

CREATING 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS: PUBLIC EDUCATION REFORM

April 15, 2009

TRANSCRIPT

KATHY KRETMAN: Good morning. My name is Kathy Kretman and I direct the Center for Public and Nonprofit Leadership in the Georgetown Public Policy Institute at Georgetown University. On behalf of all of us here at Georgetown, welcome. We're delighted to have you here -- our students, our faculty and, especially, members of the community.

This is the last in the Waldemar A. Nielsen Issue Forums series. Nielsen was a historian. He also worked for the Ford Foundation for a number of years and served on the board of the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation. Yet he was a critic of philanthropy. He held foundations to high standards for accountability. And he wanted foundations to become more involved in public policy. When the Kauffman Foundation chose to honor him, we were fortunate to have them endow a chair in his name at the Center for Public and Nonprofit Leadership here at Georgetown.

Last year, we partnered with the Kauffman Foundation to develop this series of forums on the role of philanthropy in public policy. We felt that time was ripe. We sit in a public policy institute. We really care about the policy work that philanthropy is doing -- much of which is not recognized. We see the potential for philanthropy to do a great deal more and we wanted to have an open, public conversation about this. We wanted to bring people together from the world of philanthropy, the public policy arena, folks from government and people in the community here at Georgetown.

There were many subjects on which we could have focused, but our advisory committee, consisting of foundation executives, people working on public policy and Georgetown alumni, identified four:

philanthropy and race;

philanthropy and the fight against global HIV-AIDS;

philanthropy and social justice for America's children;

and today's topic: philanthropy and public education reform.

When we selected these topics, we didn't know who was going to be the president of the United States. We certainly didn't know about what was going to happen to the economy. But these subjects have become even more timely as things have changed. The environment has changed. Funding has changed. How will that impact these efforts?

Today, we will hear speakers addressing public education reform from both the national and the local – Washington, D.C. – perspective. But first, let me introduce to you Dan Porterfield, senior vice president for strategic development at Georgetown and one who is passionate about quality education.

DAN PORTERFIELD: Thank you, Kathy. Thank you to all of the speakers today, to the extraordinary panel that Kathy, you have convened.

I bring greetings from Jack DeGioia, the president of Georgetown. Reflecting my title, he views investing in education reform as one of the key strategic development initiatives of Georgetown University. Looking forward, working to create a stronger school system – public, private, Catholic schools at all levels, preschool through PhD – is a priority of Georgetown University and should be a priority of every institution that calls itself a school, a college or a university.

Let me take a moment to offer a bit of context about why President DeGioia and Georgetown view education this way.

Let me say at the outset that Professor Kretman has done some extraordinary work in convening this set of fora. She was absolutely prescient in the topics that she chose. She was visionary in recruiting the kinds of leaders to the stage that she has been able to bring to Georgetown. The concept of thinking about the role of philanthropy in policy is absolutely vital. As a country, we can't afford to have philanthropy working in its sector and higher ed in its sector and education reform in that sector and public education as a sector. We've got to bring it together. How we do that is a big challenge. The coordination is not easy, whether you're talking about international development or educational development in the U.S., but we must do it. And it is places like this that make it happen. Thank you, Kathy.

Joining us today are several Georgetown University students, faculty and staff who are working in important ways to bring to life the president's commitment to education reform.

Kathleen Maas-Weigert, who will be moderating, is the leader of our efforts to engage with the City of Washington in improving the quality of education. She's the one that wakes up every morning thinking, "How much are we going to get done today?" and goes to bed every night worrying we haven't done enough.

Heather Voke, professor of philosophy, is here. Heather is bringing together, at Georgetown, the resources for us to provide an intensified set of academic opportunities for students to study education and pedagogy more deeply. Heather also is working at Ballou High School in an extremely innovative program there and is at the center of Georgetown's efforts.

Charlene Brown-McKenzie leads a team of people who run a program called the Meyers Institute for College Preparation. This is a program that Georgetown launched about 15 years ago with a single cohort of kids from Ron Brown Middle School in northeast. We started with about 50 6th graders and stayed with them for six years, all the way through high school, with their families and their teachers, as they went to different schools. Almost every student, if not every student, of that first cohort went to college. So we figured, "Well, we did that for six years. Let's do it again," and we started a second cohort. And then we got a little bit ambitious and decided to see if we could do two cohorts at one time. It was an incredible pleasure in 2004 to see four graduates from Charlene's program walk across the stage at Georgetown University to earn their Georgetown degrees 10 years after we met them as 6th graders. Today, that program has an even bigger goal: to have six cohorts of DCPS students working with us for six years, with a seventh cohort in the freshman year in college. This is essentially a small high school. Charlene is responsible for growing the program from one cohort to six

cohorts. We received a \$10 million gift from the philanthropist Dan Meyers last year to do this. It's a big experiment for us and Charlene's the one who's carrying it out.

This kind of effort is happening across the institution. We have students working with immigrant families and children in their homes, with kids that are on probation or in need of supervision. We have a large number of Georgetown students going out to public schools or charter schools or Catholic schools every day to provide tutoring or support the teachers. We think there are about 500 students at Georgetown involved in educational activities right now, direct, hands-on activities.

One of the challenges we all face in higher education is to find still better ways to provide more opportunity, better organized, with a greater focus on results so that we can tap in to the extraordinary idealism that defines this generation of college students and the high school kids right behind them. We would love to hear what you think we should do to promote an even stronger, deeper, more meaningful, and more outcome-based sense of civic engagement in the students that we have the chance to educate for four years in college.

You know you're at a Jesuit university right now. Saint Ignatius Loyola was a mystic. He founded the Order of the Jesuits in the 16th century. He felt knowledge and imagination could bring somebody closer to a deeper awareness of what's most important, of real truth. For him, that was spiritual truth and the way, having heard the Word of God, one that engaged in the community that God placed one in. He created exercises to help us grasp what's most important.

Today, I want to borrow a page from Saint Ignatius and ask you to imagine that this room, right here, all of us, represent all of the 9th graders in the 50 biggest urban school districts in America. Now consider this:

50 percent of us will not graduate from high school.

Another 25 percent of us will graduate from high school but not go on to college.

Another 18 percent will graduate from high school and go on to college but not graduate from college.

The remaining 7 percent – 7 percent – are those 9th graders in the 50 top urban districts who earn a college degree.

Just one more thought provoking idea: What do Finland, the Republic of Korea, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Belgium, Australia, Denmark, Czech Republic, Iceland, Austria, Germany, Sweden, Ireland, France, United Kingdom, Poland, Slovak Republic, Hungary, Luxembourg, Norway and Spain have in common?

The ranked ahead of the United States in the 2006 Program for International Student Assessment on math literacy among 15-year-olds.

The United States ranked 25th out of 30 countries in math literacy among 9th graders. All of the countries I mentioned ranked ahead of us. If this were the Olympics, what kind of medal would we deserve for that performance? Would we be chanting, "U.S.A., U.S.A., U.S.A."?

