

# Center for American Progress



## **SPECIAL PRESENTATION**

### **“TURNING AROUND LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS: LOCAL STRATEGIES IN ACTION”**

#### **MODERATED BY:**

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#### **FEATURED PANELISTS:**

**DR. JACK D. DALE, SUPERINTENDENT,  
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**MICHELLE RHEE, CHANCELLOR,  
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MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

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MS. ELENA ROCHA: I have to say this is a wonderful crowd and quite a media turnout. The three of our panelists should actually get together more often. (Laughter.) Thank you all for joining us at our back to school event. My name is Elena Rocha and I'm a senior education analyst here at the Center for American Progress. I am pleased to welcome you here for a discussion on low-performing schools and local strategies in action to turn them around. As we begin, I would like to ask you all to please silence your communication devices so as to avoid any disruption. Thank you.

Today, we have with us an impressive panel of Washington area school superintendents, each bringing knowledge and expertise on the management of public education and school reform in a standards-based era. As schools around the nation are once again opening their doors, an increasing number of students are walking into schools that have been identified for improvement under the federal No Child Left Behind Act. Nationally, about 16 percent of all schools and 20 percent of all districts have been identified.

Over the last few years, this number has remained relatively steady as schools cycle on to and off of the school improvement list. But as each state's academic targets continue to rise in order to meet NCLB's goal of 100 percent proficiency by 2014, it's very likely that a greater percentage of our nation's schools will be identified and will find it more difficult to exit the list without significant assistance and change. In the coming months, parents, advocates, and policymakers will be closely watching our nation's underperforming schools, including the students they serve and the individuals who lead them with a watchful eye.

Simultaneously, we are on the eve of potential reauthorization of NCLB, and high expectations, accountability, AYP, and prescribed school improvement interventions will undoubtedly remain major components of the law.

While NCLB provides a structured educational framework, it also allows for state flexibility in the development and implementation of strategies to improve schooling and meet the needs of students. But to take advantage of this flexibility, states, districts, and schools must have the leadership, capacity, expertise, and financial resources to support reform.

Today's panelists will address the strategies they are planning to implement to turn around low-performing schools and discuss the challenges that they are facing in implementing such interventions. Many of the schools in this area and across the nation that have been successful in turning schools around have provided additional high quality professional development opportunities for teachers, staffed schools with strong leaders, used performance data to guide instruction, sought parental and community involvement, and increased learning time. These and other strategies together create a school-wide approach to education reform.

The expansion of learning time, for example, has great potential to boost student performance and close academic achievement gaps. We at the Center for American

Progress support this strategy as a key component to help turn around low-performing, high-poverty schools. To explain our conceptualization of expanded learning time, we're actually releasing a paper today that I have authored entitled "Choosing More Time for Students: The What, Why, and How of Expanded Learning." Copies of the papers are available in the lobby and also on our website.

I'm sure that we are all are looking forward to this afternoon's conversation about a complicated issue in a politically charged time. So with that let's turn to our panelists. Each will deliver remarks on their approach to help turn around some of the lowest performing schools in their respective districts, after which we will move to a question and answer session.

Joining us today is Michelle Rhee, the newly named chancellor of the District of Columbia Public Schools. Prior to her appointment, she served as chief executive officer and president of The New Teacher Project which she also founded in 1997. Ms. Rhee began her career in 1992 as a Teach for America teacher at Harlem Park Community School in Baltimore.

Also joining us is Dr. Jack Dale, superintendent of Fairfax County Public Schools in Virginia, the nation's 12<sup>th</sup> largest school system. Dr. Dale has been in this position since 2004, before which he served as superintendent for Frederick County Public Schools in Maryland. In 2002, he was named Maryland's Superintendent of the Year.

And finally, Dr. Jerry Weast is superintendent of Montgomery County Public Schools, the largest and most diverse school system in Maryland and the 16th largest district in the nation. Dr. Weast has held this position since 1999 and was named the Maryland Superintendent of the Year in 2003. He has served as superintendent for more than 30 years overseeing eight school districts in five states.

And with that I will now turn to Dr. Dale.

MR. JACK DALE: Thank you very much. What's interesting is that the three of us have Maryland blood in our experiences (Laughter.) So, what I'd like to do in my short introductory comments is give a little history of where I think we've been with some of these efforts, what Fairfax has done over the last several years or actually probably maybe even three superintendents. We have one former superintendent, Bud Spillane, in the room and Dan Domenech in between us. And then share with you what I'm working on currently by way of more recent interventions.

Historically when we've looked at additional time for either teachers or students, you can see a list of the different kinds of things we've contemplated, whether we use per diem rates of pay or negotiated hourly rates, we'll either do that to add more time into the teacher's work time to perform such duties as department chairs, team leaders, et cetera. Or we have also used those rates of pay to increase the amount of time per kids commonly referred to a summer school or other kinds of interventions. So those have been around for quite some time.

The other thing, of course, with Title I funds which we've used historically along with state monies is to reduce class size under the theory that by reducing class sizes – getting down to 15 or so – you actually increase the amount of time that individual student has with his or her teacher. We also know that most of the research would suggest, you'd probably got to get it below the upper teens and clearly get down into the lower teens and least if not even lower to have any kind of a significant impact. But nevertheless, those are some of the interventions that we've used over the last couple of decades.

In Fairfax, we've got a variety of programs. The first one is one that actually Dan Domenech started several years ago – it's referenced in your paper – is basically identifying schools that were potentially going to be lower-performing, identified as having high levels of student poverty – kids coming from more impoverished circumstances – as well as having high percentage of English as a second language programs. And you can see where we've identified it several years ago, there are about 20 elementary schools, most of which were Title I. About half of the Title I schools were in this mix, and we put in full-day kindergarten for the first time.

In Fairfax, we had not had full-day kindergarten in any of the schools. Other jurisdictions may have - I know Maryland is implementing full-time, but that was in essence looking at two things that occurred with that. Full-day kindergarten, obviously, is more time for kindergarten students. It's doubling the amount of time that they have in the classroom with teachers. We also added an instructional time for students by lengthening the instructional day. And in essence, we've added an amount of time equivalent of about two hours or three hours per week under the assumption that with additional instructional time by those teachers, there would be increased learning that would take place. In all the cases, the compensation was basically the per diem rate of pay. So, as we increase the teacher's salary by about – I think it was about 8 or 7 percent – that basically compensated for the additional time.

Recently, we've also put in place another intervention that I think lots of systems use - we call it "instructional coaches," where you bring in a highly qualified, very skilled, very successful, proven track record teacher to provide instructional coaching to other teachers. And you basically start to create teams of teachers working on quality instructional practices. This particular intervention does not add more time for kids, but the assumption is that the time that the teachers have is of higher quality with their interactions with the kids.

Modified calendar is another intervention we've used in other jurisdictions, where we've basically taken the same 180 days but then put breaks every quarter, and you end up during these intersession times with actually having more time for kids to have either enrichment activities or remediation activities or advanced teaching activities. All three can occur. So the modified calendar actually gives you an opportunity to give more instructional time for kids. And in our case, as noted, I've said seven elementary schools, one middle school, and two high schools are on that particular calendar.

