

# Center for American Progress



**WITH THE INSTITUTE FOR AMERICA'S FUTURE**

**PRESENT AN EXPERT POLICY FORUM ON:**

**“FAST TRACK TO COLLEGE: INCREASING  
POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS FOR ALL STUDENTS”**

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CINDY BROWN, DIRECTOR,  
RENEWING OUR SCHOOLS/SECURING OUR FUTURE:  
A NATIONAL TASK FORCE ON PUBLIC EDUCATION**

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MS. CINDY BROWN: Good morning. Welcome to the Center of American Progress. I am Cindy Brown. I'm – many of you I know, but many of you may not know that here at the Center I'm the director of the Renewing Our Schools/Securing Our Future Task Force on Public Education. This is a joint initiative of the Center, and the Institute for America's Future.

The task force I direct commissioned the work of Hilary Pennington that we're going to discuss today. Before turning to your comments, we will hear commentary on her proposals from two experts on high school reform and school reform generally, Dr. Susan Sclafani and Jack Jennings. All three of these people are long-time colleagues of mine, and I'm so pleased they agreed to join us today.

Before we turn to Hilary, I want to tell you a bit about the Renewing Our Schools Task Force. It was established almost a year ago with three co-chairs: Governor Janet Napolitano of Arizona, Roger Wilkins of George Mason University, and Phillip Murphy, a director of Goldman Saks. There are 12 task force members, all outstanding educators or leaders in their respective field. (Audio break) – of you of the task force that lists them all. The mission of the Task Force is to examine America's public schools, which have not kept up with current times, and to make recommendations that call for a 21<sup>st</sup> Century education for 21<sup>st</sup> Century students, one designed for education success for all.

Today we're a long way from the kind of modern public school system and supportive services that we need. If we don't redefine the system we now have from birth through college, the nation's prosperity and even democracy itself will be threatened.

The task force studied where we are with schooling today and examined the promising practices through public forums we held last fall in six cities and through six commission papers, one of which we are discussing today. This summer, the task force will report on its recommendations for modernizing and renewing public education in the United States, which is essential to the nation's future economic and civic well-being.

Today we will be discussing important proposals made by Hilary Pennington to redesign high schools and strongly connect to postsecondary institutions. I say "proposals" plural because as you will hear in a moment, Hilary has deeply thought about three alternatives to the traditional high school, each with options of their own. We on the task force believe it is essential that we consider and debate these ideas very publicly and take action soon. We'll be hearing not only from Hilary, but from two people who have deep knowledge and recommendations of their own about changing high schools

and linking them in more constructive ways to postsecondary education and the work force. You have short biographies on each, so I'll only give them brief introductions.

Hilary Pennington is co-founder and vice-chair of Jobs for the Future, a leading research and policy development organization in the country regarding issues of work force development and future work requirements. Dr. Susan Sclafani is counsel to the U.S. Secretary of Education and Assistant Secretary for the Office of Vocational and Adult Education. Prior to her service in Washington, she was chief of staff in the Houston Independent School District. Jack Jennings is the president and CEO of the Center on Education Policy in Washington, D.C. The Center is an independent, nonpartisan advocate for improved public schools. From 1967 to 1994, Jack was the chief education staff expert in the U.S. House of Representatives.

After we hear from Hilary, Susan, and Jack, I will ask each of them to make a comment or two on what they heard from each other, and then we'll open the floor to you. We will first answer questions from any media that are present, and then we'll take questions from everyone else, maybe two or three questions at a time, so that the panelists can contemplate a more involved answer. So I'm pleased to turn the show over to Hilary.

MS. HILARY PENNINGTON: Thank you. Good morning, everybody. You feel a long way away, but it's a pleasure to be here and I'm looking forward to the conversation that we'll have today. And just to piggyback on what Susan said, and probably to the relief of my colleague, today's forum, I hope, is not going to be about the immediate issues of budget proposals, reauthorizations, implementation of No Child Left Behind and high school reform, although obviously it touches on them somewhat.

But this paper and the ideas in it are really an attempt to stimulate some new thinking and some new conversation about a challenge that is very familiar – and if I can work this, I'll put it up there – which is a challenge of reinventing the relationships between our high schools and our postsecondary institutions to make it likely that every student completes some kind of education beyond high school. We would say a job for the future by the time they're 26. Education beyond high school does not mean everyone goes to a four-year college and gets a B.A. degree, but it does mean that something beyond high school, whether it's an apprenticeship program, a one-year certificate, a two-year associates degree, it's going to have a huge impact and return for young people and for our country.

And you all, I think, are very familiar with why. Over the last couple of decades, the returns to education beyond high school, even one year of postsecondary learning, have grown and grown, and they have become in a way the new dividing line between people who make it into the middle class and people who stay behind. And that's true for the United States, but it's also true for countries around the world. And it's why you see such an emphasis on high school graduation and postsecondary in many places. If you look at India, you look at China, they graduate now more people from college per year, because of the numbers in their population, than we do in the United States.

So despite these realities of the importance of education beyond high school, our education pipeline is badly broken. And these again I assume are familiar statistics to most of you. But if you look at things longitudinally, for every 10 students who start high school in America, only seven – fewer than seven will graduate and get a high school diploma. Only four of them will enroll in college. A little more than two will come back after their freshman year in college, and fewer than two will complete any kind of degree, an associates degree or a four-year degree, within six years of graduating from high school and that is a problem.

And in a nation that prides itself on equal opportunity, these kinds of problems are worse for people in America with low incomes and they are worse for young people of color. And this – and who are, as we all know, the fastest-growing cohort of the youth population. So if you put these statistics together, you find economists like Tony Carnevale and others warning us that we may reach the year 2020 with far fewer – 14 million fewer, he estimates – people with some kind of college degree than the country needs given the growth in occupations that require education beyond high school.

And yet the sobering fact is that these are very, very hard trends to change. If you look at the investments we've made as a country in financial aid, in access and support for people to go on to college, we've only achieved over the last 20 years a 3 percent compound annual growth rate in the numbers of people who enroll in college, and completion rates lag even farther behind that.

So the question that this paper tries to focus on and starts to play with is, what do we do about that? Is the current path that we're on a path that's likely to get us where we need to go, given how slow it is to change these kinds of systems? And in a sense, I think you could say that there are two sort of schools of thought about how to approach this set of issues.

The first one says, let's exist – let's accept the existing structures as we have them, and let's work to incrementally improve them. That's going to take time. It's going to mean increasing standards, improving quality of teaching and learning, but basically we accept the existing constraints, which is, four years of high school, students move forward as a cohort at the same rate from grade to grade. They enter postsecondary education after they complete four years of high school, and at the federal and state level we have separate funding streams and government structures over K-12 education and postsecondary education. That would be one school of thought.

And the second would say, there is something inherently problematic with the structure itself with the way that we configure those years. And we need to begin to look at solutions that blend or blur the lines between high school and college, that allow much more flexible, customized ways for young people to move forward if they've met the standards that they need to meet and are ready to take on a new challenge, and that begin to create more competition and/or collaboration between secondary and postsecondary –

or secondary and postsecondary systems. And that's the point of view and premise that this paper takes.

Those two points of view are obviously not mutually exclusive. A lot of the solutions that would be necessary for one are necessary for the other. But this paper says in a sense that we have in some ways the conditions for a perfect storm. We have a high school system that is not educating young people to the academic standard that they need to be educated. At the same time in which young people and their parents – really the society have decided they need education beyond high school. They want to go to college, but the costs of college are rising and given the state deficits at the state level and deficits at the federal level, it's hard to imagine how we can accommodate that increased demand by simply adding on to the structures that we've got, adding money into the systems that we've got. The costs are too high and the waste and inequities are too great.

So that's sort of a starting point backdrop for this paper, which basically says what if we were to use federal seed money and state seed money to create a deliberate almost zone for experimentation; some alternative ways of thinking about and structuring the last few years of high school. These assume that we keep traditional high schools as we've got them. They serve large numbers of young people and communities well, and they're under constructive, I think, pressure to change and improve what they do. But given the urgency of dramatically increasing, particularly the numbers of underrepresented young people who get through high school and go on to college, they need to not leave that to chance.

Let's experiment with some alternatives, with some different ways of structuring these years. And there – the paper puts out in very rough terms three possible ways of thinking about this, each of which is intended to reach a kind of student who is not now well served by the structure of our existing school system.

So the first proposal is for what I've called an academic head start on college, which would let students who want some kind of academic acceleration break out of the lock-step progression of the way high school is structured and get a significant head start on college while they're still in high school. The second I've called an accelerated career technical college, which would try to take young people who are in career and technical preparation and make their options more robust, and better tied to postsecondary credentials that will get them further in the labor market than simply a terminal high school degree.

