

Testimony of Gregory B. Taylor

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Battle Creek, Michigan

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Hearings on Realizing a Competitive Education:
Identifying Needs, Partnerships and Resources



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*To help people
help themselves
through the practical
application of knowledge
and resources to improve
their quality of life and
that of future generations*

Good morning. Chairman Baucus and members of this committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am Gregory Taylor, Vice President for Programs for Youth and Education at the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation was established in 1930 “to help people help themselves through the practical application of knowledge and resources to improve their quality of life and that of future generations.” To achieve the greatest impact, the Foundation targets its grants toward specific areas. These include: health; food systems and rural development; youth and education; and philanthropy and volunteerism. Within these areas, attention is given to exploring learning opportunities in leadership; information and communication technology; capitalizing on diversity; and social and economic community development. Our grants are concentrated in the United States, Latin America and the Caribbean, and southern African. We are based in Battle Creek, Michigan and in FY 2005-06, distributed approximately \$287 million in grants for projects in the United States, Southern Africa and Latin America.

In addition to supporting the education and development of young people, the focus of my testimony today, the Kellogg Foundation has a long history of working with communities and vulnerable citizens. Previous efforts have fostered community and state partnerships designed to create a sustained impact on policy and people’s lives. The Kellogg Foundation played a major role in the development and expansion of the community college system throughout the United States. We supported the establishment of the agriculture extension service and more recently worked to bring about change in our nation’s foster care and adoption programs.

In Mr. Kellogg’s day, and up until he died in 1951, the prospects for children in the United States seemed inevitably and naturally to be improving. For many children at the dawn of the 21st century, however, this is no longer the assumed outcome. For the first time in our nation’s history, many worry that the next generation faces diminishing prospects. Perhaps more than ever before in the history of our Foundation, some of the most quoted words of Mr. Kellogg take on prophetic meaning:

*Relief, raiment and shelter are necessary for destitute children, but the greatest good for the greatest number can come only through the education of the child, the parent, the teacher, the family physician and the community in general. **Education offers the greatest opportunity for really improving one generation over another.***

The current framework that defines and organizes what our country calls “education” into the K-12 system is in desperate need of a “version 2.0” if the next generation is to have better opportunities and see improvements. Expert research is showing how the achievement gap for poor and otherwise disadvantaged children is created in the first five years of their lives. We now understand that fundamental cognitive, emotional and social attributes combine with healthy physical development to build IQs (intelligence) and EQs (emotional) to equip young brains and hearts with resilience and learning attributes that will guide them their entire lives.

Of the four million American children who start kindergarten each year, as many as one-third are unprepared to learn. Many will never catch up. The reasons for this are complex, but this much is clear: The multiple systems – from family to schools to government – that should be

supporting young children too often are failing to do so. The Kellogg Foundation seeks to permanently improve systems that affect children's learning.

The concept of seamless support systems for children's learning, often called P-20 (an education policy term that refers to the full range of child education from birth and preschool through post-graduate work or the 20th grade) is one that has gained wide appreciation in recent years. The concept is widely recognized with P-20 councils now in dozens of states and localities. Currently there are 30 states engaged in P-20 activities. Of these, 8 states have formalized these councils through legislation or legislative mandate. It is evident that phrases like "the earlier the better" and "seamless systems of support" are no longer hypotheses for enhanced learning but rather accepted wisdom. I hope to share some of our experiences with the Committee today as related to the educational needs and resources of students, parents, teachers, educational institutions and employers.

Our work on early education and learning has four dimensions: cognitive, social, emotional and physical. Each affects the others and gains are not sustainable over time unless all are addressed and supported in a way that is particular to each individual.

Early childhood development and education, youth development and health care providers generally understand this and strive to attend to all dimensions as part of a balanced whole. They speak in terms of the "whole child," "developmentally appropriate practices" and "family-centered support systems" as a means of describing their commitment to the simultaneous development of the individual and the family on multiple fronts.

In contrast, educator preparation and practice tends to be more narrowly focused on cognitive outcomes and measures, methods and classroom management. The systems that support education tend to be disconnected from other service providers. And, despite all that is known about learning styles, the unique attributes of every child, and the effects of vastly differing cultures, communities, concepts and circumstances of home and family, schools for the most part have not adapted to our country's changing needs and workforce.

