to improve our schools. In the quarter century since that report was issued, we have seen a number of positive education reform movements, each of which, if allowed to succeed, could make a real difference to students.

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I would like to discuss just a few of those reform movements now. First, A Nation at Risk energized those who support educational freedom. There are many that believe a lack of competition in our public schools is a major force behind their stubborn lack of improvement. Rather than permitting the educational establishment to maintain its stranglehold on educational options, we need to give parents the right to decide how their children will best be educated.

Another key education reform principle that emerged in the wake of A Nation at Risk was the drive to improve teacher quality. In fact, an entire section of the report was dedicated to improving teacher quality. In 1983, the report highlighted a shortage in highly qualified teachers of key subjects like math, science, and key foreign languages. It also called for innovative strategies like performance-based pay to recruit and retain effective teachers. Twenty-five years later, we are still facing a shortage of teachers in these critical subjects, and we are still fighting to be able to treat teachers as the professionals that they are by rewarding them for their performance.

Perhaps the most fundamental education reform movement that has come about in the years since A Nation at Risk is the No Child Left Behind Act. That is because NCLB sought to change the expectations at the very core of our education system. Instead of accepting mediocrity, NCLB demands that every child in America be given the opportunity to succeed.

You know, it's a real indictment of the educational system of the past that it was considered radical to expect every child to merely be able to read and do basic math. But that is the mentality that NCLB is trying to change. Unfortunately, despite these and many other efforts to improve our Nation's schools, we are still a long way from educational excellence. And so I would submit that our Nation is still at risk.

We have an education establishment that puts preservation of the system above elevation of the student. We have children trapped in chronically under-performing schools and parents with little or no ability to send them elsewhere. We have teachers leaving the profession because they are frustrated with a system that fails to recognize and reward success. And we have a majority in Congress that has refused to take the next step toward education reform by making much needed reforms to No Child Left Behind.

Tonight, some of my friends and I on the Education Committee are going to take a look at A Nation at Risk: 25 Years Later. From where I sit, the education landscape in this country is often disappointing, yet hopeful as well. Reformers from all ideological perspectives continue to push for better schools, greater education reform, and a commitment to competitiveness that will allow us to thrive in the 21st century and beyond. Education reform is a daunting challenge, but one that cannot be ignored.

I would like to give the time now to a good friend from Delaware, the ranking member over the Subcommittee on Elementary and Secondary Education, Mr. CASTLE.

Mr. CASTLE. I thank the distinguished ranking member of the education committee for yielding time to me, and I would like to share in his message which we have tonight. I remember 25 years ago when Secretary Bell issued The Nation at Risk and we had the whole discussion about the fact that America perhaps is not doing as well educationally as were other countries. I am not sure before that time that anybody had ever really tried to point the finger at that and to really reach that conclusion. We looked at our fine schools, our excellent colleges and universities, and we didn't look at some of the problems behind, and we didn't look perhaps at the fact the economy was growing on us in a way that demanded education of all children, not just of the kids that could go to the very best schools in the United States of America. But from that point on, I think there has been a focus on this.

The Congress has essentially done its job. There has been a great increase in funding of education, not as much on the local and State level, but at the congressional level there has been a great deal of funding increases. But we have seen many studies now which have indicated that the funding increases do not necessarily end up with a bottom line of our young students being educated better.

The bottom line is that we need a tremendous commitment from anybody who touches on their lives. Obviously, their parents, the teachers, the administrators in the school, the other personnel in the schools, elected officials both here in Congress and throughout the United States of America, and I think a broader understanding among all Americans, perhaps even the media, of the significance of education and how that ties in economically to what children may do in the future and to the entire future of America.

We have for many years now here in Congress under the leadership of Mr. MCKEON and other leaders looked at education and made efforts to try to improve our educational status in our country. There is a distinct recognition of we need to do more in math and science, perhaps in geography and other areas as well, but that has not happened at the levels which we would like it to happen. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which has been with us for some time, has worked to help in that area somewhat, but it wasn't really until No Child Left Behind came along some I guess 6 years ago now that we really started to make a difference as far as education is concerned.

All of a sudden, now our test scores are going up in various parts of the country. In addition, some schools who are educating their best students very well are being exposed as not doing as good a job with some of their lesser students. We now have to examine these students by various categories and we have various numbers and achievement levels that have to be met for schools to make adequate yearly progress, and that has shown that in some areas of the country and in some certain school districts, that is simply not happening. In others, it is.

I can tell you that in my State of Delaware that I have visited many of our schools. In fact, at one time or another I visited every school in our State. It's a small State. I will tell you that some of those districts have done just a wonderful job of grabbing hold of the need to make improvements in education, of getting commitment, of getting parents involved, making sure the courses are laid out in such a way that those kids could improve. As a result, we have seen test scores grow, particularly in our elementary and middle school levels, and these kids are now doing considerably better than they had been doing before, simply because they have made that commitment.

It does involve standards, it does involve assessments. Some people don't like that, and we hear some concerns about it. But the bottom line is that we are making the progress that we felt that we had to make in order to improve our schools. This must continue, and I believe strongly that we have to do a variety of things to do this. We have to strengthen the parental options which are out there, make sure they understand what they can do in terms of helping education.

We still have State and local flexibility. That is another area that we have to continue to work on, and we have passed legislation to do that. No Child Left Behind is very demanding in terms of teacher quality, and some of the aspects of teaching, which is important as well. We have encouraged the establishment of more charter schools. That is not just to establish charter schools, it is so that they can perhaps show us the way or set an example for our other schools. For that reason, the charter school movement has had a beneficial effect on education in ways beyond just the charter schools themselves.

We need to be careful with our dollars, obviously. We know that is important. The whole business of standards and assessments and growth models is important too. We need to be able to