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ABSTRACT

This hearing was called as one of a series of hearings to address concerns related to the role of the Federal Government and the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) in reaching the goal of providing equal educational opportunity to all in the United States. Arguing that significant inequalities in educational opportunities still exist, Major R. Owens (Representative from New York and chairman of the subcommittee) points out that these inequalities are most evident in the nation's inner cities and among minorities. A major problem identified by Owens is the need for additional support for school systems that must provide effective educational programs for at-risk students. The primary concerns addressed by this hearing were the proposed Institute for the Education of At-Risk Students, the depoliticization of educational research, the necessity for planning to meet the needs of rural educational programs, and the relationship between OERI, the Federal Government, and educational improvement. This transcript of the hearing includes testimony and prepared statements presented by eight witnesses: (1) Major R. Owens, Representative from New York; (2) James Comer, the Yale Child Study Center at Yale University; (3) Todd Strohmenger, the Rural Small Schools Program at the Appalachia Educational Laboratory; (4) Linda Darling-Hammond, National Center for Restructuring Education Schools and Teaching (NCREST) at Teachers College, New York; (5) Keith Geiger, the National Education Association; (6) Edmund Gordon, Yale University; (7) Shirley McBay, the Quality Education for Minorities Network; and (8) Laura Rendon, North Carolina State University, Raleigh. (DB)

HEARING ON THE OFFICE OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND IMPROVEMENT

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON SELECT EDUCATION

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED SECOND CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

HEARING HELD IN WASHINGTON, DC, APRIL 25, 1991

Serial No. 102-18

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HEARING ON THE OFFICE OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND IMPROVEMENT

THURSDAY, APRIL 25, 1991

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON SELECT EDUCATION,
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 10 a.m., Room 2261, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Major R. Owens [Chairman] presiding.

Members present: Representatives Owens, Payne, Serrano, Jefferson, Ballenger, and Klug.

Staff present: Wanser Green, Laurence Peters, Theda Zawaiza, and Andy Hartman.

Chairman OWENS. The hearing of the Subcommittee on Select Education will come to order.

Last week, the President unveiled his America 2000 education proposal to move the national education goals ahead. We applaud the initiative and find many positive aspects to the proposal. However, if we are to ensure the implementation of these goals, we must fight the urge to politicize education research. We must rise above partisan agendas which have in the past yielded the resounding failure of the National Institute of Education and its successor, OERI, to critically impact the condition affecting the educationally disadvantaged. It is, therefore, of vital importance to examine new research-based strategies and alternatives.

New initiatives are needed to assist with the Herculean task of improving education for large numbers of at-risk students. The largest proportion of such at-risk students are African-American and Hispanic who are located in our densely populated inner-cities. At the same time, very intense problems face some rural communities where drastic population declines threaten the very existence of public education. The dimensions of these education failures and their negative consequences continue to expand out of control. An Institute for the Education of At-Risk Students can play a major role in reversing the present dangerous landslide into official helplessness.

In addition to maintaining the existing research centers and laboratories, an institute capable of grappling with the extensive research and demonstration possibilities in a timely and broad-based effort is needed. The Institute must assemble the most knowledgeable national leadership as policy-makers and staff. It must have the funding and promise of longevity which will attract the most expe-

rienced researchers who are already involved with programs and projects involving at-risk students.

It must have high visibility and command trust from all segments of the communities which will be targeted. The Institute must have the capacity to rapidly move programs, projects, and methods from the "anecdotal" stage to the validated, certified status of a recommended basic approach that works.

There are existing programs that may yield high returns on investments already made. Federally funded drop-out prevention programs need to be evaluated, analyzed, and replicated. Special education classes, filled with a disproportionate number of minority males, need to be reviewed, surveyed, and studied to ascertain the degree and nature of their positive or negative effect on these students.

In addition, the Institute For the Education of At-Risk Students must have the capacity to fund demonstration projects on a large scale. What is learned in connection with any segment of the at-risk population will be applicable for the other groups and for education in general. Although the research function can never compensate for budget problems or for deficiencies in governance and management, the Institute's production of a few answers to some of the basic problems can contribute greatly to the ongoing, desperately needed school improvement effort.

[The prepared statement of Hon. Major R. Owens follows:]

STATEMENT OF HON. MAJOR R. OWENS, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW YORK

Last week, the President unveiled his "America 2000" education proposal to move the national education goals ahead. We applaud the initiative and find many positive aspects to the proposal. However, if we are to ensure the implementation of these goals, we must fight the urge to politicize education research. We must rise above partisan agendas which have in the past yielded the resounding failure of the NIE and its successor, OERI, to critically impact the condition affecting the educationally disadvantaged. Therefore, it is of vital importance to examine new research-based strategies and alternatives.

New initiatives are needed to assist with the Herculean task of improving education for large numbers of at-risk students. The largest proportion of such at-risk students are African-American and Hispanic who are located in our densely populated inner-cities. At the same time, very intense problems face some rural communities where drastic population declines threaten the very existence of public education. The dimensions of these education failures and their negative consequences continue to expand out of control. An Institute for the Education of At-Risk Students can play a major role in reversing the present dangerous landslide into official helplessness.

In addition to maintaining the existing research centers and laboratories, an institute capable of grappling with the extensive research and demonstration possibilities in a timely and broad-based effort is needed. The Institute must assemble the most knowledgeable national leadership as policy-makers and staff. It must have the funding and promise of longevity which will attract the most experienced researchers who are already involved with programs and projects involving at-risk students. It must have high visibility and command trust from all segments of the communities which will be targeted. The Institute must have the capacity to rapidly move programs, projects, and methods—from the "anecdotal" stage to the validated, certified status of a recommended basic approach that works. There are existing programs that may yield high returns on investments already made. Federally funded drop-out prevention programs need to be evaluated, analyzed, and replicated. Special education classes, filled with a disproportionate number of minority males, need to be reviewed, surveyed, and studied to ascertain the degree and nature of their positive or negative effect on these students.

In addition, the Institute for the Education of At-Risk Students must have the capacity to fund demonstration projects on a large scale, e.g., bilingual demonstration schools where all classroom activity and business is conducted in Spanish—will they raise the self-esteem of Latino children while enhancing the Spanish language proficiency of children from English-speaking families; projects on the use of public television in assisting rural education—what works, what almost works, how to rapidly replicate that which works; and projects on how to educate students at lower costs with fewer schools and fewer teachers. What is learned in connection with any segment of the at-risk population will be applicable for the other groups—and for education in general. Although the research function can never compensate for budget problems or for deficiencies in governance and management, the Institute's production of a few answers to a few of the basic problems can contribute greatly to the ongoing, desperately needed school improvement effort.

Chairman OWENS. I yield to Mr. Jefferson for an opening statement.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and distinguished colleagues on the Subcommittee on Select Education.

I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this discussion on the proposal to establish a national Institute for the Education of the At-Risk. I would like to briefly voice my support, Mr. Chairman, for this measure. In his America 2000 education strategy, the President has called for the United States to move from a Nation at risk to a Nation of students. This is a commendable goal and indeed one the United States should strive for.

Our work must be to ensure that it is, indeed, an achieved goal, not just a play on words or a mere change in phraseology. Therefore, I respectfully ask the President how this goal can be realized when the special educational needs of growing numbers of impoverished urban and rural youth continue to be overlooked and underserved. How can we move from a Nation at risk if we do not confront the problems of the students most at risk in our Nation?

The President's goal for America must be "excellence for all," not "excellence for a few." And this is possible only if the national education goals are buttressed by firm commitment to research to adequately educate this Nation's at-risk population.

Although research or the education of the at-risk is a part of OERI's mandated mission, little progress has been made on increasing the quality and quantity of information on how to improve the achievement of at-risk students, especially at-risk secondary students. The unfortunate consequence has been a small mix of scientifically unsupported and unsound programs for upper grade students.

I believe the Institute for the Education of the At-Risk is needed to fill the void created by OERI's neglect of its mandate for research on the effective education of at-risk youth. The Institute would speed the transformation of valuable research findings on at-risk youth into functioning classroom programs serving needy students.

I am particularly attracted to two parts of the proposal: one, which calls for developing relationships with predominately minority high-education students, rural focused colleges and universities, and institutions specializing in bilingual education, and another, which calls for, the promotion of special involvement of scholars with expertise in the education of minorities and the poor.

The importance of the Institute's mission cannot be overstated. There must be an ongoing Federal presence in the efforts to edu-

cate at-risk children who, undoubtedly, are the most vulnerable segment of our society.

I commend this committee for recognizing an urgent need and advocating a sound first step. I say, "first step" not to take away from the monumental task that the Institute will undertake, but to emphasize the point that America's central challenge is not only how to educate its existing at-risk population, but how to prevent a new generation of at-risk from developing.

Escalating numbers of at-risk youth is a recognized ill in our society. As with any ill, Mr. Chairman, the short-term goal is treatment but the long-term goal is prevention. I hope for the day when an institute such as this Institute for the At-Risk is unnecessary, but today the situation in our rural areas and our inner-cities tells us that the Institute for the Education of the At-Risk is desperately needed, and so I firmly support it, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman OWENS. Thank you.

Mr. Serrano?

Mr. SERRANO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to commend you for these continued hearings addressing the growing needs of the underrepresented.

Part of reforming the education system should include our knowledge of the needs and demands of all students. Presently, all we know about at-risk students is that they have reached the stage where they are at risk of failing and, thus, maybe dropping out of school. How can we expect excellence from our students when high percentages of them continue to fail to receive an adequate education?

In order to reform our education system, we must have a well-coordinated long range plan. For there to be educational improvement, resources must be accessible to research and develop programs and, most importantly, disseminate information to schools that will better aid teachers to meet at-risk students' needs. The Institution for the Education of At-Risk Students would be such a resource. Such an institute would provide support for change in a system that has ignored many students whose special needs are not understood and, thus, fall through the cracks.

I am encouraged, Mr. Chairman, to read that high priority will be given to involve minority participants as scholars, teachers, policy-makers, and researchers. Their input will be invaluable in closing existing gaps in research knowledge. It is vital that the Institute serve as support and provide guidance for parents, teachers, and schools to identify how to best address and serve the needs of urban, rural, and bilingual students who are at risk.

We do not need anymore quick fixes. We need long-term, well thought out, researched solutions to reform the crisis in our education system. I look forward to hearing the discussion of our distinguished panelists.

Thank you.

Chairman OWENS. Mr. Payne?

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let me commend you, again, for calling this hearing to discuss the need for an Institute for the Education of At-Risk Students that will be able to conduct research and demonstration initiatives designed to promote the improvement of education for at-risk students and provide on-going

assistance to schools whose enrollment are made up of predominately at-risk students.

We can no longer wait to address the needs of the growing number of at-risk students in urban and in rural areas of this country. OERI is required by law to contribute to the effect of education of at-risk students. In fact, they have done some research in the area. However, now is the time to develop an action-packed agenda and to provide funding for long-term research projects.

Moreover, we need to be able to go from the active research phase to actually developing policies and programs to the evaluating and choosing of the most effective programs, and then we can begin to meet the needs of our at-risk students.

Mr. Chairman, I hope that we will draw upon the resources of our minority and rural colleges and universities in an effort to get the benefit of their expertise as they may be able to provide a unique perspective as well as provide some additional insight so we can better serve our at-risk students. An Institute for the Education of At-Risk Students must be established to provide the commitment necessary to ensure that our most vulnerable students receive a quality education, or we risk creating a permanent underclass and losing another generation of intelligent and promising human beings.

Mr. Chairman, I look forward to hearing the testimony and would also like to acknowledge that a friend of mine from years ago, as a high school student, joins us here in the audience. I think you know her from her work in New York, Dr. Dolores Cross, who is the President of Chicago State University, the first woman to be appointed to that very prestigious position. I would like to thank her for being here with us.

Chairman OWENS. Yes, I would like to join you in welcoming my old friend, Dr. Cross.

Mr. SERRANO. Well ditto that for me, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman OWENS. We have a New York homecoming.

Mr. Ballenger?

Mr. BALLENGER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't really have a prepared statement. I would like to say, however, that I'm sorry I'm late in arriving here, and I look forward to approaching this from a different viewpoint, considering the New York leaning of this crowd. I come from a much less urban area of the country, western North Carolina.

But I recognize that, as a business man, we have approached this issue in our area—and I think the chairman has heard me say this before—that, in this country, our businesspeople, our educators, and society in general, need to be able to save the people that are slipping through the cracks. We cannot say, as we might have in the past, "we'll forget some of these students." Our future depends on all students.

We're losing students and I, personally, and my business, have spent a great deal of time and effort in my own home area, trying to make arrangements for drop-out students to re-enter school or to enroll them in the I Have a Dream Program that was started in New York City.

I would like to say that I'm very serious in this effort.

Some of our minority students at home, don't seem to have the same dedication that a very much smaller group of minority of students in our same area, the Vietnamese have. I don't know where their dedication comes from. Maybe you have some solutions that we can apply so that people born in America will recognize the opportunities that are available to them the same way that other people who are brought into this country, can.

And without further ado, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for allowing me to say a word.

Chairman OWENS. Thank you.

We are pleased to welcome a very distinguished panel of experts and scholars. Some of them are widely quoted already, and some have appeared before us on previous occasions. We thank them very much for taking time out and returning—it's very important at this point to get what they have to say on the record.

I would like to first welcome Dr. James Comer, Director of Yale's Child Study Center, Yale University, New Haven; Mr. Keith Geiger, President of the National Education Association; Dr. Edmund Gordon, Professor of Psychology and Afro-American Studies at Yale University; and Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond, Professor and Co-Director of INCREST, Teachers College, New York.

Please be seated. This the first panel. We'll hear all of the panelists and then pause for questions. We will begin with Dr. Comer.

STATEMENT OF JAMES COMER, M.D., DIRECTOR, YALE CHILD STUDY CENTER, YALE UNIVERSITY, NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT; KEITH GEIGER, PRESIDENT, NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION, WASHINGTON, DC; EDMUND GORDON, Ph.D., PROFESSOR, PSYCHOLOGY AND AFRO-AMERICAN STUDIES, YALE UNIVERSITY, NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT; AND LINDA DARLING-HAMMOND, Ph.D., PROFESSOR AND CO-DIRECTOR OF NCREST, TEACHERS COLLEGE, NEW YORK, NEW YORK

Dr. COMER. Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to speak in support of the proposal to establish an Institute for the Education of At-Risk Students. Our country has an education problem among some of our most affluent, best educated students as evidenced by the fact that they often do not score as well in academic subject areas as students from other industrialized and post-industrialized countries. Because of our education problem, we are at risk of not being economically competitive with these nations in the future.

But we have an educational crisis affecting from 20 to 50 percent of our students in urban and rural areas. They are at risk of not gaining the kind of education that will allow them to earn a living, take care of themselves and families and become responsible citizens. They are likely to have personal problems which in turn will intensify all of our existing social problems to the point that they can undermine our democratic system.

Traditional government-sponsored research approaches, training, and dissemination effort have not been very effective for at-risk students. Yet numerous successful programs and practices exist in many places across the country, but have not been, and probably cannot be nourished and significantly expanded through existing

government structures without significant modification and enlargement of educational development programs in the form of the kind of institute being proposed here. My own work and experience is a good example of the problem.

Our Yale Child Study Center Team began our work in the New Haven School System 23 years ago, and most of the "new approaches" that are thought to be promising today were established in our project during its first year, 1968–1969—school-based management and/or decision-making, parent participation, social capital building such as social climate and social skill development in schools, age-appropriate instruction, child and proximal environment-centered curriculum and the like.

Unfortunately, helping staff and pre-service educators acquire child development and relationship knowledge, skills, and activities—a central focus of our work—is still not a significant component of today's restructuring efforts. Students in our pilot schools showed dramatic academic and social gains. Today our work is widely recognized as a pioneering effort still at the cutting edge of efforts to improve educational opportunity for at-risk students. Our program is being used in 14 school districts in 12 different States and the District of Columbia.

Despite our experience, we applied for financial support for our intervention research efforts at least five times to various groups within the Department of Education, and we have never been successful. Without the generous support of private foundations, our efforts would have been lost. I will not speculate about why we have not received support in spite of the fact that our applications have been considered very strong by very competent peers, most not on the official peer review committee, some on the committees.

I believe that this is unfortunate in that because of my background, combined with my training, I bring unique insights to the problems of children at risk. My mother was the daughter of a rural sharecropper who was killed by lightening, and was raised by an abusive stepfather. She, herself, was at risk. But through grit, determination, and luck, with no education, working as a domestic, and with my father, who had a sixth grade education and worked as a steel mill laborer, eventually sent their five children to college, where we obtained a total of 13 college degrees, and are all now involved in activities addressing problems of at-risk children.

A disproportionate number of such experiences have occurred among minority social and behavioral scientists, and a disproportionate number of the at-risk children are from minority backgrounds. Yet, traditional research institutions and practices give no weight to the value of such backgrounds and have made very little effort to learn from the personal and research activities of such scholars.

I am not suggesting that minority status or a low income or working class background is necessary. But I am suggesting that such scholars could expand the knowledge base, and accelerate the action orientation in our effort to meet the needs of at-risk students. In many cases, we are spending a great deal of time and money researching issues which many scholars already have considerable insight and knowledge about because of their own personal experiences.

The institute being proposed here can combine traditional research, dissemination, training, and service approaches with knowledge from other public and private agencies and people, in a way that will greatly accelerate our efforts to meet the needs of at-risk students. Such an institute will give an urgency, focus, and visibility to the problems and opportunities for meeting the needs of at-risk students that cannot exist under present conditions.

In short, I strongly support the establishment of an Institute for the Education of At-Risk Students, and I would like to commend the subcommittee for your effort in addressing this problem.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of James Comer, M.D. follows:]

April 24, 1991

Testimony Before the Subcommittee on Select Education Hearing on the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)

by

James P. Comer, M.D.
Maurice Falk Professor of Child Psychiatry
Yale Child Study Center
Associate Dean
Yale School of Medicine

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for this opportunity for me to speak in support of the proposal to establish an Institute for the education of at-risk students. Our country has an education problem among some of our most affluent, best educated students as evidenced by the fact that they often do not score as well in academic subject areas as students from other industralized and post industrialized countries. Because of our education problem we are at risk of not being economically competitive with these nations in the future. But we have an educational crisis affecting from 20 to 50% of our students in urban and rural areas. They are at risk of not gaining the kind of education that will allow them to earn a living, take care of themselves and families and become responsible citizens. They are more likely to have personal problems which in turn will intensify all of our existing social problems to the point that they can undermine our democratic system.

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In short, I strongly support the establishment of an institute for the education of at-risk students.

Chairman OWENS. Thank you, Dr. Comer.

We apologize for the problem with the mikes. We have done everything we can, as laymen, to make the adjustment. We'll improvise.

Mr. SERRANO. [Indicating] isn't this how we started out?

[Laughter.]

Chairman OWENS. We are pleased to have with us Mr. Keith Geiger, President, National Education Association.

Mr. GEIGER. Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to speak to you about the Office of Educational Research and Improvement. Mr. Ballenger, I would like to help you a little bit; I want you to know I have no New York influence whatsoever. In fact, I come from Pigeon, Michigan, and there is no place in North Carolina more rural than Pigeon, Michigan. So you and I can probably speak the same language today.

Each day, our schools are working to prepare America's children for an ever-changing world. As such, they must be involved in a wide range of innovative and experimental projects. But we must avoid experimentation for its own sake or innovation without goals. Education research will help keep the experimentation on track.

Education research is an essential element in efforts to achieve the national education goals. It must be readily available to both practitioners and to the policymakers. It must be related to fundamental issues that educators face today and in the future. It must be nonpartisan; it must be apolitical, and it must be conducted with public education employees in a school setting.

Research must be led by the Federal Government. Only the Federal Government has the scope and the resources to give national education priorities national attention.

Research alone cannot solve all of our Nation's education needs. Research can provide the compass, but we must assure that the ship itself is seaworthy. As Chairman Owens has stated elsewhere—and I'm paraphrasing here—If political hostility toward public education continues to create an environment of scarcity, then research and development efforts will be irrelevant.

NEA shares your commitment to create an environment where education research can make a difference, not simply a commentary on what might have been. The Office of Educational Research and Improvement can, and should, provide significant leadership and support in efforts to advance educational excellence and equity.

Education research must be depoliticized. The proposal to establish a nonpartisan review board to assure a close connection between education research and outstanding needs is a good start. We cannot afford to go from reform to reform without considering the relationship between policy and outcome.

For example, the idea that market forces—choice, competition, and rewards—would have a positive impact on American public schools would have no basis in any empirical research. And yet, for fiscal year 1992, the Bush Administration proposed spending about twice as much to support vouchers and choice, as is devoted to the total Federal education research effort.

In the 1980s, State after State changed educational policies. But according to a study by the Rand Center, had lawmakers taken

more time to consult the available research, they would have found a strong basis for involving teachers in the decision-making process.

In addition, education research must be provided adequate resources. Between 1980 and 1988, appropriation for OERI declined by more than 51 percent after accounting for inflation. At present, about two one-hundredths of a percent of the Federal resources devoted to research and development are used to improve educational practices and policies.

Education research must be conducted in close cooperation with public education employees in a school setting. Education researchers cannot breeze through and clean up the town in short order. The work of Dr. Comer is important precisely because it is based on a close, sustained relationship with a school, its staff, and its students.

The more closely research is connected to a school, the greater acceptance both staff and the community will have for its conclusions, and the more likely recommendations will be acted on.

We commend the chairman for his emphasis on addressing the needs of all of America's students. An Institute for the Education of At-Risk Students, would help us, in a coordinated effort, overcome the inequities in educational opportunity.

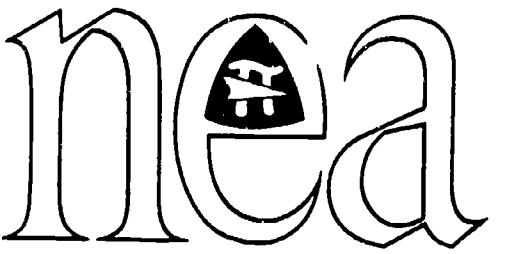
We must provide sustained, coordinated programs to meet the nutritional, health care, and safety needs of children and to establish and enhance basic support systems in the community at large.

In addition, the committee has discussed a similar approach to research into educational technology. It's true that computers can help individualize instruction, allowing students to work at their own pace in learning certain concepts. But computers themselves are no panacea; they must be connected to something: software, data bases, and teachers.

NEA and its affiliates have had long and valuable experience with the research community. We look forward to continuing that partnership, and we stand ready to help assure that partnership is productive.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Keith Geiger follows:]



LEGISLATIVE INFORMATION

TESTIMONY
OF THE
NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

ON
OFFICE OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND IMPROVEMENT

BEFORE THE
SELECT EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PRESENTED BY
KEITH GEIGER
NEA PRESIDENT

APRIL 25, 1991

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I am Keith Geiger, president of the National Education Association, which represents more than 2 million education employees in the nation's elementary, secondary, vocational, and postsecondary education institutions. I appreciate this opportunity to speak with you about the reauthorization of the Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

Education research is an essential element in efforts to achieve the National Education Goals set forth by President Bush and the nation's governors. It must be readily available to both practitioners and policymakers. It must be related to fundamental issues that face educators today and in the future. It must be nonpartisan and apolitical. And it must be conducted with public education employees in a school setting. Education research must be balanced between applied research that investigates the viability of proposed education reforms and programs and basic research that investigates questions about how people learn, how people learn best at various stages of their lives, and how people from different cultures learn best. This undertaking must be led by the federal government. Only the federal government has the scope and the resources to give national education priorities national attention.

Research alone cannot solve all of our nation's education needs. Research can provide the compass, but we must assure that the ship itself is seaworthy. As Chairman Owens has stated elsewhere, "If budget cuts, deficits, and

political hostility toward public education continue to create an environment of scarcity, deprivation, and desperation for our education institutions, then research and development efforts will be rendered irrelevant." NEA shares your commitment to create an environment where education research can make a difference, not simply a commentary on what might have been.

The Office of Educational Research and Improvement can and should provide significant leadership and support for efforts to advance educational excellence and equity. The federal government is the appropriate point for collecting and disseminating statistical information on schools. Moreover, the federal government has a well-acknowledged responsibility for identifying national priorities in education. Research collected at the national level can help determine if these priorities are on track and enhance public accountability that programs supported by the federal government accomplish their objectives.

The adoption last year of six national education goals was significant for a variety of reasons. Broad goals can help focus attention and effort on specific needs. Common goals can lead to consensus, cooperation, and collaboration. Goals can help mobilize the public, giving them a better understanding of what the challenges are and what is at stake. Strategies to advance these goals must be supported by solid information, including statistical information that informs policymakers about issues related to the structure

of schools -- class size, school size, and length of the school year, for example. Instructional strategies must also be supported by research. Practitioners must have better information about individual learning styles, effective ways to make the school setting more collaborative, and effective classroom management techniques.