The simple reality is that of all the imperatives we face, from fixing the economy to protecting national security, from cooling the planet to creating global goodwill, nothing matters more to the future of America than building a universe of well-educated citizens capable of professional success in a globalized economy. Nothing matters more to the future of the country. That's what Barack Obama said yesterday here at Georgetown when he gave a speech in which he set an absolutely audacious goal: to be number one, not number 25, number one in the year 2020 in graduating our citizens from college.

That is an extraordinary stretch goal for this country. I hope that part of what we are doing at this discussion today is thinking about real common sense ways we can roll up our sleeves and reach that goal.

Thank you very much for being here today. I hope you enjoy your time at Georgetown. And Kathy, thank you for the chance to be here now.

KATHY KRETMAN: Please welcome Dr. Kathleen Maas-Weigert, executive director of the Center for Social Justice Research, Teaching, and Service, and co-sponsor of today's event. She will be our moderator for today's panel.

KATHLEEN MAAS-WEIGERT: I'm delighted to introduce our speakers, each of whom has made significant contributions to advancing social justice in the field of education.

Our first two speakers provide a national perspective.

Kati Haycock has a rich background in advocating for children in the field of education and helping others to do the same. She currently serves as president of the Education Trust, an organization founded in 1992 to speak up for what is right for young people, especially the disadvantaged, and provides hands-on assistance to educators to improve student achievement.

Wendy Puriefoy has been president of PEN, the Public Education Network, since it was founded in 1991. PEN is the nation's largest network of community-based school reform organizations. Under Wendy's leadership, it has grown into a national network of local education funds, reaching more than 11 million children in 1,220 school districts and 18,000 schools nationwide.

Our second two speakers are providing a local angle, one from the perspective of philanthropy, one from that of the school system.

Katherine Bradley is the president of CityBridge Foundation, a nonprofit located here in the District that she co-founded with her husband in 1994. In 2000, CityBridge launched a five-year initiative to improve quality and expand capacity in early childhood and elementary education in D.C. This initiative was expanded in 2007 to include K-12 D.C. public school space.

Cate Swinburn is executive director of the D.C. Public Education Fund, an organization committed to improving the district's public schools through private investment and community involvement. She began her career through Teach for America and has extensive experience in the charter sector.

KATI HAYCOCK: Good morning to all of you. I had a chance in the cab coming over here to take a look at the roster of who's here and it is very clear to me that many, if not most, of you in this room, are doing wonderful work in a variety of community-based organizations here in Washington that are doing terrific and important things for kids. My role today is to remind you of what I suspect you already know: no matter how wonderful the work you do with individual kids and groups of kids around this city, it's really important that their schools do the right thing for them, too.

There's been a lot of talk of late about the achievement gap that separates low income kids and kids of color from other young Americans. We're told frequently, for example, that in fourth grade reading, only about 14

percent of African-Americans and 17 percent of Latinos nationwide hit the proficient level -- in other words, read at the level that they should. The numbers for whites and Asians, in contrast, are close to one half.

In eighth grade math, we see numbers that remind us that about half of our low-income kids don't even get to the basic level in mathematics. They're still trapped at the below basic level. For middle class kids, it's only about 19 percent.

Now, a lot of folks around the country hear numbers like that and they say, "Well, what do you expect? The kids are poor. Their parents, somehow, don't care. They come to school without an adequate breakfast. They don't have enough books at home. They don't have a quiet place to study at home. They speak the wrong language."

In other words, they offer a whole list of "explanations" that are always, and only, about the kids and their families.

The truth, however, as I suspect all of you know, is a little bit different.

When you're looking at the data for a school system or for a state or the country and you see gaps between groups, all of us know that many of those gaps began before kids even arrived at the schoolhouse door. But here's what's really important for you to know: rather than organizing our educational system in this country to ameliorate that problem, we've actually organized our educational system in this country to exacerbate it.

How do we do that? It's simple. We take the kids who come to school with less and give them less in school. In fact, it turns out that we give the kids who arrive at school behind less of everything that both research and experience tell us makes a difference. And then when they don't perform as well on standardized tests, who do we blame? We blame it on the kids. We blame it on the parents. We blame it on their culture. We blame it on the race. We never, ever talk about what we do.

Some of those reasons to do less, as I suspect you know, flow from choices that policymakers make, including the choice that most state legislatures have made to just plain spend less on the education of some children than they spend on education of other children.

But the truth of the matter is that the most devastating factors in the education of poor children and children of color flow not from the choices that the policymakers make but rather from the choices that we, educators, make. Choices we make, for example, about what to expect of whom, choices we make about what to teach to whom, and perhaps, the most devastating choice that we make of all and that is a choice of who teaches whom.

When you add up the effects of all of these choices, both the choices that the policymakers make and the choices that the educators make, the results are simply devastating. Kids who arrive at school a little bit behind actually leave us much further behind. The gap, in other words, that separates poor kids from middle class kids and kids of color from white kids actually grows wider and wider and wider the longer they remain with us in school.

The good news is that it does not have to be this way at all. All around the country, there are schools that are teaching us every single day that we if we teach these youngsters at high levels, if we provide them with the support that they need as they struggle to get there, they absolutely, I mean, absolutely can achieve just the same high levels as anybody else. I don't have a lot of time today for stories but I want to tell you about two schools just very quickly.

One of them is Capitol View Elementary School, which is in downtown Atlanta, existing in the shadow of the state capital. Capitol View is a very poor school. It serves a student population that's about 96 percent African-American and about 90 percent not, frankly, just low income, but really poor. For years and years and years, this

school languished near the bottom of the state in terms of achievement levels. People said, "Right. What do you expect? They're poor kids. They're black kids. What do you expect?"

Then, a new principal arrived at that school. Unlike her predecessors, she saw the chaos in the school and she saw a fair amount of chaos in the neighborhood, but she didn't think it had to be that way. Together with her teachers, they set about turning that school around to be a school that didn't just teach kids but actually cared about student learning. They knew what you know: when you're talking about really poor kids, this is not a school you turn around with a little more drill and practice and a few more ditto sheets. These were kids who needed a curriculum that was rich, I mean RICH, in history, in art, in culture, in music, as well as in science and math and language arts. Once they shifted in this direction, you could see the results. Today, more than 90 percent of the kids in this school are performing very well on the state assessments. In fact, about 80 percent of the African-American kids in this school perform at advanced levels, knocking the top off of the state assessments.

Elmont Memorial Junior-Senior High School in Queens, New York, is an equally amazing senior high school: 75 percent African-American, about 20 percent Latino. About 10 years ago, a new principal arrived at that school. He tells an interesting story. He said, "As I walked up at the front steps of this school, my two assistant principals said, 'welcome, Mr. Harper, to one of the best minority high schools in the state of New York.'" He said, "You know, as a black man, as I said to myself, what does that mean, one of the best minority high schools in the state of New York? Why aren't we one of the best high schools in the state of New York?" And that is what they set out to become.

