



POLICY FORUM ON
QUASI-MILITARY APPROACHES TO EDUCATING
STUDENTS WHO ARE STRUGGLING IN SCHOOL
AND IN LIFE



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CENTER ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES POLICY FORUM

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Presentations:

Daniel Donohue – Founder and architect of the National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program, the quasi-military corps for school dropouts, and Special Assistant to the Chief of the National Guard Bureau.

Dr. Russell Gallagher – Assistant Principal of West Philadelphia High School, former director of Junior ROTC for the Philadelphia School District, and retired Army Colonel.

Panel Discussion: Implications of Military Models and Methods for K-12 Education

Dr. Edmund Gordon – Distinguished clinical and counseling psychologist, Senior Scholar-in-Residence at the College Board, and Professor Emeritus from Yale University and Columbia Teachers College.

Bella Rosenberg – Former advisor to Albert Shanker, the late president of the American Federation of Teachers, and former Chair of the Advisory Board of the federal Center for Research, Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing.

Osborne “Ozzie” Wright – Principal of the Philadelphia Military Academy, and former Principal of the West Philadelphia High School and of the Youth Study Center Juvenile Detention Alternative Education.

Dr. Velma Cobb – Vice President of Education and Youth for the National Urban League and former Associate Director of the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future.

Conrad Mandsager – Management, program development and evaluation consultant whose clients include the ChalleNGe program, and who created the second largest mentoring program for at-risk youth in the U.S.

Moderator

Hugh B. Price -- Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution, former President and CEO of the National Urban League, and former Vice President of the Rockefeller Foundation, where he helped conceive and launch the ChalleNGe Program.

On behalf of the Center for Children and Families at the Brookings Institution, I want to welcome you to our policy forum on the topic of quasi-military approaches to educating students who are struggling in school and in life.

We are focusing today an interesting new set of ideas that address what I consider to be the paramount domestic challenge of our time, which is education.

Several factoids illustrate my point. The academic skills needed in the work place are beginning to converge with the skills required for success in the first year of college. The academic preparedness of the recruitment pool is one key to the quality of the all-volunteer military force. Therefore, it's a national defense issue.

The U.S. economy will rely increasingly upon Latino, African-American, and low-income young people in the labor force. Minority students have surged to 42 percent of public school enrollment in this country. That's up from 22 percent merely three decades ago. Yet these economically indispensable young people, along with low-income youngsters, consistently lag farthest behind academically.

We've made gratifying progress in some respects. Even so, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), it is still the case that as recently as this year, 50 percent of Latino-fourth graders read below basic, and 30 percent perform below basic in math. Fifty-four percent of African-American-fourth graders read below basic, and 36 percent perform below basic in math. Also, 50 percent of youngsters who are eligible for free and reduced lunch performed below basic in reading.

The imperative to boost youngsters from below basic to basic and beyond transcends ethnicity. White students comprise roughly one-third of all youngsters who are scoring in the lowest quintile, according to NAEP.

We also know that alarming numbers of Latino and African-American youngsters are dropping out of high school. Only about 50 percent of black students and roughly 55 percent of Latinos graduate from high school. Recently there has been a spate of articles about so-called dropout factories, namely high schools that perform very poorly when it comes to graduating youngsters. Less documented, but no less ominous is the phenomenon of student disengagement.

This is why I embarked on a search for new ways to help young people who are not performing well in school and who have struggles in their lives get up to speed academically. We prepared a paper at Brookings that focuses on what can be learned from the military about educating and developing young people who are struggling in school and in life.

Why am I, as someone who never served in the military, interested in this issue? My curiosity dates back to when I was growing up here in Washington, D.C. I remember how some of my classmates in my middle school and high school, fellows we quaintly called knuckleheads and thugs, would drop out of school. A few years later, I'd encounter them. They had either enlisted in the Army or else been drafted. They were ramrod straight in their uniforms, full of purpose. I didn't know what had transformed them, but I knew something in that two-year period, in that experience in the military, had transformed them.

I've heard it said that the military invests more in understanding human development than any other institution on earth. The military arguably has the best track record in our society when it comes to training and advancing minorities.

In conjunction with the paper that we prepared for Brookings, we looked at basic training, JROTC and the JROTC academies, and public military schools. We also learned about a fascinating program that ran for a while in Mississippi called the Pre-Military Development Program. It was for young people trying to get into the Army who couldn't pass the qualifying test. So they enrolled in this intense program. In a matter of five or six weeks on average, they gained a grade and a half or two grades in reading and math. We also looked at the National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program. This is a quasi-military residential youth corps for youngsters who have actually dropped out of school.

In the course of looking at these programs, we identified certain generic and common attributes across many of them. These include an emphasis on belonging, a strong focus on motivation and self-discipline, emphasis on academic preparation, close mentoring and monitoring of how youngsters are doing, accountability and consequences, demanding schedules, teamwork, valuing and believing that they can succeed, structure and routine, frequent rewards and recognition, and of course, an emphasis on safe and secure environments.

Over the last couple of years I have been co-chairing a Commission on the Whole Child for the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. The entire thrust of the commission is that for kids who are not functioning well in school, it isn't enough to focus strictly on academic preparation. These youngsters have a lot of issues and needs in their lives that have to be addressed as well if they're going to become successful students and successful adults. The Commission is convinced that we must concentrate on academic and emotional and social development. In addition to what must happen in schools, we need to create communities that support the development of young people.

Ironically enough, when you examine the core components of the ChalleNGe Program, you see that the National Guard understands the philosophy of the whole adolescent. The core components of ChalleNGe are academic excellence, job skills, life-coping skills, responsible citizenship, health and hygiene, leadership and followership, physical fitness, and service to the community.

As part of our analysis, we thought about the potential programmatic implications of these military-like models and methods. One idea we came up with was that, given the fact that some of these programs have managed to generate very significant gains in achievement in a relatively short period of time, perhaps there could be so-called immersion programs, namely very intense summer programs, for youngsters in middle school and high school who are a grade or two behind in reading and math. The goal would be to get them up to speed very rapidly by using one of these quasi-military approaches that is different from conventional summer school.

Secondly, we felt there could be an expansion of the quasi-military public high schools, and perhaps even middle schools, for youngsters who are struggling in school and in life. Also, more public schools could embrace at least some of the generic attributes that we saw in the quasi-military approaches. We pushed beyond this to recommend that for youngsters who need to get out of their communities entirely, there should be quasi-military public boarding schools for young people.

Lastly, for kids who are caught up in the corrections system and who really want a second chance at going straight, we suggested creating quasi-military residential programs for those youngsters.

In our research, we didn't seek to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that these programs work. That level of proof doesn't exist yet. Instead, we were looking for signs of significant promise. Based on the encouraging academic and developmental gains that we learned about, we decided that these programs offer that kind of potential for youngsters. In fact, instead of calling them the antidote for dropout factories, I prefer to think of these quasi-military programs as graduation factories.

Today we're going to delve into how these programs work. I'm delighted that we have two presenters who have

deep experience, as well as a number of panelists who have thought about these issues and actually have hands-on experience working with young people and with these kinds of programs. As for the format, there will be two consecutive presentations, followed by a discussion among the panelists, and followed then by Q and A with the audience.

Presentation by Daniel Donohue

MR. PRICE: Our first presenter is Dan Donohue, who is the founder and architect of the National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program, and Special Assistant to the Chief of the National Guard Bureau. Dan will discuss the origins, objectives, operation, and impact of this quasi-military youth corps, which is aimed at turning around the lives of school dropouts.

MR. DONOHUE: When we began designing the National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program, we tried first, as we do in the military, to define a strategic objective that could be accomplished. We decided to target youngsters with the highest potential to be reversed. We might have been able to do more, but at the time we were launching this back in the early 1990's, this was quite a challenge unto itself—in an environment with great skepticism in many quarters and outright opposition in others.

So we concentrated on youth at risk. The next thing we did was to try to lay out the situational environment, what was really happening in their lives. With a youngster who stays the course in school, he or she will go on to lead a productive life. But most of those who dropped out at that time were eventually headed to jail. The recidivism rate was 70, 80 or 90 percent among those youngsters.

I recognize that jail is supposed to rehabilitate people. But as a general rule it graduates guys with PhD's in crime. In my personal opinion, it's not about rehabilitation; it's about punishment.

If you look at the three options for them at the time, you had probation, boot camp, or jail. If you went to jail, you were guaranteed to come out with at least a masters' degree in crime. If you went to boot camp back then, it focused on just a few things like learning how to march and salute, the ability to walk, talk and act military. You came out with huge pecs and fantastic deltoids because you did physical training all day long. And you had the option in boot camp to try and get a GED.

But when you look at these programs, they don't have a start-to-finish, a cradle-to-grave approach. The only way for a dropout or expellee from school to receive help in those days was to get in trouble with the law or else go back to school. And they'd already decided they weren't going back to school.

That's why we came up with ChalleNGe as another choice for these youngsters who were basically idle. An idle mind and a gang environment, in a tough city with hopelessness and despair, is not the place where you begin to breed hope and to believe in yourself -- that you can succeed.

So in doing our analysis, we decided that we wanted to return these youngsters to society. But the ladder that was out there for them wasn't good enough to get them back onto the main line. It literally left them hanging in mid-air. We believed there had to be a better, stronger transition back to society.

