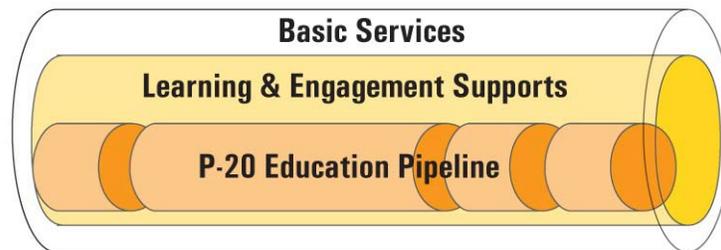


Statement by Karen Pittman, President and CEO
The Forum for Youth Investment
Before the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
April 22, 2010

Introduction

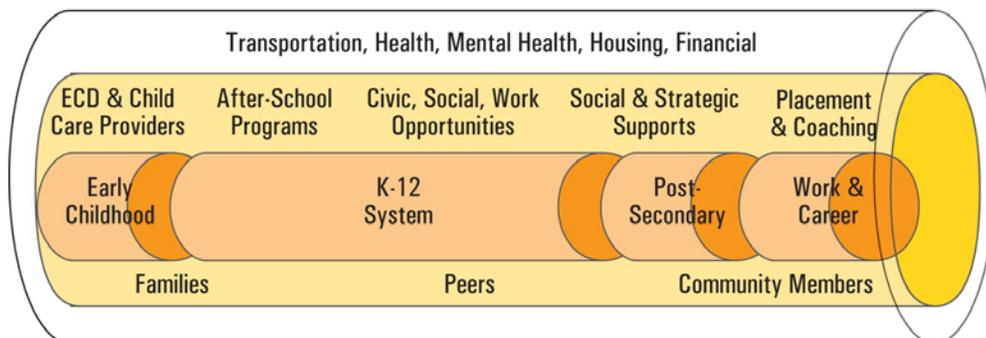
Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. I thank you for your leadership on educating the whole child—focusing not only on the traditional education pipeline that links early childhood programs to schools, and schools to higher education, but also on the families and community organizations that insulate this pipeline.

Figure 1: The Insulated Education Pipeline¹



The first layer of insulation is the family, supported by a range of formal and informal organizations; this should include community based organizations that connect youth and families to critical supports and resources, as well as employers who provide students with opportunities to apply their learning, pursue their interests and build social capital. A second layer of insulation should ensure that young people have access to quality basic services that will allow them to successfully make their way through the pipeline—health care, transportation, housing, and financial supports. It is this dual focus on both the traditional educational pipeline and the layers of insulating family and community supports that will allow this legislation to truly be an Elementary and Secondary *Education Act*, as opposed to merely an Elementary and Secondary *Schools Act*.

Figure 2: Looking Inside the Insulated Education Pipeline²



¹ From "Bringing Precision to Your Passion: A Quick Overview of the Ready by 21[®] Approach to Data-Driven Decision-Making." Forum for Youth Investment, Washington DC. (2010)

² Ibid.

Every parent knows that they cannot attend to only one aspect of their child's growth and ignore the others. Yet as policy makers, we too often forget what we know to be true as parents. We too often pick one area to focus on, such as test scores, and think we can succeed in this one area while ignoring the rest of our children's lives. We can't.

I have spent my career working to reconcile the wisdom of parents – who tell us that we need to attend to the whole child – with the intricacies of public policy – which tells us we must focus, crafting narrow policies that seek to influence only one type of development or behavior at a time. I have done so from an academic perspective, as the founder of the Center for Youth Development and Policy Research at the Academy for Educational Development; I have done so from an international philanthropy perspective as Senior Vice President of the International Youth Foundation; and I have done so from a federal policy perspective, as the director of the President's Crime Prevention Council, chaired by Vice President Gore, which brought together the Secretaries of all major federal departments to forge an overarching, interagency approach to educating the whole child.

Currently, as co-founder and president of the Forum for Youth Investment, I oversee the development and promulgation of the Ready by 21 Strategy, which helps communities improve the odds that all youth will be ready for college, work and life. The Ready by 21 Strategy embodies a "whole child" or "youth development" approach to education. With effective local leaders and public structures like schools, community centers and libraries working together, communities can prepare a competitive workforce, strengthen social networks, support families and help all young people realize their potential. Using innovative strategic planning tools designed to maximize resources and developed by national experts, Ready by 21 mobilizes communities including state and local leaders to improve the odds for youth.

Chief among these activities has been the formation of the Ready by 21 National Partnership, a coalition of prominent organizations such as United Way Worldwide, Corporate Voices for Working Families, and the American Association of School Administrators—whose members collectively reach more than 1 million children and youth across the country. Each of the Ready by 21 National Partners delivers the Ready by 21 Strategy to their respective constituencies, helping their affiliates use the Ready by 21 Strategy to strengthen their work. My remarks today, however, are my own and do not necessarily reflect the positions of any other Ready by 21 National Partner or the Ready by 21 National Partnership as a whole, which does not take official policy positions.