He was one heck of a principal and his successor was one heck of a principal, too, but the real leaders of instructional improvement at this school were the department chairs, the teacher leaders. This high school has one of the best set of academic department chairs, I would argue, of any high school or frankly, any college in the country. These teachers care so much about the quality of teaching that goes on in every classroom in their department that they think about almost nothing else. They are obsessive about it. When you look at the results in this school, you see about twice as many African-American and Latino kids pass the Regent's exam in this school than is true in New York State as a whole. And if you think they're doing that by pushing kids out, you're wrong: 95 percent graduation rates for African-American and Latino kids.

These outstanding results occur not just in isolated schools. At the district level, there can be whopping differences in the performance of what people think of as the same group of kids.

By fourth grade, for example, low income black children in New York and in Houston are reading two full grade levels ahead of low income black children here in D.C. or in L.A. In eighth grade mathematics, low income Latinos in Houston are doing math two and a half grade levels ahead of low income Latinos here in D.C. The so-called "same group of kids," very different results.

The bottom line is very clear: What schools do matters big time, I mean big time, in whether kids learn or whether they don't.

So what are the big lessons from these schools and school districts and states around the country that are really aggressively tackling some of the problems in public education and getting better results? Let me just mention five.

First: You all know this because it's just common sense. START EARLY. It makes a heck of a lot of sense to reach out to kids and families when kids are one, two, three years old. For sure, by age three and four, low income kids, in particular, ought to be in a super high-quality pre-K program. Programs like that can really ramp

up the so-called “pre-reading, pre-Math skills,” really enrich kids’ vocabularies so you get them off to a strong start in school.

Second: SUSTAIN QUALITY. You can do all you want in the pre-K level, but if you send kids off from a quality pre-K program into a lousy public school system, all of that goes away. You need to be very clear, very vocal, and very loud. You need to demand high quality schools not just for some kids but for all kids.

Third: Insist on FUNDING FAIRNESS. We have for decades in this country pretended that we’re the land of equal opportunity, even as we systematically shortchanged our neediest kids in terms of resources invested in their education. Not just those people who are affected by that, but everybody else needs to raise his or her voice on this issue and insist that we live up to our values as a nation by investing more in the kids who need more, not less.

Fourth: EDUCATE FOR COLLEGE AND CAREERS. As those of you know who are working on college readiness, we’re way past the time in our economy or our democracy where we educate some kids for college and other kids for something else. All of our kids need to be educated for both college and careers. Why is that? Pretty darn simple. When you look carefully at the reading, writing and math skills that you need to succeed in a two or four-year college and you compare those with the reading, writing and math skills that you need to get a job that will either pay a family-supporting wage or let you at least get enough on the job education to earn your way to a family supporting wage, the skills are the same. Ready for college, ready for careers, same thing. Which means, very simply, we must insist on all kids being educated as if they were bound for college.

Fifth: This is really important. TEACHERS MATTER MOST. When you look at the mounting mountains of evidence, it is very clear that among all the things that are important here, the thing that matters most is quality teaching. We’ve got incredible amounts of evidence that says three years in a row with a strong teacher and kids soar no matter what their family background. Even two weak teachers in a row, kids never recover. I want to repeat that again. Two weak teachers in a row, kids never recover. So quality teachers are the most important ingredient in closing the achievement gap. You can’t actually be for closing the achievement gap if you’re not working on closing the teacher quality gap. It’s that simple.

What does that mean in a very practical way? First, it’s hugely important to support very aggressive efforts to draw high talent, high quality talent into the profession. Second, it’s really important to provide lots of support, especially for teachers during their first couple of years, so they can become ever more effective. Those first couple of years are critical. But third, and I want to be crystal clear here, we must remember that for us to succeed in closing gaps, school has to work every year for low income kids.

Those of us who are parents of middle class kids, if they have a weaker teacher once in a while, they’re not going to die from that, right? We don’t like that year, as parents, but they recover. Low income kids need for us to care enough about quality teaching to make sure it works right every year.

We must support efforts in the high poverty schools that really work for poor kids. We must support teachers and administrators who care so much about the quality of teaching that goes on in their school that they collectively chase out teachers who they think are not good enough for their schools. We have to care enough about what matters to do the same thing.

Thank you very much.

WENDY PURIEFOY: Good morning. I am very pleased to be here and I thank you for inviting me and I thank all of you for taking your time to come here today. I’m going to do two things. I’m going to tell you about

Public Education Network and by way of that, tell you about the path that I think philanthropy has taken to shift policy or not, and some of the steps that need to be taken.

I think Public Education Network is actually reflective of the changes that are taking place in philanthropy and the role that philanthropy intends to play and is playing in aggressively working on public policy around public education.

You know some of the facts. We're a national organization of individuals and organizations. These organizations work on three things. One is increasing student achievement. Two is helping to build a public that is educated and knowledgeable about the information that Kati just talked about -- what it's going to take to have great schools -- and is willing to act on it. And we work at really helping people to understand that public education, as an institution is a fundamental founding block of our democratic society and that we won't have a democracy unless we have a system of effective public schools.

We are a network of organizations that are community-based. There are roughly 81 of them now. They generate about \$200 million a year in resources. They just celebrated their 25th anniversary last year and they have raised, since 1983, more than \$4 billion in private capital. Most of that has come from their local communities and they have helped to leverage more than \$25 billion in public capital by working on tax and bond measures in their local communities. About half of the \$4 billion that they raise goes to work on various aspects of improving teaching and learning.

In the beginning, in 1983, when these local education funds were started, they were looking at small things because we didn't know as much about the importance of teaching and effective teaching on the lives of poor children. These funds did things like small grants to teachers, helping them to get the extra course that they needed or helping schools afford a field trip for the kids. They did a lot of, at the time, charitable work. It was the kind of work driven by people who thought if you worked around the edges and you basically believed that poor kids were just like everybody else but they just needed a little bit more, then you gave them the kinds of resources that our ed funds did in the beginning, things would improve.

The organizations have now moved into a much more intensive, focused effort around teachers and a variety of other areas. They work on high schools. They have been very effective in helping get urban teacher residency started up. They have done work on principal leadership. At our national office, we have raised funds from national foundations -- roughly \$250 million -- to help put money into these communities where these local education funds are to get communities more focused on the critical policy issues that affect the lives of poor children, because local education funds are focused exclusively on the needs of poor and disadvantaged children.

So what is a local education fund and why is it structured the way that it is?

They are nonprofit organizations, which means they sit in the tradition of a nonprofit. They're independent from their school district. They're professionally staffed (way back in 1983, it was school volunteers, PTA. So to create an organization that was professionally staffed that was going to work on schools in a more strategic way was a new thing). They work in high poverty areas in urban and primarily urban communities. They're committed to whole system reform. They engage and broaden community stakeholders.

So what work do these groups do?

First, they work in building knowledge, both in the community and in the school, about what it's going to take to close the achievement gap.

They work on building leadership, both among teachers and among principals. They work with superintendents, they work with school boards, they work in a number of places to help people understand that it is not a

charitable act to educate people well. It is strategic and it is necessary. If we are going to help our nation achieve, we have to help our children achieve.