And the third I've called a gap year or college in community – in the community, which would play with restructuring the senior year of high school, widely considered to be an unproductive year for many young people in a way that allowed them to do community service and work experience still under the supervision of their high schools.

The assumption – oops, going too fast here – is that each of these tracks would have some general principles that are consistent across them. All of them would provide students with access to a rigorous curriculum, that would prepare them for college-level

work. All of them would use expanded time and learning opportunities, whether it's summertime, time in the after-school day, and support systems to help students succeed in meeting those higher standards and more rigorous curriculum. All of them would have an explicit intention of accelerating students' progress in the grades 11 through 14. They would introduce some kind of choice and competition into the system, because money could follow young people into the options of their choices, and each of them would have to devise mechanisms to ensure that they – that there were equitable access and outcomes associated with them.

So, in other words, the theory of change sort of in this is to come at two critical challenges about high school reform. The first is the poor rigor of the academic curriculum and the second is the problems that happen in the transition to postsecondary. And the idea would be that we can get farther by emphasizing challenge and acceleration, instead of remediation and holding kids back, but that support systems to help young people go that distance are critical. You can't raise the challenge and the standards without providing the support systems without risking exacerbating the kinds of dropout problems that we have already.

So I'm going to go very quickly into a little bit more detail about each of the options, assuming that not everyone has read this paper, and it's not necessarily that comprehensible, even if you have read it. But I want to say just as I go into them that this – these proposals do not require creating things that do not now exist in the United States. For every single one of these models, there are – or these pathways, there exist high-quality models that are happening somewhere in America. The problem is, they're not happening at scale, and they're not being stitched together in an intentional way as part of what a new system for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century education would look like.

So let's take the first proposal, which is this academic head start on college. And this basically says that there are many, many students who have both the desire and the ability to accelerate their progress through high school and into college, and that among those – and that those students include not just the academically gifted and well prepared, but also students who are underprepared, who with additional supports would like to get a head start on college, and that would help them and their families overcome some of the barriers that they face when they try to move forward out of high school and into postsecondary.

This proposal would provide incentives to schools and to institutions of postsecondary education to collaborate together, to create either free-standing schools, like early college high schools or middle college high schools or collaborative programs of study that create a coherent program of study that would let young people earn an associates degree or a year or two of college credit and a high school diploma simultaneously, and, where possible, create incentives to change the place of schooling so that students get more experience at college settings while they're still in high school.

And this piggybacks on what is already a huge interest and demand in the population for getting a head start on college-level work when in high school. Advanced

placements are some of the most rapidly growing pieces of the high school curriculum. The enrollment is skyrocketing. By some estimates half of all juniors and seniors in the country are in some kind of dual-credit course. But the problem is that these courses are not coherent or systemic. Students take kind of isolated classes that don't add up to a coherent program of study, and they are not designed to reach out and get students who are underrepresented in college or in an advanced placement or dual enrollment onto a college-level track.

So I want to give you three examples that talk a little bit about ways in which schools have structured programs and supports to serve that kind of student, the academically underprepared student. And I'm going to spend a minute on this, because it's important not just for this option, but for the other options. I'll give you three examples.

The first example is a high school in Massachusetts called University Park High School, which is a seventh grade through 12<sup>th</sup> grade school, already playing with time. It enrolls students, but who – none of them speak English as their first language at home, and all of them start the seventh grade at the third grade reading level. And what they do is a very, very intensive dosage of basic academic skills in seventh and eighth grade, but by the ninth grade, they're moving all of those students into an honors – the equivalent of an honors curriculum, a college preparatory curriculum. They use – they have a strong partnership with Clark University and college professors and college students work with the teachers in the high school to develop a challenging curriculum and support students in meeting that curriculum. And University Park has the – among the top highest scores for its students on all rigorous state tests, the MCAS in the state higher, but outperforming many wealthy suburban districts, and they've achieved those results year after year, so they know something about how to structure supports and challenge to help people progress.

Another example would be middle college high schools, which deliberately go out and ask school districts to refer to them students who've been identified as at risk of failing in the traditional high school structure. They put their high school on the community college campus. They again have very intensive kind of double doses of math and English in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>-grade year. But by 11<sup>th</sup> grade, they've moving students into a combination of high school and college-level courses, and they structure seminars to support the students in being able to meet the standards at the high school level.

My last example is an early college high school in Los Angeles called CALS, the California Academy of Liberal Arts Studies, which does a similar thing. In the upper division years of high school and junior and senior year, students take their English and their foreign language and their science classes at a local technical college, but because colleges teach courses, you know, either two days a week or three days a week, on the off day students with their high school teachers are in academic support seminars where they debrief the college assignments, they get help with the homework, they practice their study skills. In other words, the high school teachers are using themselves and their time

differently in order to prepare those students to succeed in these college level courses and there is a degree of collaboration between high school teachers and college faculty that is unusual and exciting for people on both sides of that equation.

Let me just move a little bit more quickly through the next two. The second proposal is for what I've called an accelerated career technical college. And the theory behind this one is that we need as a country robust career technical education, and career technical education right now is under siege. Enrollments are declining. There's a lot of tension and debate and challenge about how to upgrade the academic curriculum and quality of teaching and learning, and there's a lot of debate about how to really keep them up to date with rapid changes in technology and employer job requirements.

So this makes a pretty radical proposition. It says, let's think about shifting the upper division preparation for technical jobs from comprehensive high schools and even regional high schools to community colleges, and the benefit of this is that it would give students a head start again on earning college-level credits that could transfer for advanced standing towards a two-year or a four-year degree, rather than giving them a credential that is – that terminates at the high school level. It would make a head start for those students easier to accomplish. And high school faculty would move with those students into the community college system so that they provided a support system for students where students were still known. And in the same way I described the support system, teachers provide to students in the early colleges, they would be able to help them succeed in the college level courses.

But because employers of choice hire young people from community college, they don't hire them right out of high school, students would be moving into a place which makes it easier for them to accelerate their advancement into jobs that pay good wages. This would build on a lot of models that we've got already – tech prep, schools of work – and you could imagine it being implemented in somewhat less radical ways by partnerships, expanded partnerships between high schools and postsecondary.

Third, and this is going even further out on a limb, is a proposal to think about changing the traditional senior year as we know it with a gap year that rather than happening after high school would happen in the senior year, and it would be a combination of continued academic learning, work experience, and community service. And there are really two reasons behind sticking this proposal in this – in the – in with the others. The first is that for large numbers of high school students, senior year is a waste of time. They're bored, they're disengaged, and they disconnect at the very time in their lives when they should be ramping up and getting prepared to – for the kind of rigor that they will face when they get to college.

But the second reason is that the hope and proposition is by creating financing for very strong community-based and community-approved experiences there would be – you would be able to encourage at the local level the kinds of partnerships that would not only benefit high school students, but also kids who have dropped out, not only be about

the senior year, but mechanisms that would help enrich after-school learning for young people in the lower grades of high school.

So basically, the proposition would be this: that civic institutions in the community, employers, and postsecondary institutions collaborate to design a course of study – a coherent course of study, work, and community service experience, and those experiences would get approved by a community board. You could remission the youth board under WIA. You could create some kind of different community board that included the school system. High schools would stay responsible for students, and by and large, this would be an option that would primarily be available to students who were on track for graduating: they passed the state test, they've done a lot of their course requirements, although they might need to continue to make up some of that over the course of the year. And students would be able to earn some money; they would accumulate some college credits, depending on how the postsecondary partnership was structured; and they could even through service and employer contributions get some kind of a contribution to a college fund.

And the infrastructure that got put in place, as I mentioned before, could also be of service for after-school programming for younger-age kids. You take, for example, the – Chicago, which has a program called After School Matters, which by 2005 will serve half of all the high school students in the city of Chicago. And there they have created neighborhood-based almost campuses for after-school time with programs in the arts, in sports, in technology, where our young people are doing a combination of skill development work, paid internships, teaching other young people, but it's a systemic approach and the idea behind this would be to create the resources and the excitement in the community to create that kind of systemic approach for young people.

Last thing before just closing with a proposal for how the federal government could help encourage these kinds of models is to just say a word about dropouts and the importance of reconnecting dropouts. My vision would be that there would need to be very, very strong on-ramps to each of these options for young people who have dropped out of school. In other words, not – you wouldn't have one option be a catch-all for all young people who had dropped out, but you would build systematic ways for helping young people enter each of the options. And you would accomplish this in part by a financing system that made those young people more valuable and created an incentive for schools and other institutions to compete in order to be able to serve these students and create – provide them with multiple supports.