Recommendations

As the founder and president of an organization that helps communities across the country create Ready by 21 action plans to educate the whole child, I urge the committee to consider taking four steps that would facilitate this "whole community" focus:

Broaden the Definition of Student Outcomes

Everywhere that the legislation calls for accountability for a specific narrow set of outcomes, such as literacy and math, I urge the committee to consider striking and replacing that language with a broader set of outcomes that incorporates "21st century skills" that students, parents, business and higher education professionals all agree are necessary to be ready for college, work and life. These skills have been well documented by The College Board³, the Search Institute⁴, Harvard and MIT professors⁵, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills⁶, and the Gallup Organization⁷, among others.

³ In addition to their detailed standards that align with expectations for entrance into core content college level courses in English Language Arts, Science and Mathematics, the College Board's standards include practical skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, problem-solving and technology literacy that the Board believes are critical to success in any content area. College Board College Readiness Standards. <http://professionals.collegeboard.com/k-12/standards>

⁴ Two decades ago, the Search Institute brought adolescent development research into the school building with the release of their Developmental Assets Survey which demonstrated a powerful, direct relationship between the number of assets in a young person's

We know that by any of these broader measures of success, young people are not doing well. At best, only 3 in 10 seniors are college-ready.⁸ Only 4 in 10 high school graduates are work-ready.⁹ Up to a fourth of all students at four-year colleges do not return for their second year of school.¹⁰

Employers, while acknowledging the need for “21st century skills”, are not equipped to train in these areas. According to a 2009 study by Corporate Voices for Working Families, forty percent of the business respondents that offer some form of workforce readiness training have no on-the-job trainings to offer in these “high need” areas.¹¹

We must ensure that young people are not only academically prepared, but also are prepared socially, physically, vocationally and civically. In general, the *Blueprint for Reform: The Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act* uses a narrow set of outcomes when setting the criteria for receiving major funding streams, and uses broad definitions of outcomes when setting the criteria for small competitive grants. The opposite should be true.

Formalize and Support the Roles of Families and Community Organizations

ESEA is primarily about schools, teachers and principals. But to fully educate the whole child, it must also be about supporting families, community organizations and other public services (such as 21st Century Learning Centers, Supplemental Educational Services and Parent Information and Resource Centers). This requires educators to overcome what Daniel Domenech, executive director of the American Association of School Administrators, refers to as the “edifice complex.” I urge the committee to ensure that these important institutions beyond schools are adequately funded, and that a broader set of professionals such as after-school providers and youth workers are invited to work in conjunction with teachers and principals to develop and implement quality improvement plans and accountability systems. Their commitment and expertise should earn them a seat at the planning table, not just a spot on the providers list. At the committee’s hearing on teachers and leaders, critical questions were raised about how to measure and support quality teachers and principals. There is a parallel conversation underway in the afterschool field, with assessments and capacity building tools such the Youth Program Quality Intervention having passed rigorous research scrutiny on

life, their involvement in pro-social or anti-social behaviors, and their attitudes and performance in school. Search Developmental Assets list. <http://www.search-institute.org/content/40-developmental-assets-adolescents-ages-12-18>

⁵ In 1997, Murnane and Levy, the Harvard-MIT education-economics duo gained traction with the education and business leaders with the introduction of “new basic skills.” They identified three skill sets that young people need to succeed in the workplace – hard skills (e.g. mathematics, problem solving, and reading); soft skills (e.g. oral and written communications, team work) and information technology. Murnane and Levy, *The New Basic Skills*. <http://www.infibeam.com/Books/info/Richard-J-Murnane/Teaching-the-New-Basic-Skills/0684827395.html>

⁶ In 2002, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills introduced skill sets that acknowledged the importance of: core subject matter content infused with 21st century themes; learning and innovation skills; information, media and technology skills, and life and career skills. The Partnership for 21st Century Skills. http://www.21stcenturyskills.org/documents/P21_Framework.pdf

⁷ In 2008, the Gallup Organization introduced a student poll that measures students’ hope, engagement and well-being. The Gallup Student Poll National Report. Dr. Shane Lopez. Gallup. 2009. <http://www.gallupstudentpoll.com/121019/Gallup-Student-Poll-National-Report.aspx>

⁸ College readiness rates are rising slowly, but the problem is huge. Only 23 percent of high school graduates who took the ACT in 2009 scored as college-ready in all four core subjects. Earlier calculations, done by the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research based on calculations using graduation rates, high school transcripts and NAEP reading scores, found that one third of seniors ready, with white students almost twice as likely to be ready than African-American and Hispanic students.

⁹ In 2007, Corporate Voices for Working Families, the Conference Board and other national business organizations surveyed over 400 employers across industries to document the skills they expect in entry level workers and assess their satisfaction with high school graduates. Employers report that 4 in 10 high school graduates are grossly deficient in the necessary skills, all of which, were important skills in the 20th century.