The very presence of these organizations, building knowledge, building leadership, working at various practices that will change student outcomes, builds momentum. Schools, public schools, become a place to invest.

Our funds have done a range of things. For example, in Chattanooga, the local education fund began by examining the issue of teacher excellence and helped that community understand what a high-performing teacher does. What kinds of supports does that teacher need? How long does it take to help a teacher improve? What kind of professional development leads to increasing student achievement?

Our fund in New York, New Visions for Public Schools, works closely with the school district and has helped to start up new small high schools that are focused on a very rigorous curriculum, one-on-one relationships, personalized learning environments, and effective teaching. Through the years, they have developed more than 83 of these high schools. They have a 78 percent graduation rate -- 20 percentage points higher than the rest of the system.

We have a local education fund in Mobile County [Alabama] that has worked at improving student achievement by engaging the community and the community understand what quality public education is. That effort went from tabletops in people's homes and in the supermarkets to working with the school district to develop a plan. That organization helped to pass a bond measure, the first that was passed in 40 years in Mobile, Alabama, which is significant. The organization can draw close to 15,000 people to rally around the schools. Now, all 15,000 of these people are not experts like many of you may be, but they know what it means to Mobile to have quality public schools. They know that it translates into new corporations moving into Mobile that wouldn't have touched that county before because they had such a dismal set of outcomes for their kids.

This public engagement has helped move a number of schools off the Mobile County watch list. When the work began, the schools were performing below par -- there were 127 schools -- and now, most of those schools are off the watch list.

The director of this education fund knows that Alabama standards are low and, therefore, the organization is working with the governor to help increase the standards of performance in Alabama.

High-performing local education funds such as these have five key competencies:

- ❖ They look at research and data to locate the problem, because so many of us want to help improve outcomes for children in public schools but we want to do what we want to do. We don't want to do what the research tells us we need to do. The local ed fund looks at research and data and identifies where the problem is.
- ❖ They also look at research and data to know whether they are improving, based on their choice and strategy.
- ❖ They look at effective practices.
- ❖ They seek policy change.
- ❖ They help to communicate the issue effectively and clearly and then they work to engage communities.

We have a range of organizations within our network; some are high performing, some are moderate performing and some are at that startup stage. Our goal is to get every one of our funds at the high performing level.

There are some powerful forces that are affecting the work of these local education funds.

The first is the change in what we expect from public schools. All of you have been a part of the conversation that all children can learn and learn at high levels. That philosophy must translate into action. We are shifting how we view human potential, but based on what we heard earlier this morning, our shifting view has yet to shift the outcomes for poor and disadvantaged children. This change in expectations – for kids and for public schools – is one of the forces local ed funds deal with

Then there is the change in the relationship between the federal government, state government and school districts. Those changes are multiplied by the stabilization and stimulus moneys being dispersed.

Then there is the growth of local education funds. In 2009 there are many more of these education organizations around and so the environment is very rich with advocates for quality public education.

Finally, philanthropy has a very new role in public school improvement, and you see that in the development of local education funds. The funds started out as charitable organizations in the beginning. Last year, in 2008, we celebrated the 25th anniversary of local education funds. As we did so, we said, as a network of organizations the question in front of us is whether we are going to take collective and collaborative action on a set of obstacles that are affecting the lives of poor and minority children.

Up until 2008, we were a network holding an umbrella over the heads of several organizations. But each of these organizations was choosing, according to its local community needs, what it should do. When you get to the end of 25 years, what's the story you tell? Well, we tell individual stories, very good individual stories, of success. But why should we put all of that capital, intellectual capital, social capital, political capital, financial capital that these groups have gathered in building relationships over the years and just continue to use that for the benefit of one local community? We know that the challenges that our children are facing are the same across the country -- they're systemic, and they need a collaborative systemic approach.

So we are now engaged in a strategic planning process to identify issues to work on collaboratively. In that collective work, we would be able to impact the number of kids that are graduating. We would be able to point out systemic gaps -- not just the systemic problems that D.C. is experiencing but New York is experiencing and Philadelphia is experiencing and others across the network. We would identify places where we need more research to learn more in order to affect the outcomes for more children. We would have a very good lobbying, be able to organize people across these communities and have a good advocacy strategy.

How does this mirror philanthropy? Philanthropy has two major traditions. One is the tradition of charity. When you think of the early giving in this country, it was giving in relatively small dollars to help people advance their lives. But in charitable giving, we don't always look at the problem we are trying to solve, data that would tell us the scope of that problem, and what strategies would, in fact, make a difference. Charitable giving is not necessarily research based or data driven. I would call it tinkering, tuning, looking at problems but not necessarily being able to get to the root of them. It is altruism. It is compassion based. It is operating issue by issue and not looking at things holistically.

Over time, as problems changed and culture changed, giving changed. Foundations played a key role in the Civil Rights Movement, giving dollars at critical times. For example, the Field Foundation offered a lot of support of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. As time moved on and we pushed for larger and larger systemic changes, tough questions emerged: what was the depth of the problem of women's unemployment? How much money were women making in comparison to men? What was the depth of the challenge in terms of higher education? How many people, particularly African-Americans and other minorities, were able to receive higher education? Philanthropy was pushed to look more systematically at issues that the nation was facing and giving began to look more strategic.

Foundations began to engage in more collaborative work -- for example, the Ford Foundation's work to create community development corporations or its early work that helped to create model cities. Philanthropy began to move from charitable, individual, altruistic responses to a response that was more attuned to the problems that were happening in society.

Groups such as the Independent Sector, the Council on Foundations, the Center for Responsive Philanthropy, began to really push foundations and became very vocal about the ways in which foundations could be much more effective in advancing social change. Foundations began looking at issues of public policy -- what role can a foundation play in public policy? Today, a primary activity of many foundations is encouraging advocacy and public policy work. Major national associations award prizes acknowledging the work that foundations are doing in public policy.

We see this focus on public policy but not enough of the work is coordinated. When you look at the problems that Kati and I have outlined and what is needed to help close the achievement gap, we still seeing a project-like approach and not necessarily a policy, a systemic approach.

We now have a new set of actors and a new set of philanthropists – organizations such as the Gates Foundation and the Broad Foundation. We have new and different types of leadership in many of the larger national foundations who are beginning to change the conversation. They are beginning to ask different questions.

Of course, the problems they seek to address are too large for any one foundation to change so they must get partners. They also must partner with government. They are looking at ways in which they can influence, but carefully, the role of government in helping to solve and change problems. Foundations are acting more entrepreneurially. They are acting more collectively, and they are using data and they are looking at outcomes and they are developing plans to address specific problems.

I think there are some big challenges in our work as we work to bring philanthropy in as a real partner in making change in our public schools. The depth of work in philanthropy, in order to change public policy, is going to have to be more research-based. It's going to take longer; philanthropists will have to stick with that work longer. It's not two-year project; it is a five to seven, perhaps even 10-year investment. And the challenge for philanthropy is, of course, how close it will get to state and federal governments to address these issues because, at the end of the day, we have to change public policy in the federal and state levels.