All too often, what drives education reform proposals is politics, rather than sound educational theory. For example, the idea that market forces -- choice, competition, and rewards -- would have a positive impact on American public schools has no basis in any empirical research, nor is it widely supported by either practitioners or laypersons responsible for education policy at the local level. And yet, for Fiscal Year 1992, the Bush Administration proposed spending some $350 million to support open enrollment and vouchers -- about twice as much as is devoted to the total federal education research effort.

We support the concept of establishing a nonpartisan review board to assure a close connection between education research and outstanding needs. Moreover, we believe that such a review panel would help assure long-range studies are conducted on long-standing problems that challenge schools and teachers.

Education research must be provided adequate resources. At present, less than one percent, in fact, about two one-hundreds of a percent of the federal resources devoted to

research and development are used to improve educational practices and policies. Between FY1980 and FY1988, federal appropriations for OERI declined by more than 51 percent after accounting for inflation. The need for adequate, timely, and consistent data is essential to education policymakers at every level.

Governors, state legislators, state and local education officials, and the general public must be provided both statistical and substantive research. We cannot afford to go from reform to reform without taking a hard look at the relationship between policy and outcome. Research supported by OERI should maintain a balance between analysis of education changes that have already taken place and new, innovative ideas.

For example, our society has been engaged in an examination of questions relative to teacher preparation, staffing patterns, alternative routes to teacher licensure, etc. Throughout the 1980s, state after state acted to change educational policies. But a study by the RAND Center for the Study of the Teaching Profession concluded that state officials who considered these changes demonstrated a fair degree of ambivalence over whether teaching is a knowledge-based professional activity that demands autonomy or semiskilled work that should be regulated at every turn.

Consequently, the results from state to state are uneven and, in many cases, inconsistent with national education objectives. Had lawmakers taken more time to

consult the available research, they would have found a strong basis for involving teachers in the decision-making process, both in broad educational policy and in the day-to-day decisions that affect the quality of education in the individual classroom.

At present, a tremendous gulf exists between education research and action. As this Committee considers the reauthorization, it should explore effective methods for making research available to those who need it most -- policymakers and practitioners.

Within this context, I urge you to find ways to assure that education research be depoliticized. The proposal to establish a nonpartisan review board is a good start, but it only addresses, to some extent, the questions asked. The integrity of research findings should be safeguarded. Some attention should also be paid to how conclusions are presented by the Department of Education.

For example, the Department funded research into the efficacy of reducing class size. The conclusion, as presented in most newspapers, was that there was an uncertain relationship between reducing class size and results on achievement test scores. That was the account published in numerous newspapers and periodicals. But the report did find that reducing class size below 20 can produce significant improvements. In other words the public accounts were the opposite of the research findings. When such glaring contradictions exist, there ought to be

consequences for the Department which publicized the results.

Congress can help shield education research from politicization by ensuring a balance between field- and Department-determined research agendas. Competitive grants and contracts, administered through a process of rigorous peer review, ensures a healthy environment for the generation of creative research ideas.

Toward that end, education research must be conducted in close cooperation with public education employees in a school setting. Education researchers cannot just breeze through and clean up the town in short order. The more closely their work is connected to a school environment where conclusions can be acted on, where the staff have a better understanding and support for changes because they were involved in the process, the more effective researchers work can be.

We commend the Chairman for his emphasis on research in effective means of addressing the needs of disadvantaged students, and we support efforts to enhance research in that area. The current organizational structure of OERI has allowed little room for sustained research, evaluation, and dissemination of educational challenges of such magnitude. An Institute for the Education of At-Risk Students would help guide us toward a nationwide, coordinated effort to overcome inequities in educational opportunity.

I would hope such an Institute would help confirm and disseminate what we already know: Significant academic improvement is possible only if we first meet the basic human needs of America's children. We must provide sustained, coordinated programs to meet the nutritional, health care, and safety needs of children and establish and enhance basic support systems in the community at large. This is, I believe, a somewhat oversimplified statement of the conclusions of Dr. Comer's work and the theory behind such effective federal programs as WIC, Head Start, Chapter 1, and many others.

We must not dismiss what works simply because it is obvious. But we must continue to develop ways to refine the theoretical basis for what works and explore new, promising avenues for future improvements.

In addition, the Committee has also discussed a similar approach to another area that merits further exploration: technology in the schools. The public mind has always been attracted to the idea that technological advances will lead to major advances in effective educational practice. We believe that can be true, but not without some careful planning based on evidence about what is appropriate and inappropriate use of technology.

For example, availability of satellites and televisions in America's classrooms does allow for greater access to information. Computers can help individualize instruction -- allowing students to work at their own pace in learning

certain concepts. But computers themselves are no panacea; they must be connected to something. Further investigation into effective and appropriate software and data bases is warranted, as well as investigation into what time should be devoted to computer-assisted learning, as opposed to other types of instruction.

NEA and its affiliates have had long and valuable experience with the research community. For the past several years, NEA's Mastery in Learning project has encouraged a high degree of collaboration between teachers and federally funded research labs and university-based centers. As a result, researchers have become more than just observers. They have been active participants in efforts to change the way we approach teaching and learning.

Research participants in the program have provided inservice training, conducted workshops on locally determined priorities, and worked closely with teachers on effective methods for assessing student progress.

As our schools work to achieve the National Education Goals and prepare tomorrow's citizens for an ever-changing world, they must be involved in a wide range of innovative and experimental projects. But we must avoid experimentation for its own sake or innovation without specific goals. Education research will help keep that experimentation on track.

Thank you.

Chairman OWENS. Dr. Edmund Gordon.

Mr. GORDON. Gentlepeople, I'm here to speak in favor of the Institute for Education of At-Risk Children. Since you have my written statement, I would like to take the few minutes assigned to me to simply elaborate on some of the ideas there.

The first has to do with the nature of the population of which—you know as I do that we have often thought of children at risk as consisting of those youngsters with——

Chairman OWENS. I don't think we can survive without it, we're going to have to——

Mr. GORDON. [continuing] should I move to one side of the room in particular?

Chairman OWENS. Don't know.

[Laughter.]

Chairman OWENS. [continuing] social sciences.

Mr. GORDON. What if I speak into this mike?

Chairman OWENS. [continuing] why don't you move over one seat, Mr. Serrano. Let's try that.

[Laughter.]

Chairman OWENS. I noticed there was a slight problem in the hearing yesterday, but now it seems to have escalated and gotten worse.

[Laughter.]

Chairman OWENS. The cabinet is locked so we can't—we're going to try to get some help. We'll have a three minute recess, then we can get some help. Let's have a five minute recess. Sorry about that.

[Recess.]

Chairman OWENS. Please take seats, we think we have the equipment fixed, but I respectfully ask the technician to stay for a while.

[Laughter.]

Chairman OWENS. We're very sorry, Dr. Gordon. You may resume.

Mr. GORDON. Well, that's quite all right. I was simply indicating that I appear in support of the idea of creating a national research center concerned with at-risk students. I was about to get into five points from my written testimony that I would simply like to comment on.

The first had to do with the population itself, and I was calling attention to the fact that we have traditionally thought of at-risk people as being those persons who have physical or mental disabilities. We've also, in more recent years, included persons who suffer from social and economic abuse and neglect.

I would hope in the specifications for the new center that the two kinds of at-risk status will not be placed in competition with each other, but that it is clear that it is the latter group that I understand this legislation is directed at. That is, those persons who have been abused, neglected, or denied opportunity because of their social status and by their economic status.

The second point that I addressed in my written testimony has to do with the importance of research and strategic planning directed at this group. It's important for several reasons. One, the group constitutes—the problems represented in this group are immensely complex problems. Two, they are likely to increase as a group, that

is, the number of persons, as a result of the complexities of modern living and the globalization of our national political economy. The likelihood is that we're going to have more such people unless better interventions are pursued.

The third, these changes in the nature of the society and in the world are going to make demands on this population which are radically different from the demands made on a generation of folk, say, once or twice removed. The new demands of technology, the new demands of knowledge and knowledge manipulation will place very heavy cognitive demands on these folk. And if we are not better prepared to address those issues, they will suffer even more.

The third point that I address has to do with the importance of our recognition that as important, as necessary, as essential as are the research needs here, the research is not the sole answer to this problem. These problems reflect dislocations, problems, dysfunctions, and the social order itself in the nature of our economy. And we don't want to place a burden on the research community or the schools that neither can answer independent of those changes in the society.

The fourth has to do with my concern that the Institute cannot conduct research as usual. Research which focuses on this population, which is not only diverse within itself but is different from the model group which has been the standard for, which has been the referent for the paradigms that we've used in research, such research may be misguided; it may have missed the mark.

The implications of these two levels of difference—that is, differences within the population and differences between this population as a group and the model population—have implications for the production of knowledge which had been discussed in greater detail in an article I wrote that The Educational Researcher published in March of 1990.

I won't summarize that article here, but in that piece we did talk about the implications for knowledge production that flow from the fact of communocentric bias. And I use "communocentric" to represent the variety of biases that are reflected in the research community, whether they be bias with respect to gender or culture or language or ethnicity.

The issue of population diversity is, itself, a very complex one, as I have indicated. We lack consensus concerning the meaning and significance of the differences in the status that flows from the social divisions by ethnicity, gender, language, et cetera. But there is agreement that the learning styles, the conditions of life, the interests, the motivations, the dispositions of folk that somehow attach to these various ways in which people are identified and socialized have very important implications for education.

The point there is that we don't fully understand what those implications are. But there are few people in the research community who would argue that those differences are not important for education and do not need investigation. Nonetheless, there is increasing agreement that the correlates between these manifestations of difference and developmental outcomes, whether they be social, economic, or educational, simply cry for, demand further investigation.

In a serious research endeavor which seeks to address these issues, we must be sensitive to these differences. The sensitivity must be reflected in the kinds of questions that are posed, the paradigms that are used to explore those questions, the methodologies that they utilize, the criticality of the interpretation supplied, as well as in the background, perspectives, and competencies of the persons that are selected to do this research.

It may well be that the most relevant issue relates to perspective. Despite all of our differences as human beings, we share a great deal in common. It is, perhaps, one's view of the world and the idiosyncratic meaning which is most influenced by one's status, by one's functional characteristics, by one's related social experiences—if I am right, the issue of differences and perspective must be accorded respect. That leads to my fifth point.

The greatest challenge to the new National Institute for Education of At-Risk Students may come from this need to take seriously the question of perspective. It will require significant changes in the way in which we do research. Objectivity, one of the hallmarks of the research community, is challenged by this notion. It raises a question as to whether or not we can be objective, and whether or not our research interests are best served by objectivity.

What one may need is the combination of several perspectives wisely interpreted to arrive at some decision that has particular interest behind it. In other words, it may be necessary in knowledge production that it be influenced by the goals to which it is directed. Some think that this is already the fact; it is simply not a recognized one, the fact that so much of what we produce in the research community reflects the purposes for which we do it.

It will require that we test the limits of our hypotheses. It's traditional in research that we test the hypothesis, that we try to validate it. If one takes the perspective, multi-fold perspective issue seriously, it may mean that you are required to test the limits of that hypothesis: What are the conditions under which it is true? What are the conditions under which it changes? What have I got to manipulate in order to produce certain kinds of results?

Finally, it may be that the search for truth, as if it were a singular phenomenon rather than the plural phenomenon, will have to be challenged. It may be that the truth of my experience is different from the truth of your experience. And particularly in the area of trying to understand human behaviors of persons who have differential access to the resources of the society, who exercise differential power, relationships with the society, some of which are deprived, some of whom are discriminated against, some of whom are advantaged, it's conceivable that truth from the perspective of these different positions and different experiences may be quite different.

And if I am trying to organize a learning experience in which my concern is to influence the way in which a particular individual or a particular group of persons learns, the consensus with respect to what is true may be less important than the personal truth for this youngster.

I have been reading, recently, a little book that's called "Paths Toward A Clearing," by Michael Jackson—not the vocalist, but the Professor of Anthropology and Religion out at Indiana. And in this

book, Jackson, really, has borrowed a metaphor that was first advanced by Heideiger, and it's basically the notion that those of us who produce knowledge, those of us that are trying to solve the problems of the world, trying to better understand things, may be in error when we look for absolute answers. Maybe we are in error when we look for single answers, particularly in diverse societies.

Maybe what we should be searching for is that path toward a clearing from which I can get a better perspective, and the search goes on. I use the perspective from that clearing to organize my activity for today, but I realize that the world is changing, that I am changing, that knowledge is changing, and I search for the next perspective. I hope that those ideas can influence our Institute.

[The prepared statement of Edmund Gordon follows:]

The testimony of Dr. Edmund W. Gordon, The John M. Musser Professor of Psychology at Yale University, before U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Select Education. April 25, 1991

Gentlepeople:

The honor of being invited to testify before this body on the pending legislation concerning the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) is exceeded, by the responsibility which is implicitly assigned by the task. It is not simply that the work of the Office of Educational Research is so important, but the proposal to include under its charter a National Institute for the Education of At- Risk Students confronts us with a rare opportunity and an awesome responsibility for intelligent planning. I enthusiastically support the idea of a national research institute devoted to this issue and encourage careful planning and adequate funding.

When one thinks of the population of students at risk in our society, one thinks of a rather diverse group of persons whose life chances have been compromised by their limited access to the power, resources, opportunities and rewards enjoyed by some members of our society and sometimes also limited by the intrinsic characteristics of some learners, i.e., mental, physical or sensorial dysfunctions or disabilities. Confronting opportunity denial or limitation which is socially imposed or is a correlate of one's intrinsic characteristics is no simple problem. Overcoming disadvantages of any source is not easy and we certainly want to avoid even the appearance of sponsoring competition between at-risk populations. However, in the proposed legislation supporting the creation of a National Institute for the Education of At-Risk Students, they are those students who have been handicapped by social and economic abuse and neglect who are the targeted population.

For most of the last fifty years, our society has given varying degrees of attention to these problems, with some degree of effectiveness, but often with more failure than success. Now that the problem of persons at risk of educational failure has begun to be recognized as approaching crisis proportions, with fateful implications for the stability and future of our democratic society, consideration of still another intervention must be under taken with a seriousness that we as a nation have seldom achieved.

To insure an appropriate and adequate educational response to the facts of at-risk status may require as serious a national commitment as was mounted in the Manhattan Project which produced the controlled splitting of the atom or the project which placed

a human being on the moon. These were enormous feats of human intelligence and technology. The adequate education of the variety of at-risk persons in our society may require even greater effort, in part because the material with which we must work is animated, is willful, is dialectically responsive and is transformative. In addition, this human material exists and functions in dynamic contexts which can facilitate or limit development and which are resistent to control. It is possibly because of the complexity and magnitude of the task that this work has not been seriously engaged. It is also likely that serious task engagement has not been pursued because we have neither the knowledge (understanding) or the will. Thus the need for a National Institute for the Education of At-Risk Students.

We need an institution in our society which has the capacity to generate the needed knowledge and understanding of the problem and the capacity to guide the shaping of a national and professional will. The two are not unrelated. The national and professional will may have eluded us because we have not adequately understood the problem and have been disappointed by past efforts at applying limited knowledge to a massive and elusive problem. Faced with such a possibility, the intelligent response is to generate the appropriate knowledge base and to apply that knowledge to relevant aspects of the problem. How do we do that?

Essential Components of National Intensive Research and Demonstration Initiative Directed at the Improvement of Education for the At-Risk Students

A. Conceptual Analysis: There are almost as many ideas concerning the nature of at risk status and its correction and prevention as there are projects. All across the country we have projects which reflect one or another notion concerning what the core of the problem is or just an idea of something that may help. In some instances it may simply be someone's pet idea which has been almost mechanically applied to this problem. What is needed is the serious application of theoretical, empirical and practical scholarship to:

1) the analysis of the problem;
2) some delineation of the component characteristics and dimensions of the problem;
3) the development of a taxonomy of conditions and circumstances associated with the problem;
4) the development of rational causal models; and
5) the development of preventive, corrective or circumventive interventions.

Since what may be needed is a national programmatic attack upon the problems of at-risk status and its relationship to developmental dysfunction, that programmatic attack must be

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informed by better conceptualizations of the problem, its manifestations and its causes.

B. Generative Research: In our haste to do something about the life chances of at-risk populations we have often rushed to mount an experiment or a demonstration without having done the conceptual work referred to above and without sufficiently immersing ourselves in the realities of the persons and programs. Even when the idea is good, if it is inappropriate to the context in which it is to be used, we can have problems. The Institute's program should provide ample support for small, pilot, exploratory and descriptive studies which enable us to see what Becker and Straus refer to as "grounded theory" or what I call naturally occurring relationships, potential hypotheses, different perspectives and sensitize us to what Jackson calls "the lived experience". Especially because we are dealing with groups which have been understudied or inappropriately studied, we will need these more open ended probes which are not constrained by the conceptions and paradigms generated from work on groups whose life conditions may be different and less risk prone.

C. Theory Driven Empirical Research: There are several existing notions and questions referable to at-risk persons which are in need of investigation. Certainly those that become the products of the first two levels of work described above should be the focus for the empirical work of the Institute. For example, we know little about:

1. The life course and developmental ecology of persons at-risk of educational or personal/social underdevelopment and failure;

2. The correlates of success and failure in high risk populations;

3. The attributional and existential phenomena which give meaning to the life experiences of person at-risk which d the same circumstances to function as challenges or resources for some and threats and impediments to others;

4. The specific educational and developmental needs of specific categories of at-risk persons; we know this is not a homogeneous group yet our treatments and interventions tend to be generic;

5. The interpenetration of biological, economic, political and psycho-social forces in the origins or consequences of at-risk status.

These and a host of other questions beg for systematic

investigation through well conceived and designed empirical studies, led by first rate investigators. But this empirical work should not be limited to established mainstream paradigms theories and methodologies. In recent years, several scholars have called for greater attention to be given to the appropriateness of traditional paradigms to the study of populations for whom the models and theories were not originally intended. The research program of the Institute and those programs that it sponsors will need to be especially attentive to the need to explore new paradigms and to be sensitive to the contextual appropriateness of research concepts and strategies as they are used with persons from diverse cultures. This issue gains importance as we recognize that at-risk status may sometimes be a function of the mismatch between the demands of the hegemonic culture and certain features of the indigenous culture.

Theory driven empirical research sponsored by the Institute should not be hampered by the old distinctions between basic and applied research. Rather basic and applied work should be seen as points on a continuum with the possibility and acceptability of considerable over lap and bidirectional movement between the two points. Traditional "theory driven" work certainly should inform application and applied studies, but effort must be directed at insuring that the more traditional theory driven work is informed by practice, thus the Institute should encourage and support the scholarly analysis of practice in the recognition that even though it is not always explicit, there is always theory grounded in practice. It is often this grounded theory upon which the wisdom of practice rests and to ignore or demean it is to weaken both science and professional practice.

D. Evaluation: One of the crying needs in work with at-risk populations is for the careful evaluation of the wide variety of initiatives currently under way. These extant initiatives constitute natural experiments which could be studied more systematically. One strategy which proved useful in the early days of Head Start research and evaluations was to couple research and evaluation grants in such way as to encourage able scholars to undertake specific evaluation problems alongside their pursuit of research questions using the same setting and often the same populations for both. These evaluation efforts should address such questions as:

1) What has actually been implemented and delivered to what persons served?
2) With what effect (what was the impact)?
3) How does the new intervention compare to other interventions?
4) At what costs, monetary, material and human?
5) How do we explain the evaluation findings?.

There are other aspects of program which include development,

i.e., the transformation of research and evaluation findings into materials and techniques; dissemination; technical assistance; and community out reach, i.e., influencing the attitudes, awareness and the will of the several constituents and potential sponsors to participate and support the development and utilization of knowledge produced through research.

Edmund W. Gordon
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and

Visiting Scholar
Center for Research on Inner City Schools
Temple University

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Chairman OWENS. Thank you.

Let me correct a mutilation of an acronym. NCREST is an acronym for National Center for Restructuring Education Schools and Teaching. Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond is the Co-Director of NCREST.

Ms. DARLING-HAMMOND. Thank you. Acronyms are so important in Washington; I had forgotten when I went to New York.

Chairman OWENS. For the record.

Ms. DARLING-HAMMOND. Thank you. I'm pleased to add my voice to the chorus in support of an Institute for the Education of At-Risk Students. I think that notion, in conjunction with the development of an overall viable research and development capacity for education in this country, is incredibly important at this moment in time, for reasons that all of you are well aware.

With drop-out rates now of 25 percent overall and 50 percent or more in our central cities, with low skill levels on the part of many of our graduates, with ever-closer links between lack of education and other social problems, we really can't afford now, at this time, to permit the levels of school failure that our society has accepted in the past, fairly complacently, because for people whom schools had failed, there were jobs in the mill, in the factory, on the farm, to allow them to lead productive lives without the benefit of having had a successful educational experience.

At this point in time, a male high school graduate has only one chance in three of getting any job at all, whereas 20 years ago he had twice that set of odds. And if he gets any job, he'll learn half as much today as he would have in 1973. Those odds will only continue to decline. More than half of the adult prison population is functionally illiterate. Nearly 40 percent of adjudicated juvenile delinquents have treatable learning disabilities that went undiagnosed in the schools.

Clearly, the kinds of educational changes that we need to prepare all of our students—all of our students—for the complex world of tomorrow are not going to emerge full-blown from the schools of today without investments in research that indicates what kinds of approaches are and can be successful, and in development activities that help us learn how to implement those approaches successfully.

As an enterprise, however, educational research and development is woefully underfunded. The Federal budget for education research, which has declined ever since 1972, amounts to less than one-tenth of one percent of the total budget for education in this country. By way of contrast, the Federal Government spends about 30 times more on health-related research and about 200 times more on defense-related research than it spends to figure out how to educate our children well.

In addition, these meager funds have been spent in ways that often reduce their capacity to produce cumulative knowledge. Because of shifting political winds and agendas, and lack of continuity in funding, research projects and centers have often been funded on a short-term basis, with funding frequently cut just as solid findings begin to emerge.

Over the last few years, for example, a number of research centers that had begun to make important contributions to research

on teaching, learning, and school organizations, were eliminated after they had existed for only five years. Several more are slated to be discontinued in the next two years. Longitudinal studies of the kind needed to establish the long-run consequences of education approaches are almost never funded in education, although they are the mainstay of much research in medicine and other areas.

The instability and paltry size of the education research budget simply will not sustain such work. As a consequence, our ability to understand how various approaches to various problems, under different circumstances, may play out in the long run is much limited.

The politicization of research within OERI is part of the problem. When the National Institute of Education was eliminated, and research functions were placed in OERI under a politically appointed Assistant Secretary, the potential for confusing political with scientific judgments was expanded.

In recent years, OERI research agendas have often been determined by political agendas featuring hot topics of the day, not by judgments about what we need to know in order to educate children well or by judgments of which areas of research were ripe for major breakthroughs. The capacity to make scientific judgments about research proposals was undermined by the increasing use of individuals without research experience or credentials in the review process, which has severely weakened the "peer" component of peer review and the technical expertise brought to bear in the evaluation of research ideas or claims.

Clearly, ways must be found to buffer OERI from political influences, and the new Institute for the Education of At-Risk Students, so that a stable, scientifically credible and useful research agenda can be pursued. Proposals before the subcommittee include the idea of establishing a nonpartisan research policy board for OERI to help set directions and priorities. In addition, a technical advisory council might be advisable, including some members of the policy board, to include those who are known for their expertise with relation to systematic inquiry in education.

But despite the handicaps I have described, educational research has managed, over the last 20 years, to produce an important and growing knowledge base about such matters as how children learn, how to teach effectively, how to identify a wide range of different student learning styles, how to organize schools so that fewer students drop out or fall through the cracks. Dr. Comer's experiences are part of that growing knowledge base; so are a variety of other initiatives across the country.

However, the synthesis of this knowledge in ways that will help us create targeted solutions to educational problems is not adequate. And the transmission of research findings in ways that make them useful to the field is not sufficient.

The current organization of OERI is not the most conducive arrangement for encouraging development and dissemination in conjunction with research in critical areas, because these functions are maintained in different offices. The organizational arrangements are not organized around problem-solving such that you can get

interdisciplinary work across research domains and that can then be integrated in a way that allows it to be accessible for practice.

The proposal that you're considering for an Institute for the Education of At-Risk Students provides a very useful example of an organizational arrangement that could achieve the objectives of being mission-oriented and problem-focused and sustaining of that kind of interdisciplinary research across domains linked to dissemination and development capacities.

A good example of how this works outside of education is the National Institutes of Health which have created organizations that focus on problems, the centers that focus on particular diseases, their treatment and their prevention, that can sustain attention and can integrate diverse lines of research that bear on the solutions to those problems. Their structure also connects research on these problems directly to development, dissemination, and professional education activities needed to create and implement practical applications.

Those institutes build communities of interest and expertise which tie together researcher and practitioners, along with the potential beneficiaries of this problem-solving, in a variety of ongoing vehicles for regular communication and cooperation. The proposal to create an Institute for the Education of At-Risk Students would provide just that kind of mission-oriented, problem-focused organization that could sustain an interdisciplinary agenda focused on one of our most pressing national problems.

