



Transcript of Conference Call Presentation

Raising Standards Through School-to-Work: How New York State is Sustaining School-to-Work

presented by

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February 23, 2000

Mary Mack: My name is Mary Mack and I am with the National Transition Alliance at the University of Minnesota. We are really happy to have you join us in this conference call presentation and discussion. This presentation will focus on how New York State is sustaining school-to-work through large-scale assessment and a standards-based education system.

One of the presenters for today's call is Jean Stevens, the Assistant Commissioner of the Office of Workforce Preparation and Continuing Education for the New York State Education Department. Jean, if you want to introduce yourself and the other presenters, that would be wonderful.

Jean Stevens: Thank you very much, Mary. We are really pleased to be part of this conference call and to share some of the things that are going on in New York. With me is Sara Knower from our Office of Workforce Preparation and Continuing Education, a strong advocate for school-to-work who has worked tirelessly. In addition, Nancy Lauria from the Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities is with us today. She is also a tireless advocate for school-to-work.

I would also like to add that I've been with the Department fourteen years, and during that time we have had a wonderful relationship with Nancy Lauria, supporting the need of students with disabilities in all the work that we have done over the years. I think we are building on a history that "all" means all. I feel very fortunate to be able to work with such wonderful and skilled people.

My first task is to set a bit of the context. As we planned for this call, we hoped to keep our comments fairly focused and tight with enough detail to stimulate conversation because we continue to try to discover the answers and know that some of the best things that we do come from conversations and learning from one another. So, let me just start with some context.

One of the other roles that I fulfill related to school-to-work is that of State Director for School-to-Work, but I also serve as cochair for our State School-to-Work Advisory Council. I cochair that council with Margarita Mayo from The Business Council of NYS, Inc. She is the governor's appointee. It has been a marvelous group. We are finishing our fifth year and feel very fortunate that we do have some transition funding. In terms of school-

to-work, albeit the federal funding is really on the downside for us, the interest in school-to-work and what that means for youth and adults in New York really has a great chance of tremendous sustainability and growth. I think that is much to the credit of many of our partners.

In New York State, like many states across the country, we have been embarking on a very challenging journey to raise the learning standards for all learners. I would say that is the case for youth and adults, but focusing clearly on youth.

We have twenty-eight learning standards and they cross a number of frameworks: English/Language Arts, of course; math, science and technology; the social sciences; the arts; languages other than English; the physical education, health, and family consumer science framework; and finally, but I think also very importantly, is the career development and occupational study standards, which I think are, in a sense, like the bindings in a book. They are very, very powerful in terms of our work in school-to-work.

What has happened as we have identified standards is we have identified graduation requirements and course requirements like many other states. Along with that, some very high stakes assessments have started and are going to roll out over the next several years. The English/Language Arts assessment is now required. The math requirement is next and then there will be an assessment in Science. There will be a choice for students; they can either take a physical or biological science Regents examination. Then also there will be two assessments in the social sciences: one U.S. History and Government and one Global Studies. Again, these are all at the Regents level. We have moved away from when we had three: a local diploma, a

Regents diploma, and then the IEP. We now have an IEP diploma and a Regents diploma. It's a very profound change.

Along with that is the responsibility of ensuring that all the students have the opportunity to really achieve academically. As they move out of the secondary environment into their futures, they are doing so with a great deal of information. Part of our challenge, as in other states, is where does career and technical as the broad umbrella in school-to-work fit into that? We have convened a national panel that met in November and will be meeting again in about a month to look at how to ensure that all students have opportunities in rigorous academics but also have opportunities to link their learning to the world of work through some career and technical opportunities and internships, many of the things that we see emphasized so strongly in our school-to-work effort.

So, we think that we have a context. We have many partners coming to the table to try to help us build on some successes, but also know that we are continuing to discover. I'd like to turn it over to Sara to speak a bit on our capacity and staff development efforts. Sara?

Sara Knower: Okay. Hi, everybody. Jean spoke about the Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) standards, and they really form the foundation for school-to-work in New York State. These standards were conceived not to be given in a course, such as a math sequence, but were intended to be integrated throughout the curriculum, across all the other standards. It's a very important concept in New York, very basic to school-to-work and to understanding these standards. To build capacity under school-to-work, major staff development was done with the CDOS standards and linking them

throughout the curriculum. In fact, we like to think that we actually introduced these standards to the rest of the state, that we were the Broadway show that really kicked them off.