But the most important thing would be that the options for them were the options that connect them, just like everybody else, into a connection to college-level learning. And again, there are – there is precedence of this. There is a wonderful program expanding around the country called Diploma Plus that help – works with alternative schools and young people that have dropped out, and again gives them sort of a double dose of academic curriculum but moves them quickly into credit-bearing courses at the college level.

The State of Oregon allows the community college system to compete with high schools to offer high school diplomas, and Portland Community College is now the largest issuer of high school diplomas in the state of Oregon, and it goes out and it contracts with the district to recapture kids who have dropped out, puts them in cohorts of 20 into again fast-track academic ramp-up courses, and then moves them as quickly as possible into college courses, so they get a high school diploma and college credit, college degrees.

So those are sort of the broad outlines of these proposals, and they're provocative. Why? Because they would require very significant changes in two complex systems. Second, as I'll talk about in a minute, because the proposed demonstration to help seed this experimentation would require reallocation of existing funds at the federal level. We're not in an environment where new funds are likely. And third, it would introduce a new level of competition and choice into the system, but the theory or hypothesis is that these options will increase the rigor of the high school curriculum, increase student motivation, improve the transition between secondary and postsecondary systems, and decrease the cost in time required for a postsecondary credential.

How to get from here to there? I propose a federal demonstration program. It might not happen in this round, but something to think about as we think about the future of how we use federal resources that would have four components to it. The first would be innovation – an innovation fund that would let states on a competitive basis compete to create these or other versions of things like this that would accelerate young people's progression into postsecondary education.

The second would be a very rigorous cost and evaluation study to be able to answer whether or not the hypotheses bear out whether this does better particularly for underserved students, underrepresented students than the traditional structures that we've got, and whether in the long run it ends up costing more money for a higher return, higher achievement, higher credential or whether the accelerated progress will – would, in fact, save money. We don't know the answers to those questions.

Third would be some kind of Congressionally-mandated study that would take the experience and the learning base and use it to ask basic questions that we need to think about about whether it makes any sense to continue the (siloed?) kinds of reauthorizations that treat young people and their needs as separately, as we do now.

And the fourth, some kind of public marketing campaign that would reach out to the public and tap into the interests in helping young people get to college and succeed there.

I think in the interests of time, I'm going to skip going into a lot of detail about the state innovation fund, and just close with laying out what I think the design principles that states would have to meet or show how they would use the federal funds to push forward these kinds of ideas, allowing money to follow the students to finance these options so that they would be sustainable over the long run, encouraging a kind of

competency-based progression, rather than the lack-step cohort, seat-time progression, ensuring that the postsecondary credit students earned are in fact transferable and will be accepted by higher education institutions for advanced standing, providing incentives, creating a management and information system, and making sure the state accountability system asks not just how do we deal with the kids who stay in high school, but are we doing a good job of recapturing the kids we lose and how do they do at the ultimate thing, which is going on to get some kind of credential and completing it.

And that these principles in a sense should be the characteristics of what the education system for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century that we're moving towards should represent, and that we can't afford a slow incremental status quo approach to getting from here to there. We need some kind of an experiment that would give us a quicker start. So that's the proposal. And let me turn it to my colleagues for reaction.

MS. BROWN: Okay. Thank you for those rich ideas and I'd like to hear the views of Dr. Susan Sclafani.

DR. SUSAN SCLAFANI: Ironically, what – lots of what Hilary has proposed was proposed by the president this time in his '06 budget and was not there. The high school intervention fund was to allow schools to redesign their high schools to create programs that really ensure that every student completes successfully, that provides the support systems for going on to postsecondary education by linking gear up and trio programs to what is happening in the high schools, expanding advanced placement opportunities for those students who are ready for the academic acceleration as well as the community college access fund, which brings states into planning with their K-12 and their higher ed systems on how to ensure that dual enrollment really fulfills the possibilities that we know that it holds, and yet now are not there.

We do have enormous numbers of community colleges offering dual enrollment. It's nearly 85 percent. Really 70 percent of all of the four-year institutions are offering dual enrollment possibilities. But as Hilary pointed out, those credits often aren't the same credits as what students are asked to do once they leave high school and go on to college. Either they're counted as electives or they're counted as nonspecific credits, so that students who take the science and the math courses, for example, don't get to now go on to the next course in science or math. They are told, "Well, your calculus isn't our calculus" or "The community calculus – college calculus isn't the four-year institution calculus, so you'll have to do ours, too," which really defeats the motivation that young people bring to this opportunity.

It also talks about the opportunities for states to create incentives within the system to bring the K-12 and the higher ed together to look at this issue of whether or not we're providing smooth transitions for young people to move from one to the other. All of those were proposed and our challenge is that America and certainly Congress is in love with the current model of high school. Many have these fond memories of how high school prepared them for what it was they need to do now, and particularly the parents of

our most successful students are affluent and are middle-class parents – believe that this is the model that will prepare their children.

They're not thinking about the changes in the workplace. They're not thinking about the changes in society, which are happening so rapidly. They're not thinking about who their children are, what strengths they bring to this picture, and how different those are from what they exhibited when they were in high school 30 years ago, 40 years ago, 20 years ago, and so are not really enabling their young people to take advantage of all that they could. So I want to change not just the last two years of school; I want a truly competency-based system that looks at what we're expecting of students by the end of high school currently and that ratchets that up.

Many states will tell you – the majority of the states – that their – that have exit exams, that their exit exam is somewhere around eighth grade level. Is that all that our students will need in order to be competitive, in order to be able to go on and do these courses? I think not. And so we've got to come up with some system for ensuring that there are some opportunities for students to demonstrate competency that truly is at the high school level. We need to ensure that there are chances for students to get out into the community and it's – I know that Hilary believes that community-based organizations ought to be part of this. It wasn't part of the paper, but it is an important piece of the opportunity for young people to truly develop their expertise, their concern about their community, their interests in a much broader way than just the K-12 system and the higher ed system.

In fact, one of our critical issues with this is looking at the motivation of students. These plans work well for motivated students, and the opportunities to do these different things, I'm sure, would be taken by many of our students. The reason that over half of our African-American students and Hispanic students drop out before graduation is that this system doesn't respond to their needs, their interests, their focus on what it is that they want to be doing.

So how do we transform the whole system, including back at middle school, so that our students are able to leave middle school truly at that eighth grade level so that we can spend high school and beyond at – working at higher levels, learning at higher levels? The latest report on – that I just was handed points out that if retirements happen between 2020 when Tony Carnevale is already assuming they're going to be 14 million more jobs requiring postsecondary education than we have people to fill them, to the 2040, that that's going to be 35 million as all the baby boomers retire. And in fact, one group is proposing that we not allow them to retire entirely; that we only allow partial retirement, sort of phased retirement so that they're working down their time.

For the first time since we designed high schools to keep people out of the job market until they were 18, which is the only reason high school goes to 18, we've got to figure out how to move them into the job market at earlier ages to be part of this. And when you talk with our students today, you recognize they're much more mature. They have been exposed to so much more than we did when – you know, I'm 60, so I'm

really – than I did when I was moving from middle school to high school. I was still a child. Young people now are far more sophisticated. They can do far more. They want to do far more. And the issue becomes how do we engage them in understanding that education needs to be part of that more that they do?

I really liked Hilary's opportunities in that gap year to give students a chance to go out into the community and find out what they're passionate about. If they are highly motivated and they know what they want to do in college and want to take that academic acceleration program, that's wonderful, but many of them want to get out of high school, but they don't really know what they want to do once they get out of high school, and that's the group that we really need to be working with.

One of the interesting things in the paper, it mentions that Mark Tucker was talking about the European model where everyone has a common curriculum until the end of grade ten, and then they move in different ways. Well, in Denmark that works very well for the young people. The students who move into the technical areas as proposed here are technical. I hate to call it a track, because we have such negative use of that, but a technical option are achieving as well academically as the students who take the academic option at the end of their time there when they give them the PISA, when they give them international measures, when they let them take TIMS. They don't see a major gap between the two.

Germany, on the other hand, on whom many countries monitor their program, have found that their students who are going into the technical programs today are not well prepared academically. There's a huge – they look like us. Got good numbers up here in the level five of doing very well, and big numbers down here at the level one or lower that are doing very poorly, so we have to be very careful as we design a system like this to ensure that we're not continuing what happened to voc ed over the years, which was that if students seemed to have a spark and an ability, we put them into the college prep track, otherwise, we put them into the vocational track. Well, they can't think; well, let them work with their hands. That's no longer what's needed in the workplace. That's no longer what's going to enable them to have a career they love to go to every day.

