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Introduction:

MICHAEL HANSEN
Senior Fellow and Director, Brown Center on Education Policy
The Brookings Institution

Overview of the Federal Role:

DOUGLAS N. HARRIS
Professor of Economics and Schleider Foundation
Chair in Public Education, Tulane University
Nonresident Senior Fellow, The Brookings Institution

Panel Discussion:

MARTY WEST, Moderator
Assistant Professor of Education, Harvard Graduate School of Education
Nonresident Senior Fellow, The Brookings Institution

ARNE DUNCAN
Former Secretary, U.S. Department of Education
Nonresident Senior Fellow, The Brookings Institution

GERARD ROBINSON
Resident Fellow, Education Policy Studies
American Enterprise Institute

LINDSAY FRYER
Vice President
Penn Hill Group

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. HANSEN: Good afternoon, and Happy New Year! I'm Michael Hansen, senior fellow and director of the Brown Center on Education Policy here at The Brookings Institution. I welcome you here today to our discussion of the federal education policy under the Trump administration.

This event that we're holding today, it marks the culmination of the Brown Center's series on "Memos to the President on the Future of K-12 Education Policy." This project brought together a team of scholars and practitioners with expertise in a variety of topics in pre-K through 12 to write memos aimed at informing the incoming President on how to proceed based on the best evidence we have in this space.

This project began months ago, prior to the election, and those involved contributed their great ideas and their efforts to this project in the hopes of helping to be critical advisors during this transition point. And I want to take a moment at the outset here to acknowledge the efforts of the project's co-chairs, Doug Harris, Helen "Sunny" Ladd, Mike Smith, and Marty West, along with my co-editor for the series, John Valant, and to the many authors who have worked to make this series and this event happen. There are too many to name here, but I encourage all of you to look at the Brown Center Chalkboard for the memos themselves and all the great writing that has been put there.

We will be video archiving this event, so anyone who wishes to view this after today will have the opportunity to do so through the brookings.edu website.

And as for an introduction to the event, just to set the stage, Donald Trump's victory has been widely viewed as a signal of change for the federal government's role in American society generally, and in education in particular. After all, Trump has previously called for the elimination of the U.S. Department of Education. And following on the heels of the recent enactment of the Every Student Succeeds Act in

December of 2015, which once again rewrote the rules for the federal government's role in the nation's schools, the future of education policy in the country is now very fluid and quite uncertain. Trump's nominee for Education Secretary, Betsy DeVos, is also standing behind the claim that the administration poses an opportunity to fundamentally change education in America, though we still aren't entirely sure how those details are going to play out.

So we are convening this event today to have an in-depth discussion about what the Trump administration may have in store on the education front, what this means for the federal role in the classroom -- and there's a lot of speculation swirling around, but few answers, and we know that -- and we hope that today's panel will offer an insightful retrospective and prospective discussion about the U.S. government in schools.

Next we'll hear from Doug Harris. Dr. Harris is a professor of economics, the Schleider Foundation Chair in Public Education, and founding director of the Education Research Alliance for New Orleans at Tulane University. He is also a nonresident senior fellow in the Brown Center on Education Policy here at Brookings, and was one of the co-chairs for this "Memos to the President" series.

Following Doug's remarks, we will move to a panel discussion moderated by Marty West of Harvard University, and we will introduce all panel participants at that point.

Doug?

MR. HARRIS: Good afternoon. So to understand where we started with this project, we have to rewind back to the spring, which now seems like a century ago. The world has changed so much here. Even back then it was clear that this was going to be a good time to reconsider the federal role in education. We knew we were going to

have a new president, and if you look back in the last 15 years of education policy, you could also see that a lot had already been changing. I probably would say the most change in the last 15 years than we'd had since the 1960s.

We had No Child Left Behind under the second Bush administration, and that followed with the Obama administration ratcheting up the federal role in education even further with Race to the Top, with the NCLB waivers, and then we saw this pendulum swing back a little bit with ESSA here just in the last year. So there was a lot of change going on at the K-12 level, also at the higher ed level. The Obama administration had really ratcheted up the federal role there, as well, and that is something new. So, for both of those reasons, it was a good time to take another look.

And we also, as we were thinking about doing a project like this, we were looking at the fact that we couldn't actually find other examples where we had a somewhat bipartisan group coming together, to try to figure out what we might all agree on. So that's what we aimed for with this project.

We wanted to do two things: one was to identify the things we do agree on and to establish some basic principles around that; the other was to have some provocative ideas on things we might disagree on, and to try to do both of those things at the same time. So we have both these memos on specific topics where the authors were able to write on their own that you can find on the website, and then we also have this overview piece that's really what I'm going to focus on that focuses on general principles for the federal role.

So I said we have a bipartisan group and so, just to be specific about that, we have Marty West, who has advised Senator Alexander, as well as Mitt Romney in his presidential run We have Mike Smith, who had worked in every presidential administration since Carter. If Mike had been here I would have said Truman as a joke.

(Laughter) But he's been around for a long time. I've advised the Obama administration on some policies. Sunny Ladd has been involved in these debates for a long time. And we all had fairly different views on, at least, some specific policies. Going in, I don't think we knew for sure how different we would view the principles.

So what are those principles? What did we come up with? What did all four of us agree on? So, first, I'm just going to read these because we spent a lot of time wordsmithing them over the last few months. We were on the phone every week for five months. And so here's what we came up with, four principles:

One, the federal government should ensure that no student is denied the right to equal educational opportunity based on race, ethnicity, gender, disability, or protected status. So that principle is rooted in the 14th Amendment, in the Equal Protection Clause, and in the Supreme Court's interpretation of *Brown v. Board of Education*.

Principle two: the federal government should provide compensatory funding to facilitate access to educational opportunity for high-needs students, including, but not limited to, students living in poverty and students with disabilities. So this went beyond the first principle in that it wasn't just about avoiding the denial of rights, but it was about making a more affirmative case for the need to provide education to all students. These first two principles I would describe as the equity principles, for they both have that orientation.

Third, the federal government should support education research and development and the gathering and dissemination of information about the scope and quality of the nation's education system to inform policy and practice at the state and local levels. So this principle rises just from basic economics. Research and development information is a public good. When we do research studies, when we

provide information, everybody can use it. It's out in the air, and it makes sense for the federal government to do it. If we left it to the states, if we left it to districts, they wouldn't do as much as we ought to do because the benefits that they would receive are narrow and the benefits that all of us receive from those studies are broad.

Fourth, the federal government should, in a manner consistent with both its unique advantages and limited capacity, support the development of conditions to promote continuous improvement of state and local education systems. So I think a couple of keywords here: one is "conditions," right? So it's about setting the conditions and it's less about telling state and local governments how they need to do things, but about setting conditions, providing capacity, and facilitating improvement, but not actually directing that improvement.

Now, the way I've just phrased that, probably a lot of you are thinking, "OK, well that seems like a more moderate view than what has been taken by Secretary Duncan and under the Obama administration." And I think even amongst our group, we would partially agree with that statement, but also partially disagree. So it's not meant as a rebuke or anything in that respect, and in fact, a lot of things that these principles embody are things that I think the administration did follow.

One example in particular is that the group believes that competitive grants and more optional programs are a viable and productive role for the federal government to facilitate experimentation in the states, to have options, provide money for them to try things without necessarily requiring them. Right? So that is within the scope of what we're saying. It's not forcing the states to do anything. Race to the Top and the NCLB waivers fall into that category. They were, at least formally, optional.

A few other observations: one is that we as a group were concerned about regulations and mandates in that we have to be concerned about unintended

consequences of those rules, especially preventing and constraining the experimentation that state and local districts might try. While those regulations might not intentionally have that effect, they often do unintentionally.

So what does it all mean? So I think whenever events change, right, the meaning of all these things change. When we started working on this project, it was not meant to respond to any of the candidates' policies. You're not going to see, if you read these documents, that we're saying "Well Trump said this and here's our response." There's none of that. We were trying to give a bigger picture, a broader view of all this. But I do think events have changed. We now know the election results, and I think the meaning of what we've done has changed in two ways that are worth mentioning.

One is that we learned in the election that we are a deeply divided country, and I think probably even more so than what we realized beforehand. And I think having a project like this, where we're trying to find areas of agreement, is something that is very productive. Whether you agree with what we came up with or not, the idea that we'd try to get together and come to agreement is especially important, I think, where we are right now.

The second reason is, I think with the election results, we're asking more fundamental questions than we probably would have otherwise. So, instead of asking "How is the budget allocation for this program going to change, or some other program?" we're asking "Does the federal government have any role at all in some of these activities? Should we have a Department of Education?" These are much bigger questions and the project is designed to answer those big picture questions in ways that I don't think we realized would be relevant when we started this.

So, asking these big questions is healthy if you have principles on which to answer them. Does President-elect Trump believe in protecting civil rights within the

realm of education or elsewhere? Does he believe that the federal government should work to ensure that all students have equal educational opportunity? Does he believe the federal government should carry out widely-accepted responsibilities for research and development and information, and providing the conditions for improvement? I don't know, and I think there are a lot of unanswered questions about those principles.