The three standards are:

- 1) career development;
- 2) integrated learning: school-based and work-based learning are done together; and
- 3) universal foundation skills, or SCANS skills.

New York State also developed or adapted six career majors.

Now, the most recent effort in terms of capacity building has been the development of core curriculum guides. One has been developed in career development; one has been developed for the foundation skills; and guides have been developed in four career majors. They are almost ready to go to press.

To conduct staff development around the CDOS standards and to support special education integration, the state hosts regional meetings. They have been very successful this year and are attended by all categories of educators. We have elementary, middle school, high school, vocational, and special education teachers, as well as administrators.

I think that what we want to convey here is that we have this merging going on. Instead of just talking to a single audience as we might have done in the past, because of CDOS, and the fact that it's linking across the curriculum and the standards are for all students, our audience is getting larger and larger. High standards for all kids means every teacher is involved.

I probably will come back to this, but I want to speak a little bit about the career plan. Career development is CDOS standard number one. New York State developed a career plan pilot. This pilot

integrated the two other CDOS standards so there would be a comprehensive CDOS approach to career planning that would start at the elementary grade level and continue through high school into our large adult education program. The pilot has been ongoing for three years. We did an evaluation of it and it is interesting; I'll just give you two highlights from it.

One of the things that we sometimes hear is that there is just not enough time to do career planning because there is so much pressure on kids now to pass the five high stake exams. However, in our evaluation, we learned from teachers, students, and parents that career planning was very important and there was enough time to do it. This is a critical finding for us. Because the pilot was so successful, we are going to have a chance to roll it out to the seven hundred school districts in New York State. We don't know how long it will take us to reach all of them, but there is a great deal of interest around the career plan. It is one of the areas that we are focusing on for our year six school-to-work transition grant.

With that, I am now going to turn it over to Nancy.

Nancy Lauria: Thank you, Sara. I am going to talk about some supports that we have in place to help students achieve the standards, both general and special education. We have what we call academic intervention services (AIS) that will be offered to all students who may be at risk of not being able to reach the standards, either through health problems, home problems, or things that are happening in school. There will be a two-pronged approach for those students identified in both general and special education. There will be instruction provided in addition to the subject area class in

which they are having problems. That may be provided during school in a free period, before or after school, or in a summer school program. This will be an enrichment program. It's not just the traditional remedial instruction that we have had in the past, but additional enrichment activities will be offered to help students understand how to apply this learning and better acquire the skills.

In addition, there will be support services provided to those students in case they need some guidance or counseling or some social work services related to the family in helping them to help the students achieve. Parents will be notified about these services and programs and asked to participate and be more actively involved in what the students are doing. This will be provided K-12 for all students.

In addition, we have alternate performance indicators for those students with severe disabilities in our state. All students learn the same twenty-eight learning standards, but these indicators cover prerequisite skills that students need to learn before they can learn the twenty-eight learning standards. There will be an alternate performance assessment as of July to measure how they are doing in these twenty-eight areas. One option we are looking at is possibly having a portfolio approach to assessment. We have a state advisory group working on it.

In addition, for those students who may have difficulty taking the Regents examinations that Jean was talking about, we have a safety net. They can take the Regents Competency Tests (RCT) in addition to the Regents exams. So, if they cannot pass the Regents exams, the class from 1996 to 2000, as this is phased in, can also apply for a local diploma if they take the RCT's and pass those instead of the Regents exams. Also, the score on the

Regents exams is set at a lower level during this phase-in period to give students a better chance to succeed. Appropriate accommodations in testing are also provided. Each year, this will be reexamined to determine whether to extend the safety net. The types of accommodations that will be provided will be determined at a later time.

For staff development and capacity building in our comprehensive system of personnel development for special education, we are developing needs assessments in various areas of special education for school districts to determine their staff development needs. This will help to raise the standards and include students with disabilities in that area. That is being linked with school district education development plans for all areas including general and special education.

In addition, we have a lifelong service network, which consists of all technical assistance training and support networks in special education that are linked together with a common mission and goal. This network supports the CSDP, or our staff development plan. That is being linked now to what is called the JMT, the Joint Management Team, which is the general education staff development and planning team to help raise the standards for all students. The two are being jointly looked at and integrated so that there are not two separate silos anymore, but one integrated approach to help all students achieve the standards and to provide the kind of staff development that's needed for teachers to help students achieve them.

