

Testimony to the Senate Education Committee
By Holly Eaton, Director of Professional Development and Advocacy
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Thank you for this opportunity to give input on this broad and far-reaching interim charge. Regarding the issue of postsecondary success, one of the most consistent messages that students who drop out of school send is that they are bored and not engaged in their education. (Civic Enterprises: The Silent Epidemic, 2006, found that main reason kids dropped out was boredom – students want and need more connection between what they're learning and real world.) Consequently, we would suggest that a major facet of keeping students engaged and interested in their education is flexibility and choices for students in coursework and graduation pathways. Experts in the areas of high school completion and dropout prevention have pointed out that the availability of rigorous Career and Technology courses are extremely valuable in increasing the percentage of students, particularly at-risk students, in meeting postsecondary success standards. For example, the Southern Regional Education Board recommends that states create optional programs of study pathways for college and careers and embed the most essential college and career-readiness standards into the Career and Technology curriculum.

http://www.sreb.org/programs/hstw/publications/briefs/04V09_ResearchBrief_CT_studies.pdf

Speaking of Career and Technology, we believe that this is certainly an area in which the business community can actively assist in providing hands-on learning opportunities for students by providing apprenticeships in local businesses through an arrangement with the local school district. We believe that there should be some state-level coordinated effort to facilitate a system of apprenticeships on a local level. This kind of arrangement would be a win/win for students and for their potential employers, who could essentially work with schools to "grow their own" employees.

Additionally, it's no secret that employers are clamoring for employees who come out of the educational pipeline possessing not only critical thinking skills, but basic work skills. Making rigorous Career and Technology programs a legitimate part of the mainstream curriculum is an excellent opportunity to help students learn these skills. I have attached several news articles describing the importance of rigorous Career and Technical education to this testimony for your review.

Regarding growth measures, we urge you to ensure that whatever measures are used are scientifically research-based and validated for that particular use. You may be aware that there is actually a set of standards endorsed by the National Council on Measurement in Education and the American Educational Research Association that represent a professional consensus concerning sound and appropriate test use in education and psychology. The AERA cautions that if high-stakes testing programs are implemented in circumstances where educational resources are inadequate or where

tests lack sufficient reliability and validity for their intended purposes, there is potential for serious harm. Accordingly, one of the standards is that each separate use of a high-stakes test, for individual certification, for school evaluation, for curricular improvement, for increasing student motivation, or for other uses requires a separate evaluation of the strengths and limitations of both the testing program and the test itself.

<http://www.aera.net/policyandprograms/?id=378>

Additionally, many noted researcher have cautioned that the research base is insufficient to support the use of value-added models in particular for high-stakes decisions, particularly at the individual teacher level, and I have attached a summary of that research to my testimony.

Thank you again for this opportunity to give input on these issues.