Solving the educational problems facing at-risk students in this country will require integrating research on learning and cognition; on teaching strategies for various kinds of learners under different circumstances, taking into the account the nuances that Professor Gordon just reminded us of; on school organizational conditions that foster positive relationships between schools and their students and parents, that identify and meet students' needs before they fall through the cracks; and on policies, as well, that can create and sustain these conditions for effective education for students who have been traditionally poorly served by our schools.

Frequently, we have examples and models of programs and strategies that work without sufficient knowledge and development activities about how to undergo the process of allowing those strategies to be used in other places. That has to be part of an integrated mission for an institute like this.

Such an institute, if it were adequately funded, could involve several of the existing research centers with missions that are relevant to this focus, along with sponsored and field-initiated research in areas needing greater attention. It could support and evaluate demonstration programs, something we have no capacity to do at the moment in the Department of Education and OERI. It could institute longitudinal programs of research that would investigate the long run consequences of different strategies.

It could sponsor conferences and the kind of consensus development activities used in the National Institutes of Health, that are intended to produce in more ways that it can easily be understood and adapted by schools, because a translation exercise has to occur between the production of knowledge and its access by schools. It could serve as a clearinghouse and dissemination center.

One of the things we have learned from other R&D strategies in the Federal Government is the importance of disseminating knowledge by investing in the education of the potential users rather than by mailing reports in manila envelopes. The success of the Agricultural Extension Agency, as well as that of many of the National Institutes of Health that I mentioned earlier, is that they have created a means for conveying research-based knowledge to practitioners by funding land grant colleges, extension agencies to educate them directly about the scientific bases for their work.

And it's the drawing together of that link to professional education institutions that is missing in the education R&D infrastructure and is present in the ways that we use research in other parts of our society. We need ways by which we can train practitioners to be research users, and help them create the bridges needed to put research into practice as well as putting the needs and wisdom of practice into research.

An Institute for the Education of At-Risk Students could, in addition to its other research development and dissemination activities, plan an instituted program of funding for schools of education, particulary those which serve critical locations, and including those such as Historically Black Colleges, which are training many of the future teachers of at-risk students, to help them educate practitioners about the knowledge base that can improve and undergird their efforts.

A model for such an Institute already exists within the Department of Education. The National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, not in OERI but in another part of the Department of Education, which is currently funded at over $50 million a year, which is approximately the minimal level, I think, for an institute of this kind to begin to accrue all of these activities in a critical mass, conducts research funds, demonstration projects and programs for training of practitioners and researchers. It also awards grants for utilizing and disseminating research results, and is able to produce a critical mass of activity that focuses quite specifically and quite successfully on how to improve the results of rehabilitation efforts.

It is only fitting that the first such Institute in the Office of Educational Research and Improvement ought to become this Institute for the Education of At-Risk Students. both symbolically and practically, I think that this initiative would call attention to the pressing national need to solve the educational problems facing children in central cities and poor rural areas. And it could start us on the road toward constructive approaches to these problems, leading the way for a restructured Federal education research enterprise that would eventually, perhaps, become a comprehensive set of National Institutes for Educational Improvement.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Linda Darling-Hammond follows:]

Testimony of Linda Darling-Hammond
before the Subcommittee on Select Education
on the Office of Educational Research and Improvement
April 25, 1991

Thank you for inviting me to testify this morning on future directions for the Office of Educational Research and Improvement. It is critically important that we attend to pressing needs for establishing a viable, effective research and development capacity for education at this stage of our nation's history, as the challenges facing our educational system threaten the economic, political, and social fabric of the country.

It is widely recognized that we are at a critical turning point in our nation's history. The schools we have today, designed for the world of the early 1900s, educate some children well and many poorly. Yet the highly-technological information economy of tomorrow will require that all our children be well educated. Whereas in 1900, about half of the nation's jobs required low or unskilled labor, now fewer than 10 percent do. And while fewer than 10 percent of jobs at the beginning of the century required professional or technical training, more than half of the new jobs created in this decade will require higher education. More than 90 percent will require at least a high school education.

With dropout rates of 25 percent overall and 50 percent or more in many of our central cities, with low skill levels on the part of many graduates, with ever-closer links between lack of education and welfare dependency and crime, we can ill-afford to

permit the levels of school failure the society once accepted complacently, because there were jobs on the factory and the farm for those who did not succeed at school. We have entered an era in which education is critical to individual life success and to the survival of the society as a whole. A male high school dropout, for example, has only 1 chance out of 3 of getting any job at all - less than 1/2 the odds of 20 years ago -- and, if he gets employment, he will earn only half of what a high school dropout earned in 1973. More than half the adult prison population is functionally illiterate, and nearly 40 percent of adjudicated juvenile delinquents have treatable learning disabilities undiagnosed in the schools.

Meanwhile, we are experiencing the largest wave of immigration since the turn of the century. Over 40 percent of the net additions to the labor force during this decade will be recent immigrants and historically underserved minorities. Even with these new immigrants, by the year 2000, there will only be 3 workers for each person on Social Security. If all of them are not prepared to enter the productive side of the economy, rather than the welfare side, our social contract will evaporate. Thus far, we have done very little as a nation to ensure that these challenges can be met.

The kinds of educational changes needed to prepare all students for the complex world of tomorrow are not going to emerge

W.T. Grant Foundation. The Forgotten Half: Non-College Youth in America. Washington, D.C.: William T. Grant Foundation, 1988.

full-blown from the schools of today without investments in research that indicates what kinds of approaches are and can be successful, and in development activities that help us learn how to implement these approaches successfully.

Yet, as an enterprise, educational research and development is woefully underfunded. The federal budget for education research amounts to less than $200 million, less than 1/10 of 1 percent of the total budget for education in this country. This research budget represents, in real dollar terms, only about 25 percent of level of funding committed to establish the National Institute of Education in 1972. By way of contrast, the federal government spends about 30 times more on health-related research and about 200 times more on defense-related research than it spends to figure out how to educate our children well.

In addition, these meager funds have been spent in ways that often reduce their capacity to produce cumulative knowledge. Because of shifting political winds and agendas, and lack of continuity in funding, research projects and centers have often been funded on a short-term basis, with funding frequently cut just as solid findings begin to emerge. Over the last few years, for example, a number of research centers that had begun to make important contributions to research on teaching, learning, and school organizations were eliminated after they had existed for only five years. Several more are slated to be discontinued in the next two years. Longitudinal studies of the kind needed to establish the long-run consequences of educational approaches are

almost never funded in education, although they are the mainstay of much research in medicine and other areas. The instability and paltry size of the education research budget simply will not sustain such work. As a consequence, the growth of a powerful knowledge base in education is greatly slowed.

The politicization of research within OERI is part of the problem. When the National Institute of Education was eliminated and research functions were placed in OERI under a politically-appointed assistant secretary, the potential for confusing political with scientific judgments was expanded. Though NIE was also vulnerable to politicization, it had a somewhat greater (though not always shorter-lived) buffer between its work and the political arena.

In recent years, OERI research agendas have often been determined by political agendas featuring "hot topics" of the day, not by judgments about what we need to know in order to educate children well or by judgments of which areas of research were ripe for major breakthroughs. The capacity to make scientific judgments about research proposals was undermined by the increasing use of policymakers without research experience or credentials in the review process, which has severely weakened the "peer" component of peer review and the technical expertise brought to bear in the evaluation of research ideas or claims. In addition, research projects have frequently been asked to change focus in mid-stream to adapt to the "hot topics", often at the expense of the research underway with much greater potential educational payoff

in the long term.

Clearly, ways must be found to buffer OERI from political influences so that a stable, scientifically credible and useful research agenda can be pursued. Proposals before the Subcommittee include the idea of establishing a nonpartisan research policy board for OERI to help set directions and priorities for its activities. Hopefully, members of such a board would be selected on the basis of their "distinguished, nationally significant accomplishments related to educational research and improvement,"[2] from among nominations made by the key relevant organizations: those representing parents, teachers, and administrators, chief state school officers, educational researchers, state and local school boards, and so on.

To ensure that the necessary technical expertise is represented in research judgments relating to the design and implementation of research programs, the Secretary might also create a technical advisory council, including one or more members of the aforementioned policy board, to include "researchers and practitioners nationally renowned for their expertise with respect to systematic inquiry."

Despite the handicaps I described earlier, educational research has managed over the last 20 years to produce an important

[2] Willis D. Hawley, "Enhancing the Federal Government's Capacity to Support the Improvement of Education through Research and Development," Educational Researcher, May 1990, p. 19.

[3] Ibid.

and growing knowledge base about such matters as how children process information and learn, about how to develop literacy and how to teach mathematics for understanding, about how to identify and successfully address a wide range of student learning styles and, where necessary, learning disabilities, about how to organize schools so that fewer students drop out or "fall through the cracks". However, the synthesis of this knowledge in ways that will help us create targeted solutions to educational problems is not adequate, and the transmission of research findings in ways that make them useful to the field is not sufficient.

The current organization of OERI is not necessarily the most conducive arrangement for encouraging development and dissemination in conjunction with research in critical areas, as these functions are maintained in separate offices. The organizational arrangements are also not established around areas of needed problem solving, such that interdisciplinary work across research domains can be easily supported, encouraged, and integrated.

The proposal before you to establish an Institute for the Education of At-Risk Students provides a useful example of an organizational arrangement that could achieve these objectives. I would like to address much of the remainder of my remarks to describing how such an Institute could operate to make much-needed inroads in R&D efforts to improve the education of students who are at-risk of school failure while, meanwhile, strengthening the capacity of OERI to conduct integrated, nonpartisan, and cumulative research, development, and dissemination efforts.

As Arthur Wise noted in an article proposing the reorganization of OERI into a set of National Institutes for Educational Improvement:

> The problem with the research structure that resulted from the 1986 reauthorization is that it is not mission-oriented. OERI is currently organized by functions and programs....: the Fund for the Improvement and Reform of Schools and Teaching, the Office of Research, Programs for the Improvement of Practice, and Libraries and Star Schools. The Office of Research also is organized by area: education and society, higher education and adult learning, learning and instruction, and schools and school professionals. This structure does not create a compelling set of targets for research; as a result, the enterprise lacks both accountability and the potential to gain adequate support.[1]

In contrast to the structure of educational research in OERI, the National Institutes of Health have created organizations that focus on problems, that can sustain attention, and can integrate diverse lines of research that bear on the solutions to those problems. Their structure also connects research on these problems directly to the development, dissemination, and professional education activities needed to create and implement practical applications. The Institutes build communities of interest and expertise which tie together researchers and practitioners, along with clients and potential beneficiaries of this problem-solving in ongoing vehicles for regular communication and cooperation.

They also have a variety of mechanisms for cumulating and

[1] Arthur E. Wise, "A Response to America's Reform Agenda: The National Institutes for Educational Improvement," Educational Researcher, May 1990, p. 25.

advancing knowledge in their fields, and for framing it in ways that will allow translation into practice. One such mechanism contrasts starkly with the OERI practice of reviewing programs for the National Diffusion Network by sending out piles of program descriptions to random reviewers for numerical rankings. The Institutes use vehicles like Consensus Development Panels, which are blue ribbon panels comprised of leading research and clinical experts convened for intensive meetings to discuss specific areas in the field that are ripe for interpretation and consensus. These panels deliberate on the meaning of the existing research and clinical findings, seeking areas of agreement in interpretation, identifying areas where contextual conditions may make a difference in the course of a disease or in treatment outcomes, and discussing what further work needs to be done to advance the state of knowledge in the field.

The results of their deliberations are clearer guidelines for practice as well as for the directions of future research. The Institutes' relationships with educational organizations, such as teaching hospitals, also facilitate the transmission of research into practice by influencing practitioner training. In a variety of ways, the structure of the National Institutes of Health helps to foster the cumulation, integration, dissemination, and use of research results by building communities of interest and expertise around pressing problems.

The proposal to create an Institute for the Education of At-Risk Students would provide such a mission-oriented, problem-

focused organization that could sustain an interdisciplinary agenda of research, development, and dissemination centered on one of our most pressing national problems. Solving the educational problems facing "at-risk" students in this country will require integrating research on learning and cognition, including the effects of many environmental and health-related conditions on learning along with greater information on different learning styles and strengths; on teaching strategies found to be effective for various kinds of learners under different circumstances; on school organizational conditions that foster positive relationships between the school and its students and parents, that deliver enriched curriculum and good teaching to all students, that identify and meet students' needs before they fall through the cracks; on policies that can create and sustain these conditions for effective education for students who have traditionally been poorly served by our schools.

Such an institute, if it were adequately funded, could involve several of the existing research centers with missions relevant to the problem-solving focus, along with sponsored and field-initiated research in areas needing greater attention. It could support and evaluate demonstration programs. It could institute longitudinal programs of research that would investigate the longer run consequences of different educational strategies. It could sponsor conferences and consensus development exercises intended to produce more reliable knowledge in ways that it can be more easily understood and adapted by schools. It could serve as a clearinghouse and dissemination center.

One of the things we have learned from other R&D strategies in the federal government, is the importance of disseminating knowledge by investing in the education of the potential users rather than by mailing reports in manila envelopes. The success of the Agricultural Extension Agency (as well as that of many of the National Institutes of Health mentioned earlier) is that it created a means for conveying research-based knowledge to practitioners by funding land grant colleges and other extension agencies to educate them about the scientific bases for their work.

A major problem in the application of educational research has been the lack of attention to building an adequate infrastructure for knowledge transmission. Knowledge must be transmitted to the practitioners who actually educate children, not merely to those at the top of bureaucratic systems who attempt to incorporate it into directives and memos. Because of the complexities of teaching and teacher decisionmaking, knowledge must be available and understood in a manner that allows it to be applied differently in each context with each student, in light of many other kinds of knowledge and understandings about the students being served. That is, knowledge must be transformed into practice in the minds and hands of skilled practitioners armed with a range of interlocking understandings, not lists of research findings simplistically reduced to ineffectual prescriptions for practice. The missing link in the educational research and development infrastructure is a central role for professional education institutions who can train practitioners to be research users and can help create the

bridges needed to put research into practice as well as putting the needs and wisdom of practice into research.

An Institute for the Education of At-Risk Students could, in addition to its other research, development, and dissemination activities, plan and institute a program of funding for schools of education, particularly those which serve critical locations and including those such as historically Black colleges which are training many of the future teachers of "at-risk" students, to help them educate practitioners about the knowledge base that should undergird their efforts.

A model for such an institute already exists within the Department of Education.[6] The National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, currently funded at over $50 million a year -- a level comparable to what the Institute for At-Risk Students should command -- has the following mission:

> ...to provide a comprehensive and coordinated approach to the administration and conduct of research, demonstration projects, and related activities concerning the rehabilitation of disabled persons, including training of persons who provide rehabilitation services or who conduct rehabilitation research.... Discretionary grants are awarded for support of rehabilitation research and training centers, rehabilitation engineering centers, and research and demonstration projects, including field-initiated projects on resolving problems encountered in the rehabilitation process by disabled individuals of all ages. Grants or contracts are also awarded for utilization and dissemination of

[illegible]

research results and training.[6]

It is only fitting that the first such Institute within OERI ought to become the Institute for the Education of At-Risk Students. Both symbolically and practically, this initiative would call attention to the pressing national need to solve the educational problems facing children in central cities and poor rural areas. It could start us, at long last, on the road toward constructive approaches to those problems, and it could lead the way for the restructured federal education research enterprise that would eventually become a comprehensive set of National Institutes for Educational Improvement.

Thank you for your time and attention.

[6] U.S. Department of Education, The Fiscal Year 1991 Budget, Summary and Background Information, Washington, D.C., p. 33.

Chairman OWENS. Thank you.

For the record, we said—at the beginning—that the written testimony of all of our witnesses will be entered in its entirety. We do appreciate, again, your appearing here to amplify your written testimony.

I would like to begin, Dr. Comer, with something which does not directly relate to the Institute, but we need a statement for the record. In the President's proposal, America 2000 there is a special section which states that children spend 91 percent of their time outside of the schools, and that 91 percent of the influences on them do not come from the classroom in the school.

Your school development program certainly addresses that problem. I would like to hear you discuss, just a little bit more, how you deal with that 91 percent.

Dr. COMER. We have involved the parents in the program of the school in governance and management, also in planning activities within the school and activities that extend into out-of-school plans for working with children during leisure-time activities and the like. Also, many of the activities of the school are given during after-school hours, and many of the special programs, the parents are involved in those programs.

And those programs are structured in ways in which we help parents gain skills and knowledge about how they can help their children grow and develop in a variety of ways, and develop the skills necessary to be successful in school—academic skills, but also so that they can gain social skills.

And we have developed a systematic program of teaching social skills in politics and government, business and economics, health and nutrition, spiritual, leisure-time activities, a whole variety of areas where we feel, and parents feel, that children will need skills to be successful as adults. And those programs are worked out between staff and parents, and are carried on at home by parents as well.

Also there are spin-offs and benefits to parents. In one of the programs, for example, in politics and government, where children learned all about politics and the relationship between politics, government conditions within the city, and the like, parents were involved in that activity. Many of the parents who had never voted before, ever, after that activity then registered and voted and became voters and so on. So the programs have benefited both parents and students.

Chairman OWENS. What about social service agencies involved in that 91 percent; did you create your own separate set up for social services?

Dr. COMER. No. We started by creating a mental health team within the school. And what we did—we took psychologists, social workers, special education teachers, anybody else involved in helping activities within the school and who had all worked individually, before—we had to become one mental health team in the school so that—--

Chairman OWENS. You use all that foundation money you have to bring in these people?

Dr. COMER. Well, they were already there, actually. They were already there. These are people who are already in the school, psy-

chologists, social workers, special education teachers, but they work separately and individually in traditional schools. And as a result of that, there is duplication, fragmentation, and youngsters are often pulled in and out of classrooms, and it's not effective. It's generally not effective, the one-on-one approach.

We pull them together into a team. And they not only address the problems of individual children, but they looked at the school as a social system, and helped the staff change the way the school functioned to make it a good place for all children, for parents and teachers, and that reduced the behavior problems within the school.

What we also did was that group of people then pulled in social service agencies from outside and in the community, as it was appropriate, around the needs of particular children and families, and in that way, had a more systematic use of the resources out in the community. And eventually, that mental health team within the school, working with the community, developed an activity out in the community in which the social service agencies all came together in the area around the school to address the needs of parents and families that had hard core problems. That grew out of the school activity.

Chairman OWENS. Thank you.

One of the arguments that we make for the Institute approach is that there are many good programs that need to be replicated on a much wider scale; also, we need to have the replication process take place much faster in order to outrun the galloping crisis that we face.

Could you, Dr. Comer, Mr. Geiger, and any others who want to comment—but particularly the National Education Association which has sponsored many projects and innovative programs over the years—address these questions: To what degree should we have replication? What is an optimum quantity of replication before you can say you have something which is worthy to bring into the education community with a stamp of certification on it that says, "This works," or, "we know this works in certain specific situations?" What kind of replication do you need?

Mr. GEIGER. First off, I think it's fair to say, and most of the research will indicate, and most people will say that you probably can't duplicate exactly, from one building to another, a program—in fact, the general statement now is that we aren't going to reform education from Washington, DC or from the State capitals; we're going to do it district by district, and probably building by building, by involving the teachers, the administrators, the parents, and the community.

But if you take a look at the programs that Dr. Comer has, if you take a look at Ted Sizer's programs, American Federation of Teachers has programs, the NEA has—and one of the problems we have is there are just a lot of good things going out there, but nobody knows about it. We have hooked up, through the good graces of IBM, with the regional labs of the U.S. Department of Education, our innovative programs in the NEA—we probably have 50 or 60 of them all to way from Hawaii up to Maine, to Florida to California—with some of Ted Sizer's schools and some of the others. And we now have teachers and faculty who talk to each other by com-

puter, from Maine to Hawaii, on what's working and what's not working.

I think what we could see, with good research, is the best of all of these lifted up. We have at-risk programs going in some of ours—but for some reason, there is no coordinated research out there at all that shows that we've got, maybe, thousands and thousands of schools that are doing good things. We could show those to others. I think research, in fact, could lift that up.

I know there are a lot of good things going on out there, in rural areas, suburban areas, inner-city areas. But I think what we have to do is have a way of putting all of that together. So, maybe, we will find out that six places are doing this similar thing and we can start to duplicate that. And I think that's what we need to start doing.

Chairman OWENS. One of the problems we have with our colleagues in OERI is that many of these good, innovative programs that are going on, are dismissed as being anecdotal. Choice is the only thing that seems to be able to get certified without a rigorous examination. Everything else is dismissed as being anecdotal because there has not been enough experience with it.

Let me just press the point: is there any such thing as trying to begin to quantify innovative programs? There are 15,000 school districts in the country and I don't know how many thousands of schools. Dr. Comer, your program has existed for 20-some years; at what point do you think it will have been replicated enough for you to begin to say, "It works?" Generally, it must be tested in 1,000 schools, or 2,000?

The hard-nosed businessmen are getting involved in education. How do we approach them and say, "We have validation on this because—" and some of this has to be quantification, I think, of testing.

Dr. COMER. Some of it is quantification, but repetition in a number of places—with success in every place—should suggest that it works. And it's a question of how you—the kind of theoretical base—that's part of the problem, it seems to me, is that much of the innovation in research is without theoretical base, it is off the top of somebody's head.

Our program is operated from a theoretical base that has to do with the developmental needs of children and how you create systems around them that will meet their developmental needs. And we've taken that kind of ecological perspective, and that is to look at the interaction of people and systems to create the conditions that will help children grow and learn. We took that theoretical base and our results in New Haven, and we tried it in 14 other school districts, 12 different States. We've gotten some of our outcomes, and we have been able to quantify academic achievement outcomes, self-esteem changes, and so on, in those various schools.

I'm not sure what else you have to do to indicate that it works. I think that we have a model that's based on a sound theory and empirical evidence that it works, and I think now it's a matter of simply creating the people to help other people change and work differently. But I think we have the evidence that it works. And other people who have done similar things have the evidence that it works.

Chairman OWENS. Does anybody else want to comment?

Ms. DARLING-HAMMOND. I would just like to add to that. One important aspect, of course, is the extent of research that's done so that people understand and have documented it in a way that they can use it; the important principles upon which a successful program is based, and how those have unfolded in different environments.

The other piece that is very, very important for this argument for an institute is that you also need links between research, demonstration, and dissemination. Currently, in OERI, you have different offices responsible for promising programs, and different offices responsible for research no linkage between the two; somebody else is responsible for dissemination.

When you develop an institute, I think one of the strongest arguments for that strategy is that you can create a way that you integrate the demonstration of the ideas with the further development, research, and dissemination on those programs and ideas in a way that makes it much more accessible, much more available, and much more usable by the field. And I think that is why it is so important to have the kind of institute structure that's been proposed here.

Chairman OWENS. Dr. Gordon?

Mr. GORDON. I just wanted to comment, briefly, on your question about how much replication is necessary. You probably recall Ron Evans used to make the rather rhetorical argument as to how many successful schools do we need to have for us to conclude that kids can learn. I think that number of replications really becomes a kind of political issue. What's necessary to convince people who, otherwise, don't want to be convinced?

To build on Dr. Comer's observation that much of this work lacks a conceptual base, one of the great advantages of working from theory is that one can not only replicate to determine whether or not it works in a variety of settings, but one can analyze those data to determine why it works. And it's the "Why?" question that is the one that's infrequently asked and answered.

If I understand why, then, in the utilization of that model or idea in other settings, I don't have to struggle with trying to duplicate it. What I am trying to do is to create the kinds of conditions that pick up the "why" pieces rather then the ritual. In looking at Professor Comer's work around the country, I suspect in each of these settings there are some common things, but there are a lot of variations there. And some of those variations may be relatively unimportant. And it's even possible that some of the common pieces are ritualistic.

But my guess is, given the theory out of which he is working, that when you talk to him about what is essential to that program, he can begin to point those things out. And those are the things that we want to see duplicated in other spots.

Chairman OWENS. Thank you.

My worry is that the cynic can say that, "As great as Dr. Comer's model is, until it has been tested in New York City, it's anecdotal." The argument we make for the Institute is that we can get around those cynics or be able to deal with them if we have the

authority of the government as well as greater resources to replicate faster and on a broader scale.

Just one final question, and I guess, Mr. Geiger, you might want to address yourself with teachers on the firing line out there, they might know better than others, and also Dr. Darling-Hammond, working with teachers—when I use phrases like: we have a situation which continues to expand out of control with respect to the crisis in education in our urban areas, inner-city areas; "present dangerous landslide into official helplessness," is this exaggeration, or do we have a situation which is escalating, growing worse at a more rapid pace every day?

Mr. Serrano. You would never exaggerate, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. GEIGER. I think we have a situation that is growing worse every day, and I think Dr. Comer addressed that when he talked a little bit about putting their programs together. He talked about an awful lot of people in those schools that were not classroom teachers; that we have health needs in this country, and that there are psychological needs of kids in this country today that 40 years ago, when I was growing up in Pigeon, Michigan, did not even exist.

And so those who say—and I heard someone say it just the other day, and it made me cringe when someone said it on television "While we have all of these problems of health and nutrition and so on"—by the way, we have a country of children, for the first time in the history of this country, who are less healthy than its parents, and we have to consider that too—when someone says, "Even though we have all of these problems out there, we ought to ignore them, and we should be able to educate the children anyway."