The one that I think we do know is that he believes in freedom of choice for families to choose schools and that there will be policies to pursue that. But one thing he's going to recognize very quickly is that that principle is going to conflict with some of the others that we've mentioned, and somehow, some judgment is going to have to be made about what those are. And those trade-offs are going to be easier to make if we're really clear about what our principles are and about what we're really trying to achieve in the education system.

So we offer these memos to the president and to the administration, and more broadly to Congress and to the public, to spark a debate about new ideas, to find areas of agreement on basic principles, which is something we really need right now, and to help turn sound principles into effective policy.

So, with that, I'm going to turn it over to Marty West and the panel. Marty is going to be the moderator, and he's going to introduce the panelists and I'm just going to introduce Marty. So, Martin West is associate professor of education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education; deputy director of Harvard's Program on Education, Policy, and Governance; and executive editor of *Education Next*, a journal of opinion and research in education policy. His research examines the politics of K-12 policy in the United States.

Marty and the group.

MR. WEST: So thanks to Doug, and thank you to all of you for being

here today. We're thrilled to see so much interest in this topic as we start the new year. There's so much interest, in fact, that we have a number of people standing in the back. I've been asked to let you know that we're opening an overflow room next door where you'll have full audio and video. So if you'd prefer to find a seat, that option is available to you.

I also want to say thank you to this panel for joining us today, and for being willing to dig into some of these ideas with us and share their own reflections as we head into a new presidential administration. I can't imagine a better group to do it. I'm going to introduce them now, briefly. You have more extended bios for each of them in the packets that you picked up on your way into the room.

So, immediately to my left is Lindsay Fryer, who's a vice president at the Penn Hill Group, a professional advisory and consulting firm here in D.C. that specializes in education policy. Prior to joining Penn Hill, she served as the senior education policy advisor to Senator Lamar Alexander, the chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, and she served as his principle negotiator in the process leading up to the Every Student Succeeds Act. Prior to that, she worked for Chairman John Kline of Minnesota for the House Education and Workforce Committee, so she has a ton of experience in federal policy, especially from the perspective of Congress.

Immediately to Lindsay's left is Arne Duncan, who needs no introduction. But you may not know that he's currently a managing partner with the Emerson Collective, as well as being a nonresident senior fellow here at the Brown Center on Education Policy at Brookings. Prior to that, obviously, he was the Secretary of Education under President Obama for seven years. And before that he was the CEO of the Chicago Public Schools, the nation's third largest, I believe, school district.

And then finally, at the end of the row is Gerard Robinson, currently a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. Both prior to, and for a month following the election, Gerard was a member of the presidential transition team for President-elect Trump and he's currently still serving as an informal advisor to that effort. Before that he was commissioner of education in the state of Florida, as well as the secretary of education for the Commonwealth of Virginia. Not at the same time, I don't think. (Laughter)

MR. ROBINSON: Commonwealth and the state.

MR. WEST: So let me start things off by asking each of you to reflect, in different ways, drawing on your experience, on what we might see over the next four years, what we might want to see over the next four years.

And I'll start with you Lindsay. You know, as I just mentioned, you recently played a key role in the successful bipartisan negotiation of the Every Student Succeeds Act, and your former boss and my former boss, Senator Lamar Alexander, says he hopes and expects that law to govern the federal role in K-12 education for the next 10 or 20 years. How do you see ESSA implementation proceeding under the Trump administration, and what else do you expect to see from the Trump administration?

MS. FRYER: Right, thanks for the question, Marty, and thank you all for allowing me to be here today to discuss this important topic. I think there's a lot to think about and reflect about, so hopefully we can provide some insight into what we might expect in the next four years, at least.

So, a couple of framing remarks just to begin. I think an important thing that I've thought about a lot is that there will always be a federal role in education. And whether or not it's the Department of Education as they are now or just as a pass-through for federal money to go to states and colleges, I think there will always be a federal role.

And as we've seen in the past couple decades, this will change through different presidencies and in reaction to different policies and events that are happening in the world, as well as how high on the agenda education really is as a priority, particularly in looking at the economy and what skills are within our needs to be successful.

But it isn't always the Republicans that reduce the federal role in education. We saw an increase in the federal role under George W. Bush and right now we see, for example, a lot of Democratic members and Democratic ideals pushing against a federal role in the school choice vein. So I think that's an important framing remark for folks to think about.

Another thing in looking at where we are right now, certainly we have moved towards a reduced federal role in the K-12 education landscape. And with ESAA we've seen the pendulum swing back to give more state authority and focus on developing their own state accountability systems and school improvement systems, and a more limited ability for the Department of Education to interfere with those types of systems. But that really means that it's up to states and locals at this point to step up and take on the robust roles of making sure that all students, including subgroups of students, really get an adequate education. And as long as they continue to do this and take on this responsibility, their flexibility will stay, but if they don't, we'll see the pendulum swing back again in the next reauthorization in a more increased federal role there.

So, a couple of things to think about with the Trump administration and what to expect. The first thing that I've thought a lot about is that one of the first things that a Secretary-designee DeVos could do is really signal to states that they should move forward with implementing their ESSA plans, so that we can get No Child Left Behind and BFCA flexibility waivers off the books and really give them the message that "There's

stability here, we're not going to continue to change everything, move forward with developing your plans."

And I say this even in the light of the fact that there is some discussion around whether or not accountability and state plan regulations will stay. What will happen to other specific K-12 regulations? But I think an important message from the Trump administration out the gate could be: "Move forward with developing your state education plans." And within that same vein, even with the state plan approval process, I think the message could also be: "There will be a lot of deference to state and local decision-making," which means there will be a lot of room for state and local innovation in terms of how they want to spend funds.

So we could see Title 1 being spent on things that we haven't necessarily seen at this point, like dual or concurrent enrollment or virtual learning or early college high schools or even transferring funds between different titles within ESSA. I think that, really, the states will lead the way in how they want to spend their funds and the Department of Education is going to give them the leeway to do this. So I think that's an important thing that they could signal up front, moving away from this compliance-driven environment, really, to promoting innovation.

And I also think within this space you'll see President-elect Trump using his platform to talk about things that are working, and using the bully pulpit to promote different ideas that states and districts are taking on, particularly ones of those that lead to tangible skills and promote national prosperity as he sees education as leading to that. So I think that's one thing to think about.

The second thing is one that's fairly obvious, is school choice. Obviously that will be a huge platform for Secretary-designee DeVos and the Trump administration. And, of course, they want to do something large, but that will have to pass Congress. So

we've heard discussions about tax credit proposals or a new competitive grant promoting school choice or potentially using existing money to follow students to the school that they attend. Those things will all have to pass Congress.

But I think what is less talked about is the opportunities for school choice in the existing ESSA space and the existing space that the Department of Education has to work with. So just a couple of examples:

Increasing funding for the charter schools program, a Secretary DeVos could, out the gate, advocate very directly for that. Encouraging states to take advantage of provisions in the law, like direct student services, which allow districts to provide individual services to kids, such as tutoring or course access. Promoting different provisions in the law that talk about public school choice still being a school improvement option, if school districts want to move children from one school to the other. And really promoting this idea that school choice could work within many existing funding streams that are within the law, like the Rural Education Program, or a student support and academic enrichment grant program. And then they could utilize competitive programs like the Education, Innovation, and Research Program to promote school choice priorities, as well, which we've seen under the Obama administration.

So I think there's a lot of other little opportunities that people aren't talking about which could promote choice wins that a new administration should consider and think about.

And then, lastly, this idea of transparency is one that has been on the Republican platform for a while and I think will continue to be a major focus of the Trump administration. And I think this will be a two-pronged approach.

So, first, continuing the priority of states providing information on their websites and the federal government publishing NAEP results and PISA results, and

providing transparency around what states are using their funding on, really to empower local communities to make decisions about what they want, how they want to use this information to advocate for change in their local communities.

But then also promoting transparency doesn't necessarily mean new burdens in data collection, but using the bully pulpit again to say "These are the things that are happening, this is how money is being used. These are the things that are working, and these are the things that are not working. So, local communities, take advantage of the information that you have to advocate for what exactly you want your school districts to look like." And I think this power of objective information statistics really puts the pressure on communities to figure out how to change.

And I'll close with just two brief questions that I still have. What will the federal role in education research be? So, transparency is important, data is important, but if you don't have research to interpret what that data means, an analysis that's meaningful to parents to say "This is what this could mean for our community," it's not going to be helpful. So I think that it's really important that this administration think about what research, in tandem with what data privacy should be, and what the federal role should be there. We haven't heard much about that yet.

And then, lastly, this idea of monitoring in states. So, currently, states have had a lot of interaction with the department back and forth about what they can and can't do with their federal money. I think this relationship's going to change, but states still are looking for direction from the department about what things they should be thinking about. So, I think, ideally you'd want to see -- I'm thinking about what is monitoring going to look under a new administration?