We also have schools which have created a more intentional thematic focus. We call them “focus schools.” We have 33 elementary schools, ten middle schools, and five high schools, and they we’ll take for their entire instructional program and have a thematic approach. For example, we have one that focuses on the arts, and so social studies and history and geography and English – everything is taught from that kind of thematic approach and it gives a common theme throughout the day. Again, not additional time per se for kids, but it’s a more focused instructional time.

International baccalaureate is another kind of a program that we have at the high school, advanced placement programs, and I know Jerry has as well. But in essence, what you have in your whole approach in those schools is a more tightly focused curriculum.

Obviously, summer school is another way to give additional time for kids, and we have in our system – we service out of our 165,000 kids, we have about 25,000 to 30,000 children who attend summer school. So we have a large portion. Now, some of those kids are there for remediation. Some though now are moving into that because they want enrichment, and some, even more so, are going into summer school because they want to basically take a course so they can skip courses and accelerate their academic career. In particular at the high school level, you’ll see kids coming and taking, let’s say, regular biology, so they can take the AP Biology when they enroll in the year. So our summer school now is taking on a little bit of a different flavor.

We’ve also started to use, this last year in several of our schools, “pre-teaching.” We bring students in in August for a two, three week period of time and pre-teach their coming year’s curriculum, giving them advanced opportunity to learn some of the vocabulary, some of the nuances, some of the interaction, so that when they see what their age peers in their regular classroom, during the regular school year, they can respond to “Has anybody ever seen ‘this’ or ‘that’,” and they can say, “Yes, I have” because they’ve actually seen it now a few months ahead of time.

We also have, like many school districts, done a lot of targeted interventions, and most of these, no matter what the acronym, you end up creating very small class sizes for kids – for more needy kids, for kids who have a specific kind of a need, maybe a lack of motivation which AVID gets after right away. But the purpose there is to have higher quality interaction between the teacher and the student. The theory again being like with the reduced class size – when you can get kids in smaller groups, have a significant relationship with the adult who’s highly trained in that particular program – you’re going to have higher quality outcomes or student achievement in the long run.

I mentioned the early start where we’re piloting in a couple of elementary schools - one is a Title I school and one does have sanctions right now where we’re pre-teaching. We look at it as an alternative to doing kind of the regular summer school, instead to kind of catch up all the time. We’re trying to get ahead of the curve.

The last item here is a theme that you're going to see throughout a few more slides, it is what we call a "professional learning community" if you read the literature on that. But it's in essence looking not only at additional time for kids but additional time for adults to work with adults on critical instructional planning so they can be much more effective with kids. And I think that's a shift that we have to make.

Some of the assumptions leading into some of the programs that we're actually implementing in about 24 schools – one of the assumptions that I have come to believe is that we have to stop calling teaching a nine or 10 month job. It's fulltime. The amount of work that is required of a teacher outside of the classroom is extensively different than when any of – at least Jerry and I - started our careers. Michelle's a little bit younger, so... things are extensively different and we have to recognize that that is substantially different. We also know that the duties include many things outside of the classroom. The examples that I would do is the school improvement planning process, the team processes that teachers engaged in.

We also have to get rid of the notion that to advance in education you have to go into administration. If you look through some of the assumptions, what I've come to the conclusion is that we need to make teaching a 12 month profession. And I've worked extensively over the last probably five years – for a couple of years when I was in Frederick County, Maryland and now in Virginia, in Fairfax – to redesign the teaching profession around these major roles. The first one is the obvious one: school improvement planning process where you have a team of teachers working on the normal things that you have to engage in to develop a high quality improvement plan. You have to analyze your student data. You've got to analyze where the strengths and weaknesses of the faculty are, so that you can be much more intentionally, much more focused in your training and all the things that go on into that process.

We also, I think, are beginning to recognize the importance of looking at what we call feeders or clusters of the K-12 pyramid of learning. It's not enough to have just an elementary school focused on interventions and change of processes. You've got to have that done in concert with the middle schools and the high schools and have the teachers across those grade levels begin to interact. What I found to be extremely effective is giving teachers the time to talk to one another about expectations for writing, for example middle school teachers are talking to the elementary teachers about their expectations for a student writing sample, same thing with high school teachers. We have not historically spent a lot of time with that for teacher to teacher conversation. We've thought that the central office could fulfill that duty, but it doesn't work. It doesn't work as powerfully as when you get teachers engaged.

Instructional improvement, we have amazing conversations going on in some of our schools where I'm piloting this with teachers to teachers about instructional quality and what they're doing in their classroom to have a significantly enhanced student achievement. I'm going to quote from a teacher that just last week or two weeks ago when I was meeting with the faculties engaged right now in this, said "Fifty percent of my job is to provide the best instruction to the kids in my classroom." It's 50 percent.

“The other 50 percent of my job is to make sure that all of us as teachers are able to provide the best instruction in the classroom.” She has shifted her paradigm from thinking about the classroom as hers to the school and the children are theirs. That to me is the most significant shift and where I see the significant improvement taking place, is when the school begins to own every one of the children and the teachers own every one of the other teachers in the building. It’s a phenomenal sight to see.

The other ones are less surprising. New teacher support, obviously probably Michelle can talk about that at length, but the amount of time, the training, and intentionality you need to have to make sure that your new teachers are well prepared to teach in the classroom. What’s interesting now from several decades ago is we have new teachers as people fresh out of college. New teachers are also people who were teaching and then dropped out the profession. They’re coming back 10 years later. And new teachers are also people who are doing their second or third career. So we have a variety of different quote “new teachers” and each one of those has different training needs, and we’re being intentional about doing that.

“Student transitions,” by this I’m talking about the notion as kids fall through the cracks as they go from grade level to grade level. When you have a significant adult tied to those children and that significant adult has the capacity to intervene positively as they move from middle school to high school or elementary to middle school, you don’t lose those kids. You have them on track. So that’s another intervention.

Extended learning time, we’ve already talked about the notion. There, of course, and you think of remediation, but I think you also have to think about pre-teaching and then ongoing support during the year. What I’ve done is crafted a model where the schools look at all six of those new rules, plus the traditional rules, and have 24 schools that have anywhere from about 7 of their teachers to 100 percent of their teachers on fulltime contracts, dividing up those roles and responsibility in a systemic matter built around the needs of that particular school. And that’s where I think we’re headed – that’s where we are headed. It’s where I think we need to go as a profession. So I guess I’ll save my passion for my editorial comment or separate the two. As I mentioned, we have 24 schools. They’re all on 11, just shy of 12 month or full 12 month contracts minus typical vacation and holiday things, but they have to look at this as a systemic issue. They cannot look at anyone of those really as an isolation. You cannot just look at extending time for kids without thinking of the training that’s necessary for teachers. The big shift that I think we need to make is looking at teams of teachers working together, not individual teams – not individual teachers trying to improve their craft, but teams of teachers improving the collective craft of that school. And the only way that works is when you begin to put teachers together to offer that kind of planning time.