In my mind, we can't educate the children until we deal with the teenage pregnancy problem, the drug problem, the parenting problem—which is one of the best things about Head Start, parents must be involved in that—and all of these health care problems. They are all one problem. And teachers are the last bastion of hope for a lot of kids in this world, an awful lot of kids. Teachers are the last bastion of hope. And if we give up on them, whether it be health care or anything else, the country has given up on them. We can't do that.

Ms. DARLING-HAMMOND. I would just like to concur with that, and say that you could escalate your claims several times over and still be, I think, within the realm of accuracy. We have schools in New York City that not only don't have the interactive video discs that Lemar Alexander was bemoaning the lack of when he and I shared a television program a week ago, we have schools that don't even have textbooks with Ronald Reagan in them because they're so old. We have schools where kids are being educated in closets because there are not enough classrooms for them to use.

We have close to 500,000 homeless children who are being buffeted from school to school, and schools losing social workers and other support staff who would constitute the mental health team that would help integrate their lives into the school.

We have schools that are trying desperately to meet what they are told and know to be the demands of the 21st century for a new kind of education for all students not only without these infrastructure components that are absolutely essential, but also with great

desire to have knowledge about how to educate children better, and very little access to the kind of knowledge that they need.

I get into, as I'm sure all of the people on this panel do, dozens and dozens of schools every year, in a variety of capacities, and there is a hunger for strategies, for answers, for approaches on the part of teachers and other school workers, as well as parents and community-based organizations, that simply is not going to be satisfied until we begin to invest in both developing the kinds of knowledge that can be useful to them to a greater extent and getting it out there. And we really need both the strategies to support the infrastructure of the schools and those that are going to build their capacity to do the right thing for kids.

Chairman OWENS. Thank you.

Dr. Comer, your model has gotten a lot of widespread exposure. I just wondered, how many times have you been offered Federal funding for any part of your program?

Dr. COMER. Never.

Chairman OWENS. Never?

Dr. COMER. Actually, NIMH, during one period—but it's interesting, also, the funding that we received was from the center that was developed to address minority group issues—that's the only time that we were ever funded by a Federal agency.

Chairman OWENS. You never applied, did you?

Dr. COMER. I applied constantly. And only private foundations have we ever been funded by, significantly, over 23 years.

Chairman OWENS. Thank you.

Mr. Ballenger?

Mr. BALLENGER. That's a most embarrassing statement, for somebody that's supposedly in Congress to serve the people, to learm. The Federal Government does not have a primary role of assisting in education, because this is a responsibility for States and local communities and parents. However, I think OERI is probably one of the better issues that I am involved in.

I think the research Institute, if it could—and I would love to have your opinion should replicate parental involvement.

I can remember a husband and wife, in my own home town, who had very little education. Their children went on to become successful including: a vice president of IBM, three school teachers, and a lawyer. Somehow, we should look to parents like this I don't know whether parents like this continue to exist today. I know you mentioned that in schools, the parental involvement is necessary. I would like your opinion on replicating this.

I have no confidence in the Federal Government's ability to accomplish anything. I think it's the individuals that have to do it. It appears that we can help by giving more money, but what you're doing is, obviously, more important than what we're doing, at least as far as I'm concerned.

Dr. COMER. Let me point out a couple things. One is that prior to the 1950s, and even now, but prior to the 1950s, there were many such families. Almost all of the middle class black community today had similar kinds of experiences and families and people. It was after the 1950s, because of the younger education of large numbers of blacks who came out of rural areas and then into urban areas, and the effects of urbanization and so on, that the

strength of the black family, the black communities, really diminished because of these circumstances, and people were locked out of the economic and social system. But there were many such families.

There are still many parents who, with just a little help from mainstream institutions, can do a great deal. At least nine of the parents who were working in our school program, who started working with their children in the school program, who were undereducated, not functioning well, many of them depressed, got involved in the school program, went back and finished high school, went on to college, and are now professional people themselves.

There are many of them who were able to leave the school program and go out and take jobs out in the community that they had felt they couldn't manage. They didn't have the confidence. They didn't have the skills. They got involved in the school program, learned how to do that and gain the confidence, and then went out and were able to function.

There are many people who with just a little opportunity to interact with mainstream people in a respectful kind of way, and mainstream systems, could then function adequately. And I think that if we could support such programs, we would get much, much higher production.

Mr. BALLENGER. Next time you apply, ask me to help. I'll be glad to.

Dr. COMER. Good.

Mr. BALLENGER. Dr. Darling-Hammond, my wife and I as businesspeople in my hometown in North Carolina the unemployment has beens 3 percent or less for the last 15 to 20 years, began looking for people that we could find that would go to work. We found that the day lack of care was one of the major factors that kept welfare mothers from working.

So we set up a developmental day care center that was mostly supported by private funds with a little Title XX and State money. And, eventually, we enabled the mothers to work. However, we discovered that we couldn't get them off of welfare without their losing Medicaid. As a result, we worked out an insurance program with the local businesspeople, guaranteeing some minimum insurance. With the support of the United Fund, we cut our day care cost to $30 a week. We ate the difference so that these mothers could go to work.

The basic point is we finally took all the government programs that were available and made them work the way we wanted them to. I discovered that Head Start, although it is an excellent program, puts my little day care business out of business. If you have the opportunity of implementing a Head Start program or paying to have a little bit of day care, most would pick up Head Start.

That's the reason the Federal Government is helpful in some cases. Programs that are worthwhile are identified and chosen to receive funds, instead of Congress designating how and where funds will be used.

Let me ask you, if I may, is there really an effort in our educational system at the present time for at-risk students? Aside from special efforts that the group here knows about, overall, is there an educational effort for at-risk students?

Ms. DARLING-HAMMOND. There are, as you've suggested, many, many, many programs here, there, and the other place, patching together—really a patchwork quilt of supports for at-risk students by all kinds of people and all kinds of communities doing heroic work.

What we don't really have is a well-developed infrastructure there. The safety net is really shredded for students; in many, many communities, that's necessary. The Federal education funding declines when—Federal education funds used to be about 12 percent of all funds, now they're down to, I guess, 6 or 7 percent—mostly came out of poor rural areas and central cities, through programs that were really part of that infrastructure and safety net for students.

Early childhood education is one—I wouldn't worry about a day care center going out of business. There is such a demand that we can't satisfy——

Mr. BALLENGER. If you can't pay then you're in trouble.

Ms. DARLING-HAMMOND. [continuing] we need both the early childhood day care centers and the early childhood programs like Head Start, which only serves about a third of the students who are eligible for those services, and then all of the other pieces of the infrastructure, the mental health teams that are necessary to glue the social service agency and the school services as well. We don't have that, at this point in time, in any kind of good shape. And we need to rebuild that, along with supporting the heroic efforts of people in programs across the country.

Mr. BALLENGER. Mr. Geiger, I thought I would add that you represent an organization that has a great deal to say about these issues and the program that just came out. I recognize that we've had discussions about testing, but I've never been able to ask the NEA how they felt about that effort by the new Secretary, of using testing as a measurement of success, or how it's going to be used.

Mr. GEIGER. Pick up Sunday's Washington Post and read my editorial; it was all on testing. What it says——

Mr. BALLENGER. I live in Hickory, North Carolina, I didnot have an opportunity to review the Sunday Post. I'll look for your article.

[Laughter.]

Mr. GEIGER. [continuing] what it said was this country does not need another paper and pencil test. Any teacher will tell you they test kids, already, too many times during the course of this year.

But I do believe this country could put in place a good assessment process which might have as part of it a paper and pencil test, but there's a lot of other things that you better get from kids, like a portfolio and so on. But if we move in that direction, then somebody had better wave a magic wand and get rid of the multitude of tests that teachers now have to give. Because most elementary teachers will tell you that in somewhere between 10 and 20 days out of the course of the school year they give a test.

I do want to respond to the other question you asked Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond though, because one of the problems that we have—and it's all right to say this, but if we're going to say it, then we can't continue to compare ourselves to other countries on test scores and education and so on. Remember, this is the only country, except for South Africa, that does not have health care for all

of its citizens. And we keep saying the reason we don't have it is it's not the Federal Government's responsibility, that's the responsibility of the States and locals.

When we talk about preschool and day care, most industrialized countries don't even quibble over whether its the mother's job to raise the children until age 5, they simply start formal schooling at age 3 or 4. And if we're going to compete with the other countries, then we can't keep saying, "We have a national crisis, but it's the local and States' responsibility to take care of that."

So this country is going to have to wrestle with health care—12 million children have no health care, 37 million Americans have no health care—we have to wrestle with where only the 20 percent or 25 percent eligible for Head Start are going because we don't fund it, when most other industrial——

By the way, Sweden, this fall, will begin formal education for children at age 18 months. Now, I don't, for one minute, recommend that. But one ought not to be surprised that the children from Sweden score higher in international test scores than do the children of the United States.

Mr. BALLENGER. Let me pick up on that, if I may, because you hit a nerve. The basic thing, and the sad part about it is that, in this country we measure everything by the financial efforts of government. I've always felt that if you add all of the money that the Federal, State, and local governments put into education, we spend more per child than anybody else does, but we don't produce anything.

Mr. GEIGER. Yes.

Mr. BALLENGER. We also have the most expensive medicine in the world, and yet we don't cover 37 million people. The system is out of whack. We throw money at everything and nothing comes out of it.

Mr. GORDON. First of all, we spend more money on cosmetics and dog food than any other country, too. This is the richest country in the world. I would not compare our educational system to any other country by the number of dollars that we spend per child because we, simply, are the richest country in the world.

I do think, in all fairness, that there is something to be said that 45 years ago we told a country called Japan that they could not have a military, and so they didn't. And they decided, "Well, shoot, if we can't have a military, we'll spend our money on our roads and on our health care and on our education system," and probably a couple of them were even snickering to themselves saying, "and if everything works out all right, 45 years from now we'll buy Los Angeles and New York." And so one ought not to be surprised.

I don't think one can look at the dollars we spend. I think one has to look at the priorities that we've established. And I have no problems with the priority of a military, but we can't compare what we're doing, educationally, to Japan when they spend hardly any money on the military and we spend $300 billion a year.

I think it's the priorities. It's the health care, it's the preschool day care, it's the pregnant mothers in this country that don't have care at all; that doesn't happen in those other countries. That's, I think, what we have to look at.

Mr. BALLENGER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman OWENS. Thank you.

Mr. Serrano?

Mr. SERRANO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Geiger, your comments before this round anticipate my statement and my concern, so I will—having the relationship and the past work experience and the respect I have for teachers—I'm going to be very careful not to be misquoted here.

Part of my concern about this issue, in general, education in this country, and the work that this Institute may carry out in particular is that, I really do not want researchers coming back to tell me what I already know. If they tell me that conditions in certain neighborhoods are horrendous, I already know that. If they tell me that there are some parents that are either unwilling or not capable of knowing how to help their children, I already know that. If you tell me that people come speaking another language and, therefore, have a problem, I know that too. I know all of these things.

And while I know that they are important, what I am asking is maybe for us to hang on to the most important part—perhaps the only important part in my biased opinion—of the President's education statement, is when he said, "Let's reinvent the wheel." Maybe what I want is researchers telling me and, a national policy that says, "In spite of the fact that we have got serious troubles outside the classroom, let us understand that that is the problem, and then go ahead and invent an education system that deals inside the classroom."

Now again, at the expense of sounding melodramatic, we do that at times. We knew we had to get Saddam out of Kuwait. It is a poor example because we left a mess, but that is what we knew we had to do. And we did it well. And whether you supported it, or were in disagreement as I and the chairman were, you cannot deny the fact that it was done well and almost cleanly. We knew we had to find Noriega in Panama. That is not an easy place to find someone if they get lost in the mountainside, but we found him.

And we know what the problems are, and we keep getting back statements—and this Institute may do the same thing—that will come back and say, "Parents are incapable; they do not care. No father at home. Lack of money." I know that.

Are we capable, in this country, number one, of reinventing the wheel like the President suggests, and educating children in spite of all these problems, or accepting that this is a problem? And secondly, how does this Chairman and this committee and its ranking member make sure that in any legislative language that we write for the creation of an institute, clearly states, "do not hire anyone who will come back and tell us what we already know."

Mr. GEIGER. Sir, we don't have to create anything, in my mind, to do what needs to be done in this country. We need to take a look at what Dr. Comer is doing in his schools, which, by the way, costs money. We need to take a look at the health care of children in this country, which, by the way, costs money—maybe it doesn't, I see it just went up to 12.3 percent of gross national product. And you're right; we have the worst health care of many of the industrial nations. I'm not smart enough to crack that one.

We need to make sure that there are somewhere between 15 and 18 children, no more than that, in any kindergarten through third grade class anyplace in the United States and, especially, in our inner cities; that costs money. But we will do what needs to be done because this country is not going to face up to that issue; I am convinced of that.

And the one thing that the research, I believe, will show is that the programs like Dr. Comer has are successful, but to duplicate them—you listened to all the people he talked about which were auxiliary, and talked about the at-risk schools that we have going which deal with small class size. In my mind, what has to be done by and large, if it deals with the health of kids, nutrition of kids, low classes at the early elementary grades, is going to cost money. I don't see this country facing up to that issue at this point.

Mr. SERRANO. Well, I, personally, do not have any problems with how much money we put in education. I risked, for 17 years, wrecking up a political career by saying I will spend whatever you put in front of me. I imagine I can tell my colleagues, 10, 15 years from now, "If my time comes, beware. I will spend whatever money has to be spent on education." That is the greatest investment in this society.

But even though we continue to fight over the expenditure of money, my question still remains. Are we capable of creating a system and putting a price tag on it that does not speak to everything that surrounds the school and speaks to the school as the world by itself? That is what I want, because, let me tell you something, there are, in my community, the poorest district in the Nation, children who come from two-parent homes, children who come from parents who have graduated from high school, and they are two years behind in reading.

Now, is it contagious? You cannot blame the family. In that case, if you are going to compare it to another family. For too long, I think, what we have done is told the truth, in saying that there are conditions that create the situation in the classroom, and you are talking about someone who worked in the classroom. But that is not what I want to hear anymore. I want us to find a solution to the problem as it exists.

We found a solution on going to moon, and there were obstacles—they may not have been as difficult as a local drug pusher—but there were obstacles. We got to the moon before the time that we were supposed to get to the moon. And we have done other things.

Why cannot we seem to do this one? Is it a lack of knowledge in this country? Is there a lack of politics? Is it that the people who most suffer are the ones who have the least political power, or do we wait until it hits Beverly Hills and then we solve it? Or do we stop it now?

Ms. DARLING-HAMMOND. Could I——

Mr. SERRANO. Sure, please.

Ms. DARLING-HAMMOND. As a researcher who spends a lot of time in schools trying to answer those kind of questions, I would hope that this kind of an institute would do certain things that aren't being done now. For example, I'm now working in a school in East Harlem that has a zero percent drop-out rate, in a commu-

nity that has a 60 to 70 percent drop-out rate, that sends kids on to good colleges and universities, that does a variety of things that many people say can't be done with the kids in that community and so on and so forth and aren't done in many other schools.

What people in many other schools want to know is: How do they do that? What is it that they do that produces those outcomes? The work that Dr. Comer has done and the work that Ron Edmonds did when he documented effective schools that worked in communities where schools normally didn't work, is all part of a process of trying to build a knowledge base—this is how some schools do what other schools aren't doing. What would you need to have happen to have that help elsewhere?

The problem, however, is that there's very little support for that kind of research. My work is not funded by the Federal Government, either. Neither was that of many other people who are trying to answer those questions. There's very little support for the dissemination of the research so that other people can get a hold of it and use it. There's no support for the demonstration and development projects that would then show how it could be done somewhere else—the lessons that we've learned here, how they could be transported to schools here, here, and here.

The educational research enterprise has been, essentially, in a shambles for years. You can't get a project going and finished and disseminated in a reasonable fashion such that that kind of knowledge can be spread around. So the point certainly shouldn't be for research to come back and say, well, there are all these problems and, you know, that's why schools are failing.

But we have to build some kind of capacity, as we have invested in doing in some other areas in our Nation, for documenting what's working, how it works, and then getting that spread around, and I think that's really the goal of what we're talking about here. And it's a discouraging thing to be on the end of the table watching the ruined lives of the kids who should be achieving. It's discouraging to be on the end where there's so much to be done to help point directions and also the lack of continuity in that enterprise to do that.

A lot of kids who should be doing a lot better than they are aren't going to get the kind of education they need until we get about the business of tilling that soil.

Dr. COMER. May I respond to that also?

I think we know enough—there's still a lot more to learn—but we know enough to make it possible for almost all of our young people to succeed. Dissemination and support for dissemination are a very big part of making that happen.

But beyond that, there is still a tremendous amount of resistance in our society, in a number of places, to success for poor children and success for minority-group children. And we're also going to have to address that, because there's still a mind-set in this country that, "We'll get by. We used to do it a long time ago, and we'll get by now in the same way."

And there are large numbers of people who don't understand that times have changed, and we're not going to get by, because if you don't have an educated population, you, at least, have to have one that has the social skills and capacities to operate. But you

need both. You need education and social skills, and that requires development; it requires support.

You have communities that lack the infrastructure that will make that possible. For families, you have families that aren't supported in ways, and they need to be locked into systems that will support them. That's going to take money, and in order to get the money, you're going to have to have the support of the community, and that's going to take some political leadership on top of whatever else we do here.

But I think that an institute, such as the one you're talking about, can provide the kind of information, can provide the kind of support that would, then, provide the ammunition for the political leadership.

Mr. SERRANO. Thank you.

Chairman OWENS. Dr. Gordon?

Mr. GORDON. There are two or three pieces that I would like to pick up to comment on, and I want to speak carefully because I don't want to appear to be in essential disagreement.

When Mr. Geiger suggested that there are some real problems out in our society that we've got to attend to, I think he said, before it will work, I think and hope he was trying to stress the importance of those extraeducational problems.

Coming back to Mr. Serrano's observation, we would hope that even in the presence of those problems, we can help education to function more effectively than it presently does. And since I, for one, don't have the confidence that we will move as quickly on the political, economic, and broad social problems, I kind of lean toward Mr. Serrano's bias that we've got to work harder at making education work despite those.

But I would not by any means, want to be counted among those who would support things as they are in that extraeducational environment, because they are actually immoral, and we've clearly got to change them.

Second point: As good and as effective as, my friend Jim Comer's work is, I think when we talk to him quietly, he worries about being more effective. He doesn't argue that he's got the solution to our problem. He is moving us ahead.

I would hope that we don't look so enthusiastically at those pieces in the society that are working fairly effectively that we decide that we don't need to know any more, because the fact is, with respect to education in our country, we are in trouble in a number of areas, not just in the persons who are thought of as being at-risk.

I don't know whether you're familiar with a little book that's called "Valley Girls," but it's a book written about some teenage women on the West Coast, coming out of middle-income families, who are essentially ignorant despite the fact that they've gone through school. And I don't have to go to Los Angeles to find them.

All across the country I see education not working as well as it ought to work and as well as it could work for us. I think that we need to generate answers to those kinds of questions. Even as we support the Jim Comers of the world, we have to enable them to improve upon what they're doing and to investigate problems that, maybe, they haven't even looked at.

Third point: Two of the consultants you have had this morning have commented on the fact that the U.S. government has not supported their work. That's a story that, I think, has real implications for this new Institute and for the education research community in general.

I don't think it is just because they are ethnic minorities, although that happens to be the experience of most of the ethnic minority research scientists that I know, that they have found it difficult to get support from our government. I think it may relate, in part, to one of the points that I address in my paper for you. And that is the narrower perspective that the research establishment brings to bear on research and what they will support.

Before Dr. Comer and I became colleagues, I used to sit on panels in Washington, and his work came before them. And the reason he wasn't funded, at least the explicit reason he wasn't funded, wasn't because he was black. They claimed that he wasn't doing the kind of research that that research community wanted to support.

Now, some years later, I hope they have the wisdom to see their error. But if we create another Institute that goes on doing research like we've always done, in the way that we've always done it, looking for the people who have already gotten their stars for doing research, we aren't going to get to some of these problems. We're going to have to have an institute that's willing to go out and take chances on folk who are doing things differently, who see things differently.

I think it was Keuhn who suggests that we get changes in our knowledge. We get changes in the way in which we understand things because some people see them in a different way. And, evidently, my colleagues on the review panels didn't have the insight to appreciate the different way in which Jim Comer saw the problem that he was asking them for money for. I don't want another institute that makes that kind of mistake.

Chairman OWENS. I think that's a fitting point in this panel. Excellent.

Thank you very much. If you have any further comments, we would appreciate, your submitting them, in writing, in the next ten days. We reserve the right to submit to you any questions we may have which would further clarify your testimony. I do appreciate your taking the time out of your busy schedule to appear today. Thank you very much.

Mr. BALLENGER. Mr. Geiger? They gave me this.

Mr. GEIGER. Yes, I saw that.

Mr. BALLENGER. They don't want you to know I can't read.

[Laughter.]

Mr. GEIGER. Is that okay?

Mr. BALLENGER. Yes. For sure, it's fine.

Chairman OWENS. Our next panel consists of Dr. Todd Strohmenger, Director, Rural Small Schools Program, Appalachia Educational Laboratory in Charleston, West Virginia; Dr. Laura Rendon, Associate Professor, Adult Higher and Community College Education, North Carolina State University; Dr. Shirley McBay, the President of Quality Education of Minorities Network; and Dr. Ruby Thompson, the Professor of School of Education, Clark Atlanta University.

Please be seated.

Mr. BALLENGER. Mr. Chairman, I would like to apologize to my compatriot from North Carolina State University but I've got an airplane to catch.

Chairman OWENS. We're going to yield to Mr. Ballenger for a special statement.

Mr. BALLENGER. I would just like to say that having lived in Raleigh for 12 years, as member of the State legislature, one of our most outstanding educational institutions is North Carolina State University, and I'm glad you were invited to be a member of this panel.

Ms. RENDON. Thank you.

Mr. BALLENGER. And I apologize for having to leave.

Chairman OWENS. We'll begin with Dr. Todd Strohmenger.

STATEMENT OF TODD STROHMENGER, DIRECTOR, RURAL SMALL SCHOOLS PROGRAM, APPALACHIA EDUCATIONAL LABORATORY, CHARLESTON, WEST VIRGINIA; LAURA RENDON, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, ADULT HIGHER AND COMMUNITY COLLEGE EDUCATION, NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY, RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA; SHIRLEY MCBAY, PRESIDENT, QUALITY EDUCATION FOR MINORITIES NETWORK, WASHINGTON, DC; AND RUBY THOMPSON, PROFESSOR, SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY, ATLANTA, GEORGIA

Mr. STROHMENGER. Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, as a Director of the Rural Small Schools Program, AEL, in Charleston, West Virginia and as Co-director of the Educational Resources Information Center, affectionately known as ERIC, a clearinghouse on early education in small schools, I am quite pleased to give this testimony regarding the need for a proposed Institute For Education of At-Risk Students, particulary those students in rural America.

You have my written testimony and statements, and I would like to highlight some of the content. First, I would like to make four specific points. One, there are large populations of at-risk students in rural America. Second, there are similarities and differences in at-risk in the urban and rural context. Third, the numerous categorical programs now funded are not as effective as they could be. And fourth, the proposed Institute for the Education of At-Risk Students can provide the catalyst needed to effectively deal with the at-risk crisis in American education.

Sometimes there's a confusion in defining what we mean by "rural." One of the experts said that, "If you think you're rural, you are rural." Of course, that's not a very workable definition. In dealing with data and statistics, we find that metro versus nonmetro is the most common way of approaching, and some of the things I say may refer to that.

One of the things, as we look at that rural America, that's obvious is that we have diversity of people, of terrain, of economic activity. For example, Arizona reservations of the Navahos are quite different than those we find on the Mississippi Delta. The eastern Kentucky mountains and coal regions are quite different than the

farmlands of Iowa. And the mountains of Montana are very much different than the Finger Lake regions of New York.

On the other hand, there are commonalities and conditions in rural America that contribute to the at-risk problem. One of them is poverty. The poverty rates in rural America are equal to center cities' 18 percent. The poverty rate among rural minority groups sometimes is higher than urban minority groups. There is economic decline. Rural should not be equated with farming. Fewer than 8 percent of the rural people engage in farming.

They have a narrow economic base in rural communities which makes them sensitive to the national-international economic change. Failure of the single major economic activity in the community can be disastrous. The impact is far greater than that in a metropolitan, diverse economy.

For example, the extractive and small industry jobs that were considered the saviors of some rural areas in the 1960s and 1970s are now in decline, and the at-risk problem in many rural areas is exploding.

A unique at-risk problem in some rural schools is the stereotyping of poor or different students, the hillers versus the creekers, or, "He's from up the hollow," or "she's one of them." Being different in a small community is more obvious than in urban areas with the concentrations of ethnic or other at-risk students; at least they have peers.

The rural schools have problems that often contribute or create at-risk conditions. For example, the matter of finance: most rural areas have low tax bases; they spend a higher percentage of their money for transportation; the per people formulas of States are not quite equitable in many cases. For example, our neighboring State of Virginia, just last Friday, joined the long list of States in this country under litigation regarding equitable financing for their schools.

