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## **Learning Point Associates' Jessica Johnson Presents Testimony to U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and Labor**

Hearing Explores Turning Around Our Nation's Lowest Performing Schools

WASHINGTON, D.C. (May 19, 2010)—Jessica Johnson, chief program officer for district and school improvement at Learning Point Associates, a nonprofit education research and consulting organization, presented testimony on “Research and Best Practices on Successful School Turnaround” before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and Labor.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, approximately 5,000 U.S. schools have been labeled as chronically low achieving or underperforming. The Education and Labor Committee is discussing efforts to turn around these schools as part of a bipartisan reform of the nation's primary federal education law, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

In her testimony, Johnson addressed the reauthorization of ESEA and spoke of the importance of conducting research and evaluation on the components of school turnaround to gain a solid understanding of which interventions work well and under what types of conditions. Johnson said the existing research base—while pointing to some factors that influence achievement—does not adequately describe the individual and collective contributions that these factors make to improve student learning.

“We know that strong school leadership, focused attention on instruction, staff and community commitment to change, and attention to family and community circumstances have a positive effect on student achievement,” Johnson said. What is not fully understood, she added, is the individual impact of each of these factors and the best methods to foster these changes.

“We have the opportunity to discover the recipe for successful school turnaround,” Johnson said. “By integrating rigorous evaluation into the school turnaround process, we will learn how interventions work and why. We will better understand which conditions spark change and which undermine success.” The field can then use the information, Johnson said, to jettison ineffectual approaches and replicate those that work.

Johnson stated that the challenge now is to provide schools and districts with the support to promote long-term change. She pointed to the research showing the importance of the principal in increasing student achievement and to the fact that there will be as many as 5,000 openings for principals in the next three to five years. Finding enough effective principals prepared to meet the new demands of turnaround will be a challenge, especially in rural areas where as many as one third of the lowest performing schools exist.

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A recent report released by Learning Point Associates, [\*Managing Educator Talent: Promising Practices and Lessons From Midwestern States\*](#), found that programs geared toward recruiting, developing, and supporting principals do not exist to the same extent as programs for teachers, if at all. States and districts will need to increase their preparation and professional development programs as one strategy to create and retain strong leaders.

Johnson encouraged the committee to take advantage of the strengths of the current federally funded R&D system and to involve the larger education system—from regional educational service agencies to state departments of education to external organizations, including community-based and youth development organizations—to ensure that proven practices are identified and replicated.

### **About Learning Point Associates**

Learning Point Associates is a nationally recognized, nonprofit education research and consulting organization with 25 years of experience working with educators and policymakers to transform education systems and student learning. The organization's reputation is built on a solid foundation of designing and conducting rigorous and relevant education research and evaluations; developing and delivering tools, services, and resources targeted at pressing education issues; and analyzing and synthesizing education policy trends and practices. For more information, visit [www.learningpt.org](http://www.learningpt.org).

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