MR. WEST: Thanks, Lindsay. I think one of the things I take away is that everyone's been focused on this idea of $20 billion to support school choice for low-

income students, but really there's a lot more in play and a lot more, because of the federal government's current role, that deserves attention and hopefully we can unpack some of that.

Secretary Duncan -- Arne, if I may? -- obviously you've been at the center of this major shift in federal education policy over the past 10 years. As you reflect on your experiences as secretary, what did you learn about the potential and limits of the federal government's role in American education? And what advice would you offer, based on those lessons, for Secretary DeVos if she, in fact, is successfully confirmed?

SECRETARY DUNCAN: Let me say one thing first and come back and try and answer that very specifically. But there is no question the election -- "a deeply divided country," I think is how you said it -- well, there's absolutely truth to that. The thing for me is, this election was really a cry for help, and that was the commonality on the far left with Bernie and on the far right, or on the right. And Hillary was somewhere in the middle and didn't quite resonate, and that's why she didn't win.

And I think that cry for help is there are many people who feel that their own lives and their children's lives are in jeopardy, that they can't compete in this new global economy. And I think that perception -- sometimes perceptions may be inaccurate -- I think that's an accurate perception. This is a very, very scary time for folks.

And all of us in this room are blessed to be here and lucky to be here, and the one thing I know about all of us is we were all lucky enough to get a good education, and there are a whole set of folks who will never be in rooms like this, and people I work with every day back home in Chicago who are locked out, they are excluded from rooms like this. And whether it's inner-city Chicago or the Rust Belt or McDowell County, you know, West Virginia, there are lots of people who aren't getting what they need.

I'm convinced the only way to give them a chance is through high-quality education, that that's the way to get there. And so what I would love us to think about are not -- we always talk about what I call "small ball stuff," frankly, and think about big goals for the country. So I would love for us as a nation to lead the world in access to high-quality early-childhood education.

We're proud to have gotten high school graduation rates up to about 84 percent, that's progress. The goal should now be to get to 90 percent of the nation, and go beyond that. I think a goal for the nation should be to have 100 percent of our high school graduates actually college- and career-ready, able to go into the world of work or able to go to college and not take remedial classes, and neither one of those is true.

And then I think our goal for the country should be to lead the world in college completion rates. In a flat world, jobs are going to go to where the most educated workforce is, and I don't think -- maybe there is -- I don't think there's anything that's left or right or Republican or Democrat or liberal or conservative about those goals.

Now, I think we could have lots of vigorous debate about strategies to achieve those goals, and we should try lots of different things to do that. But I think we always start on small stuff and we never get to the bigger picture. And so I'd like to start on the bigger picture and then, you know, see what helps us get there.

Having said that, what do I think is the appropriate federal role? And obviously we grapple with that every single day and some days you got it more right than other days.

I actually agree with a lot of what was said. For me it's three or four principles, I sort of have three buckets. And for me the first bucket is equity, which I put early-childhood education in that; I put the Office of Civil Rights in there, protecting people from, you know, bad things, which, unfortunately, we had to do a lot of that. And

it's no secret: bullying and harassment is up now. Trump has unleashed some very -- I'm not blaming him, but he's unleashed a lot of bad things going on in schools that I don't think we can afford to turn a blind eye to. So equity, I think, is one piece of what the federal government should do.

Second for me is excellence, high standards. And, again, we are so happy to get in the ESSA law, for the first time ever in our nation's history, that states actually have to have high standards. And in reaction to No Child Left Behind, many states actually reduced standards, which was not the intent of those that passed that bill, but I think was a pretty horrific thing to happen to kids in about 20 states around the country

And then it liberates it to the research bucket -- I call it innovation. One of the things that I'm most proud of was the Invested Innovation Fund, where we just tried to put money behind local ideas. Not my ideas, not the president's ideas, but local ideas that had evidence that it was making things better for students. And that was in rural communities, that was on Native American reservations, that was in inner cities. Unfortunately, those funds were challenged by both the left and the right, and we can talk about why.

But what kills me in education is for every tough challenge we face, it is being solved somewhere in America. And I had the privilege of probably visiting more schools around the country maybe than anyone else in the country. It was sort of a unique opportunity. What we don't do in education is we don't scale what works, and putting money behind research and putting money behind best practices. And our principles are pretty simple: where we had more evidence, we gave it more money -- $50 million. For medium evidence we gave you $15/$20 million, and $5 million for less. But if we could simply scale things, it will work easier. Again, not politically, not whatever, but

just if you're getting higher graduation rates, if you're reducing dropout rates, if more of your high school graduates are able to go on to college and be successful, we should be investing in that.

So, for me, the appropriate federal role: equity, excellence, and innovation.

MR. WEST: Thanks. There's a lot that I think we could unpack in that. But before we dig into specifics, I want to get Gerard into the conversation. So, in addition to having contributed to the incoming administration's transitions efforts, you bring this perspective as a chief state school officer. So, having served in that role in Virginia and Florida, can you tell us a little bit about how federal education policy supported or hindered your efforts? And, based on that, what advice are you giving the Trump administration about the appropriate federal role vis-à-vis states?

MR. ROBINSON: Well, first of all, let me say "Happy New Year!" to everyone. Let me thank Mike for extending an invitation to be a part of this important discussion. Let me thank Doug and Marty and the rest of the scholars for coming together, from the right and the left, to figure out how to create a middle passage for families and children who try to make sure their children have a better opportunity than they did.

You know, when we talk about the federal role in education, this conversation would have been very different if Hillary would have won. But when Trump wins, all of a sudden we begin to ask very fundamental questions, and those are good things. So let me give you a fundamental approach.

March 2nd of this year, the Department of Education will be 150 years old, even though it was a cabinet level position in 1980. In 1867, when they created the department, shortly after the Civil War when the states and reconstruction governments --

many in the South who were formerly enslaved Africans, who helped create the first universal public school concept that we know of in the nation -- they're trying to figure out, "What is the federal role in education?" And they said, "Let's create a Department of Education," so they did so with Congress on March 2, 1867.

Guess what happened a year later. They abolished the Department of Education. And why? Because they said they didn't want the federal government to tell states what to do with teachers and with the curriculum -- that should be a state and a local issue. Now that was 1868. It might as well be 2017. We have the same discussion. But let me put into context what this means.

In 1867, 37 states already had a constitution, and all of those states, in fact, had an education clause. 20 of those, in fact, had what I call an encouragement clause, borrowed in part from the 1787 Northwest Ordinance. So the idea of states being involved in education is older than the Constitution and older than the Bill of Rights. But more importantly, there's always been a federal role in education. The question now is, what will it be under a Trump administration?

Well, if we take the Republican approach, it'll be a light footprint approach. Not very massive, not a big push. You saw that under Bush I and II, you saw that under Reagan. Under Clinton and Obama, bigger. I don't make a value judgment of good or bad, but it's a small footprint versus big footprint.

The small footprint works well for state chiefs because there are opportunities for us to do things. Now, one thing I had a chance to do in Florida was to oversee our application for the waiver for No Child Left Behind. One of the things that Arne did to support our effort in Florida, because we have a large number of students who come to the United States, was when do you create the clock to tick for when those test scores are to be counted for the kids and for the school. Was it a back-and-forth with

DOE? Absolutely, but we actually got the waiver we needed.

That was a way of the Department of Education looking at a state with a population that's radically different than most states. Most of our students are on free and reduced-price lunch; most are Hispanic and African American, which is now the majority. In fact, the white kids are the minority now when you talk about public education. And the fact that they said, "Yep, you can do this," that was a smart move for the federal government to work with the state, given where we are.

Where Arne and I disagreed was on changing our formula for high school graduation. We had 80 percent graduation. When I had to use the Department of Education's part, it dropped to 70 percent. So suddenly I had to explain to our parents what happened. Those are nuances, but there are things the federal government can do.

From a Trump perspective, I think he was pretty clear in his Gettysburg address. He had 10 items he wanted to -- I was glad to see education is number four. And he said he wanted to make sure that school choice worked. But when you guys hear "school choice," you think vouchers, charters only when, in fact, we've had school choice longer than charter schools and vouchers. We have magnet schools, we have traditional inter-district choice. So I see public schools also getting taken care of within the traditional public school piece.

For me, I think we focus too much on the "or," school choice or public schools. It really should be the conjunction "and," school choice and traditional schools, because at no point in American history, going back to the founding and going back to those who are on the margins of society -- women and formerly-enslaved Africans -- never saw a one-size-fits-all monopoly approach to education. And I surely wouldn't recommend that Trump and Betsy do that at this time.

MR. WEST: Thanks, Gerard. So I want to actually pick up the theme of

waivers that you use as your example of when the federal government was helpful to you by offering a waiver. Offering waivers from federal laws to deal with unique state circumstances is something Republicans have generally been in favor of.

I think it was interesting to see that actually become one of the more contentious elements of the Obama administration's education policy, especially during its second term. And I think what became contentious was the idea that, yes, waivers were offered from some of the more problematic requirements of No Child Left Behind, but with strings attached to them, in particular with requirements that states ensure that their standards were high, that they intervened in low-performing schools in specific ways, and overhaul their teacher evaluation systems.