We are rolling the career plan piece that Sarah was talking about out over the next couple of years to many more districts. We have integrated it with our transition components on our individualized education program (IEP) so that the two are inter-

related. One of the things we are looking at right now is where the crossovers are and what the possibilities are for having one document for all students modified slightly for students with disabilities, so that we are doing one planning and one written documentation for all students. Sarah is going to talk a little bit more about the career plan roll-out at this time.

Sara Knower: Well, I just would like to say that I think it is important to the development of the career plan that Nancy worked with a planning group which met faithfully for about a year and a half so that special education was always merged with the career plan development. We are not trying to take two systems that developed separately and merge them. Instead, the career plan was developed along with special education. Now we have an integrated system that serves all students.

I don't really have too much more to say about the career plan roll-out. I think it is important that the pilot included students who were in urban, suburban, and rural areas. It is also important that it included special education students, that the evaluation was very affirmative, and that we are going forward with it.

There is just one more thing in terms of the safety net for all students that I think is very important. The state is looking at component retesting which will help a lot of students who have difficulty in high stake stressful situations. It's a very complicated process, but I believe we are going forward with it.

We are also developing an assessment instrument for the foundation skills or the SCANS skills, that's one of the CDOS standards. The pilot assessment will be given to all students, 9-12, sometime this Spring. We are going to gather an

awful lot of information from that pilot assessment.

Nancy Lauria: We have done some evaluation around what we have accomplished using the CDOS learning standards and school-to-work work experience activities in New York State, for both general and special education. I'll talk a little bit about some of the results we had for special education and Sarah or Jean can talk about the general education piece.

We borrowed from Vermont and modified for New York State a post-school indicators survey. Our Commissioner came from Vermont and so he thought it was a good idea and encouraged us to move forward with it.

We have looked at the results of students with disabilities and those in general education one year out of school. What we found is students who had occupational education programs, work experience programs, and transition planning and guidance activities were more likely to have a job or to be in college than those who did not, whether they were in general or special education programs. That linked very closely with what we were finding with some of the school-to-work evaluations.

Sara Knower: Right. We had a mid school-to-work evaluation. The findings there were somewhat similar to the post-indicator survey. The major findings are that students who have school-to-work life experiences do just as well, if not slightly better, than students who are in a strictly academic course of study. I think that this is very important because some people still believe that if you are doing school-to-work-like activities, then that is taking something away, that it's not preparing you for postsecondary education, where a lot of kids — and a lot of kids' parents — want to go. However, our findings did not support that. Our findings also

said that kids that were in school-to-work-like experiences had better attendance and a better career focus so that when they left school they had confidence and knew what their next steps were. Of course, that was one of the major goals under school-to-work: that kids would graduate with a career plan and with the confidence to carry it out. We seem to be getting emerging evaluative data on that particular piece.

We have a second evaluation on school-to-work that is going on and we think that's going to be very powerful and very exciting. All of the schools in New York State are participating in this evaluation, so we are going to know a lot more information when it is done.

Nancy Lauria: We are also going to be doing a longitudinal study for the post-school indicator survey over the next five years. We are doing a random sample across the state of general and special education in different schools and we'll be starting with this year's seniors. A senior survey will be completed this year and then a post-school indicator survey for the next three or four years. Our recommendations will be based on those results. We expect the results to be consistent with what we have already found.

Jean Stevens: With that, we have probably done a little bit of information overload. Maybe we should just open it up to questions or comments or some discussion.

Sharon Belli (Washington, DC): I have a question. This is Sharon Belli from the National School-to-Work office. Sara, you said that the students who were enrolled in school-to-work did a little bit better or just as good as those that were not involved in school-to-work-like activities. Could you say just a little bit about what they did better in

and what exactly Tom looked at? Do you have that information with you?

Sara Knower: No, I don't have it with me. But as I remember, Tom did quite a bit of research around those questions. He looked at attendance records; he looked at school records. He looked at the kinds of activities that they were actually involved in. That's why we call them "school-to-work-like" activities. That's probably the best I can do without getting my hands on that piece. Sorry, Sharon.