Scarce populations, long distances, and terrain make offering services to at-risk students many times difficult and expensive. Another problem is small size. The nonmetro high school, on average, is about half the size of the metro high school. Many times they lack the critical mass for efficiently meeting curriculum demands of the School Reform Movement. The answer is not always large schools and consolidation, but many times the terrain and distances make it very difficult.

On the other hand, we have technology that seems to have some promise to resolving this particular problem, distance learning, computers on-line, and so on. I happen to have a series of library networks and technology in southeastern Virginia, as well as Alaska village and some Indian reservations, that seem to be meeting the problem and actually are meeting the problem of scarce library resources for students and teachers, alike, in very rural, small, and some poor schools.

The at-risk problem has some common elements in both urban and rural settings. For example, at-risk conditions are usually developmental; they're not the result of events or conditions at one stage of a child's life. Short-term programs seldom cure the at-risk student.

In addition, there are no "one size fits all" programs for dealing with at-risk. There is a need, not just for adopting programs, but for adapting programs to fit the various context in which they might be used.

The proposed Institute for the Education of At-Risk Students can provide the catalyst, as I mentioned, that's needed to make existing programs more effective. First, they can develop models for coordination of a variety of programs that we find now in the various agencies in development departments. Perhaps it can develop ways to combine programs to deal with the family, the community, and the school facets of at-risk. Many times we see at-risk in the school as only a symptom of what's going on in the community and the home.

We can search for ways to provide sustained support of at-risk students through the various developmental stages they pass.

We can provide long-term research and development. I would like to point out that at AEL we had, in the late 1960s and 1970s, what we called a home-oriented preschool program. After it was administered, 500 children were compared to control group children for 20 years, and we found significant gains of these program children in education and employment.

Along with that, there are now boxes and boxes of research and activities and ideas just waiting to be mined and developed into proven, effective programs based upon what we have learned. When the funding stopped, the development stopped.

The Institute would provide bottom-up R&D rather than the typical top-down of telling people what you ought to do. We need to involve persons in institutions with backgrounds matching the target audiences. We need to use the 24 American Indian tribal colleges, the 114 Historically Black Colleges and Universities, the 10 Regional Laboratories across the country, and the numerous institutions working with rural schools and communities to find solutions.

We need researchers, program developers, and programs adapters that are sensitive to the needs of the total child; that understand the total context family, community, and school; and are accepted in families, communities, and schools as they work.

Other than the rural initiative of the Regional Laboratories, there has been no comprehensive R&D approach to the rural at-risk population and problem. This Institute would supplement the work being done in the rural initiative, to provide the much needed major attack on the at-risk crisis in rural America.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Todd Strohmenger follows:]

Written Testimony of the Appalachia Educational Laboratory

to

The House Subommittee on Select Education
The Honorable Major Owens, Chairman

about

The Proposal to Establish a

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR THE EDUCATION OF AT-RISK STUDENTS

Presenter

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Introduction

The Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL) is pleased to give the following testimony, at the invitation of the Subcommittee, about how best to meet the educational needs of disadvantaged, impoverished, and handicapped students in rural America (now generally characterized as "at-risk students"). This term--in contrast to others--reflects the understanding that disadvantaged, impoverished, or handicapped students share certain commonalities (risks in life and other qualities, as well).

AEL's Venue

AEL brings to this testimony the conviction that good schooling should result in substantial benefits to society--to families, communities, states, and the nation as a whole--and not simply to the individual. Our recognition of the commonalities of risk and our understanding of the implications for the idea of "community" is at the heart of the testimony that follows.

We are particularly concerned that those of us who care for the fate of children reclaim a sense of the wholeness that binds us to those in our various communities who are "at risk." Such communities, incidentally, include not only the family, school, neighborhood, and nation, but also the world of ideas. Lacking a vision of such communities, we risk what makes us human. These children may be at risk because we are at risk.

AEL's Background

AEL is a nonprofit corporation whose staff have worked for more than 25 years with Appalachian educators to develop, from a research base, approaches

to the educational dilemmas that beset the impoverished area of the nation where we live.

Examples of AEL's work, beginning in the late 1960s, include the development of voluntary Educational Cooperatives, many of which continue in existence to this day. Original work has also focused on involving parents in their children's education. Project HOPE--Home-Oriented Preschool Education--is one such example that involved extended work among rural communities, with rural people serving both as the target group and as participant researchers. AEL's Experience-Based Career Education (EBCE) program, developed in the 1970s, continues to be used in rural areas of the nation.

Two relatively recent developments have built on the Lab's long-standing interest in rural, culturally different, and disadvantaged student populations. From 1987 to 1990, under the Rural Education Initiative established by Congress, AEL conducted a variety of rural education projects for the U.S. Department of Education. The work begun in that initiative continues in our current five-year commitment to serve as one of 10 Regional Educational Laboratories under contract from the U.S. Department of Education. AEL has also, since 1988, operated the ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools (ERIC/CRESS). ERIC/CRESS abstracts and synthesizes the educational literature on American Indians and Alaska Natives, Mexican Americans, migrants, outdoor education, rural education, and small schools.

AEL's staff bring to their work a wide variety of backgrounds as child advocates, teachers, school administrators, and higher education faculty. Most of us, moreover, are parents; and one of us trace our concern for education to our care for our own children. But, more generally, all of us are students of the ends and means of education.

No one has all the answers to the questions that are part of the effort to develop effective mass education, and AEL--both as an organization and as a site for individuals' professional work--is hardly an exception to this rule. We are, however, gratified to share with the Subcommittee our collective view of the complex issue of how to serve well those disadvantaged, impoverished, and handicapped students who live in rural areas of this nation.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AEL's oral and written testimony today is directed toward establishing the need for a qualitatively different approach to serving at-risk children and youth, especially those in rural areas. We warrant this need by answering five critical questions:

(1) Who needs rural America?

(2) Are children at risk in rural America?

(3) Don't rural schools face fewer problems than urban schools?

(4) Aren't there already a raft of programs for at-risk students?

(5) What advantages might the proposed National Institute for At-Risk Students offer?

Who needs rural America? Our answer to this question is the one on which the remaining four are predicated. It is the key question of meaning, purpose, and value. Our answer is that we all need rural America.

Nonetheless, some people might argue--indeed, have argued--that what is rural about America is not very important. Moreover, much of what is done to rural America seems to reflect this position.

AEL believes, on the contrary, that rural America is part of a whole that is meaningful only when meaningful distinctions of culture and place are preserved. One of the reasons rural schools have been unable to serve rural America better is that most of them are not very sensitive to local contexts. Rather, historians of education tell us, these schools are the results of a

long battle to extend a "one-best-system" into often hostile territory. For the most part, local communities lost the battles.

Today more is at stake in rural America than just a system of schooling. Ways of life and ways of thinking and acting are jeopardized. Only a few educators are asking the questions that would help rural schools to nurture authentic distinctions of culture and place. In the rush to see students "acquire" the tools of literacy and numeracy, schools seldom get students to consider the questions of meaning, purpose, and value that ultimately depend on understanding who we are and where we come from. This is a critique th applies equally to urban and rural schools, of course.

But the attractive features of rural life--solitude, the closeness of the natural world, kinship with neighbors, and the opportunity to see things whole--may involve an enduring meaning for the various communities we inhabit. These communities include those we inhabit in reality and those we inhabit in our thoughts. One of the missions of education is to make possible the necesssary connections that constitute such meaning. We do not seem to be doing that very well at present.

Therefore, AEL hopes that plans for the Institute can encompass studies of the meaning, purpose, and substantive values without which schooling implements no mission at all.

Are children at risk in rural America? They certainly are. Poverty, or low socioeconomic status, brings with it a host of risks for children and youth. Throughout rural areas of the country--which are inhabited by about 25 percent of the nation's residents--poverty rates equal those in the nation's central cities (about 18 percent). Moreover, poverty among rural minority groups is often higher than among urban minority groups. While most of the

rural poor are white, rural poverty is most severe among rural minority groups. For example, the poverty rate among rural African Americans and American Indians is about three times what it is among rural whites.

Further, economic restructuring has severely jeopardized rural America's economic base in natural resources. The jobs most frequently replacing lost jobs bring lower wages and fewer benefits to rural workers. Given this gloomy profile, the great irony is that the potential for rural economic growth now--amidst this growing economic crisis--is said to be the "attractiveness" of some rural areas as places to live and visit.

Don't rural schools face fewer problems than urban schools? They face just as many problems. Some resemble urban problems, and some are unique to rural schools. Demographers forecast a crisis of growing risk, and the outlook for rural areas is as sobering as it is for central cities. Like central city schools, rural schools are challenged by this crisis.

But rural schools also face problems that differ from those faced by urban schools. Sparse population, long distances, and rough terrain are features unique to rural districts. Yet the unworkable expectation persists that rural schools should, to the minutest detail, resemble urban schools. This inappropriate expectation limits what rural schools might otherwise be able to do.

Rural school finance, moreover, is inequitable. This fact is attested to by litigation brought nationwide by rural districts against state funding formulas. Rural schools cannot do more with less. Earlier this month, for example, the Texas legislature ended a long ordeal by redistributing funds from wealthier school districts and directing such funds to poorer (largely rural) districts.

Rural schools must also face an additional legacy of dysfunction peculiar to them alone. College-going rates among rural students are comparatively low. Nonetheless, the best educated students migrate to urban areas in search of better jobs. In fact, the gap between rural and urban poverty is greatest among the best educated. Thus, even when rural schools succeed with students, they seem to fail the communities in which they are located. This legacy of "outmigration" has had long-term damaging effect on local communities.

Aren't there already a raft of programs for at-risk students? There are, and they make an important contribution. We have many good programs for particular groups, administered by particular offices, operating on differing regulatory bases. But coordination, leadership, and responsiveness are lacking.

For that reason, concerted effort, too, is lost to us. And failing to make joint efforts, we lose a vision of the whole. We forget that in educating children whose families, communities, and schools face unusual difficulties, we are not just seeking to forestall catastrophe. Rather, if we saw the whole, we might realize that the education of "at-risk" students needs to reclaim a vision of the shared experience--the community--of which we intend these young people to be a part. The will and wisdom of the students we are now calling "at-risk" must not be lost; if it is lost, we diminish our shared experience, and we jeopardize the future of things that matter most.

Everything we do--as educators, parents, and fellow human beings--should involve that realization. Good education is more than directing "services" at isolated persons. It is building connections--of knowledge, responsibility,

and will--among us all. This happens in some schools and classrooms even now. But it should happen more often, and among more of our students.

What advantages might the proposed institute offer? We believe the proposed National Institute for the Education of At-Risk Students can provide leadership and coordination to meet the crisis of growing risk. It can provide long-term attention, insulated from political partisanship, to meet this crisis by responding carefully to the diversity of contexts in which risk emerges.

Some observers are concerned that recent educational reforms, for example, seem to assume that all schools, and the families and communities they serve, are much alike. Nothing could be further from the truth. Children come of age (that is, undergo their education) in the context of particular families, communities, and schools. Schools must respond to this diversity if they are to enact a meaningful mission.

Many dedicated people are working to this end already in rural areas; such dedication is even traditional in many rural communities. But these efforts need widespread, long-term support. And they need to involve institutions and people with the background to understand the particular, diverse contexts in which rural and urban children--notably including minority children--live and through which they come of age.

This summary provides a quick review of our full written testimony. The full testimony, which follows, documents and explains more completely the points made in the preceding paragraphs.

WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF THE APPALACHIA EDUCATIONAL LABORATORY
ABOUT THE PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A
NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR THE EDUCATION OF AT-RISK STUDENTS

The real rural America differs dramatically from the one most people think they know. The title of a famous report about rural America, The People Left Behind (Breathitt, 1967), conjures two false images:

1. Rural people do not have the good sense to move to the cities or suburbs.
2. Progress bypasses rural areas.

A lot has happened in rural areas since that 1967 report influenced national policy. For instance, population returned to rural America during the 1970s.

That growth appears now to have been an aberration, but, ironically, recent observers claim that the economic potential of rural America rests in its attractiveness as a place to live (e.g., Reid, 1989). In addition, so much "progress" has taken place in rural America that fewer than eight percent of rural people are engaged in farming, and even fewer people actually live on farms.

Who Needs Rural America?
(A View Along a Missing Dimension)

So much has changed, in fact, that the nation's commitment to preserving the quality of rural life can be questioned. Before considering the status

and needs of at-risk students in rural America, therefore, a key question requires a response: Who needs rural America?

Science might provide an answer. For example, a "scientific" answer might show that rural America's natural and human resources were critical elements in the national economy. But that is not the sort of answer we believe is most relevant to the mission of education at this juncture in our history.

Rather, we interpret the question to relate to the ongoing significance of the rural context, its significance both to the people who live there and to the national experience. We intend our answer to provide a view along a dimension missing from most of the current debate about education.

A Missing Dimension in the Debate about Education

The history of the United States, in large part, tells the story of urbanization. In 1790, 95 percent of all Americans lived in rural areas; about the time America entered the "Great War," the population was evenly divided between rural and urban areas; today, the balance has shifted so that just 25 percent of the nation's residents inhabit the rural landscape (Fuguitt, Brown, & Beale, 1989). The outlook for the future is that this trend will continue in the United States (World Future Society, 1990).

This worldwide trend encompasses momentous changes in social, economic, and cultural interaction that should be of paramount concern to those of us who care for the ways we lead children into adulthood. By and large, these changes concern issues ignored by scientists, including most educational researchers.

Such issues involve interpretations about the nature of the good life, the aims of education, the character of democratic institutions, the perpetual contest of equity and freedom, and the significance of human life. They are questions of intellect, informed judgment, and substantive value.

Perhaps the reason we have ignored these questions is that we are such a practical people. Our tenacious practicality, however, may also be the Achilles' heel of our culture (Bell, 1973). As we face off against a variety of crises--the crisis of the cities, the crisis of rural areas, the crisis of growing risk among children and youth, persistent race and gender bias--we will doubtless continue to seek what works. And it is very important to do what we can with the means at our disposal.

But perhaps it is also time for education to begin to approach the whole of its mission again. An education that focuses its energies on providing the tools of thought (literacy and numeracy), but ignores the need to help students use those tools <u>on ideas</u>, will not ultimately work.

We have begun to see the signs of that sort of failure. At present, educational research asks questions about how best to manage the enterprise of schooling. It wants to know what techniques are best for teaching whom. It seeks to create schools that serve everyone well. These are worthy objectives, but they are sought only in the realm of the present, and we often fail to reach them.

The fundamental reason for this failure is that we have lost any sense of the whole. Seeking only what works, we fail to understand very clearly what does not work. Clues to the whole may lie in what does not work. A great deal is <u>not working</u> in rural America.

Ethical Studies about Education in Rural Settings

Ever since Thomas Kuhn (1962) published The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, futurists have been scanning the world for signs of "new paradigms." The coming of post-industrial society and the information age are taken as omens that a new way of understanding the world is at hand.

We long for such a change because, however dimly, we sense that what Kuhn called "normal science" is not working. Accepting the assumption that schooling, learning, and teaching are accessible to the statistical methods of the social sciences, educational research has become increasingly specialized and fragmented. For example, few (if any!) scholars in education cross the arbitrary boundaries that separate "administrative science" and "cognitive science."

When we think about such classifications as rural and urban, however, we force ourselves across those boundaries. Stretching across the established boundaries in this way can, we believe, be a starting point for reclaiming a vision of the whole that has been lost.

Ethos and context. Though "Who needs rural America?" has a facetious ring to it, the long history of outmigration from rural areas gives the question a basis in fact. Rural America is being deserted. It is not difficult to imagine a future time in which the extraction of natural resources from rural areas continues unabated, and to which wastes of all sorts are returned, but in which rural areas are virtually depopulated.

We do not believe this scenario is likely, though. Something about the quality of rural life--despite its hazards and risks--remains attractive, if elusive, for many Americans.[1]

The attractive features of rural life--solitude, the closeness of the natural world, and kinship with neighbors--may involve an enduring meaning for the nation as a whole. After all, the history and culture of America are rooted in a rural experience. More generally, the search for virtue in America is bound up with stewardship of the earth (Berry, 1990).

In short, the rural context embodies an ethical ideal--an ethos--that encompasses individual, family, community, and nature. Schooling in rural America might reflect such an ethos--which relates to concern for the social and natural environments and for the thought such concern entails--better than it has.

One of the reasons schools have been unable to pursue such purposes is that they are not very sensitive to local contexts. Further, the questions that would make them sensitive in this way are ethical questions, and they have seldom been asked in recent decades. Garrett Keizer, a rural high school teacher from Vermont, put the issue this way in his remarkable 1988 book about his teaching experiences:

> For consider, if the real world is as full of injustice, waste, and woe as it appears to be, and school has no other purpose than to prepare young people to man and woman the machinery of the real world, then schools are pernicious institutions. They serve to perpetuate rather

[1]According to J. Norman Reid, Director of the Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service, "Increasingly, rural areas' economic potential is based not so much on what can be taken from them or produced in them, as on their desirability as places to live" (Reid, 1989, p. 7).

> than remedy evils. We would do as well to burn as to maintain a school that does no more than mirror and foreshadow the real world.
> (Keizer, 1988, p. 68)

Taking steps to understand the whole. This view of the mission of education is capable of perceiving the social nature of the risks that beset young people as we help them become adults. If we fail to support serious work to articulate such views, risks may multiply rather than disappear because we lack an understanding of the whole.

For this reason, we hope that a small portion of the resources of the proposed Institute can be allocated to the range of interpretations of ethical issues--questions of meaning, purpose, and value--to which risk, as an issue of social justice, inevitably devolves. Such work--whether it focus on rural, urban, or bilingual contexts--can help restore to education a sense of the whole it now lacks. Further, we believe that plans to address rural at-risk populations would make a logical place to begin this effort.

Diversity and Specialization in Rural America

This section of our written testimony is provided to sketch a picture of the economic diversity and specialization of rural America. In particular, it shows that rural people are neither stupid nor immune from the effects of progress. Progress has affected rural areas, though not always for the better.

What is "Rural"?

This question has troubled scholars and policymakers for some time, and as a result the Federal government has never adopted a single, consistent definition of the term for the purpose of guiding public policy and program development. Perhaps part of the difficulty is that "rural" is a moving target, not just in the U.S., but around the world. Urbanization is a continuous process, and views of "what rural is" are subject to new interpretations with each passing decade.

Despite the lack of official consensus, a number of definitions do enjoy widespread use in certain circles. Perhaps the most common definition is the one based on the category "metropolitan areas" (counties with a central city of at least 50,000, together with their surrounding suburbs). Everything else constitutes nonmetro (or rural) America. Obviously this scheme leaves much to be desired in itself, but this definition is the basic point of reference in the discussion that follows (approximately 25 percent of the U.S. population lives in nonmetro areas).

Rural Is Not Farming

The Economic Research Service (ERS) of the Department of Agriculture has extended the dichotomy of metro and nonmetro counties and developed a typology based on type of economic activity in the 2,443 nonmetro counties (see Bender et al., 1985). The counties are classified into eight (not mutually exclusive) types: farming, mining, manufacturing, retirement, government services, federal lands, persistent poverty, and "unclassified."

o	Farming counties	702
o	Manufacturing counties	678
o	Mining counties	200
o	Government counties	315
o	Persistent poverty counties	242
o	Federal lands counties	247
o	Retirement counties	515
o	Unclassified counties	370

57.3% of counties belong exclusively to one category.
22.0% of counties belong to two categories.
15.0% of counties belong to no category (the unclassified group).
6.0% of counties belong to three or more categories.

(Source: Bender et al., 1985, p. 2)

The ERS analysis suggests that rural America exists on a very diverse economic basis. It would, therefore, be wrong to conclude that agriculture was the single feature that best characterized rural America. Farming is a capital-intensive enterprise. When it produces sufficient local income for a county to be classified as farming-dependent, it takes place in certain geographic areas that permit the large-scale operations that produce the greatest profits. For example, although West Virginia (where AEL is located) is a prototypically rural state, no West Virginia county is classified as farming-dependent in the ERS typology. The small-scale farming that takes place in West Virginia may have some meaning, but it is not, in conventional terms, "economic."

Rural Areas and the National Economy

Rural areas differ substantially from one another, but the previous discussion of farming suggests another feature of rural economies: They tend to specialize. Perhaps as many as 1460 nonmetro counties (i.e., 70%) depend either on manufacturing or extractive industries (Howley, 1991).

Extractive industries are principally mining, farming, and timbering (Weber, Castle, & Shriver, 1987). All these industries have experienced hard times in the last decade (Reid, 1989). Moreover, manufacturing, as a characteristic rural enterprise, is a relatively new phenomenon that is also part of the process of rural economic specialization. Manufacturing firms--whether large or small corporations--tend to locate low-wage, routine production operations in rural areas (Lyson, 1989; McGranahan, 1987).

Extraction and routine manufacturing are very sensitive to economic forces outside rural areas, both national and international. For example, although many communities attracted manufacturing plants during the 1970s, many plants left their new homes during the economic hard times of the early 1980s. In fact, the net loss of manufacturing jobs between 1979 and 1986 in rural America was 12 percent (McGranahan, 1987). Therefore, expected revenue increases for local governments (e.g., to support improved school funding) did not materialize (Lyson, 1989).

It is instructive to note that rural economic specialization has taken place even as services have become the fastest-growing sector of the economy generally. Thus, we hazard the view that recent economic restructuring has not, overall, benefitted rural America's inhabitants. Data about rural poverty seem to corroborate this view.

Poverty in Rural America

Although poverty is historically associated with country life--both here and throughout the world--by the early 1970s rural poverty in the U.S. seemed to be decreasing, with poverty rates in nonmetro areas edging closer to the

comparatively lower metro poverty rates.[2] But throughout the 1970s, the most chronically poor counties in the nation continued to be located in nonmetro areas (particularly in the South and in Appalachia), and during the 1980s matters deteriorated. By 1986, the nonmetro poverty rate was 50 percent higher than the metro rate (O'Hare, 1988). In fact, the poverty rate for all nonmetro counties in general nearly equaled the poverty rate for central cities (Porter, 1989).

Rural poverty in the 1980s also stayed higher, rose more rapidly, and fell more slowly in the "recovery" period (O'Hare, 1988). Displaced rural workers were unemployed more than 50 percent longer than urban workers and, when they did return to work, were more likely than urban workers to take pay cuts and lose insurance benefits (Podgursky, 1988). Rural poverty, almost by definition, is more geographically dispersed than urban poverty, and, therefore, less apparent to national attention.

Poverty among rural minorities. Twenty-nine percent of the rural poor are minorities, and these people suffer more severely from poverty than either rural whites or urban minorities. For example, 44 percent of rural African Americans were poor in 1987, compared to 33 percent of their urban counterparts (Porter, 1989). The poverty rate of rural African Americans exceeded the poverty rate of rural whites by over 200 percent. Similar contrasts characterize the relationship of poverty rates among rural Hispanics and their white and urban counterparts (Porter, 1989).

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[2]Metro areas include suburbs. Within metro areas, of course, central cities show high poverty rates. In aggregate measure, however, urban areas are more affluent than rural areas.

American Indians and Alaska Natives are the most rural population in the nation. Approximately one million Indians (of a total population of nearly 1.7 million) live on or near reservations (located principally in rural areas). Among the ten largest tribes, the poverty rate for families varies from nearly 43 percent (for Navajos) to about 18 percent (for Cherokees). The Navajo poverty rate may be indicative of the poverty rate among rural American Indians, since about two-thirds of this population reside on the Navajo reservation (all data derived from Hodgkinson, 1990).[3]

Economic development and rural poverty. Even when economic growth does come to rural communities, however, its benefits to the poor are questionable. Most new jobs are low-paying or minimum-wage jobs (Reid, 1990). Moreover, rural workers in service industries have the highest poverty rates. This fact is particularly vexing, since many analysts are now predicting that the service industry is the sector of the rural (not only the national) economy most likely to grow in the future (O'Hare, 1988).

Schools and Schooling in Rural America

The background on rural America sets the context for an equally brief review of schools and schooling in rural America. Despite the evident diversity of rural America, it is true that schools in rural America are much like schools elsewhere in America. This point needs to be made because it is

[3]Nationwide (i.e., including both metro and nonmetro populations) in 1980 the poverty rates for African Americans, American Indians, and Hispanic Americans were 28.9%, 23.7%, and 23.2%, respectively (Hodgkinson, 1990). More recent data show even higher poverty rates, and poverty rates among children are higher still (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 1991).

bound up with understanding the strengths and weaknesses of rural education and with the needs of the disadvantaged (or "at-risk") students served by rural schools.