We have some schools who are in sanctions. These are the kinds of interventions that we’re dealing with. And as you well know, the ladder continues or the bar continues to rise through the No Child Left Behind, but we are seeing some significant progress. The one school I mention in particular probably close to one of those 90-90-90 schools but they’re performing at the 90 percent proficiency level – so quite an exemplar school.

Obviously, the outcomes that we're looking for with this are in academic achievement, but the other thing that we need to focus on is the second one because that's getting missed in some of our conversation – is the instructional improvement and innovation. Because we cannot significantly make changes unless we take the time to plan what those might be and what those might look like. So the rest of them become then the result of I guess that kind of instruction improvement and innovation.

The cost efficiencies I'm finding, you can get much more bang for your buck by extending a teacher's contract by a month than hiring more teachers. The significant amount of time I get out of a teacher wanting to work with his or her colleagues, working with kids for one more month is much less expensive than to try and hire some expert to tell him how to do things in the regular 180 days. It's not as efficient that latter model. This I think is much more efficient. And I can't help but say at this point in time on a national perspective, I think we need to – as you were describing in the middle of the reauthorization debate, kind of suspend NCLB and let us have these kind of public debates and put together a cogent path forward for public education in the United States and then begin to implement. With that I'll conclude, so thanks.

MS. ROCHA: Thank you very much. Chancellor Rhee?

MS. MICHELLE RHEE: Sure. So you'll have to excuse me because I actually thought I was coming to learn from my colleagues about what I'm supposed to do with my low-performing schools as opposed to presenting about them. So, since I've been on the job only for a few weeks and I haven't had the opportunity to put together a plan and a nice PowerPoint, I'm instead going to tell you a little about all of my challenges that I'm facing with low-performing schools and that way if you have the answers for me, you can email me them, and I will then come back in a few months and present what my plan is.

I think that this has been a fascinating few weeks for me. I've learned more about what's going on in schools, how the district operates than I think I ever would in such a short amount of time. I'm light-years behind my colleagues here because I'm focused on trying to get the textbooks out to schools and get teachers on payroll so we can pay them on time. But it's interesting to me, particularly within the NCLB context because clearly NCLB lays out over a period of time with the school that does not meet its AYP performance targets what is supposed to happen.

And so as our data came in to the district and I saw that schools were sort of moving from one status to the next, I sort of asked what I thought was a relatively obvious question which is: "Okay, if one of these schools was in corrective action status or was in restructuring status last year, what was the plan? What was the district's sort of mindset about how we were going to move these schools forward or how were we going to look at each of these categories and what kind of treatment were we going to give to these schools." And I could not find any answers. It was very clear that somewhere in a folder, there were a list of our schools and which category they fell into, but there was no

sort of coherent plant that was driven by the central office – if a school is in this category, we are going to have this kind of touch with it or here’s what our philosophy is versus when it moves into the next level versus the next versus the next.

And so as I was starting to talk with principals about this and say, “Well, you’re in the second year of corrective action, what is the plan?” They’d say, “I’ve got that somewhere.” So they knew that they had to create a plan. It was on paper, but it had absolutely no bearing on what is happening day to day in that school. And I think that is just a testament to the absolutely opposite of what the intent of the law was in terms of how we want to operate with these schools. But I’m going to get us to a different place over a period of time.

Here are what I think are some of the major challenges that we’re facing in the district. First of all, we are a district with declining enrollment and we have severely underutilized buildings. So my predecessor went through a very intensive two-year process to come up with what we call the “master facility plan” that is looking specifically at how we can have a better utilization of our space. And in the plan, it calls for a number of consolidations and school closings that are based strictly on enrollment. So I’ve been out in the community, talking to folks over the last few weeks and what I’ve realized is that this is an incredibly sensitive topic. (Laughter.)

People don’t want to close schools down. It’s incredibly sentimental and emotional though. People will say, “I went to school here. My mother went to school here.” They do not want to see these schools closed down and – and we as the district have not done a particularly good job of explaining why these schools should be consolidated. So the master plan was created. It kind of floated out there. People saw that their school was on the list and I’ve been to community meeting after community meeting where people are trying to just throw the whole Hail Mary and say, “Well, what if we bring in community center or health care” And they’re trying to figure out a way to save their school.

And meanwhile, I’m looking at it from the very specific perspective of when you have a school that is serving 110 kids, we cannot provide those kids with the services that they deserve. When you have a school with a 110 kids, we can barely have seven teachers and a principal. We can’t even have somebody in the office to answer the phone, much less to have an art teacher and a music teacher and a gym teacher with, which now, in the District of Columbia, those things have been deemed quote unquote “extracurricular activities,” as opposed to part of a really solid comprehensive curriculum.

So our entire vantage point or perspective has been skewed. But what I’ve realized in all this is that in order to get the community to a point where we can actually see why these closure and consolidation decisions have been made, it’s going to require a significant amount of advocacy work. Because as I started going out in the community and talking to people about this, I sort of said, “This is the way” I’m thinking about it from my perspective “I want all kids in elementary school, for example, to have an art

teacher or music teacher, a gym teacher. I want them to have a counselor.” I want all these things and our community’s shaking their heads ‘Yes.’ So do you understand that when you have low enrolment, we just cannot provide those services to these kids? Yes, they get that. So we’re actually working through this together and they get it.

And I’m not saying that it doesn’t mean that we’re not going to have pushback and a fight, but when – when they’re engaged in the process with us, I think it’s a completely different story. I also think, though, that this is just closures and consolidations that are based on enrollment. We haven’t even gotten to closures based on performance which is where we’re going to have to ultimately be.

And I think that advocacy is going to play huge part in that as well. And let me tell you why. I went to one of our schools the other day in Ward 8 and I was meeting somebody there and I got there a little early, so I decided to walk across the street. There was a housing project with a number of older gentlemen sitting outside. It was the middle of the day. I went across the street to them and I said, “So what do you think about the school?” And they said, “Great school. We love the school. The teachers are wonderful. The principal – everybody works so hard here. This is a wonderful school.” And they knew that it was slated for consolidation. “Please don’t close the school.”

So I started talking to them and I’m thinking to myself, “This is not a great school.” Nine percent of the kids at this school are proficient or advanced. There’s a KIPP school six blocks away where 80 percent of the kids are proficient. This is not a great school. Period. But it was clear that they have this conception of what a great school meant – because they said to me “Chancellor, do you really think that what we need in this neighborhood is one more abandoned building?” I mean, that made so much sense to me, I get it. They were sort of talking about all the people who had put in so much hard work over there. I understand that, but at the same time I think that if we said to those folks, “Look, 9 percent of the kids in this school are proficient or advanced in math, and here is what that means.” So first of all, look at the comparison to one of our higher performing schools - you all know the statistic if a child is not reading or performing on grade level by the third grade, the chances that they’re ever going to perform on grade level are next to none. And here’s how it impacts their life chances and their life outcomes and their earning potential.