These two have to come together, and so we've got to be very careful as we talk about these options that we ensure that, as we're hoping through No Child Left Behind, students are getting from elementary school to middle school on grade level, they move from in middle school through all of those preparatory courses that will enable them to succeed, and then the question is, how many years do they need to spend in a high school as opposed to moving into some of those other areas.

So I think that we need to be a little more radical in rethinking what our students tell us and, you know, there's – the one option that wasn't mentioned is the met (ph) school, which takes students who were dismal academically in middle school, but who want to do something – know that they've got to do something more with their lives, and graduates articulate, well-prepared, young people who are going on and succeeding in college. And it's not doing it through our traditional school program, and it's not 30 kids

in the class or the teacher every minute of the day. It's a mentor who helps them design in the community and in the work force opportunities to learn those things that are of interest to them, and to learn those things that are not of interest to them because they need them in order to succeed in those things that they are interested in. So I think that that is a challenge.

I agree that we've got a major issue in terms of whether our high schools traditionally done are ever going to be able to keep up with state-of-the-art equipment and career and technical ed. That's one of the things that our employer groups come back and say, you know, we'd rather you teach them nothing specific in terms of the skills of this career area because if you teach them on obsolete equipment with obsolete ideas, then we first have to unteach that before we can teach them the right way to do it. Teach them how to communicate well in the oral and written form, as well as using technology. Teach them the mathematical problem-solving abilities that they are going to need. Teach them to work in teams. Teach them to be able to manage their own time. Teach them to be able to work with a diverse group of people.

Now, that – those criteria in and of themselves say that our high schools are poorly designed to reach those goals. We don't allow team – maybe a teacher who is innovative will have students sitting around a table working together, but project-based learning is not very available and accessible to the majority of our students. They are taught to work individually and solo. They don't get the opportunities to explore career areas that might be of interest to them. So I think that we've got to rethink that maybe high school is what – the old days is what middle school currently ought to be. Or maybe it's not even that kind of a distinction. Many schools are rethinking that the structure of middle school because it's – in some cases, it's not socially manageable. It's not socially productive to put all of those young students of the same age in a building together rather than having them have role models who are older or be role models to younger students, so we may see that some go back to K-6, 7-12 model. Some are going back to a K-8 model, and then giving students options to move on from there.

But I think, as I say, we've got that – the challenge of getting Congress to think differently about how we do things, particularly when there are lots of constituencies that say, "No, no. Maintain things as they are, including tech prep." And I think tech prep is a great model, but it was a pilot program 12 years ago. Either it's proved its worth or it hasn't, and it shouldn't have a separate hierarchy, a separate set of staffing. It ought to be available, because frankly very few of the tech prep dollars are going to focus on high-quality tech prep programs that truly offer that two-plus-two that our students need.

I would like to talk about the capacity issue, because this worries me a lot. And while we certainly have capacity issues of subject matter experts in our high schools, to assume that we've got enough in our community colleges and our colleges to meet the needs of not only those students who are banging on the door to get in, but also students who are currently in our high school system is something that is a major concern. I was talking yesterday about these wonderful transition programs, and someone from California said, "The UC system now tells students that they are going to have to start at

the community college level, because they have no room for them.” And the community colleges are saying, “Well, you can come here, but we can’t guarantee that we can make the courses available so you’ll finish in two years. It’s much more likely it’s going to take you three years to get out of the – to do the two years of work, because we can’t – we don’t have the faculty, we don’t have the space to offer the courses to you.” And then when they go to the four-year institution, it takes them another three years for the same reason, that they can’t offer enough sections of the courses.

And again, we need to be thinking about different models. It’s – it can’t be just the models that we’ve had in the past that we take into the future. We’ve got to be using technology to a much greater extent than we do. Online courses require different time use by professors and instructors, but they do enable students who aren’t the ones waving their hands to be speaking in the classroom an opportunity to be part of the dialogue that they don’t take in a regular classroom; that removes for faculty that assumption they make about students based on what they look like, what age they are, because they don’t know who they are, they’re responding to them online.

Our students are much more interested in using technology as a medium through which to learn, and, you know, those of you who have heard me before, these students grew up with different media. Their synapses are just not the same as ours. And as a result, they’re not going to be motivated by the same structures that we worked in, and there’s some young people in the audience shaking their heads. They know that. And they suffer through, but it’s not maximizing their learning, and if we could maximize that learning, we probably could do all of this in fewer years than we’re currently requiring.

We just added to the Pell Grant the opportunity to go year-round if students want to. Again, why should they be limited to two semesters a year? If they can continue going in the summer, and they want to finish university in three years, that’s good for the university, so it has more space for others. It’s good for the individual, because they are not losing time in between when they have one course in the sequence, and the next course in the sequence. A major problem with our high schools where students usually finish their math requirements junior year, and then have to take a remedial course when they get to community college or college because they’ve forgotten, where if they were moving immediately into that next math course, that next science course because there wasn’t this artificial division between what they take as a 16-year-old or a 17-year-old or a 19-year-old, we wouldn’t have those problems. If we could remove the remediation requirements from our colleges and universities, again that would give them greater capacity to serve the students who are ready to work on grade level.

Speaking of financial incentives, Alabama has already figured out how to do this. They’re working with students who are highly at risk, possible dropouts. They catch them before they drop out. They put them into a community college program. They have said to the K-12 system – and I think this is a little overly generous, but they’re trying to prove their point – you keep the funding, we’ll educate the students.

Now, that doesn't make sense to me. I was in a K-12 system. I know that when students go in ones and twos that you don't have the economies of scale you would have if they went in neat little groups of 25, but we ought to be designing the system so that the teachers aren't basing their expectations for a class on the number in the age cohort, but rather the number who need that level of work. And if we could combine not only the K-12 and the higher ed, but also the adult ed programs, if we had campuses that made these available to everyone, if we brought some of the community college work into the high school, which now would have some more space because some of the students are leaving and going on, we'd have a more productive system.

But I agree with Hilary. It's time to rethink the way in which we're doing these things, because what we're doing now is not meeting the needs of the individual, and which is my greatest concern. We are denying young people the opportunity for the American dream that's their birthright and the reason so many of them came here if we continue to use an old system that was designed to do different things for a very different group of students. So I'll stop there and –

MS. BROWN: Thank you very much.

Jack?

MR. JACK JENNINGS: Thank you, Cindy. Well, first of all, let me welcome the Center of American Progress onto the policy scene in Washington. Your voice is needed, and I'm glad Cindy's involved. I've known Cindy for many, many years, and she's a person with a great deal of experience that can help the Center become involved.

Let me start by – Cindy, when she introduced me told you that I was involved in Congress for many years, in fact decades. Everything we're talking about today was discussed 25 years ago. In fact, legislation was enacted in 1980, which was President Carter's legislation to do many of these same things. And the money was actually provided, \$2 billion at the time, to do all of this type of thing. And \$2 billion then 25 years ago comes to about \$3.5 billion today. So this was serious money, and it was a serious proposal to change high schools, to bring about improved vocational training, to integrate postsecondary with high schools and so on.

We lost those 25 years because President Reagan came in and removed all the money because he wanted to reduce taxes instead of fund programs, and he thought the federal government was part of the problem, not part of the solution, and therefore the legislation was repealed, the money was lost, and we lost 25 years.

Now we're back at the point where the federal government a quarter of a century later is talking again about trying to change high schools. And I hope we don't lose this opportunity, but I think some things have to be provided in any proposal that's serious about changing high schools in this country. And let me commend Hilary for her thinking. I know she drew upon a number of the people who were involved 25 years ago, like Bob Schwartz, and some of the others who were very influential in getting that

legislation enacted, so many of the ideas that she's recommending are resonating with me from earlier debates.

I think your proposal is very thoughtful. I think it ought to be enacted. I think it ought to be tried out at the state level, but let me give you what I think the merits are, and what I think the problems are, and then let me make six recommendations for changes or reinforcements about what you're proposing.

First, the merit or the merits are that you're talking about engaging students and giving them more options. And that is quite appropriate because American teenagers today, as Susan pointed out, are physically more mature than they were 25 years ago. And it's a strange situation where we keep them boxed in high schools as they are more mature. It doesn't make a lot of sense. And so giving them more options, getting them more engaged with postsecondary, getting them more engaged with the community, all makes a lot of sense. Trying to integrate postsecondary with secondary also makes a lot of sense. Trying to give kids a head start on their careers makes a lot of sense.