KATHERINE BRADLEY – So this is a little bit of déjà vu for me this morning, being back on the Georgetown campus. Way back in the Dark Ages of my work and my career, when CityBridge worked on public health problems, I decided that I just could not do the work and no one would ever respect me if I didn't go back and get a medical degree. I had done a policy degree in undergrad. So when CityBridge was in its infancy and when I had two small children at home, I decided I would go back and get a medical degree. I enrolled in Georgetown's pre-med program. Ultimately, I decided I did not need a medical degree to do the work and I also decided to change what field I was working in, and we morphed CityBridge to much more of an education platform.

What is CityBridge today? CityBridge Education runs a portfolio of projects, some of which we've created and some that we fund or we've asked other people to partner with us, all of it in the urban education space in Washington. We also have some collaborative work that we do with national funders here in Washington and then we have a mix of funding and some consulting work that we started more recently for Michelle Rhee [chancellor of D.C. Public Schools]. Altogether, our education staff, plus our ServiceCorps staff, is a professional staff of 10 located right near here in the Watergate building. We have an annual budget both for staff and for partnerships of between \$4 million and \$5 million.

How did we choose this public education reform field for CityBridge?

We chose it before we had this great reformer, Michelle Rhee, here in town. We chose it after a lot of other funders in the Washington D.C. area had thrown up their hands and said, "We cannot work with the public education system. There's been mismanagement. We've had no results for so long. This is a hopeless cause."

CityBridge was created inside of two for-profit corporations, both of which are now public companies. We took that best practices model and thought, "Okay, what if we took this same data-driven research model and applied it to social problems instead of to business problems? What would that look like as an enterprise?" We've always been this hybrid organization, a real blend of a research-based organization and an operating foundation where we can take insights from work like Kati's and from academic work that we do and then say, "Wow, what would that look like to operationalize these ideas in the field?"

Back in about 2000, CityBridge was concluding the last of our round of projects in international health. We had decided that we didn't want to travel all over the world doing public health projects anymore. We wanted the next phase of our work to be centered on returning something to Washington D.C., the city where we built the businesses and where we'd created the resources that we would now use in this nonprofit enterprise. As we looked around D.C., we saw plenty of need all around us. We did not need to go off to Africa to find need and to find people with problems that our time and our resources might be able to help.

The frame for me is very much -- and I can say this because we're at a Jesuit university -- the frame for me was very much the one that I learned from the Good Samaritan story: that you don't always have to go really far afield to find a problem to solve. If there's a problem that you literally have to step over every single day as you go about the course of your daily life, then you're almost bound by duty to do that which is within your power to solve that problem.

As we looked around D.C., it was very clear that the urban poverty field was going to be our sweet spot. We started, as best practices researchers would, by reading everything that showed success in the urban poverty field. The end game for all this antipoverty work, for us, was to help people find and keep meaningful work that could support a family. If you think about it, every single antipoverty intervention that anybody works on has the ultimate goal of helping people find meaningful work that can support a family.

We started in on several pilot projects, but quickly realized that work-centered interventions were not going to work for us. Why? First of all, there were almost no models out there of effective interventions. We just couldn't find them. The success rates were extremely low. Second, there was no clear capture point for clients for the work. You can't force adults to participate in your job training program, whereas you can tell kids, "You must go to school." Finally, we gained an insight that, in the end, was the most powerful one in leading us to the public education field: I call it "The cake was baked." By the time an adult is showing up with no skills, without the ability to read, while it can be remediated, it's extremely difficult to do so.

There were other insights, positive ones as well, that pointed us toward education. But the salient one for us was that we wanted to work on a problem that could be solved. We did not want to work on something where the best that we could hope for was slight changes in outcome.

We shifted within that urban poverty framework to work on education directly, which is what we call the "upstream issue," because its quality affects everything else downstream in the antipoverty field. It affects test scores, first of all, and the achievement gap, high school graduation rates, what jobs individuals can get, and ultimately, how competitive our nation is.

In working on our education portfolio, which we've done now for about five years, we've come up with a few lessons that guide our philanthropy and our work in education.

Lesson No. 1: Effective philanthropy is always about solving a problem. You have to start with that frame. "What problem am I trying to solve?" And right after that, you have to ask yourself, "Do I have the time, the resources, and the skills to -- are those things I have scaled properly -- to attack this problem?"

For me, choosing global warming or nuclear terrorism without carving out some small piece that I know I can solve would have been a completely impractical frame. We chose narrowly. We chose education reform. We chose one city, Washington D.C. We chose a city with a relatively small group of kids. There are fewer than 100,000 school-aged kids in Washington D.C. And we chose an even smaller target population, the lowest income kids within this school system. Further, we ended up choosing one part of the K-12 continuum along which to start our work and that place was the early childhood and early elementary starting point.

Lesson No. 2 -- and we talk about this in every place that CityBridge goes -- is, "Start early." Every single problem is easier to solve the earlier in a person's life we attack it and the earlier in the problem's life cycle that we attack it. For us, this meant starting our education work by focusing on the huge gains that can be made in a low income child's life if he or she receives highest quality early education.

When we looked at the K-12 continuum and we looked at our skills and resources available, we said, "Wow, the best single thing we can do is to feed this K-12 system better prepared students." We constructed the Early Years Education Initiative, which launched several years ago and it is working.

One of our partners is the network of KIPP schools. When we first approached them, they only had middle schools. They had one flagship early childhood school in Texas called KIPP SHINE. It was spectacular. I will tell you that school was delivering a better education than my kids were getting in their private nursery school and kindergarten here in Washington, D.C. We asked KIPP here locally if they would be interested in partnering with us to replicate KIPP SHINE and to create a network of KIPP early childhood and elementary schools here that would attach on to their high performing middle schools. Fortunately, they said yes.

The first of those three schools is in its second year. Let me tell you how those kids are doing. The first 100 pre-K'ers now are kindergartners but had their first year in a KIPP preschool last year. Eighty-five percent are low income and 100 percent are African-American. By the end of that first year 100 percent of those pre-K'ers were reading on grade level; 49 percent were reading one year ahead; and 34 percent were reading two years ahead. The smallest group was the group that was just on grade level!

Because these kids are on a continuum that will be good every step of the way through their education, we expect that they will never face an achievement gap, which is a really exciting thing and is the standard that we should have for all low income kids.

The third lesson: we realized, in constructing this portfolio, that schools were the central leverage point.

I agree with Kati that, within schools, teachers are, by far, the most important thing that you can get right. But for constructing our portfolio, we believe that schools are the right location for intervention. We heard this over and over as we did our initial research. You can try to cure poverty all you want but if you don't fix the school at the center of the neighborhood, at the center of the family, or at the center of the child's life, you will not break the cycle of poverty.