I think that if we can take that information and that data out into these communities, then we are going to have a much different dialogues about school closures than if it’s just big, bad, old NCLB saying, “No, you’ve got to close this school down.” And there are a lot of misconceptions out there about NCLB, about how fair it is or not fair it is, and that sort of thing – that’s going to be a different conversation because then it’s about what the government or what the district is trying to do to hold people accountable. That’s a different conversation.

If we take it from this perspective of saying, “This is the quality of education that we are not providing to these children, and this is how is going to impact their futures.” But it’s interesting because in all of this, my sort of tactic has been to ask people within

the district, “Well, so how have we been talking about all of these closures and consolidations?” And the only person who could give me an answer was the facilities guy. He said, “Well, my team went out and we had all these community forums.” The facilities guys are leading these conversations. This does not make any sense. Why would the facilities people be going out a leading community conversations about – this is all driven – it has to be driven from the academic perspective, not from the bricks and mortar. So I think that this has been interesting.

The second thing is that the district wanted to run a sort of pilot initiative to spark innovation. I think it was specifically to think about what we could be doing in the community that would be thinking outside the box - a lot of the things that our colleagues in Fairfax County are thinking about in terms of extra time and that sort of thing. And what I realized when I came in, people told me that we were in the stage where we were looking at all of the applications that had come in and we were making decisions around which ones we were going to fund. And when I looked at the schools that had turned applications in, it was mostly from higher performing schools. And I thought, “Well, okay, this is not necessarily where more innovation needs to happen.” And I started asking questions.

And it turns out that as the RFP was being put together, we specifically put in certain things that excluded a lot of our lowest performing schools from applying. We said that you had to have this kind of growth and you had to have this sort of stability or leadership, et cetera, and so literally the lower-performing schools were left out of this innovation initiative. And the more that I talk to people, I've realize that actually our lower-performing schools probably don't have the capacity to develop high quality proposals to do this kind of thing.

So then my next question is, “Well, what can we do to actually bring some external resources to bear with these lower-performing schools so that we can actually build some of that capacity?” So we went through that competition, but the next thing that we're going to do is we are going to ask lower-performing schools who are interested in driving this to apply for a planning grant where we can bring some external resources in to say, “How could we think about and engage the school community more in driving this.” And I think it has significant potential. As I sort of think longer term about where the district needs to be, it's clear that long term I want to make sure that we have a portfolio of schools and that the district and the city sees all of the children who are in our city as *our* kids whether they're served by a charter school or what have you.

But it's been fascinating to me to see how anti-charter the sentiment here is in D.C., given how many students are being served by charter schools. It's very interesting. So to get to that more sort of comprehensive portfolio approach, I think that I have to spark some thought internally first, so that we can come up with district driven options that can be a part of the portfolio. And I think that those can come from places and ways that we might not anticipate.

I was in a meeting the other day with a group of five principals from relatively high performing schools in the city and they said to me that they wanted to collaborate with the Commission on Teaching and America's Future to look at a new model for teacher training which would be sort of a year long residency. We've done this in a few other cities – in Chicago with the AUSL and up in Boston with the Residency Program, so I've seen it work before. And they wanted to sort of put something together here in D.C. And they're talking through it – the first thing in my mind is “okay, this is going to provide great teachers – additional great teachers to some already great schools,” which – not that there's anything wrong with that, “but how are we going to get programs like this to start impacting our lower-performing schools?”

So I said to this group of folks, “I would really try to figure out how to make this work if we could do one of two things. One: if we pilot it with your schools first, and then we think about how do we take this to lower-performing schools next.” That's sort of thing. I said, “But the more interesting option to me would be something like – say we're going to bring in five to seven of these residents per year per school. That would be linked to five to seven master teachers in these higher performing schools. So this cadre of between 10 and 14 teachers are working together in these schools”. Let's extract a commitment from them at the front end. That some subset of this group who is going to spend a year gelling together is that they're going to be lifted up and potentially transported and put down in one of our low-performance schools. That would really excite me. And I thought that these people are going to look at me like I was crazy, and they said, “Okay, we can do that.”

And it wasn't even something that I necessarily came into that meeting thinking “this is the answer” or anything. It sort of grew organically from this conversation of what they thought they needed for their schools and than me broadening it out a little bit to: how can this impact the district overall? So I think that as we go through this year, the extent to which we can foster more innovative thoughts within the district and what we're doing to have impact on our schools that need innovation and capacity and help the most – I think that's sort of what are we going to see happening.

MS. ROCHA: Thank you very much. Dr. Weast?

MR. JERRY WEAST: Thank you. Good job, Michelle. Great job, Jack.

MS. RHEE: Great job of laying out all the work.

MR. WEAST: Yes. I was fascinated about this – this is my 32<sup>nd</sup> year as a superintendent and I think I've heard all of those kind of things. We don't want our buildings closed and those kinds of issues. I thought the ‘can do’ attitude that you express and I thought the ability to ask questions – you've got a good set of questions, and expectations. And then Jack talked about the complexity of teaching and learning. And I think teaching is complex and I think it's developmental. And I think somehow that all fits together.

I want to talk about expectations and I want to talk about time. And I really want to talk about if we really want the country that we're going to need, to really help in the world, we've got to be committed to developing school systems where race, gender, and socioeconomic status are no longer predictors of a student's academic success. I want to say it one more time. Race, gender, socioeconomic status. They're too much predictors of academic success right now. Look at any bar chart, break it down anyway. SATs came out today. Draw out four little bars and see if you can't predict who's got the two short bars. We've got to be committed to eradicate that. In my opinion, that's what No Child Left Behind was – it was the first attempt to do that.

We have no Title I schools right now and we have 34,000 students on free and reduced lunch. Sixty-seven thousand children, all packed into a little area, which is a bigger system than D.C. 80 percent of them are minority, 28 percent of them don't speak English. Thirty-four thousand of them are on free and reduced lunch, and not one Title I school is under threat under AYP. Not one. No actions taken against any of those schools.

How'd that happened? Time and talent. How you use your time and how you use your talent. Michelle, you know you've got to have a good teacher and that's what Jack was talking about. Teaching is developmental, you can't do just the induction part. You've got to build the skills. You've got to allow them to communicate with each other. You've got to provide support and coaching, and you have to give them more time. Right, we're a little older. When we graduated from high school, you could go right to college and get in with just a high school diploma. When Michelle, who is much younger, graduated from high school, she had to take some tests and some classes to get in. My grandkids now have to take AP classes, IB, have to have a certain SAT score, and get selected to pay the high tuition. (Laughter.) We have to build systems that don't do that sorting but work for all of the children. In order to do that, some of the things, and I'm want to tell you a story or two about a couple of our schools because I think it's best told through the school's eyes.