Sharon Belli (Washington, DC): No, it's fine.

Jean Stevens: Hi, Sharon. I think some of the things that were powerful for us were that, as you looked at those students, the evaluation told us that, of students who were taking these school-to-work-like activities as compared to those that weren't, their grade point averages were generally higher. Again, their staying in school was part of it, and we think you start to draw some correlations.

Again, I don't think we can minimize the feedback that, as we have done the evaluations, students moving into a postsecondary experience felt they were in the right place initially for them. While many students that do make that transition from secondary into postsecondary still feel very unsure about what they want to study, these students felt a high level of confidence that they really were in the right place to begin their postsecondary study. We do know, from other research, that this is often not the case.

Mary Mack: Nancy, might you also have something to add from the studies that have been done in the area of transition?

Nancy Lauria: With the PSI study, we found that students who took an occupational education track, that is, a sequence with three to five courses

in occupational education or had some kind of work-related experience — a school work experience program, after school or weekend or summer work experience, or voluntary or paid — had a better chance of succeeding one year out of school. They were better connected with community activities. They felt better prepared and were more successful in college. Those that were working had a higher wage and had more support in the work environment. Also, they were better connected to adult support systems like vocational rehabilitation or OMRDD's. So, there were a lot of positives having had those kinds of experiences.

When asked what kinds of support they thought would have been helpful in high school, they said they would have liked more technology-related activities with the computer, and more of the basic reading, writing and math skills. So, to me that tied in very nicely with the academic intervention service piece that we are now going to be implementing in New York State.

Janis Chadsey (NTA, Transition Research Institute (TRI)): Nancy, this is Janis Chadsey from the National Transition Alliance. It's nice to hear your voice. I just wanted to follow up on the survey. Did you look at the results in terms of different disability categories, or were those just all sort of lumped together?

Nancy Lauria: It was broken out by the 13 disability categories, Jan.

Janis Chadsey (NTA, TRI): Would you say that the positive findings went across disability areas?

Nancy Lauria: Yes. Most of the populations that we surveyed were the high percentage populations that we have in New York State, which are LD, ED, and mentally retarded. The results were similar across the board for all three groups.

Janis Chadsey (NTA, TRI): Great. Thanks.

Mary Mack: Are there other questions?

Jay Cannon (Pennsylvania): Yes. This is Jay Cannon from the Department of Education in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Some of the information that you are sharing is quite good. I'm not quite sure if Pennsylvania has all of what you are talking about, but I do know that school-to-work is very important in Pennsylvania and we have done a lot with it under the leadership of Mike Snyder.

Do you have any information regarding the work that you have done, like research and/or copies of different research papers that you could send? Is that a possibility?

Jean Stevens: Sure. We can send you the summary of the school-to-work research that we talked about. As I say, we'll have more research coming in this year and hope to give that wide coverage, too.

Jay Cannon (Pennsylvania): All right. I appreciate that.

Nancy Lauria: We also have the latest post-school indicators report that we have done of our large five cities and of students in those five cities. That Regent's report was done this past year and we have a copy. We can tell you how to access that on our web page as well.

Jay Cannon (Pennsylvania): By all indications, it's working. It's just a matter of showing the validity in terms of numbers and statistics.

Nancy Lauria: That's why we have implemented the longitudinal study we are going to be doing over the next five years.

Jay Cannon (Pennsylvania): Right. I hate to see school-to-work go out the window. In terms of the SEED money, the federal funds are gone. I'm not quite sure if Pennsylvania is going to pick it up or not, but I wish they would. It's a good thing and I

hate to see a good thing go.

Nancy Lauria: Another thing we have done in New York is to link it to our quality assurance process, the special education monitoring component.

Jay Cannon (Pennsylvania): Right.

Nancy Lauria: We have tied into our student surveys when we monitor school districts. There is a five-question survey about post-school indicator information that students complete. This is the first year we have been doing that. We have also developed some key performance indicators and have started measuring how students and staff are doing, both in our office and in the field. We'll have some of that information soon. Our PD5 forms, which are our special education data collection, ask a transition question on exiting students. Districts are asked what they are doing for transition planning. This can be broken out by district as well.

Jay Cannon (Pennsylvania): Thank you.

Mary Mack: Other questions?