We structured the whole of our early years' portfolio around school-based intervention, looking at the 8 a.m. to, for many of these schools, 4-5 p.m. school day and not focusing much at all on what happens in the after school time. We have never been shy at CityBridge about learning off of someone else's dime, so we were very eager

students when some real lions of the antipoverty field steered us toward school as the location for our interventions. If you think about it, it's just simply the practical, right answer. Schools have children for seven to eight hours a day. It's a better capture point than any other intervention I've ever seen. Schools are funded with public dollars and that means that we, the public, can hold those schools and the adults paid to run them accountable for results. No other setting to reach kids has that kind of total capture point and that kind of accountability built into it.

Our fourth CityBridge lesson? Collaboration is absolutely necessary. There are not enough private dollars in this country to effectively solve any public problem without public-private partnerships and collaboration among private entities to get a large effect. Even the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is dwarfed by what the State of California spends on education every year. Here locally, our dollars, which are large for a family foundation, spending between \$4 and \$5 million in education in this sector, are miniscule compared to the \$1 billion plus that D.C. spends on all sources of education across a year.

I also suspect that collaboration will become a necessity just as much as a smart way of doing things. As this recession forces foundations to look much harder at their dollars, many of them will have fewer dollars to spend and there will be a much greater necessity to make sure that those dollars are spent well, that people are not using different pools of money against different and perhaps, conflicting objectives, and that fewer dollars can actually go farther.

There's also a practical answer buried in our collaborative work: at the end of the day, education is a public trust. It has to be owned and stewarded by the whole community. I really think that effective education philanthropy has to do more than just good work in the community and great results for kids. It also has to educate adult stewards of this work, not just educating a crop of young people, so that those adults understand the issues at stake, how to work on the best projects, how to stand for the hard right answers.

We hope our collaborative work will build out not just great projects that benefit kids but also build out a team of adult stewards who can carry this message forward and be just as focused on results for kids five years from now, as we all are right now.

CATE SWINBURN: In the interests of full disclosure, my salary at the D.C. Public Education Fund is being supported by the generosity of CityBridge Foundation. They believed strongly that somebody needed to come and help DCPS harness the foundations and private dollars. I'm incredibly grateful for that.

The D.C. Public Education Fund was founded in 2007, soon after, Chancellor Rhee was appointed. Our mission is to support the dramatic improvement of student achievement in D.C. public schools by serving as a strategic partner to foundations, to businesses, to individual donors and community leaders as they forge partnerships with D.C. public schools. We're an intermediary between the philanthropic community and D.C. public schools. I'm working to raise the private dollars to support specific DCPS initiatives, managing the partnerships as they move along, and then act as the fiscal sponsor for the grants made on behalf of DCPS. We're working to support those core system-wide reforms that Wendy mentioned.

I should mention that we are a bit different from some of the other public education funds that Wendy mentioned, in that we work incredibly closely with the district. We are an independent nonprofit but it is incredibly close. Essentially, our mission is to take what are the DCPS priorities, identify those that would be great fit for philanthropic partnerships, and go out and raise the money and find the intellectual capital and bring it in. It's less of us doing the research and finding an investment that we want to make and more of us understanding and believing that the research that DCPS has done is really a key way to make an impact and

taking that out and essentially shopping it out to partners and building people's belief in that potential partnership.

I came to D.C. Public Education Fund in November of last year. Before that, I was at the Fund for Public Schools in New York. The D.C. Public Education Fund is modeled on the Fund. We worked closely with the New York City public schools. Many of you have probably heard of it because Caroline Kennedy is the vice-chair of the Fund for Public Schools board. She helped it launch in 2002 and 2003, soon after, Chancellor Klein took over control of the New York City public schools.

Since 2003, the Fund for Public Schools has raised about \$240 million to support the New York City Department of Education, primarily core system-wide reforms, some arts work and some library grants. We raised \$240 million over those five years but in each of those five years, the New York City Department of Education's annual operating budget was \$17 billion to \$20 billion. In fiscal '08, we raised \$44 million raised to support public education and in that year, the DOE's annual operating budget was \$19 billion.

We can't look at funders to fill a gap. We can't say to private investors, "You know what? We really think that this year, we need to spend \$1.2 billion, so we want you to give us that \$0.2 billion." It is a question of funders saying that they want to support and make a strategic investment in a specific initiative. It involves finding the right match and identifying projects that could have a huge impact but cannot be pursued with public dollars because maybe the public dollars are not there. Or maybe the projects are not yet proven and the private dollars can help determine something's effectiveness, enabling the public dollars can come behind it.

There are four areas where I think private dollars make the most sense coming into a system and have the greatest impact: innovation, replication, capacity building, and accountability.

INNOVATION: In New York, private dollars that we raised helped the DOE pilot and test new initiatives, proving their effectiveness before the investment of public dollars. One example is the Autonomy Zone Initiative, which was piloted in 48 schools for 2004-2005 school year. Instead of having the central office push supports out to schools and mandate curriculum and what schools needed to do with their budget, the Autonomy Zone Initiative gave schools the autonomy to decide what they needed to do, what they, with their student population, needed to be successful, and pulling those supports from the central office. The pilot showed significant achievement gains in those schools. The leaders were happier. The teachers were happier and the kids were excelling.

The Autonomy Zone later became the Empowerment Schools Organization, which, in the 2006-2007 school year, had 330 schools across the DOE. Ultimately, in the 2007-2008 school year, the DOE essentially empowerment zoned the entire city. All 1,500 schools in the city were pulling their supports from the central office.

REPLICATION: Private support helps the DOE to scale up successful models citywide, ensuring that some of the most promising practices could reach schools as soon as possible, even as public dollars are still being shifted. We all know public dollars and public budgets can take a while to shift. There are bureaucratic legacies in public systems that need to be dismantled before public dollars can be shifted to another area. Private dollars can help something be scaled at a faster rate than public dollars can be funneled into that project.

An example is the Children First Network, a privately supported pilot in one network of approximately 20 schools in the 2007-2008 school year. The Children First Network was a test to see what happens if we put the front office, the instructional office and the back office together in the same support team for a school. When that happens, the person who is talking to the principal about effective instructional practices and their literacy curriculum is sitting right next to the person who is thinking about facilities repairs and ordering supplies. If

you're going need a resource to make your program effective, you want to have that person near you so that you can mobilize the resources. The idea was to increase efficiency, increase effectiveness, and increase the responsiveness of the folks who are supporting the schools.

The Children First Network was piloted last school year in a network of 20 schools. I worked with the internal team to write a proposal to a larger national foundation to scale that so that it grew to four networks of approximately 90 schools. Schools in the Children First Network were outperforming their peers by about 8 percentage points across the board. Next year, I understand, the city aiming to have 75 percent of schools on the Children First Network model, and that will all be publicly supported. The private dollars essentially hold the public budget harmless this year. Next year, the public dollars are coming behind it and we'll move to almost a citywide model.

CAPACITY BUILDING: As I said earlier, public budgets can be inefficient and it can take time to free up money. Additionally, as we know, public budgets can have incredible legacy. Once you increase a budget line, it is incredibly difficult to decrease that budget line. Once you hire a full time employee, it is sometimes incredibly difficult to get rid of that full time employee or to move that full time employee. Private dollars can help with capacity building, which is growing a school's ability to do something. Suppose we need to build the central office's ability to do something, but we don't want to add a whole new department. We may use private dollars to bring in the resources and, then once the internal folks have the capacity, the private dollars go away and you don't have that legacy.