Therefore in developing the model for ChalleNGe that I'll describe in a moment, we said not only do we need to change the hearts and minds of the youngsters, we've got to have a program component to transition them back into

society, and that component would become sponsorship and mentorship. In some of the models at the time, you had a mentoring program, which is a wonderful thing, or you had a remedial program or an intervention program. We married the two together.

Let me explain the eligibility criteria. We decided not to take someone that's already in trouble with the law. We didn't want kids who were told by a judge that their choice was the ChalleNGe Corps or jail. We elected not to take the jail cohort because they already had a special interest looking after them with boot camps and other things. So why establish the same thing? Why not go after the group in the middle that nobody is looking at? In my view, they had the greatest potential of successfully returning to society.

Kids who wanted to join had to be drug-free at the time of entry. ChalleNGe isn't a rehabilitation program. That doesn't mean the kids hadn't been junkies and doing drugs. We knew many had. It's just that they had to test clean before they walked in the front door of our program. We had to make some modifications over time. In some cases we tested the kids six months out, because the grass tests positive in your urinalysis for at least six months. Our message was: young man, young lady, if you're serious about this, then for the next six months you better be clean, then come back and see us, and we'll take care of you.

Applicants also had to be unemployed, a dropout or else expelled from school. We didn't allow kids who were already in high school to decide they wanted to get out and go to ChalleNGe. Frankly, after the first three years of the program, there were many moms and dads who wanted to bring their kids as young as age 12 and enroll them in ChalleNGe. And finally, the youngsters had to volunteer for the program, meaning they had to want to do it.

We see ChalleNGe, and we structured it, as an intervention model, a preventive intervention. It isn't remediation. We decided you have to deal with the whole person. This included an analysis of what the kids are, why they are the way they are, where they came from, and in some cases, where they want to go. We wanted to shape their expectations and realities.

We also knew that the National Guard couldn't do this alone. This isn't a military program. Yes, we run it. But it depends on people from the social behavioral field, the education community, and the military. Each brings incredible capability to the real challenges here. It's the synergy of the three disciplines or fields that make it work. We don't see any one as better than any other.

State-certified teachers do the teaching in the classrooms. The military aren't the classroom teachers. At the start of this, we didn't have many teachers who wanted to participate. It took a lot of face-to-face personal persuasion to get teachers to come in and try this stuff out. After about two or three years, we had them lining up at the door to join the program. That's because the teachers got to teach. They didn't have to worry about checking for guns and knives and all the other things that many of them faced in some regular schools.

We made the behavioral community part of the ChalleNGe team because they are critical to understanding and helping the kinds of youngsters that we admitted. I remember a little girl in Georgia, 15 years-old, who reported her Dad used to rape her and beat her. She left the house and had been living out of the trunk of a car since age 12. She eventually graduated from ChalleNGe, graduated from college, and is now married with kids -- a normal family.

Other kids in our program were gang leaders. Why were they in gangs? What's the behavioral motivation behind belonging to a gang? I believe it's because there's a vacuum somewhere else in their lives, and gangs fill that vacuum.

So what we determined is that in order to make it work, we needed each of the disciplines -- educators, specialists trained in social behavior, and the military -- working together. No one of these is in charge. It's more like unified

command in the emergency response community. That teacher has as much to say about how a youngster in our program learns as that GI does. And that behavioral psychologist or counselor has as much to say about how the kids learn as the other two do. When they talk to each other and collaborate with each other, that's where the power lies.

Let me explain how the military works and why we designed ChalleNGe the way we did. In the military, you've got this guy called the first sergeant. For those of you who have never served, you've got to walk a mile in those boots to understand what a first sergeant means to you. You've got a commander who says do this stuff. Then you have a first sergeant and a non-commissioned officer corps whose job it is to get it done. So you all go through basic training. They teach you how to wear a uniform and salute. You do a lot of push-ups, all that neat stuff. You go through advanced training. You learn how to shoot your rifle better and maneuver as a unit or whatever you're going to do in your specialty.

Next, you've got the behavioral dimension. Those infantry platoons that you're part of are the people who keep you alive, the people who die with you, the people who will save you. They will give their all for you. It's called esprit de corps. That first sergeant is the guy who looks at you and says, hey, Donohue, your attitude is really bad. This is a mentoring session, only they don't call it that. In my day, they took you behind the barracks and mentored you. Today they are not allowed to mentor that way. But, mentoring, counseling, caring, close supervision and correction are continuously applied in every aspect of early military life. But having said that, the dynamic remains the same. You've got a person looking into your soul, looking you dead square in the eye, and saying, young man, young lady, you're screwed up. Let me talk to you about it. How are we going to fix this?

That's what teachers in many schools are not allowed to do, because they're not certificated as counselors. And a counselor who knows there's an education issue isn't certificated to talk about the academic part of it to the kid. And so you've got what I call stovepipe specialties.

What we did in this program is make them all – kids and adults alike -- part of a team. We've got teachers, and we've got counselors, and we've got GIs, and you know what, they're all equal partners on a team. It's not one is right because it's about saving kids, or someone else is right because it's about school, or another is right because it's about behavior. It's hey folks, we've got a problem to solve, and not one of us by ourselves, not one specialty, can get it done. We've got to work it together.

So what does the model we designed look like in practice? First, kids self-admit. At most sites, we've got lines waiting to get in. Not all are qualified. We have a 22-week residential phase, where they go through a form of basic training just like in the military. What are we looking for there? One purpose is to identify the bad leader, the person who's going to be oppressive, who uses the wrong kind of intimidation and those types of things in leadership.

Secondly, the goal is to give faith and hope to the youngsters who have been so shy all of their lives that they're afraid to stand in front of a room and speak to anybody. Thirdly, we give everybody kind of a norming experience. It's a form of socialization. You're in a uniform, you're in the mud, and everybody is going through it.

They take off the clothes of the street. They take off the flashy jewelry, the fancy sneakers, and all the clothes that signify different cliques within our society. Everybody wears one uniform, so everybody is equal now.

What we found is that, using the military approach for this part of the model, but not for the whole model, this is where you norm people. There's a single common denominator. You all look alike and you're all going to face the same challenges. This means the recruits have to start looking inside to decide whether they can make it in the program. They can no longer look left and right to their peers who are wearing different colors associated with one organization or the other that gives you the "atta boy."

This is why mentoring then becomes critical. It starts in the program and it goes on for at least a year after they graduate. We worked with a group called Dare Mighty Things and a number of other mentoring organizations and sponsorship organizations to put together a mentoring partnership to help, watch and guide each youngster during the program and help them stay focused.

It goes back to that concept of the ladder or pathway back to the main highway of life. It isn't good enough to get them three blocks away and make them walk the rest of the way. In most cases they can't get the rest of the way on their own.

The focus of the post-residential phase is placement, which includes working with the Job Corps, state agencies and job fairs, and then providing mentoring in the workplace as well. ChalleNGe isn't a jobs program. We never go to an employer and ask them to give somebody a job. We go to an employer and ask them to give the kid an opportunity to perform. Then they'll see that they want to hire them. And they do.

Let's go back to the model. The way I see it, youngsters are influenced basically in four ways for most of their life. The family is the foundation of everything that we do. But we saw the dissolution of the nuclear family in the '70's and the '80's. It was the '60's generation having kids. With single parent families and all of the dynamics inside them, many of the youngsters reared in these families were lacking key supports at some level or another.

Then you look at the schools. School systems are designed to teach the masses. The youngsters we're talking about obviously didn't take to what was offered, for whatever reason. We did not worry about whose fault it was. It's just a fact of life. So we needed to come up with an intervention that allowed us to reach and help these kids where the schools haven't worked.

The next important set of influences is the youngsters' peers. And that goes right to this issue of recognition. What's the difference between the military and a gang? A big difference is the social purpose of each one and the legality of their respective activities. But both provide the needing, the belonging, the recognition, the uniformity, the camaraderie. In these respects they aren't much different, are they? No. The specific behavior's objective and legality is, but the rest isn't.

And so if you're going to take a youngster from an environment where he or she has buy-in with a gang, where they're a member, where they're rewarded, where they're given whatever they get in a gang for stripes or whatever, then we're going to use a similar model. If we're going to jerk them out of that situation, if we're going to take them away from their family -- and remember they are out of the school already -- then we've got to have something into which they can fall that may not be as comfortable, but at least is relatively similar.

The final one of the key forces we identified was the communities. Communities expend resources at varying levels against the problem. Some communities don't do anything about the problems of troubled kids. To them it's just the cost of doing business. They said the generation of youngsters we were talking about was lost, so why invest in them.

But our assessment of those kids' situation was different. We believed that once we figured out the forces I just talked about affecting the behavior of young people, then we could begin to construct an intervention that would help them return to the mainstream. Hugh mentioned the eight core components of the ChalleNGe Program. These were derived directly from my studies in the '80's about what were the elements of change that were needed in a society, and what are the common traits of all successful people. Any one of us in this room, whether we are successful on a grand scale or at the average level, can just take a look down that list of core components. I bet we've all experienced each of these, either on our own initiative or because someone exposed us to them. But how many of the youngsters

in the cohort we're talking about have done any of them? Not very many.

There's a lot of potential there. We see it when we watch the former gang leader graduate from the ChalleNGe Program, and then turn into the number one cadet at the Citadel. We see it with the meek young boy who becomes the Army Ranger of the year, which for those of you who aren't Rangers, is no easy task. That's a monster task, in fact. This is a youngster who was afraid to even speak up in class.