In most school districts there is little if any interaction between local child care centers, early care and education providers and the K-3 public school system. Transitions between pre-K and K-3 usually consist of a "meet and greet" session in the late summer for parents of prospective kindergartners. Rarely is there an alignment of teaching or curriculum or coordination of teachers and parents.

The current challenge is to take the best of what we know and apply it. Unfortunately, our knowledge of what works far outstrips actual practice in this arena. As we looked at how the Kellogg Foundation might help improve practices and policies, we formulated a future vision around three major education and learning stages. This testimony focuses on the first stage, which involves children from birth to age 8. I have also included a short overview of another facet of our work called New Options for Youth that begins at age 16.

The first stage of education and learning comprises pre-natal and infant care through early childhood education. We know infants and children are constantly learning, right from birth. They are in fact born learning. The earliest months and years provide a foundation for

future growth and development; from birth through third grade, theirs is a seamless learning environment consisting of home and family, informal child care and licensed care.

Frank Porter Graham's Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill uses the term "First School" to describe the experience of children age 3 to grade three who, brain research and developmental studies indicate, are best looked at in terms of determining developmentally appropriate materials and approaches. The major transition for this age group is the one from home and early care to school. To deal with the age 3 to grade three continuum successfully requires the early childhood development community and the public school system to work together in new ways. This is both a tremendous opportunity and a tremendous challenge.

SPARK with its motto of "Ready Kids, Ready Schools, Ready Community" is the Kellogg Foundation's current effort for children age 3 to grade three. Our goal is to ensure that all children – and in particular, vulnerable children – are ready for school, and that the schools are ready for children.

The SPARK Initiative is built around **S**upporting **P**artnerships to **A**ssure **R**eady **K**ids. SPARK is a six-year initiative developed by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation that unites communities so that all children can be successful in learning before and after they enter school. We are midway through the Initiative and present below some of the critical lessons already learned from our grantees' experiences in eight locations: the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Mississippi, North Carolina, New Mexico and Ohio.

Our purpose is to improve learning outcomes for vulnerable children and youth that are sustainable. Children, youth and families are the primary building blocks to any society and as such, they need to be at the center of any system designed to support them.

If children are adequately prepared for school and can make a smooth transition to primary education, we are finding that they are better prepared and do better in their later elementary and high school education. Thus, SPARK seeks to create for every child a smooth transition from quality early learning settings, including the home, to a ready school.

SPARK's theory of change – that is, how we believe it works to improve children's success in school – can be described in this way:

- Effective partnerships and leadership work to coordinate and align community systems and increase the readiness of children and their parents, schools and communities.
- Partnerships that are deliberate and distinct collaborations and an intentional leadership development effort involving the key partners are the key levers of the change we seek.

SPARK is based on four key principles:

First, strong partnerships among families, providers, community organizations, and ready schools ensure that all children can learn and succeed in school.

Second, quality is a critical element of a child's early learning from birth through the early years of school.

Third, parents and families at home and working with early care providers are critical to ensuring that children succeed in school.

Fourth, school leaders and teachers working with the community's support can indeed create smooth transitions from early learning settings so that children can succeed in school.

I want to address more fully our experience with “partnerships” as I understand it is the focus of today's hearing and also because they are central to the SPARK Initiative and important levers for change.

We believe that effective partnerships consist of relationships between individuals, families and institutions that work together on behalf of children.

In SPARK, there are two key partnerships.

- *Primary Partnerships* – The linkages and interactions among those who directly and daily touch the lives of children – families, early education providers and elementary school teachers and principals.
- *Policy Partnerships* – The partnerships that focus on changing the systems and policies that impact children and their learning. Policy partners include school districts, state agency representatives, child advocacy organizations and the business community.

The quality of those partnerships and of the leadership that they create is the basis of the change needed to improve the quality of learning and life for our youngest citizens. When you match quality partnership and quality leadership to innovations in learning, then policies and practice improve.

As Jack P. Shonkoff and Deborah A. Phillips pointed out in the 2000 Institute of Medicine and National Research Council report *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development*: “Brain research continues to shed light on the critical importance of the earliest years of life to lifelong healthy development and success and society's need to ensure the nurturing and healthy development of very young children.”