An example would be the Children First Intensive Program. In the 2006-2007 school year, school leaders in the previously mentioned Empowerment Schools Organization, realized principals and teachers needed explicit development and a structured approach to using data to make instructional decisions. They knew they had kids who were struggling but they didn't know how to break it down and put it back together in terms of effective lessons, interventions, whatever they needed to do to be modifying their curriculum to meet the needs of all of their students. Using existing resources in that school year, they piloted a model whereby a team of teachers and principals or assistant principals in the school focused on improving the outcomes of a target group of students via close data monitoring, research-based interventions, and mid-year adjustments as needed. It was a variation on a widely discussed or known professional learning community but something more like an inquiry based learning for adults. School-based educators were learning as they went. They were reflecting on their practice as teachers and the best news was that at the start, the students in the target population were making incredible gains.

Moving toward the 2007-2008 school year, the DOE wanted to replicate that model in all schools citywide. Lessons from that '06-'07 pilot had taught them that schools needed more structure and more support in doing the work. They needed somebody to help them reflect on what they were doing and step back. They needed ways to connect across schools. But they were confident that ultimately, existing DOE staff could handle that support and could provide the structure.

Private funding over two years provided the resources to bring in external experts, pay for the training expenses, create online tools, and provide the materials and the other resources needed to build both the school's capacity and the central DOE's capacity. Data informed decision making, all without creating a bureaucratic legacy.

ACCOUNTABILITY: This is less about the funding and more about the leverage of having private dollars at the table when pursuing reforms. Philanthropic dollars help and continue to help the DOE in two major places. One is the vetting process when the DOE is considering what initiatives to pursue and what projects they're going to implement in their schools. Second is in the implementation process,

In the vetting process, we would sit down with DOE staff and ask all the questions that we knew the funders were going to ask. The funder perspective can help folks with tunnel vision, which sometimes can happen in an individual department or in a public agency. The funder perspective can help you lift up a level and think more macro. What is happening in other agencies? What's happening in our charter neighbors? What's happening in the independent schools? Who could be our partners in this work? What are some of the interdependencies? What are some of the potential challenges? Having the philanthropic perspective at the table is a way to make an organization a better organization, particularly because we have these strategic thinkers, in this day and age of philanthropy, who can lend expertise and who have knowledge from other school districts with which they have worked.

In the implementation process, we agree at the outset of a project what the metrics and outcomes in a grant agreement will be. Those grant agreements are revisited quite frequently. There are agreed-upon reporting intervals so that donors know when they are supposed to hear back and we know when we're supposed to report back to them.

There are some challenges in having philanthropists as partners in education reform. Sometimes funders have a priority that is not a priority of the school district. The school district needs to have a laser-like focus on their ultimate goal and if a donor really wants to go off on a project that is not aligned with the district priorities, it is better that they go their separate ways.

The second challenge, of course, is the fast paced nature of reform. Public education reform is building the plane while flying. We can't stop educating our children, so there is constant adjustment, constant reprioritization, constant change and that can be challenging for donors.

Many of you have heard about the significant amount of money that Chancellor Rhee and her team have identified as being needed for the five-year action plan to be successful. I am now working to raise support for data and accountability work, the compelling schools component of the DCPS five-year action plan, and their human capital work, so both teacher quality and leadership components and principles. In the longer term D.C. Public Education Fund needs to become a vehicle for sustaining these reforms.

MAAS-WEIGERT: What we'd like to do is take several questions at a time. You may direct them to a particular person on the panel if you'd like or more broadly but we want to get crisp questions.

QUESTION: I have two questions. One is around public accountability: in the recent example of using funds to pay children in D.C. to attend middle school, which came with no public input in the district. The other is about the ideological direction of funding: We know teacher quality is not supported in a vacuum. Quality teachers need to continue learning, need to work with peers, confer, etc., and yet, the emphasis right now seems to be on merit pay, for which there's very little research supporting its impact on quality teaching. Where is the theory of change?

QUESTION: I respect all of you for the work you're doing and the intentions that you have, but at the same time, I'm pretty alarmed to know about the very tight connections between philanthropic organizations and government policy, in part because of what I know about history and philanthropic support for the education of African-Americans in the South after the Civil War. Why should we trust you to make these decisions and have access, whereas the public is having much less access?

QUESTION: We talked about accountability, almost everyone did, and I'm interested in the part of accountability that creates the constituencies for public schools that Cate emphasized at the very end of her

comments. That part of the role of philanthropy -- creating a citizenry that understands and appreciates what is involved -- is a part of philanthropy that hasn't had as much discussion as I think should be heard.

PURIEFOY: Public Education Network and local education funds were developed precisely to build constituency for public schools. That is what every local education fund actually does. What's important is also educating that constituency and working with the constituency to understand what problems they see in the schools. There is a very important role that nonprofit organizations play in helping communities to develop their own voice and their own thinking and then bringing their knowledge to bear upon the system that they are ultimately responsible for. They provide the resources. They elect the public officials to husband those resources and, good or bad, they set the expectations. It is up to us, who are working in the nonprofit sector, to make sure that the public knows as much as it can know so that it can act responsibly about their schools.

BRADLEY: You didn't put it quite like this but I think the point of it was, is it a pernicious force that philanthropists with money are influencing public policy? I would say that education philanthropy today is correcting an imbalance in our political system that's been there for a long time. Most education philanthropy in this reform space is trying to create a voice for kids and for achievement for kids and in particular, a voice for kids who have been achieving at the low end of the spectrum, who have been left out for so long. The adult issues and the adult interests have been well represented for years in our policy process and the interests of the kids who have every right to achieve in these school systems have not been represented. It is being fueled by philanthropic dollars, and that does mean that a few people are getting a chance to put a voice forward, but that is part of our democratic process and you have to grant that, in fact, we're not even close to equalizing the forces from the adult voices that are still sending those same messages they have been for a long time. We're not equal yet in building a voice for kids and for low income kids.

SWINBURN: The first question was around public accountability with private money and school reforms. I think it is important to remember that this is not a funder sneaking over and saying, "Cate, I've got \$5 million to pursue this really neat project that I like and I think you should implement it in D.C. public schools next week." These are public schools with procurement processes and city council hearings and a chancellor and a mayor and all of those disparate essential pieces in place. This is taking initiatives that the public has demanded or that the chancellor and her team have researched and saying, "We believe that this would help us reach the greatest number of our kids and help us make a huge impact," and then raising private dollars to support that. It's relatively transparent. If they're publicly paid for, the chancellor and her team are accountable for their impact and for their work with students -- they do answer to the mayor and they do answer to the chancellors. Initiatives that are privately funded are not held to a separate level of accountability.

HAYCOCK: I'm a leftie but my job is to win changes in public policy and in school practice for poor kids and kids of color. What I've learned over time is that Republicans will help us get some parts of our agenda done and Democrats will help us get other parts of our agenda done. And if you just do the math, you understand, you have to reach out to all kinds of people.

