READING & ACCOUNTABILTY: IMPROVING 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH CONGRESS

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FIELD HEARING ON "READING & ACCOUNTABILITY:

IMPROVING 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS"

Tuesday, February 20, 2001

U. S. House of Representatives

Committee on Education and the Workforce

Fair Oaks Elementary School

Marietta, Georgia

The Committee met, pursuant to call, at 10:06 a.m., Fair Oaks Elementary School, Marietta, Georgia, Hon. John Boehner, presiding.

Present: Representatives Boehner, Collins, Barr, Isakson and Miller.

Staff Present: Bob Sweet, Maria Miller, Dave Schnittger, Majority Staff and Alex Nock, Minority Staff.

Chairman Boehner. Ladies and gentlemen, good morning. Before we officially get started, we have some introductions to do. Let me start by saying that I am John Boehner. I am a member of Congress from the Eighth Congressional District of Ohio and Chairman of the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

I would like to turn to our colleague and our host today, Bob Barr, who represents the Seventh District here in Georgia.

STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN BOB BARR, 7TH DISTRICT OF GEORGIA, U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Mr. Barr. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It is an honor to welcome you and Ranking Member Miller and our very good friends and colleagues, Johnny Isakson and Mac Collins here to the Seventh District of Georgia today.

I would like to welcome this panel to the Seventh Congressional District of Georgia and the Fair Oaks Elementary School here in Marietta and Cobb County, Georgia.

I also would like to extend a hearty Seventh District welcome to the witnesses today, including Governor Barnes; our State School Superintendent Linda Schrenko and the other distinguished members of the state educational community.

I also would like to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this important hearing on one of the most significant public policy issues in America today, the education of our children. Under the leadership of President George W. Bush, education has moved quickly to the forefront of America's agenda. The President's new emphasis on improving our schools has culminated in his recent proposal to the Congress, which he submitted just a few weeks ago. I look forward to working in Congress on that and other educational initiatives that emphasize local control, accountability, and achieving effective results.

An important part of President Bush's proposal is the Reading First Initiative, which will help ensure a basic standard which we all can agree on; namely, that every child be ready, able and willing to read by the third grade. Being in front of the power curve here in Georgia, and particularly here at Fair Oaks Elementary, our state has already employed a Reading First Program for several years. Reading First places responsibilities on both students and their teachers. Students must read approximately three hours a day and their teachers are required to either teach reading or privately tutor individual students. This program has proved particularly effective among first grade students, low achieving second grade students and some low achieving third grade students.

It is entirely appropriate that this hearing is being held in an elementary school in one of America's communities rather than in Washington, D.C. Appropriate because our attention too often turns to Washington when it comes to education, when, in fact, our attention really should be focused here in the schools and communities that actually educate our children. Too often students leave our schools without the necessary skills they need to succeed in today's economy. I believe we need to recognize programs like Reading First, which combat that very problem. We should also work to share such solutions with the rest of the nation so that other schools may enjoy the success that Fair Oaks has already begun to realize.

We all look forward to hearing from our distinguished panel of witnesses today. And again, Mr. Chairman, I thank you and the Committee members for being here in the

Seventh District with us. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Boehner. Thank you, Mr. Barr. I know that you had a number of previously scheduled activities and so we know that you have got to go, but thanks again for hosting us.

Let me turn to my colleague who is from a neighboring district, Congressman Johnny Isakson.

STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN JOHNNY ISAKSON, 6TH DISTRICT OF GEORGIA, U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Mr. Isakson. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I, first of all, want to thank you for allowing this hearing to be held. And second, I want to share that a special affinity in my life before going to Congress was with the State Board of Education and with so many of you here. There are some real heroes in my life that are here today, and I am going to introduce them quickly, because I would like for the members of our Committee and the Congressmen to know who is here and how much they care about education.

Louise Radloff is the Chairman of the Gwinnett County Board of Education, and you should know that Louise, I believe, has served on the Board for 25 years, is that correct?

Ms. Radloff. Twenty-nine.

Mr. Isakson. Twenty-nine years, and has been a champion for public education.

Johnny Johnson at the back of the room is the former Chairman of the Cobb Board and is on the Board. The current Chairman is Laura Searcy, who is here. Laura. And Teresa Plenge is also on the Cobb County Board. And like every board, the Cobb County Board needs a good attorney. Glen Brock is here somewhere. Where is Glen? There he is. Glen is an attorney with the Cobb County Board.

I am particularly delighted that the lady I served with for three years, Superintendent Schrenko, is here. And my friend, Governor Barnes, we have been in political office together, I guess, Roy, for 24 straight years now, something like that. I am so delighted the Governor would come and testify in his home county, and that Superintendent Schrenko would also take the time to testify, and the same of all of our other panelists.

The Education and Workforce Committee thinks there is nothing more important than raising expectations for our children and raising the performance of those that are most disadvantaged and fall primarily in the category, as most of you in education know, as Title I. So we are here today in Superintendent Joe Redden's school district of Cobb County to listen to our witnesses and take their message back to Washington, D.C. and hopefully pass a product that is beneficial, with flexibility in the use of federal funds and its direction.

My last comment, Mr. Chairman, is to particularly welcome George Miller from California. One of my fondest experiences in Congress is getting to meet George and know him. He has served in the Congress since 1975 from California, and he's an outstanding advocate on behalf of children, education and the environment. So, George, welcome. Thanks for coming all the way from California.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN JOHN BOEHNER, COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE, U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Chairman Boehner. Let me extend a warm welcome to all of you, to my colleague, Mr. Miller and to my colleagues here in Georgia. My special thanks to both Bob Barr for hosting this and to Johnny Isakson for helping us get so many of our great witnesses here today. Johnny, I don't think we could have done this without you.

I especially want to thank Ms. Suzanne Linberg, the Principal here at Fair Oaks Elementary, for all of the work that she has done to help us get ready for today. We enjoyed our tour of the school this morning, and seeing the children here at school reminds us of why we are here. We want to work together to help schools like this provide the best possible education for our children. I know this hearing involves an awful lot of work for you, Suzanne, and your staff, and we are grateful for your hospitality.

This is the second of several education reform hearings our Committee will be holding over the next several weeks. As Congress begins a new legislative session, our Committee will be traveling around the country to hear from parents, teachers, school administrators and many others about state and local reforms that are improving academic performance.

These hearings will help lay the foundation for legislative action later this spring on our major K-12 education law, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Just a few weeks ago the President announced his education reform plan, a plan with academic accountability as its centerpiece, and a plan that ensures that no child is left behind.

Today, we are particularly grateful to Governor Roy Barnes, who has agreed to share his thoughts with us on how education reform is being implemented here in Georgia. Several others will tell us about the new accountability measures the state has instituted to ensure a quality education for all of Georgia's school children. We want to learn from you and make sure that any federal education reform legislation complements what you are doing here in Georgia. We want to be partners in this effort to provide the best education possible for our children.

Our hearing today will focus on the success of Georgia's Reading First program under the able leadership of Superintendent Linda Schrenko. At the national level, President Bush has made improving reading for America's school children a top priority. The first day on the job he held a reading round table with teachers and principals who were successfully applying scientifically research-based reading instruction in their

schools. His vision, like that of Georgia's Reading First initiative, is to ensure that every child is reading fluently by the third grade.

It is my hope that the federal government can learn from what you are doing here in Georgia. President Bush's education reform proposal would provide assistance to states and school districts in establishing comprehensive scientific based research reading programs.

With that, I will turn to my colleague from the great state of California, George Miller.

WRITTEN OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN JOHN BOEHNER, COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE, U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES – SEE APPENDIX A

OPENING STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER GEORGE MILLER, COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE, U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Mr. Miller. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for holding this hearing, and I thank Fair Oaks School hosting us. And to our colleagues from Georgia, thank you very much for attending this field hearing.

As has already been said, this is an effort to try and continue to gather information so that we can make the intelligent and right decisions about how to proceed on the proposal that the President has submitted to the Congress. We will be doing this in the next few weeks, both in the House and in the Senate. I think there clearly is bipartisan agreement that we need to make sure that our school systems are in fact accountable for the education that we seek for our children and that we have the ability to provide for our children to be able to read by third grade. We clearly understand that that is not happening today. As we look at the NAPE exams in the last round, only 31 percent of our fourth graders were reading at what we call grade level. Clearly, we have to make a strong investment of resources in research-based programs that we know can deliver the goods that we seek on behalf of the education of our children. I look forward to hearing from the witnesses today.

Governor, thank you very much for taking the time to appear. Your struggles on behalf of education reform go beyond the borders of Georgia. We are well aware of your efforts and we look forward to hearing about provisions for accountability and also for the programs the state and the counties have started with respect to literacy.

Thank you.

Chairman Boehner. I ask unanimous consent for the hearing record to remain open for 14 days to allow member's statements and other extraneous material referenced during the hearing to be submitted in the official hearing record, and without objection, so

ordered.

And with that, it is my pleasure to introduce to all of you, you all know him, the great Governor of the State of Georgia, Roy Barnes. Governor, you may begin.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE ROY BARNES, GOVERNOR, STATE OF GEORGIA

Governor Barnes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First, I would like to welcome you to Georgia and I would also like to thank you all for accommodating my schedule. When the General Assembly is in session, I am a little bit skittish about leaving the Capitol for any extended period of time.

Chairman Boehner. Governor, having been a member of the state legislature, I know exactly what you mean.

Governor Barnes. There are four basic building blocks to education reform. Great teaching, leadership that is committed to serving the best interest of the children, willingness to use innovation rather than defending the status quo and accountability. Which is what I am here to talk about just for a short period of time today.

Absolute standards must be used in order to measure the success of education reform. That is why in last year's education reform effort we set up an independent Office of Education Accountability here in Georgia to set standards, to measure results and to reward success. Now I know that later this morning you will hear from Mike Vollmer, who is the Executive Director of our Office of Education Accountability.

Now does this involve testing? It does. But I hope that you will not consider testing to be a bad thing. There are those that contend that testing is unfair, that we test children too much, that teachers will teach to the test. Every excuse known to man will be thrown up to you as to why not to test to observe children. I suggest to you that if you do not test, you cannot make a diagnosis on what needs to be corrected, number one. And that you cannot make the steps and strides that are necessary to improve education and the performance of education. Well, if we do not test, and to all of those that contend that testing is bad, I will tell everyone, as I have in the last couple of years, that there is a test coming one day and it is called life. And we either test now to find the weaknesses in the education system and hold our schools accountable and reward them for improvement, or we will fail in the test called life in preparing our children for employment and for a lifetime of learning.

People almost do not get into college or they almost do not get jobs and we do not want our children to get an almost good education. So we have to be able to measure results in some type of objective standard and method. Here in Georgia, we are developing the test ourselves, the Criterion Referenced Competency Tests that are being written by Georgia teachers and based on the standard Georgia curriculum being taught in our schools, and they have had some dramatic results in the first series of tests that we have given. We have tested at grades four, six and eight. We found that almost a third of our fourth graders couldn't read on a basic level. Forty-six percent of our eighth graders

could not do math on a basic level. So we test our children to learn the weaknesses and seek to correct them. We do this so our children will be able to learn and kept on grade level. Now if you look at the results in North Carolina, Texas or Kentucky, you will discover that it was a similar system of accountability that allowed them to vastly improve their school systems over the last 10 years.

I want to give you some things that I think you need to keep in mind in accountability systems. One is, you have to make sure that the test results, the criterion test results, are not dumbed down in the scores. The easiest way to show some type of improvement is just to set the cut scores lower so it shows that everybody is doing well. We went through this earlier in this decade, or in the last decade in Georgia. That is the reason we give NAPE at every opportunity, and also we give Stanford 9s. We gave ITBS before. We give Stanford 9s to be able to crosswalk and crosscheck the Criterion Referenced Test. Now everyone, as I said, when you do this, will all complain that there is too much testing, but, in fact, it is necessary to be able to crosscheck and crosswalk those Criterion Referenced Tests to assure that we are testing and setting a high enough standard.

The accountability system that we are putting into place here in Georgia, and it has this crosscheck from NAPE and also from the Stanford 9s, will monitor the progress of our schools and then give each school two grades, one for absolute performance and the other one for improvement. This gives two opportunities for rewards under our accountability system. Schools that score an A or a B for either absolute performance or improvement will receive financial rewards. These rewards will come in the form of bonuses to teachers, administrators and all other school staff, including cafeteria and maintenance workers, because a school should operate as a unit and they should help and assist each other. If they improve or they score high on the absolute standard, then everybody should share in a financial reward. It takes all of these people; every person in a school to make sure that a school runs correctly and all should be rewarded when a school is doing well.

Now schools that score a D or an F on either scale will be visited by school improvement teams that will help the administration determine what can be done to fix what is obviously failing. For when a school fails, it is our children that suffer and not the adults.

If a school continues to fail, the State Board of Education will have the opportunity and responsibility to intervene. Options include taking over the day-to-day management of the failing school, closing the school, or allowing parents to remove their children and send them to another public school in the district.

The Office of Education Accountability will also do performance audits on schools to verify that the information being submitted to them each year is accurate.

Just last week, I proposed to our General Assembly to take accountability one step further and to end social promotion here in Georgia. We must do all that we can to help those children who are failing and falling behind stay on grade level. But when everything possible has been done, sometimes the best option for that child is for them to repeat a grade. I have proposed a set of statewide guidelines to be used in conjunction with local policies to determine when a child needs to be held back. Our hope is that this happens to a very few children, that we are able to use early intervention programs that

we've put into place and are expanding, and other programs to keep children up to speed and on grade level. And if a school is holding too many of their children back each year, which will be another reason for the Office of Education Accountability to check on them, we can give assistance in that regard also.

Schools that are high-performing schools should be rewarded and given flexibility to continue to do the good job they are doing. But schools that are failing and that are having children fall behind need all the help we can give them in order to ensure every child in Georgia a quality education.

I want to add one other thing, too, and it fits into this, but it is not exactly on accountability. We have created an early intervention program where children that are behind grade level in grades K through 3, and we are expanding it to four and five this year, has a teacher for every 11 students. We fund a teacher for every 11 students. We also have provided funds to extend the school day, the school week and the school year for those children.

The states need more flexibility to integrate Title I money into those existing programs. What is happening now in many cases is there are parallel programs being run in Title I schools. And these schools generally overlap, as you well know. And we're running parallel programs that do not allow us to combine and consolidate into one program. Now, I do not want the State to say well, we will just use Title I money and do not use state money. I am willing to have some agreement and some requirement that you have to continue with your level of funding or increase it, but there needs to be flexibility. And to do that, the funds need to be paid so that they are subject to the appropriation process rather than flowing through.