So why does ChalleNGe work and how does it work? I'm going to use one example here and then talk through three or four parts of the curriculum. These are the eight core components of the program. They are not separate and unto themselves.

1. Leadership/Followership
2. Community Service
3. Job Skills
4. Academic Excellence
5. Responsible Citizenship
6. Life-Coping Skills
7. Health, Sex Education and Nutrition
8. Physical Education

Let's take the academic component. How many of us remember Pythagoras' theorem? How many of us have ever used it in our lives? Actually we use it every time we put a level up to make a deck perpendicular to our house, or else figure out how many cubic feet of gravel we'll need to build our driveway. That's the way we teach kids in ChalleNGe.

Each of us learns in different ways. Some of us are very visual, some of us are very auditory, and others of us are very hands-on. This is the experiential dimension of learning. It's important to learn things in the classroom. But the way we keep it in our heads is by applying it.

Pythagoras' theorem is very easy. $A^2 + B^2 = C^2$. It's the rule of the right triangle. In the community service project, that is a required core component. For instance, ChalleNGe cadets may be required to build a path for disabled kids in a park, and do it on a winding trail over the course of a quarter mile. How much gravel will be needed? How many and what supplies will the cadets need?

You're now applying the academic skills of math, the community service component, and the leadership skills, which then become critical to get the job done. The kids can't build the quarter mile path by themselves. They've got to motivate other youngsters to help do it. To build the path they've got to understand the math to order the supplies. And they've got to apply basic job skills, including the proper flow of supplies and equipment to get the job done on time and up to standard. And all this demonstrates responsible citizenship because the cadets are either doing the project in partnership with the community or at the request of the community.

Anybody who's ever had to lead a group has had to apply life-coping skills, which is another core component of ChalleNGe. You've got to be able to motivate people and cope with all of their issues and stresses. Plus, you've got to be able to deal with your own baggage at the same time and not necessarily show it.

In other words, in order for the ChalleNGe cadets to get the job done and perform successfully, each one of the core components of the program comes into play. First, there's academic excellence. They need to know the academic material involved. Secondly, if they don't employ job-related skills, they can't get the job done. Thirdly, they come to recognize that one of the obligations of citizenship in America is to be responsible and contribute. Fourth, they utilize life-coping skills and demonstrate leadership in order to motivate the group to follow them and work with them. They have to deliver a service to the community because now their reputation is on the line, and they've learned that reputation is very important. They must be physically fit and able to do the job. We don't turn anybody into Arnold Schwarzenegger, but every kid is able to do the work that we assign them. And finally, when it comes to health, sex and nutrition, they've at least got to be healthy enough to be able to hold a job and do these kinds of tasks.

We find that what all this does -- at the end of the day -- is motivate kids to want to learn more. Once they learn why Pythagoras' theorem is really important to them, they then start wondering what else they can use it for. When they learn how to figure out how many cubic feet of gravel they need for the project, they find they could figure out how to build a perpendicular deck on their house and do all kinds of neat things. The real-world applications of their new knowledge may vary, but the basic academic skills remain the same.

So this is our "whole person" approach in ChalleNGe, if you will. The intervention uses all eight core components simultaneously. Each one is taught by different specialists or experts. Now, why is that important? The key is understanding how we communicate across generations. We, the adults or the community, the teachers or the military, believe these youngsters should be able to perform. But young people, even our own children, code things and see things differently than adults. They may have a different perception of the exact same set of problems. We have a communications model that we apply in the program where we try to understand the problem and how to communicate with the kids. Once we understand how young people communicate in the environments they come from, we have a better handle on how to reach them.

I want to talk now about how we achieved such significant increases in math and reading in such a short period of time. At the federal level in the National Guard Bureau, we dictated what the desired outcomes were. By that I mean the standards and measures of success. But we did not dictate how each site should do it. We did require that there would be three functional specialties in the program, namely education, behavioral sciences, and the military. But we didn't dictate how the academic skills were to be taught in the classroom.

We recognized that kids learn in different ways. We have standardized tests in America for everything. But if I'm a kid that learns hands on, reading it in a book may not be my cup of tea. This doesn't mean it isn't everybody else's or that it's the school systems' fault.

What we did back in 1990 and '91 is gather together a bunch of teachers, a bunch of military folks from the Guard who were also teachers in the civilian world, and some behavioral experts. I asked them to come up with the right way to improve the kids' reading and math skills. For as many people as we had in the room, I had as many solutions. To repeat, what we didn't do is dictate how to do it. What we said is, we need to come up with a common set of understandings from which we can measure progress, because we're going to measure. Back then, measuring education results wasn't very popular. However, we were going to measure the results, the failures, and the successes of this program. And we were going to do it in each one of the eight components.

For the math and English, which are only two of the subsets of the academic excellence component, we said this is

not a GED program. It is not a high school diploma program. Let me explain my thinking on this. It was our view that to get a kid from the second grade reading level, which is where many of our kids tested, to functional literacy at a fourth grade level was as noble an endeavor and undertaking as getting a kid who reads already at the eleventh grade reading level, which is four years above the *New York Times*, to the twelfth grade level. In our view, each group of youngsters was equally deserving of help. Each could contribute equally to society.

We chose to focus on admitting and helping kids who by and large needed to climb up to functional literacy. Some people still say it's a GED program. It is not. Our goal is academic excellence. By this I mean that we're asking – and equipping – the kids in ChalleNGe to perform at the level they're intellectually capable of. We don't allow them to be lazy. We take away the ability for them to say that if they don't get their high school diploma, they won't be successful in life

In the education component of ChalleNGe, youngsters get classroom instruction from a teacher. To augment that, they receive computerized instruction, also under the supervision of a teacher. This is particularly true if they are behind in an area. We've found youngsters are excited to get on the computer and use it for other things -- other than whatever they do, play games or whatever else kids do on computers. Most of our youngsters didn't do anything on computers and many of their schools didn't have them back when we started the program.

We try to individualize the academic goals and progress for the kids. First we do an assessment of where each one stands academically and how much of a gain it's reasonable to aim for with each one of them. That becomes the individual cadet's goal as well as the program's goal. When you add up the progress each individual makes, that gives you the gains realized by the overall program.

How has the program worked out since it started in 1993? It has grown from the original sites to programs now in 28 states. We've had 74,000-plus graduates, with about 8,000 drop outs, for about a nine percent dropout rate. About 79 percent of the participants are male. We still face huge challenges attracting youngsters from the Hispanic community, especially with the young women. We have been more effective in reaching out to the black community.

Some people express surprise that 46 percent of our kids are white. Shouldn't they all be black, they ask? My answer is no. The dropout problem in America is incredible. We see it in the big cities because it's really visible. Actually it's that way all over America. We just don't talk about it because it's invisible, but it's just as big a deal. Is there disproportionate representation in the program? The answer is no. These ratios are just about right for the nation as a whole when you look at percentages of the population experiencing dropout problems among young people.

When it comes to academic skills, our kids gain on average 1.5 grades in reading in a matter of 22 weeks. That's pretty significant. In math, we're seeing an average increase of 2.2 grade levels by the end of the residential phase. The actual number of community services hours per cadet was 72, and the goal is 40. The 72 hour figure is going down basically because of lack of funds in the program for these projects.

If you look at the last 7,000 graduates from ChalleNGe, you will see that about 57.6 percent are out there employed, hopefully in better jobs than when they started with us. Twenty-six percent either go back to school, on to college, to vocational school and so forth. About 12.3 percent join the military. Their dropout rate in the military is significantly lower than the average American that joins the military. They perform in an incredible manner.

Every teacher in the ChalleNGe Program is licensed. There's no such thing as a teacher in here that's not a state-licensed teacher. We gave the teachers a mission impossible. Thanks to their dogged determination and their love for their profession, they've been able to contribute in ways that most folks thought were impossible. Many people were predisposed to just dismiss most teachers and say they didn't want to help these youngsters. I disagree. I think

the teaching community wants to make all kids good kids. Sometimes we set up an environment where we give teachers an impossible mission and we don't give them the tools to do the mission impossible. We decided to create the environment and give them the tools to be successful.

Let me close with some thoughts about the application of ChalleNGe outside the program itself. First, I really believe that the core components of this program are the ingredients of every successful person in this room or anywhere in this country. As soon as we embrace these ingredients, we begin to move people in the right direction, whether it's business, the military, or education.

Secondly, I also come to this with the view that there's no such thing as a bad kid. A bad kid is not born bad. I honestly believe in my heart of hearts, that you are a product of your environment and your experiences, and you don't change until something radically affects you. It can be military combat in a very bad jungle that makes you grow up. Or when you hold a dying kid in your arms. It can be seeing someone for the first time who won't beat you every night. It can be somebody who cares about you enough to say that it's okay to fail.

If we come at it this way, then we don't block this whole bunch of kids and say to them, "You're broken and you can't be fixed." Every time we say to these youngsters that they're a disposable generation, we reinforce our own view as a society and we reinforce their own belief that they're not savable. I disagree that they're disposable, that they're a lost generation.

As I mentioned, we rely on self-admission. There are reform schools and other things for kids that want and need to be forced to change. But the vast majority of youngsters that we've met already recognize that they have a problem. They just want to be helped. And for whatever reason, they find that the schools are not the right place for them to get the particular help they need.

That's why I think that self-admission is key. I also think the synergy of the three components is absolutely key. The military is not the expert at everything. Nor are teachers, or behaviorists, or community leaders, or elected officials. It's the synergy of everyone working together that makes an incredible difference.