I want to tell you about Viers Mill, it's a national (unintelligible) school. It's got 60-some percent on free and reduced lunch. It has like 47 different nationalities represented. We have 163 countries. We have no majority race and we speak a lot of different languages. Viers Mill dealt with this by selection of not only teachers with high skill levels, but with the right attitude; kind of like Southwest Airlines: select for attitude. They made agreements through our system and the unions to do collaborative work before and after school. They didn't punish children by putting them in summer school. They started previewing kindergarten before kindergarten. They started to work across proper scheduling use of time by scheduling their planning periods where all of the teachers could work together. They utilized coaches because you have to know more about teaching and learning; you have to know something about the content. And they didn't shoot low. They shot for the college track for all of their kids. And they developed extensions in their program and kept records of how every child was doing and then matched and regrouped throughout the year, depending on the teacher strengths and

the students' needs. Now, remember, I didn't say deficits. I said students' needs – needs to achieve at a level that they could do middle school-ready work without falling behind.

Viers Mill, 90 percent on free and reduced lunch. They had one Caucasian child. It's about 85 percent now. One Caucasian child. The kids all lived in the neighborhood, about 35 to 40 percent turnover, that meant if I started the year with “these kids” and ended the year with “these kids.” I'm proud to say they have the National Teacher of the Year teaching kindergarten, Kim Oliver, who's back in the school teaching kindergarten and I visited her class today.

They did what Jack was talking about - a different model - 20 days extra time, worked in teams, spent the time staff developing, grouped and regrouped, had a principal that didn't the top down – that did the collaborative model, worked with the unions to help get their support on not only teacher induction, but building skillful teachers; worked with the national board certification folks to get levels of certification of their teachers, retained their staff for a period of three years – made an agreement that you're not going to for three years – worked their way off of the list for corrective action, and now are one of our higher performing schools.

Did the students change? No. We changed. We changed our attitude. We changed our belief system and we changed the outcomes. When you really start believing that all children can learn, you then start to say, “Under what conditions can that occur?” You start utilizing time differently and you start utilizing your talent differently. And you start hiring in a different methodology. Now, my fear for this very good law that I helped support when it came in, is that we will follow under this particular chart that I have up here on the screen right now – the lower track. We will follow the floor and make that the ceiling. I look at a lot of state exit exams and there're about eighth or ninth or 10<sup>th</sup> grade level. And you have to ask yourself as a grandparent, “You're getting these children ready for what?” And one of the things that I think is occurring is that we're draining a lot of energy following a lower track and what we have learned is that you have to shoot for the higher track.

Now, you're going to have to have both of those things. You need a floor, but the floor can't become a ceiling. So we're going to have to develop a ladder in between and make no ceiling for I found out that these kids can do so much more. Ninety-eight percent of our children are reading already in kindergarten. We have low expectations just the way we were organizing. So if you really then start concentrating on how you're going to hit that college and work ready, we created a simple formula. And I'm not saying I did. I'm saying we, our teachers, our unions. Everybody got together. What's it going to take?

First thing is access. Access to what? That means you take down the barriers. We had barriers in our AP classes, you had to have this prerequisite, you had to have that. We had barriers in elementary schools, sorting for this gift or that talent – all of those kinds of things we had bought into the sorting mechanism. Take down the barriers, and I'm going to skip the middle thing and you've got to keep the rigor in – the third part of

the equation. If you don't keep the rigor in, you won't be college and work ready - and they're both the same - college and work ready, both the same right now. That is if you want a job that has benefits and carries you somewhere. That means the middle part is something you can do at the school.

How do you improve equity? And equity is all about training. Equity is about developmental issues, about building a learning community, about differentiating - not the outcomes, but the approaches. So you can have multiple approaches but with the same outcome in mind. It is about using time completely differently. It's about changing the way we word things and changing our expectations through training. It is about all of the things that really were burning in my heart in the 1960s, true equity coming about.

You put those things together, give everybody good access, with a proper teacher and materials that are congruent, and a coherent plan that is collaborative and everybody buys in, and then you have the ability to execute that plan at a rigorous level. Guess what? You're going to have success. And we have had our share of successes and those successes are kindergartners reading at the end of the year. This is the most impacted students that we have in our county against the most affluent - and if you know Montgomery County, we have a level of influence there. There is almost no differential now, and by the way, we break out everything by race. Let's put race on the table, folks. Let's don't run away from the issue. You can hide it and say socioeconomics, but it all breaks down into some of the same factors.

And when we started talking about that, that started to get people's interest up in what we were talking about. And we must go forward and take a look at our - if you want kids out of algebra, you'd better improve the math curriculum. And so we started doing what we used to do in the sixth grade and fifth grade, because we knew that you couldn't get out algebra by the eighth grade. And if you can't get out algebra by the eighth grade, you can't get into TJ. And if you can't get into TJ, you're probably not going to get that college kind of placement. We did it on a district-wide basis, and now we have 50 percent of our population completing and successfully passing algebra by the eighth grade. And there's no difference between - very little between the high poverty schools and the low poverty. And, oh, by the way, this costs money. (Laughter.)

Did that soak in to you a little bit? (Laughter). It costs money. We actually spend \$60 million more on our low poverty schools, and I'm not talking about Title I money, I'm talking about 75 percent of our money comes from the locals - more than we spend on our highly affluent. We have 15 to 1 in kindergarten in a poverty school and 23 to one in the non-poverty. Both are doing very well, by the way.

We now have carried that up and to show you that kids can learn in high levels, all kinds of kids, these are our AP exams. Jack's got similar exams. We're very proud of the two districts. We are two large districts in America, and we have the only two districts in America where the African-American population outscores all of America white, Asian, Hispanic, and African-American. And we're very proud of that and the percentage of our students who outperform the nation - I mean, we doubled the nation

taking the test and we also scored three or higher. And why do we use three or higher? I'm not talking about one and twos. We want college level work. There's the African-Americans - that red line going to cross here is the national average - our African-Americans outperform the national average. And again, I'm going to be very bold and talk to you a little about race and socioeconomics because you have to put it on the table. And you can't hide from the fact that it is too big of a predictor right now on success. Time, talent, can-do attitude, learning communities, mesh it all together. That's the plan and it works.

MS. ROCHA: Thank you so much. These have been wonderful presentations. Michelle, I know you unfortunately have to leave in a few minutes. Do you have any last words or do you have time to take a question?

MS. RHEE: I can take some questions.

MS. ROCHA: Okay, let's go ahead and move to Q&A. Please wait for the mike and clearly state your name and affiliation. And I think we'll actually begin by asking if there're any members of the press that have questions first.

Q: Sarah Sparks, Ed Daily. This is for Mr. Weast and all the panelists. You mentioned a high turnover rate at your schools, how did they address that as part of the school improvement and how were you even able to test the kids at that point?

MR. DALE: The turnover rate, mobility. First of all, we stopped the mobility of the teachers. You heard that we put them on for three years and made a deal with them and the union to help to that. So you stop the mobility of teachers. Biggest drop out rate in America is teachers, 50 percent within five years. So you got to stop that. Second, you've got to do what I call saturation for that whole area. We weren't having many people move from our least affluent neighborhood to our most affluent. They were moving around within the same neighborhood.