Now I know there has been several advances in trying to get more flexibility in Title I money, but there is, in my view, lost and wasted money not being used to its fullest potential by not being able to integrate fully on an annual basis and make the changes in Title I money so that we can give the remedial help to make sure that an accountability system works. For an accountability system to work, you have to have the backup programs to give the assistance to the children to keep them on grade level. You have to have the extended day and the extended week and the extended year.

One of the things that has amazed me over the years is this: I have heard all of my life that children learn at different levels, and that is true. They learn in different time periods. The phrase I have always heard is, all apples do not ripen at the same speed. If that is true, then why do we have all children going to school the same number of hours a day, the same number of days a week and the same number of weeks a year? Some children need more time on tasks. And to be able to form those types of programs to keep children on grade level so that an accountability system works, we need to be able to fully integrate state and federal funds in remedial programs.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for allowing me to come.

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE RAY BARNES, GOVERNOR, STATE OF GEORGIA – SEE APPENDIX B

Chairman Boehner. Governor, thank you. We appreciate your testimony. Under Committee rules, each of us has five minutes to question our witnesses.

With that, let me begin. Let's begin on the last point that you brought up, that you need more flexibility with Title I funds to better integrate our activities with yours. I think all of us here would agree with that. Although in the past when we gave block grants to states for specific purposes, we noticed something after several years, and that is, the money got funneled off into other purposes. One of goals here is to consolidate the number of programs, focus our efforts on those students whom most need it and frankly, to beef up Title I, but to give the states the flexibility that you are calling for. How can we best do this?

Governor Barnes. Well, I will tell you this. We have got a little better experience now than we have had in past years. For example, with TANF money, which came in a block grant, that has worked very well. That money hasn't gone off to other purposes and has not sloughed off to other purposes. So we have a little better experience now. But the best way to do that is to say that the state, in my view, the state can, if they have a program, a remedial program, and they agree not to decrease the funds below the level, or have even some growth in it, state funds that existed on a certain date, that the federal Title I money can be put into that program to expand it as long as it covers all Title I eligible schools, which it will. Because what you do now, you know, the local school comes up with a plan and it goes to the state plan and it flows through the state but there is so much paperwork there that it is difficult to review and to be able to monitor what is effective and not. So when you are not doing that, you have two parallel plans. You have an intervention program that is state funded and an intervention program that is federally funded.

You have made some giant steps in that regard. One of the problems in extending the day, for example, for children that need remedial is transportation. You now can use Title I money for transportation for remedial programs. We should not let bus schedules run whether a child gets remedial work during the day, a remedial chance during the day.

Chairman Boehner. That is a novel idea.

Governor Barnes. But it happens. And when I talk to administrators and I say why do we not, just to use an example I have right now, why do we not have an extended day for those children that need it, and they say, well, you cannot get it on the bus schedule. And I always say, well, bus schedules should not be running the idea of whether a child stays on grade level or not. If we have to put more money into transportation, let us do it. And if we have the flexibility of using the funds, we can do that.

Chairman Boehner. Governor, I have got one more question and my time is about up. Do you have any suggestions or recommendations for improving President Bush's plan?

Governor Barnes. Well, of course, all I have seen is the summary. I was one of the governors who was invited to the White House. There were about 15 or 16 of us. On first blush, I have some difference of opinion only on vouchers, but we will lay that aside. Besides that, I think he is on the right path and I agree with him. I would like to see the details, of course. The devil is always in the details. But I think he is on the right path.

It is consistent with the plans that Texas and North Carolina and Kentucky and some of these other states have done in the past.

You know, for years we struggled to figure out what it was that improved schools. We were looking for the recipe back when I first came to the General Assembly in the '70s and '80s. We know what the recipe is, and it is setting high standards and measuring and pushing those standards every year. And to measure, you have to test. And to be able to push those standards, a good number of children have to go to school longer periods of time, whether it be extended day or extended year.

Chairman Boehner. I recognize my colleague from California, Mr. Miller.

Mr. Miller. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Governor, again welcome and thank you. If I just might ask a couple of questions. You stated that you thought Title I money should be subject to the appropriations process. Do you mean the district appropriations process or the state legislature?

Governor Barnes. The general assembly.

Mr. Miller. Oh, Governor, wait a minute here.

Governor Barnes. I know there are those that disagree with this, but what happens is, you cannot integrate into a program. Listen, whether we are Democrat or Republican, if you are a governor, the number one priority you have is education, or it should be. And to be able to integrate those programs in and to use the funds effectively is very difficult. In all of the education reform effort, I did not take Title I into consideration in what we did in Georgia because it was so difficult to integrate into the program.

Mr. Miller. Well let me beg to differ with you a little bit, Governor.

Governor Barnes. I know there are others that differ with me.

Mr. Miller. No, if I understand the process correctly, Title I monies that would come to this school under the Reading Excellence Act, let us say, which supports reading programs. They could be used essentially for any program that this school would decide. They could use Reading First, they could use Success For All, or they could use Reading Recovery. Essentially, we would like them to use some research-based reading program, but that is a decision that the schools make, or the district, I guess, if they wanted every school to use the same one, and Title I would simply fund that program, along with state monies.

Governor Barnes. Yes, but let me tell you what; that is a nice theory but it is not the practice. What happens is, I am not telling you at this school, but I am telling you that in many schools, we have a reading program that you will hear more about this year. We are making some changes in it this year. And what we are going to do is get the local districts a menu. You can choose these, but you have to have an assessment method every certain period of time and we will fund it, we will give you a grant. All right, now you have a local district that says all right, we choose under that plan and then we have the federal money over here, why not have them in one program?

Mr. Miller. There is no prohibition on those federal dollars being used.

Governor Barnes. There is not, but what happens is, on a local basis they never funnel down. I am not telling you that it occurs here, but I am telling you in many parts of the state they never funnel down to be able to have that flexibility. And what happens is, it becomes a plan that is repeated. A Title I plan that is sent and forwarded on every year and it becomes the same plan and it does not have the accountability measures.

Mr. Miller. Oh, I agree that it may not have the accountability measures, that is a different issue. We would hope that that would be incorporated. I think the growing trend in the Congress is to try to drive these dollars to the school site. In my state, I hate to say this, but my superintendent of education takes 70 percent of her office out of Title I funds. Now people argue we are only six or seven percent of the dollars, but all of a sudden we are funding 70 percent of that office. I had rather that go down to the schoolroom. Now that is not your problem in Georgia, I understand that.

Governor Barnes. No.

Mr. Miller. But, you know, our concern here is that these dollars get driven to those schools most in need, that they get targeted to those schools and we do not have that many of them to go around. I hope the President will increase them.

Governor Barnes. Let me reply to that directly as to this. These schools that we are trying to affect right now; last week we identified some at a meeting at our Education Coordinating Council where I require everybody that has got anything to do with education, all of the heads, university system, technical college, they come to one place once a quarter and we discuss education and the problems that exist across lines. We identified schools that at least 70 percent or more did not score basic on our test. In many cases, I will tell you that this school is an exception, but in many places in the state we are trying to change things that are repeatedly occurring each year at that local level. And when you say well, let us just send it back to the local system, and you say the General Assembly cannot affect it by trying to require some changes with that, you are repeating the same mistake every year. It is time to do something different.

Mr. Miller. Well, I do not want to get over technical here;

Governor Barnes. That is all right.

Mr. Miller. But I think, you know, those are decisions that the state boards make, the general assembly makes, and the local districts make, and that is how you spend Title I money. That is just a question of whether or not this school will have the resources to deal with a population that has a huge percentage of free and reduced price lunch and whether or not they will have the same quality programs as other schools do and Title I is to contribute to that pot. How you want to spend that money; in the old days, we used to tell you how to spend every nickel and dime. We used to call them radioactive dollars. Well that did not work.

Governor Barnes. No.

Mr. Miller. That just did not work. So now we agree, you ought to be making these determinations at the state and local level.

Governor Barnes. Except you are making them at the local level; there are 1800 schools in this state.

Mr. Miller. No, no, no, I am not saying that at all. That is your decision. That is your decision. All I am saying is that when you make the decision that you want kids reading by the time they are in third grade, our goal is to drive enough money to the poorest schools where the students are having the most difficult time and making sure that they get the same shot as kids in other neighborhoods that have more resources to do that.

Governor Barnes. I agree with you.

Mr. Miller. That is all we do in Title I.

Governor Barnes. That is all education reform is about.

Mr. Miller. That is right. I knew we would agree.

Governor Barnes. Education reform is about closing the gap. But what you are saying, and I do not mean to be argumentative with you.

Mr. Miller. And we are two Democrats going at it like this.

Governor Barnes. I do not mean to be argumentative with you, but what you do is, when you do not allow us to tailor programs on a statewide basis that target those schools and say, well, it ought to be pushed down to the local school basis, that sounds great in practice but you are trying to change those very schools, and we are too. And we are trying to change those schools and we ought to be able to concentrate both the state and federal money in one pot and push it down and say, choose from these. You have got these accountability measures and push along. Listen, that is what education reform is about. It is about gap closing, primarily on income levels. We know that. All of us know that. But we ought to be able to control that policy and push it on down so you can bring about some of the real changes rather than it get into arguments about all 1800 schools.

Mr. Miller. I suspect that I will be hearing more about this from Congressman Isakson.

Governor Barnes. You probably will.

Chairman Boehner. But, Governor, I think your goal and Mr. Miller's goal are identical. Now frankly, I share the same goal. The key to the legislation is to make sure that we in fact meet the goal we are all agreeing on, and that is getting the money to where it is needed and giving you the flexibility to maximize those dollars to help those students who most need it.

Mr. Isakson. Mr. Chairman, out of respect for the Governor's time, which is tight, I am only going to ask one question, but before I do, I want to make sure I introduce the first lady of Georgia, Marie Barnes, who is standing over at the side. Marie, welcome.

Governor Barnes. I used to say that she was an old schoolteacher, but I was corrected, she is a former schoolteacher.

Mr. Isakson. I did not know whether to say Myree or Marie. She is first lady, so I stuck with Marie. We are glad to have you, Marie.

Roy, on the testing and accountability, I hope, if you cannot answer this maybe Mike can. In the last two weeks Fair Oaks Elementary had 12 new students enroll and six students leave.

Governor Barnes. Yes.

Mr. Isakson. The diversity of those 12 students was all across the board, for 50 percent of this school, English is not their primary language. And there is a tremendous turnover by the nature of the transient work that their parents do.

Governor Barnes. Yes. How do you take that into consideration?

Mr. Isakson. Now, I 100 percent agree with testing. You and I have talked a lot about this and your concept, mine, and what the President is talking about are exactly correct. The President does not want to tell you what test. He just wants to make sure you test and make sure that you cross-reference it.

Governor Barnes. With NAPE, yes.

Mr. Isakson. But how does Fair Oaks Elementary, since we are here, how can we be sure how we are doing; just like in business, you do like-store sales, we need to do like-student improvement where you do not penalize them for that.

Governor Barnes. You do. Mike will give you the details later, but a child should be required to be present in that school for a certain period of time before they go into the overall accountability measures. It is not right to bring a child in five days before a test or the CRCT is given and hold that school responsible. The teachers and the school should have a fair opportunity. We are still working on those numbers. I mean, you know, that time period.

The other thing that you have to do, Johnny, that follows up on that is you have to have a good student information system, which we are developing. So that if a child comes within the state, that information about where they were is available electronically to that school. Now we appropriated $50 million last year to do that student information system. We are building it right now. I think Price Waterhouse is to one that is doing it; won the bid or something. We should have it up and running in about 18 months.

Mr. Isakson. Yeah, I remember student information systems.

Governor Barnes. I am sure you do. It is not the first round with it.

Mr. Isakson. I want to thank you, on behalf of the Committee, for taking your time to come and for bringing Marie. We appreciate that.

Governor Barnes. Thank you. Good to see you.

Chairman Boehner. Mr. Collins.

Mr. Collins. Yes, sir.

Governor Barnes. Oh, I am sorry, Mac.

Governor Barnes. I did not mean to overlook you, Mac. Mac and I used to serve in the Senate together years ago.

Mr. Collins. Governor, we had a little bit of this conversation last week I believe by phone.

Governor Barnes. Yes.

Mr. Collins. First, Mr. Chairman, let me say thank you for your attendance here in Georgia and Cobb County this morning, but also for taking just a few minutes to meet with several of the superintendents from the Third District of Georgia who are here with us. We had previously scheduled a meeting this morning in another part of the state, which was down around Callaway Gardens, for the school superintendents of the Third District, but after this hearing was scheduled, we called and they were agreeable to coming up here because they wanted to participate and listen to what was going on here today. So we welcome them and thank them for coming and thank you for spending some time with them. And thanks for allowing me to participate.

Governor, as I said last week, one of the problems with the approach to funding that you want to take goes back to a lot of things that have already been evident here this morning. There seems to be a distance of trust on some previous programs and how they have been conducted, how those funds have come down and been merged with state funds and then used in other manners, maybe not the same year, but in years to come. Also, one of our theories or philosophies of many of us in Congress is less government and more local control. I think what you are proposing, merging those funds, would increase the size of the state's participation and probably take away some of the local control, which is adverse to the thinking of many of us in Congress.

Governor Barnes. Well, I disagree with you. I mean, it does not take away local control. What you do is provide a larger pot of money to participate in the remedial programs that you have. I mean, the State of Georgia, for example, which is entirely proper in my view, says when you receive funds to hire teachers, you have to use 80 percent of it to hire a teacher. Do you think that takes away local control when you say that money for teachers has to be spent for teachers?

The standard should be in the improvement of the child. I mean, it is nice to talk about local control and this and that and the other, but believe me, the school districts in the state will make sure that they have sufficient flexibility under the systems. I mean, they elect folks and they are there in the General Assembly. You have been there and you know that. Are you satisfied with the way Title I is done right now? Are you satisfied with the results that come out of it? If you are not, then you need to try something different. I suggest to you that if you look at the results out of Title I schools, there has not been the improvement; there has been improvement in some, but there has

not been the improvement that we should have. Why? Because it is Balkanized in the approach that it gives. Without the state board and the state superintendent and the General Assembly being able to say, listen, these are programs where we want to put money to, then it gets diluted.

Mr. Collins. Well, I still have a problem with the fact that we have,

Governor Barnes. It sounds like you and Congressman Miller ought to get together. You all have got bipartisan support coming there.

Mr. Miller. That would be a first, huh, Mac?

Mr. Collins. That would be a first.
You know, in the 159 counties that we have, there is quite a difference in the makeup of the counties and the tax digest of the counties.