But this is the main problem I have with the proposal. I just get a feeling in reading this – and I read it several times last week and over the weekend – once all the rhetoric is done away with, what I'm concerned about is that this will be a tracking system, and that what it will mean will be that academically motivated kids, many upper-middle class kids are the ones who are going to be able to start college early, the ones who are going to get the degrees, the ones who are out the gate and far ahead. Those kids who are less academically motivated may be less interested in school, may go into a vocational track. There are not that many good vocational schools available today that are academically challenging as well as that can prepare kids for a career. And I wonder whether many of those kids would just be lost in a muddle as they are today in generalized courses in schools.

And then the third track, I'm afraid I don't see the great motivation to keep dropouts from dropping out. And I'm afraid that if there is this degree of flexibility and encouragement to leave high school, a number of these kids are going to be gone, and long gone, and not coming back. And so when all is said and done, even though there's much to be said for this, I'm afraid that when all is said and done we will wind up with the more affluent kids getting ahead in college, the middling kids not doing too well, and then kids not being encouraged to stay in school and not drop out.

So – but it's a lot easier to criticize something than to propose something, so let me give six features I think that have to be emphasized in your proposal or added to your proposal. First, I think that this should be a one-year option, not a two-year option, because I think we have an obligation to high school kids to make sure that they have learned enough in three years, so that they are ready for options if there are going to be options available. I wouldn't cut it short at two years.

Secondly, I know that you've said there would be demanding academics, but the unit of analysis here is a state as I understand it. It's not a school district; it's a state, and

so the authority would be given to a state to make changes in its school system. Well, in every state in the union we have a very unequal field when it comes to the academics that are provided to kids, and it's unequal principally because of economics, so that the more affluent the community, the better the academics are in school. The less affluent the community, the worse the academics are in school. So if a state really wants to have this option, wants to go along this road, they have to really not just sign a piece of paper and check off and say, all kids are going to have more demanding academics. They really have to change the academic demands of all kids within that state. That, in fact, is what's happening in other countries.

You know, these countries who are getting ahead of us – Ireland, Canada, Korea, Singapore – are demanding more of all kids at a higher level, and they're frequently doing it in a traditional high school. They're not doing it through giving kids a slew of options. They're not doing it through giving kids the option to go out into the community. They're saying, you're going to stay in high school, and you're going to learn more, and here's exactly what you're going to learn, and there's very few electives. And so the people who are getting ahead of us aren't the ones who are opening the door of the high school. They are the ones who are keeping kids in high school and just demanding more of them in terms of academics. I think there's something to be learned from that.

You know, the polls that kids fill out with public agenda and all that, all say that they wished they had studied harder in high school, they wished they had known what they were supposed to have known, they wished there had been greater demands on them. I'm afraid that this proposal gives kids choices, which is nice, but it doesn't demand enough of them to ensure that they really know the academic subject matter before they had their choices.

The third factor I would emphasize, and I know that you talked about providing supports. In the United States, because we have a very decentralized set of schools, it means that the poorest schools and the schools with the highest percentages of kids of color have the teachers who are least qualified, especially in high schools. And so if you open the door and you say, well, we're going to allow kids to leave after two years, and they can go out into the community, they can do what they want to do, we have not taken care of the problem that we have not educated well many, many kids in the inner city and schools with high percentages of poverty, middle class, lower-middle class, white schools. We have not provided, in fact, an equal education to kids.

And so before we talk about making all these changes, why don't we do it right to begin with in terms of making sure that kids in poor schools and kids in schools with high percentage of kids of color in fact have qualified teachers and that they in fact have labs. One of the reasons why you don't have science programs in many poor schools is they don't have the labs. They don't have the equipment. And so we can talk about providing all this flexibility and freedom, but we haven't done the job right at the state level in terms of providing a fair set of schools that are demanding academically for all kids. And before we talk about making radical changes, maybe we ought to do it right. So that's the

third thing. There should be supports. There should be better a distribution of aids, of supports, and teachers for kids.

The fourth thing I would recommend is that you talk about kids being encouraged to go on to post secondary education. What, in fact, has happened in our country in the last 10 years is that need-based aid for postsecondary education has gone down, and there's been a shift towards loan-based aid, so that there's a decline in the number of poor kids who are going to college now. All the attention has been on the middle class angst in terms of not having enough money to go to college, so what we've done is we've shrunk up need-based aid so that there's a smaller proportion of poor kids who are going on to college or staying in college.

So we can say we're opening the doors to postsecondary education for kids, but unless you provide need-based aid, many of these kids aren't going to go on to college. And so I would demand that a state provide need-based aid. Many states now are shifting towards merit-based pay and away from need-based aid for postsecondary education.

The fifth thing I'd recommend is that none of this is going to work unless you provide substantial money, and all this talk about we don't have the money – you have to reallocate – that's nonsense. There's an intentional strategy adopted in the last four years to shrink the federal surplus and to do away with federal funding so that nothing could happen, and it succeeded.

Forget that. If you really want to do this as a national priority, find the money to do it. Right now, the federal government provides about 8 percent of the aid for all of elementary, secondary education. In high schools I think it's probably about 1 percent because most federal aid goes to elementary schools and to middle schools. So we're going to tell states that they can make all these changes and give them 1 cent on the dollar. That's not going to work. And so if you really want to do something, you had better provide some money to do it. You don't have to pay for it all, but you better provide some money.

The last thing is that this proposal talks about on-ramps for dropouts and so on. I don't think that that is going to work very well, but I don't know what will. Hilary and I were talking ahead of time. The dropout problem is a very, very serious problem in this country and we have little programs here and there that help dropouts, but we really haven't addressed the issue of dropouts very seriously. And I don't know if anybody has a solution, but that we have to give much more attention to dropouts.

Maybe what we should do – if this is going to be a proposal to have states to do this, maybe they should be given goals to reduce dropout rates over a number of years, and maybe they should be given help to provide aids to get kids back into school through specific programs, but this is a serious hole, not just in your proposal, but in all our thinking. I don't think we have figured out what we're going to do with dropouts.

So having said that (laughter) I think it's a very creative proposal. It's very reminiscent of what was proposed before, which I wish had been tried for the last 25 years; we would have had some experience to know what would have worked, what wouldn't have worked, but I think it's certainly worth trying now. But I think we have to think out a little bit better some of the aspects of this proposal to make sure that we don't wind up just having a track system which is what we have today unfortunately, and what we should be moving away so that these countries that are surpassing us are trying to bring up all their kids to certain minimum levels. That should be our goal: to bring all kids up to certain minimum levels and not to have a track system that just allows the more affluent to get ahead.

So with that – suggestions for advice – I wish you will. (Laughter.)

MS. BROWN: What a great panel. Lots of rich ideas. A lot to sort through, and hopefully we can do that together for the next few minutes and – but we'll all continue this discussion even after today, but before I open it up let me ask Hilary, Susan, if they have comments, and if Jack wants to comment back that's fine, too.

MS. PENNINGTON: Well, let me start by, you know, agreeing with Jack's concerns, which I share. And two things: you know, I think you mischaracterize our proposal by saying open door for everybody. Let them all leave school and drift off into these options. You know, what I tried to be careful about, particularly in playing with the latter year of high school, is to say this is something that could actually be compatible – as Mark Tucker's proposal as well – with a common high school experience that gets kids to a certain standard and then gives them choices.

But I do think that we have to break the lock-step progression and there have to be ways, as many schools have demonstrated even with underprepared – academically underprepared kids – for moving challenge and rigor and opportunity closer in, but one of the worst things that's happening today is that the kids that are doing least well are being given very, very boring curriculum – drill and grill, remedial – and you could make an argument that that's part of what's causing dropout rates to go up as we raise standards, not down.

So I think this is partly trying to say let's figure out how to change the motivation and let's get institutions outside the high school helping us out here. You know, you talk about underqualified teachers – and it's true. I agree with Susan. It's not necessarily the case, but community college teachers are a lot better teachers. You've got to assume and hope they know their subject discipline and that if you can get some (hearing?) of ways teachers or teachers in high schools, particularly in urban areas, you could begin to do better.

I didn't mention, but I think one of the elements of this that would be important is to give – there are states and cities now that are beginning to give young people at the end of 10<sup>th</sup> grade the test that they would have to take to get into a credit bearing course at the community college level. And they learn whether they're on track or off track in 10<sup>th</sup>

grade when they can still do something about it. New York with its (unintelligible) program says, okay, if you fail that test you have a choice of taking (unintelligible) remedial or development education either in a community college – part of the community system – or still in your high school. So that would be compatible with this, and if you pass it you can move on and start to take courses at the college level.

So I think we have to begin to differentiate and play with this, and I don't want to leave anyone the impression, including me, that this is saying open the doors to the high schools and let everybody out. One of the things I struggle the most with is whether you would want to think about this program in a more universalistic way, which is the way that I tried to frame it, in part thinking about all those parents who like the schools as they are now, but are a little bit anxious about whether or not their kids are going to get a head start onto college and can they pay for it.