So what we did was a congruent, coherent plan for whatever they moved. And we selected all of the 66 elementary schools that they would move to and we had very congruent, coherent programs in all of them. Then we made electronic the curriculum and the records so there was no downtime, and we did everything we could to help the parents stay in that school if we could provide that transportation and those kinds of issues. So there is a way to go about it if you have that selection. All of our Title I schools get the first pick of all of our teachers for example. All of our Title I schools get all of the best equipment quickest. All of our Title I schools get the training. All of those kinds of issues that make people want to stay and they have the lowest class sizes.

MS. ROCHA: Next question? Here in the front, the third row.

Q: I'm not media. I hope you don't mind. This is a question to all of you. Chancellor Rhee, I wish you luck. I have worked with D.C. schools and I'm from Baltimore. So what I haven't heard in this discussion, and I'm glad that Dr. Weast

brought up the issue of race, it is very important in education. It is very important that you look at neighborhoods, especially in D.C. in Ward 8 – and I don't know so much about Montgomery County and parts of Virginia – those low performing schools. Why are we not hearing anything about parent participation? Parents are very important in the education of our children who are from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and race. And school districts tend to have these territorial boundary issues involved that they don't want anyone from the outside coming in. In D.C., how will you engage those parents, in Ward 8, in your lower-performing schools who have their own difficulties? Who cannot read – I know for a fact – who we send mixed messages we want the kid to behave this way in school and send them home to chaos and you need to get out of the boardroom. So what will you be doing in D.C.? What have you experienced in Montgomery County, Dr. Dale? What have you experienced in Fairfax to include parents in the learning process of our children? Thank you.

MS. RHEE: So I have spent the last couple of months meeting with a lot of parents, and what I will tell you is that there is a tremendous amount of public will in this city. It doesn't matter if we're in Anacostia or in upper northwest to improve the schools, to fix the schools. And the parents that I've met in Ward 8 – and those east of the river – are very, very specific when they talk to me about what they are looking for or what they need. I think there are a few things that we need to do from the district side to make sure that we're appropriately engaging parents.

We need to first of all understand that parent engagement and parent involvement is going to look different for different parents. It doesn't mean that everybody has to come in and volunteer for three hours a week to cut letters out or that sort of thing. We have a lot of parents who just – they're not going to be able to do that. You might have to catch them on their lunch break at their second job at nine o'clock at night. That might be how we're going to engage those parents.

So I think that we have to get out of this mindset that parent participation and engagement looks a particular way. I think the second thing that we're going to do is free principals from a lot of the mundane, operational, day-to-day things that in Washington, D.C., they spend an inordinate amount of time doing – calling 12 times to get the toilet fixed and getting paint donated so that they can cover up the graffiti on the outside of the building, et cetera, so that they can spend more time engaging the community. And then we're going to hold them accountable for it.

We have just completely revamped principal evaluation process, and one of the things that we're going to be looking at specifically is: what does your parental satisfaction rate look like? But I honestly think that the most important thing that we can do is to – and what I've been out there talking to educators in our community about is the fact that we cannot have any excuses for why our kids are not successful. And people want to come to me all the time and say, "It's the parent involvement. It's the kids' diet. It's the fact that they don't have a quiet place to do their homework or they didn't eat a good breakfast before they came to school." All those things are real things, but the bottom line is that we're not going to be able to change those factors. And what I know

from my own experience and what Superintendent Weast was talking about was that you can see vast differences in the educational attainment of kids where nothing in their sort of environment or their home life changes. What changes is the quality of the teacher in front of them and the quality of instruction that they're getting in those schools. So the bottom line, and I've been telling teachers and principals across the city this, is that if you want to teach in this district, you have to be willing to take personal responsibility for saying, "That despite every single one of those obstacles, I'm going to ensure that our kids are achieving at the highest levels." And this is not going to be for everyone because the challenges that our kids face are significant, and it's not going to be every person who come in the door who says, "Yes, I'm willing to take on all of that and still ensure that my kids are successful." It's a different kind of person that's going to be able to teach in our district from here on out.

MR. WEAST: I'm going to be honest with you. I've been trying to teach them out to kick my butt. Yes, in a proper way. (Laughter.) If you think about it, people who know the pathways, know how to work the system, kick my butt everyday. They know how to advocate. Now, they don't wait until the kid fails, right? So I just took that theory and thought that we ought to teach people in poverty with high mobility that don't speak English how to advocate. So how did we go about doing that? Well, first of all, we didn't do it the regular ways. We started these things called "study circles" that have just of 15 because people were afraid to get in big groups because they speak different languages. We welded those together like a quilt and created bigger advocacy groups. We got our principals to go visit home visits and do things like that and our teachers to stay stable and maybe loop – keep the classes more than one year so they get to know the kids. And then we started TV shows in four to five different languages that are on a regular day at a regular hour in the languages of those parents and taught them how to advocate. And we had advocacy specialists go out and teach them how to approach us and work it. We got our NAACP in our African-American community make a pamphlet - that they made and we printed - and sent to all African-Americans, Latinos, Asians, Caucasians that are poor. All came from their areas. All said, "Here's how you advocate. Here's the pathway." Then we started hooking up the homes, the libraries and everything else so they could keep track of their students just like affluent people do and then how do you approach.

Now, have we been totally successful with that? No, but the smartest thing I did was hire a deputy named Frida Lacey and a communication person named Maggie Alvez and both of them are training me how to do that. It's going to take all of us to do that. If you really want people to succeed, you break the sorting mechanism and take a look at the outcomes and then rearrange the environment to hit your outcomes.

MR. DALE: To reinforce what Jerry said –

MS. ROCHA: I'm sorry; may I interrupt you? Chancellor Rhee, I'm so glad that you were able to be here with us. Thank you for your participation. (Applause.)

MR. DALE: Actually both of them said that those are very important components. I want to go back to one of the thing that Jerry actually said very eloquently. It's when schools ignore poverty and ignore race in look at learning is when things take off, and that's in essence what Jerry was saying. You have to look at that. You monitor the heck out of it, no question. You cannot hide behind it. You're fully displayed. You continue to have the high expectations, but when the schools make the shift, they don't ever look at any circumstance as an excuse. In fact, most of the time the teachers say, "Oh that's interesting. Now, let's learn," and have that kind of attitude. So it's a fundamental shift as Jerry was talking about earlier.

Initial things that Jerry talked about, we are also just as proactive. I won't be redundant with those particular things, but it's getting parents engaged in helping other parents as well. We have several positions we call parent liaisons which are positions in the schools, they're really parents who live in the community that we're employing to help connect with other parents and make the school welcoming. They'll make the phone calls, they'll do it in the native language if we can – all do that. We have 200 different languages – 200 different countries, 100 and plus different languages, so that's not always as easy to do and we regularly translate all of our things into six different languages. We do the multilingual TV broadcast, et cetera. But what we're trying to do is be more proactive and reach out parent to parent with those kinds of activities.