I'd like to use that, Arne, to get you to sort of look back at that decision. Help us understand what happened there, why you chose that route and what you learned from it, and, in particular, what you learned from the, I think, backlash that the teacher evaluation policy in particular seems to have generated, and how that contributed to maybe some of the broader pullback with respect to federal education policy.

SECRETARY DUNCAN: Happy to. And where I always start, try to start -- and again, don't get it right or anywhere near perfect, you know, most days -- is: what's right for kids? And a lot of the drama's around what's right or wrong for adults. And for me, that's a very second- or third-tier issue, to be very blunt about it. And I just think there are far too many children today across America who are poorly served by education. And when we fail to educate, we've condemned them to poverty and social failure.

So I talked about our pride, and this is genuine pride, that we have high school graduation rates up to all-time highs as a nation. That's lots of hard work by tons of people around the nation. We're at about 84 percent.

The truth is that means there are about 750,000 young people, often black and Latino, who are leaving our schools for the streets each year. And they have no chance to have a successful life; they have no chance to enter into the middle class.

And so much of the pushback on many issues we got was that we were going too fast. My self-critique is that all of us are going way too slow, way too slow. And we can debate appropriate roles, or whatever, and that's an important debate, but that's, for me, frankly, a secondary debate.

Until we make sure that every child in this country has access to a great education, we have to work with real urgency. We have to make ourselves uncomfortable, we have to move outside our comfort zones, we have to challenge each other as adults. Because, again, rooms like this are pretty comfortable. Life for a lot of people around this nation now is very, very scary. And until we're walking in their shoes, until we're understanding that, I think we get complacent.

So, yes, we insisted on high standards because I would defy anyone to give me a good reason why low standards are good for any child in America. Yes, we insisted on intervening in low-performing schools, because we had 2,000 high schools in this nation that were producing half our nation's dropouts, and 75 percent from minority community. I am thrilled we cut that number from 2,000 to 1,000, and our goal for the nation in the next four or five years should be to eliminate dropout factors. We should go to zero. It doesn't mean we'll eliminate dropouts, but when you have schools that, year after year, sometimes for generations, where the vast majority of kids are dropping out, what chance do they have?

Yes, we insisted on teacher evaluation, because we think that great teaching matters. And we think that, you know, great teachers change kids' lives in a positive way. Teachers who aren't as good hurt kids.

And I always give the example of California. California has about 300,000 teachers. I would argue the top 10 percent in California, the top 30,000, are not just great California teachers, they're world-class teachers. They could teach anywhere in the world and be great. I would argue the bottom 10 percent, the bottom 30,000, probably shouldn't be teaching, probably should be doing something else with their lives. And there's not one person in California who can tell you who's in that top 10 percent and who's in that bottom 10 percent.

And I think, again, if we genuinely care about kids and we genuinely care about minority kids and poor kids and getting good resources and good teachers to them, if we don't have the conversation about teacher quality, we're not in the game. And it's a difficult conversation, it's an uncomfortable conversation, and we have lots of ways to debate teacher evaluation. But if we're unwilling to say that great teachers matter and great principals matter, I think we're lying to ourselves and we're not serious about closing achievement gaps.

And so on all of those things, those were difficult. I don't apologize for any of them. I think a fair critique of us could be that we tried to do a lot too fast. Again, I think, frankly, we didn't go fast enough.

And let me just back up. The context of the waivers is, I actually wanted to do waivers the year before because of, again, No Child Left Behind was so far out of date, had so many flaws. Again, not due to the folks who put it together, but the world had changed. But we had a dysfunctional Congress, and people in Congress pleaded with me, "Wait a year, work with us." And we, frankly, wasted a year, and had teachers and kids under a bad system for an extra year And I regret not doing waivers the year before; that's my regret. And at the end of the day, for all the noise, we had, what was it, 43, 44 states, you know, came forward and took that opportunity, again, across the

political spectrum, from the left to the right.

And so a fair critique of, you know, we asked for too much or we did too much, but if you take any one of those principles -- high standards, turning around underperforming schools, saying that great teachers matter -- if we want to compromise on that for adults, we can do that. I just – I struggle to understand how that helps the kids we're trying to help.

MR. WEST: Lindsay, how did you all look at that policy from the perspective of Congress? I mean, there was the concern about whether, procedurally, new requirements were being imposed, you know, outside of the statute. But, as Arne points out, Congress wasn't exactly, sort of, operating at peak efficiency during this stretch. But, you know, I think people who shared Arne's concern about the urgency of addressing underperformance had some concerns about how this plays out.

MS. FRYER: Yeah. I think, you know, I understand why the waivers were necessary. I think the issue here is no one's doubting the laudable goals that Secretary Duncan talked about. I think the underlying issue was: yes, everybody wants fantastic teachers; yes, everybody wants all kids to achieve; yes, everybody wants low-performing schools to be turned around. The question was, and everyone has said this all the time, the devil's in the details. And Senator Alexander talked about this quite a bit.

While, you know, a lot of this was framed as flexibility for states, these are the four models that turned into six or seven models on what you have to do to turnaround your low-performing school. This is how you have to evaluate your teachers to say this is what a good teacher looks like. And I think that limited the options that states and districts could think about and grow from the ground up and have a community swell of how to create a great teacher. And it was coming from a very top-down approach with very specific requirements around what you had to do.

And I will defend and say that the states actually asked for waivers and ended up supporting them initially. And then, you know, they changed once they realized what they were going to have -- all the requirements that went into it and all the requirements that were hamstringing them into making certain decisions. But I think, you know, the fundamental problem was everyone has these laudable goals, but the federal government's top-down approach to dictating to how to achieve those goals and what results those were going to achieve, but also what local policies and local contexts that were going to come into conflict with the goals and the requirements that the federal government was putting into place.

So I think we saw that as, again, this problem of perceived flexibility, but not really. It was: "This is how you have to do all these things in order to get this perceived flexibility." And also, just general congressional understanding that it's our responsibility -- or their responsibility, I'm not with them anymore -- to reauthorize the law. And although we couldn't do it, there probably could have been better ways in the interim to deal with this needed flexibility than saying "These are the whole new systems that you have to adopt in order to get it."

MR. WEST: And so I hear a concern that the specificity of the requirements placed on states, in this case as conditions receiving waivers, but it's also the same structure, conditions attached to the receipt of federal funds, that serve as the basis for federal education policy under No Child Left Behind, under the Every Student Succeeds Act. There's a concern that the more specific that we get, the more of a compliance mentality we might see adopted at the local level that might sort of limit the federal government's capacity to actually pursue this goal despite the urgency of the problem.

Gerard, I see you --

MR. ROBINSON: So when President Obama signed ESSA, I was one of the people that cheered. It was good to see bipartisan work.

At the same time, you've got to realize that a lot of state chiefs understand the importance of state and local control and that's great. We also understand there's certain responsibilities and things we can't do alone and that there should be a role for the federal government. Now we have the Department of Education, Department of Agriculture, Department of Labor, so federal is also larger than that.

But what I would definitely champion for the state chiefs and the superintendents and school board is when people say "You're free," one of the hardest things to do is to accept freedom, because you don't know what it looks like. You say it's good, but now we give it to you. And so one thing the department could do, either through its local offices, but also using technology to get the word out, is to say "When we say you have the flexibility to do A, here are examples of what you can do."

Now, because we have a president, first time in government, no track record of what he would have done in other states, we're going to have to use technology and people in the Department of Ed to get that done. But as I said before, this is in 20-, I guess, 2016. This is a great time to be a state chief.

SECRETARY DUNCAN: Two things. Obviously, we're focused now on K-12, which I'm happy to focus on, but I just want to, for the audience, I think there's a very important federal and state and local role on early childhood education and on higher education.

MR. WEST: Yeah.

SECRETARY DUNCAN: And the federal investment in higher education is 2 1/2 to 3 times more than the K-12 investment. And the lack of accountability there is a little bit stunning. And again, for me, it's all about outcomes.

But let me just push back --

MR. WEST: And I should mention just briefly, closely related to the project that we're discussing today, Brookings has underway the development of a parallel set of memos on higher education policy. So it was a strategic decision to organize the work.

SECRETARY DUNCAN: But let me just -- but for me, an issue that's got a little buried with the Trump election, but for me just epitomizes, frankly, the falsehood or the disingenuousness of a lot of this debate about being too prescriptive or whatever, and it's a little wonky, but bear with me for one second, was this debate around "supplement, not supplant." And so the simple goal is to have Title 1 money, which is for poor kids, actually go to poor kids. That's how the law was written, that's the intent of Title 1.

What folks in the department now are trying to do was actually make sure that money goes to poor kids and poor schools. And there's massive pushback from both the left and the right. And again, how can we say "We actually want to add more resources for poor kids and for English language learners and for homeless kids," if we're unwilling to do what the law actually requires us to do? So this is not additional burdens, this is not additional mandates. It's simply saying money for poor kids shouldn't go to middle-class kids and to wealthy kids. And somehow that is, again, wildly controversial and hard and difficult for adults. How do you justify that? How do you justify that?