To do that, we've got to set aside our egos and those artificial barriers that we put up between each of the disciplines. It's the "team" rather than the "I" approach. Anybody who deals in the emergency management business knows that when you have an explosion somewhere, you get something called unified command. At one point, the doctor is in charge. At the next point, the fire guy is in charge. Then at the next point, the law enforcement guy is in charge. They all work together. That's exactly what we're talking about in terms of this construct called a quasi-military model.

It takes mentoring, caring for and loving the kids that society is prone to write off as disposable. Mentoring comes easy to the military. Loving and caring is something we've had to learn in the last five or six years as it's become politically acceptable for men to have feelings. Those components have to be part of the system. It can't be impersonal. We actually have staff that cries as much as the kids on graduation day, because the cadets in effect become the children of the staff. They own them.

The egos are the biggest thing we had to overcome. When I first brought a bunch of behavioral psychologists, educators, and military guys together in the room, everybody came in with their stripes on, their positions laid out, and their sand bags around them, prepared to fight with each other and never surrender to the other two.

Take all that down. Leave it at the door. You put these knowledgeable people in the room and there's a lot of talent on tap to get the problem fixed. Focus on helping the youth, not who's in charge. Frankly, this could be done in a school district with a school teacher in charge. It doesn't make any difference. This is just the model that works for us.

I set out with the ChalleNGe Program to produce kids who could survive in society and contribute. We take a kid who according to some artificial standard is supposedly capable of only performing at the third grade level. But if we can get that youngster to a fourth grade reading level, then he is now functionally literate. He can fill out a job application. He can go to work. He's probably trainable if he's well-disciplined, and he's probably going to perform darn well. At the end of the day, that's what it's about.

If you wanted to expand a concept like ChalleNGe into other areas of education, the immediate goal is not about getting the kids to meet the standards of the average. No, that's not it. The purpose is to take a lot of average kids and make them the best they can be, with the recognition that the best that they can be may be 12 points below what the average is. But we encourage and empower them to give their all, to give their heart, to give their focus. And ultimately to give society a lifetime of productive employment and social responsibility, as opposed to a lifetime of expenditures by taxpayers to pay to keep these youngsters in jail.

So I think our model is applicable elsewhere in education. There are some tough questions that need to be asked in all of the disciplines and communities involved. There is no magic in the military doing it. The magic is in the community getting it done. And I think that's what the future holds for the young people if we want to learn from the National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program.

Presentation by Dr. Russell Gallagher

MR. PRICE: Our next presenter is Dr. Russell Gallagher, former Director of Junior ROTC for the Philadelphia School District. He is now Assistant Principal of the West Philadelphia High School, and he's also a retired Army Colonel. Dr. Gallagher will discuss the objectives, operations, impact, and potential applicability of the Philadelphia Military Academy, which is a quasi-military public high school.

Dr. GALLAGHER: It's a great opportunity to talk about something that I love to talk about, and that is, how the military and military-style training can influence our young people. My purpose here today is to briefly review how public military high schools or academies got started in the United States. I also want to talk about how they came about in Philadelphia, and to present some findings of a study that I did at one of our two military academies.

When I retired from the Army, my intent was to come back to Philadelphia to be the Chief Pilot of the Philadelphia Police. Unfortunately for me, the position was eliminated due to budget cuts. So there I was without a job. My sister told me there's this program getting started in Philadelphia called Junior ROTC. You may recall that General Colin Powell expanded JROTC in the early '90's.

My first response to my sister's suggestion was that I don't really want to work with a bunch of inner-city youth. But I thought I would take the job just to see how it worked. I'd do it for a year or so until I got a real job. Well, here I am 13 years later, and I ended up becoming the director of the program, and have a doctorate that's associated with that program.

I fell in love with it. I fell in love with the kids. I saw what they need, and what I really saw was the impact of the JROTC structure, the organization, and most important, and this is something that we learn in the military, is the caring attitude. We learn from the military that when you're that platoon sergeant, you must take care of your people. That was natural for us. When I worked with the kids, I could see how they were influenced. One of the things I was eager to look into was what would happen if kids got to attend a whole military high school. What kind of citizens

and students could we produce?

Thankfully, in 2002, I was given the chance to find out. I became the first Director of Junior ROTC in the School District of Philadelphia. One of my first tasks was to develop a military high school, a military academy in Philadelphia.

Today, most of the military academies that you find in the United States are private institutions. There are a limited number of public military institutions. In addition to Philadelphia, the other places that have them are Chicago, Oakland, Richmond, St. Louis, Wilmington and Prince Georges County in Maryland. Chicago has the most with four of them. Interestingly, the number of military academies is increasing at a steady rate. That trend is attributable to a number of factors, and that is mostly the failure of public education in the United States today.

Parents want the dedication, the discipline, and the structure associated with military schools. One of the things we find in public high school is peer pressure. In a lot of cases, it's negative peer pressure. In the military schools, there is also peer pressure. But it is peer pressure to do the right thing.

In Philadelphia, we decided that these large schools were a big part of the problem. Years ago they built some schools that were gigantic with three, four and five thousand students. Research has shown that what happens with these schools is, the kids get lost. And there's been research to show that smaller schools tend to produce better students. They don't get lost and they get more attention. By making these military schools small, we can provide what they need for academic success.

The first public military high school in Philadelphia, which we called the Philadelphia Military Academy, was started in 2004. A second one followed in 2005. We had planned to do a third. But unfortunately we weren't able to start it because of Philadelphia's financial woes.

The vision and mission of our military academies is to produce high performing organizations, where young men and women are challenged and nurtured through a rigorous college prep curriculum. This whole-school curriculum and the experience at the academies is designed to ensure that each of those young people learn, progress and achieve so that they have excellent – even exceptional -- qualifications for post-secondary education. In other words, we want them to go to college.

We are committed to providing quality education programs that will enable the cadets to fulfill their learning potential through courses that are rigorous and that give them the personal attributes they need to be successful in local, national, international institutions of higher learning, as well as in preparing them for the future.

Students get many benefits from attending these military academies. There's the small school concept and the structured learning environment. The most important thing that we found is the duty, discipline, and leadership, as well as the character development that is reinforced in every classroom.

As Dan Donohue mentioned in his presentation, we take away the differences in clothing that let them set themselves apart from one another. They all wear an Army-style uniform that's provided for them. They start each class every day at attention. They call adults "sir" and "ma'am." They work as a group. They move from class to class together. There are high standards of personal and ethical behavior. What you find in a lot of the public high schools does not happen in the military schools.

In addition to the behavioral requirements, the educational requirements are very rigorous. All students are prepared to go to college. We're trying to get them in so that they can be successful in life. They get a little bit more individualized

attention. The classes are a little bit smaller, but not hugely smaller. Everything that they need when it comes to their uniforms, textbooks and special equipment is all provided for them. And finally, the schools have a number of extra curricular and sports programs.

Let me turn to the admissions process and criteria. In Philadelphia, we have different types of schools. We have special admit schools, and we have what are called citywide admittance schools and neighborhood schools. The military academies are considered citywide schools. This means that students from anywhere in the city can apply. The entrance requirements include being a Philadelphia resident. We have gotten requests from all over the United States for students to come to the military academies. We have to tell the parents who call us, these are not private schools and students must live in the city of Philadelphia to go there. We have actually had students that live outside the city, but use addresses in the city so that they can attend the school. They want to come to the academies because these are college preparatory schools where students perform on grade level in reading and math.

We originally required that applicants have “good” grades to get in. We changed that to “average” grades. The point is that we want them to be able to perform in the school when they get there. We don’t want them to go there and then drop out because they cannot meet the very stringent requirements academically.

Applicants must take a standardized test called the Terra Nova. As a general rule, the city’s so-called special admit schools require applicants to score in the 80’s and 90’s. At PMA, we look for them to score in the 50’s, namely mid-range. They should also have a record of good attendance and good discipline.

Before students are accepted to the school, they have to come to us and have an interview. Their parents bring them, but we don’t allow their parents into the room with them. The reason is we get a lot of parents that say, “You’ve got to take my boy” or “You’ve got to fix my boy.” And that’s not what we do. We take those kids that want to be there. If they tell us they don’t want to attend the school, the interview is over. Most of them say, yes, they do. Then we go into why do you want to be here? What is your goal? What do you want to do and where do you see yourself?

Once we have accepted them, they have to go through a summer orientation program. It is their first reality check, where we bring them in for two weeks, and we put them through a process so that they know what to expect for the next four years. Some don’t stay, but most do. One of the other things this summer orientation does is get them ready for school.

Anybody who has been in an inner-city high school probably knows that for the first two weeks, there’s absolute chaos. It’s not necessarily a bad kind of chaos. But there’s plenty of confusion and disorder in trying to bring everybody together and get them to where they need to be. However, when the young men and women arrive for our military academy, we give them everything they need. So on the first day of school, they’re ready to learn. They know what’s expected of them, they know what they have to do, and they’re ready.

Our students sign a behavioral agreement called a compact. Since they’re under 18, they can’t sign a contract. But we can have them sign a compact, so that they understand what’s required of them. They also have to agree to wear the uniform and wear it properly, along with the standards that are associated with wearing a military uniform.

Finally, they have to agree to abide by the cadet creed. This is the heart and soul of the school. The cadets recite the creed every morning, much like the Pledge of Allegiance. It goes:

I am a military academy cadet.