There is one other piece I was going to say – the other piece that we have – we have an adult and continuing education program. So we're actually on another prong working with particularly our parents who do not speak English, who have just immigrated in the United States, and helping teach them English as well as the American education system. So they can understand how to access - and Jerry's absolutely right – teach people how to kick you in the rear and that's called high expectations all around and kids are successful in that kind of environment.

MR. WEAST: I'm glad you dressed up my language. (Laughter.)

One more thing right there – one of the things I've discovered is parents are not really interested in the school district, although that's kind of important to them – the brand. They're kind of interested in their school. They're very interested in the classroom, but they're almost passionate to the person about their kid. We're not giving them enough information about their child. We tend to give them information about their schools and their school district, and that's great. But they want to know how their child is doing. So the more we can get away from the standardized tests that are once a year and tell you how you did in the rearview mirror and into the developmental types of instruments that measure against the standard how your child is growing, kind of like you've got to be this tall to get on the ride at Disney World? The better you get parent participation and the better you can communicate that in a way that is not only understood but agreed upon, and show them about the pathway that, like Michelle said, will lead somewhere, the more their participation becomes active. Then you just weld them into groups. We don't tell them enough. That's what I'm trying to say.

MS. ROCHA: I'm actually going to use my moderator's prerogative and ask a question. What is the best help or support that you feel your state could give you to help you turnaround low-performing schools?

MR. WEAST: Well, I'll let Jack go on that one. (Laughter.)

MR. DALE: We'll see whether I speak for both of us. We have the advantage of being large, we're larger than many states in the nation. And so in many respects, we have the capacity and the resources. It's up to us, I think, to use it strategically. In Jerry's case, no different than ours. We have about – in our case – about 20 percent of our revenue comes from the state, 5 percent or less from the feds, so it's all local. So what we deal with is the local community, the local politicians, the local passion for education and say, "This is what we need to do." And I think both Jerry and I developed that community passion around what it is we're trying to accomplish and then that's when the resources come.

MR. WEAST: So I'm old and so I'll say what I want to say. And take the lumps later. Help us by, one, incentivizing for our children that can get through these kinds of ceiling exams, these these floor exams, let them go. Don't make them sit there every year. Let them go. If you can pass an AP and you get a level three and you're and African-American, why go back and sit for an eighth grade exam? That's one. Incentivize that, really do it. Do a growth model.

Two, allow us to use time and things different. We don't all have to walk in lock step. There are different ways to go about rearranging. Treat us like we want to treat our schools. If there're 100 systems in your state, let them have a little bit of flexibility if they are hitting the targets because different systems have to work under different conditions.

Third: try to do everything you can not to regiment us into tests that are inappropriate for the child we're addressing it to. It's hard for me to see a child sit and cry because they can't read the exam. They've been here less than two years and they can't read the exam.

MR. DALE: That's my issue. (Laughter.)

MR. WEAST: Lastly: children who have issues can all learn at high rates, but you have to develop the conditions. We're making adaptive conditions so they can learn at high rates. Let us utilize those adaptive conditions.

So there's a lot of things that could be done and I think I'm in a state that is trying to do so. I'm just – just like I'm teaching people to be a bur under my saddle. I'm bur under other people saddle, too. That's part of it.

MR. DALE: To reinforce that – in education we were making some great strides after World War II, and equal opportunity, everything was a process measure. We're

measuring access. We're measuring opportunity by process and Jerry is basically right on target, I believe, in saying we need to shift from the process things controlling time, controlling seat time, controlling credit number, and look at the outcomes we're looking at for kids and let us focus on the outcomes and let the variability begin to occur in process. And our states across the nation are in very different places around that. You look at the amount of technology in our kids now and what they can do with distance learning, online learning, but they also – and we know this – we have to pay attention to social learning, so you've got to have a balance. You can't do everything out of the classroom, but the point is be explicit about their outcomes like socialization, academic progress, centralized skills, whatever it is, and let's be explicit about those kinds of outcomes and not get so hung up on the minutes and seconds.

MR. WEAST: There's a difference between commitment and compliant. I know you all know that. There's also a huge difference between activities and productivity. And there's a whole big difference between processes and outcomes. Let's shoot on the outcomes in a committed way, and I think we will hit a much higher target. And let's see if we can incentivize that. Children do not like to be put down and neither do the teachers who work in those buildings. And I think there's a way that we can incentivize it and lift them up. We've got to get them a vision and put a little hope back in this equation. This can't be a deficit model, folks. It can be a model where you can get more children to win. And you get a whole lot better performance out of people who feel a level of oversight, but not the level of overseer. And there's a big difference in how that feels.

MS. ROCHA: Other audience questions? Yes, in the back.

Q: Thank you. No Child Left Behind, you both, I think if I summarized your comments correctly, are not fans of the legislation.

MR. WEAST: You get mine wrong. I'm kind of half – I'm half and half.

MR. DALE: Let's get on with your question, then we can maybe comment.

Q: Well, the question is whatever half is on the negative side, what is that you are not positive? Why don't you like No Child Left Behind? That's the question.

MR. WEAST: The half that I like is it pushes us. I think it really did put race and special ed and many of the issues that have been swept under the rug on the table. I like that. The part that I don't like is that you think that we can make everything monolithic. There's not that much of a degree of flexibility and everybody has to march in the same parade, on the same day, at the same hour, with the same test, and you can't get much good feedback to the parent or to the teacher on a test that costs \$15 that you give once a year.

MR. DALE: And you get the results back six months later or four months later.

To reinforce what Jerry said, the – absolutely the tenets of the law, the purpose of the law exposing those shortcomings in education, we need to pay attention to – absolutely right on. It's punitive. It's deficit driven. It's built around the school and it's not built around the kids. It's not built around teachers. It does not make distinctions between different rates of learning, different kinds of kids and if you were following the press last year, I tried to take on the English language learner issue. It is horribly inadequate in recognizing what you – no matter what research you want look at, there's a learning curve that takes place in learning English. We got to recognize that and take a look at assessing that progress and not be idiotic and so singular in our focus that you're losing sight of what the purpose is. That's part of the issue from I think both of our perspectives, it's too, as Jerry said, homogenous or monolithic in this approach.

MR. WEAST: How do you feel if you're one of our teachers or you're one of our principals and I go to you and I say, "I love you, but there's 27 ways to fail and only one to succeed?" And that's the problem. You've got to hit 27 blooms to make AYP, and I'm proud of our schools that are able to do that, especially with the high poverty. But with the cell size of five – you've got 27 cell sizes of five - and if a couple of kids have a bad hair day, it doesn't mean school's a failure. And so I think we've got to loosen up a little bit on the definition here and it can't be just pass-fail. It's got to be developmental on outcome and growth oriented.

MS. ROCHA: There is a question here –

MR. WEAST: But I like the social justice part, so don't be painting me against it totally.

