

**Report on U.S. Education Reform and National Security  
Council on Foreign Relations (CFR)  
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**"Additional comments" by Carole Artigiani**

It was a privilege to join members of the Task Force in considering strategies for addressing the challenges faced by U.S. K-12 public schools in the twenty-first century. While I remain concerned about key elements of the report, I appreciate the openness of the chairs, project director, and members to comments, suggestions, and criticisms that many of us offered throughout the process. In my view, the report has been strengthened by these contributions. I hope that the entire effort will spark enlightened debate about ways this nation can support the neighborhood public school, the bedrock of communities, and also meet the needs of students, educators, and their schools as they prepare young people for fulfilling lives, productive work, and active citizenship in an interconnected, global society.

National security requires a healthy economy, energy independence, investments in research and development, strong defense, a thriving civil society, a respected and involved diplomatic corps, and, most of all, a healthy and high-functioning political system. (The current political environment is a clear demonstration of what happens when we have a public—and public officials—who are uninformed and/or ill-informed about our nation's history, our political system, and the values upon which it was built.)

Certainly schools must play a critical role in assuring that these needs of national security can be met. Yet, while some of the data are disturbing, nothing in this report convinces me that that our public schools “constitute a very grave national security threat facing this country.” Indeed, claims of alarm can only set the stage for dramatic actions unsupported by evidence: in this case, market-based approaches to school reform, that, overall, have not demonstrated their effectiveness. Indeed, charter schools and vouchers are diverting funds and energy away from neighborhood schools, and the more successful ones rely on additional support from private sources (“voluntary taxation”), a situation that is neither sustainable nor scalable. Moreover, the drive toward “competition” can diminish individual commitment to the common good, thus undermining the very nature and purpose of public education: preparing young people of all backgrounds to become informed and active citizens who understand their rights and responsibilities to contribute to society and participate in the shaping of policies that affect their communities and the larger world.

I applaud the Task Force report's call for more attention to U.S. and world history and cultures, civics, science, and foreign languages. However, the well-intentioned emphasis on testing basic math and reading has diverted funding and attention from other areas of equal value. The proposed national audit will only increase the pressure to focus on standardized tests when funds to pay for this initiative could be better used if made available to the neediest school districts for classroom instruction.

Our public schools need flexibility and sufficient resources to identify and nurture young people's talents, interests, and imagination, whether in the sciences, mathematics, technology, or the liberal and applied arts. Early and ongoing exposure to all of these subjects develops critical thinking and creative problem-solving skills, all essential to building a sound and sustainable economy—and also a society enriched and emboldened to take on the challenges before us in the twenty-first century.

My heartfelt thanks to the Council on Foreign Relations for the opportunity to participate in the Task Force.

Carole Artigiani  
joined by Linda Darling-Hammond, Stephen M. Walt and Randi Weingarten