Lorraine Hashi (Alaska): This is Lorraine Hashi calling from Valdez, Alaska, and I'm the School-to-Work Coordinator. Next week, we will be giving the first high-stakes exam to our high school seniors and we do make accommodations for the special education. Because of your dual system with the Regents exam, how long have you had that in place and how did you go from the Regents to coming up with maintaining the high standards, but making allowances for the special education kids?

Jean Stevens: I believe the Regents examinations began somewhere in the 1700s in New York with an eighth grade exam. Up until the new regulations, there was an opportunity for students to take Regents examinations and get a Regents diploma and it was considered at a higher level.

There were also local examinations — a Regents Competency Exam — so students could obtain a local diploma. We have eliminated the option for a local diploma.

But as Nancy said — and I'm going to ask her if she'll speak to accommodations — we have been pleased with some of the initial results on the English/Language Arts examination as it relates to students with disabilities. In fact, we do have a lower cut point as we are gathering some base line data that is at a 55% rate. Our examinations are not in the senior year. They tend to be in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh and so there is a little wiggle room for students as opposed to the twelfth grade exit exam. Let me turn it over to Nancy to speak to accommodations and also the pass rate for students with disabilities on English/Language Arts.

Nancy Lauria: What we found is in '97-'98, 74.5% of the students with disabilities who took the English Regents exam scored 55 or higher and 52% of those got 75 or higher, which is the cutoff for general education. What we found in '98-'99 is that 46% of the students who first entered ninth grade in 1996, which is when the phase-in started for this new requirement, achieved a score of 55 or higher on the new English Regents exam that was just instituted. We feel that if we continue to provide students at a lower level with more stringent, more challenging curriculums, that they'll be better prepared and we can increase that number.

For all classified students, testing accommodations are provided on any state or local exam that is given and on any national assessment that is used in New York State for students. There are a variety of accommodations. New York State has a book on testing accommodations and these accommodations are currently being examined to determine what is

appropriate with the new exams. It looks like we'll continue to provide most accommodations on the new Regents exams.

Lorraine Hashi (Alaska): Thank you.

Mary Mack: The state of Oregon has also done a lot of work — Pat Almond is the person in the Department of Education — in terms of reliability and accommodations and modifications of their certificate of initial mastery around academic content areas. States are really, really working.

Nancy, Sarah, and Jean, could you go a little bit more into depth about the multiple strategy intervention you have as a safety net for young people in New York that do not meet the benchmarks?

Nancy Lauria: Okay. This is Nancy. I'll cover our safety net for students with disabilities. Students have to be either identified by the Committee on Special Education and classified under IDEA in one of the thirteen areas, or they can be identified by a multi-disciplinary Section 504 team. Either way, those students — if testing accommodations is put on their IEP — can have testing accommodations across the board. The Committee on Special Education identified which testing accommodations will be used.

During the phase-in period, students with disabilities entering ninth grade beginning in September of '96 through September of 2000 must take the Regents exam and the Regents courses the same as their non-disabled peers. However, in addition to the Regents exam, if there is any chance that they might not pass, they can take the Regents Competency Tests and work towards a local diploma. We are reviewing different research, including working with national groups, in trying to decide what will happen after the initial phase-in period.

There is also the component retesting that Sarah mentioned before. A student will take a Regents exam and if they pass two of the three components, they could retake the third component and have a little more time to do that and not be under such stress to complete all three components at once. They will have a chance to pass the exam in a couple of different ways.

Also, the IEP must now be geared towards the educational goals set in the learning standards so that students with disabilities, whether they are in general or special education instructional programs, must be working towards the Regents learning standards and have access to the curriculum the same as their general education peers.

Jean Stevens: Just in terms of New York State's assessments, students are assessed in the fourth and eighth grades to see how well they are meeting these standards. If students haven't been identified before fourth grade as having difficulty in ELA or in Math, they will definitely be identified by that time. They will be given the interventions and support that they need in order to do well.

One of the major activities that is going on in the state now is the alignment of curriculum. We have the standards, curriculum, and assessments. We want to make sure that the alignment is there, that the standards are not isolated, but are actually driving the curriculum to help students prepare for those assessments.

Mary Mack: Does anyone else have a question?