I will always conduct myself to bring credit to my family, country, school, and corps of cadets.

I am loyal and patriotic.

I am the future of the United States of America.

I do not lie, cheat, or steal, and will always be accountable for my actions and deeds.

I will always practice good citizenship and patriotism.

I will work hard to improve my mind and strengthen my body.

I will seek the mantle of leadership and stand prepared to uphold the Constitution and the American way of life.

May God grant me the strength to live by this creed.

We live in a society where we want to know if we're being successful. I wanted to know if the military academy would produce the results we were looking for. Of course, I couldn't do that right away. We had to wait until the students were in the program for a while, to see what results it would produce.

Recently I conducted a research study whose purpose was to explore how the environment at the Philadelphia Military Academy influenced the attitudes of its students towards several key things -- school, learning, and the taking of standardized tests. I looked to see if there were any research studies done on military-type high schools. Yet I could not find any significant information on the impact of military high schools on young people, which led me to conduct my study.

My personal experience has shown me that military-type training has a positive influence on not only students' passing rates, but on academic achievement and college attendance as well. There are many factors that influence student achievement on a high stakes tests. I believe that most of it is attitude. Positive student attitudes help improve standardized test performance.

What I decided to look at in my study was one small group of students at the one military school, namely the Philadelphia Military Academy, to see how the environment there affected them. Hopefully what I came up with would have an influence on other schools in the future. Or it could be used to make a decision as to whether this was something beneficial.

In my study I looked at five sub-categories. The main item I looked at was the environment at the school. The sub-categories that I looked at were the overview of the JROTC program, because the JROTC program is the foundation of the military school.

Secondly, I looked at structure within the military academy, and how the increased teacher attention would impact those students. One of the key aspects of the school is discipline. And I also looked at some other factors associated with success in school, such as time management, self-esteem, the ability to set and manage goals, positive self-image, and community service. The last item I looked at was standardized testing.

More specifically, I wanted to find out what is the impact of structure, discipline, and increased teacher attention on military high school students, their work ethic, self-discipline, and attitudes towards learning, education and standardized tests. And whether an improved attitude towards school and learning contributes to raising standardized

test scores. Without belaboring the details, the methodology I used was a survey and focus groups with a representative sample of about 25 percent of the total enrollment of 269 students. The 69 kids who ended up participating had to agree, of course, because they are under 18.

Of the questions asked on the survey, only three produced a somewhat negative result. One question had to do with distractions, namely whether they felt there were more distractions at the military academy than they might experience elsewhere. Another was whether they felt their study skills were improved. And did they feel that they were able to manage their time better? Just under 28 percent did not feel they were able to manage their time better.

There was one set of responses that stood out and was very surprising, and pleasantly so, to me. That was the importance of scoring well on standardized tests. Ninety-seven percent felt that this was very important. In other words, they realized they had to do well on standardized testing if they wanted to be successful in the future.

The focus group interviews produced interesting feedback as well, much of which was similar to what Mr. Donohue reported earlier. I had a trained interviewer do the focus group interviews. I didn't want to do it myself because I was a bit afraid of bias, plus the students knew me, and I was afraid that they might respond to me in the way they thought that I wanted them to respond.

We come up with a lot of the same kinds of findings that Dan Donohue described earlier. The first thing the students felt was that the teachers were very concerned about them and took an interest in them. They felt the teachers were there to help them.

They felt that the structure at the school was very, very beneficial to them. They said it allowed them to learn by providing a very positive learning environment. They felt very safe in the school. Many students do not feel safe in public schools today, sometimes for a good reason.

They also felt the school helped prepare them for the future. They felt people respected them in the school. They were very, very proud of the school that they went to, which is a very important part of improving their attitude. If they're proud of being there, they're going to do better, and I think that's very, very important.

The last part we wanted to look at was students' performance on standardized tests. Unfortunately, with the school being as new as it is, the test data wasn't as readily available as we would have liked. We did try to look at a couple of tests -- the Terra Nova Test, and the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test or PSAT. Since our students had gone there from the ninth through the eleventh grade at the time, very few of them had taken the SAT. Also, the results of the state test that the students take, the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA), were not yet available because, as eleventh graders, they had just taken it.

What we did see is that on the Terra Nova, the ninth and tenth grade students at PMA did better than the average for their peers overall in the Philadelphia School District. In the second quartile they scored higher and in the fourth quartile, which is the lowest, there were proportionately fewer of them, which is what we hoped to see. In other words, they had very few in the bottom quartile, and in the second quartile they had quite a few.

As for the PSAT, the tenth and eleventh graders at PMA performed better than the average for other high schools in the district. The PMA tenth graders were 3.5 points higher, and the eleventh graders were 3.6 points higher. That doesn't seem like a whole lot, but it's still an improvement, it shows an improvement.

There are a number of other quantitative and qualitative measures of success. These were not part of my study, but this is what we see in the military high schools in Philadelphia. They have a better than average daily attendance rate

at 93 percent versus the district average of 81 percent. The graduation rate for the School District of Philadelphia is 72 percent. Now, the oldest of the military academies has not yet had a graduation. But in speaking to the principal, he has advised me that 100 percent of the students in the military academy are on track to graduate.

The dropout rate is zero. No students have dropped out. Some of them switched schools, but they have not dropped out of school. The discipline rate and suspensions are negligible, less than one-half of one percent. And the number of serious incidents is very, very small.

Qualitative benefits cannot always be measured. But from my study, we see that the students feel increased confidence and self-esteem. They have developed leadership abilities. The education and experience helps them make decisions and solve problems and gives them the courage to deal with peer pressure. They're leaders in their school and in their community. They have improved their physical fitness, and they have enhanced communication skills, which help them work better as a team.

To sum up the results of my study, I found that the environment at this military-type high school had a distinctly positive impact on the students' work ethic, self-discipline, and attitudes towards education. There was a correlation between the students' improved attitudes towards school and learning and the scores that they achieved on standardized tests.

And finally, they felt very strongly and favorably about how their teachers work with them, the structure at the school, and the safety at the school. They talked about wearing the uniform and how that made them feel. How when they went home, people would say positive things to them, and how that helped with their attitude.

I feel this study was significant simply because there wasn't anything like it that we could find. It showed that the environment at the military school helped these students develop skills that are necessary for them to be successful in life. Hopefully when this study is available, it will be beneficial to other educational leaders if they should decide to do something like this within their school districts.

I've recently moved into a new job as the assistant principal at one of our more challenging high schools in Philadelphia. Anybody from the Philadelphia area will recognize the name, West Philadelphia High School. It's a high school with a lot of history, but it's also got some real challenges.

Here's some data about the school. It's got a 76 percent attendance rate. Last year it had a 51 percent graduation rate. The suspensions were 349 out of 1,045 students enrolled. As for the types of things that took place in the school, there were assaults on students, assaults on teachers, weapons violations and so on. There were a number of fires last year as well.

I took those seven significant military academy themes with me to the school, and we're applying them in the school. The seven key themes are:

1. Teacher concern
2. Structure
3. Learning environment
4. Safety

5. Preparation for the future
6. Respect
7. Pride

I've only been there two months, but in that time we have seen a positive change. There haven't been any fires or significant problems so far. The serious incidents that we've had are very, very few.

I believe it's because we're applying these seven components to the school. We're trying to show the teachers that if they're concerned about their students, they will get a more positive result. We've applied structure in the school. We have divided the school up. We've deployed security, almost like a military operation. We split it up. The chain of command goes down and everybody has their own area they're responsible for. And we've given these kids some structure. We're trying to improve the learning environment for them so that they want to be there. Obviously, there's the safety of the school. With the lack of problems and fights and fires, et cetera, they're starting to feel safer.

They're starting to see the importance of taking tests and preparing themselves for the future. And interestingly, they're starting to feel a small amount of school pride. Hopefully we can employ this approach in that school and in others in order to improve the overall performance of Philadelphia's schools.

Panel Discussion

MR. PRICE: I want to thank Dan Donohue and Russ Gallagher for their informative and thought-provoking presentations. Let's turn now to the panel discussion. We are joined by five terrific panelists.

Osborne "Ozzie" Wright is the Principal of the Philadelphia Military Academy and the former Principal of West Philadelphia High School and of the Youth Study Center and Juvenile Detention Alternative Education in Philadelphia. He has served on active duty in the U.S. Army and is a member of the Army Reserve.

After Mr. Wright, we will hear from Dr. Edmund Gordon, a distinguished clinical and counseling psychologist who is a widely acclaimed scholar and prolific author. He is Professor Emeritus from Yale University and Columbia Teacher's College and a Senior Scholar-in-Residence at the College Board. And, I'm delighted to add, one of my most important mentors throughout my career.

Bella Rosenberg is an educational consultant and former advisor to Albert Shanker, the late President of the American Federation of Teachers. Bella is the former Chair of the Advisory Board of the Federal Center for Research, Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing.

After Bella comes Dr. Velma Cobb. She is the Vice President of Education and Youth for the National Urban League. She previously served as Associate Director of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. She's a former elementary school teacher and reading specialist.

Conrad Mandsager is a veteran management, program development and evaluation consultant, whose clients include the ChalleNge Program, MDRC, and Dare Mighty Things. He was instrumental in creating and implementing the second largest mentoring program for at-risk youth in the United States.

