

WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF DR. JARVIS SANFORD  
BEFORE THE  
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR  
OF THE  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
AT THE HEARING ENTITLED

***“ESEA REAUTHORIZATION: BOOSTING QUALITY IN THE TEACHING PROFESSION”***

MAY 11, 2007

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify before you today concerning the vital importance of the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, perhaps better known as the No Child Left Behind Act.

***Background***

As context for my testimony today, a brief overview of my credentials is warranted. My education background is a Bachelor of Science degree from Morehouse in Atlanta; an MBA and a Doctor of Education degree, both from Northern Illinois University; and a graduate of the premiere principal training program, New Leaders for New Schools in Chicago. I am completing my third year as Principal of the Dodge Renaissance Academy, an elementary school on the west side of Chicago; my student population, about 450 students, is above ninety-five percent low-income.

***Overview***

High-performing public schools are an integral component of the core stability that is fundamental to a strong democratic, civil, and prosperous society. We must elevate the achievement of the worst-performing schools to be able to realize the full potential of our children and our country. We cannot have a healthy, vibrant America while so many of our children are truly left behind with no real options or tools to develop anything good for their future.

It is imperative that we recognize that the children in our low-income, urban public schools give us a reality that requires specific and rigorous preparation to reach and then teach them to achieve. The life issues, the community realities, the confusion of the world outside of each of these schools follow these students when they walk through our doors. All the harshness of their world winds its way into the classrooms.

***Teacher and Principal Quality: What’s Working***

Research supports what common sense tells us: the two most important variables affecting student learning are the quality of the teacher and the quality of the school leader. This means

the most urgent challenge to improving student achievement across the country is a problem of human capital: how do we develop the teachers that we have, how do we attract the nations best and brightest to become teachers and school leaders, and how do we retain these outstanding teachers and principals once we have them?

On teacher recruitment two things are clear: first, the traditional approaches to teacher training are not providing the *quantity* or *quality* of teachers and principals we will need to transform American education; second, we know that there are programs around the country that *are* recruiting and training high quality teachers and principals that *are* having a profound impact on student achievement. I would like to spend my time today talking about two of those programs, about how they have made possible our achievement results at Dodge, about how Dodge benefited from the tough love of a true turnaround, and about what implications these programs might have for the reauthorization of NCLB.

As I mentioned a minute ago, my school, Dodge, is over ninety-five percent low-income. However I am proud to share an even more important statistic from Dodge: This year we achieved the highest gains in the State of Illinois on the Illinois Standards Achievement Test. Dodge's scores skyrocketed from 26% of students at-or-above national norms in 2005 to **62%** in 2006, a **36%** gain in just one year.

When people ask us how we accomplished this I say that it is all about good teachers and good leadership, and I attribute much of that success to the Academy of Urban School Leadership, the organization that trains and supports our teachers, and to New Leaders for New Schools, the organization that recruited, trained and supported me as a principal.

#### *Academy of Urban School Leadership (AUSL)*

AUSL has been changing the reality of underperforming and underserved schools in Chicago for the past six years and is one of only three not-for-profit Urban Teacher Residency programs in our country. AUSL's teacher preparation program is modeled after the medical profession's requirement of a clinical residency. The program requires that a teacher candidate spend a full school year's apprenticeship with a mentor teacher in one of their urban teaching academies like Dodge. During that year, the Residents also earn their Master's degree and state certification. Theory and practice are continually woven together as coursework is specifically designed to equip the Residents to teach in low-performing urban schools.

AUSL provides continuing professional development to its graduates through instructional workshops, networking opportunities, and coaching. Their Field Coaches provide graduates with intensive support during the first two years in the classroom, and three additional years of on-call support. AUSL currently has 153 graduates teaching in Chicago and boasts a ninety-five percent retention rate compared to a district wide average of barely 50 percent.