So do you take a universalistic approach or could – might you say that this should be much more targeted? That this should be in fact deliberately targeted at the kinds of young people who we know already are underrepresented in college preparatory curriculums and going on into college and target it at low-income young people, children of color, because the key principle of having a support system and a school design in a sense that makes it predictable that they're going to go to college and at least get a first year or two under their belt without costing their family money would be a good thing.

And there I think it would be an interesting question about the politics of whether we as a country would be willing to create systems like that that were targeted versus more universal. But I think you raise great concerns that need to be thought through better.

DR. SCLAFANI: Yeah, we obviously have a very different view on the politics of this issue – Jack and I – but we agree on the substance of what we want to see for kids, and the point, I think, is that we've got to bring students into the dialogue. I think that by leaving them out and doing to them what we do, rather than having those students who are either in college or at work say they wish they had worked harder, say something more about how they might have been able to work harder and more effectively in the school that they attended. I think that our students have wonderful ideas about things that could be done differently that would motivate them.

One of the sad facts is that a lot of our kids still have teachers who say, you know what? You're on your own. It doesn't matter whether you learn or not. And we've got to do something about that. I mean, it's a – we've kind of demonized the students as the problem rather than saying, do we have a community that they can be part of both within the school and within the community that's encouraging them to be all that they can be?

And I think that the value of doing things differently and giving them some opportunity to be in on the planning of it means that we're going to engage some of the students. You know, the (proper surveillance?) program that what kids can do isn't taking the best and the brightest students – the top honor society kids and the top student

council kids. We're working with a group of at-risk kids who have some very good suggestions about how to improve their schools, how to improve their communities, and they demonstrate through these projects what they're capable of doing. Often, there are faculty working with them who are amazed at what they're able to do and it's because it tapped into something that interested them.

And so, yes, there are going to be students who will do just fine in the traditional system, and we have schools of them around that do that. You know, YES is a charter school in Houston. It takes a very traditional approach. It's small. They get lots of attention. There are high standards. Seven through 12 and it works, but it doesn't work for every child. There are some children who leave that program – not a lot, but there are some who leave that because that's not what they need. So I think we have to have some broader opportunities to engage the students and I think that if we're talking with them about why they left and what would get them back, we have a better chance of designing some new options that would get them onto the interest and willingness to do some of these programs.

MS. BROWN: Thank you very much. I'd like to open questions and comments to the audience. I want to begin with any media folks who are here, and we have a mike in the back. Antoine has it, but if you could identify yourselves and speak into the microphone it would help a lot.

Right here.

Q: Hi, I'm Stew Magnusson with *Education Daily*. A question for Dr. Sclafani and anyone else who wants to comment. You talked about a lot of options and different things going on and for students and getting away from the drill and grill, but one thing you didn't talk about is one of President Bush's main proposals, and that's expanding testing in the high schools for No Child Left Behind and that model. Now, there seems to be kind of a conflict there. It seems that schools would want to get back to putting the students in neat little rows and drilling and grilling them and –

MS. : It doesn't work.

Q: – it seems like different approaches.

DR. SCLAFANI: Yeah, it is a different approach, and it says to the state, design the kind of assessment system that you think will work for you. So, yeah, if a state wants to do end-of-course exams, competency-based ways for its students to demonstrate that they know this and are ready to go on, that is something that they would be encouraged to do. I don't think that they're at odds at all. I think that if you're setting up a system with options, then you have to have ways to ensure that all students have true access to those options.

And it's kind of what Jack was saying; that if this is only available to middle-class kids who have good teachers, then it's not going to achieve its ends. If on the other hand,

the state knows that part of the system is an accountability system that says devise what you think it is that students need to know and be able to do by the time they leave high school, and whether that's the five Regents exams that New York state requires or at – end-of-course exams that they're doing in North Carolina; it's whatever they see appropriate. In fact, Texas is now going back to end-of-course exams because they recognize that that tells them whether students really are getting equitable opportunities.

If you look at all of the students who are taking algebra and you look at the test results and you find that in some schools – longitudinally continue to fail the majority of their students on that test, then you know that those students are not learning algebra. The course may say algebra, but they're not learning algebra. And so it says now, let's – how do we go back and ensure that the teachers at that school understand not only the algebra they're trying to teach, but the variety of strategies that would enable them to teach it to the diverse group of students that they have in their schools. So I don't think that those are at all at odds.

I think if we're talking about competency-based, then we've got to have good assessments that assess competency. Our – the exams are one way; portfolios with external people coming in to see student work are other ways. But what we believe is you've got to have that easily done dipstick to ensure that you know what's happening in every school in the state in order to know that students are all getting the opportunity to learn.

MS. BROWN: Do you want to comment?

MR. JENNINGS: No. He has another question.

MS. BROWN: He has another question.

MR. : (Off mike.)

Q: Thinking about the Nebraska model, how they really had a big battle with Secretary Paige over what you were just describing – kind of more individualized local assessments for progress is something that is going to be more flexible on in the future?

DR. SCLAFANI: Well, I think that we want is a combination of assessments. I – as I finished what I was saying, is you want these objective third-party assessments so that you can ensure that the teachers at a school are indeed holding the correct standard for their students. I mean, in many of the low-performance schools it's not that teachers are saying that we had our standard up here and the students can't do it; over time they've lowered the standard. The result of that is that students moved forward without the background that they need to be successful in the next course. So I think that it's a combination of what the school does to assess their students and what the accountability does to ensure that students indeed are giving all students access to a quality education.

MS. BROWN: Okay, any media or – okay, Judy Winston in the front row.

Q: Thank you very much, Cindy.

I have to preface – ah, I’m Judy Winston; Winston, Withers & Associates. I’d like to say – preface my question by saying I did not have a chance to read your report, Hilary, before here in your presentation. I was jotting down a number of questions that I had as you were presenting. I must admit that Jack Jennings basically raised every one of them that I was concerned about, but I would like to have the panel elaborate a bit on an issue that Jack raised, and that is what the implications of these options might be for teachers and how we have generally deployed teachers, have been able to attract them or not, particularly in rural areas and in urban areas – inner-city areas populated largely by children of color and poor children.

MS. BROWN: Want to take a shot at that one?

MS. PENNINGTON: Yes. Well, I think they would change teachers’ roles, as I was trying to describe with some of the models that we’re talking about. You know, this is a big issue and debate with the early college high schools, no matter who gets to teach what classes. You know, if a high school’s teacher – if a high school teacher qualified to teach a college-level class in the high school and if they teach it, would it be accepted by the college as to the right standard. If a college faculty member – good at teaching (young?) people. And so I think there’s – we have – there’s a lot of stuff around that that would need to get worked out.

But I think if you look at the issue of lack of subject matter (expertise?), we don’t have enough teachers, particularly in poor urban areas or rural areas, we have subject matter expertise. Large numbers of teachers are retiring. Why not be more flexible about what these kinds of partnerships between college faculty and high school teachers, perhaps supplemented by distance learning might allow to be possible? And I think that would be a piece of what you would want to encourage at the state level, and that you would want to evaluate very carefully and very intensively because I think we have all kinds of gatekeepers around things that can sometimes be for wrong reasons.

I think also, they – you know, taking the (Met?) example is a good example. You know, there are many of those in which the resources outside the school that can enhance students’ learning. But the school ultimately has to be accountable and you do ultimately have to make sure that students are getting – all students are getting to the academic level of preparation that they need to be, but I think within that there is a lot of room for improvement and creative exchange.

MS. BROWN: Okay, yes?

Q: My name is Mara Sadie (ph), and I’m an intern with Results. And I just graduated from high school last year, and I was at the top 5 percent of my grade. And my parents emigrated here; they had no idea about the system and it was basically self-motivation that kept me going because my counselors and my teachers, you know, they

just wanted us to – everybody was on the same – in a class of 600, they just wanted us to pass and basically just get whatever – the credits that are, like, mandatory to pass through high school. They didn't say, you know, "Take some AP classes," or anything.

And I have two younger sisters that are going to be going to high school pretty soon, and I'm the one that's looking for different things, and my state of Utah just basically just right now, this year, started the program of getting your Associates Degree in high school and has given my sister that option, and I wish that I would have known about it before –

(Cross talk.)

Q: – you know. In my senior year I only had two classes to –

MS. : (Off mike.)

Q: – really attend to, I finished my credits. I had no motivation from my teachers or anything, and that's a problem I think teachers should get some training in.

MS. PENNINGTON: Absolutely.

Q: Motivating their students.

MS. BROWN: Thank you so much for sharing that.