MR. WRIGHT: I am the principal of the Philadelphia Military Academy, the first one that opened up in Philadelphia. One of the first things that we ran into when we started the academy was the perception of the public toward military academies. One concern was that we were trying to be a recruiting tool for students to go into the military. The other was whether or not this was a boot camp-type school. And the third was whether or not it was a charter school. We had to tell the public that none of these things were true because it was a public school and it was an academic school geared for students who were going to go into post-high school programs, preferably college. If the military was something that they wanted to do, this was another option for them.

We started out being very under-funded. When I say under-funded, the Army Cadet Command decided that we would be measured over one year to determine if the school was going to be successful. They came in to evaluate whether or not the school district would support the program, whether or not we would have a good retention rate for teachers, and whether or not the retention rate for students was going to be adequate.

I was very proud to say that all these things were successful because we ended up opening another military academy high school in 2005. We started out with 130 students. Presently we have 98 of those students still attending the military academy and I think that's very significant. 2008 will be the first graduating class for the military school here in Philadelphia.

I want to stress two things about the selection process. All the youngsters who apply have to come in for interviews and their parents must understand what we want from them. What's also very significant is that all of our teachers have to be interviewed for the job as well.

All of the teachers are Philadelphia-certified or state-certified teachers. They're all highly qualified in the subjects they teach. We also have four military instructors, all of them retired from active duty, who are our JROTC instructors. The difference between a regular Junior ROTC program in a comprehensive high school and our JROTC program is that our students have JROTC leadership classes every day. Also, they have to wear their uniforms every day, except Friday, when they have to do physical training. When people come in and look at the school, they are impressed because there is a climate that's conducive to learning. That climate has to do with a collaboration of teachers, outside agencies, counselors, and parents.

In the four years that we've had the school, we've had four serious incidents with students bringing weapons to school for one reason or the other. Two of them were because they wanted to get out of school and the parents didn't want to let them out. The other was because someone had a Boy Scout knife. We feel we must have zero tolerance. However, I'm glad to say that those students are still attending schools.

We had approximately 1,200 students applying to come to the school this year. We take in 130 every year. There was a question about the academic criteria for admission, whether all kids had to be performing at grade level. Hopefully we'll get the very best students. You should know that ten percent of each class has to be special education students. They need extra assistance as far as academics are concerned. We have two special education teachers -- a psychologist and a counselor -- to help us with those particular issues. I would personally like to see this type of program duplicated throughout the nation implementing the same academic and behavior standards.

Dr. GORDON: I had planned to talk about many of the lessons that we are learning from the education work of the Defense Department. But given the limited amount of time available, I want to talk instead about some associated problems as I perceive them.

I must say that as one who has spent the last 30 or 40 years working with the educational problems of the segment of the population that is under-producing academically or with whom we are underproductive, it's a pleasure to come to

a meeting to celebrate some successes. And it's clear that this kind of work is a positive force in education.

But there are two sets of problems that we encounter in it. One has to do with the pedagogy. Clearly, it appears that we have learned a great deal about pedagogy through the military, better than any other segment of education, how to educate youngsters who have been underserved and, in some ways, abused by the society and by our schools. The Defense Department has been unusually successful at the education and rehabilitation of some of these young people.

One of the principal things we've learned about it is the place of structure and challenge in education. Public schools came under the influence of a philosophy that I happen to be highly respectful of. I refer to the somewhat permissive approach to child development that dominated much of the latter part of the 20th century. We have been reluctant to use structure in education. In fact, there are some of us who demean highly structured educational experiences and are shy about academic challenges to socially disadvantaged children.

But it's clear that for some aspects of learning, structure is terribly important. However, the problem presented by structure is that we know that while high degrees of structure provide an effective context for learning, it is fluidity that seems to be the more productive context for thinking.

In education, we have the paradox of this concern for learning juxtaposed against a concern for thinking. The structure that enables me to learn how to think can be a constraining force on creative and critical thought. That is because thought goes beyond what I know, beyond what I've experienced, beyond that with which I'm comfortable. So that one of the problems I worry about is how we transition from the gains that we get from the structure that enables learning to the fluidity in learning experiences that seem to be associated with thinking.

Secondly, for most of my career I have studied cognitive development, namely how we intervene to influence the cognitive development of kids. It may be that we have reached an asymptote with respect to further improvement in the technologies of directing cognitive development.

We see in these quasi-military programs a heavy emphasis on and a utilization of the affective domain. That is to be applauded. It appears that without even deliberately examining it, the work that we're hearing about today builds upon what we know about emotions and feelings. The work reflects the notion suggested by Bourdieu, the French social theorist, who argues that life conditions and social experiences tend to develop what he calls "habitus." Habitus has to do with dispositions, appreciations, attitudes that one holds.

Bourdieu argues further that in the absence of access to certain education relevant forms of capital, the habitus that is developed may be counterproductive to academic achievement. So we applaud the presence in this work in the military of an emphasis on attitude, disposition, or the affective domain as a way of influencing development in the cognitive domain. We in general education might take a lesson from that. Unless we are working on the social psychological context out of which youngsters get a sense of validity, a sense of membership, a sense of meaning and purpose in the learnings that are expected of them, then those cognitive developmental landmarks are going to be more difficult for them to achieve.

I will close with probably what is the most difficult of the problems I see here. If it were not for the fact that Hugh Price asked me to begin worrying about this domain, I might have avoided it. And I probably would have avoided it out of some value conflicts I sense.

I am a pacifist. I find it problematic to my thinking that I turn to military service to serve the ends to which I've devoted my professional life. A lot of people in education, not necessarily pacifists, may be turned off by the notion

of turning to the military to figure out what we're going to do in education.

That is because in our society, we have tended to let the military get away from civilian control and the values that we claim to privilege for the nation. That has seldom been more obvious in our society than in the present climate. So that one of the problems I have is outside of pedagogy, outside of what we are doing professionally. It has to do with the context in which we do it. As we celebrate what we can learn from the military, we need to turn to ourselves and rededicate ourselves to our responsibility as citizens for controlling what the military does in our name, so that we can learn from it and use it and welcome the opportunity to guide our youngsters through military and national service into the mainstream of society, not only for national service, but for their own development.

MS. ROSENBERG: That's a nice transition for one of the many questions I wanted to raise, which is, how critical is the military component of the model? In part, that's an empirical question, which has a partial answer. The limited research we have on effective high school models points to characteristics that are uncannily close to the key components of these more military models. For example, the lessons drawn about what works from the MDRC evaluations of career academies reinforce what's going on in these military models.

What's so striking to me about these models is that they tap into what is now a broad and deep scientific consensus about the roots of achievement, which are essentially found in the environmental influences that children experience, particularly in the first three years of their life, in their family and in their communities.

If families and communities are disabled from providing those foundations, that is an enormous challenge for schools because it undercuts even the most productive of reforms. These military or quasi-military models and the non-military models which they resemble fundamentally recognize that schools must compensate for these healthy influences for kids who were deprived of them. They understand something that actually we saw fairly commonly very early in the 20th century with the settlement house movement and other things of that nature. Unless you purposely provide kids who haven't gotten them with the kinds of structures and experiences that are provided by strong families and strong communities, you will not get the kind of development that they need to succeed.

I use the word development deliberately because, as Dr. Gordon said and as his research and other research indicate, without the behavioral development, the social development, the development of individual and social capital, you are not going to maximize cognitive achievement. They're inextricably linked.

Does this have to be done through a military or quasi-military model? Not necessarily, though I fully support the ones that we have. I think there's an important place for them and for their replication and an even more urgent need to apply their broader lessons elsewhere.

The second point I want to make is that the military also has something to teach us about curriculum. There have been a number of times in the history of the United States, starting in World War I, when the military admitted very large numbers of young adults who failed to meet its qualifying standards and had to get them up to speed.

One of those times, during the Vietnam War when Robert McNamara was Secretary of Defense. It was done deliberately as a matter of social policy as part of the war on poverty. It was called Project 100,000, but in fact many more than 100,000 young people per year were admitted.

These at-risk young people were called cast-off youth at the time. Back then and to this day, there's been plenty of controversy about this program within the military, in Congress and the broader public. These young people were called "McNamara's morons." Within the past year I saw an op-ed in the *New York Times* by an academic who raised some concerns because the military was going to be lowering its entry standards due to the difficulty recruiting these

days. This op-ed said that the experience of the so-called “McNamara’s moron corps” indicates that this is going to be a catastrophe.

Well, it turns out that there was some pretty heavy duty research done on the so-called moron corps. It followed what happened to these soldiers in their military service and afterward. By the way, they were all high school dropouts. A significant percentage of them were grade school dropouts and very, very poor. Most did not have the basic skills needed even to comprehend instructional manuals for basic military roles. Long story short, the key to the program the military developed -- and this is certainly obvious in the Challenge Program but a little less so in the Junior ROTC program -- was something called Functional Context Education. This means that literacy and numeracy skills were taught in the context of the tasks that these young people were going to be doing.

Just to give an example, soldiers who were going to do small machine repair were taught the literacy and numeracy skills to do it in that context. They also had a control group that took a generic basic skills kind of curriculum that looks very much like what you would do in regular schools and what the military was using at the time. The Functional Context Education approach way outscored the regular, more school-like approach. More to the point, it wasn’t just a matter of these young people doing much better at reading and math related to, let’s say, small machine repair. The skills they learned generalized outside of the context where they were learned.