We've learned that, unlike what some of us thought growing up in the '60s, conservative people care about poor kids, too. They care in different ways. They have sometimes different approaches. But when you look at what the so-called rightists are funding and so-called lefties are funding today, there's a lot more in common than there is difference. We're beginning to understand what works and we must advocate for what works regardless of where the ideas came from.

On the merit pay thing: I don't know a single person in a single school district that's implementing merit pay alone. Nobody is so naive to think that pay changes alone are what we need in order to attract and hold good people in this field. But when you talk especially with younger teachers who have other options about what's important to them, it is important to them not to be paid the same as the teacher down the hall who shows film strips all day and hasn't bothered to even have the kids crack a book.

PURIEFOY: The work that we're all trying to do to change schools is not the work of nonprofit organizations alone. It just can't happen. There are not enough of us. There's not enough money.

What we can do is work with school systems' new ideas and ways of looking at things and give people a new way of thinking, because the thinking that we've had about who should be educated and how they should be educated must be shifted. It is the result of that thinking that is the problem we're trying to address right now.

There are two things that we must do. We must look at what is going to make a difference in these kids' lives, determine how we get that, and amass enough evidence and strategies that it can translate into the daily life of a school, or of a teacher, or of a principal.

At the same time, we must develop a public that, at the end of the day, will be vigilant about the most important public institution outside of government. And if that institution fails to work, then everything else has failed to work. Ultimately, it comes down to the public, to the representative they send to Congress, to the person they elect to the school board, to the mayor... it's going to come down to some publicly elected official. We must find a way to affect that.

QUESTION: I'm a youngish leftist teacher with other options. I'm also a master's student in American and international peace and conflict resolution. While I appreciate the necessity of local focus, isn't there a way that 21st century American school reform can support global efforts of educational development in a way that is mutually beneficial? And what models are there, particularly given the growing cultural diversity of our public school students?

QUESTION: My question comes as one who's worked in after school programs and sees the schools as a hub. What do we, as people who are advocates for reform, say to communities when a school is closing? How do we reconcile the differences between commitment to democracy and community voice and youth voice when we know that a school will be shut down?

QUESTION: I noticed that all of you mentioned how important good teachers are in this whole educational reform process and you mentioned a growing amount of enthusiasm from the younger generations, specifically, college students and older high school students, about getting involved. What would be your advice for those of us who are enthusiastic and motivated but aren't sure what our role yet will be in this whole process?

QUESTION: You talked about early childhood and KIPP SHINE and I wanted to know what you saw as the role of federal programs in providing early interventions? And you talked about public schools as a leverage point but does that mean that our early intervention stops at pre-kindergarten?

QUESTION: What role does technology play in education reform? When you're doing your strategic planning process, is technology a part of that process and how much of the budget does it consume?

QUESTION: I was educated in D.C. public schools. It looks, from the outside, that there are outsiders now coming inside trying to influence or rather make these drastic changes, and they are not including the voice of the communities around them. It seems Chancellor Rhee is excluding us from the discussion. How do we make sure that the community is engaged in this process of reform and, at the same time, not create a push-pull type of thing?

QUESTION: One of the things that I've seen in working with kids is that not only does teaching make a huge difference but there are some real struggles in schools to address different learning styles and different learning types. Are there any movements or initiatives happening locally or nationally to address how we teach so many different learning styles in one classroom?

BRADLEY: The question about federal programs: The Head Start programs, the federal early education programs, I think they're going to be expanded under the Stimulus Bill. That is good. If I had the ability to do it, the one thing that I'd change would be the level of education of the teachers in Head Start programs – they should have the level of education that we are trying to model for these kids. Head Start has always been two things: great education and health for the kids, and community development for the adults. I personally believe that that often underserves the kids in those programs.

On IT and technology: There are a lot of interesting things happening now in pilots around improving the efficiency of the very laborious recordkeeping and testing that happens for kids. A company called Wireless Generation, for instance, is piloting, here in the District, some handheld assessment tools for young children. It's incredibly time consuming to try to work with young children and figure out where they are on their literacy. Being able to do that real-time on a handheld machine that can crunch all the numbers for you is a boon for teachers.

HAYCOCK: On the school closing issue: I can tell you, from doing a lot of work with a lot of school districts around the country and watching the process of closing schools, no school superintendent closes a school easily. It's the most difficult thing for a community to deal with. It is a horribly wrenching process. But when you have schools that have 30 kids in them or 40 kids, when you have schools that have languished at horrible achievement levels for a very long time, what's really important is not keeping a school open. What's really important is getting quality education for the kids. And sometimes, that means that you have to trample feelings and just move, that if you worry too much about what people think, you will never, ever do anything in those schools.

How Chancellor Rhee is perceived depends on who you ask. If you go to self-appointed, self-anointed community leaders, you will often hear, "She doesn't pay attention to us." There are always at least 14 people outside of her office picketing. But I can tell you that about once a month, she and I have breakfast or lunch someplace around the city and it's really hard to have conversations at that lunch because of the constant stream of people of all walks of life, and that includes in the taxis going to and from. It's the taxi drivers, it's the people on the street, all of whom come up to her and say the same thing, "Go, girl. Keep going. It's my kids you're helping. You got to move faster, further." She may trample on some people's feelings, but if you go out and talk with rank and file D.C. folks, you get a very different message.

PURIEFOY: I think we've had enough people and enough superintendents dealing with school closings for a long time. The democratic process is wounding and it also brings a lot of the wounded in the dialogue and there are people who have been left out of these discussions for a long time. There isn't a superintendent who hasn't been clobbered by this and there isn't a superintendent, for the most part, who hasn't been justified in closing some of these schools, given the performance outcomes.

What can we do to make it a bit better? We need to talk more and more and more to people, even after the school has been closed, to keep drilling at the understanding of why. The lesson is not in closing. The lesson is in reopening or reconstituting a school or getting the kids to better schools. That story, post closing, needs to be told and it's not told enough.

I don't know a superintendent who's been trying to do reform who hasn't gotten clobbered by this issue. I think the bigger part of the issue is the sense of disassociation that too many people in too many communities have from their public institutions. And unfortunately, when it comes up, it comes up in the closing of the school. So we got to find a better way of addressing it and using that moment.

KRETMAN: Thank you all for staying. Thank you to our panel. My takeaways include: No. 1, research. Everyone talked about research and data and their importance. From those of you here, I saw the vitality around the issues, the interest in the rigor. It's very inspiring. I think that we are at a great stage. The challenges are great but the opportunities, I think, for the first time in many years, might be even greater.

To our panelists: thank you for coming for being so inspirational. And thank you all for the hard work that you do in this field.

Finally, let me thank the people who have been involved in this series from the beginning: the advisory committee, the Kauffman Foundation, the different centers with whom we have partnered and to our wonderful staff at the Center for Public & Nonprofit Leadership under Luisa Boyarski's leadership. It would not have happened without you.