Governor Barnes. Yeah but algebra is algebra in all the counties and reading is reading in all of the counties. This is not about different make-ups. This is about where children learn the basic skills in each county, and surely we do not set different standards and expectations for kids in different parts of the state. That is a part of the problems we have had before. You know, they are from a poor area, or they are black, or they are from a different demographic group. That is one of the things that we have to fight. You have to make sure that the standard is set on a high enough expectation that every child in the state can learn and they will learn and they will learn to read at certain levels or do mathematics at a certain level. I have heard that over the years. You know, well the state is different. Children compete in the same job market and we either set high expectations for all of them or we are going to lose them.

Mr. Collins. Well, there is a difference from county to county, system to system. You know, in the Third District we have a system with 47,000 students and we have a system with less than 900.

Governor Barnes. Sure there is a difference. Does that mean that the child from a 900-system shouldn't be able to be reading on grade level by the end of grade three?

Mr. Collins. Your answer is?

Governor Barnes. Of course not. The one from a small system and a large system should have the same chance, and the way you do that is you consolidate and be able to give those that are poorer, because generally many times in a smaller system are poor, more access to more programs and you do that by funneling and being able to give those resources to those poor students.

Mr. Collins. We will hold you accountable for that statement based on your appropriations of state funds because there are some systems that do not seem to have adequate funds to produce those same results that you are talking about. And every child does have the right and should have the right and must learn to read.

Governor Barnes. Sure. I agree with you. And that is exactly what all of this funding controversy has been about in this last year. Instead of equalizing at 90 percent, we are equalizing at 75 percent. We have a school construction plan that is going through right

now that gives to poorer systems larger amounts of construction money. You are exactly right. But if you do not allow that to be done in the process of the General Assembly in making overall policy then you lose the impact of it.

Mr. Collins. We will not debate state politics here. It is not the time and place, but we will have that debate.

Governor Barnes. Okay.

Mr. Collins. Thank you.

Chairman Boehner. Thank you, Mac.
Governor, I do want to say thank you for taking time out this morning and sharing with us what is happening here in Georgia. Your input this morning will be very helpful to us as we proceed in the moving of the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Thank you.

Governor Barnes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Boehner. If the other witnesses could come forward and take your seats, we are going to continue to move along.

While everybody is settling in, let me begin to introduce all six of our witnesses. First is Ms. Linda Schrenko, who is the Superintendent of Schools here in Georgia. She will be followed by Mr. Bill Hammond, the Instructional Coordinator, DeKalb County Public Schools in Decatur, Georgia; followed by Pat Biggerstaff, who is the Assistant Principal at J.A. Maxwell Elementary School in Thomson, Georgia; followed by Michael Vollmer, Executive Director of the Office of Education Accountability, Georgia State Department of Education. Then we will hear from Dr. Alvin Willbanks, Superintendent of Schools, Gwinnett County and Dr. Cindy Lee, who is the Associate, Cindy Loe, I'm sorry, Associate Superintendent for Organizational Advancement, also here in Gwinnett County.

With that, Linda, if you would like to begin. We would like to ask all of our witnesses to keep your statements to five minutes. Your entire written statement will be made part of the record and that will keep things moving.

STATEMENT OF MS. LINDA SCHRENKO, GEORGIA STATE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT, ATLANTA, GEORGIA

Ms. Schrenko. Thank you, Chairman Boehner, and thank you for coming to Georgia and for listening to those of us that implement these programs.

Chairman Boehner. Do you have a microphone?

Ms. Schrenko. Can you hear any better?

Chairman Boehner. I can hear you fine. I want to make sure the people in the back can hear you.

Ms. Schrenko. My testimony today centers around Reading First, our reading initiative in Georgia. I have to tell you first that we copied Texas' program, so if there are some similarities between the Bush proposal and what Georgia is doing, it is because we did not reinvent the wheel.

In 1996, after we reviewed our curriculum standards and our student achievement scores and we found that we were extremely low, we started trying to do an analysis of what the problem was. At that time, we got a new Board Chairman, Johnny Isakson, who served with me for three years.

We decided after looking at all of our achievement scores and interviewing 17-year olds who had dropped out of school, we asked these 17-year olds, what would have kept you in school, what could we have done differently for you during our K through 12 years that might have kept you in your school career? Over 80 percent of them said, if I had of learned how to read before I left third grade, I probably would have stayed in school because I could have read the science book, I could have read the social studies book, I could have been successful. So with that in mind, we contacted the Congressional Research Office and asked them what the best reading programs around were and they gave us some suggestions and we hired a reading director to begin a program called Reading First.

We started with federal funds, some of the flexibility that you gave us. We chose eight schools to begin Reading First. What we said to those schools was, one, you have to train your teachers. They cannot just use whole language. They have got to teach a phonics-based approach to reading. They have to teach comprehension, they have to test. All of the teachers have to be willing to go through this training and you have to be willing to have students who are not on grade level have three hours a day of reading instruction because if they are ever going to catch up they need additional time in the reading subjects.

We then went out and in those eight schools we had a pilot project for two years. In the pilots we demonstrated up to 20 and 30 percentile points of improvement. We further found that the earlier we caught these kids in kindergarten, we could raise their scores 20 or 30, one school, 32 points. Regardless of poverty, regardless of background, we could raise reading scores.

So after two years and some success stories in the eight schools, we asked the General Assembly to fund a proven project. They funded the first year 350 schools to be trained and go into the Reading First program, and the second year they added 250 more. So around 650 schools are in the Reading First program. Most of those schools are in their first year, but there are a few of them in their second year. What I am pleased to report to you is that regardless of whether they are in first grade, second grade, third grade, they are showing improvement in reading. They show the most improvement if we catch them in kindergarten, next highest in first grade and in the third grade they still show gains but not nearly as much as they do in the first two grades. Parents continue to write to us pleased that their children can read. We have had students up to the eighth grade level in Reading First and parents writing to us to say that for the first time ever their child can read. We have, in the schools that have Reading First, decreased the

number of students in the lowest 25 percent of the test scores and increased the students in the top percentiles of test scores and raised the average scores overall. We have a school in north Georgia that gained 32 points. We have a school close to my hometown, and Pat will tell you about that in a little while, a very poor school that reached the 89th percentile or 83rd?

Ms. Biggerstaff. The school scored in the ninety-second percentile in kindergarten.

Ms. Schrenko. Oh, the ninety-second percentile.

So we have had success where the program is implemented correctly. If you refuse to give the three hours, if you refuse to use the phonics-based approach to instruction, you don't get nearly the success that we do in the schools that use all of the components of the program.

That is why when the Bush proposal came out, I was delighted to see Reading First, because I think it can do for the United States what Reading First is doing for Georgia, and that very simply is to ensure that every child can read by third grade, or by the time they leave third grade. We can affect dropout rates; we can improve our quality of life simply by starting with these kids and teaching everybody to read. So I am wholehearted supporter of the Bush proposal, and I hope the faster you can pass it the quicker we will get started.

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF MS. LINDA SCHRENKO, GEORGIA STATE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT, ATLANTA, GEORGIA – SEE APPENDIX C

Chairman Boehner. Linda, thank you. Mr. Hammond, you may testify.

STATEMENT OF BILL HAMMOND, INSTRUCTIONAL COORDINATOR, DEKALB COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS, DECATUR, GEORGIA

Mr. Hammond. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am Bill Hammond and I am an instructional coordinator with the DeKalb County, Georgia schools. I am also a member of the International Reading Association, the Georgia Reading Association and the International Reading Association's Urban Initiatives Commission. I appreciate the opportunity to come and share with you some of my personal concerns as well as the concerns reflected by the International Reading Association.

I am very pleased that this hearing is being held here in Georgia because our population, as our Superintendent and our Governor have alluded to, is very much reflective of the needs and the successes of the nation with respect to reading instruction. Our state has 42.9 percent of its students on free and reduced lunches and our reading scores are very close to the national average on the state reading report card for fourth grade, and our state required test data reflects a set of scores that reflects some progress

but not consistent progress.

To that end, the International Reading Association has addressed some of the concerns and made some recommendations regarding a list of children's rights. That is reflected in a statement entitled ``Making a Difference Means Making It Different.'' There are 10 children's bills of rights that are reflected in my statement. In the interest of time, I will not elaborate all of those, but they are there for your reading.

The essential part of the testimony here and the time that I hope will be addressed, will be the section that we will call to your attention is those kinds of things that are recommended that need to be done and need to be addressed. From the standpoint of the Association, there are 10 recommendations.

Number one. Teachers working with our neediest children need to be professional teachers. In too many schools, nonqualified teachers and paraprofessionals are employed to provide instruction to the neediest children. This is a source of major concern of professional educators, as well as parents, and rightfully so.

Number two. Even the best teachers need professional development, and programs such as Title I should provide funds for training based on teachers' assessment of their needs. This is occurring and it does need to continue being addressed. This is, in part of what our Governor was alluding to when he spoke to the issue of flexibility; greater flexibility of Title I funds.

Now Title I school-wide projects should address the needs of those who are most at risk of school failure. Too often resources are diverted from this core mission. These programs should be changed so that the funds may be used only for core curriculum and for the neediest students. I think any discussion with any person that has been involved at a local level, such as I have been for 32 years, would give you some insight into that process and to what occurs in terms of the misuse and the misappropriation of those funds.

Early intervention is critical. Local Title I programs should expand their outreach activities to coordinate with Head Start and other professional programs.

Number five. Assessment needs to be ongoing and linked directly to instruction. Assessments must reflect students' instructional programs and provide teachers with useful feedback. Students and their parents need to understand the assessment process. In Georgia there has been a consistent effort on the part of the school board and the school system, the State Board of Education, to mold that assessment process into something that is going to be meaningful not only to teachers but to parents and to students as well. That needs to continue and it needs to be supported.

Accountability encourages involvement and enhances program effectiveness. Teachers, schools, districts and communities need to be held accountable for publicizing the goals of all of their programs. Funding should be contingent upon shared commitment and accountability. And you will hear, I suppose, from several of our folks here, statements regarding accountability and the support of that statement. At the local level there is strong support for accountability. Teachers support accountability, but not on their back alone. That is the part of it that has alienated our teachers and why we have a significant teacher shortage in many, many instances. We are doing them a disservice

by just burdening them with that business without the other support.

Number seven. Services for children need to be coordinated to fit the needs of the children, not to fit the children in the service. And that is not something that is particularly new. When I first came into education and we had the ESEA program, it seems like 100 years ago now, that program adapted the children to their needs, and as such it was not successful. We have duplicated that failure time and time again at the state level, and at the local level and even at the national level. There does need to be a change and there does need to be differences that are appropriated there.

Programs should be based on a wide range of research. Research programs should be tailored to local and individual student needs, but they should also be based on proven principles of effective schooling subjected to independent objective review. My organization, the International Reading Association, reflects the full spectrum of viewpoints on reading. We battle more than Democrats and Republicans in terms of what we do and what we perceive as reading. We do spend the most amount of time investigating the practices, and there are some effective practices that have been identified. We do know what research historically has shown us about effective schooling. It is there. We do know how to go about our business and what kinds of things are practical and effective. It would be very much appreciated if that body of literature would be continued to be considered and to be a basis upon which action is taken, and those kinds of things I look forward to.

Chairman Boehner. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. Hammond. Thank you so much.

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF BILL HAMMOND, INSTRUCTIONAL COORDINATOR, DEKALB COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS, DECATUR, GEORGIA
SEE APPENDIX D

Chairman Boehner. Ms. Biggerstaff, you may testify.

STATEMENT OF PAT BIGGERSTAFF, ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL, J.A. MAXWELL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, THOMSON, GEORGIA

Ms. Biggerstaff. Thank you very much. First of all, I would like to thank all of you for having us here today.

Chairman Boehner. Pat, if we can move the microphone over to you.

Ms. Biggerstaff. First of all, I would like to thank all of you for having us here today. I want to let you know that I brought with me one of our kindergarten teachers, Ms. Deborah Hodges, and one of our students, Ms. Breanna Burns and her mother, Sharon

Burns. Possibly later on you might want to ask them something pertaining to what I have to say today.

Gentlemen, four years ago J.A. Maxwell Elementary, a pre-K through second grade school had a major power shortage. Students did not have the power to read. Of course, no one was really surprised at that because, you see, Maxwell is located in a rural town of Thomson, Georgia. Over half the students are minority and most students are from lower socioeconomic status and 68 percent of our students receive free or reduced lunch. Many students come from one-parent homes; many are latch-key kids due to parents working shifts, and many are at-risk students due to limited vocabulary and experiences. Maxwell is a Comprehensive Title I School. All of the above are common reasons and excuses as to why children cannot read.

In the fall of 1997, Ms. Hanna Fowler became the principal and I became the assistant principal at Maxwell. Together we began to study what teachers were teaching and it was not reading. We were encouraged by Governor Zell Miller's heart for education. We were encouraged that Superintendent Linda Schrenko was a classroom teacher herself and was well aware of the power of reading. She employed Dr. Cindy Cupp, author of the Reading Program, to guide a reading program for Georgia's schools and when Superintendent Schrenko unveiled the Georgia Reading First Program, it was the beginning of the end of the power shortage at Maxwell.

In 1998 we became a Reading First school and immediately test scores began to rise. This is our third year as a Reading First school and all areas of assessment continue to improve and that includes math. Last year our reading total for kindergarten at Maxwell was the 92nd percentile. This, of course, means that our students scored 92 percent or better than the students in the nation taking the test.

Now Reading First requires ongoing training of all teachers in the instruction of reading. This includes your PE teachers and music teachers and so forth. Reading First says that all students will have three hours of reading per day per child. There seemed to be some question if that meant every child having three hours of reading a day, but yes, that is what we do at Maxwell. So Hanna and I implemented an AB Day Block Schedule to support teachers so that they would have the time to do this.

Reading First requires the use of research-proven programs and effective reading practices. Explicit systematic scripted phonics combined with sight-word instruction and comprehension are strong components of Reading First. A nationally known assessment and that basic literacy test and other assessments are given to chart individual and classroom progress and hold us accountable for student learning. No more excuses. Professionalism and morale are very high at the Mighty, Mighty Max.

Since the implementation of Reading First, we have become a Georgia School of Excellence; we have done the Pay for Performance and we have received many other honors and awards. Teachers and administrators from other schools are visiting Maxwell. Legislators and community members are visiting our school and we appreciate the generous amount of time that Congressman Charlie Norwood has spent visiting us. We thank you all for this meeting today because, you see, by sharing our success of the Georgia Reading First program with others, we can ensure that students in our nation have this power to read. Our advice is for every school in our nation to plug into the

Reading First program.

Now I would like to introduce you to Breanna. Breanna, could you come up for just a minute? She is a second grade student at Maxwell and she is reading at a fourth grade reading level and she just wants to read a little bit to you. Smile at those men up there.

Ms. Biggerstaff. Give them your Ms. America smile. Tell them your name.

Ms. Burns. My name is Breanna Burns.

Ms. Biggerstaff. And your teacher's name?

Ms. Burns. Ms. Thomas.