MR. WEST: And this refers to draft regulations that the department has in the regulatory process right now that would tighten up the enforcement of "supplement, not supplant" under the Every Student Succeeds Act.

SECRETARY DUNCAN: Right. These aren't more requirements. This isn't going further. It's simply saying that we need to adhere to the purpose of– "Let's

tack all of your money, your taxpayer money, that's supposed to go to poor kids," it's just trying to say "It should actually go to poor kids and to poor schools."

MR. WEST: Lindsay, what are the concerns that members of Congress do have? As Arne says, this has generated a lot of pushback from both sides that would, sort of, illustrate this divide.

MS. FRYER: So I think when Congress tweaked a few things in the "supplement, not supplant" requirement -- which has been in place I think since the '70s; it's been in place for quite a long time -- to make it easier for states to comply and to show where their money is going and how their money is Title 1-neutral, meaning "I'm not taking away federal money from a Title 1 school because I'm getting Title 1 dollars." The issue with the draft regulations, I think, is, you know, while, again, the goal of having money, this Title 1 money go to serve poor kids is laudable, the regulations set forth, "These are the options that you have to do in order to make that happen." The law intended for states to publish their methodology for how they make sure that their Title 1 funds are neutral and state and locals are not losing money because they get Title 1 dollars, and give them flexibility to demonstrate this in a large number of ways.

The new regulations say, "Well, these are the four ways that you have to do it, and all these four ways are very destructive to the current system that you have in place, whether it is or isn't working." So I think the concern was: "Why don't we let the districts try and figure this out before telling them these are the four things that you have to do in order to meet that?"

And the other thing that, I think, we haven't talked about here is that, you know, there's this idea that there are disparities within Title 1 schools and non-Title 1 schools in terms of where federal money is going. And I don't think that anyone can debate that, but we don't have very good data to show specifically where those

disparities lie, or the ability to use that data to fix that problem.

So Congress put in place this reporting requirement for the first time that, down to the school level, they're going to have to report actually per-people expenditures, including teacher salaries, which the law currently says nothing about, to enlighten the fact that there are these disparities, and then empower communities to say "This is the problem and this is how we want to fix it."

So I think the regulations are a little premature and saying: "These are the four things to choose to fix this problem before even knowing what disparities do or do not exist in your district."

SECRETARY DUNCAN: And just quickly, actually this is a fantastic analysis. I actually agree with the analysis. I think the difference -- and again, it's not a judgment here -- that Lindsay raises it as being disruptive as a problem, and I think the intent is to be disruptive. And so do you see disruption as needing disruption, or do you see disruption, "We've got this great system, let's not disrupt it?" And so it's just a difference of opinion on that one. On the facts, I absolutely agree with the analysis.

MR. WEST: The "supplement, not supplant" issue is very wonky, I agree, but it's actually a really nice one because this discussion, I think, illustrates this difference of approach, both with respect to willingness to disrupt, but also, sort of going back to Lindsay's opening remarks, the emphasis on transparency first. And trying to hope that shining a light on inequities in resource allocation, in this case, or on achievement, will in and of itself drive a response versus jumping to, "Here, we're going to tell you what to do about it."

SECRETARY DUNCAN: So, again, theoretically, I agree with that. I love transparency. Few people mention transparency. But what trumps transparency for me is urgency. And where we have kids in communities, poor kids who have been

denied the resources they need for decades, who have been denied this, and no outcry, no pushback because no one understands this stuff. No one knows about this. For us to say, "Well, let's just be transparent for the next 10 years and see what happens," that for me is not good enough.

MR. ROBINSON: So in a place like Florida a few years ago, you had about $800 million in Title 1. In Virginia, much less than that. And we know where that money was going. It was definitely going to help out the poor kids. There are also some middle class kids who benefited, as well.

This would be a good time for us to go back just as a nation and go back and look at, well, one, Jack Jennings, who many of you in here know. He wrote a really great book -- in fact, I did a book review for *Ed Next* on his book -- but he really did a good, deep dive into the history of the creation of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, but Title 1 in particular, which caused me to go back and dust off some old reports.

But go back and look at what Augustus Hawkins, who was a former Congress member from Los Angeles. In fact, he was at one point my Congress member when I was a kid in Los Angeles. A member of the Black Caucus. What was his role, and what did he think was the important role of Title 1? And what were the debates then, and how did it play out in the South, which at that time was solidly Democrat? And how does it play out today?

While we talk about poor kids -- I mean, my career has been focused on that kind of stuff -- let's also take a look at the election and let's look at the signals we choose not to hear. There are a lot of white, poor, working-class kids who are not in urban areas, who also voted for Trump because often when they hear school choice, how we define it, they're like "Well, what about our kids? Is it always the black kids, always

the Hispanic kids?" And you start to see, at the state level, rural, white Republicans voting against bills, where before they had not, because they're trying to figure out what happens.

And if you take a look at the map, a lot of the people who voted for Trump they live in what I call "choice deserts." We've got to keep that in mind.

SECRETARY DUNCAN: Just one thing just to add, a caveat that, hopefully folks understand, is that for me, money is never, ever the only answer. This is not just an unfettered, you know, turn on the spigot. For me the transparency part is so important. One, I want the poor money to go to poor kids, but, two, I would argue in many places that money is not actually helping poor kids learn more. And if that money is not being effectively used, we've got to find out more effective ways to do it. So the goal is not just to give them the money and then walk away. The goal is to change their life, and that money is a tool, a vehicle, a strategy to do that. So I just want to be explicitly clear on that.

MR. WEST: And so how can the federal government do that? I mean, so part of it is that was really the basis for accountability requirements in the first place, which, as we talk about in the memo, you know, first the idea was "Let's just make sure you're testing your Title 1 kids." That was expanded more broadly and so that the rationale actually became a little less clear.

There's also the federal role in research, which appears to be, sort of, a consensus, certainly was among, sort of, our working group. But you seem to be talking about something beyond that.

SECRETARY DUNCAN: No, no. I think you're hitting it. So for me it's sort of three checks:

First, again, is the accountability. Like taxpayer money, asking any of us

for an additional nickel for education, we have to be able to demonstrate how that's helping a kid. And if we can't do that, we can't ask for that money. You can't do it, it's not fair. And so there has to be accountability. And I do think at the federal level that has to be -- if it's just not happening at the local levels, not happening at the state level, something has to happen. And so I think that that one's important.

Secondly, the R&D is huge.

And then third, again, I would push again just the innovation, the scaling what works. So, again, where you have great local ideas where more poor kids and more English language learners -- again, black, white, Latino, I could care less -- more kids are being successful, let's just help them scale that and serve more kids with whatever they're doing, whether it's dual-enrollment classes or extracurricular stuff or afterschool or whatever it might be.

So I think those three things are ways to hold ourselves accountable, but take to scale what's working.

MR. ROBINSON: One of the things about education is we know how much we spend, but that's not the same as saying we know how much it costs to educate a student. You'd be surprised -- I think this is where Arne and the Department of Ed did a great job in terms of the money they were giving to states to enhance their technology system, but also the database. We know what we spend on kids. That's not the same as saying we know how much it costs.

And so at the state level, independent of the Feds and what they say, we need to get better razor-like focus on how much does it cost to educate a kid in the eighth grade in Algebra versus a student maybe in grade six. Some of our technologies and databases are, per se, as strong as we want it to be; some of that has little to do with the Feds. And I think states should take the lead on this, independent of what the Feds say.

MR. WEST: So we've danced around, a little bit, the centerpiece of what we know about the Trump administration's education agenda or ideas as it enters office, which is this idea of a $20 billion investment in expanding choice for low-income students. I want to get you all to talk about that a little bit, both from the perspective of what would you like to see them do to try to operationalize the commitment to bring it to reality, if anything; and secondly, what are the politics of that?

As Lindsay mentioned, something of that scale would need to get its way through Congress. And despite the fact that we have Republican majorities, we certainly don't have 60 votes in the Senate in support of that type of agenda. And it's not necessarily clear that the debate over this issue falls exactly on party lines.

So, Lindsay, can you first help us understand the politics of the promotion of school choice at the federal level, as well as the challenges from a policy perspective?

MS. FRYER: Sure. Yeah, so, you know, this idea of school choice, a lot of people equate school choice with vouchers, as Gerard pointed out earlier. I think it's a broader discussion that includes magnet schools and charter schools and virtual schools and vouchers. And school choice has actually really grown significantly in the past few decades from state-led efforts and local efforts to promote school choice.

So one caution I would have for the Trump administration is to not force anybody to do school choice or force school choice and define it in such a way that maybe a state or district might not want to take on. So that's something to think about.

The other thing I will say is this is not necessarily a Republican or Democrat issue. You have a lot of Republicans in Congress, as Gerard mentioned, out in rural areas where school choice just doesn't exist for them and they don't want to take on the fights with their unions or school boards or school districts to potentially allow

other folks to take advantage of this opportunity. So the politics are not as clean as R versus D. It's a lot of Republicans just don't see school choice as a benefit to them.