The Unfortunate Similarities of Rural and Urban Schools

Rural schools follow the age-grade-placement pattern so common elsewhere. They offer certain other sorts of services (e.g., Chapter 1, special education, school lunch and breakfast programs, and transportation) to students on much the same basis as schools elsewhere. This phenomenon of similarity was characterized as "the one-best-system" in a seminal book of the same title by David Tyack (1974). Other authors refer to the "factory model of education," because of the influence that mass-production models of industrial management have had on schooling (Callahan, 1962).[4]

For all their similarity to other schools, rural schools have nonetheless faced considerable impediments as they have attempted to match the industrial model that first took hold in emerging manufacturing cities like Lowell, Massachusetts, and Indianapolis, Indiana, early in the century. As late as 1950, for example, there were, in rural America, at least 30,000 public one-room schools still in existence (Dewalt, 1989).[5]

[4]The phrase "the one-best-system" originated with Frederick W. Taylor, whose methods of "scientific management" began to be applied by school administrators to school management in the second decade of the present century, following the phenomenal success of those methods in improving manufacturing output. Callahan (1962) suggests that the scientific basis for such an adaptation was, in reality, totally lacking.

[5]Half the state departments of education, according to Dewalt (1989), did not even gather data on the number of one-room schools within their jurisdictions. For this reason, 30,000 is probably a low estimate of the number of one-room schools still in existence in 1950.

The years 1950-1970 have been referred to as the "era of the Big Push" for consolidation and reorganization by some observers (e.g., Stephens, 1991). Many small schools and districts and virtually all remaining one-room schools were eliminated in this period. Rural schools and school districts began, finally, to look a lot more like urban and suburban schools. So the similarity of rural and urban schools is a recent, and incompletely realized, phenomenon. In particular, school size is a troublesome issue, as our subsequent testimony will show.

School finance. Then and now, however, rural schools have existed on a much smaller tax base than urban schools, though in many central cities the tax base has also declined precipitously in the years since 1950 (Honeyman, Thompson, & Wood, 1989), producing equally great stresses on those urban systems. In comparison to income, rural areas typically tax themselves for the support of education at higher rates than suburban and urban areas (Tompkins, 1977; Stephens, 1991). Even so, they cannot match the per-pupil spending that materializes elsewhere (Dubin, 1990). Sparse population and comparatively great distances from rural homes to consolidated schools mean greater proportions of less overall revenue must be devoted to transportation. In addition, collaboration with other human service agencies is made physically and economically more difficult by distance and sparsity (Stephens, 1991).

The expectation for rural schools has been that they will resemble the urban model, and some observers believe that expectation has been compounded by the recent educational reform movement (Brizius, Foster, & Patton, 1988; Stephens, 1991). Although their funding has not increased, rural schools are

now expected to meet even "higher standards" of accountability than in the past (Stephens, 1991).

New technologies (e.g., interactive distance learning, computer-assisted instruction) offer a hope that meeting such standards may be economically feasible. But it is, as yet, only a hope. Hard data that evaluate the reality are not yet available; nonetheless, rural schools are increasingly becoming consumers of distance learning services because the promise seems so great and alternatives are so few.

Student outcomes. In general, it seems that rural schools probably do a credible job of nurturing student achievement--at least in comparison to national averages. The varying definition of "rural" among most studies, however, make comparisons between studies very difficult.

On average, rural students seem to do better than urban students and less well than suburban students. If, however, urban and suburban categories are combined to produce the common metro-versus-nonmetro dichotomy, nonmetro student performance is slightly below the metro average. Poor minority students, wherever they live, face the greatest impediments to realizing high levels of academic achievement (e.g., Hodgkinson, 1990).

Rural and urban comparison of other outcome measures is not so encouraging. For example, the college-going rate at high schools attended by nonmetro students is about 38 percent, compared to the metro rate of about 46 percent (data analysis by AEL staff). Part of this difference may lie in the types of courses taken by rural as compared to urban students, with metro students more likely to take an academic or college preparatory program

(Pollard & O'Hare, 1990).[6] We also infer from such statistics that rural students, on average, have lower occupational aspirations than urban students. Higher education is, moreover, less physically accessible to rural students (Stephens, 1991).

If subsequent employment is considered to be an outcome of schooling (it is by many observers), then the significance of the condition of the rural economy must figure in any discussion. Rural areas offer comparatively few professional opportunities. In fact, the metro-versus-nonmetro poverty gap is greatest among people with the most education and least among high school dropouts (O'Hare, 1989; Shapiro, 1989).

This situation is itself an incentive for the better educated to leave rural areas; and, in fact, outmigration from rural areas has historically been led by the better educated (Reid, 1990). Perhaps this situation also contributes to the fact that the occupational aspirations of rural students (e.g., as reflected in the percentages of rural students enrolled in college preparatory curricula) are not so high as those of urban students.

School Size, Disadvantaged Students, and Cost "Efficiency"

Despite the great push to make rural schools larger, natural limits of population sparsity, distance, and terrain mean that rural schools can never be so large as urban schools. For example, nonmetro high schools are, on average, about half the size of metro high schools (about 1600 versus 800 students; data analysis by AEL staff).

[6]The AEL analysis and that of Pollard and O'Hare (1990) use the same definition of urban and rural, so that comparisons are possible.

Variation among particular regions, states, and local school districts can be dramatic, however. Some rural K-12 districts in the West and Midwest are a fraction of the size of the average nonmetro high school. One study reported that about 26 percent of the 15,600 public school districts in the U.S. enrolled 300 or fewer students in the early 1980s. Of these, about one-third were K-12 or 1-12 districts. At the same time, 14 states (all in the South and Northeast) had no such small districts (Barker, Huse, & Smith, 1985).

Disadvantaged students. School size is a potentially powerful factor in explaining why some poor schools are able to produce good achievement results among impoverished students. A 1988 California study comparing rural and urban schools suggests that community socioeconomic status (SES) influences the effect that school size has on student achievement (Friedkin & Necochea, 1988). Small size is related to comparatively high achievement in poor communities, whereas large size is related to high achievement in affluent communities.

That is, school size may produce different results depending on the characteristics of the community or students served by the school. Similar studies need to be done to substantiate the findings of the California study.

On the other hand, a well-established finding about small schools is that the participation rate in extracurricular activities is greater than in large schools. The reason is simple: Because there are fewer students, they tend to fill more of the available roles (Barker & Gump, 1964). Involvement in extracurricular activities--while not directly related to improved student achievement--may help keep students who would otherwise drop out of school

involved in the culture of the school and, thereby, improve their school completion rate.[7]

Cost efficiency. The phenomenon of "economy of scale" most certainly applies to manufacturing, and the factory model of education maintains that unit costs (i.e., costs per student) decline as school size rises. Very few studies, however, have compared the cost savings that are supposed to accompany consolidation (Valencia, 1984). At the high school level, we do know that no more than 12 percent of students take the additional course offerings that larger size makes possible (Monk & Haller, 1986). Some observers (e.g., Haller & Monk, 1988) argue that too great an emphasis on creating large units in order to achieve a hypothetical cost efficiency may be counterproductive in rural schools.

The Predicament of Rural At-Risk Students and Mechanisms for Addressing the Relevant Issues

Rural America is not the peaceable agricultural district of popular myth. In recent decades, economic dislocation and growing poverty have negatively affected the quality of rural life, which was never, on average, affluent. Moreover, expectations that schools everywhere will resemble one another are not workable, however well-intentioned.

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[7]According to the National Center for Education Statistics, rural dropout rates are lower than central city dropout rates, but higher than suburban rates. Rural and suburban dropout rates for African Americans are identical (and much lower than central city rates). Among Hispanics, however, dropout rates are lowest in rural areas and highest in suburban areas (Kaufman & Frase, 1990). Hispanic dropout rates, on average, are higher than either white or African-American rates. Among the three groups in each of these three contexts, however, the highest dropout rate is for African-American students in central cities.

Like other places, risk in rural America is a feature of life. But the context of life in rural areas differs from the context of urban life. Programs to serve at-risk students must take that fact of life into better account than they have in the past.

As AEL sees it, the issues relevant to risk among rural students depend, in very broad terms, on the following conditions that characterize the rural context:

- o the diversity of rural populations in general, and of rural students in particular;
- o the limited economic prospects of rural America;
- o the extent of poverty in rural America;
- o unworkable expectations projected on rural schools; and
- o the interaction of these conditions.

The Importance of Context

These conditions shape the kind and degree of risks faced by rural students in ways that differ substantially from the kind and degree of risks faced by urban students. For example, American Indian students on different reservations, or in urban settings, encounter different sorts of risks depending on local conditions. African-American students living in persistent poverty counties are subject to risks that probably vary in kind and degree from similar students in mining-dependent counties. Early parenthood and adolescent sexual behavior may mean different things and evoke different responses in urban and rural contexts (and in different rural contexts).

Nonetheless, the traditional approach to the predicament of risk has been to assume that rural and urban educational issues are amenable to the

some solutions. Such an approach is central to the "efficiency" of the factory model ("the one best system") of mass education originally developed in, and disseminated to the hinterlands from, urban areas. In fact, we argue that many different approaches are required for diverse urban and rural contexts.

Traditional approaches. The United States does have a history of admirable effort to meet the needs of at-risk students. Much of this history, of course, begins with such programs as Head Start and Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. Other notable efforts include the implementation of the Title VII Bilingual Education Act in 1968 and the passage of the Education of All Handicapped Children Act of (Public Law 94-142) in 1975. Throughout our recent history, these efforts--and many more "categorical" programs that target services to particular categories of students--have been developed to provide a wide range of services. These efforts have produced impressive results, which often, as in the case of P.L. 94-142 and Head Start, have included large numbers of students not previously served at all by American schools.

Such efforts may well have contributed to the perception that all children can learn, no matter how different they may be from the phantom "average" child. As most thoughtful people agree, such a view is an essential underpinning to an effective system of mass education. Much, however, remains to be done before our actions can come widely into line with this perception.

What has been learned from the array of categorical programs is a general lesson that needs to be better integrated into the design and operation of local classrooms, schools, and districts--the places where

education must make a difference in the lives of disadvantaged, impoverished, or handicapped children; the only places where it can make such a difference. The lesson is simply this: If all children are to learn, schools need to use a variety of approaches tailored to the specific needs of their students. No one program, no one instructional method, no one model of schooling can ever serve all students well.

In fact, no single array of services is appropriate for every school population. Cultures, communities, families, and individual students differ. Risk originates within that context, and overcoming risk depends on understanding and working within the integrity of that context. In different places, different students come to learning with vastly differing experiences and assumptions about the world. Education that fails to accommodate those differences fails to help all students learn. Strategies, techniques, and tools developed in one context do not necessarily have merit for application in other contexts.

The Crisis of Growing Risk: Implications for Programs

The services provided by Chapter 1, by P.L. 94-142, by Head Start, by the Title VII Bilingual Education Act, and by the other categorical programs are essential to millions of at-risk students. Without these programs, the current crisis of risk would be much worse.

The existing approach has difficulties, however. One difficulty is that these programs cannot keep up with growing needs. As Pallas (1991) notes, the population of students at risk has grown in recent decades and is projected to keep on growing. These risks must be overcome in order to secure the

foundations of the good life--however we may differently interpret that objective--in the United States.

Another major difficulty is coordination among categorical programs, each of which is governed by unique regulations and administrative entities. The result is that services become fragmented.

This fragmentation of services places local administrators, teachers, and parents in a difficult position. To access appropriate services for students, they must negotiate a labyrinth of regulations and turf boundaries. Negotiating that labyrinth successfully requires extraordinary knowledge and resourcefulness, requirements that most parents of at-risk children, for example, cannot hope to meet. In the process, critical needs go unmet. The challenge can be especially great in small, rural, poor schools. In these schools the incidence of students in some categories may be very low.

Continuing simply to proliferate services along existing lines is unlikely to meet the crisis of growing risk. Such an approach would add new categorical programs that addressed the needs, for example, of rural African-American students or that targeted educational institutions in persistent poverty counties in nonmetro areas. But it would not address the related issues of fragmentation and coordination, which are major impediments to effective service in rural areas (Stephens, 1991). If these difficulties are not overcome, we argue, efforts to address the full range of predicaments in which rural at-risk students live will not develop. We need a qualitatively different approach to serving rural at-risk students.

The Rationale for a New Approach

Categorical programs are founded on the assumption that "child benefits" are the goal. The model's point of departure is that the individual is the essential social unit. To deal with the differences among individuals, categories of individuals are defined, and services are directed only to those individuals who qualify. As a result, definitions and identification procedures become a major point of contention.

The term "at-risk," by contrast, cuts across all such categories. It emphasizes the notion that disadvantaged, impoverished, or handicapped students share certain commonalities (risks in life). A more important idea, however, is that effective services to this disparate group should result in substantial benefits to society--to families, communities, states, and the nation as a whole--and not simply to the individual.

Benefits to individuals are important, but the notion seems to imply the view that benefits to at-risk students should produce a total effect that is greater than the sum of its parts. The categorical model of educating disadvantaged and impoverished students tends to fragment the social unit in the name of targeting services to categories of individuals. The categorical approach yields a social whole that is less than the sum of its parts.[6]

Education desperately needs a restored view of the whole community of which we intend at-risk students to be an integral part. This approach should supplement, rather than supplant, current categorical efforts. For this view to take effect, a new approach to providing services to at-risk students is

[6]There is no question, however, that services must continue to be matched to the varieties of student need. Existing categorical programs can be an essential part of future efforts.

needed. AEL supports the concept of the National Institute for the Education of At-Risk Students as a workable means to this end.

The National Institute for the Education of At-Risk Students: A Workable New Approach

The scope of work apparently planned for the proposed National Institute for the Education of At-Risk Students reflects the elements of the new approach needed to create a far more productive school experience for at-risk students. For one thing, the Institute idea promises to match funding to need, a principle identified by several observers as a fiscal mechanism of choice (e.g., Jordan, 1991; Taylor & Piche, 1991). By focusing on rural, urban, and bilingual students, it will help those who work with it to cross the boundaries that separate students from the contexts that give their lives meaning. More generally, the Institute has the potential to restore a view of the whole without which we believe it will be impossible to meet the crisis of growing risk head-on.

It is apparent that the design of the Institute will recognize that the crisis of growing risk constitutes a national emergency. According to Forbis Jordan (1991, p. 11), "Immediate action to provide funding for at-risk programs is imperative because the social and economic cost of delay is too great" (original emphasis).

Critical Features of the Institute

The focus of its efforts rightly targets development of responsive ways to make the school experience a good one for diverse populations of at-risk students. Features of the Institute will bring additional resources, never

before an important part of such efforts, to bear on the predicament of at-risk students. This point is critical. These features include long-term research, development, dissemination, and evaluation efforts. The proposed Institute must provide (1) a range of effective programs that addresses diverse local contexts and (2) time and resources to develop and implement strategies of proven merit within those contexts.

Moreover, plans for the Institute must recognize that stable effort toward such ends necessarily relies on the protection of a responsible, non-partisan, professional agenda. If the best minds are to set to work in a long-term effort to address the crisis of growing risk, they must be insulated from the possible disorderly influence of partisan politics. This protection, however, does not deny the need for accountability. Through its Board, the Institute should be able to ensure effective allegiance to the educational well-being of at-risk students.

Building the Capacity for Steady Work

The development of institutional capacity for this mission takes time and "critical mass." Although opportunities to begin this mission abound in rural areas, much needs to be done to nurture a growing competence to address the complex issues involved.

First, we infer that the Institute will engage in research and development efforts of its own, in addition to providing leadership to its grantees. A long-term commitment is needed to develop the Institute's own capacity. Given adequate resources and leadership, this capacity can become operational rather quickly. Once operational, however, sustaining, developing, and renewing that capacity requires steady work, because the

predicament of risk will not disappear under the influence of any particular "solution."

Second, maintaining the Institute's own capacity to conduct appropriate research and development is prerequisite to building similar capacity among its grantees. Building such capacity among grantees unaccustomed to the sort of assistance envisaged for them will doubtless require special attention. The plan for a panel to develop procedures and guidelines for evaluating promising practices to be the subject of further development, evaluation, and dissemination makes a great deal of sense to AEL staff. Good development is steady work in its own right.

A variety of institutions already exists that could be used--because of their locations and their knowledge of local context--to help respond to the need to develop further such projects as those illustrated above. Programs to help existing institutions and organizations engage in the development and testing of responsive strategies to serve rural at-risk students can and should be coordinated by the proposed Institute. These entities might well include, for example, the 24 American Indian Tribal Colleges, the approximately 140 Historically Black Colleges and Universities, the 10 Regional Educational Laboratories, various state-level rural education centers and associations, the Hispanic and American Indian caucuses of the National Educational Association, and many, many others.

Moreover, we believe the plan to actively recruit researchers and developers whose backgrounds match those of the target populations is sound. This plan is a key element, in our view, that safeguards the responsiveness of projects to existing needs.

Illustrative Opportunities in Rural Areas

The responsiveness envisaged in the design of the Institute, we believe, can take advantage of existing opportunities in rural areas with high proportions of at-risk students. We want to highlight a few such opportunities, principally by way of example.

The five programs described below represent just a few of the promising practices known to AEL staff. Each may be in need of further development, adaptation, and evaluation by which they might prove their merit, but AEL staff believe they are worthy now of such additional efforts to refine and demonstrate them, as well as to expand their influence. These programs simply illustrate the sort of development that could make better the school experience of at-risk rural students.

FIRST EXAMPLE

Rural characteristic: narrow economic base, outmigration

Associated Risk: alienation from school culture, early school leaving

Program: North Carolina REAL Enterprises

This project, funded by the Ford Foundation, is the brainchild of Jonathan Sher, an incisive student of rural education. REAL Enterprises operates in schools to teach students how to plan, develop, operate, and maintain local businesses.

Potential contributions:

Successful ventures could help students become important parts of their communities; establish their own competence in their own and others' eyes; expand the economic base of the local community; and retain in school students who might otherwise leave.

SECOND EXAMPLE

Rural characteristic: isolation

Associated risk: lack of resources

Program: Southern Virginia Library Consortium

The Consortium is a project of the Longwood Community College in Farmville, Virginia. AEL staff are collaborating with the Consortium members--12 rural school districts serving a high percentage of African-American students--to provide college library resources to students and faculty. Resources include access to the ERIC database.

Potential contributions:

Such consortia might significantly augment access of faculty and students to the full range of resources available in large libraries. In small, poor, rural districts this would mean that teachers could assign library research to students with the assurance that students would actually find relevant books, articles, and other materials. This is a major problem in small high schools throughout rural America.

THIRD EXAMPLE

Rural characteristic: poverty, low college-going rate

Associated risk: low aspirations

Program: West Virginia Scholars' Academy

The Academy is a project of the Woodlands Institute in a very rural, remote section of West Virginia. Each summer for more than 10 years, the Academy, working in concert with local schools, serves about 75 able students. The objective is to show students how they can apply to and succeed in elite colleges.

Potential contributions:

The program often serves able, but impoverished, students. It gives students the confidence and knowledge to examine their options realistically. In this case "realism" involves helping students realize that they are entitled to high aspirations. The methods of the Academy may have the potential for adaptation to other populations and age groups.

FOURTH EXAMPLE

Rural characteristic: poverty, isolation

Associated risk: early school failure

Program: Home-Oriented Preschool Education (HOPE)

The HOPE project delivered preschool services to poor and isolated Appalachian families, but simultaneously tested four alternative strategies for delivering those services. The program still operates in at least one Educational Cooperative in the four-state AEL Region.

Potential contributions:

We believe HOPE illustrates the sort of R&D effort needed to establish the merit of programs that respond to particular rural needs. Funding for HOPE was discontinued in the early 1970s, but with its own resources, AEL continued a longitudinal study of children who took part in the field test. This study documented long-term benefits. The original project also determined which of the delivery strategies was most effective.

FIFTH EXAMPLE

Rural characteristic: high dropout rate

Associated risk: failure to complete high school

Program: Rockingham County, Virginia, Dropout Prevention Effort

Early school leavers found ready employment in a local firm in Rockingham County, Virginia. School people resented the firm for drawing students away from school. Not until Eastern Mennonite College--working through an AEL program--helped bring the school and business people together, however, was it possible to work out a solution. Now students without diplomas (with rare exceptions) are not hired; and employees without diplomas go to school on company time.

Potential contributions:

More than anything, this example illustrates the need for sensitivity to local contexts. But it is also suggestive of the productive role that can be played by faculty from local colleges. Models for effective leadership of this sort of collaboration, however, are desperately needed.

The point of these examples is to illustrate that a basis for further development along lines intended for the Institute already exists in rural schools. The examples suggest that rural schools are active arenas of change, not stagnant places that "progress" has bypassed. They need and deserve more considered support for efforts already underway, and staff at these schools would welcome the opportunity to participate in such initiatives as the Institute might launch.

The example of the HOPE program also illustrates the disappointing fate of many similar programs. In spite of apparently good results in the original implementations, institutionalization is elusive. Funding disappears, the major actors move on to other funded work, and more general, sustained benefits to at-risk students are seldom realized. Programs, as well as students, are currently at risk under the present approach to serving at-risk students.

Although the programs listed above come mostly from the four-state Region in which AEL works, similar examples can be found across the nation. AEL, working collaboratively with ERIC/CRESS, for example, is extending the Southern Virginia Library Consortium model into schools serving American Indians and Alaska Natives. Such efforts, however, cannot be systematic without the sort of long-term commitment the Institute would provide.

In recent years the Regional Educational Laboratories have demonstrated their willingness and ability to identify promising practices in rural schools, especially those serving at-risk students. Directed by the U.S. Department of Education to collect such practices, the Laboratories completed work on this task during the period 1987-1990. Many hundreds of practices

were gathered across all Laboratory regions, and the reports that list these practices have been included in the ERIC database.

Of course, these publications list "promising" practices in existence at the time the schools implementing them were contacted. Our impression is that these promising practices vary dramatically in quality, and most have not been rigorously evaluated for their potential to serve the disparate rural at-risk population. Some have probably ceased to exist since the time since they were originally described. Others have doubtless come into existence. The point, nonetheless, is that many such promising practices exist as places to begin work sponsored by the proposed Institute.

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Chairman OWENS. Thank you.

Dr. Rendon.

Dr. RENDON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My name is Laura Rendon, and I'm pleased to know that you are considering supporting an Institute for the Education of At-Risk Students. In many ways, I wish that you were considering an institute for the improvement of at-risk institutions, for I believe that the problems associated with high school drop-out rates and poor academic achievement are inherent more in school and college systems that in the students themselves.

In my work with the Quality Education for Minorities project, funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, I became convinced that the problems associated with at-risk students had to do more with teacher attitudes and behaviors, school management policies, a watered-down curriculum, low expectations, poor funding, and inadequate counseling and advisement than they had to do with students coming from poverty backgrounds.

Today I will focus on three points. First, I will discuss a broader definition of students the Institute should address. Second, I will elaborate on the problems associated with research on at-risk students. And third, I will discuss the scope of the research program for the proposed Institute.

First, who are the at-risk students who should be studied? There has been a tendency for federally-sponsored research to concentrate on students enrolled in the K-12 system who come from low socio-economic backgrounds, who are African-American, and who come from non-English speaking backgrounds, particularly in the area of bilingual education.

I argue that these are not the only students who are at-risk. Unfortunately, large numbers of students graduate from high school woefully unprepared to enroll in college or to enter the work force. For these students, the only opportunity to develop job skills, improve their basic skills, or initiate a four-year program of study is found in their local community college.

In essence, community colleges have become the collegiate institutions which bear the burden of educating students who have been malserved by the public school system. Community colleges are also the institutions that enroll differential numbers of students of color. In 1988, 56 percent of all Hispanic college students were enrolled at community colleges, as were 54 percent of all American Indian students, 40 percent of all Asian college students, and 42 percent of African-American college students.

Unfortunately, it is becoming increasingly difficult for community colleges to make up, in 2 years, what the school system failed to do in 12. There have been many successes for at-risk students in community colleges, but there have also been many failures such as high drop-out rates and low transfer rates from community colleges to four-year colleges and universities.

For at-risk students, the problem of underachievement does not stop at the end of high school. Students who enroll in community colleges often have their hopes and dreams of a college education to prepare for a job or to initiate a program of study leading to a bachelor's degree shattered due in large part to the perpetuation of a deviant institutional system.

Quite simply, even many college faculty believe that students from poverty backgrounds, immigrant students, bilingual students, and students of color are incapable of learning. Consequently, they set low expectations. They do little to involve students in higher-order thinking skills. The employ multiple-choice tests, as opposed to essays. They resist advising and working closely with students who need the most help.

Although there are encouraging signs of change and progress, for the most part colleges do little in the way of working with feeder school systems of their communities to improve education. In essence, what we have now are three disparate systems, the K-12 system, community colleges, and four-year colleges and universities, often working in isolation from each other. In consequence, at each step of this educational pathway, it is those students who need education the most that get the least of the best that education has to offer.

I propose that the Institute For At-Risk Students expand its research agenda beyond students in the K-12 system so that we can learn more about the educational experience of at-risk students in higher education, especially in the two-year college sector where they are. most represented. To ignore these student is to have a short-sighted vision of the power of education in terms of what it can do to create a new future for students who have been underserved by our present educational system.

Second, what are the problems associated with research on at-risk students? Despite the multitude of reports and voluminous newspaper and magazine articles written about at-risk students, the sad fact is that, to date, we have little empirical evidence about what works for these students, how to change faculty attitudes and practices, and how to build a school and college management system where all players are interested in the same goal: making education work for all students.