According to the State Early Childhood Policy Technical Assistance Network our society's increasing knowledge about brain research and brain development has improved early childhood policy in five key ways:

- Addressing the achievement gaps that exist at third grade – by race, socioeconomic status, and neighborhood – requires actions even before kindergarten entry.
- Social and emotional development is key to healthy development and learning.
- Parents are their children's first and most important teachers.
- Primary, preventive health services can make a difference in physical health and overall development.
- Quality matters in early care and education programs.

The incubators creating innovative policies based on what we know about children’s brain development are the states. We see signs of recognition of the need for new structures and systems at the state level. In 2006, early childhood education was named a legislative priority by 24 governors, compared to 17 in 2005. Nearly half of all governors now endorse early childhood education as a critical start to children’s success in school. Some states such as Washington have created whole new departments of early learning.

But within the states, communities are leading in the development of practices and approaches that put what we know about children’s brain development into practice.

Parents, principals, teachers, early care providers, grandparents, community organizers, business leaders, and civic leaders are the foot soldiers of this change. Public opinion surveys over the past five years show that Americans increasingly support early care and education, but want it to be of high quality. Public support, however, is based on the link between quality early learning and school readiness. People understand that recent advances in brain science have revealed that young children are *ready to learn* much earlier than previously thought and that our early care “system” needs to respond.

Why Ready Schools?

There has been tremendous innovation in how we change, shape and improve systems that touch the first five years of a child’s life. Thus, we define a ready school as one that acknowledges that quality early learning experiences can pave the way for children to succeed. Ready schools accept the responsibility that they need to ensure that children continue to learn and succeed after they enter school, for their progress in school is essential to achieve the knowledge and skills that are required in a modern economy.

Let me share with you ways in which our SPARK sites in Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Mississippi, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio and Washington D.C. have nurtured innovation.

In its search for a framework for describing ready schools, the SPARK Initiative Level Evaluation Team reviewed several models brought to our attention by experts in the fields of early care and elementary education, other relevant literature and the SPARK grantees and then identified the following principles. This is by no means a complete list of all the characteristics of good schools and applies mainly to elementary schools.

1. Children succeed in school.

The school promotes and supports healthy growth and development in five domains suggested by the National Educational Goals Panel:

- Physical well-being;
- Social relationships and emotional development;
- Approaches to learning that incorporate cultural aspects of learning styles;
- Use of language; and,
- Cognition, general knowledge and problem solving.

At the same time, children acquire culturally relevant knowledge and skill sets necessary and valuable to the functioning of a modern economy.

2. The school environment encourages a welcoming atmosphere.

- The school projects an open, child-focused, welcoming atmosphere.
- It shows friendliness, respect, high teacher and staff morale, and the use of restrained and appropriate discipline.
- The building and grounds are inviting and developmentally appropriate.
- Children's work is prominently displayed and bulletin boards contain family-oriented material.

3. Strong leadership exists at every level.

- School leaders believe that all children can learn, that teachers and staff can develop professionally, and that all schools can meet or exceed state performance standards.
- The principal has good management skills.
- The school connects with and garners support from the superintendent, school board, and the state Department of Education.
- In turn, the superintendent, school board, and the state Department of Education provide a coherent and appropriate set of policies and regulations.

4. The school is connected to early care and education.

- The school works closely with early care and education (ECE) providers to improve the quality of ECE to help children get ready for school.
- ECE and elementary school teachers communicate and coordinate with one another.
- ECE and the school align their standards and curriculum at the local, district and state levels.
- The school participates in or provides transition activities for children entering pre-K or kindergarten, such as school and home visits, summer camps, and orientation sessions for parents.
- The school gets assessment data from ECE providers to plan and individualize children's learning.

5. The school connects culturally and linguistically with children and families.

- The school seeks to help children from all circumstances and backgrounds succeed.
- The school uses culturally appropriate curricula.
- Children and families are encouraged to share their backgrounds and experiences with other children and families.

6. There is a high level of parental involvement.

- The school communicates with and involves parents in a wide range of activities, from providing information to parents, to engaging them in policy and decision-making.
- Special populations such as immigrants, refugees, and non-English speaking children and parents are included in all school-related activities.