Ms. Biggerstaff. What are you going to read for us today?

Ms. Burns. Super Fudge.

Ms. Biggerstaff. All right, read a little bit.

Ms. Burns. That night mom and dad went out and grandma stayed at home with us. We all watched TV together and my little sister was on grandmother's lap having her late night bottle. So how is kindergarten going Grandma asked Fudge? I have a nice teacher he said. She says I am as sweet as my name."

Ms. Biggerstaff. All right, thank you, Breanna.
We think she has got the power to do whatever she wants to do in life because she is a very good reader. And I might add that not only can she read, but she can comprehend as well. That is a very important part of Reading First.

Thank you.

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF PAT BIGGERSTAFF, ASSISTANT PRICNCIPAL, J.A. MAXWELL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, THOMSON, GEORGIA – SEE APPENDIX E

Chairman Boehner. Mr. Vollmer.

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL VOLLMER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF EDUCATION ACCOUNTABILITY, GEORGIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, ATLANTA, GEORGIA

Mr. Vollmer. That is a hard act to follow, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Boehner. It sure is.

Mr. Vollmer. I will try not the read anything because I could not equal that performance.

I want to thank you very much for your time and effort and commitment to this. I feel like we are in really good hands because of Johnny and Mac sitting up there, those two great individuals helped us implement two of the nation's finest education programs in the last five to ten years, the Hope Scholarship Program and the Georgia Pre-kindergarten Program. What I would like to do is spend about five minutes talking to you about accountability from the state level.

You know, the popular statement the train has left the station is very appropriate when we look at accountability in education. The train indeed has left the station on accountability. Just about every governor in the country, as well as our new President, is talking about either implementing an accountability system or have already implemented accountability systems.

In Georgia, the time of accountability has come, not for a punitive reason, but rather to focus on student achievement throughout our state, 1.4 million students, on a school-by-school basis, 1800 schools. In Georgia, we are currently spending over $10 billion a year in local and state tax money for our education system. When we look at our share of the state budget allocated for education, in the early 1990s it was in the 50 percent range. It is now approaching 58 percent of our state budget that is going to education. I think it shows a remarkable commitment of resources by Georgia's citizens.

However, when we compare ourselves to other states in school completion, national assessment tests and drop-outs, we always fall off from the national average. For instance, we lose 27,000 students a year between grades nine and twelve through drop-out. If we look at our 1990 census in the state of Georgia, we have more students dropping out per year, 27,000, than populate 104 of 159 of our counties. So the question many Georgia taxpayers are asking is, what is happening with this commitment? On top of this, Georgia has become the largest importer of college-educated talent in the nation. So as a state, we have got to focus on how we can home-grow some good students, some college-educated students to fill the economic needs of our state.

What I would like to spend the remaining part of my time on is the Georgia accountability system and the four fundamental principles of that system.

Number one. Assessment of student progress in every grade. Not just a couple, in every grade.

Two is ensuring that no child or group is left behind.

Thirdly, focusing on absolute levels of student achievement. Here is a bar. But I think more importantly zeroing in on student performance gains as well.

And fourthly, and probably most importantly is providing support for those schools that we find that have a low level of student achievement.

First, there must be assessment of student progress in every grade level. You know, accountability systems come in all sizes. In some states school performance is judged by maybe a test in the fourth grade, maybe a test in the sixth grade, maybe a test in the eighth grade and one in the high school. You can certainly have an accountability of that system in that mode. However, we are more interested in following a student's performance on an annual basis and past that annual basis, grade to grade, to see where student achievement is either going well or not going so well. So we believe our role is much more than just pinpointing low performing schools, it is pinpointing where our students are not meeting expectations and what to do with that.

Secondly, ensuring that no child or group is left behind. In many states accountability systems look at general student populations. In Georgia, what we will do is measure student achievement in so-called disaggregated means, or really more or less in common English, we are going to break down student groups, male, female, white, Hispanic and based on socioeconomic status. Why is that so important? Because as you all have learned, there is a gap in student achievement in many of these groups. What we want to do is identify those gaps and see what we can do to close those gaps in all areas.

Mr. Vollmer. Is that it? Just lastly, if I can, sir, please. Focusing on absolute levels of student achievement, what I would implore this Committee to look at is when you are setting accountability standards or at least looking at the state setting accountability standards, keep in mind that it is great to have that absolute bar, but I think it is even better to judge the performance gains of schools. That way, you will be not pushing teachers out of low performing schools into higher performing schools, but giving teachers in lower performing schools the incentives to stay there and ratchet student achievement up.

Thank you very much for your time, sir.

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF MICHAEL VOLLMER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF EDUCATION ACCOUNTABILITY, GEORGIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, ATLANTA, GEORGIA – SEE APPENDIX F

Chairman Boehner. Dr. Willbanks.

STATEMENT OF DR. ALVIN WILLBANKS, SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS, GWINNETT COUNTY, LAWRENCEVILLE, GEORGIA

Mr. Willbanks. Mr. Chairman, Congressman Miller, Isakson and Collins, I thank you for this opportunity and for your work on behalf of education and children to ensure that no child is left behind.

My testimony will be from the perspective of the local school district here in Georgia.

Certainly I subscribe to the belief that assessment that is appropriate, timely and ongoing is an essential part of improving instruction and increasing student achievement; thus, I view accountability as a value and not something to be feared. Several years ago Gwinnett County citizens made their expectations known to us. They wanted clear communication about and accountability for what students are taught and what they learn. They wanted to be certain that every child was held to a high academic expectation and they wanted our assurance that every child would receive the time and opportunities needed to meet these expectations.

We embarked on a number of initiatives to ensure that we could meet this charge. We developed and implemented curriculum standards in every subject and course at every grade level, standards that we expect all students to meet. To be certain that they indeed did meet the standard, we established performance standards in the form of a gateway assessment in language, arts, mathematics, science and social studies at grades four, five, seven and eight, a graduation exam in language, art, science and social studies and an end-of-course exam for all high school courses were developed.

To ensure that our schools are doing everything they can to help our students be successful, we implemented performance objectives and standards for every school. Along the way, we have informed parents and the community of our progress and involved all of our stakeholders; teachers, parents, community, even students, in the progress. The result has been increased student achievement despite a rapidly growing population and significant changes in our demographics.

These initiatives provided the focus we needed to assure a quality education for all students. We began with a vision that our students would be provided a world-class education and a mission to pursue excellence for every student and hold ourselves accountable against accepted standards.

We believe that the most powerful, positive effect of our standards-based reform is this: It has focused attention on student learning and has shifted the conversation from one about different groups of students meeting different standards to all students being held and taught to meet high standards. Holding ourselves accountable for students reaching those high standards just makes sense. I ask you, is it important for students, parents and teachers to know clearly what is expected in the classroom? Should all schools be accountable for providing each student world class education? Does it make sense to have a consistent standard for teachers to use in planning instruction, intervening and providing extensions for students? Should parents and educators know with confidence that our graduates are well prepared for the future? We believe the answer to all of these questions is yes and that accountability for reaching high standards is the way to achieve goals.

In our county, our standards-based approach began with a comprehensive and rigorous curriculum that demands high levels of learning for all students. We call it our Academic Knowledge and Skill or AKS. We spent more than four years aligning that curriculum with top quality instruction and a program of meaningful assessments that truly tests what we expect to be taught and learned. Our assessments included the Gateway Test, included short-answer questions and extended-response items, as well as multiple-choice questions. In other words, our tests demand high levels of thinking and performance from our students. We undergird our standards-based approach with support for both teachers and students. Materials, support staff and professional

development are provided to those delivering the curriculum. Targeted interventions are provided for those struggling to learn it, and extensions are offered for students who can do more.

Obviously that is not the whole picture. For students to reach high standards, they must have competent and caring teachers who are prepared to teach those standards. We allocated our personnel based on the needs of the school. We differentiated for schools with high mobility, many disadvantaged students and large numbers of students who are achieving below grade level. We support them with resources and targeted staff development based on the need of the student. But professional development opportunities are essential for all teachers when implementing high standards.

The State provides all systems in Georgia with funding for staff development. On top of the State's contribution, Gwinnett provides additional dollars to provide professional development activities. We offer centralized staff development to support system initiatives, and because our principals regard staff development as important and valuable, they devoted still more local funds for training for their teachers and staff. There is a focus to our staff development activities, both at the central and local levels.

As the State increases its professional development requirement for teacher renewal, Gwinnett continues to require a minimum number of staff development hours based on the needs of local school faculty. These needs have included using standards, designing appropriate assessments and interpreting test data; all are important for raising student achievement.

Chairman Boehner. Thank you, Dr. Willbanks.

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ALVIN WILLBANKS, SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS, GWINNETT COUNTY, LAWRENCEVILLE, GEORGIA – SEE APPENDIX G

Chairman Boehner. Dr. Loe.

STATEMENT OF DR. CINDY LOE, ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT FOR ORGANIZATIONAL ADVANCEMENT, GWINNETT COUNTY, LAWRENCEVILLE, GEORGIA

Ms. Loe. Good morning. I will be speaking from the blue folder that you have and there is a handout in there with a slide presentation of Gwinnett County Schools.

Superintendent Willbanks shared reasons we have embarked on standards-based reform. I will share how we did that and what the results have been since we began in 1996. On page 5 at the bottom of that presentation handout, you see a slide called ``Putting It All Together," which basically takes you through the steps in the process that

we have put in place and we believe would be the steps that would be required for putting in place any standards-based reform. It begins with the vision and mission and goals for high expectations for all students, classified through content standards, in our case called the Academic Knowledge and Skills or the AKS, that students are expected to learn at every grade level. It is important to clearly communicate these to students and parents and each year. You have a copy of one of these in your blue folder; we provide a handout to each parent, student and teacher of what are the content standards that the student is expected to learn and be able to do by the time they leave that grade level at the end of the year. Note that they are correlated to the QCC, the Georgia curriculum, the PSAT, the SAT, the ITBS and even the Character Education initiative that are part of Georgia's comprehensive curriculum, so that if teachers are teaching the contents standard, they are teaching the test. And that is what we want them to do because the test covers the entire curriculum and that is aligned with any test or measurements that they might take.

As Governor Barnes said, once you have excellent content standards, then you must have in place measurements in order to know whether or not students are achieving the curriculum. If teachers are teaching the curriculum, then students will do well on the test. If they do not do well on the tests, interventions must be put in place and those in Gwinnett County have included a comprehensive three-week summer school for approximately 10 percent of our students who are in danger of retention since we eliminated social promotion in 1996. Over half of those students go on and are promoted, but those that are not are available to be in transition classes. Those transition classes assure that students do not repeat the same negative experience in the grade level that they had the year before, because we all know that straight retention does not work.

On page 8 of this slide presentation handout, you will see two slides that show you that free and reduced lunch participation in Gwinnett during this time has doubled and our ESOL students who do not speak English have tripled in this same time that we put in place these content standards.

If Gwinnett County had done the good job it had always done prior to 1996, but had seen and put in place these increases in ESOL and free and reduced lunch, we could anticipate that our test scores would have dropped over the past five years. But in fact, since we put this program in place, we have seen in 1999 and in 2000, our highest SAT scores ever.

And on page 10 of your handout, you will see that that is with 72 percent of Gwinnett students taking the SAT, well above the national average and the Georgia average, both on percent taking and on score.

But more importantly, as Governor Barnes said, we know that the real proof of improving standards and reform in our country is based on closing the gap between white students and minority students. The slide on the bottom of page 10 shows you that while our white students' scores are increasing, for instance, over the past three years, 13 points on the SAT, our African-American student scores, which is our largest minority in Gwinnett, have increased at two and a half times that rate with an increase of 31 points. We are seeing that same kind of trend on other testing like the PSAT results that you see there, the number of students taking the rigorous advanced placement courses and tests and we are proud to say that in 2000, we are not only well above the national mean, but the global mean on that test that is given in English-speaking schools throughout the

world.

Georgia's CRCT program, which Governor Barnes and Mr. Vollmer discussed, is where Georgia tests our QCC, the Georgia curriculum. Gwinnett students participated in that testing last year for the first time and on page 13, you see that Gwinnett students were significantly above that score.

On our own Gateway CRCTs, we have seen improvement every year over the past four years that we have had that program in place.

On the bottom of page 16, you will see that our accountability plan is a simple one. Students are responsible for learning the curriculum, the AKS. They are responsible for showing that they have learned that through a variety of assessments including the SAT, the ITBS, our own Gateways and the state tests. The school's responsibility is to work together to make sure that students learn the AKS and we are all accountable through our results-based evaluation system, or RBES, for communicating those results to our parents and our business partners who serve on our local councils. And one way we do that is through our accountability report, and you have a copy from one of our schools in your packet, as we work together to increase student learning.

And finally, if I could just mention that standards reform is hard and it is difficult for teachers and they need support. They need support to work smarter, not harder. And you see from the slides some of the technological tools that we have available to teachers so that they can at their desktop computer be aware of lesson plans, test questions and other curricula support technological tools that are also available to parents on the Internet.

We are putting in place in Gwinnett a student information system and a data warehouse which both support teachers as they do the very difficult work of increasing achievement for all students.

Thank you.

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF CINDY LOE, ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT FOR ORGANIZATIONAL ADVANCEMENT, GWINNETT COUNTY, LAWRENCEVILLE, GEORGIA – SEE APPENDIX H

Chairman Boehner. Dr. Loe, thank you, and let me thank all of the witnesses for your viewpoints and your excellent testimony.

Mr. Vollmer, under the Georgia system, who is ultimately responsible for every child getting a good education?

Mr. Vollmer. That is a very insightful question.

The concern, if I can give you some background on this.

Chairman Boehner. No, no. I do not want to get too way laid here. I want to know who is responsible.

Mr. Vollmer. I would have to say the local school system, the local school.

Chairman Boehner. Well, that is kind of a building; it is a group of people. When I think about accountability in my business, there was somebody that had the ultimate responsibility. And if somebody does not have the ultimate responsibility, then they are not really accountable. So I am trying to determine under your system who is ultimately responsible.

Mr. Vollmer. Our system stops at the school door. We will be looking at each of the 1800 schools in this state, issuing them a grade. However, we will not go further than that in terms of assessing teachers; that will be the ultimate responsibility of that principal in that particular school.

Chairman Boehner. So it is the principal of the school building, at least in your view.

Mr. Vollmer. I think so, I think to a large part, sir.

Chairman Boehner. Dr. Willbanks, in your view of this, who do you think has the ultimate responsibility to ensure that every child gets the tools they need to get a good education and meet the standards as outlined under the system?

Mr. Willbanks. In my system, I would be, sir. I share that responsibility with the school principal.

Chairman Boehner. I can understand that you are responsible, you are the superintendent. How many schools do you have in your system?