Much of the research available is anecdotal, not theory-based and even poorly conceived and conducted. For instance, research that is based on assumptions that students alone are to blame for their problems often conclude that students, not institutions, must change. Thus, we hear conclusions such as students must be ready for school, not that schools must be ready for students.

This research tends to validate assumptions that at-risk students must not want to learn, and that only the "best and brightest" deserve to get an education. This raises a larger issue I posed earlier. It is not only students but institutions that must be studied. And we must ensure that research does not overlook the strengths of these students and that the research framework used to study these students is not based on a deficit model which focuses only on student needs and deficiencies.

Yet another problem is that research findings tend to be shared with and disseminated to other researchers or individuals far removed from the classroom environment. Practitioners such as school teachers, counselors, and principals, as well as community college faculty and counselors, remain untouched by research findings published in scholarly journals. Moreover, these practitioners are rarely helped by researchers to do anything about solving their problems.

Just recently, I called an administrator at a community college to see if I could use the college in my research. The first questions she asked were: "What is going to happen after you conduct your research? Will you help us to write a grant to address the problems you discover?" I'll have to admit that I had not given much thought to these issues, but I submit that it is time that all researchers involved in studying at-risk student populations consider it their duty to work closely with institutions to use research to improve practice and policy. Unfortunately, most researchers neither have the expertise nor the funds to expand their work to help build communities and work effectively with practitioners.

Third, what should be the scope of the research program for the Institute for the Education of At-Risk Students? While I support the basic concepts outlined in the proposal to develop the Institute, I add the following:

First, the Institute should work closely with African-American, Mexican-American, Puerto Rican, Alaska Native, American Indian, and Asian-American scholars to outline the Institutes's research agenda. Scholars who are closest to the issues, who know and understand the culture and experiences of at-risk students, and who are familiar with the limitations of past research, should be supported by the Institute.

Second, the Institute's dissemination efforts should ensure that research findings are distributed to those who need it most: classroom teachers, school principals, parents, and other practitioners such as community college faculty and administrators.

Third, the Institute's research program should be broad enough that scholars interested in examining the academic progress of at-risk student can look beyond elementary, junior high, and high schools. These scholars should also be able to examine how at-risk students are faring at collegiate institutions that tend to enroll them, such as community colleges and preparatory schools.

Fourth, the Institute should collaborate its research efforts with Historically Black Institutions, as well as with the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities and tribally-controlled institutions.

Fifth, the Institute should receive long-term funding to allow for continuous, sustained research that builds on previous knowledge production.

And sixth, the Institute should include a focus on training researchers to work with communities and practitioners to assist them in designing programs and activities based on research findings.

The issues I have outlined above I believe can be addressed by a nonpartisan research agenda. In the end, the Institutes's work should provide evidence that disputes the myth that the situation is hopeless. The scant information that we have does tell us that students can be taught to learn, that carefully managed schools can make a difference for students, and that in the end, change for the better is possible.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my views on this important topic.

[The prepared statement of Laura Rendon follows:]

TESTIMONY

Proposal to Establish an Institute for the Education of At-Risk Students

April 25, 1991

Laura I. Rendón, Ph.D.
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I am pleased to know that you are considering supporting an Institute for the Education of At-Risk Students. In many ways I wish you were considering an institute for the improvement of at-risk institutions, for I believe that the problems associated with high school dropout rates and poor academic achievement are inherent more in school and college systems than in the students themselves. In my work with the Quality Education for Minorities (QEM) project funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, I became convinced that the problems associated with at-risk students had to do more with teacher attitudes and behaviors, school management policies, a watered-down curriculum, low expectations, poor funding and inadequate counseling and advisement than they had to do with students coming from poverty backgrounds.

Today, I will focus on three points:
First, I will discuss a broader definition of students the Institute should address.
Second, I will elaborate on the problems associated with research on at-risk students.
Third, I will discuss the scope of the research program for the proposed Institute.

1. Who are the at-risk students who should be studied?

There has been a tendency for federally-sponsored research to concentrate on students enrolled in the K-12 system who come from low socio-economic backgrounds, who are

African American and who come from non-English speaking backgrounds, particularly in the area of bilingual education. I argue that these are not the only students who are at-risk. Unfortunately, large numbers of students graduate from high school woefully unprepared to enroll in college or to enter the workforce. For these students, the only opportunity to develop job skills, improve their basic skills or initiate a four-year program of study is found in their local community college. In essence, community colleges have become the collegiate institutions which bear the burden of educating students who have been malserved by the public school system. Community colleges are also the institutions that enroll differential numbers of students of color. In 1988 56 percent of all Hispanic college students were enrolled at community colleges, as were 54 percent of all American Indian college students, 40 percent of all Asian college students and 42 percent of all African American college students. Unfortunately, it is becoming increasingly difficult for community colleges to make up in two years what the school system failed to do in 12. There have been many successes for at-risk students in community colleges, but there have also been many failures like high dropout rates and low transfer rates from community colleges to four-year colleges and universities. For at-risk students the problem of underachievement does not stop at the end of high school. Students who enroll in community colleges often have their hopes and dreams of a college education to prepare for a job or to initiate a program of study leading to a bachelor's degree shattered due in large part to the perpetuation of a deviant institutional system. Quite simply, even many college faculty believe that students from poverty backgrounds, immigrant students, bilingual students and students of color are incapable of learning. Consequently, they set low expectations. They do little to involve students in higher-order thinking skills. They employ multiple-choice tests, as opposed to essays. They resist advising and working closely with students who need the most help. Although there are encouraging signs of change and progress, for the most part colleges do little in the way of working with feeder

school systems or their communities to improve education. In essence, what we have now are three disparate systems, the K-12 system, community colleges, and four-year colleges and universities often working in isolation from each other. In consequence, at each step of this educational pathway, it is those students who need education the most that get the least of best education has to offer. I propose that the Institute for at-risk students expand its research agenda beyond students in the K-12 system so that we can learn more about the educational experience of at-risk students in higher education, especially in the two-year college sector, where they are most represented. To ignore these students is to have a short-sighted vision of the power of education in terms of what it can do to create a new future for students who have been underserved by our present educational system.

2. What are the problems associated with research on at-risk students?

Despite the multitude of reports and voluminous newspaper and magazine articles written about at-risk students, the sad fact is that to date we have little empirical evidence about what works for these students, how to change faculty attitudes and practices, how to build a school and college management system where all players are invested in the same goal: making education work for all students. Much of the research available is anecdotal, not theory based and even poorly conceived and conducted. For instance, research that is based on assumptions that students alone are to blame for their problems often conclude that students, not institutions, must change. Thus, we hear conclusions such as students must be ready for school, not that schools must be ready for students. This research tends to validate assumptions that at-risk students must not want to learn, and that only the "best and the brightest" deserve to get an education. This raises a larger issue I posed earlier. It is not only students but institutions that must be studied. And we must ensure that research does not overlook the strengths of these students, and that the research

framework used to study these students is not based on a deficit model which focuses only on student needs and deficiencies.

Yet another problem is that research findings tend to be shared with and disseminated to other researchers or individuals far removed from the classroom environment. Practitioners such as school teachers, counselors and principals, as well as community college faculty and counselors remain untouched by research findings published in scholarly journals. Moreover, these practitioners are rarely helped by researchers to do anything about solving their problems. Just recently, I called an administrator at a community college to see if I could use the college in my research. The first questions she asked were: "What is going to happen after you conduct your research? Will you help us to write a grant to address the problems you discover?" I'll have to admit that I had not given much thought to these issues, but I submit that it is time that all researchers involved in studying at-risk student populations consider it their duty to work closely with institutions to use research to improve practice and policy. Unfortunately, most researchers neither have the expertise nor the funds to expand their work to help build communities and to work effectively with practitioners.

3. What should be the scope of the research program for the Institute for the Education of At-Risk Students?

While I support the basic concepts outlined in the proposal to develop the Institute, I add the following:

First, the Institute should work closely with African American, Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Alaska Native, American Indian and Asian American scholars to outline the Institute's research agenda. Scholars that are closest to the issues, who know and understand the culture and experiences of at-risk students, and who are familiar with the limitations of past research should be supported by the Institute.

Second, the Institute's dissemination efforts should ensure that research findings are distributed to those who need it most: classroom teachers, school principals, parents and other practitioners such as community college faculty and administrators.

Third, the Institute's research program should be broad enough that scholars interested in examining the academic progress of at-risk students can look beyond elementary, junior high, and high schools. These scholars should also be able to examine how at-risk students are faring at collegiate institutions that tend to enroll them such as community colleges and proprietary schools.

Fourth, the Institute should collaborate its research efforts with historically black institutions, as well as with the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities and tribaliy controlled institutions.

Fifth, the Institute should receive long-term funding to allow for continuous, sustained research that builds on previous knowledge production.

Sixth, the Institute should include a focus on training researchers to work with communities and practitioners to assist them in designing programs and activities based on research findings.

The issues I have outlined can be addressed by a non-partisan research agenda. In the end, the Institute's work should provide evidence that disputes the myth that the situation is hopeless, for the scant information that we have does tell us that students can be taught to learn, that carefully managed schools can make a difference for students and that in the end change for the better is possible.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my views on this important topic.

Chairman OWENS. Thank you.

Dr. McBay.

Dr. MCBAY. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the proposed Institute, and I would like to begin by saying that the Quality Education for Minorities Network strongly supports the creation of the Institute, as well as its proposed establishment as a stand-alone activity within OERI. We think that it's critical to the welfare of the country and to the families of the students that the Institute will be serving, that the needs of these disadvantaged students be addressed. As you know, the majority of those students are minority students who have historically been underserved by our system.

We think that, in addition, it's important that meeting the needs of these students be at the forefront of the country's educational reform efforts, and that the Federal Government maintain its historic role and obligation of ensuring that students from disadvantaged backgrounds have equal access to quality education through the programs and initiatives that the government proposes and supports.

We envision the Institute, as you do, funding others to conduct research, to evaluate existing education initiatives, to collect and disseminate information on successful strategies, and to establish demonstration programs. But we think that in addition, the Institute ought to have a public policy initiative to formulate recommendations for educational policies and practices at the national, State, and local levels based on the findings of the Institute-sponsored research and demonstration projects.

Further, we strongly encourage that there be a special and early focus on mathematics and science by the Institute, given the especially poor quality of education and training available to low-income and minority students in these fields. We urge, as well, that the initial focus of the Institute be on children and youth from low-income families residing in housing developments and other geographically well-defined, low-income communities, including rural areas.

We think that it is essential that minorities have a major role in every aspect of the Institute's activities as participants in the creation of a research agenda as principal investigators in the research that will be conducted, as project directors in the development and the implementation of strategies growing out of promising research findings, and as members of the proposed governing board. We think what is needed is the long-term involvement and commitment of knowledgeable individuals with experience in working with, and credibility within, minority communities from which the target groups disproportionately come.

As you know, we strongly encourage a change in name for the proposed Institute to eliminate the negative connotations and low expectations conveyed by the term "at-risk." We suggest, instead, a term that reflects the socio-economic conditions under which these students are forced to live.

The Network believes that the Institute ought to be guided by a vision of what it is trying to accomplish through its work, as well as a deep appreciation for the full range of issues that have to be addressed if that vision is to be achieved. In our written testimony,

we respectfully share our vision of what we think needs to be achieved. We provide a summary of some of the major current educational issues, and give some examples of potential demonstration projects that the Institute might support.

What I would like to do is just take two or three of these issues and cite them for you, rather than going through all the ones that are there. Let me first begin by talking about the need for the Institute to look at the whole practice of tracking.

As you know, what we have in place is a factory model system that tends to disproportionately place low-income and minority children into lower tracks where they are knowingly given less of everything that we know they need to be successful. At the same time, this system singles out more affluent students and calls them "gifted and talented," and these students are taught in an environment of trust and high expectations, and they have the very best teachers.

A second issue that should be considered is, as I suggested earlier, that the Institute focus on the special circumstances of children and youth in housing developments and low-income residential areas, including rural sites, in order to determine how to create a supportive environment in which these children would have access to the educational and social services, resources, and enrichment needed for success.

A third area is that the Institute ought to look at the implications of the National Education Goals for socio-economically disadvantaged students. So far, discussion of these goals is heavily weighted towards measuring student progress in achieving the goals. Very little is heard about ensuring that students from low-income families are not overlooked in the rush to meet standards.

A fourth area is that the Institute ought to look at the implications for students of establishing a national testing system of student achievement. Because, again, the focus thus far appears to be more on assessment models than on the quality of instruction and strategies for ensuring that youngsters from disadvantaged backgrounds aren't simply sorted, once again, only this time with a different battery of tests.

Parental choice is an issue that is already under discussion in Congress. The Administration's Choice proposal raises considerable concerns, not the least of which is the effect on students from low-income families. It is clear that without adequate knowledge and understanding of options and without low- or no-cost transportation, low-income and minority parents are less likely to take advantage of Choice, leaving their children in lower quality schools.

Our conjecture is that the competition for schools of choice is going to be among middle-income families. Furthermore, we have already had experience with freedom of choice plans of the past, and they led to the court-ordered desegregation because Choice plans were used to avoid school integration.

An area that is very critical for the Institute to consider is that of special education. And that's because of the disproportionate number of low-income and minority children, particularly black and Hispanic males, who are placed in special education classes. As you know, there is already under consideration an expansion of the definition of who is eligible for services provided through a Special

Education Act, and that will just simply be one more way of labeling these children negatively.

School finance is still another area for the Institute to explore, because schools of large low-income and minority populations have traditionally suffered inequities in financial support.

Let me conclude by listing three or four potential demonstration projects, just by way of example. We think that any project that is sponsored by the Institute ought to be based on the premise that every child can learn. These projects ought to have the potential to lead to increased academic achievement for all students, but, particularly, for those from low-income backgrounds.

Very quickly, three or four examples: Our first, a network of summer residential science academies that would be on college campuses, for students in grades 7 through 12. This would take up the criticism that was noted in the background paper that most of what we know exists at the elementary school level.

A second example is a pilot network of year-around residential youth academies that might be on the closed military bases and closed school facilities. These year-around residential academies would target minority students and other low-income students who would be the first, for example, in their families to attend college. And it would serve youngsters who have not succeeded in achieving their full potential at school or at home.

There are Teacher Training Institutes that could be used as demonstration projects that would help to prepare more minorities to enter teaching careers.

And finally, we recommend a network of community service centers on predominately minority college and university campuses through which college students, faculty, and staff can provide enriching and reinforcing educational support to low-income minority children and youth in the local community.

With the establishment of the proposed Institute, the OERI has a new opportunity for enhancing the education of socio-economically disadvantaged students. At the same time as the country undertakes new efforts to meet national education goals, the Institute, in our view, would provide a living demonstration of the Federal Government's intention to mount a serious, highly-visible effort that would impact the students who are most underserved by our educational system.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Shirley McBay follows:]

TESTIMONY
OF
SHIRLEY M. MCBAY, PRESIDENT
QUALITY EDUCATION FOR MINORITIES NETWORK
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON SELECT EDUCATION OF THE
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
APRIL 25, 1991

Mr. Chairman, members of the Subcommittee on Select Education, my name is Shirley McBay. I am President of the Quality Education for Minorities Network, a non-profit organization in Washington, D.C. established in July 1990 and dedicated to improving education for minorities throughout the nation. The Network is a focal point for the implementation of strategies to help realize the vision and goals set forth in the report: **Education That Works: An Action Plan For The Education Of Minorities.** The report was issued in January 1990 by the MIT-based Quality Education for Minorities Project, following more than two years of travel around the country, exploring effective programs and strategies to improve the education of minority children, youth, and adults.

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the proposed Institute for the Education of "At-Risk" Students, under consideration by this Subcommittee. The QEM Network strongly supports the creation of the Institute as well as its proposed establishment as a stand-alone activity within the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI). It is critical to the welfare of the country and to the families of these students that there be serious and focused efforts to identify and develop long-term strategies to address the needs of these students, the majority of whom are minority children who have been historically and disproportionately underserved by our educational system. Further, it is important that meeting their educational needs be at the forefront of the country's educational reform efforts and attention, and that the federal government maintain its historic role and obligation of ensuring that students from disadvantaged backgrounds have equal access to quality education through the programs and initiatives it proposes and supports.

To ensure the Institute's effectiveness as well as its ability to respond in a timely manner to the crisis the country faces in the education of these students, it will be important for the Institute to use existing research and

development capabilities within institutions and organizations experienced in, and committed to, the education of minorities. This would avoid the delay and expense of having to create a federal research and development infrastructure within the Institute. We, therefore, endorse fully the participation of Historically Black Colleges and Universities and of Predominantly Minority Institutions as well as other minority organizations as research grantees or contractors.

We envision the Institute funding others to: conduct research; evaluate existing education initiatives; collect and disseminate information on successful strategies; and establish demonstration programs to improve the education of students from low-income families.. The roles proposed suggest the need within the Institute for:

- an accessible, interactive communications network (to facilitate the sharing of information and experience among the proposed 50 initial sites)
- a research and evaluation unit (to set research priorities and to review project evaluation reports externally prepared)
- a community outreach/demonstration projects component
- a public policy initiative to formulate recommendations for educational policies and practices at the national, state, and local levels based upon the Institute's findings

Further, the Network strongly encourages a special and early focus on mathematics and science, given the especially poor quality of education and training available to low-income and minority students in these fields. We urge as well that the initial focus of the Institute be on children and youth from low-income families residing in housing developments and other geographically well-defined low-income communities, including rural areas.

As the Network's experience in the preparation of our report demonstrates, it is essential that minorities have a major role in every aspect of the Institute's activities: as participants in the creation of a research agenda; as principal investigators in the research that will be conducted; as project directors in the development and implementation of strategies growing out of promising research findings; and as members of the proposed governing Board. While the analogy with the National Science Board's (NSB) role in providing direction to the National Science Foundation is a good one, it is very important that the Institute's Board not be political appointees. The education of the students to be served through the Institute is too important to be guided by politics. It is time for the

country to meet its obligations to these students and their families and this will require the long-term involvement and commitment of knowledgeable individuals with experience in working with, and credibility within, minority communities from which the targeted student groups disproportionately come.

We strongly encourage a change in name for the proposed Institute to eliminate the negative connotations and low expectations conveyed by the term "at-risk". It is possible in the detailed description of the Institute and its mission and goal statements to characterize the group of students of primary concern to the Institute more fully by using acceptable socio-economic status descriptors.

The Network believes that the Institute ought to be guided by a vision of what it is trying to accomplish through its work as well as a deep appreciation for the full range of issues with which it must grapple if that vision is to be achieved. We respectfully share, for the Committee's consideration, the one envisioned in our work and a summary of some of the major, current educational issues with accompanying commentary. This paper concludes with examples of potential demonstration projects that the proposed Institute might support.

VISION

In the future, as in the past, low-income groups and families will have to look to the public schools to equip their children and youth with the knowledge and skills required for future success and security in meeting their family and citizenship responsibilities and to be productive in the workplace. The role of the public schools as equalizer and provider of equal educational opportunities is especially critical to the future well-being of minority children and youth from low-income families as workers, as family members, and as citizens.

The public school system we envision instills in its students an appreciation of such life long values as:

- Experiencing the pleasure of using one's mind to solve problems and come up with ideas.
- Knowing the self-satisfaction and pleasure in doing a project well.

- Appreciating and respecting one's own accomplishments as well as those of others.
- Appreciating the importance of the role of the family in one's life.
- Being willing to work with others toward a common objective.
- Having the self-confidence to make decisions based on one's own ideas and experiences.
- Respecting points of view that may be different from one's own.
- Accepting people different from oneself, and having interest in learning about their cultures.
- Taking responsibility for doing things that need to be done and doing them well, from beginning to end.
- Understanding that helping others is a responsibility and is its own reward.
- Being committed to honesty, truth, and self-discipline.
- Understanding that learning is a life-long process and the best way to have the most control over one's life.

In this vision, America turns once more with confidence to its public schools to develop, in partnership with parents and the local community, an understanding and appreciation in its students of democratic values, citizenship responsibilities, and the work ethic. It looks to its public schools to graduate students who are fully prepared to be successful in the workforce or college, and not in need of remedial education. The Institute envisioned in this legislation will help reform public schools so that they will be able to fulfill their mission for all students,

MAJOR EDUCATIONAL ISSUES AND COMMENTARY

1. Our factory model education system.

Central to successfully meeting the educational needs of students historically underserved by America's educational system is the dismantling of the factory model educational system now in place. The

overwhelming majority of the graduates of this system do not have the ability to solve complex problems, to analyze abstract knowledge, to communicate with precision, to deal with change and ambiguity, and to work well with other people, especially those from diverse cultures and backgrounds. These deficiencies are acutely found among the students of primary concern to the Institute and disproportionately among minority children and youth, especially Black and Hispanic males.

The existing system disproportionately places low-income and minority children into lower tracks where they are taught to memorize through drill and practice by the least experienced teachers, with the fewest resources and in a climate of low expectations. These students are treated as objects to be acted on rather than as active participants in their own learning. In short, we knowingly give these children less of everything they need to be successful.

The factory model system, in the meantime, treats their more affluent peers as gifted and talented. These children are taught in an environment of trust and high expectations by the very best teachers, not in most cases because of higher innate ability but, rather, because of pre-school and out-of-school enriching experiences that derive from their more privileged backgrounds. They feel special and their self-esteem is high for they have been singled out, along with a small group of peers with similar backgrounds, for an academically challenging and rewarding experience.

Our entire educational system must be restructured to eliminate the debilitating practice of tracking and to create an environment for success for all students. Such an environment would hold high expectations for all students and would respect and value the culture of every child in school. Such a system would create incentives that make the best teachers available for those who need them the most, would strengthen the bonds between schools and communities, would offer a rigorous academic curriculum, would provide access to social and cultural enrichment in and outside of school, and would help to revitalize the traditional faith within minority communities and families in the power of education to advance their children. The main characteristics of this environment include:

- a strong core curriculum
- competent and motivated teachers
- extensive parental/community involvement in schools
- use of effective and innovative teaching strategies

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- access to state of the art instructional technology
- year-round enrichment
- systematic assessment of student progress
- systematic exposure of students to career options
- a special emphasis on mathematics and science

2. Change at the local level where education takes place.

To produce the fundamental transformation of our educational system that is necessary, change must take place where education takes place: in schools and in communities across the country. While it is important for the proposed Institute to collect information on successful strategies and to influence policies and programs at the national level, it is also critical that Institute sponsored demonstration projects supported by local alliances and partnerships be conducted. Such a focus on the local level would enable the Institute and others acting on its behalf to:

- help persuade people in local communities that change is possible if individuals and groups are motivated to act, and if they work together to meet common goals and objectives;
- help state and local policymakers, teachers, parents, professionals, students, and others, develop a common vision of an educational system that values the full development of the potential of each child, upon which to base local goals and actions;
- help motivate people in local communities into individual and collective action to produce the local changes that are required; and
- help unite efforts in communities to produce change through a well thought out and systematic course of action that can draw on other resources throughout the country.

3. Special needs of low-income residential communities.

The Network also encourages a focus within the Institute on a long term effort to create a model approach for enhancing educational opportunities for socio-economically disadvantaged children and youth in housing developments and low-income residential areas, including rural sites. The purpose of the program would be to create a supportive environment in which all children and youth in these communities would have access to the educational and social services, resources, and enrichment needed to succeed in school, to go on to college or the world of work, and to become productive citizens. This could be achieved by focusing and coordinating

resources and support services of a number of public and private educational and social services agencies, institutions, and organizations in specific low-income residential communities; attracting untapped resources in the larger community; involving the entire residential community in the educational process; and designing a model that would provide a range of educational and social services residents may require. The proposed model is based upon one under discussion by the QEM Network, the Atlanta QEM Network Alliance, and Clark Atlanta University in which resources would be concentrated on two Atlanta housing projects.

4. National Goals for Education.

Much of the current national debate on education is tied to the national education goals adopted by the President and the Nation's Governors in 1989. The discussion around implementation of these goals is heavily weighted towards measuring student progress towards the goals. Very little is heard about ensuring that students from low-income families (who are disproportionately minority) are not overlooked in the rush to meet standards.

5. National Examination System.

Consideration currently is being given to establishing a national testing system of student achievement. One such discussion concerns a multicomponent examination (a written performance examination, student projects including group projects, and student portfolios). Thus far, the focus appears to be more on assessment models (and the ability to take the examination multiple times) than on quality of instruction and strategies for ensuring that youngsters from disadvantaged backgrounds aren't simply sorted once again, but with a different battery of tests. Even administered on a voluntary basis, a national test may join the other major "voluntary" examinations (SAT and ACT) which are voluntary, unless a student wants to go to college.

6. National Teaching Standards.

Legislation was recently approved by Congress to provide $5 million of federal funding for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. This board is developing "voluntary" assessments for elementary and secondary teachers. Although there is recognition of the critical need to increase the number of minority teachers in the classroom,the Institute would want to help ensure that National Board assessments do not represent yet another hurdle for minority teachers as many state-

administered pre-professional teaching examinations do now, thereby undermining minority teacher recruitment efforts which are critical to the education of students from low-income backgrounds.

