



**US Senate Committee on Finance
March 20, 2007**

***Realizing a Competitive Education:
Identifying Needs, Partnerships and Resources***

Good morning, Senator Baucus and distinguished senators. My special greetings to Senator Rockefeller, one of West Virginia's and America's outstanding statesmen. I appreciate this opportunity to provide testimony to the Senate Committee on Finance on the topic *Realizing a Competitive Education: Identifying Needs, Partnerships and Resources*.

We in West Virginia believe our state is leading an educational renaissance from which our students will graduate our public schools ready to be contributing citizens of the 21st century. This work has begun because we realize the absolute necessity of providing a world-class, competitive education for all students. Through our 21st Century Teaching and Learning initiative, our graduates will enter a fiercely competitive, digital world equipped with the necessary intellectual capital and the finely honed skills that will enable them to compete as productive citizens of a diverse and interconnected world.

What has brought us to this defining moment in education? Very simply, the spotlight that shone on the requirements and consequences of the *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* legislation told us that our students needed to acquire 21st century skills in addition to those measured by state NCLB assessments. In other words, our students would not learn the prerequisite skills to become globally

competitive if we continued to follow this national educational plan. Interestingly, West Virginia was one of the first three states in the country to have its NCLB plan approved by the U.S. Department of Education. Under this plan, all West Virginia student subgroups have been doing well meeting adequate yearly progress. But doing well does not mean that our students are being prepared with the skills necessary for success in the world awaiting them.

Rather than preparing our students for their future, we realized we had created an educational system that was preparing students for our past. We had concentrated primarily on the equity mission of West Virginia public schools. As an unintended consequence of implementing our NCLB plan, we had forgotten the quality mission. This startling realization, made apparent when our 2005 National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) scores were released, caused us to stop in our tracks and reassess what was best for the students of West Virginia. We believe what is best is an education that delivers equity in quality.

Further, what is best for the students of West Virginia is exactly what we have committed to in the formation of our Partnership for 21st Century Skills. Joining the national partnership of the same name in 2005, West Virginia's partners – the Governor, the Legislature, the state Board of Education, the state Department of Education, education associations, state business representatives and other stakeholders – have begun moving our system toward achievement of the six elements that make up our vision of a world-class education for our students.

First, while we know our students must develop learning proficiency in the core subjects that have been the bedrock of America's education, we also know that these core subjects must be joined by content of the 21st century. This content includes global awareness; financial, economic, business and entrepreneurial literacy; civic literacy; and health and wellness.

With the assistance of our national 21st century partnership and national and international experts, all of whom reviewed and provided feedback on our curriculum, we have revised our curriculum. We are now convinced that our latest revision has produced a curriculum that is robust and globally competitive. It has been infused with much greater cognitive demand; it integrates those aforementioned new content areas; it incorporates 21st century learning and technology skills; and it is aligned with the NAEP and the challenging Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Program for International Student Assessment (PISA).

To enable students to discover the value and relevance of new skills and knowledge, we have added 21st century contextual learning skills to the curriculum for all students, the third element of our initiative.

A most critical element of our 21st Century Teaching and Learning initiative is the use of technology tools. The use of these tools will enable our students to use technology to develop 21st century content knowledge and skills, to develop information and communication literacy (commonly known as ITC literacy), to bridge connections between content and its application, to gain thinking and learning skills and to connect learning with their global, digital world.

In our assessment work, the fifth element, we continue to strive to align our student assessment process with not only the national assessments already mentioned, but also with international assessments including the TIMSS and the PISA. One of the major discoveries we have made, with the assistance of our assessment experts, is the central role assessment for learning plays in the daily learning of our students. We believe this formative assessment will bring increased learning for our students.

Acquiring 21st century learning skills, the sixth 21st Century Teaching and Learning element, is vitally important to the success of our students. Content will constantly change in the world awaiting these young people. The right learning skills will enable them to learn and relearn content throughout their lives. Our learning skills focus on information and communication skills (such as analyzing and evaluating sources), thinking and reasoning skills (such as critical thinking and problem solving), and personal and work place productivity skills (such as interpersonal and collaboration skills, adaptability, ethical behavior, personal accountability and leadership). Most all of these skills have been embedded in West Virginia's curriculum.

Up to this point I have shared with you where West Virginia has been, what we have discovered is needed for our students and how, with the help of our partners in the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, we are building the right 21st century educational system for the students of the Mountain State. What I have not discussed are the resources that are necessary to do the work we have

begun and those necessary to sustain that work for the benefit of our students, our state and our country.

Resources come in the form of time, money and people. For example, through the co-authorship of the E-rate legislation by Senator Rockefeller and Maine's Senator Snow, this country's schools and libraries have received \$19 billion in discounted services for costs of telecommunications, Internet access and internal connections. Of this amount, West Virginia's schools have received approximately \$60 million in discounted services. This is a very good example of federal resources that have assisted our schools in building the infrastructure necessary for existence in the 21st century. This resource anchors our 21st Century Teaching and Learning initiative.

Private sector contributions can provide necessary resources to our schools. For example, in 2003 Senator Rockefeller joined with the Beaumont Foundation of America in announcing that West Virginia would receive \$700,000 for need-based grants for computer equipment. These grants extended the benefits of the E-rate discount, which does not allow the purchase of computer equipment, by providing an avenue for securing the computer equipment that could utilize the E-rate discount. This partnering of resources served to support the work of our education process in West Virginia.

While the aforementioned resources have proven invaluable, it is evident that our greatest need today is for technology tools, teacher professional development and resources for non-Title I schools struggling to equip students with the latest learning technologies. I believe that similar kinds of resources

could be made available to schools and school systems willing to adopt a systemic approach to improving education as we have in West Virginia. Such schools and school systems deserve support and incentives that will enable them to build this country's future.

An example of an incentive to build 21st century schools and school systems might be a federal incentive that would provide matching funds to states that develop and adopt educational policy in support of the critical elements of 21st century learning in states and schools. States could provide dollars, foundation grants and/or private donations to secure a federal match.

Another example of an incentive to build 21st century schools and school systems might be legislation to provide tax incentives to businesses that support the critical elements of 21st century learning in states and schools. Such an incentive would encourage private donations to this initiative.

I am sure you have many more ideas that could assist schools, school systems and states to develop 21st century skills partnerships. West Virginia students have already benefited from our involvement in the national Partnership for 21st Century Skills.

I would enjoy showcasing the foundation for systemic change West Virginia has laid and talk with you about how we have built strategic alliances to support our 21st Century Teaching and Learning initiative. But that will have to be another day.

We in West Virginia have been strengthened by our rugged terrain. We have been protected by our mountains. We have gained courage and have

become resilient from the tribulations experienced by our people. We have been and will continue to be nurtured by the good people of West Virginia who are our greatest resource.

And while we want to keep the road that takes us back to the place we call home, we know that road today is a two-way digital highway taking our students into a new world. West Virginia's 21st Century Teaching and Learning initiative will give our students the knowledge and skills they need to enter their world.

Thank you for this opportunity.