Mr. Willbanks. Eighty-six.

Chairman Boehner. So obviously you cannot be responsible for each of those children.

Mr. Willbanks. Correct.

Chairman Boehner. Somewhat, but in terms of delegating your authority, do you think it is the school principal that is ultimately responsible for what happens in their building?

Mr. Willbanks. I certainly think the school principal sets the tone and the expectations for what goes on in that school. Obviously, unless accountability is at the classroom level, I do not think you ever have true accountability.

Chairman Boehner. Now of the 86 schools that you have in your district, do all 86 schools have equal opportunity to provide the resources and the services necessary for every child to get a good education?

Mr. Willbanks. They do equally, yes, sir.

Chairman Boehner. Do you spend the same amount of money in each of the 86 schools?

Mr. Willbanks. No, sir.

Chairman Boehner. Is it on a per-child basis?

Mr. Willbanks. It would not be on a per-child basis. We have differentiated staffing. Those schools with a very high diverse student population, they get additional staff, which certainly would impact the per-pupil cost.

Chairman Boehner. Knowing that low-income students require more services than students that come from better neighborhoods, would you guess that you provide more money to those schools than you do in the better schools?

Mr. Willbanks. On an individual student basis, yes. Our school board for years has approved of that and allowed us to have a formula whereby we differentiate staffing, giving to some schools different staffing formulas than we would to other schools.

Chairman Boehner. I have heard a great deal over the last month or so about the fact that in certain states, they do not have equitable funding issues. Apparently that is not as big an issue here in Georgia, but putting the accountability pieces and standards all in place and the testing all in place is the easier part of this process; difficult but easier than actually getting there.

One of the concerns that others and I have is that while the standards go in place and everybody is expected to meet them, that the resources necessary in lower income areas, in lower socio-economic neighborhoods, are not there to help those children, to the extent they are in better neighborhoods.

Mr. Vollmer, has that been a problem in Georgia?

Mr. Vollmer. It has been a problem. There is no denying that, sir. But I think what you are seeing now is where are the problems at in our state, how do we address them in terms of, as the Governor mentioned, 20 extra days of the school year, remediation from K through 5. So you are seeing the state really focusing on where can we best put some extra money.

Chairman Boehner. Mr. Miller.

Mr. Miller. Thank you very much. This panel has raised about a thousand questions in my head and I have got five minutes.

I do not want to cut anybody off, but just quickly, do you have enough experience yet with Reading First that, you know how the youngsters who have gone through Reading First are doing on NAPE or will this be the first year for fourth graders?

Ms. Biggerstaff. Well, I can only speak from my experience as reading specialist and I have had 29 years of experience in the classroom teaching children how to read.

Chairman Boehner. You are qualified.

Ms. Biggerstaff. We have had Reading First in our school for three years, starting with kindergarten, first and second. This is our third year, so this is a product of three years of Reading First in our school.

Mr. Miller. I understand. So they have not gone on to take the NAPE.

Ms. Biggerstaff. No.

Mr. Miller. That has not happened anywhere in the state yet?

Ms. Biggerstaff. Not yet.

Mr. Miller. I did not know. Obviously the fourth grade scores you do have on the NAPE. We have to assume everybody in the state wants to raise scores, but we have not subjected this program to assessment. As I understand it, this is not a State mandate, this is a program that you have expanded to about 600 schools, but schools can still choose another reading program, is that correct?

Ms. Schrenko. Yes, sir. Reading First is a grant and you have to apply for it, you have to agree to go through the training, you have to agree to test your children. It is entirely voluntary on the part of local systems.

Mr. Miller. So if a school took Reading Recovery or wanted to do Accelerated Reader, they could do that. Would they all then be tested on the same state test as to proficiency?

Ms. Schrenko. Yes.

Mr. Miller. As to proficiency?

Ms. Schrenko. Yes.

Mr. Miller. So at some point, you will be able to establish how these programs are translating in terms of the state standards.

Ms. Schrenko. Yes, sir.

Mr. Miller. You consider both of those programs, Accelerated Reader and Reading First, would both be aligned to that state exam?

Ms. Schrenko. That is right. That is what we are preparing to do with the testing.

Mr. Miller. I assume then the state would be doing some assessment down the road to compare these different approaches to reading.

Ms. Schrenko. Yes. We are in the second year of a three-year evaluation of Reading First and this year, as we add Reading Recovery, Voyager, some of the other programs, they will too enter that process and the CRCT, the same test, will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the different programs.

Mr. Miller. There is some discussion or a fair amount of discussion suggesting that we are actually getting better and better at teaching young children to read by grade three. We have not done it as a nation yet, but we think we now know more how to do this. And you are obviously evidence of that in what you believe this program will be able to deliver.

The second part of that equation is then as these children move on, are we capable of teaching them how to read to learn?

Ms. Schrenko. Right.

Mr. Miller. How do they read in context, how do they appreciate and comprehend. You mentioned, our student reading here, that she is also very good at comprehension. And reading just for the sense of understanding that this is what you are going to have to do the rest of your life. Sometimes, it seems to appear because again we get these scores up, we get to the fourth grade and then they start to level off. This is not just in Georgia, it is all over the country. The scores fall again. And we wonder why are we losing these students at that point.

Ms. Biggerstaff. I would like to respond to that. At our school in our system, teachers teaching at the third, fourth and fifth grade level cannot believe that these students can read as well as they do. So their curriculum is somewhat watered down in that they are preparing for children that they had several years ago that were not proficient readers.

Mr. Miller. That would be encouraging.

Ms. Biggerstaff. Excuse me, sir?

Mr. Miller. I said that would be encouraging.

Ms. Biggerstaff. Well, as these children come up and they are showing their teachers that they can read and they are ready to do the research projects and to get involved in the love of learning on their own, then I think we will see an improvement there. And we do stress comprehension, because we were very worried that this would be a group of students that would be word callers and that would be all, and especially with students at our school that come from a very limited background; to have the vocabulary to move forward, you know, was very important. And in my packet that I gave you, it shows the increases not only at kindergarten but first and second grade level for language and reading and reading comprehension and vocabulary, and all of those have skyrocketed. So we are very excited.

Mr. Miller. Let me ask you, Superintendent Schrenko, you obviously have a great deal of faith in Reading First. I was talking to one of your very talented professors from Georgia State and as I understand it, so far there has not been an attempt to try to align the training of the teachers with this program. It would seem to me, especially in a low income school where you get high teacher turnover, it would be kind of a good idea if this is what you were going to use in those schools, that they would be trained and sort of hit the ground running.

Ms. Schrenko. That is right.

Mr. Miller. So you could just integrate them into that program, and I assume if people wanted to choose another reading program, that there would be some effort to train teachers at that.

Ms. Schrenko. That is right.

Mr. Miller. It seems to me the local districts would be kind of ahead of the game there, if there was that kind of alignment. Has that been done or is there consideration of consulting with the universities about this?

Ms. Schrenko. Yes. One, we have consulted with the universities and some of the universities, colleges of education, have implemented this balanced reading approach. Others have not yet agreed to do that. But our principals now are trained to evaluate a teacher on how well that teacher can teach a reading lesson. And so we are sort of drawing a line in the sand and saying if you do not train them in research-based, we do not care if it is Reading First, Reading Recovery, but research-based, something that works, we are not going to hire you to teach.

Mr. Miller. Mr. Vollmer, I am a big fan of disaggregating data, but let me ask you this. Maybe, Ms. Loe, you can help me. When I get done reading this, can I find out how my child is doing in Berkeley Lake School?

Ms. Loe. That is a school accountability report. We do give to each parent though how their child did and that would tell them how the school did in relation to the district and in some of those examples, the state and the nation.

Mr. Miller. So I would be able to walk my child all the way through the state system.

Ms. Loe. All the way through by having that and their individual scores which would be mailed home to you as a parent or given to you at a parent conference.

Mr. Miller. That is good, I am glad to hear it. I like that.

Thank you very much. I thank all the members for your contribution.

Chairman Boehner. Mr. Isakson.

Mr. Isakson. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

In reference to Congressman Miller's question, Linda, when I went to the State Department and we first met, is it correct, and anybody in the audience can respond if this is wrong, but there is an academic bias in favor of Reading Recovery and some other programs and somewhat of an academic bias against phonics that has been going on in the academic community.

Mr. Miller. California led those wars.

Mr. Isakson. I know. And John's question was so good about who is responsible. The university systems are responsible to be more open-minded in teaching more different methodologies so the teachers are better prepared. I am kind of making a statement and not asking a question. But it is not a teacher's fault that comes out of the University of

Georgia or Georgia State, and I know Georgia State is big on Reading Recovery, if I remember my stuff well.

Ms. Schrenko. That is right.

Mr. Isakson. But if they come out of a bias-based instruction, then they are going to be instructed that way. President Bush's program, and correct me if I am wrong, Linda, President Bush's program says look, I do not care if it is Reading Recovery, I do not care if it is Reading First. I care that both are available and that the same test measures the child and made the child win; is that not correct?

Ms. Schrenko. That is absolutely correct.

Mr. Isakson. And so on that who is responsible, the university systems? And I am a big fan of ours in Georgia, but some of the colleges of education need to get into the 21st century in terms of what the teachers at Fair Oaks are dealing with, and we would have a better student.

I guess this is also a comment, but it is for the benefit of all the members of Congress who did not have the great luxury I had of working with these people in Georgia. I would encourage everybody to look inside this Gwinnett book. Cindy Loe took me to a meeting somewhere years ago when they were getting ready to do this Gateway program and so you all will know, Alvin took more hits than were given at the Battle of the Bulge, all the opponents of testing, you know, teaching to the test, everything else. But if you look at this book, it has the desired achievement in the eighth grade in each course, and then in parentheses, it has references whether it is in the QCC, it is on ITBS, it is on CRCT or it is on PSAT.

President Bush received some criticism for the TAS, the Texas Assessment vehicle, whatever it was called, saying it taught to the test. Well, the fact of the matter is, if you have a curriculum and if your teacher is given instruction units as to what the desired knowledge is, the only way to measure it is to give them a test. And if you are teaching to the test but the test is based on the curriculum, you are a winner. And at Gwinnett, you all are now in the fourth year, the first mandatory, but the fourth year running?

Ms. Loe. Yes, actually into our fifth, this spring will be our fifth year.

Mr. Isakson. So the longitudinal evidence is there. I just wanted to really commend Cindy and Alvin because I saw this work and this book is what brings the parent, this book and the report card.

I do have one question. Mike.

Mr. Vollmer. Yes, sir.

Mr. Isakson. Mr. Hammond said the following: ``Give us accountability, but not on the back of the teacher alone." Is that not the quote? And Chairman Boehner asked you, who is responsible.

Now I worry, I am big on accountability, as you know, and big on testing and raising expectations, but in that statement, it is more than just the teacher and do we not sometimes cop out on the teacher and not get into the entire system? And I would like your comment on that.

Mr. Vollmer. Yes, we do and that is why, Mr. Chairman, your question was difficult. I usually do not beat around a horse, as many folks know. But it is almost like the Chairman of GE, asking him who is ultimately responsible for this jet engine. Well, obviously when he meets with his vice presidents once a quarter, he is going to be looking at the vice president who is in charge of that division, but ultimately the responsibility for building those jet engines goes to the individuals that are on that line. And that is really what we are getting down to in this accountability system.

It does fall on a teacher's lap. But we have got to make sure when we talk about accountability that our teachers understand it is just not them, it is the building, it is the parents, it is the state bureaucracy, it may be people up in Washington as well. But we are all in this as a team.

And unfortunately, the way some states have gone about it, everything falls on the lap of the teacher in terms of accountability and I think that unfairly corners our teachers.

Chairman Boehner. If the gentleman would yield.

Mr. Isakson. Sure.

Chairman Boehner. That was the point I was trying to get to, that I do believe eventually it is the teacher in the classroom who has the ultimate responsibility. Yes, the principal has the responsibility for bringing all the resources, the atmosphere together, but it is the teacher and in many of the schools who have the students who need the most help, you do not have, typically, the most experienced teachers.

Mr. Vollmer. Correct.

Chairman Boehner. You do not have the best teachers and you do not have, typically, the resources that you do in the better schools. And you are putting that teacher, in that particular case, in a horrendous position.

And so while I think the country is certainly moving and growing toward accountability, we have got to respect the fact that there are front line people who are going to end up with the responsibility and who need the help and the resources to have any chance of success.

Mr. Vollmer. That is so correct, and that is why I believe what we are going to try to do in Georgia is give more emphasis to gains rather than meeting absolute bars. And the reason for that, sir, is this, that if you just have an accountability system with an absolute bar, you are going to have teachers, very dedicated teachers, in lower performing schools saying, why should I stay here, I am going over across town to a higher achieving school, and get my bonus there. So we have got to provide incentives, at least in Georgia, to those good teachers that are in our lower performing schools; and secondly, also to be able to attract good teachers into those lower performing schools.

That is why over the past six or seven months, I think we have come down to the conclusion that more emphasis will need to be placed on performance gains and providing support into those schools rather than just those schools meeting absolute targets, sir.

Mr. Isakson. If Mr. Chairman will yield back, I just want to say, what the Chairman said and what I heard you say was the point that I was trying to get to. If the teachers in the school, and we all know that the Title I schools are prototypical schools for what we are all talking about, it is where most of the students are and if we are not giving the teachers the training and professional staff development and the support and the incentives, then we cannot expect them to just do it because we said it. That is why I made the comment about the university system. They need to visit the classroom at Maxwell, your foreign language school, is it not Maxwell?

Ms. Biggerstaff. We are Maxwell.

Mr. Isakson. I know you are Maxwell. Is it not Maxwell, Cindy?

Ms. Loe. Maxwell has many foreign language students, but actually we have so many ESOL students now that we have sites in every single Gwinnett County school, it has expanded that much in the past three years.

Mr. Isakson. My comment to close, Mr. Chairman, is you are exactly right. It is the teacher's responsibility but it is the system's responsibility to see to it the teacher is getting the support, and I think the State's responsibility to provide opportunities for incentives. Because with expectations should come both accountability and reward. And the ultimate reward, of course, is that we are having improved test scores like Gwinnett is.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Boehner. Mr. Collins.

Mr. Collins. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

You know, accountability is a good political buzz word, but I am afraid oftentimes it may be used to point fingers to those who we hold accountable and use them as scapegoats, and that should not be the process.

A lot has been said about it, Mike, you mentioned teachers moving from one school to another, from a lower performing school to a higher performing school. I hope our ultimate goal is we do not have any low performing schools.

Ms. Biggerstaff, it seems as though you have taken the assembly line approach. You got your staff together because they are the ultimate ones that you are depending on to deliver your program to teach these students how to read. You pulled them together and I am sure you had the support of the principal and the superintendent of your schools all the way up through Ms. Schrenko. When you were assessing those who are on the assembly line, to prepare them for this program, how did you go about that? You must have done it with a very soft approach to get the results that you have here. How did you

assess those teachers?