And then there's kind of --

MR. WEST: There are a lot of conservatives who also, I think, would oppose a $20 billion spending program of any kind, right, in education?

MS. FRYER: Exactly, yeah. That was another point I was going to make.

And then the third thing, which is I would say is more recent, is this idea of if public dollars are going into private schools, some of which may be religious schools, what interference -- or what ability does that give the federal government to interfere in those schools, which have typically been shielded from federal government intervention? So there's a lot of conservative members who are concerned about this idea of expanded federal role in the private or parochial school space.

So the politics are not clean for those policy reasons and then Marty's point; the spending reason. Where are the $20 billion going to come from? Nobody wants to -- or not many folks, I won't say nobody -- it would be hard-pressed for Congress to vote to collapse all existing K-12 funding or IDEA funding into a voucher that follows the kid to the public or private school they attend. I think that there is not support for that. We've seen that voted on several times in the past few Congresses. So where is this new $20 billion going to come from?

And one thing that I think has been talked about is this idea of a tax credit and where individuals or organizations or whomever could donate dollars that would support a school choice-type program, but, you know, there are a lot of details that would need to be worked out there. But I think the questions I have in that: who is the program focused on? Is it going to help low-income kids or the kids that need the

choices? And how exactly does it work? Like, who's going to oversee this program and how are we going to ensure that these dollars are ultimately helping the kids that they're intended to serve?

MR. WEST: Gerard, school choice is a topic you've mentioned a couple times, something you've worked on. How do you see them moving this issue forward?

MR. ROBINSON: So we can think creatively about how to find 20 billion, and when we talk about it, we primarily focus on the Department of Ed. Now, remember, there are other departments that have a role in education. For Native American education, the Department of the Interior. You have free and reduced-price lunch, that's Agriculture. There are ways of actually repurposing $20 billion within the existing amount of money that you have without raising any new money and possibly trying to address that.

Now, I know there's weeds in the policy, it's tough to get into it. But let's think creatively because there are other ways to do it other than DOE, so that's part one.

Part two: if we're going to use the term "low income," how do you define it? Do you use the Milwaukee program, which was the first voucher program in the country, 1990/'91, 185 percent of poverty? Do you go to the New Orleans program where it's 300 percent?

I mean, I would like to see something, if we're going to make it -- now, I'd like to see universal. Not going to happen, but I'd like to see it universal. And this is a revelation for me over the last five years. It wasn't my fault because we can get into that at another time. But if you're going to pick low income, maybe 300 makes sense because you're getting families who make 50,000 and 60,000. They're not rich. And the anger amongst working-class families who say: "Wait a minute, there are people I know who didn't get married because their income would go up. Oh, I can't qualify for it any

longer." So if we're going to raise it, I guess we could look at existing states at 300 or so, but let's make sure that working-class families are included.

And number three: if we continue to target this as a black and brown issue only, versus an American kid issue, you're going to raise a lot of interesting challenges. And remember, again, go back to the debate about ESEA and its founding in 1965. It was Johnson who had to cut -- you know, use his -- I don't like the term -- he had to use his office to work with the southern Democrats to make them address desegregation and how that was going to happen. If we're going to have school choice, Trump and Betsy should think of ways on what they want from states as well. It shouldn't be a give without an ask.

Is the teacher accountability to something else? We'll see.

MR. WEST: So in just a minute I want to open up to the audience for questions, but, Arne, I still don't think I've gotten you to give a word of advice to Betsy DeVos. So as she thinks about the choice agenda --

SECRETARY DUNCAN: Sorry, I've got lots of advice. (Laughter) I was very clear. Let me try and be clear once again. I think my advice would be she should set a goal for the nation to lead the world in access to high-quality early childhood education. She should set a goal to get graduation rates up to 90 percent. She should set a goal to have 100 percent of those high school graduates be college- and career-ready. And she should set a goal to lead the world in college completion rates. And everything else flows from that.

So that's as clear as I -- I mean, there are lots of details we can get into. We haven't talked a lot about career and technical ed, voc ed, which I'm a huge fan of. I think that's a real interesting play they could make now with Perkins there. But I just think, again, we've got to agree on goals.

So just to answer this one directly, for me, $20 billion, I don't want to say it's small ball, but it's small ball to me. If you tell me this money's going to help reduce the dropout rate by this percent, then I start to pay attention. You tell me these resources are going to help increase high school graduation rate by this percent, then I start to pay attention. Short of that, it's politics. There's no there there.

And so I have not heard anyone -- and again, this is not a critique of Trump or her. I didn't hear anyone in the campaign other than a little bit on the early childhood talk about those four goals I'm talking about. Nobody. And so that for me, for me, that's my clear, unequivocal advice. Again, whether it's her or anybody else, it doesn't matter. Let's agree on the goals and then let's have lots of vigorous debate and try lots of different stuff to achieve those goals.

MR. WEST: And let's not forget about the role of the bully pulpit and the president and the secretary of education in helping us understand the issues in front of us.

MR. ROBINSON: Yeah. Arne just said something. One thing I wanted to congratulate him on, I mean, it's a tough job that he had, is that he made accountability sexy. (Laughter) And that's important to know.

SECRETARY DUNCAN: Nobody's ever said that before. (Laughter)

MS. FRYER: I was like, really?

MR. ROBINSON: And that's important to know because as I talk to parents and stakeholders in not only two states, but in my, you know, work as -- you know, with BAEO and other areas, people are now talking about accountability in ways they had not, so I want to thank you for that.

And you mentioned higher ed. If there's something that Trump and Betsy could do -- we're looking at the 20 billion -- particularly for the low-income kids, is to

do a better job of pipelining those kids into great schools. But also they have an opportunity to do some great things with historically black colleges and universities, many of them who are now partnering with some of our no-excuse models. So just more food for thought.

MR. WEST: Excellent. Well, we could talk all day, but I want to make sure that we let some of the audience into the conversation. Raise your hand, you've already figured that part out. (Laughter)

SECRETARY DUNCAN: Smart class.

MR. WEST: But as we acknowledge you, please identify yourself and try and be brief and make sure that your remarks end with a question mark. So, yes, sir.

MR. KOHLMOOS: Great. My name's Jim Kohlmoos, representing the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. And really, what a great panel and it could go on all afternoon and I really appreciate your comments.

I would like to go back to Doug's four principles and the final two were about R&D and continuous improvement. And I think a lot of concern in the field right now is that you have these tools, but there isn't the capacity at the local level to really use evidence to make decisions and then to apply it to continuous improvement processes rather than just a compliance-driven education system. So I'm wondering if you think that the federal role should actually focus on building this continuous improvement, evidence-driven infrastructure at the local level. Is there a federal responsibility there given the new ESSA requirements and the Trump administration's desire to further devolve authority to the local and state levels?

MR. WEST: Anyone want to take a crack at that? I have some thoughts. After you.

MR. ROBINSON: So Carnegie and several other groups emailed me

one- to two-page ideas on what they would like to see. And I want to mention that to say that those documents are put in the right place. Most of you won't hear from any of us before the inauguration, but just know that those ideas are being collected.

The short answer is yes. Most presidents, D and R, have come in with an idea. But what's going to be particularly interesting, having two businesspeople, one as president and one as secretary of education, is that they're interested in evidence, they're interested in analytics, and so I could see that being something used in unique ways, and I will definitely support it.

MS. FRYER: One thing I'll say, too, is again, yes, I think there certainly is a federal role there, if not one of the most important federal roles to support R&D and make sure that we're looking both from an evaluatory perspective to see if our programs are actually -- taxpayer dollars are being used to fund things that work and then, also, developing for the good of the field what actually does work in education, both in an applied- and basic-research sense.

I think one thing I would do is challenge the research community. You know, you talked about local capacity and there are programs in place to help locals figure out what evidence works and help locals make these decisions is to really let the field drive the research rather than researchers say: "These are the topics we think are good and this is what we're going to focus on." But what are the questions of practice that local people are asking and how can we as researchers, with the limited federal dollars we have, help them solve those problems?

MR. WEST: Jim, I really liked the emphasis in your question on the need to build local capacity for a variety of reasons. One is that we've learned that what works in one place doesn't always work in another place. So this idea of let's just fund what works, you know, may be a bit too simple.

Secondly, just local decision-makers find evidence from within their systems a lot more compelling often. And I had three reasons, but I can only get two right now. I'll leave it there.

And the question is, you know, how do we go about building that capacity? I think that has to be a state role that they take on. That's certainly the framework that's put forward in ESSA.

So I think the federal government really has to find a way to help states take advantage of these data systems that they've developed over the past years to build local capacity for evaluation. So I hope we see that going forward.

Yes, ma'am? Please wait for the mic.

MS. RANCK: Thank you. My name is Edna Ranck and I'm not the Board of Directors of the District of Columbia Early Learning Collaborative, which is an NGO 501(c)(3).