7. The school forms partnerships with the community.

- The school functions as a community center, drawing children and families from surrounding neighborhoods for multiple activities and purposes.
- It partners with the community to provide opportunities and services to children and families, such as health screening and health services, courses in English and other languages, and instruction in GED preparation, computers, and parenting.

8. The school seeks out and uses assessment results.

- The school uses assessments and their results to plan and tailor instruction to individual needs.
- It has strategies in place to improve test scores and reduce achievement gaps.
- The school ensures that testing is reliable, valid, and developmentally and culturally appropriate.

9. The school constantly seeks to improve its quality.

- The school follows a written improvement plan that includes a strategy for maintaining its mission and goals over time.
- It supports staff in professional development and consults with educational and non-educational experts for staff training and quality improvement.
- Management uses evaluation data for decision-making.

Below is a snapshot of what we have learned to date from each of our grantees:

North Carolina SPARK experiences highlight the strategy of coalescing around state education leadership as a force to shape Ready Schools policies. From the SPARK experience in North Carolina, education leaders in other states can learn how intentionally linking early education to K-12 school systems can lead to enhanced school readiness and continued success in learning. In North Carolina, the effort to create ready schools brings together education leaders from both worlds at the state level where the Department of Public Instruction integrates standards of early learning with those of the early grades, and integrates ready schools into performance standards. The linkages, between state and county and between pre-K and elementary schools, will also shape local efforts to develop concrete plans to assist transition practices.

Mississippi SPARK experiences highlight two key strategies for children's learning success. The first is engaging business leaders to become effective advocates for early education in the state. Working with key business councils and organizations, Mississippi SPARK seeks to develop a cadre of business leaders with a deep understanding of ECE issues who can then become effective advocates for policies related to the state's economic future. The second strategy is to engage parents in their child's learning by providing them with comprehensive support systems that identify obstacles and provide practical support to overcome them. Integral to this model is to also teach parents about their child's development and learning and, in doing so, help them become effective advocates for their child's success in school.

Georgia SPARK experiences highlight the value of using the Parents As Teachers model to engage parents in pre-K and school transitions and to foster parent leadership, using community-based partnerships to implement the linkages between parents and schools.

The **Miami-Dade SPARK** project in Florida highlights the formation of deep partnership with the public school system and integrating strong community partnerships in order to enhance a community's comprehensive early learning efforts. SPARK was added to the existing platform, several years into an overall early care movement centered on carefully crafted community consultations involving over 100 community leaders, a broad community mobilization and a ballot initiative. Under the guidance of a central leader, David Lawrence, a public-private partnership connected political and school leaders and others to encourage acceptance of the voluntary pre-K initiative in Miami-Dade. SPARK's integration into the movement built on a ready-made collaboration between pre-K and elementary schools called "Ready Schools Miami," laying the groundwork for expanding to all 208 elementary school innovative training, practices and policies.

New Mexico SPARK highlights the strategy of schools, parents, and early learning providers working together as a team to support children's transitions and learning in school. SPARK supported an initiative called Joining Hands to foster teams within a school that includes principals, teachers, parents and early learning providers from outside the school. The teams create parent involvement programs, professional development opportunities for teachers and import other best practices that support early childhood education.

Hawaii SPARK highlights the strategy of using P-20 councils as a leverage point to improve quality of early childhood education and has created models for culturally responsive early childhood education.

Lessons learned by **SPARK Ohio** shed light on how to get kids ready for school. Ohio demonstrated that training parents to be learning advocates, carefully screening kids and following up with appropriate referral services *does* make a difference in children's readiness for kindergarten. Ohio is now experimenting with "dosage" – how much of a quality pre-K experience is necessary to show statistically significant increases in kindergarten readiness. They are adapting their 3 and 4 year-old program into a shorter summer program, with evaluation results expected in September 2007.

SPARK D.C. has made inroads in two domains: A partnership with Washington, D.C. health agencies led to a "health passport" as well as to coordinated early screening efforts for health problems, with follow-up services, such as inoculations. It has also led the way in using NAECY accreditation for pre-K, kindergarten and first grade classrooms as a quality improvement tool.

