

OPENING STATEMENT

THE HONORABLE RALPH HALL (R-TX) Ranking Member, U.S. House Committee on Science and Technology

*STEM Education Before High School: Shaping our Future Science, Technology,
Engineering and math Leaders of Tomorrow by inspiring our Children Today*

Monday, May 12, 2008

1:00 pm

Martha and Josh Morriss Mathematics and Engineering Elementary School
Texarkana, TX

First, I want to officially welcome you, Chairman Gordon, to the fourth district of Texas and to thank you for making the journey and spending the entire day with us. I believe we can both agree that what we experienced this morning was pretty impressive.

It seems like it was only yesterday that I was here for the dedication celebration for the Martha and Josh Morriss Mathematics and Engineering Elementary School. I know these folks are proud of what they have established here, and it's good to see so many of my Texarkana friends in the audience, including Martha and Josh Morris, who donated the land for the school, and Scott Bruner, President of the Texarkana Independent School District (TISD) Board of Trustees.

The collaboration between TISD and Texas A&M University-Texarkana to make the Morris School a reality is one that can and should be replicated. The concept of starting a STEM program that a student can follow from kindergarten all the way through a baccalaureate degree, and all in their home town, is very positive. It is good to see that local businesses, like Alcoa, recognize the value in supporting such an effort.

The Texarkana collaboration is a slightly different approach than what we created in *America COMPETES*, but we never intended for that to be the only solution. This nation is full of good visionary ideas, and the area of STEM education is no exception. I look forward to hearing from Dr. Marrett about some of the other ideas NSF is funding on the federal level, as well as how Mr. Smedley is motivating his own students in Arkansas. Inspiring our children about math and science at an early age is important. Keeping them enthusiastic as they progress through middle school and high school and into college is critical.

As I said at the school dedication last September, advancing STEM education must be a national priority if we are to prepare our students for 21st century jobs and keep pace with countries like China and India who are graduating larger numbers of STEM students. They may be graduating more, but the quality of ours remains unsurpassed in the world. America has always been the leader in cutting edge technology and innovation – and we must do all we can to ensure our strong footing as a global economic leader.

I appreciate all of our witnesses being here today and look forward to your testimony.