Now, we see in broader high school reform right now a push to make the traditional college prep curriculum the default curriculum for all kids. It’s based on the belief that the skills needed for work and for college are the same. That’s not exactly true. It’s also making it hard to pursue some of the more promising reforms that use relevance in the service of academic excellence, a multiple pathways approach to high school reform that connects academic learning to real-world learning. One of the lessons from these quasi-military models and the military experience with cast-off youth, as well as other research, is that we need to look at that more carefully.

Dr. COBB: I’d like to focus my remarks on three areas. It is so easy for us, especially educators, to want all or nothing, to want it to be perfect, to find the one best way of doing things. I believe we need to look wherever we can find some of the solutions because schools the way they currently operate obviously are not working for the children we’re talking about today. The military may not have all the answers, but they perhaps have some. It’s not either/or, but a fusion, because we need to go further.

Michelle Gambone and Jim Connell estimate that only about four out of ten young people are doing well by the time they get to the early twenties. That statistic is for all young people. Twenty-two percent are having difficulty, which the researchers define as doing poorly in two life areas, and not well in one.

What do young people need? The one thing we do know is that if they’re going to be ready by 21, they need supports and opportunities that will foster growth and development. This is more than a matter of academic competence. That is critical, but not sufficient. Not only do young people need to be educated, they need to be healthy, they need to be connected, they need to be work-oriented, and they need to be ready to contribute.

What do we mean by that? What are the life areas that we need to look at? I’m talking about learning to be productive. That may mean going to college, but it might be another way. We define ourselves by whether or not we are productive, whether we are contributing. We all need to feel that. And young people need to feel that all along the way. Tests don’t do that. So it’s not about just the tests, it’s about more than that.

We each have to connect to the adults in our families, to our community, and to other peers, because we don’t live in this world alone. And we need to learn how to navigate, and I mean navigation on a broad scale.

Schooling is a navigational process. You have to learn to get in and to get out. For those parents who are able to help their young people navigate, they do better, and that has nothing to do with the educational components in the school. The key is your ability to know what's expected of you and to get you in there and to get you out.

Youngsters also need to learn how to navigate in a multi-faceted world. They need to know how to think for themselves. Passing tests helps kids clear –one threshold in terms of getting in and out of school. They need to learn how to navigate those transitions from middle school to high school, high school to the next phase, from being a young adult in the twenties into adulthood and perhaps marriage, and finally from school into careers.

Young people need to learn how to be productive, to connect, and to navigate. These are not discrete skills or trades. They are accomplishments.

When I look at the core components of the quasi-military academy, I see that what we're talking about is what young people really need. I refer to the emphasis in these programs on productivity and academic excellence, job skills, cognition, leadership, followership, community service and responsible citizenship, navigational or life-coping skills, along with health, sex education and nutrition. Those last ones are more important than ever with all that's going on with obesity, diabetes among young people, and physical education.

So we know that all young people need social capital and navigational skills. They cannot do this alone. That is why the social environment matters a lot. Therefore we look at the social environments in all high schools, actually from infancy through high school, which help young people become ready at every developmental milestone. Right now, we just don't do a good job of that, although a lot of the research is out there.

If you look at Dr. James Comer's work, if you look at other peoples' work, we understand what's needed. The social environment in school can either impede or support that process. It's not just about academics; it's about more than that. We need to think about the supports and opportunities available to young people that help them thrive. Nothing is going to be a panacea. The No Child Left Behind law wasn't a bad idea. The way in which we implemented it was questionable.

The main thought I would like to leave with you is that we know what young people need. Perhaps these models can deliver that for them. Also, we need to make this knowledge available not just through these programs. It also can inform high school reform overall because the way in which we interact with young people really does not support their growth and development.

MR. MANDSAGER: One of the challenges that we face as we begin to think about this sort of a structured educational model is, how do you transition the young person from that kind of a model back to a low-structured environment that most of our young people are living in on a daily basis.

In a thriving community or a thriving family environment, mentoring occurs naturally. One of the great things that Challe/NGe did in thinking through the model back in the early '90's was the fact that we are probably going to need some sort of a mentoring structure, a formal mentoring structure, to be able to help these kids make that transition back to the environments where they were going.

I want to talk about the different paradigm for mentoring that the Challe/NGe Program has developed and that has a great deal of promise as we think about how to roll out these sorts of structured quasi-military educational models. One of the things that we knew early on from some studies by the Department of Justice of boot camps, is that, although they saw a lot of gains while the young person was in those boot camp environments, when they went home, those gains virtually disappeared in a matter of two or three months. Everything that they had gained they lost when

they went back to a low-structured environment.

When you look at what was different about those boot camp models versus what was going on with ChalleNGe, what you saw was an after-care component, a post-residential component that was evident in ChalleNGe but not in those boot camp models.

The program designed for ChalleNGe is an 18-month intervention. It starts with a 5 1/2 month residential component, followed by a year-long post-residential component. That post-residential component, while it may be the least visible part of the program, probably is the most important component in terms of helping that young person become successful in the long term. It's marked by a mentoring relationship with a caring adult, someone who's willing to commit to that young person for that year-long period of time.

Back in 1993 when we first got engaged with the mentoring component, we used to come to meetings with Dan Donohue and say, you've given us almost an impossible task because you're asking us to build a mentoring program with virtually no resources. We were faced with the fact that we had a mission with very little financial resources to make it happen. When you look at traditional mentoring programs like Big Brothers/Big Sisters and others, you'll note that a great portion of their budget is involved in recruiting mentors into the game. We didn't have that.

So we began to challenge the programs at the local level to try some different things and come up with something that we might be able to use. Oklahoma was the first to come up with the idea of actually asking the young person to help find their own mentor.

You might think that's a dumb idea because of the fact that these kids oftentimes came from very bad environments. To think that we might be able to find a mentor in that sort of environment seemed like an impossible task.

Over the years, as we refined that concept and we began to call it a friendly match strategy, we began to see that in many cases, there were caring adults even in those neighborhoods and environments where these kids live. Oftentimes it was a coach. It might have been a counselor in school. It might have been a teacher, someone who showed an interest in that young person, in their development.

So when we began to think about how we might roll this out with the very little resources that we had, we began to focus on that approach. We recognized that as adolescents move towards adulthood, they find it extremely difficult to engage with people that are older than them. They don't trust them. They've oftentimes had very bad experiences with them. Bringing a stranger into that mix oftentimes created more problems than it created good outcomes. Finding adults who would engage with an at-risk teenager was even harder.

As this approach developed, it really began to show some promise. It became the strategy that ChalleNGe has used over the years. Back in 1993, we probably had fewer than five percent of the kids who were leaving the residential phase with a screened and trained mentor. Today it's between 95 and 99 percent of those kids who are leaving with a mentor, someone who's willing to stand with those young people as they go back to this low-structured environment we're talking about.

I want to conclude by proposing this mentoring approach as a potential solution when we think about to help these young people move from this structured environment of these quasi-military high schools or residential programs into the low-structured environment where most of them eventually live and exist.

MR. PRICE: Please join me in thanking our presenters and panelists. We're going to move now to questions from the audience.

QUESTION: What are the research goals and the focus for future research that we should be looking at?

MR. PRICE: MDRC is currently doing an evaluation of the ChalleNGe Program. Therefore the sort of gold standard in evaluation and research is underway. I don't know that there are enough of the other kinds of programs in existence, like the quasi-military high schools, but it may be that we're approaching the time when it's feasible to evaluate them in this fashion. Some of the interventions that I've proposed, like fast-track literacy programs over the summer for youngsters who are way behind in reading, don't exist now. So you'd have to create it and let it ripen on the vine a little bit. I don't believe in evaluating something the day you open the door. Let folks figure out what they're doing, and then evaluate it rigorously.

MR. DONOHUE: Research is vital, particularly longitudinal studies on the programs themselves. I bring us back to a comment that Dr. Gordon made about the ability to think, not just to learn. Before you can learn to think, you first have to learn to learn. And thinking is the evolution of the learning process over time.

As you look at these studies and the cohorts that they're going to examine, it's critically important that you understand that mainstream schools are going after one objective, which is different than the ChalleNGe Program, which is different than, say, what the Philadelphia Military Academy is going to do. That's why the finite levels of detail that are necessary to draw reasonably defensible and scientifically valid conclusions are going to be critical to the scope and purpose of any evaluation study.

That's because -- and this is not an attack on or a defense of anybody -- if you've got a kid that's drowning, first you've got to stop him from drowning. The second task is to teach him to swim. But first, stop him from drowning. If you've got a kid who volunteers, who's already in the right grade and reading at the right level, and if what you're basically doing is putting him on academic steroids to help him become the cream of the crop in college, that's a different challenge. There's one ChalleNGe Program -- I won't say where -- that creams the crop.

Taking kids who already read at a tenth or eleventh grade level and getting them to pass the GED is a good thing. But if you have 100 percent of the class reading at the first grade level and you get them up to the fourth grade level, which makes the bigger contribution to America?

My point is, when you do the studies, first identify the strategic target of the program. Is it to put kids into Yale and Harvard, which is admirable? Or is it to get the kid who's drowning, get him ashore, get him resuscitated, and then start teaching him swimming lessons? First, researchers should clearly define research that way based on who these programs are serving and what they're trying to accomplish for the kids. Define the research in terms of what the program is producing, and then come up with a way to analyze the intervention as opposed to analyzing laterally what the effectiveness of all programs are by combining data, because the data doesn't combine. There are different targets, different solutions, and, frankly, different outcomes that are desired.

