serving the whole child is an essential element of driving proficiency, graduation, and college-readiness.
- **George Sugai** (Professor & Carole J. Neag Endowed Chair, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, Storrs, CT) summarized his work with the Center of Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports, which works in 11,000 schools across the country. Stressing the importance of positive supports, he supports flexible funding, data systems that measure important educational outcomes, and deliberate, integrated models of professional development.
- **Jamie Greene** (President, Rhode Island School Library Association, Warren, RI), noting budget cuts and layoffs, stressed the importance of school libraries and licensed librarians in all schools.
- **Clare Struck** (Elementary Counselor, Price Lab School, Cedar Falls, IA) discussed the importance of school counselors, decrying the national average of 460 students per counselor.
- **Nikki Rittling** (Educator, Wonderful Willards Elementary School, Willards, MD) explained the arts integration model at her pre-K-2 elementary school.

- **Lynsey Wood Jefferies** (Executive Director, DC Metro, Higher Achievement, Washington, DC) outlined DC Metro, which currently serves more than 600 students with year-round enrichment after school and in the summer. Students make multiyear commitments in middle school and have three weekly mentors.
- **Anne Henderson** (Senior Consultant, Community Organizing and Engagement, Annenberg Institute for School Reform, Washington, DC) examined the importance of engaging low-income, nontraditional families, citing the link to higher student achievement, lower dropout, and closing the achievement gaps.
- **Dan Cardinali** (President, Communities in Schools, Arlington, VA) emphasized the importance of integrating and aligning strategies so that educators have buckets of resources for school improvement.

Discussion Focus: Following the witnesses' testimony, members of the Committee participated in an informal discussion session. Occasional questions from Senators resulted in lengthy discussions among the witnesses.

- Chairman Harkin asked how initiatives that extend the school day and year effectively address student interest. Ms. Pittman explained that many services take part outside of school with a rich array of organizations ready to provide supports. Mr. Schwarz warned against simply adding more hours to a failing system and distinguished initiatives that use the extra time as a lever to reform the entire day – for example, adding back in arts, music, athletics, and internships. Ms. Jeffries observed that the alternative for many participants in the DC Metro program is boredom at home.
- Senator Bennett (D-CO) decried the alarming statistics on the work- and college-readiness of those high school students who graduate. He asked Mr. Canada specifically what he would do to adjust such profoundly unjust outcomes. Senator Franken (D-MN) added that return on investment was an important consideration for Congress. Mr. Canada noted the United States' slipping educational ranking internationally and warned that state budget crises could further undermine progress by reducing opportunities including full-day early childhood and after-school programs. But he noted that certain programs do not produce results and should no longer be funded, and when prodded, named DARE as an example.
- Senator Dodd (D-CT) stressed the importance of early childhood education, noting the achievement gaps that exist when students begin kindergarten, and the necessity of involving families in ages 0-3. Chairman Harkin mentioned his discussions with the Administration to redefine elementary education as beginning at birth. Ms. Pittman agreed with Senator Dodd, citing research on investment in early education, but she cautioned that the investment must not only be early but also sustained. Mr. Cardinali noted that public will was necessary to provide real investment in early childhood education. Ms. Henderson highlighted the success of Chicago's Child-Parent Centers (ages 3-9).
- Senator Reed (D-RI) noted the role of technological advancements in education. Ms. Greene noted that part of library curriculum includes Internet knowledge including safety, access, and evaluation of information. Mr. Canada warned that technology could further separate disadvantaged students who lack access.
- Senator Bennett reflected that perhaps Congress should reconsider its separate streams of funding, appropriated for certain activities, and instead permit communities to determine the best use of funds. Mr. Schwarz expressed his support for finding ways to open up funding to creative

programs and permit decisions to be made at the local level; specifically, he encouraged nationally-administered competitive grant programs to identify strong interventions and scale them. Ms. Pittman agreed with Senator Bennett that hundreds of federal programs to address single problems have led to enormous fragmentation. Mr. Cardinali emphasized the importance of resource integration, noting that Communities in Schools has developed a technology to integrate school and community resources.

- Senator Franken discussed that his plan to introduce a bill about the bullying of LGBT youth. He asked panelists about how to create an environment that promotes positive behaviors. Mr. Sugai noted that zero tolerance and other reactive responses are ineffective; instead, there needs to be a school wide environment where kids are confident and enjoy success, academically and socially. In addition to targeted social skills instruction at school, Mr. Sugai observed that adults must model the behaviors schools hope to instill in students. Ms. Struck seconded the importance of adult modeling and highlighted Iowa's bullying and harassment law that includes sexual orientation. Ms. Henderson agreed that parents need to be involved in anti-bullying initiatives. Ms. Greene observed the importance of teaching students and parents about the online community and cyberbullying.
- Chairman Harkin asked whether any of the panelists had opinions about the common core standards initiative. Mr. Cardinali applauded the effort, asserting that common standards will permit accountability standards for effective programming. Ms. Pittman noted that the proposed common standards mention 21st century skills but do not provide specificity on them. Mr. Schwarz applauded Secretary Duncan's approach of tight on goals, loose on means, to permit educators to figure out the most effective ways to engage students. Finally, Ms. Henderson noted that the National PTA has promulgated standards for family and community engagement, and Kentucky is the first state to tailor the recommendations and adopt standards.

Analysis: The roundtable format of the hearing resulted in a congenial, conversational atmosphere with no points of contention. Witnesses spoke for the majority of the time, with Senators occasionally offering their own thoughts. In closing, Chairman Harkin observed that American society has changed drastically over the course of several centuries, but classroom structures remain largely the same. He commended the panelists on an engaging discussion.