#### *New Leaders for New Schools (NLNS)*

I particularly appreciate the value of this type of training model because I too was trained in a residency based model as part of my principal training program with New Leaders for New

Schools. I was honored to be selected from over 250 applicants as one of 14 New Leaders to join my cohort in Chicago. As part of the New Leaders training model, all fellows engage in highly rigorous coursework that focuses on instructional and organizational leadership, and then spend a year in a full time paid residency with an outstanding mentor principal in an urban public school.

This combination of rigorous coursework, on the ground experience working alongside outstanding principals, the built in support of a cohort of fellow principals plus an organization that provides ongoing coaching and mentoring have been critical to my own professional growth and the success of my school. In a time when it is difficult to earn a job as a principal, in Chicago we now have parents, community members and kids pleading to get a New Leaders principal for their school because they have seen the results that New Leaders principals have generated across the city. New Leaders is currently partnering with 9 cities around the country and New Leaders principals are changing the educational opportunities of more than 200,000 of America's children every day.

We know there are other innovative teacher and principal training programs throughout the country that are having incredible successes attracting the best and the brightest into education. Teach For America alone has placed more than 15,000 teachers in the most underserved classrooms in the country and consistently draws applications from more than 10% of the graduating classes of Ivy League colleges. These programs and others prove that it is possible to attract the best people to be educators, and that if we train them well and support them well they can produce the dramatic kind of results that we have seen at Dodge.

### ***Teacher and Principal Quality: Implications For Reauthorization***

I think New Leaders for New Schools and AUSL have three implications for the reauthorization of NCLB, the first and most important is that we should continue to support growing teacher and principal training programs that are successful because we know that developing outstanding teachers and principals is the only way to reach our goal that no child gets left behind.

The second is that we should hold the adults accountable for results the way that we are holding students accountable for results. This means we should track the success of teachers and principals as they go out into the world and connect these results back to the teacher and principal training programs that prepared them. This will help us determine which programs are really turning out great teachers and leaders, and which ones are just diploma mills that do not prepare teachers for the real work of instruction. Programs that have high levels of success training effective educators should receive more funding to expand their practices, while education schools or training programs that achieve little or no results should be held accountable the way our worst performing schools are held accountable-they should lose the ability to certify teachers or they should lose federal funding.

Third, when we recruit and develop these outstanding teachers and principals we need to make sure we get them to the schools that need them most. We must provide incentives for our best teachers and principals to work in the hardest to staff schools that struggle the most. To keep and attract these educators we will need to build diverse and challenging career paths for teachers and school leaders that will allow them to expand and share their skills with others as

they become masters of their craft. This means allowing teachers to grow into positions as master teachers or staff developers where they can lead apprentice teachers in developing their skills.

### ***Restructuring Failed Schools***

In addition to teacher and principal training and recruitment, I think there is one other important lesson from our success at Dodge: our lowest performing schools require our most serious interventions. In addition to the superior teacher-preparation model, AUSL also focuses on transforming chronically failing schools into schools of excellence by closing schools that fail to meet NCLB guidelines and creating NCLB Turnaround Schools. Students leave in June and return two months later in September to a school of all new teachers, a new principal, a new curriculum, and improved facilities. Dodge was the beneficiary of just such a turnaround. We were able to capitalize on this drastic change to dramatically change the culture, expectations and results at Dodge and we believe that our success demonstrates that schools with dramatic needs require dramatic interventions. We should expect more from low performing schools and if they don't succeed we should shut them down and open new schools rather than tinkering around the edges with superficial changes: too many districts allow their lowest performing schools to just rearrange the deck chairs on the Titanic rather than demand that they build a whole new ship.

It is critical to minimize the "wobble room" that enables districts to embrace delays, or to proceed with an incremental change when whole-school change is warranted: chronically underperforming schools should be closed and restarted in order to ensure success for the children we are failing to serve right now.

Too many underperforming and underserved urban schools.

Too many lives undeveloped.

Too many fascinating, important futures unexplored.

I welcome any and all of you to visit Dodge, to visit the Academy of Urban School Leadership, to visit New Leaders for New Schools and to experience the models in action. I believe that you have an incredible opportunity to support these programs that are achieving outstanding results and truly guarantee that No Child gets Left Behind.

Thank you very much for your time and action.