Ms. Biggerstaff. It was a very straightforward approach. When we went into Maxwell, Hanna Fowler, the principal there, was a classroom teacher, as was I. So we knew some of the things that we thought would be needed there at the school, and one thing was to get everybody on the same page and to prepare those teachers. Part of Reading First says that teachers have to have some instructional hours. And so during that time, which we call in-service hours, we got our teachers together and went through the steps of what you would do with a directed reading lesson and how you would give the BLT, the basic literacy test, and then we streamlined everything and told the teachers that this is what we expected and that we loved them and if they wanted to do something else and did not agree, that we would support them in that. But if they were going to stay with us, this was the program we were going to use. And this was with a lot of love and a lot of morale building, but everybody knew where we were headed and we were headed for the top because we wanted these students to achieve.

In the packet that I gave you all, you have two sheets of accountability and this is the accountability for teachers and for students. One is called ``The Class Role for the BLT," and that is the basic literacy test that is required by Reading First. Every child's name is listed in the teacher's class and the teacher has a class profile so that we can tell what students are moving through the year. This test is given three times a year. We can also tell if a teacher is getting bogged down. If she has half her class not performing as you would like, then we can go in and have some interventions immediately, as opposed to waiting until the end of that year or the end of third grade to decide that there is a problem.

Then there is another profile sheet that indicates all of our assessments. This is the BLT, what we call an IRI or running record, which is like an individual test that we give to tell where a child is according to their instructional level. We give something called the Star, which goes hand-in-hand with the Accelerated Reader program, and we have an accelerated reader assessment as well.

So there are many, many assessments that a teacher gives throughout the year, plus the nationally known test, which is the ITBS. And during that time, that teacher's class profile is scrutinized by myself, by other members of the faculty and also by themselves, so that when we come to the end of the year, we can see where that teacher is and how far she has moved her class, and also compare it with what she did the year before and compare it with what her neighbor is doing.

We meet once a week with the teachers to discuss this very thing; how are our children doing, how are they moving. Our reading program is called Effective Reading Practices and we do not really have another name for it, because what we do is we take every child and teach them at their instructional level, one professional teacher to six children. And that is not just the lowest performing children, it is every child in the school.

So we have a kindergarten teacher here and one thing that she has said to me many times was that she was scared to death when we came to that school, because she was teaching kindergarten children and she did not want them to have to take a nationally known standardized test.

Well, she is one of the ones responsible for that 92nd percentile reading total that the mighty mights met. So I think she would tell you now that she is no longer afraid, and that is an important part of her accountability and she is proud of it.

Mr. Collins. Well, good. It sounds like you have got a good assembly line.

Ms. Schrenko, I believe I heard you say there are 600 system or schools that are using this program?

Ms. Schrenko. Yes, sir.

Mr. Collins. Are you experiencing the same or similar results in the other 599?

Ms. Schrenko. Overall, we are showing improvement in every grade level that uses the program. However, I have to say that schools like Maxwell that have embraced the whole training, use the materials, are willing to devote the three hours a day, are showing so much greater gain than those who just use it as a money source, who do not train their teachers very well, the more accurately it is implemented, the higher the results.

And if I could just go back to something that Congressman Miller asked about earlier when Governor Barnes was here. You all were commenting on ending Title I funds to the state and allowing the General Assembly to re-appropriate those instead of flow-through. Well, you all have already given us some flexibility in federal founding and this year when the Bush proposal came out and they said that there were going to be block grants back to the states. Within two weeks, our General Assembly had removed $7 million from school improvement teams with the idea that they were going to use federal funds in place of that. And I just think you are very wise to steer clear. The General Assembly is a dangerous body.

Mr. Collins. One last question, Ms. Schrenko.

Do I recall that you have some type of report card system in the schools in the state?

Ms. Schrenko. Yes, sir. In 1995, we started producing a report card through the Department of Education, every school gets an individual report, and it is on the Internet. On that report card we list everything from how many free and reduced lunch students there are, all the test scores, Iowa, CRCT, the drop-out rate, the completion rate, SAT scores, number of students that go on to college. And that has been available since 1995. What we have not done is to grade the schools. We could because the scores are there, but we have not.

Mr. Collins. This report card then would distinguish the performance; low, high, medium, whatever?

Ms. Schrenko. Right, yes.

Mr. Collins. Okay, would you do me a favor and send the Governor that website. They are looking for those low performing schools.

Ms. Schrenko. I will be glad to.

Chairman Boehner. Let me once again thank all of our witnesses and let me also thank those of you in the audience who came out to participate in our hearing today. We appreciate your interest and your involvement. I thank the principal and the staff here at Fair Oaks for their hospitality.

And if there are no more comments, this Committee meeting is adjourned.

Whereupon, at 12:01 p.m., the Committee was adjourned.

APPENDIX A -- WRITTEN OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN JOHN BOEHNER, COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE, U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OPENING STATEMENT OF REP. JOHN BOEHNER (R-OH), CHAIRMAN

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FIELD HEARING ON "READING AND ACCOUNTABILITY: IMPROVING 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS"

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2001

FAIR OAKS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
407 BARBER ROAD
MARIETTA, GEORGIA

Good morning. I'm John Boehner, Chairman of the Committee on Education and the Workforce in the House of Representatives. I extend a warm welcome to all of you, to the Ranking Member--Congressman George Miller, to my other colleagues, and to our witnesses. My special thanks to Bob Barr for hosting this Hearing at a school in his district, and to Johnny Isakson for helping us get so many of the great witnesses here today. Johnny, we couldn't have done this with out you. Thank you very much.

I would especially like to thank Ms. Suzanne Lindberg, the Principal here at Fair Oaks Elementary School, for all the work she has done to welcome us today. We enjoyed the tour of the school this morning, and seeing the children remind us all why we are here. We want to work together to help schools like this provide the best possible education for our children. I know this hearing involves a lot of work for you and your staff and we are grateful to you for your hospitality.

This is the second of several education reform hearings our committee will be holding over the next few weeks. As Congress begins a new legislative session, our committee will be traveling around the country to hear from parents, teachers, school administrators and many others about state and local reforms that are improving academic achievement.

These hearings will help lay the foundation for legislative action later this spring on our major K-12 federal education law---the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Just a few weeks ago

President Bush announced his education reform plan---a plan with academic accountability as its centerpiece, and a plan that ensures no child is left behind.

Today, we are particularly grateful to Governor Roy Barnes, who has agreed to share his thoughts with us on how education reform is being implemented here in Georgia. Several others will tell us about the new accountability measures the state has instituted to ensure a quality education for all of Georgia's schoolchildren. We want to learn from you and make sure that any federal education reform legislation complements what you are doing. We want to be partners in the effort to provide the best education possible for our children.

Our hearing today will also focus on the success of Georgia's Reading First program under the able leadership of Superintendent Linda Shrenko. At the national level, President Bush has made improving reading for America's school children a top priority. The first day on the job he held a "reading round table" with teachers and

principals who were successfully applying scientific research-based reading instruction in their schools. His vision, like that of the Georgia Reading First initiative, is to ensure that every child is reading fluently by the third grade.

It is my hope that the federal government can learn from what you have done here in Georgia. President Bush's education reform proposal would provide assistance to states and school districts in establishing comprehensive scientific research based reading programs.

Although the President's Reading First program is only one of the components of the overall education reform package, it is an essential part. If students learn to read fluently by the end of second grade, they will have the ability to master the challenging subject matter that will follow throughout their school years. If they can't read, then the future is indeed bleak.

While there are many other exciting education initiatives here in Georgia, time does not permit us to explore all of them. So today we will focus primarily upon reading and accountability as two key components of a quality education.

I believe we have an historic opportunity as we begin this new century. There is a growing consensus about what works in education, and there is a willingness to come together to do what is right for all our children. We want to be partners with you, to help the most disadvantaged and to open the door to success for all students.

I am pleased that my colleague, Congressman George Miller has joined us here today. He and I have agreed that we will make every effort to work together, and develop education legislation that will free the hands of the states, while at the same time holding them accountable for results for the money they receive from the federal government.

At this time, I will yield to my friend and Ranking Member, Congressman George Miller for any statement he may have.

APPENDIX B -- WRITTEN STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE RAY BARNES, GOVERNOR, STATE OF GEORGIA

REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY
GOVERNOR ROY BARNES
FEBRUARY 20, 2001

There are four basic building blocks to education reform:

Great teaching;

Leadership that is committed to serving the best interests of the children;

Willingness to use innovation rather than defending the status quo;

And accountability – which is what I'm here to talk about today.

Absolute standards must be used in order to measure the success of education reform.

That's why in last year's education reform effort we set up an independent Office of Education Accountability here in Georgia to set standards, measure results, and reward success.

Yes, this will involve testing our students. And there are those who contend that testing is unfair, that it doesn't reflect a student's full potential.

Well, there's another test coming one day for these children – it's a test called life.

People don't almost get into college or almost get jobs.

And we don't want our children to get an almost good education.

So we have to be able to measure results.

We are developing the tests ourselves – Criterion Referenced Competency Tests that are being written by Georgia teachers and based on the standard Georgia curriculum being taught in our schools.

So our children will be tested on what they were supposed to be learning throughout the year.

If you look at North Carolina, you discover that it was a similar system of accountability that allowed them to vastly improve their schools over the last ten years.

The accountability system that we are putting into place here in Georgia will monitor the progress of our schools and then give them two grades – one for absolute performance and the other for improvement.

This gives two opportunities for rewards.

Schools that score an "A" or "B" for either absolute performance or improvement will receive financial rewards. These rewards will come in the form of bonuses to teachers, administration and all other school staff – including cafeteria and maintenance workers. It takes all of these people to make a school run correctly and they should all be rewarded when a school is doing well.

And schools that score a "D" or "F" on either scale will be visited by school improvement teams that will help the administration determine what can be done to fix what is obviously failing. For when a school fails, it is our children who suffer.

If a school continues to fail, the State Board of Education will intervene. Options include taking over the day to day management of the failing school, closing the school, or allowing parents to remove their children and send them to another school in the district.

The Office of Education Accountability will also do performance audits on schools to verify that the information being submitted to them each year is accurate.

Just last week, I proposed to our General Assembly to take accountability one step further and end social promotion here in Georgia.

We must do all that we can to help those children who are falling behind stay on grade level, but when everything possible has been done, sometimes the best option for that child is for them to repeat a grade.

I've proposed a set of statewide guidelines to be used in conjunction with local policies to determine when a child needs to be held back.

Our hope is that this happens to very few children – that we are able to use early intervention and other programs to keep them up to speed.

And if a school is holding too many of their children back each year, which will be another reason for the Office of Education Accountability to check on them.

Schools that are high performing should be rewarded and given flexibility to continue to do the good job they are doing.

But schools that are failing need all the help we can give them in order to ensure every child in Georgia a quality education.

APPENDIX C -- WRITTEN STATEMENT OF MS. LINDA SCHRENKO, GEORGIA STATE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT, ATLANTA, GEORGIA

Congressional Field Hearings Testimony

February 20, 2001
Marietta, Georgia

By: *Linda C. Schrenko*
Georgia Superintendent of Schools

In 1996, after a thorough review of Georgia's student achievement, drop out rates, and other indicators of success, the Georgia Department of Education and the Georgia Board of Education decided that the single most important subject for students to master to succeed in school is reading. We polled a group of 17-year-old dropouts, and 80 percent of them told us that if they had learned to read by third grade their chances of staying in school would have been greatly increased. Armed with this knowledge, I hired a reading director to work at the Georgia Department of Education who, in consultation with U.S. Department of Education researchers, designed a program we call *Reading First*.

Reading First initially sought to equip teachers with strategies for teaching decoding skills while using the basal program to focus on comprehension. After two years of piloting the program in eight schools, we determined that our success levels were high. In fact, one of the pilot school's average reading scores increased by 20 points. *Reading First* schools focus on reading instruction for three hours per day in kindergarten through third grade and the three hours are divided to include instruction in every component of reading. Reading comprehension strategies are an important component of *Reading First* instruction. The goal of all reading instruction is for children to become fluent readers who comprehend text. This concept simply means that children are able to lift words off the printed page and make meaning from them

simultaneously. In order to become fluent readers, students must be able to access prior knowledge, gain a global vocabulary from reading, and exercise metacognative skills while reading.

Parents with children in those eight pilot schools wrote to us with such high levels of praise that we asked the Georgia General Assembly to fund 350 new sites and the following year another 350 for a total of 700 schools in Georgia. Currently, we are in year two of our first 350 schools, and without question, we are seeing real results.

1. The number of students scoring in the lowest 25 percent on the ITBS have continuously decreased, and
2. The average first, second, and third Grade ITBS scores have increased each year the schools have been in the program. Students are checking more books out of the library and special education placements are down.

The Georgia Department of Education Division of Research, Evaluation, and Testing began a longitudinal study of the Reading First Program during the 1998-99 school year. In its year two report, the study found in its summary on achievement that the *Reading First* program appears to have its greatest impact on first grade students and low achieving second grade students.
Our Reading First program has been a successful initiative in reading for Georgia students because it has provided a substantive plan for instruction on which the schools could focus. It also has provided comprehensive staff development for teachers, and it has provided a wealth of materials for both teachers and students.

Congressional Field Hearings
02/20/01

That is why I believe that President Bush's *Reading First* program is the best thing to come out of the United States Department of Education since its inception. The President's proposal is a common-sense, research based method of teaching reading. Its requirement for a diagnostic assessment, like our *Basic Literacy Test,* will give teachers a good starting place to design a reading program for each individual student. The emphasis on phonemic awareness and phonics, as well as comprehension, is a sound approach to ensuring that every child learns to read on grade level - - so that ***no child is left behind.***

The requirement that test data be disaggregated will ensure that *all* children have a quality foundation in reading. *Reading First* has worked for Georgia. Schools that have embraced the program, involved their teachers in high quality retraining programs, and devoted the full three hours of instruction to reading are succeeding and succeeding quickly. In Chattooga County at Summerville Elementary, first graders gained 15 percentile points on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. At Randolph County Elementary in Cuthbert, Georgia, which has 100 percent free and reduced lunch, the students gained 20 percentile points in kindergarten, 20 points in second grade, and 19 in third grade. Furthermore, students at Pine Log Elementary in Bartow County gained 32 points on the ITBS in kindergarten.

President Bush's *Reading First Program* can accomplish the same or better results for every child in the nation. We owe it to our children to provide them with the reading skills they need to succeed. I encourage both the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate to pass the ***Bush Education Plan*** and help us get our schools on the right track for success.