DR. GORDON: I happen to have had the good fortune of being involved in the early development of Head Start. I was actually its research director. One of the smartest things we did was to create about six centers around the country that were responsible for studying the development of Head Start, as well as its impact.

I would recommend a similar model, because it's very important that we not be so much concerned with impact and outcomes that we don't also understand the process. And if we're focused on the process, we can be sensitive to various stages of the development of both the program and the young people. Clearly, there are young people who need to learn very elementary things before they can move on to higher things. We want to know how effective that is. We also want to be studying the transitions from one stage to another stage. We certainly want to do the longitudinal work. To depend upon only one kind of evaluation would be a mistake. I would recommend that we go back to that old Head Start research and evaluation model that studied over time what's happening to programs and to the participants in those programs.

MS. ROSENBERG: One of the things that must have struck everyone in the room, particularly those from the K-12 world, is that both these programs are voluntary. The students are self-selected, and one of them is a pretty selective program. When admission is only or mainly open to kids who do not have behavioral problems, who perform on grade level and so forth, that's a very high baseline.

I'm not saying this as a criticism. It's in part my point. We in education tend to make the perfect the enemy of the good. We immediately reject approaches that that don't tackle or work for the hardest cases. Even the ChalleNGe Program doesn't take the hardest cases because it uses self-selection and even boots some out because they refuse to conform to the program. It doesn't work for everyone, but that doesn't mean it doesn't work.

We also have very perverse ways of doing research, which is reinforced by this fictional No Child Left Behind notion that everybody is going to be the same. Every child is going to have the same outcome. We ought to think about research and these models along a continuum of need and approaches.

Take the hardest case of all perhaps, the prison population, two million strong now, coming back into the community in record numbers, with no mentors, no skills, no education, nothing. Talk about short ladders back to the mainstream, these folks have no ladder at all. Yet these are future fathers and mothers, raising the next generation of kids who will not have the kind of social capital they need for academic success. And the cycle goes on.

So in research and developmental terms, you have the hardest cases, and then, you move along the continuum of need and challenges with varied approaches. Researchers need to report on these programs with honesty about what the baseline is and what the difference is when it's a self-selected or selective program or not. We need to stop looking for the one best model that turns out to be based either on the hardest cases or the easiest cases.

QUESTION: All of you have talked about components that go beyond the regular academic structure in our schools. You've mentioned the support services, the mentoring, the relationships, the environment, and all those pieces that we don't necessarily see as part of our responsibility in education world nor have funding for. How do we create this better system that includes all these components in every school, whether it's the quasi-military model or a regular high school or floor model? In my state, we've been talking about bringing in resiliency and wellness to every child, every school, and every community. But it is a challenge in terms of the recognition, the funding, the accountability, and getting educators to embrace all this as part of our responsibility.

DR. GORDON: If we look beyond the quasi-military schools to the research and practice that has come out of the Defense Department, it's interesting that you will find that the Defense Department is more effective than the public schools are with many of the kids that we have been talking about.

One of the things that we can learn from what they do in those schools, and it is reflected in the Challenge/NGE Program, is that they appear to be taking an almost public health approach to education. They recognize that the isolation of educational problems in the school doesn't make sense when there are so many things outside of schooling that influence both healthy development and learning how to think. Schooling has almost preempted education in our society, and we need to reverse that. Schooling is only a part of education. We must recognize that in order to educate well, all of this other stuff has to happen in the life of the learner.

With such a conceptualization, we might make more progress in getting the society to recognize that this budgeting and the authority that we've given to schools needs to be much broader and encompass a responsibility for the holistic development of young people.

What's working in the programs that we have been studying today is that they tend to be creating a sense of membership, a sense of belonging, a sense of polity. If we begin to move the concern for education outside of school to the society itself, the key question becomes what does that community require in order to fully develop these persons?

MR. PRICE: I think there's a question of why, there's a question of what, and there's a question of whether it works. The why, which I think we're beginning to appreciate, and which has to be drummed home over and over is that our economy will depend increasingly on young people who are not faring well in school. We have to do something about that.

Secondly, assuming we're going to maintain an all-volunteer Army, if the recruitment pool increasingly consists of young people who are not academically equipped to serve, then that weakens our national defense. So there's a global economic imperative and there's a national defense imperative. That's why we have to care about how these kids are doing and whether they are prepared for productive lives as law-abiding citizens and providers in all the ways in which we characterize that.

We've heard a fascinating discussion of why the ways of thinking about what we've talked about today are important. For a considerable segment of the population, school as we know it is not working. No matter how hard we try to push the children through traditional modes of teaching and instruction, it's hard to generate higher test scores when so many issues impede the kids' inclination and capacity to learn and achieve. So we need to take a much more holistic approach.

This conversation is not about militarizing the schools. It's about extracting what the military knows about educating, developing and training young people so that we figure out how much of that is applicable in the civilian setting in order to help the children become more productive than they are.

Whether these quasi-military approaches work is an interesting and vitally important conversation. There's no question in my mind at least that these initiatives are going to cost more money. The school days are longer, the school years are longer, the experience is longer, and they're more involved with the young people.

My view of how we spend money is to look at the totality of our investment in young people. This includes the investments in their education as we know it. But it also encompasses the investments in punishing them and destroying their capacity to function in the future. So if you look at how a state spends money on both education and corrections for young people, that's the pool of money to think of as re-deployable.

The crucial question is whether these approaches work, and whether they do so in a convincingly enough way to make the case that we ought to invest in these more expensive approaches. That's why I think the conversation about the nuanced differences between programs serving children in varying circumstances, is so important.

We need then to evaluate them. There is the gold standard, MDRC-style evaluation that's underway with the ChalleNGe Program. At some juncture, we need enough of the public military high schools and quasi-military high schools in existence in order to subject them to random assignment and longitudinal evaluations.

If the evaluations only show what I call statistically significant gains, but if those gains aren't politically significant where you can say, something really makes a difference, then we may not be able to move the ball that far forward with policymakers and taxpayers. However, if careful evaluations that are respectful of what the programs are trying to do for kids in varying circumstances produce politically significant gains, then you've got the basis for a conversation about why we ought to take the entire pool of money that's invested in the development and/or destruction of children and create these kinds of interventions that address development as well as education.

QUESTION: Is the public military academy high school a boarding educational program? If it is not, what do you have in place to make sure that when they go back home, they don't face unnecessary pressure from peers in their neighborhoods to influence them and they don't junk everything they learned?

MR. WRIGHT: The public military academies in Philadelphia are not boarding schools. Students come to school from 7:30 in the morning until approximately 4:00 in the afternoon, with after-school programs inclusive. There is a concern always about students going back to their neighborhoods. Some of them may have siblings who attend other high schools or other elementary and middle schools. We have peer mentors and a great deal of parental involvement. Additionally, we have groups of individuals from our schools, and students as well, to go out into the middle schools and elementary schools to have conversations with the administrators, teachers, and students at those schools. So we hope that the impact of our school or the impact with these students will be positive on students from other places.

QUESTION: Where does the funding for the programs we've heard about today come from?

MR. DONOHUE: Congress funds the ChalleNGe Program. It's federally funded at 60 percent, and states provide 40 percent.

DR. GALLAGHER: We receive funding for the military schools through two major sources. The first one, of course, is the School District of Philadelphia. The heart and soul of the school is the Junior ROTC program, and that is funded by the Department of Defense. Additionally, from the state of Pennsylvania, we have federal Title I funds that supplement some of the programs.

QUESTION: How are administrators appointed for both of these programs? Does the state come in to appoint its own people? Who selects the principal or assistant principal?

DR. GALLAGHER: For the Philadelphia Military Academies, they are selected by the regional superintendents in the school district, as well as a panel of people who look at them. Coincidentally, although it is not a requirement in Philadelphia, both of our military academies are headed by retired or reserve military people. That is not a requirement. However, it is just a benefit.

MR. DONOHUE: In our case, the teachers are all state-certified. They apply for the job and they're hired by the program. It's a state-level rather than a county or city-level program. So you're dealing basically with the governor's staff. You're hired into the Military Department as a civilian, or in some states, transferred right over as a teacher directly to the payroll. You're paid whatever the negotiated rate is for that given state and location.

QUESTION: Where is the work force board? Is your local work force board involved in this process?

MR. DONOHUE: ChalleNGe is actually conducted at the direction of the Governor. So the Governor instructs his

equivalent of the Secretary of Labor to work with the director of this program so that it is integrated into state labor relations. In most states you'll find they already have an ongoing relationship with the Job Corps. It varies by location. Those lines of cooperation between ChalleNGe and the labor department exist. They're effective to varying degrees, depending on the individual initiative of each of the different programs.

DR. GALLAGHER: At the Philadelphia military academies we have a close connection with a number of the universities because we focus on education beyond high school. We have partnerships with local businesses. We also have a partnership with Lockheed Martin, where they will take students and help develop them. They look very heavily at students coming out of there for their future.

MR. WRIGHT: There is an initiative in the entire school district of Philadelphia to have apprenticeships for students who are not looking toward college, but are looking for trades that they want to be involved in. When we develop these apprenticeships, we collaborate with other high schools in the area, and with other businesses, along with the school district.

MR. PRICE: It is time to wind up this forum. Please join me again in thanking our presenters and the members of our panel for their stimulating and thought-provoking remarks.