¹⁰ Dropout rates are particularly high for African American, Hispanic and first-generation college students – as many as 30 percent of students will take at least one remedial class during their college years, according to national studies.

¹¹ Corporate Voices for Working Families, July 2009 <http://cvworkingfamilies.org/publication-toolkits/ill-prepared-us-workforce-exploring-challenges-employer-provided-workforce-read>

measuring and improving the quality of youth workers. I urge the committee to ensure that the reauthorization includes not only a plan to improve the quality of teachers and principals, but youth workers as well.

Focus on Improving both the Content and Context of Student Learning

Everywhere the legislation addresses the need for better-qualified teachers and administrators, I urge the committee to define and measure not only their capacity to deliver content, but also their capacity to create classrooms, schools and communities where young people feel physically and emotionally safe, feel challenged and supported by peers and adults, and feel that they have opportunities to apply what they know. The quality of the learning environment is as important as the qualifications of the instructors – in school and out. Improving the climate in schools and afterschool programs is as critical to advancing learning as is improving STEM courses. The research is clear: the overall quality of the learning environment counts. When community after-school programs are sorted according to quality, the students in high quality programs net significant gains in academic, social and emotional skills; the programs in low quality programs show no gains. They might prevent pregnancy and violence, but they do not build skills. Quality is measurable; researchers can quantify school climate and classroom or afterschool programs quality. Quality is malleable; studies show that modest investments in quality improvement can net quick and lasting results. Quality matters if we are going to leverage the considerable investments already being made in school and community programs.¹²

Infuse Youth Voice

A wise 17 year old once said: “If you had a problem in the Black community, and you brought in a group of White people to discuss how to solve it, almost nobody would take that panel seriously. In fact, there’d probably be a public outcry. It would be the same for women’s issues or gay issues. But every day, in local arenas all the way to the White House, adults sit around and decide what problems youth have and what youth need, without ever consulting us.” He was right. Most education reforms involve everyone else – teachers, principals, parents, afterschool program providers, business leaders – but when does anyone bring young people to the table? Young people have unique perspectives that make them essential to any reform process and ESEA should look for ways to engage young people as core partners in shaping and implementing educational reforms.

Conclusion

While a well-insulated education pipeline will benefit all youth, it is particularly important for young people most in need: those entangled in the foster care and juvenile justice systems and facing poverty, unemployment, and dead ends. Only half of all students of color graduate high school.¹³ Nearly 6 million youth (ages 16 – 24) are not in school and do not have a job.¹⁴ Researchers have identified the cohorts of youth who rarely make a successful transition to adulthood: 14-17 year old adolescents that do not complete high school, are deeply involved in the juvenile justice system, are young, unmarried mothers, or are in a foster placement¹⁵. Not only are these young people more likely to be in low-performing schools, they are also more likely to be in struggling, under-resourced communities. They are students who are least connected to the worlds of work or post-secondary education, are more likely to delay the pursuit of a post-secondary credential, more likely to spend college loans on remedial courses, more likely to leave college before completion. For these young people, ensuring that EASA supports the fully insulated educational pipeline may be the only way we will get them through successfully.

¹² See, for example, Durlak, J.A. and Weissberg, R.P (2007). The Impact of After-School Programs that Promote Personal and Social Skills. Chicago, IL. Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, and Smith, C. et al. “Continuous Quality Improvement in Afterschool Settings: Impact Findings from the Youth Program Quality Intervention Study,” Spring 2010.

¹³ Harvard Civil Rights Project, <http://www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/news/pressreleases/dropout05.php>

¹⁴ Annie E Casey Foundation, Kids Count Data Center, <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/>

¹⁵ Urban Institute, http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411283_alternative_education.pdf

In the world of education policy, we tend to get tunnel vision. We think of the school system as a complete educational experience in and of itself – it is not. Education systems alone simply cannot provide the comprehensive supports necessary to succeed by themselves. Equality of *schools* alone does not guarantee equal *educational* opportunity. Schools are merely one aspect of a child's education, much of which occurs beyond the school doors, beyond the school day, and beyond the realm of academics. Equal opportunity for success requires equality of the education of the whole child. This requires legislation that goes beyond academics to include a full range of outcomes, beyond schools to strengthen a full range of institutions, and beyond teachers and principals, to ensure quality child care workers and youth workers.

In conclusion, I commend the committee's efforts to incorporate a Ready by 21 whole child approach to ESEA. Above and beyond this work, the committee may find that forging a truly overarching approach to children and youth requires strategies which transcend any one particular piece of legislation. In my work at the International Youth Foundation, I studied numerous countries that have forged an overarching child and youth strategy that brought increased alignment and efficiencies to the myriad policies focused on children and youth. In addition to the work on ESEA, I would be delighted to explore with the committee's opportunities like the Federal Youth Coordination Act which calls for the creation of such an overarching national strategy for children and youth.

Thank you for your leadership and I look forward to your questions.