I would like to share with you a menu of key approaches and high-impact strategies used in the SPARK sites. These will provide insights into how communities are being strategic and systemic about making sure that their children are ready for school, and that their schools are ready for children. Each community's initiative is different and uniquely responsive to its own needs, but all have used a combination of these approaches:

- Tapping into existing funding streams such as Title I money to create the intentional, deliberate partnerships needed for ready schools;
- Taking advantage of current mechanisms and policy efforts to improve early education;
- Providing support and skill building for parents, but engaging community-based actors such as organizations and schools as the key linking mechanism;
- Expanding the number of engaged, knowledgeable community- based stakeholders;
- Linking public and private actors around specific goals;
- Linking providers of community based early learning structures with the K-12 system in a comprehensive manner; and,
- Developing projects to serve all children while ensuring that there is a special focus on vulnerable children.

Further, the following have emerged in our sites as the SPARK High-Impact Strategies:

1. Parent Engagement:

- Featuring comprehensive approaches that blend home visits, parent education and access to family support services, so that parent engagement can enhance pre-K systems.

2. Transition and Alignment:

- School infrastructure and leadership coming together to support children transitioning to school;
- Strengthening and connecting early childhood education through professional development that bolsters the likelihood of successful transitions from early learning to school (such as joint professional development training that pairs pre-K with K-3 teachers; and,
- Defining basic principles and characteristics of Ready Schools, as well as creating deliberate partnerships to form a systemic approach to transitioning from early learning settings to school.

3. Expanding Quality Early Childhood experiences through

- Public-private partnerships;
- Multi-pronged community-based initiatives;
- Finance mechanisms; and,
- P-16 and P-20 Councils that are being developed in the states.

4. Developing and nurturing leaders in both formal and informal networks by:

- Capacity building for knowledge and infrastructure; and,
- Funding collaborative efforts between positional (e.g. business, government, advocates) and non-positional leaders (e.g. parents, teachers, clergy, child care providers).

At the Kellogg Foundation, our focus has been more at the community level, asking how parents and communities can be more deliberate and more collaborative in the development of the youngest children. Our own emerging framework seeks to articulate a comprehensive developmental continuum from a child's birth to the end of third grade, at age 8. The child's first five years at home, among neighbors, in community and child development settings, constitute

the most important years of his or her life. The first four years in school, among teachers, classmates, parents and adult guides, constitute the second most important phase of the child's lives. And the transition from home and community into school—from the first five years of life to the first four years of school, may be the most important transition in his or her life.

Children's subsequent experience as successful learners in a school setting, their accomplishments in literacy and numeracy and their excitement and sense of purpose and fulfillment are benchmarks and milestones that are critical for young children to achieve by the end of third grade. Our new awareness of the dynamics of child development, beginning at birth, cries out for our inventiveness and innovation with new community-based systems that embrace new parents and infants together.

From these approaches and strategies, we have identified SPARK policy principles that could guide and inform policy options you might consider. These are organized around what we consider as key to children's success in schools.

On Quality:

- Every child should be supported by adults and institutions who understand what a child needs at each stage of development, who are equipped for their roles, and who communicate with one another.
- Every professional serving young children should be well trained in early childhood education and development.
- Every community should ensure that children have access to early learning settings that are of high quality and staffed by qualified instructors.

On Partnerships:

- Linkages between public and private actors around specific goals on school readiness can strengthen communities.
- Linkages between providers of community-based early learning structures with the K-12 system in a comprehensive manner lead to smoother transitions to school.
- Building leadership skills among parents, providers, principals and teachers can strengthen partnerships.

On Ready Children and their Families:

- A child's school readiness is the result of successful learning *throughout* his or her early years.
- We must be deliberate and effective in supporting children's cognitive, emotional, physical development and social growth, beginning at birth.
- Every child should begin school with confidence.
- Every parent should have access to the information and support they need to be their children's first, best teachers.

On Ready Schools and their Communities:

- Every community should measure children's progress in all of these dimensions.
- Every community should have programs in place that ease a child's transition into kindergarten and from grade to grade.

- Every community should offer formal ways for parents, community-based early childhood education providers and elementary schools to work together to strengthen and align their efforts.

In addition to our SPARK Initiative, the Kellogg Foundation is engaged in New Options for Youth with an emphasis on ages 16 through 24 and beyond. Our goal is to create a new credentialing system as a valued alternative to the high school diploma and associate degree.