DR. SCLAFANI (?): Now let me just say, it's not something we prepare our teachers to do. And again it goes back to kind of rethinking our preparation programs and our professional development programs. These ideas require that teachers are advocates for their students. Well, you've got to prepare them to be advocates. They're not all naturally advocates – know about all of the opportunities available, and help to match the child to the opportunity. I think many more of them could do a whole lot more if we spent the time helping them to understand what's available out there and then how they might talk with students about those opportunities.

MR. JENNINGS: There's all this talk about remediation and postsecondary education, but that as I understand it, the largest remediation – largest amount of remediation occurs with math. And it occurs frequently because kids do not take the right sequence of courses in high school, because kids are just allowed to take electives or allowed to take what they want to do. There aren't counselors there to tell kids that if you really want to do well in college, you have to take a certain sequence of math courses. They wind up going to postsecondary education and they don't know what they should have known, and therefore they have to go into remediation.

What in my opinion, and this may be out-of-sync with everybody – in my opinion, we've emphasized freedom so much – that kids can do whatever they want – that we haven't – we have a tragedy of kids who are saying that they want to be doctors

and then they don't know what they have to take in terms of science courses in order to enter college in order to be a doctor. But nobody has disabused them of the idea that they have to study hard, and they have to take certain courses if they really want that type of career. We allow them to float along and take all these electives that we want, and in many high schools, and this is not just in poor high schools, we have dumbed down courses that are labeled living math or labeled whatever. And kids take –

MS. BROWN: Even labeled algebra. (Laughs.)

MR. JENNINGS: Yeah. Kids take these courses and there isn't the rigor in these courses, and they think they've learned something when they haven't learned it. And so I guess one reason I may have characterized this proposal as opening the doors, as tracking, is that I see the emphasis on choice; I don't see the emphasis on rigor. I don't see the emphasis on sequential courses. I don't see the emphasis on demanding that all high schools provide difficult subject matters for all kids.

One of the reasons the Catholic schools did so well is that they treat all kids the same whether they're poor or middle-class or rich. They all require that they have to have certain rigor in their math courses and their science courses and everything else. They don't have these excuses: well, these kids are poor; these kids are children with color; these kids don't have the right background, and therefore they've given them dumbed down courses. Now, I think we have to swing much more towards rigor in high school with some freedom, but structured freedom, but rigor first.

And I think that's where other countries are getting ahead of us. They're demanding rigor. They're not putting the emphasis on freedom and choice and do whatever you want and feel good about it. They're saying you have to take these courses – all of you.

MS. PENNINGTON: He's a good debater. (Laughter.) He probably had a choice to take debate in high school. But I – you know, that – I think you are right – of course you're right, that there's a difference between – part of the problem, and part of what I'm trying to argue is that you – if you want to take – if you say there has to be a standard. I mean, even worse than the doctor is the person who thinks they want to be a nurse and doesn't think they need it; shows up at community college, and lo and behold, to be a nurse they needed to have taken college preparatory math and science.

So I think that one of the advantages of making college-level expectations more transparent earlier in high school is that it would actually help young people understand just exactly what their teachers mean when they're telling them why they need to know this stuff, and that it's going to help them get ahead.

And, in all of the kinds of examples that I gave, the high school is structuring itself to scaffold kids into taking higher and more demanding courses and succeeding in them, so that when they are taking their science class at (CALS?), at the local community college, and they're coming back to the high school, they're coming back to the high

school so that they can succeed in whatever college-level course that they're taking, which is a very different proposition than a dumbed-down living math course or a course labeled algebra.

MS. BROWN: Kevin, did you have a question?

Q: Hi, I'm Kevin Finneran. I'm with Issues in Science and Technology at the National Academies. And I think one of the troubles I'm having in trying to follow this debate is focusing on what the problem is, that we want to solve. I mean, is it that there's not enough rigor for anybody? Is it that there's not enough choice? Is it for a particular group of students?

I mean, we start out talking about those – you know, the problems with dropouts; people who don't make it through. Is the solution for dropouts to give them college courses when they're not prepared for their high school courses? Are the technical courses going to put them on a line to gets them back toward community college?

So anyway, I'd be – from the three of you, I think Jack had made clear that rigor is what counts. Catholic schools, of course, fail you out if you don't meet that rigor, and then –

MS. : (Off mike.)

Q: – Susan's going to say what choice are you going to give them when they fail out? And if you're in Catholic school, they don't give you any choice except public school, and then we've got to ask the public school what choice they offer. (Laughter.)

But anyway, I just wanted to go back to see if you're focusing on a particular group of people, and I think we started out focusing on those that don't finish high school, the ones who are in most trouble as far as schooling. Then what other things they most need in various resources, choice or rigor or something else? So, for all three of you.

DR. SCLAFANI: Can I just put a little data in here? A significant number of the students who drop out of school are students who could be in those advanced placement courses. They've dropped out because school is not relevant to them because they're being asked to do things that they think are not going to move them in the direction that they want to go; that's it's got to be done one way and one way – the school's way, or your – or the highway is your other option.

So it's not just children of color or children in poverty who are dropping out of our schools. The number of gifted kids dropping out is also significant and they – these are kids who could, but are not because the current system isn't giving them any opportunity to be a real participant. They're the ones it's being done to, as opposed to really being a participant in it. So I think we're talking about all kids. I think that we're recognizing that certainly there are children whose parents think that they're not going to

ever even entertain the proposition that their child drops out of school. But they find out that they don't have a lot of choice in that. The kid – they might drop them off everyday, but he's not staying, or she's not staying.

MS. PENNINGTON: You know, Chicago has done a very interesting disaggregated analysis of its dropouts, and I'm not going to get the statistics exactly right, but they – a significant – a surprising number of the kids who drop out in that city drop out – have completed their course requirements for graduation and are doing fine on the standardized tests. It's like, 10 or 20 – it's much, much higher than we would expect to find. And there's huge variation among – as you would expect to find – schools in Chicago. So I think it is a differentiated a problem that needs differentiated solutions.

But to my mind, the single most important thing I'm trying to say is that we need to design a system that doesn't lead it to chance whether or not kids who have dropped out get back connected to the highest possible (end?) we would want for anyone. In other words, reconnecting a dropout doesn't mean they get a GED. A GED does not mean that they're going to get into college, complete some kind of a degree, or get a good job in the labor market if you look at the data.

So why I think there's – like, the Portland Community College model is so important. And you listen to the kids in that model; they talk about the disrespect that they got in high school. They talk about how much they like being treated as adults at Portland Community College.

Now, that program doesn't leave it to chance whether or not those kids get rigor. They're in a cohort of 20; they're assigned an ombudsman who goes out and figures out if they have issues with housing, they've gotten kicked out of their house, they're in trouble with the law, they help solve those problems and they have to figure out a funding scheme to let them do that. And they are in a state which allows (unintelligible) dollars. They blend and (bridge?) (unintelligible) students in a way that Congress should be much more creative about letting states do. And they move them – they get – they meet their high school diploma standard and they move them into college courses, but they again (scaffold?) them in succeeding in the college-level courses.

So, it's that kind of image that I would hope to put in people's mind, rather than the image that says kids drop out, they're going to go into a part-time course where they get a GED with underprepared teachers, but rather a system that says for those kids especially – the kids who need the most and get the least – we need to put them in a different kind of wraparound system that works backwards from the highest level of – you know, credential that we would want them to reach, and doesn't leave it to chance.

MR. JENNINGS: If I could answer that, I think you have three sets of problems. The top – the 20 percent that's at the top are those who are taking academic courses, they're taking AP courses, they're getting credit for college, they're on their way to college, many of them think they're doing better than they really are because the rest of the world is not sitting still. Europe is integrating its education system. Asian countries

are putting greater demands on their kids than ever before. And so even our best prepared kids need to know that they're not necessarily the top of the heap; that other people are getting ahead of them. So there I think that it's a matter of even more demanding material for those kids.

I'd say the next 50 percent are the kids who are sort of drifting along in between. And they're getting through high school, they're doing okay, they're breathing and therefore in America they're going to our college (laughter) because our colleges don't enforce any standards. And what they're trying to do is keep their doors open so they can hire all their professors, and so unlike before the 1940s you can get into a college in this country even without a high school diploma, and so those kids are going to get into college, but they're unprepared for college because they haven't taken the demanding coursework. They haven't taken the sequential coursework, they don't have anybody interested in them who knows enough to be able to help them structure their career and therefore they need both guidance as well as more demanding course work.

Then below that, the 30 percent at the bottom, I think have a slew of problems in the way we structure our schools in the United States so that they don't have a fair system of schoolings, that they don't have enough money spent on their schoolings, that they don't have well prepared teachers, that they have less demanding curriculum, that we're allowed dropouts of 50 percent in Detroit and some of these other cities, seemingly without people really caring enough to do something about it.