Congressional Field Hearings
02/20/01

APPENDIX D -- WRITTEN STATEMENT OF BILL HAMMOND, INSTRUCTIONAL COORDINATOR, DEKALB COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS, DECATUR, GEORGIA

The Testimony of

Bill Hammond

Instructional Coordinator, DeKalb County Public Schools

on

"Reading and Accountability: Improving 21st Century Schools"

Before the House Committee of

Education and the Workforce

Chaired by

John A. Boehner

February 20, 2001

Thank you Mr. Chairman, I am Bill Hammond, Director of Instructional Coordination in the DeKalb County Schools. I am a member of the International Reading Association, the Georgia Reading Association and IRA's Urban Initiatives Commission. I am here today to talk with you concerning a key issue facing our schools, improving reading instruction. As the President has said, reading is becoming a new civil right. It is so important that without it most have almost no hope of participating in the American dream. The President has proposed a reading initiative that takes into account many key elements of a successful reading policy. The International Reading Association applauds the initiative and looks forward to working with this committee to refine it, and to enact it.

Georgia is a good state to host this hearing. Our population closely mirrors the nation; as do our successes and failures in reading. 42.9% of our students are on free or reduced lunches. Our reading scores are very close to the national average on the state-by-state reading report card for fourth graders, and our state-required test data reflect inconsistent progress.

Why is that? Reading has been in the national spotlight for many years, reading scores are widely viewed as a reflection of a school systems' success or failure, and most people say that reading is important to them. Yet, while many students have become effective readers, many have not. And most of those who are not effective readers come from populations living in poverty. This is an important point. Years ago we would have said that children from specific minority groups are failing to make progress. Now it is clear that it is the effect of poverty that we need to overcome.

Unfortunately, our nation's approach to solving this problem hasn't been effective. Many have been advocating one idea or another as the way to make the critical changes that

will make a difference. You in the Congress need to think on a more strategic level. Changing one part of the system will yield only modest improvements. Some have also suggested that we need to empower more parents by taking public money and allowing them to purchase the type of educational services they think their children need. Independent of the many political and philosophical arguments, this course of action will not expand the number of teachers available to the school system. And in areas with high numbers of low-achieving students, parents will have few meaningful alternatives. We need to find other ways to change chronically low-performing schools and to empower parents.

To approach this situation in a comprehensive manner, the International Reading Association has developed a list of ten children's rights. These rights were published in the position statement, "Making a Difference Means Making It Different." This set of guidelines outlines what children need, and what we should be doing, to build effective reading programs.

These rights are:

1. Children have a right to appropriate early reading instruction based on their individual needs.

2. Children have a right to reading instruction that builds both skill and the desire to read increasingly complex materials.

3. Children have a right to well-prepared teachers who keep their skills up to date through effective professional development.

4. Children have the right of access to a wide variety of books and other reading material in the classroom, and in school and community libraries.

5. Children have a right to reading assessment that identifies their strengths as well as their needs and involves them in making decisions about their own learning.

6. Children have a right to supplemental instruction from professionals specifically prepared to teach reading.

7. Children have a right to reading instruction that involves parents and communities in their academic lives.

8. Children have a right to reading instruction that makes meaningful use of their first language skills.

9. Children have a right to equal access to the technology used for the improvement of reading instruction.

10. Children have a right to classrooms that optimize learning opportunities.

We believe the President's proposal to focus on closing the achievement gap between those who are being effectively taught and those who are not, needs to be expanded. One aspect of the President's plan is to expand the professional development opportunities for teachers who are providing reading instruction to enable them to learn more about research-based practices. This makes good sense and needs to be done. Yet it is only one component of an effective program. Many teachers working in urban areas are there because they want to make a difference, but many are frustrated because their teacher training programs did not provide them with information on how to reach children living in the depths of poverty. Ideas of simply expanding time spent on homework or reducing television time do not take into consideration the fact that many of these children live with adults who are working two and three jobs. Our ideas on how to teach reading need to include concepts that reflect the social-fabric in which the children are living.

Children need access to books in their classroom and in their school libraries, and this is especially true for children who live in poverty. Many children also need access to professionals who have a wide background in reading. In many states the certification requirement for a reading specialist has been taken off the books. The result is that at the very time we are asking for more intensive reading programs we lack the professionals we need to design and implement them. Also, in many Title I schools paraprofessionals are providing instruction – thus the children who need the most are getting the least. No amount of research or dissemination of research, and no amount of mandated curriculum, is going to make a difference if that one element isn't changed.

Another element of the President's proposal is to require annual testing of all children. Testing and the effective reporting of those results can be a powerful element in promoting change. Many states and communities have such systems in place. However, if teachers don't know how to make use of the data, don't have the time to analyze the data, or to make changes in their own programs, the data is useless as a mechanism of effective change.

What needs to be done?

1. **Teachers working with our neediest children need to be professional teachers.** In too many schools, nonqualified teachers (paraprofessionals) are being employed to provide instruction to the neediest children.

2. **Even the best teachers need professional development,** and programs such as Title I should provide funds for training programs based on teachers' assessment of their needs.

3. **Title I schoolwide projects should address the needs of those who are most at risk of school failure.** Too often resources are diverted from the core mission. These programs should be changed so that funds may be used only for core curriculum and for the neediest students.

4. **Early intervention is critical.** Local Title I programs should expand their outreach activities to coordinate with Head Start and other professional programs.

5. **Assessment needs to be ongoing and linked directly to instruction.** Assessments must reflect students' instructional programs and provide teachers with useful feedback. Students and their parents need to understand the assessment process.

6. **Accountability should encourage involvement and enhance program effectiveness.** Teachers, schools, districts, and communities need to be held accountable for publicizing their goals for all of their programs. Funding should be contingent upon shared commitment and accountability.

7. **Services for children need to be coordinated to fit the needs of the child, not to fit the child to the services.**

8. **Programs should be based on a wide range of research.** Reading programs should be tailored to local and individual student needs, but they should also be based on proven principles of effective schooling and subjected to independent, objective review.

9. **Parents need to be active partners in all programs.**

10. **All schools need to have access to reading specialists.** These specialists can work with classroom teachers and disseminate examples of effective, research-based practices that are needed for each individual child.

Georgia, like many states in our nation, faces a continuing upward climb to build school systems that help every child to become an effective reader. The federal government must be an effective partner in this effort. The federal government has access to funding that can assist in school reform, information that needs to be shared, and the leadership to change how teachers are taught, to change how tests are used, and to set the goal of universal literacy as a basic right of all Americans.

As you work towards this goal, please remember:

1. Funding is important;
2. Reform must be comprehensive to be effective; and
3. Reading achievement is a function of the amount of time we have invested in the teacher, the amount of time we invest in instruction, and the access children have to reading materials.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

APPENDIX E -- WRITTEN STATEMENT OF PAT BIGGERSTAFF, ASSISTANT PRICNCIPAL, J.A. MAXWELL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, THOMSON, GEORGIA

Testimony by Pat Biggerstaff for the Georgia Educational Hearing, Feb. 20, 2001

Pat Biggerstaff is the assistant principal at J. A. Maxwell Elementary. She is a reading specialist and has 29 years of experience in education. She has also served as a reading consultant. Most of her career has been spent in the classroom teaching students how to read.

TAKING READING TO THE MAX WITH GEORGIA'S READING 1st!

Demographics:

J. A. Maxwell Elementary School (affectionately known as **The Mighty Max**) is located in the **rural town of Thomson, Georgia**, 30 miles west of Augusta. The Mighty Max is **a pre-kindergarten through second grade school** with approximately 450 students. The student population is represented by **48% white, 51% black, and 1% Latino**. Max students come from various backgrounds with the **lower socioeconomic status being most prevalent. There are many at-risk students**. Of the total school population, **68% receive free or reduced lunch**. Many students come from **one-parent homes**. Most parents have not completed any formal program of study and some have not finished high school. Many students are typical **latch-key kids** with parents working shifts, unable to spend time on homework or enrichment activities. Maxwell has been designated a **Comprehensive Title I School**.

READING FIRST:

In the fall of 1997, J. A. Maxwell Elementary School underwent a dramatic change with a new administration determined to make a positive impact. Prior to this time, J. A. Maxwell had been a school focused on teacher-made thematic units that provided students with many "fun" activities but did very little to provide students with basic skills instruction. Explicit, systematic teaching, such as the use of effective reading practices and basic math facts and concepts, sadly, were not a part of the instructional day.

During the summer of 1997, Hanna Fowler, the new principal and I, Pat Biggerstaff, the new assistant principal, began to **align all curriculum and focus on reading**. We knew we must **support our teachers with carefully chosen data-proven programs** to use with our students if the teachers were going to be held accountable for student success. Our first meeting with the new faculty stressed **high expectations** with **no excuses.** Together we worked with the faculty and staff to create a team with the same goals. We created a **school-wide discipline plan** to support students and teachers. **We stressed professionalism and high morale**. During this year we heard more about Governor Zell Miller's emphasis on education and Superintendent Linda Schrenko's Reading First Program, written by Dr. Cindy Cupp. We began our application for Reading First immediately.

During the 1998-1999 school year we became a **READING FIRST SCHOOL**. We are thrilled that the Reading First Program provides for reading staff development for **ALL** teachers. The Reading First Program requires the use of effective reading practices and a daily **directed reading lesson** along with a **direct, explicit, systematic phonics component**. Hanna and I created an **A/B Day Block Schedule for grade 1 and grade 2 students to allow for three to three and a half hours a day per child for reading.** We use the **Reading First Basic Literacy Test (BLT)** to help place students in small reading groups so that they are taught reading at their **instructional level**. **All directed reading at Maxwell is taught in small groups of approximately six students per certified teacher**. This is accomplished with four reading teachers who travel from room to room during the day to support the classroom teacher. Reading First requires a **computer management program**. This gives our students practice with **comprehension** and also encourages them to read more challenging material. We are very careful not to fill the instructional day with activities that waste instructional time.

Accountability:

Reading First requires that the **BLT** be given three times a year to our kindergarten, first and second grade students. These students are given individual assessments on their instructional level. They are assessed with the nationally-normed standardized test, **Iowa Test of Basic Skills (I.T.B.S.),** also a Reading First requirement. We were apprehensive with giving the I.T.B.S. to kindergarten students, but we soon realized that this was a key assessment if students were going to become proficient readers by grades one and two. We use data from the **Accelerated Reader Program**, which is our computer management program, and we give the computerized assessment, **Standardized Test for Assessment of Reading (S.T.A.R.)** three times a year.

We compile class profiles of all the above assessments and compare them throughout the year to spot weaknesses and prepare interventions as needed. Teachers are held accountable as they review their profiles throughout the year and conference with the administration of the school to address areas for improvement and note strengths. Areas such as **math** are also addressed and although it has not been our main focus, **math scores have consistently improved with reading scores.**

Since becoming a Reading First School, Maxwell has been awarded the Exemplary Reading Award by the International Reading Association, Pay for Performance Award, Georgia School of Excellence Award, (Finalist in the National Blue Ribbon School Award to be presented at the end of this year). Maxwell has been honored as a Georgia Toolbox School and has been accepted to become a member of the League of Professional Schools.

This is our third year as a Reading First School and the following information shows the success of the program and how J. A. Maxwell is taking Reading to the Max with Georgia's Reading First!

The following shows percentiles for Reading Totals on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills administered at J. A. Maxwell Elementary School.

	Kindergarten	Grade 1	Grade 2
1998	not given	56	41
1999	89	79	55
2000	92	81	69

The following shows percentiles for Math Totals on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills administered at J. A. Maxwell Elementary School.

	Kindergarten	Grade 1	Grade 2
1998	not given	44	44
1999	85	60	62
2000	90	72	69

APPENDIX F -- WRITTEN STATEMENT OF MICHAEL VOLLMER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF EDUCATION ACCOUNTABILITY, GEORGIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, ATLANTA, GEORGIA

Michael F. Vollmer
Executive Director
Office of Education Accountability
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

Remarks Prepared for the Committee on Education and the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives

The popular statement "The Train has Left the Station," is a very appropriate phrase to describe accountability in education. Just about every Governor, as well as our new President, is either talking about or implementing some form of educational accountability.

In Georgia, the time has come for accountability, not for punitive measures, but rather to focus on student achievement on a school-by-school basis. We are currently spending over $10 billion a year in local and state taxpayer money for our education system. The share of our total state budget allocated for education has gone from the low 50 percent range in the early '90s to a share approaching 58 percent. This is a remarkable commitment of resources by Georgia's citizens.

However, when we compare our numbers to other states, in factors such as school completion, achievement on national assessment tests, and drop-outs, we continually fall-out a distance from the national average. In short, the people that pay the freight for our education system, Georgia taxpayers, are asking the question – "Where is the Beef"? On top of this, with Georgia becoming the largest importer of college educated talent in the nation, we must, as a state, focus on how to home-grow the educated talent we will need to sustain our economic growth. As in any other enterprise, we have come to the

conclusion that we have to take a hard look and begin measuring where we are falling short on student achievement and how we can intervene to ratchet-up student achievement.

The newly implemented Georgia accountability system is focused on four fundamental principals:

1) Assessment of student progress in every grade level;
2) Ensuring that no child or group is left behind;
3) Focusing on absolute levels of student achievement, and, more importantly, zeroing in on student performance gains; and
4) Providing support to low performing schools.

Assessment of Student Progress in Every Grade Level

Accountability systems come in all sizes. In some states, a school's performance is judged by a test in one or two grade levels, such as 4th and 6th. You can certainly ascertain how student achievement is at one grade level. However, we are more interested in following a student's performance on an annual basis, and providing instant remediation when necessary. We believe our role is more than just giving a school a grade, but the accountability system should provide the school, the teacher, the student, and the parent an up-to-date status report. If a child lingers and falls behind without sufficient intervention, we all know the results.

Ensuring that no Child or Group is Left Behind

Usually, when a state looks at student achievement, the results are published for the general population. Unfortunately, these general results may mask a particular group of students, such as minorities and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

To ensure that we measure the achievement levels of all children, and drawing attention to all student populations (male, female, black, Hispanic, white, socioeconomic status), we are mandated to give our assessment results by these groups. Thus, for a school to earn a high rating, all these groups must get over the same high hurdle in terms of test results.

Initially, this method will point out some disparities between racial groups and students from different socioeconomic levels. However, in the long term, it will keep us focused on the centerpiece of our efforts – to close the achievement gap among various groups. We know one thing for certain; the major corporations of this country do not have a different set of expectations for their employees due to background. You are either a productive employee or else. We need to set the same high expectations and standards for our students.

Focusing not only on Absolute Levels of Student Achievement,

But also on Performance Gains

During the debates about assessing the levels of student achievement, we continually heard about setting a bar and expecting student achievement to hurdle over that bar. I believe that until public schools begin an admissions process much like elite

colleges, there will be disparities in student performance from school-to-school. This is not meant as an excuse or for the need to have different expectation levels for different students. It is just, at least for now, the reality.