Our New Options Initiative works outside of the current employment and education systems to seek out and partner with innovative community-based organizations, businesses, educational institutions, and municipal governments that want to create a new credentialing system to prepare young people for work or further education. Innovative leaders from these institutions together with the young people they seek to serve are charged with co-creating prototypes and action plans for a new credential that would be valued by employers and young people.

This initiative focuses on out-of-school young people aged 16-24 who have been failed by the traditional school system. Most schools, dropout recovery programs and other social service systems have attempted to help this group by doing something “to” or “for” youth. By contrast, New Options builds its efforts on the passions, strengths and interests of young people themselves. New Options anchors its work around businesses and community-based organizations, in which young people are gaining marketable skills and generating products and services of value to the community.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics at the U.S. Department of Education, each year since 1985, 4 million young people aged 16-24 are not enrolled in or have failed to complete high school. And many of those who do finish high school report that they are neither motivated to further their learning in formal education environments nor do they feel prepared for jobs and careers that match their passions and interests. Currently, few alternatives exist for those whose learning styles are not suited to the “one-size-fits-all” approach of traditional classroom settings and methods. Through a new credentialing system, New Options seeks to create legitimate and viable pathways to better jobs and education.

We are also exploring a venture capital investment strategy to fund innovation; this would use grants to bring together youth and forward-looking leaders in business, nonprofit organizations, and government to design and employ new credentialing concepts. Co-created ideas from these sites would then be merged and unified into a national prototype. The Phase I goal of New Options is to fund up to 15 prototypes, which could then yield two or three models robust enough to implement, sustain and provide leverage in future phases.

The New Options Initiative is built on several foundational concepts or key features including:

1. **Youth Voice and Choice:** Many youth-serving organizations try to help out-of-school young people by doing something “to youth” or “for youth.” These deficit approaches attempt to fix youth through a wide range of dropout recovery programs and social service

delivery systems. By contrast, New Options takes an asset approach, which builds on the passions, strengths, talents and aspirations of young people and creating opportunities for them to discover their full potential, in which their voices and choices drive decisions for their future.

2. **Market-based Approaches:** While many nonprofit organizations provide opportunities for out-of-school youth to grow, develop and learn on their own terms, a select group takes this idea one step further. The latter help young people not only to gain marketable skills, but also to generate products and services that the marketplace values. New Options seeks to partner with organizations that have youth-designed products and services that business and municipal governments are buying. Youth-created products and services include designing Web sites, starting recycling programs, producing music, generating radio commentaries, mapping neighborhood assets, and creating public murals.
3. **Business Partnerships:** To create a new sustainable model for youth workforce development through youth voice and youth choice, market forces must align with youth aspiration. In a time of diminishing commitment to public spending, the private sector must be engaged to connect the dreams of young people with market realities. Further, nonprofit organizations must partner with business beyond traditional charitable connections (e.g., donating, volunteering, sponsoring, etc.) and labor-related relationships (e.g., internships, entry-level jobs). Nonprofit organizations must build private-sector partnerships that can advance a company's core business and improve that company's bottom line. New Options will anchor its work in the private sector to harness market forces as drivers of new opportunities.
4. **Innovation and Co-creation:** New Options will use a venture capital investment strategy to co-create and develop innovative prototypes for a new credential. New Options will not attempt to find, replicate, scale, or sustain existing practices or programs. Nor will New Options seek to make incremental changes in existing workforce or education systems. Instead, New Options will bring together key stakeholders including business leaders, educators, government officials, CBO directors, and young people themselves to co-create new prototypes. New Options recognizes that solutions exist in the community, that multiple perspectives lead to the best answers and innovations take root only when stakeholders have meaningful ways to participate and contribute.
5. **National Systemic Change:** Early stages of the initiative focus on co-creating prototypes for a new credential in specific local geographic sites. Some prototypes will demonstrate what is possible and emerge as potential national models. Most prototypes will not. By making room for failure in the prototype building process, New Options will move only the most promising examples forward for review and implementation. In the end, the co-creation and innovation process must yield a new credential with national currency. It must be attractive and appealing to young people (labor supply), and it must signal value and quality to business (market demand).