Janis Chadsey (NTA, TRI): This is Janis again. I have been thinking about your statement about how the IEPs need to be geared around the learning standards, which, of course, I understand. But how does that work with how the IEP is supposed to be very individually determined? Then, of course,

there is the issue of all students needing to meet the learning standard. Has that been problematic or has that worked smoothly? I'm wondering if the two do not necessarily dovetail together.

Jean Stevens: I'm going to just jump in and then I'll let Nancy jump in. You're talking about whether there is any conflict with the IEP being shaped around the individuals' needs and the standards. When we look at what's going on in New York State, just to kind of give you a broader view, we have embraced the standards across the board. I am also responsible for the high school equivalency test; the GED. If you have seen all the literature, you know that the GED examination is going to be upgraded. Many of our people were very instrumental in working with ACE on the upgrading. The New York State standards, as other standards, have been looked at in that respect, along with the twenty-eight learning standards.

I'm also responsible for adult education and family literacy. We have taken everything related to adult education as well as the family literacy component and wrapped it around our twenty-eight learning standards. It can be seen as bending the bar; connecting the system. We are actually looking at much that we are doing in New York State systemically. The commissioner is involved with other state commissioners related to PreK-16 adults. So, for us, from the very broad context, we see it sitting very nicely. I'll let Nancy speak to the IEP.

Nancy Lauria: Okay. With the present focus on the IEP process, we should make sure that students have access to general education and ensure that special education is part of a continuum of services.

The present levels of educational performance (PLEP) where the child's strength and need areas

are identified is based on individual evaluation. The PLEP for students aged fourteen to twenty-one, for whom transition planning is done, should be viewed from a vocational perspective. The SCANS skills or the foundation skills, as we call them in New York State, should be evaluated to determine the student's strengths and needs in the present levels of educational performance that drives the IEP. This helps set the long-term adult outcome of where the student wants to live, learn, and work once they exit school. It also helps determine the annual goals and the short-term benchmarks, what support services are provided, what the coordinated set of activities should be, and what accommodations should be provided.

It is all driven by those present levels of educational performance. It's kind of a building block that starts off with the SCANS skills. It helps. We feel that if a student has those SCANS skills, they can successfully participate in general education, employment, and college.

Janis Chadsey (NTA, TRI): Thanks, Nancy.

Mary Mack: Nancy, how does this fit in with person-centered planning?

Nancy Lauria: In New York State, we are working with the Developmental Disabilities Planning Council. There are nine projects across the state that have person-centered planning. It is an individualized approach with students who are developmentally disabled. They are examining the present levels of educational performance from more of a work experience and life skills approach for those students since most of the students will probably achieve an IEP diploma. The twenty-eight learning standards are examined, especially the career development and occupational studies standards.

For students with more severe disabilities who are developmentally disabled, we are looking at the alternate performance indicators that are prerequisites to learning the learning standard and including those in the IEP. One of the key pieces is tying the family into this planning process — and across the board — as part of a consensus-building approach to developing the IEP. It's really critical with this population.

Janis Chadsey (NTA, TRI): Are you disseminating those sorts of prerequisite standards for kids who have more significant disabilities, Nancy?

Nancy Lauria: They are available. You have to order them at cost.

Janis Chadsey (NTA, TRI): Okay.

Nancy Lauria: I can tell you our contact information. There are a couple of web pages. The State Education web page is at <http://www.nysed.gov>. In addition, we have different web pages for school-to-work and the learning standards and transition. If you go to that general web page, there is a table of contents and you can click on any of the other sections. The transition web page is under VESID. There is also one for elementary, middle, and secondary education that has learning standards and the academic intervention service and higher standards. There is also a school-to-work web page and a special education web page.

We have several pages and the different components that we have been talking about can all be accessed through www.nysed.gov. If you want to reach us, you can contact me and then I'll work with Jean and Sarah. My e-mail address is nlauria@mail.nysed.gov.

Mary Mack: Any interested parties can always call me at the University of Minnesota. I'll work through the maze and make sure that you get to the

right person. My number is 612.624.7579.

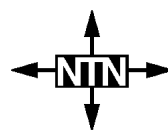
Janis Chadsey (NTA, TRI): Thanks a lot. That's very helpful.

Mary Mack: Okay. I want to thank Nancy, Jean, and Sara very, very much for presenting this afternoon. I think it has been very informative.

Thank you for joining us.

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