7. Parental Choice.

Several issues will be considered by Congress in the area of elementary and secondary education. One issue that Congress will certainly be called upon to address is the current Administration's proposal for school Choice. In the past, Congress has rejected proposals to adopt a voucher plan enabling students to take government funds to a public or private school of their choosing. Now advocates of Choice are pointing to increasing support for such initiatives across the country as the basis for expecting that Congress will reconsider its position.

The Choice proposal is expected to raise considerable concerns, not the least of which will be the effect on minority youngsters. It is clear that without adequate knowledge and understanding of options, and without low or no-cost transportation, minority parents are less likely to take advantage of Choice, leaving their children in lower quality schools. Furthermore, we have experienced "Freedom of Choice" plans in the past. They led to court-ordered desegregation because they were being used to avoid school integration.

8. Special Education.

Another issue at the national level that should be considered by the Institute relates to efforts to expand the definition of students eligible for services under the Education for Individuals with Disabilities Act to include students with a condition known as "Attention Deficit Disorder". This condition is ascribed disproportionately to minority boys. Black and Hispanic male students are already disproportionately represented in special education classes, therefore, an expansion of the definition would represent yet one more way to enroll low-income and minority youngsters in special education.

9. School Finance.

Another area for the Institute to research is the area of school finance since many experts are now arguing that "a wide spectrum of school-finance initiatives and experiments will be undertaken in the coming decades, including extreme centralization and financial control at the state level on one end to privatization on the other, where states will finance

education through vouchers to parents (based on their choices of schools) rather than by directly financing schools." Because schools with large low-income and minority populations have traditionally suffered inequities in financial support, some of these possible 'solutions' could actually exacerbate existing barriers to improvement of education for students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

9. Other issues

The Institute might focus its research efforts to include the effects on the quality of education received by youth from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds of the following:

- ack of access to educational resources (computers and other technologies)
- educational decisions based on standardized testing results (since there is a known strong correlation between socio-economic status (SES) and student performance on these tests)
- preparation and distribution of teachers, especially minority teachers
- teacher/administrator attitudes towards minority students
- school financing and distribution of financial resources to schools with high concentrations of low SES students
- home/community environment and parental/community involvement in schools
- the extent to which the students targeted by the Institute participate in magnet school programs that are demonstrated to be effective in increasing student achievement

The outcomes of public policy and legislative discussions that the Institute should promote could clearly shape the nature and the quality of education available to students from low socio-economic backgrounds. During the next few years critical legislation will be passed with implications for the education of all students; such legislation must be monitored by the public policy arm of the Institute to ensure that it takes into account the needs of low-income and minority students. To assist in this regard, the Institute might, for example, conduct a legal issues in education seminar that would bring together legal scholars and educational leaders on a regular basis to raise awareness among participants, policymakers, and the general public of current public policy and legal issues and decisions that have implications for the quality of education received by socio-economically disadvantaged students.

POTENTIAL DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

It is important that demonstration projects sponsored by the Institute be based on the fundamental premise that every child can learn. They should have the potential to lead to increased academic achievement by socio-economically disadvantaged students, to their attainment of knowledge and skills necessary for success in college, in the workplace, and for life-long learning. Demonstration projects should be carried out as well that are designed to produce scientifically literate students who are sufficiently prepared in mathematics and science so as to have further study in scientifically based fields as realistic options.

A Network of Summer Residential Science Academies (SRSA) for students in grades 7-12, who would begin participation in Year One as 7th or 8th graders and participate each summer until graduation. The goal would be to ensure that the mathematics and science academic achievement of youth from disadvantaged backgrounds is at a level that will enable them, upon graduation from high school, to enter college fully prepared to be successful and not in need of remedial education and with increased knowledge of and exposure to science, mathematics, and/or engineering as careers in order to facilitate their making realistic decisions based on the full range of career options available. A network of academies (circa 40-50) is proposed in which each academy, in the steady state, would enroll 600 7th-12th graders and "graduate" 100 12th graders per year.

This network would provide the opportunity to monitor the extent to which this science-oriented experience develops student awareness of the work of scientists through such activities as:

- Intellectually challenging experiences which are not a part of the regular school curriculum;
- Experiences in laboratories and classrooms that broaden understanding of the subject matter through first-hand experience in the research process;
- Personal interaction with researchers by working side-by-side with students;
- Career guidance by scientists and educational counseling personnel; and
- Discussion of the philosophy and ethics of the science discipline of the project.

A pilot network of Residential Youth Academies (circa 5 - 7) that would:

- Target minority students from low-income families, especially youngsters who would be the first in their families to attend college; however, the academy will also be open to other students to ensure diversity.

- Serve youngsters who have not succeeded in achieving their full potential at school or at home.

The guiding principle of these academies is that all children can learn in an environment of high expectations that promotes confidence and high self-esteem and in which there is access to quality teaching and other important educational resources.

High potential minority male and female students with difficult home situations, students with limited English backgrounds, or students who would be the first in their families to attend college would be the primary target group, however, admissions would be open to all children. Local teachers and university faculty and students would be joined by counselors in staffing these summer academies.

Teacher Training Institutes. The necessity of encouraging more minorities to enter teaching careers is well documented. Minority teachers provide important role models for students and facilitate relationships among schools, homes, and the community. Economic and social trends have greatly reduced the number of new minority teachers while, simultaneously, demographic trends are predicting a significant increase in the number of minority students, especially in urban areas.

Projects would emphasize factors that would contribute to the entry and retention of minorities in MSE teaching careers, such as:

- Partnerships among school system(s) and college(s) with strong records of training minority students;

- Academic enrichment, mentoring, and counseling programs to enhance student's self confidence, interest, and desire to pursue a MSE teaching career;

- Strong institutional leadership and commitment to the program; and

- Offering experiences and opportunities for students to interact with dedicated mentors and role models.

Projects might include linkages or partnerships among school system(s) and college(s). Other organizations might participate as appropriate: community groups, federal laboratories, private foundations, professional societies, other nonprofit organizations, business, and industry.

A Network of Community Service Centers at approximately 25 predominantly minority colleges and universities. Through these centers, college and university students, faculty, and staff could be able to provide enriching and reinforcing educational support to low-income, minority children and youth in the local community who are in danger of falling behind their more affluent peers in school. In particular, the centers could provide a structured mechanism through which minority college students can respond to the call for public service and individual involvement being heard across the country.

A formal network of community service centers at minority institutions would facilitate the sharing of resources and successful project models with one another and would garner pride and prestige for the host institutions and their surrounding communities as well as the initial funding source. These centers could serve as models for other college campuses, minority and non-minority alike, that may be considering establishing public service centers.

The "Community Service Centers Model Project" would be a direct response to the lack of a formal vehicle on most college campuses, including predominantly minority ones, for students, faculty, and staff to help meet the educational and informational needs of local low-income, minority children and youth and their families.

CONCLUSION

The OERI has a new opportunity with the establishment of the proposed Institute for the education of socio-economically disadvantaged students, in particular, such an Institute would focus clearly on those who have the greatest need for improved educational opportunities and would provide a direct response to the urgent educational needs in low-income residential communities. At the same time as the Nation undertakes new efforts to meet national education goals, the Institute would provide a living demonstration of the federal government's intention to mount a serious, highly visible effort impacting those students most underserved by our educational system.

Chairman OWENS. Thank you.

Dr. Ruby Thompson.

Dr. THOMPSON. Thank you. And allow me to bring greetings from Dr. Thomas Cole, President of Clark Atlanta University.

I am delighted to have this opportunity to speak regarding this Institute. One, because I'm a faculty member at an HBI; the other, because I would have fallen into every category of at-risk that they had when I was growing up. As a matter of fact, one of the things that spurred my interest was my attendance at a recent national conference on at-risk learners.

The characteristics of these at-risk learners included: being poor, most of my classmates were poor; parents not educated, we could count the ones who had finished eighth grade; handicapped, I have a physical disability; we were all members of racial or ethnic minorities. We lived in single-parent homes. And I wondered, then, why we finished high school and went on to college.

And I thought, then, about the era of great expectations, because in the housing project where I lived, where we all grew up, there was a resounding voice of all of the parents, of all of the community members, "You will finish high school. You will be something." And this was articulated in the schools and in the churches and everywhere. And so, I wondered why this one factor seemed to have been powerful enough to offset all of these other conditions which placed us at risk.

The other concern that I had, as a result of my attendance at this conference, was that these conceptions—and we know that conceptions guide policy, guide practices, guide behaviors—these conceptions and perceptions of at-risk students as being poor, of an ethnic, racial minority, of not having parental involvement, all lead to certain practices that further place the learners at risk.

The great concern is that at this national conference of policymakers, teacher trainers, grant writers, authors in scholarly publications, they're taking these misperceptions and misconceptions out and feeding the national hunger for some information that will continue to put poor children and minority children and other children into a corner and not allow them to come out.

I want to speak to two points today. One is the need for the Institute, and the other, the need for the full, early, and total involvement of minority scholars and minority institutions. I think the Institute is needed because of its focus on action research, research for immediate change. I think too often institutes spend so much time searching for what's wrong, that they don't spend enough time implementing programs and practices that can solve problems and that can be documented.

I think that the Institute realizes that there are universal problems, or at least there are universal manifestations of problems, but there are different causes and there are different needs and responses which must be met and provided. I think that this Institute has the opportunity to find out what works and for whom, and how and when and to what extent.

I especially appreciate the attention that the Institute gives to equity and equal opportunity. I think too often equal opportunity has failed because equity was absent. And equity, as I see it, is pro-

viding for the least advantaged that which is needed to make them competitive when equal opportunity is provided.

I believe that the Institute is in a position to provide a radical proposal for radical change. I think one of the salient features of working with at-risk learners is that we must have risk-taking people and institutes that have a risk-taking posture; that they be willing to promote a school of new research and thought, to throw away some of the previous hypotheses which show no significant difference, and, instead, put in alternative hypotheses that are directional and positive in nature.

I especially applaud the commitment to the development of minority scholars and the recognition of the potential and contributions of minority institutions. I think that this commitment, in and of itself, addresses a critical issue in higher education: the underrepresentation of prominent minority scholars. And we need and will be motivated by this commitment.

I want to speak, briefly, about the need for, the involvement of, in its many instances, leadership of minority scholars. Research should be conducted in the context of institutions with the historical mission, the ongoing agenda, and implicit mandates which parallel those of the proposed Institute. And I believe that you will find this in your minority institutions.

I think because appropriate observations, foci, and interpretations are based on vested interests, experiences, and ownership, minority scholars should be at the forefront. Scholars should have tacit information and knowledge which is framed by their membership in a minority group. Even access to data has cultural implications. There has to be some sense of trust so that those who are gathering data are, in fact, gathering the right kind of accurate data.

I believe that the attention to the inclusion of minority institutions at the helm of the effort is requisite. Too often, minority scholars and institutions are tacked on to grab proposals by nonminority institutions. This addition gives those institutions the advantage, because it suggests that there will be a true partnership and mentoring of sorts.

This expectation is seldom realized, and the minority scholar or institution is on the periphery, barely visible, and with little or no voice or true involvement in the decision-making of the directions. I believe many minority institutions and scholars have served to add color to these national research efforts and to the development and responsibility of the funders, but we have rarely participated as full partners.

I think, on a personal, cultural note, we need African-American scholars to interpret African-American experiences for the same reasons that we need African-American doctors to diagnose and interpret from a cultural perspective. I remember my dermatologist, who is black, told me once that the reason he worked so well with his people was because he knew what we ate, what we put on our face, what we put on our hair. And so he could go beyond gathering data. He could go into the true interpretation and analysis, and then provide some intervention that is appropriate for an individual, though based on a profile of medical research.

I think that the work of respected African-American scholars is, for the African-American community, valid, accurate, and relevant. I think African-American scholars hunger to hear what Asa Hilliard is going to say. We thirst for what Shirley McBay's group is going to put out. We look for the words of the African-American scholars because, to us, it's real, it has no hidden agenda, and it is directed toward positive change for our children.

I believe that the research on and programs for learners placed at risk cannot continue to be used for number crunchers, for political means, or for those whose research agenda is to perpetuate the misconceptions, half-truths, and biases which are pervasive in current research. I believe that we can no longer tolerate programs with the purpose of proving that interventions don't work with at-risk learners, and that the victims, themselves, are to blame for their plight.

I think that the proposed Institute has the potential to alleviate present flaws in the national fabric for resolving issues of education for learners at risk. I endorse the Institute in its mission, and I urge its early and full implementation.

Thank you.

Chairman OWENS. Thank you.

Dr. McBay, let's begin with the name—a term reflecting socioeconomic condition of students—how would you name the Institute?

Ms. MCBAY. Well, I've been thinking about that. I was trying to—we view these students as students who are underserved by the system, and so the name needs to put the blame where the blame is. So whether it's the Institute for Education of Underserved Students, or Underserved Disadvantaged Students—but somehow it has to be that it's the system that has let the students down.

When you say, "at risk" you get the impression that it's something that is wrong with the student, that he or she had some control over the circumstances in which he or she is living. So it's that, that we're underserved by——

Chairman OWENS. Mr. Strohmenger, should we say "Institute for Service to Poverty, Poor Students?" You said poverty is a common factor; it brings the rural and the poor urban, everybody, together. Would it be "Institute for the Education of Poor Students?"

Mr. STROHMENGER. It's more than that. It's much more than just poverty; there are many other factors involved I think. And this is why we take a look at the family, which gets into the ethnic, the background, the history, the poor—whether it be poor or whether it be somebody who is just different. The communities vary a great deal, and the schools vary a great deal. It seems to me that all of these, combined, need to be looked at.

That's one of the points that I was concerned with, that sometimes what we find happening in schools is just a symptom of other things. And we just cannot cure kids by quick fixes and doing one part of their life. They spend an awful lot of time outside of the school.

Chairman OWENS. While you have the floor, can you elaborate on your boxes? You say you have boxes of ideas? Is this out of the previous antipoverty and various programs, from ideas that have never been fully explored?

Mr. STROHMENGER. Yes, we had the home-oriented preschool, called "HOPE," that was, in the late 1960s and the 1970s, piloted in the Applachian region. This is where they actually visited and trained parents, worked in the home, provided materials, even had a television that they received and then used as a base in activities for children and so on.

And the young man, at that time, who was responsible, Dr. Edward Gotts, tracked, on his own, these 500 students for some 20 years, and found significant differences between them and those who did not receive this treatment in terms of attending college, complete success, and the occupations that they had and so on. A proven program.

And yet, when I first came to the Laboratory, in 1972, I was greeted with a number of people going down to the unemployment office from the Laboratory, getting signed up for unemployment because the funding had been stopped on that program. And when the funding stopped, everything was packed up in boxes and still is on the sixth floor of the Atlas Building in Charleston, West Virginia.

And we do not have the funding to get in there and mine this rich, rich amount of research activities and so on of a proven program that, here, over a period of 20 years, we have seen real differences in these children. We're talking about preschool—here is a wealth of information just waiting to be used. And thank goodness for someone like Dr. Gotts who is a dedicated individual who followed through, and, I think, just in the last six months or so, has published a report of this activity, which you might be interested in and we could provide for you, if you'd like.

Chairman OWENS. So another purpose of the Institute could be to go back and pull out a wealth of information from these aborted projects and aborted research that already has been started?

Mr. STROHMENGER. Right. One of the problems that we've had in the rural initiative, for example, was that we were funded from year to year. It started out as a one-year project, and we had to hurry up and get things done, get them started, and evaluate them at the end of one year. You just cannot do that with at-risk programs.

As I recall, a couple of weeks ago I was out in Arizona, the Navaho Nation reservation, doing some workshops, and I was very struck with the fine facilities we had for Head Start. The buses everywhere—kids were going around getting all kinds of wonderful experiences, but this was not going to solve the problem these Indian youth were going to face as they become mature, young people in high school. The fact that the at-risk program is a developmental kind of thing, must consider what happens.

Certainly, these children have a wonderful Head Start into school. Are we doing the same thing as they meet some of their problems in their middle school; as they face the growing problems of alcohol and a number of other problems we've mentioned, as they become high school students?

But, you know, we were doing some great things in bits and pieces. And this is where we need the tremendous possibility of some coordination or some structures for coordinating these pro-

grams, and getting what they need when they need it. That's one of the biggest problems.

Chairman OWENS. Dr. Rendon, we had conceptualized the Institute as covering education from the cradle to the grave in terms of at-risk students. Certainly, in community colleges we are aware of the many problems there. For you and the rest of the panelists, are we attempting too much if we want to cover the situation from preschool to post-graduate? Can we also cover rural, bilingual, inner-city minority? Are we attempting too much in one package?

I don't mind saying it for the record. There are strong political reasons why we put them all together. There are times that we're going to need support as we move this package forward. But are we, in terms of what is doable, research-wise, putting too many different pieces together in one package?

Ms. Rendon. It could be, but take a look at what you have now. There is already an Office for Bilingual Education that conducts a great deal of bilingual research; most of it is K–12, and that has been the emphasis. In OERI, the emphasis is on K–12. There is very little done with regard to community colleges, and very little done with regard to four-year colleges.

In fact, most of the research efforts that have been federally sponsored have been concentrated at the K–12 level, and probably with very good reason. I mean, if we can change the K–12 system, then colleges don't have a lot to gripe about. But the unfortunate fact is that colleges do have a lot to gripe about, particularly community colleges, because they are the institutions that are open-door, that will take these students who are at-risk because they have no other place to turn to for a college-based education.

That is why I'm very concerned that most Hispanics, Indians, and to a lesser extent, African-Americans, because they have a set of Historically Black Institutions that they can turn to; but, many minority students will turn to the community college for job skills and for an opportunity to initiate a four-year college program of study at their local community college.

And, unfortunately, community colleges are not research-based institutions; they're not like four-year colleges that have outstanding researchers that can look at the problems and the issues. They're teaching institutions, and so we know very little about what happens to these at-risk students who are finishing high school. Where do they go? What's being done with them? And it's my concern that we need to take a look at that problem, and that we must fund that kind of research.

Ms. MCBAY. May I comment?

Chairman OWENS. Yes.

Ms. MCBAY. I think it's important that you take the entire pipeline, because you can't fix one part, get things right there, and then not do anything with the next part. You simply lose all the progress that you've made at the previous level.

And even if students were able to graduate from high school fully prepared to be successful, which is a wonderful goal to have, on many of the college campuses, as you know, almost 80 percent of minority students are on predominately white campuses. There are other problems there in addition to preparation problems that may exist with some students.

There are many examples of students who are well-prepared for success and they're not successful because the environment is an environment of low expectations; people make assumptions about why you are there, how you got there. So there are a lot of issues that—it seems to me that you have to take the entire spectrum in order to be able to—you want the Ph.D. level, because you want to get at the problem of minority faculty, which is a very serious problem on college and university campuses. So it seems to me that you have to take the entire pipeline.

Mr. STROHMENGER. Mr. Chairman, I'd like to bring out, in relation, there's another point. As I mentioned before, when the funding stops, the development stops. We had an excellent program at the Appalachia Educational Laboratory on lifelong learning, in which we were looking at community colleges and what were their problems and what were they doing with the women, who in their later years were coming back to college, the people who had dropped out and coming in.

And there were a great—we had the four-state region. We had a lot of things happening, a lot of good research taking place, and they were starting to get some remedies going. For example, a simple matter of looking at the correspondence they sent out to the various people who were interested in coming, the reading level was at a graduate school level. And just a simple matter of taking a look at what we were saying with these people and how we were dealing with this, we made a great deal of difference.

Unfortunately, the capricious funding that we have—it was decided that was no longer a priority; it was dropped. They tried to find funds to continue this consortium, to continue the development and get the interventions that were necessary, and corrections, to get some good community college instructional programs going.

And there again, the need for the Institute, which can provide for some long-term development and research—I think this would be an excellent example of what happens when the funding stops, as it is now.

Chairman OWENS. Dr. Rendon, you've mentioned the problem of the community colleges not being research institutions, and we, continually have a problem with OERI and their RFPs emphasizing research universities and research colleges. Even most of the Historically Black Colleges, are not considered research institutions.

How are we going to deal with this problem? What can an institute do to help cultivate and groom minority researchers, and deal with the problem that many of them are grounded in institutions which, traditionally, are not considered research institutions and worthy of pulling research?

Ms. RENDON. Well, that's a very good question, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman OWENS. I wanted to address that. I started my comment—I'm addressing that to everybody.

Ms. RENDON. I still think its a good question. I did work with an IE for two years. And when I was there I tried to put together a research agenda for community colleges. And when we had a new director, the new director did not feel that we needed to do that.

I think it needs to start from the top. I think whoever is the director of OERI must be committed to research that looks at different kinds of students, diverse students, and that looks at the diversity of institutions that are able to conduct research.

When I was there, we had very few, for example, proposals coming from historically black institutions to look at black students in those colleges. I don't think that there is a feeling in the community that OERI is the place to turn to for research on minority student populations. And it's unfortunate, but I think that that is one of the attitudes that is out there. And there is not the feeling, from community colleges, that OERI is the place to turn to to study community college students.

Chairman OWENS. Dr. Thompson, you said we have to have full, early, and total involvement of minority scholars. How are we going to do that when the RFPs make the assumption already that certain institutions are not qualified to deal with research? Are there groups of minority scholars who are mobilizing to deal with this? How do we avoid being in a situation where we "add color" but we're not really decision makers.

Ms. THOMPSON. Well, I think that there's certainly groups that have mobilized and are probably waiting for such an opportunity. I know that we have to face or acknowledge the reality that many HBIs have not developed a full capacity or that broad scope and detail and ongoing research that some of the nonminority institutions have.

And perhaps one of the things that can be tried is the flip-flop. Instead of the majority institutions having an HBI as a secondary partner, the HBIs can collaborate and get a majority institution——

Chairman OWENS. Allow them to select their——

Ms. THOMPSON. That might be one of the requirements—that you get a good, strong research institution to assist you, and then you are, thereby, increasing your capacity for research, but maintaining, prominently, that minority perspective.

Chairman OWENS. Any other comments?

Ms. MCBAY. I was just thinking—I was trying to think through how could we get the—the staff is very critical in OERI, and I'm just trying to think how we could get—an analogous situation that exists at NSF. At NSF, first of all, the appointment—it's a political appointment, the directory is, but it's for six years; that's one thing. So it sort of throws it off cycle from being so tied up with politics. And then, within NSF, the people who are chosen have been people who are well-qualified to carry out their jobs.

Now, I know you can't be too prescriptive, but I'm just wondering is there something that could be said about the staffing of the Office that would match the research priorities. These people should have experience and credibility within the communities that they are designed to serve.

Chairman OWENS. You understand that the whole idea of the Institute is to pull it out from under OERI; the traditional approach of the bureaucrats in Washington would not predominate, because we want it to be as independent as NSF.

Ms. MCBAY. Yes.

Chairman OWENS. NSF is a good model. So it would have that leeway to not have to deal in the same way that OERI has been traditionally dealing with it. Even when they do that, if they proceed in an objective way, applying the usual standards, what kind of problems are we going to have?

You've just put your finger on experience and, maybe, proximity to the problem must be given greater weight. But I certainly like your suggestion that there be partnerships or consortia which involve the minority institutions choosing who their majority—better endowed with laboratories and research facilities an institution might be, there's another way to answer it.

Well, I think that all of you have covered some very important points, and I won't go on. We certainly appreciate your being here. Your testimony will be entered, in its entirety, into the record. We may contact you later on for some additional questions.

The whole idea of public policy initiatives, for example—if we don't come out of the whole process for the Institute with public policy initiatives, we will have accomplished very little. We definitely see that as part of it. We have a scenario that we're going to be following from here on, and it's going to need the involvement of the education community.

We are proposing to introduce a bill very soon—within the next ten days—which will have the Institute stand alone; a bill to just push the idea of the Institute so that its clearly out there. We're going to incorporate it, later on, into larger, more inclusive legislation for OERI in general, because that is up for reauthorization and has to go forward. But we intend to, certainly make the Institute a great priority within that total package. We would like to be in very close touch with the education community in general, researchers in particular.

Ms. MCBAY. Mr. Chairman, may I just say something I didn't say, just as a—and that is that I think one of the—and I know this won't happen—but one of the first research projects that I think the Institute ought to undertake is that of exploring the myths that people have about minorities and low-income children and youth.

It seems to me that if we were to address that issue, because that's really what undergirds all of this, there are perceptions that people have when you walk up the stairs, walk into a room, there are people who will make assumptions about you without your ever having said one word. So it would be wonderful to see a study done on the myths that people hold.

Chairman OWENS. Maybe you have to leave that to novelists and——

Ms. MCBAY. Right.

Chairman OWENS. The low expectations factor in education is one that certainly can be explored.

Ms. MCBAY. Yes, sir.

Chairman OWENS. But as James Baldwin stated—I think he was the first one to say it—"Whenever you walk into a room, you can assume that certain assumptions are being made."

Ms. MCBAY. That's right.

Chairman OWENS. Any final comment?

Thank you again, for appearing. We appreciate your patience and your taking time out to be with us.

The subcommittee hearing is now adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 1 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned, subject to the call of the Chair.]