To accomplish this, New Options will follow an intentional innovation process at the national and local level. As the planning phase is now complete, New Options is now developing site criteria for participation. At the end of Phase One, selected sites will be expected to produce a local prototype for a new credential that has been co-created by business, education, government, CBOs and youth leaders.

These local prototypes will be merged and integrated into two, possibly three, national models that can then be launched in Phase Two of the initiative. If there is demonstrable success in one model, New Options will concentrate Phase Three resources on scaling and sustaining that model.

At the local or site level, New Options will make Phase One investments to develop up to 15 prototypes for a new credentialing system. These prototypes will credential the marketable skills young people are gaining through either the products and services they are creating or the content areas where they have demonstrated passion and interest. These include such interest areas as media (film, video, TV, radio, web, print), performing arts (theater, music, dance, poetry), technology (computers, robotics, telecommunications), and community development (neighborhood improvement, environment, landscaping, horticulture).

Sites that are selected for a prototype development grant will bring together business, nonprofit, education, government, and youth leaders to develop concepts for a new credentialing system. Most sites will follow an innovation process and will: 1) create an understanding of their local context, especially regarding what type of credentialing system businesses and young people want; 2) analyze the context to determine where the new opportunities exist; 3) synthesize ideas into several new credentialing concepts; and 4) fashion one of these concepts into a viable prototype.

Recommendations:

The jurisdiction of this committee is broad and its impact on setting children on a pathway to learning is profound. Every program on children and families you review, revise and create will shape a child's learning life. But beyond the programs, your power is in setting the framework so as to provide incentives to communities to pursue community-based strategies that allow parents, schools, and community members to form partnerships and craft strategies that reflect their assets, needs, and goals is very important.

In looking back over the Foundation's history and our Youth and Education work over the past 20 years, we have found three strategies that tend to recur as tipping points for transforming systems to better serve children and youth. More than anything else, 1) the quality of partnerships; 2) the quality of leadership; and/or 3) the quality of innovation have influenced the quality of the results.

With this in mind, we would like to make the following recommendations as you continue your oversight and work during this session of Congress.

1. Pay close attention to how policies can create incentives for schools and communities to work more closely to provide comprehensive services to young children so that they can be successful in learning before and after school.
2. Build flexibility into funding streams to communities that serve vulnerable populations, so that they can more easily partner with schools and early learning settings.

3. As you examine workforce development issues, keep in mind that the learning continuum begins at birth and that investments in children from birth to 8 years of age can be your wisest investments.
4. Encourage more federal and state interagency partnerships as related to programs and policies that impact young children and their families. The systems families interact with should be seamless and easy to navigate. Joint planning by key agencies can streamline the process by which families access opportunities and services, but also could lead to less duplication of services, less bureaucracy, and an overall wiser, more effective use of tax dollars.
5. Finally, think of foundations as key partners in your work to identify new approaches and mechanisms to help communities as they seek to be effective in helping families. Private-public partnerships have fueled many of the early learning innovations that have occurred in states and local communities. Our investments can inform your challenges. We can do some of the research and development for new solutions.

In 2007, we stand at an important moment in our country's history. In our last century, there were many points at which something new had to be invented after dramatic events that reshaped our educational institutions and our economy. For example, for the education of returning military personnel, Congress created and expanded the G.I. Bill after World War II in the 1940s. For young adults seeking alternative paths to higher education, states and private foundations helped to create and expand the community college system in the United States in the 1960s; this followed on the work of a commission appointed by President Truman in the late 1940s, which had defined the need and possible policy paths.

With the gathering evidence and insight of our best scientists and educational leaders, we must ask what new structures, practices and programs are crying out to be invented to support the early learning of infants, toddlers and preschoolers?

Among many contributions, the role of foundations in America today is as a source of our nation's research and development, both as financier and social entrepreneur. We do so with tax-deductible dollars, and one of the ways we demonstrate our accountability to the American people is by making public the results of our pilot projects and initiatives. This is a time to be innovative and creative about meaningful experimentation on issues important to our country's future.

We at the W.K. Kellogg Foundation stand ready to help you in that search for innovation and new ideas so that our children may thrive in the 21st century. Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, I thank you for the opportunity to participate on today's panel.

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