Secretary Duncan has mentioned early childhood several times, much to my pleasure. And I'd like to hear the other two people, particularly -- well, both and you say something about the early childhood because we know so much about what that can mean to children, and yet the resistance to providing those services, either in the public schools or in the community-based programs, is lacking. It's not enough.

MS. FRYER: So I think there's general agreement that early childhood education is very important. We've seen Republican governors across the country taking a serious look at early childhood education and funding it and making it a priority of their states.

At the federal level I think the discussion has centered around: what investment do we make right now and is that working? Is it serving kids it's intended to serve and is it actually having an effect? And I know that particularly amongst

Republicans I think they see -- I think there's like a $25 billion investment across different programs, not all focused on necessarily early childhood education, but, you know, how can we coordinate the existing funds that we have to better promote early childhood education rather than creating a whole brand-new program?

We've seen the federal government in the K-12 space struggle with what their role should be and how they can support good work. If we add a brand-new program in the early childhood space, you know, is the federal government the one that should be, you know, setting the rules about what high-quality early childhood education looks like and what high-quality early ed teaching looks like? So I think there's a little resistance to have this new, large investment with new requirements attached to it on early childhood education, but a big desire to look at the existing funds that we spend and perhaps, you know, change those or allow those to be more flexible or be coordinated with one another. And I mean Head Start, Child Care and Development Block Grant, you know. That was -- Child Care and Development Block Grant was just reauthorized in 2014, and there is a new education focus within that that didn't exist before.

So I think that there's a movement with small changes in this area, but this idea of a new federal investment, a large one, with strings attached and new requirements is not where Republicans are at this point.

MR. WEST: I'll say that there -- and many of the topics that we've discussed there's a related memo that's part of this project. In early childhood education there's a really excellent one that I would commend to you if you are interested. It does recommend an increased investment, but, interestingly, not in preschool, but on the child care front, which it sees as sort of a necessary complement to that. Of course, that needs to be not just child care, custodial child care, but complemented by efforts to enhance program quality, as well.

So there's some interesting thoughts there that actually end up, coincidentally, aligning with what the Trump administration has said on early childhood education, which is that the focus would be on child care rather than -- not everything. It's consistent to the extent that there is overlap in what they've said.

So, yes, sir?

SPEAKER: What's the future of the U.S. Department's Office of Civil Rights, especially under a Trump administration, especially given the efforts that you, Secretary Duncan, put into the school-to-prison pipeline, and the increasingly -- the tensions on college campuses with sexual harassment and the like?

SECRETARY DUNCAN: I'll take one second. These guys are much more expert on where this is going to go than I am. I would just state the obvious, what I said earlier, is that the level of violence, the level of harassment, the level of bullying, which was already too high, has markedly gone up. And again, I don't blame Trump necessarily personally, but he has unleashed a level of hate and vitriol that is undeniable.

And in his own political self-interest, for them to turn a blind eye to that would be a challenge. And so my hope and prayer for whatever motivations, I don't -- but in their own self-interests, for them not to take these kinds of things seriously would be a challenge.

And I've shared with folks that, you know, not to -- you know, some of the cases that we had to take on of civil rights, this is not work we go seeking to do, one of the cases was a high school girl in Alabama who was gang raped at school and then she is given discipline for lewd behavior. That's the kind of thing that we get. Again, not what we want to do, not what we like doing, but that's the kind of thing that we deal with. Not easy to talk about, but if we don't address those things, if he chooses to turn a blind eye, I think the cost is going to be extraordinary.

MR. WEST: Gerard, any insights?

MR. ROBINSON: No insights other than we'll have to wait and see who's going to be appointed to the position of his assistant secretary for the Office of Civil Rights.

What I can say, knowing Betsy and having known her for nearly a decade, I can't see her coming into office with a commitment to not support -- a commitment to more discrimination. We'll have to see. But these are the questions that are periodically raised for Republicans. The same thing was said for Bush, for W., same thing was said for H., and understandably so. So we'll have to, you know, wait and see how that works out over time.

MS. FRYER: I'll just add one thing to that. The Office of Civil Rights is not going away. It's actually statutorily mandated, so you'd need Congress to get rid of it. You know, there's a lot of discussion about whether or not it moves to Judiciary, you know, and people can debate the merits of that or not. But, you know, I think, I just wanted to point that out that it's not going away. It will still exist.

MR. ROBINSON: And a lot that Arne's doing from the federal level, states also are addressing those issues within Departments of Education who are addressing that, as well. So there are multiple levels to address this, not just federal. So there's a state role, as well.

MR. WEST: Yes, sir? Sure, yeah. We'll try and get everyone in.

SPEAKER: The first young person to -- a victim of the New York City education system, I have to say.

I like the discussion, but I think sort of the problem that comes to me with a sort of goal-setting between the left and right is that there are fundamental differences, one of which is not discussed is pension reform at the state level. So sorry, Secretary

Duncan, but Chicago is an especially egregious example where you have Democratic politicians, white Democratic politicians, colluding with public sector unions who refuse to reform the pension system and increasingly larger amounts of the education budget is gone to pay retired, white, suburban teachers instead of going to poor black kids. And I think that's particularly sinister.

I also think that, you know, the whole idea of just sort of, like, throwing money at the problem is -- it's larger than that, especially when you consider that the, sort of, white coastal elites have just sort of decided that, like, rural white Americans are, like, no longer relevant and that they're going to build the country with the rest of America. And boys in younger schools, as well, are doing particularly bad, especially in rural areas that have been impacted by technological change.

So pensions, the failed structure, I guess, of the progressive state, and boys. I mean, those things seem to be real issues. Democrats are not going budge on pensions and Chicago's, kind of like, the worst place where this is happening, where other government services are suffering because of overblown state pension budgets.

MR. WEST: Got it. So let me try and -- the pension issue is a really nice one, I think, to inject into this conversation because there's no dispute that it's a real issue and increasingly a constraint on state and local budgets, and Chicago is a great example of that. I think it's an interesting question then: what is the role or responsibility of the federal government with respect to that problem, both in specific settings and nationally? Do you have any thoughts on that?

SECRETARY DUNCAN: Again, so I'm happy to take on the question. I take it in a different frame, again, what's federal, state, local? So to me the crux of the issue is how do you reward and compensate teachers? And the historic trade-off for teachers is they get paid a very modest amount, but have the security of having a secure

retirement. I think people who have taught for 30 or 40 years deserve not to live in poverty.

I would flip that. I've been very public. I would pay teachers a heck of a lot more money up front. I would pay teachers a heck of a lot more money to work in poor communities, be that inner city or rural or Native American reservations. I would upend that whole system.

So can you do that at the federal level? Actually no, you can't. That's a state and a local issue. But we have, I think, dramatically undervalued teachers and the teaching profession, and the cost to teachers, the cost to taxpayers, the cost to students, I think, has been high. So I have very radical ideas about a different way to reward, to train, to compensate teachers and, again, to think about degree of difficulty.

To very specific, I have one high school in Chicago where I've had four kids killed this year already. Being a social worker at that school, being a counselor is a fundamentally different job than being a social worker or a counselor at one of our schools in the Gold Coast of Chicago. We don't talk about those degrees of difficulty and I think we need to.

MR. WEST: Yes, sir? Right here.

MR. MACRAE: Chris Macrae, Norman Macrae Foundation. So back in April, on this stage, the Education Commission, which is comprised of 30 national leaders, including Gordon Brown, Jack Ma, Jim Kim, basically started with a different track and I'm wondering how your work connects with it, which is: make a list of every way in which the system is totally broken all around the world. Locally it'll be different, but I think the five biggest things that have come up are jobs, jobs, jobs, but small enterprise jobs, so nothing to do with paper curriculum; technology, mobile technology so that students can be great at apps.

The opposite one, the one you were talking about, I think, why is it that we have to go to Dubai to study the million-dollar teacher prize, if we really love great teachers and want to replicate what they do?

Mass media, terrible. I mean, it doesn't help us scale any good answers. It just complains and causes all the divides.

And the last and fifth thing is why don't we take down some congressman to West Baltimore, which is where Thurgood Marshall started and where there's a huge educational experiment going on. The Chinese come over to see it and it's really working the whole education system all the way back up from the ground around someone called Al Hathaway, who's completely changing everything there. Small budgets, but 10 times, 100 times more commitment of everyone in the community is doing it.

MR. WEST: And so what's your question for the panel? (Laughter)

MR. MACRAE: Well, how does your work connect with those systemically broken things? Because I didn't hear much about technology. I don't think you've specifically mentioned jobs or, you know, I hardly heard the things which the Education Commission are talking about. I didn't really hear to a level of satisfaction.

MR. WEST: Yeah, so let's pick up the issue of jobs and educating people for careers. That was a theme of your opening remarks, Lindsay, and it's a topic of one of our memos. The Perkins Act, which is the federal investment in career and technical education, is the next K-12 law up for reauthorization. There's already been some work underway.

What should the agenda look like on that topic from the federal level, making sure that students are getting the skills they need for the workforce?