And so in those situations, I think you need a slew of help dealing with getting better teachers into those schools, dealing with maybe changing those schools physically because many of them are buildings you wouldn't want to be in, and I wouldn't want to be in, and just a slew of problems there. So I think you – there's a differentiation between kids and how well they're doing in school.

MS. BROWN: Did you have a –

Q: Hi. I'm Jan Brody (sp) with the Association of Career and Technical Education. A comment and then a question because I think this certainly this – the proposal here raises, if we just listen to this, a number of issues. Certainly if it was an easy answer we'd have done it a long time ago because you don't have the systems – higher ed talking to even community colleges, let alone high schools. The employer community necessarily isn't talking to the high schools or higher ed either, so you have people graduating with college not having the skills they need to get into the workforce either.

Teacher preparation programs, which are woefully lacking and needed, whether it's academic or career and technical education. What concerns me about the proposal, and it goes back to what Jack said, is that we're still separating out academic and career tech, and career and tech is as much as part of the academic system as the academic system is of career and technical education. As Dr. Sclafani said, it is competency project-based education and that's the combination of the two.

And I'm going to be very – two very quick examples of, to me, terribly wasted human capital, and they're in my own family with a nephew who was 4.0, brilliant high school kid bored stiff in his senior year. Checked out basically, got into an Ivy League school, struggled, graduated, and doesn't know what the hell he wants to do. He's struggling and just – it's a wasted, very expensive college education and we wasted a young child's life.

On the other hand there's another nephew who dropped out of college because he didn't know what he wanted to do; struggled, but is now going on to get his EMT license. And if you think if we had done something with these kids in high school and directed them in some way – provided them career guidance, some skills – how do we even determine what their interests are, how to put their academics to use, it would have been much helpful.

But we never focus either – and here's my question – we never focus on the change of high schools. We're still dealing with the 50 or the – the block schedule system with artificial barriers – it's algebra, it's calculus, it's geometry – which sets up lines for kids to fail. If I struggle through algebra, boy, there's no way I'm going to get geometry. And they've set themselves up rather than looking at it as competency-based a continuum, making it relevant to something going on of interest to them. The proposal hasn't changed any of those what I see as artificial barriers.

DR. SCLAFANI: Well, I think that's why I was suggesting that it needs to be an even more radical redesign than what Hilary has suggested because I agree with you: part of our issue with funding schools is if we keep the model that every teacher has to be in front of 30 kids every minute of the day and that we are only able to educate children in the classroom, rather than in the business, in the university, in the library, in the science center, and the community-based organization, we limit the use of the funding that we do have available to a degree that people say, well, we can't do it because we're already using all of our money.

Well, they are using it one way, and in many school districts with large numbers of poor children, they're spending a lot of money doing it the same way they've always done it and clearly it's not working. So I think that what we've got to do is get back to the point where we also rethink the staffing models, rethink the structures into doing things in different ways that enable students to learn and demonstrate competencies.

We're in fact funding a planning grant in New Hampshire because New Hampshire has already gotten rid of the Carnegie unit. They want to put a competency-based program into place, and we're suggesting that to do that they really need to have somebody working with them to set up some standards and some rubrics so that it's not an individual teacher's decision whether that internship at the science center means that they've learned all of the competencies they might have in the science course or they learned these and now they have to go and in another way learn those that they didn't get.

So I think that it does need a more radical change, and that's what I think we're hoping that the governors conference is going to do because they focused on bringing together K-12 and higher ed, they talked about the fact that there needed to be a children's cabinet in – that goes from K through 20 or pre – zero to 21 in order to ensure that they're creating a system that really meets the needs of all of their kids.

So I think that it is going to take more. I think as Hilary said, her proposal is to say, well, we're probably not ready as a country to close down our regular high schools. I'm hoping that we are more willing to look differently at what they do when we see that it's the system, not the kids that are the problem here. And unless we change the system the results for the kids are going to remain pretty much the same.

MS. BROWN: Yes?

Q: My name is Dwayne Morgan (sp). I'm from the university system of Maryland office, and my question – one of the goals of your presentation – by the way, thank you. Very impressive board here – relates – my question relates to the goal of eliminating the disparities between – based on race and income differences in America.

Relating to the gap goal, the community-based goal, what are particular, specific ways in which you plan on engaging community? One of the things that dropouts – many dropouts in America – you know, one of the reasons they drop out is they don't see evidence of the benefits of education in their community. What are concrete ways that you see your proposal addressing that?

MS. PENNINGTON: Well, that – you know, I think this is obviously the least well thought through piece of this, but I'll give you an example of the kind of thing that I have in mind, and it stems from the city of Boston, which has had a long, long history of the business community working together with the school system to try to create out-of-school, work-based learning opportunities for kids. And they have something called the summer of work and learning, which you could imagine expanding beyond that, which is the business community organizes to offer jobs to kids and they work through their private (unintelligible) council, which could be like a youth board to make – and they have learning events that they're very explicit about the kinds of skills that they want young people to develop over the course of those jobs.

But in the summertime, they take kids who are academically behind – behind grade level, not succeeding on the state MCAS – and in the work place suing teachers from the schools they do some academic education – you know, academic preparation that is skill-based and then they move into their work-based experience. So they're in a place that says to them, you're working. You're part of the adult community. And by the way, it really does in fact matter that you learn algebra to this level.

And then they – and what they have found through that summer is that kids make a dramatic amount of progress in their grade level performance from the start to finish. So you could imagine partnerships that are like that – that would still have to be reviewed

and, quote, unquote, “accredited” or approved in some way and ideally would have some kind of postsecondary partner as a piece of this. And I think that’s an example of the kind of thing that would need to get built out a lot more before you were to say, well, this is a great way to have my kid spend their senior year.

But I think it would be the combination of real community service work or real work that was combined in some way that made more transparent to the young person why they need to learn, you know, to a particular standard and where it’s going to get them if they’re able to do that, and exposes them to a broader community of adults than the ones they’ve had access to in their families and their high schools, and gives them a view of what the world could hold for them.

MS. BROWN: Great. We’re going to just take one quick question because our guests have to leave.

Okay, Kevin again.

Q: I’ll take another turn if there are no other hands up. This is a very specific question this time. You mentioned in your paper, Hilary, about the Cisco academies and it seems to me there’s a whole sort of world of job training and education that’s going on through Microsoft, Cisco, and others, and I don’t know that much about it and I think most people in traditional education don’t know that much about it, but I wanted to know if the people on the panel – what your impression is of that education. How demanding – what are the skill levels that are required in that? Are they really training people to very narrow functions, or are they training people in a way that will give them some flexibility, some basic math skills and communications skills and so on that they can build on and then build careers on?

DR. SCLAFANI: Yeah, they do include more than just the technical skills that turn them into a router specialist, but I think the other important part of the Cisco example is that students go into that program – certainly they’re not the lowest achieving students, but they’re certainly also not the highest achieving students, and because of the individualized, online learning system that they have which provides reports for the teacher at the end of each session and reprograms the student based on their performance for the next day, they have incredibly high success rates. Over 95 percent of the students who start the program finish it successfully.

And so I think that we’ve got two things to learn from that. One is the application enables them to see the purpose of learning the trigonometry, the physics of what it is that they’re doing, but also that the learning system is indeed a coherent, well designed learning system that is based on artificial intelligence and keeps up with individual student progress so that the whole class doesn’t sit down to the same assignment the next day. It depends entirely on where they ended the day before, and I think that’s something.

You know, I've been in technology a long time. I took my first course at Vassar a long time ago before they even had a computer center and IBM came over. But starting in 1980 they were predicting that within a decade they were going to have these sophisticated learning systems that would enable every student to indicate what their interests were, it would go through and do diagnostics with them and find out where their strengths were, where they needed to go back and do additional work, and then it would forge a path for them using the interests that they had indicated.

We're still not there yet, but we're getting closer to being there and it's why, again, there will be other opportunities in our schools in the next five years that we don't see right now. And it will enable us to do a much more individualized education with the teacher spending time explaining – if they don't get it through the various explanations in the system – a teacher there to explain it a different way, or a teacher there to help motivate them if they're going too slowly through it. But different roles for teachers than what we have had traditionally.

MS. BROWN: And the challenge we can't discuss today is whether the schools of education are prepared to prepare those kinds of teachers, but that's another day.

Please join me in thanking our panel for a very rich discussion. (Applause.) I hope we all – I think I learned a lot. I hope you did, too, and I hope you come back to future forums here at the center.

Thank you.

(END)