In an attempt to keep and attract good teachers in lower performing schools, and to reward them for their efforts, we will be putting more emphasis in student achievement gains. We want to make sure that incentives are in place to keep our well performing schools striving to improve, but at the same time, we want to do everything possible to recognize those schools that are not in the high achieving category that are making tremendous gains.

I want to thank you for your time, interest, and commitment. Please keep in mind that most of us in the states are ready, willing, and able to help you with this most important work.

APPENDIX G -- WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ALVIN WILLBANKS, SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS, GWINNETT COUNTY, LAWRENCEVILLE, GEORGIA

Testimony of Mr. J. Alvin Wilbanks, CEO/Superintendent, Gwinnett County Public Schools

Several years ago, the Gwinnett County community made their expectations clear to us. They wanted clear communication about and accountability for what our students are taught and what they learn. They wanted to be certain the every child is held to high academic expectations. And they wanted our assurance that every child would receive the time and the opportunities needed to meet those expectations, . . . that we would leave no child behind.

So, we embarked on initiatives to ensure we could meet this charge. We developed and implemented curriculum standards in every subject area and course at every grade level, standards which we expect all of our students to meet. To be certain we know if our students are indeed meeting those curriculum standards, we established performance standards, in the form of gateway assessments in language arts, math, science, and social studies at grades four, five, seven, and eight, a graduation exam in language arts, science, and social studies, and end-of-course exams for all of our high school courses. And to be certain our schools are doing everything they can to help our students meet those standards, we are implementing performance objectives and standards for every school. Along the way, we have informed our parents and community of our progress, and involved all stakeholders - teachers, parents, community, even students - in the process. The result has been increasing student achievement despite a rapidly growing population and significant changes in our demographics.

The initiatives we have put in place provided the focus we needed to assure a quality education for all of our students. We began with a vision - that our students will be provided with a world-class education - and a mission to pursue excellence for every student and hold ourselves accountable against accepted standards.

We believe that the most powerful, positive effect of standards-based reform is this. It has focused attention on student learning. And it has shifted the conversation from one about <u>different</u> groups of students meeting <u>different</u> standards to <u>all</u> students being taught to meet <u>high</u> standards. Holding ourselves accountable for students reaching those high standards just makes sense.

- Is it important for students, parents, and teachers to know clearly what is expected in the classroom?
- Should all schools be accountable for providing each student a world-class education?

- Does it make sense to have consistent standards for teachers to use in planning instruction, interventions and extensions for students?
- Should parents and educators know with confidence that our graduates are well-prepared for the future?

We believe the answer to all of these questions is "yes," and that accountability for reaching high standards is the way to achieve these goals.

In Gwinnett County, we provide high standards and accountability through

- a comprehensive and rigorous curriculum that demands high levels of learning for all students.
- We spent four-plus years aligning that curriculum with top-quality instruction and a program of meaningful assessments that truly test what we expect to be taught and learned.
- We developed standards that are clear and specific with regard to what should be taught, learned, and assessed - our Academic Knowledge and Skills, the AKS.
- Our assessments, including our Gateway Tests, include short-answer questions and extended-response items, as well as multiple-choice questions. In other words, our tests demand high levels of thinking and performance from our students.
- We undergird our standards-based approach with support for both teachers and students. Materials, support staff, and professional development are provided to those delivering the curriculum. And targeted interventions are provided for those struggling to learn it.

But, obviously, there is more to the whole picture. For students to reach high standards, they must have competent and caring teachers who are prepared to teach to those standards.

- We allocate our personnel based on the needs of the school, with differentiation for high mobility, numbers of socio-economically disadvantaged students, and students who are achieving below grade level. And professional development opportunities are provided to our teachers based on the needs of their students.
- The state provides all systems in Georgia some funding for staff development. On top of the state's contribution, our system provides additional funds for schools to use for local professional development activities. We also offer centralized staff development to support school system initiatives. Finally, our principals regard staff development as valuable and important and they provide still more <u>local</u> funds for training of their teachers and staff.

- There is a focus to our staff development activities, both at the central and local levels—and that focus is on teaching and learning. It further emphasizes the critically important alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
- As the state increases its requirements for certificate renewal, Gwinnett continues to require a minimum number of staff development hours based on the needs of the local school faculty. These needs have included using standards, designing appropriate assessments, and interpreting test data—important factors in raising student achievement.

The bottom line is that there is a culture of learning in GCPS that serves us well in this important area of professional development and high-quality teaching.

Teachers are not the only resource for our students' achievement. The involvement of our parents and community members is invaluable as we determine the standards for our students and as a source of accountability for results.

- Through our Results-Based Evaluation System, we are now providing yearly reports to our parents and community about each of our school's progress in student achievement.
- We also involve the parents and community in a variety of ways, including our Gwinnett Educational Management System curriculum review committee, the Superintendent's Council of Community Advisors, and our local school Councils for School Improvement.

In Gwinnett, we are seeking the best opportunities for our students' academic achievement. This means determining what works and embracing it, both at the district level and at each of our 87 schools. Here's why I believe we are meeting with success.

- We learned from others as we developed our standards-based initiative. We were able to make better, more-informed decisions based on the lessons their experiences taught us.
- We secured support early in the process from parents, teachers, and community members.
- We put all the basic, essential building blocks in place— we adopted a rigorous curriculum, committed to offering teachers relevant staff development, ensured our students would receive needed interventions and extensions, and involved teachers and administrators every step of the way through development and implementation.
- We provided adequate and equitable resources to every school to support teaching and learning.
- We gave our schools flexibility in the ways they reach students. Our teachers and community decided what our students should learn throughout the district. Each school,

through staffing decisions, programming, and instructional strategies, is deciding how their unique population of students will reach those standards.

- We collected data to substantiate the purpose of our standards-based initiative, which is to increase student achievement.

I believe Gwinnett County is an example of the positive effects of standards-based reform done the right way. Dr. Loe will share with you the specifics of how we have gone about building the performance culture to ensure those positive effects.

APPENDIX H -- WRITTEN STATEMENT OF CINDY LOE, ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT FOR ORGANIZATIONAL ADVANCEMENT, GWINNETT COUNTY, LAWRENCEVILLE, GEORGIA

Testimony of Dr. Cindy Loe, Associate Superintendent for Organizational Advancement, Gwinnett County Public Schools

Superintendent Wilbanks shared with you the reasons that we have embarked on standards-based initiatives. I will share how we did that and what the results have been. I will be referring to the handouts we have provided.

We realized that the first step in achieving the vision and the mission that we had set for ourselves was to focus on what happens in the classroom. We needed articulated standards of what students should learn and aligned assessments to know if they have indeed learned. So we developed our Academic Knowledge and Skills, or AKS, and our Gateway Assessment Program. You have a handout entitled *Academic Knowledge and Skills and Gateway Assessment Program* which details both initiatives. In short, our AKS are specific standards for each subject outlined at each grade level. They were developed by our teachers, with extensive input from parents and community members, including an ongoing Oversight Committee which reviews the AKS annually for needed refinement and revisions. The AKS are communicated each year to students, teachers, and parents, through printed material, as well as through online access on our intranet and on the Internet.

But even great curriculum standards are not enough. We know from research and experience that what is measured is what is taught. To assure that every child is reaching the established standards, we need objective assessments of their learning to inform our instruction. These assessments have to be closely aligned with the curriculum standards. Again, what is measured is what is taught, so if you want to be sure the standards are being taught, you have to be sure the standards are what you are measuring. Therefore, we developed criterion-referenced assessments unique to our curriculum through our Gateway Assessment Program. Our students' achievement is measured by a district-wide test at 1st, 2nd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th grades, as well as for every semester of high school, and before graduation. Your handouts show the specific formats of these tests. We use grades 4, 5, 7, and 8 as gateways. At these grades, students must pass the tests to be promoted. In addition to our criterion-referenced assessments, our students take national norm-referenced assessments at grades 3, 5, 8, and 10, which provide us with data to compare our students' learning with national statistics so we may benchmark our progress.

We began implementation of our AKS and Gateway programs in 1995. This was at a time of rapid changes in our district's population. We are growing at a rate of approximately 6,000 students per year. As you are aware, most school districts have fewer than 6,000 students total, so in essence we are growing an entire district each year. That growth has brought increasing diversity in our community. Your handouts show the percentages of students in our English for Speakers of Other Languages program and our Free and Reduced Lunch participation. In less than 10 years, we tripled the number of students in homes where English was not the primary language from 4% to over 13%. During the same time period, we have nearly tripled the percentage of students living in poverty by moving from 7% to almost 20% free and reduced lunch participation. This is district-wide. What the graphs do not show you is that many of our schools have 30% of their students in the ESOL program while others have less than 1%, and several of our schools have over 70% free and reduced lunch participation. There is incredible diversity even within our district. With these types of changes in student population, as you know, research tells us that this typically means increases in academically-disadvantaged students. That almost always translates to lower achievement. For instance, on the 1998 SAT, the Georgia SAT scores of students from families making more than $100,000 averaged 167 points above those from families with incomes in the $20,000s.

However, what we have seen in Gwinnett since implementation of the AKS and Gateway programs are increases in our students' achievement. As you can see in your handouts, on the 2000 SAT, Gwinnett was 7 points above the national average, with 72% of our seniors taking the exam, compared to 44% nationally. Also note that we are seeing a narrowing of the achievement gap, as our minority students' scores are increasing 2.5 times the rate of our white students' scores. You also see increasing PSAT and Advanced Placement results, and some of the highest ITBS scores in our history. Our criterion-referenced scores for 2000 were also well above the state average, and our own Gateway results show improvement not only in the number of students passing, but also in the higher ranges of achievement. We are well on our way to achieving our mission of academic excellence measured against local, regional, and national standards. We believe strongly that this is a result of our curriculum and performance standards.

We cannot stop at just holding our students accountable for their learning. We must hold ourselves accountable. We expect our students to learn the AKS, and to show their learning on aligned assessments. We expect our schools to teach the AKS, and we hold them accountable to

show the results of that teaching. Therefore, we have implemented a Results-Based Evaluation System (RBES) which measures each school's progress in student achievement. We want to be certain our schools are adding value to each student's education, so we have established individual achievement benchmarks for our schools based on the achievement of similar schools throughout Georgia. Under our accountability system, each year school achievement results are summarized. Their results are then compared to the established benchmarks and evaluated for improvement from previous years. The Superintendent reviews each school's performance, pinpointing strengths and opportunities for improvement. Expectations for the next year are set. Your handout shows more specifics about how we set the benchmarks for our schools. You have a brochure outlining our RBES program. Also included in your handouts is a sample school profile. These are now published every year and provided to parents and the community, as a progress check for our schools. We believe a critical piece in achieving our goals is to keep our stakeholders informed of our progress.

But results just for the sake of results will not help us reach every child. We have to use the information to drive improvement. We use achievement data to inform instructional decisions for each student, so that no child is left behind. Our teachers and school administrators use the data to determine where students are in their learning and target specific strengths and weaknesses in order provide extensions and interventions as needed. At the district level, we use the data to determine the success of instructional initiatives and areas of need. For example, when we implemented the Gateway tests for grades four and seven, we established a Transition Program for those students who failed the test a second time after summer school remediation. Based on their Gateway results, schools are provided with additional personnel, staff development, and materials to work with the students who did not reach the standards for their grade level. The teachers target the specific AKS the students did not learn while moving them forward in the next year's grade level curriculum as well, with the hopes of catching that student up to grade level by the end of the transition year. Schools have flexibility in deciding how this program will be delivered, with the guideline that students' instruction is centered around the achievement gaps shown by the Gateway test.

Another example of how we use achievement data is our summer school program, which we have provided free of charge to our elementary and middle school students for four years. Summer school instruction targets individual students' areas of weakness, as shown by

standardized assessments, including the Gateway, and by their classroom grades. Summer school is attended by approximately 10% of our students, and over half of those students are able to move on with their regular grade level.

We also focus our curriculum resources and selection decisions based on the areas of strength and weakness identified in collective assessment data. For instance, as we undergo textbook adoptions, we look closely at student achievement data to determine for what areas of the curriculum our teachers need additional support. We have also provided to all of our teachers on our intranet three curriculum databases. The AKS database allows teachers to instantly access not only the AKS they must teach, but also a number of instructional resources and strategies to help them teach that AKS. They can go to a specific AKS and find the subgoals, or Indicators of Achievement, that the students should be learning as they become proficient on the AKS. The database also provides teachers with a list of classroom intervention strategies for that AKS written by our special education and regular classroom teachers, and a list of extensions for challenging the student who needs to go above and beyond that AKS. They also can link directly from that AKS into our Lesson Plans database, to find a lesson plan that teaches that AKS. We have over 600 district-approved lesson plans written by our teachers in the database, and there are over 500 more that are currently in the review process. Our teachers write these plans in the database and can submit them for approval electronically. They are reviewed by their instructional leader at the school as well as our curriculum coordinator at the district before they are distributed to all teachers across our wide-area network. Over 80 samples of these lesson plans are available on our web site, and you have that address in your handouts.

In addition, teachers can go directly into our Item Banks test generator database, in which we have over 40,000 teacher-made assessment items which are linked to specific AKS, and which have also been through a review and approval process - and that number is growing every day as teachers add more items. The database allows teachers to select test items for each AKS to be assessed and create a test ready to give to students.

In Gwinnett, we believe that the success we are having in student achievement is a direct result of our standards-based initiatives. We also believe that if any one component of these initiatives were removed, the results would not be the same. We must have clear curriculum standards that are taught in all of our classrooms to all of our students. We must have accountability for both our students and our schools, including standardized measurements of

student learning. We must provide our schools and teachers the resources and flexibility needed to make solid instructional decisions and provide strong instruction and assessment. We must provide students with whatever time is needed and whatever opportunities are needed for them to reach the standards. We must have the involvement of our parents and community. And we must keep an eye toward what works and value continuous improvement.

It is our pleasure to have two other critical members of our Gwinnett team with us today, available to answer any questions you may have. Mrs. Louise Radloff is our Board Chairperson for the year 2001. She has been a member of our Board of Education for twenty-eight years, and is a recipient of the Georgia School Boards Association Education Hall of Fame Award. She has been at the helm with our other Board members as we have embarked on the initiatives outlined for you today. Also with us is Ms. Joyce Spraggs, currently principal of Sweetwater Middle School. Ms. Spraggs is a recent Milken Award winner, and she was principal of Beaver Ridge Elementary School when it was recognized as a Title I National School of Distinction.

Thank you for the opportunity to share with you today the great strides we are making in Gwinnett County Public Schools to provide for our students a world-class education.

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