MR. ROBINSON: Well, I'd say take a look at what's taking place in

states. So 2010, one of the first pieces of legislation Governor McDonnell signed into law was the College Laboratory Bill. And what that resulted in was the University of Virginia partnering with its Engineering Department and Education School, a community college, and Charlottesville Public Schools, particularly, I think it's Buford Middle School. They've had a downward spiral in enrollment for decades, but all of a sudden, Education, Engineering, and community college come together to teach STEM skills to kids in the middle grades -- first time you see an uptick in families who wanted to stay in the system, particularly middle-class families.

Number two: parents are saying, "Wow, my kid's coming home asking a lot of different questions I didn't know." And all of a sudden, private school families who would have gone private are now looking public. So here is a way -- and it wasn't a radically, you know, input of money. I think we gave them 150,000 startup grant. But now other school systems are doing the same thing with colleges. The federal government could look at something like that and say, "Here's a competitive grant to keep going or to expand it in your state."

SECRETARY DUNCAN: One quick just competitive grant idea, at Education we're great at doing new things, we're not good at stopping things. There's not enough money for education. We spend I think $7 to $9 billion a year on textbooks that are basically obsolete the day they show up in your classroom. We push very hard to move from print to digital. We didn't put big competitive grants up. What if there were grants? And again, this is where I've challenged 15,000 districts, laboratories of innovation, we probably have 10 that have moved from print to digital. Could we put out some significant incentives to move away from paper to devices?

MR. ROBINSON: Well, the textbook company will not be sending you a "Happy New Year's!" card, I can see that now. (Laughter)

SECRETARY DUNCAN: I keep working my way out of jobs here.

MR. WEST: Yes, over here. And we'll take actually -- we're running low on time, so let's take two questions, both there and there, and then we'll move back to this side.

MS. AWAD: Thanks. Aida Awad, Einstein Distinguished Educator Fellow and a geoscientist by training. I come from a school district that was one of those 10 districts that was able to provide one-to-one for students.

SECRETARY DUNCAN: Which district?

MS. AWAD: District 207, suburban Chicago.

SECRETARY DUNCAN: What's the town.

MS. AWAD: Main Township. And also a district that worked very hard to promote STEM education. And I'm wondering what kind of agenda we might hear related to increasing STEM educators and their preparation?

MR. WEST: Adding the arts. And, yes, sir, let's take your question, as well.

MR. SNYDER: Neil Snyder with the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. Just wondering what might school choice look like for students with disabilities.

MR. ROBINSON: So quick points, Marty had mentioned that I worked with the transition team. I was the education policy lead putting together foundations for day 1, 100, 200 plan. In there, I forgot who said it up front, in there is language about early childhood, STEAM, STEM, and I definitely made an emphasis for STEAM, adding the arts to it, as well.

Students with disabilities, that's one thing, again, that Arne and them I think did well, but also one of the great benefits of No Child Left Behind was that we were

hiding those kids for too long and now we have to account for them. I'm not saying we're doing a great job, but just know that there's at least language and people around the table who think that's important and that we should continue to move ahead with that.

MS. FRYER: One thing I'll say about a federal agenda around STEM, I think there's a lot of discussion about this idea of hard, tangible skills that students need in order to succeed in the workplace. Trump has talked about that himself and this idea that education equals jobs. So I think one thing that the federal government could consider is: within existing programs or whatever new programs if they come up with, one is this idea of public-private partnerships where you get businesses involved in saying these are the skills that these students need and we're going to invest and the school district's going to invest, too, and make that a priority in their district. And then everybody at the end of the day, these kids can graduate and work in the jobs of the businesses that helped collaborate there. So I think that's something that they could think about.

In terms of students with disabilities and school choice, they're absolutely a part of the conversation and a lot of states have led the way in creating specific school choice programs for students with disabilities. How that plays out at the federal level, whether it's a focus or allowing states to use money for certain students in a way that allows them to take advantage of school choice opportunities, I think that's absolutely part of the discussion. And it's yet to be seen what the plan looks like from the Trump administration, so I certainly don't want to just focus on low income. I think students with disabilities and middle class and, you know, students in general should all be part of the conversation.

MR. WEST: And then let's pick up these two questions on this side. And then I think we may have to call it a day, unfortunately.

MR. GABRIEL: I would just ask about --

MR. WEST: Please identify yourself.

MR. GABRIEL: I'm sorry, Chuck Gabriel. I'm with a policy research firm called Capital Alpha. And I thought I heard Lindsay make a comment earlier about the collapsing of Title 1 and IDEA funding together and having that flow through to the state and local level. And there's some concern or skepticism about that happening. And I'm wondering if IDEA funding, you know, for instance, for therapy services, et cetera, could be at risk if we were to follow through with, you know, a $20 billion choice program, if states and localities were sort of forced to divert funding in order to take advantage of new federal (inaudible).

MS. FRYER: There are proposals around IDEA, school choice specifically. And it's this idea that you can use IDEA funds to follow the school the child attends. I think the fundamental question comes back to what can pass Congress? And right now, that proposal did not pass Congress.

Choice, that act might not have gotten a vote on it, but, you know, I think people are trying to figure out different ways where you could get a federal choice on when. And I will say none of the proposals are talking about forcing states to do anything in the school choice space. It would be a choice that they could use funds in a certain way to support school choice. But IDEA and school choice is certainly on the table as a proposal.

MR. WEST: Well, and that would be just taking what already exists as a practice in many cases, which is private placement under IDEA when a district can't provide an appropriate public education for the student and saying the parents could make that decision as to whether the education was appropriate or not. And that would require some tweaks to IDEA, but the basic framework would stay in place.

I heard you asking, also, though, about to the extent that IDEA funding

was combined with other sources, whether it may be less secure from a political standpoint. And I'd just say that special education funding has really broad support in Congress across party lines. I think it's a really a uniquely consensual political situation. Obviously it's not as high as the advocates would like, but it is, you know, competes with Title 1 funding quite well.

MR. ROBINSON: Just follow up to say I worked in D.C. Public Schools in the late '90s when Arlene Ackerman was superintendent. We spent $33 million sending students outside of D.C. Public Schools because we simply did not have the capacity, human or otherwise, to do that. So this isn't a new practice. There are ways -- here's where talking to school superintendents and school boards versus states could help with the conversation.

MR. WEST: And, yes, ma'am, last question.

MS. WERTHEIM: I'm struck by -- I'm Mitzi Wertheim with the Naval Postgraduate School, so you might ask why am I here? John Dewey was my godfather.

What I'm struck by is, with these very complex issues -- and, by God, they are -- we don't have people who are able and willing to tell the story so the non-expert understands how tough they are. Boy, is that hard. It's, you know, the difference when having to write a paper for the president or writing a 60-page paper when you're in college. It's much tougher to do that.

But I think the government, portions of the government, should take on explaining things so non-experts get it. And if there's some good examples, they ought to know what those are; if there are some that aren't. It turns out that preschool teachers in San Francisco earn $32,000 a year, it is the second richest city in the world. I happen to think the most important years are from birth through 12th grade when all the neurological and intellectual pathways get built, and the emotional ones. I think the

amount of money -- I know this is heretical, but I think spending $200,000 for a Ph.D. and only $32,000 for someone who's really creating human beings, our pay systems are out of whack. I think that's something.

I'm asking you to find people who will explain it to the general public, so they're not just angry, but they know these are some of the things we need to work on. I'm sorry, I went on.

MR. WEST: That's all right. Arne, I'm going to let you tackle that one. We're in the position of trying to use this bully pulpit, which is a theme of our conversation so far. How can we do a better job?

SECRETARY DUNCAN: So I'll, unfortunately, answer poorly because we struggle to do a better job with this. And for me, my greatest wish for the country is if people actually voted on education. And I could actually care less, left, right, R, D, no one votes -- Trump didn't get elected on education. Hillary didn't lose on education, governors. None of us vote -- and again, there's no one, right left, no one has a monopoly on good ideas. But education and educators are undervalued across the board.

And so that's -- let me try and answer it a better way. I think what came through in this election was a huge amount of angst, which is very real. And if we can turn that angst into, OK, the way my kids are going to have a better life, the way I'm going to have a better life is through better education at every level -- early childhood, K to 12, higher ed, we didn't even talk about adult ed, which is a big one -- if we had more folks voting, left, right, Republican, conservative, it doesn't matter -- if we had more folks voting on this issue and holding politicians accountable --

MS. WERTHEIM: But nobody explains it so they figure out they need to.

SECRETARY DUNCAN: So we need to get better at that.

MR. ROBINSON: And a federal secretary is a wrong person to explain it. It should be the state chief as well as your superintendent doing that work. And there's ways of getting it done. I've done it.

MS. WERTHEIM: And the media has failed us.

MR. WEST: So I think one thing we take away is the federal government can't do it alone under any presidential administration. We really need to work together at all levels of government, which is a nice theme to end this conversation about the federal role.

Thank you all for joining us today. Please join me in thanking the panel. (Applause)

Before you go, all of the documents related to this project are available on the website of the Brown Center at brookings.edu. I would commend them to you. Thank you again for joining us.

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