Q: Hi, my name is Pam Konde with the National League of Cities and I know you both mentioned that you don't want – that you have to address to what's in the classroom honestly and not what potential excuses or problems are outside in the communities. But I would like to know what kinds of wraparound services, what kind of help have you gotten from the counties in trying to address some of those community problems so that, for example, kids don't miss those 10 days of class and are in the classes and are able to learn and aren't moving around as much and things like that. Or what else could we be doing if we're not?

MR. WEAST: Right, I want to take a shot and I'll let Jack take a shot. First of all, I am blessed. I'm in a liberal progressive county. Honestly. Where the politicians from the County Executive to the County Council to the Board of Education are all lined up to do the kind of things that I'm talking about. And our parents and taxpayers, 75 percent of our people don't have school, allow us to do this differentiated model where we can put the money where we need it and build schools and those kinds of things. I don't think that exists everywhere, and it's time we as adults grew up and remember this is a kid issue. And it's time we start thinking about these are the kids that are going to inherit this climate that we made and they're going to inherit some of the issues that we have passed on, and they're going to inherit a global economy of which they're going to have to compete in. And so I'm glad to see that things are beginning to line up in D.C.,

but we're going to have to do more of that. I have good relationships with the superintendent in Chicago. He's got a better alignment, and in Boston had a better alignment. So it is again all of us lining up regardless of your system of government to create the outcome levels.

MR. DALE: Jerry and I are blessed with the county government serving the same population as the county schools.

MR. WEAST: Right.

MR. DALE: Now, across the nation I've been in other states, that's not always the case, so we can work with – if you will – one entity looking at some of the wraparound services, but I think we are both blessed with aligned counties, and just an example, when I arrived in Fairfax, we begin working on after school programs for middle school kids and the county providing and we're providing and how do we mesh those two together. So we do wrestle through turf issues, but it was never an adversarial wrestling. It was genuinely "how do we best provide and who should be supervising which programs, which adults, which kids and how do we mess with bus transportation et cetera." So I think, in our case in Fairfax, we've had a great conversation. I use that just as a minor example of kind of wraparound services we're working on.

MR. WEAST: To be very specific, I say, "I need recreation." They help me provide recreation. I said, "I got a health problem. These kids can't see. They can't hear" – so we started health clinics and a lot of people would have a big debate over health clinics. I said, "If you're going to hit the trajectory here, you've got to start early." We started preschools. Now, we moved up preschools to full day. I said, "We have to have all day kindergarten." They came to me and they said, "You know, that's going to mean about 150 new trailers out there which is going to get us in trouble." We put 14,000 kids in trailers and guess what – we got all day kindergarten.

I said, "We need to lower class size." Those are commitments that if you're trying to commit to the conditions necessary to get the outcomes, you will do in the short term until you get your infrastructure built up, but you won't let them drop. Prenatal care, early childhood, good health care, proper ways of attracting employees and retaining them, all of those are commitments we all have to make and into staff development, too.

MS. ROCHA: Bill Taylor.

Q: My name is Bill Taylor. You were asked about what you'd like from the state and then you were asked the question, Dr. Dale, about English language learners. And it occurs to me to ask wouldn't you like from the state the ability to give kids whose primary language is not English the ability to take the tests in Spanish where there are good tests, rather than differing assessments for a number of years?

MR. DALE: I actually, wrestling with that issue, my challenge is – I have children from over 200 different countries speaking over 100 different languages and about 50 percent or less, or a little less than that, are of Hispanic descent. I have another 50 percent from who with that doesn't pertain. So I wrestle with that one and I think what I've come to believe is our primary mission with our kids – Jerry said it really well – is get them ready to be really productive citizens in this society, whether it'd be college or a job in a highly trained environment, not just shuffling hamburgers. So part of that is to get them English language proficient. So for my belief, if I was setting up the No Child Left Behind, I'd go back to the Title III provision which isn't often talked about, for which there are standards of English language acquisition which we need to be held accountable for and that's the part that I would – in fact I began reporting this publicly this week on our English language progress – before you get to a stage of sufficient English prowessness if you will, that you can then have a command of the English language reading test, which isn't just reading English in a phonetic way – it's understanding all of the nuances of poetry in English language and short stories. That's what reading tests are really all about. But you've got to get a level of English proficiency first before you're at that level with your peers. I think we ought to be hold accountable for that kind of progress. Sure we can test maybe that and making sure they're making progress for that, but there're other assessments that we can use that are very, very valid on English language acquisition, and I think that's the key one we need. And I would argue that within three years, maybe four at the max, kids (inaudible) taking the regular assessment.

I use as an example is our assessments this year, taken the SOLs in Virginia, our entry level kids that ESOL – the level one kids passed it at about 10-12 percent rate and most of them is because they could not really understand the reading test. And I'm just talking reading, not mathematics. I'm just talking reading. And then when you go to the second year level or level two of English proficiency, they bumped it up into the 30 plus percent pass rate. And the kids really got to the third level – the third level of English level proficiency, they were now starting at 60 and 70 percent pass rates, a little below the rest of our population, but you can see now they're in the neighborhood of being able to take a test for which it might have some meaning. Because when a child gets a 10 percent pass rate, that's meaningless – where you have 10 percent of the children passing the test. That's kind of a meaningless statistic. So that's where I come down on that one.

MR. WEAST: Hey Bill, how are you. I've got a mixed – it depends, okay? First of all, can we be trusted not to use this as a sorting mechanism is I think the basic question. I know – I've talked to a lot of special ed parents and a lot of parents of ESOL students and their major worry is that if they take a different test, will they get a different level of outcome or proficiency or will this be sorting? So you got that on one hand, but on the other hand, you've got a very, very important issue. Is that instrument actually measuring that child's ability or that demonstrated the ability to know math or reading or science or whatever you do? If that instrument isn't appropriate in the language for that child, then you're not getting a good reading of the child. The child looks like it's a failure and it's not. So we're kind of caught on the horns of that dilemma and part of that is that we've had a sorting mechanism for so long. Because all you need to do is go

around any high school and take look at who's taking the advanced placement classes or any of those other things that are the road to ready and people have a trust issue.

So I think we're going to have to work our way out of this and I also think we're going to have to really understand that you can't just measure a child on a given test with – there is no test that is psychometrically sound enough to do that and accurately predict that child's success. So we need multiple measures and we need to take a look at a little broader way of looking at how a child learns. And some of that has got to come back that's developmental to help the teacher understand where the child's at so we can get them properly placed on the trajectory.

MS. ROCHA: Okay, we have time for a couple of more questions. Roger, the woman in the blue, and then the woman in the white.

MR. WEAST: Roger scares me. He's really smart. (Laughter.)

Q: My name is Roger Wilkins and Jerry is deputy of my sister-in-law's. (Laughter.)

MR. WEAST: He's a Pulitzer Prizer winner. That's why he scares me.

Q: Jerry, this is really a straight question. As you talked about how your resources go and how you have to invest your resources, you talked about the fact that it is an affluent county. I would think that a lot of affluent parents have a kind of proprietary sense about the school system.

MR. WEAST: Absolutely.

Q: And so the question is: how do you rearrange those resources in this Robin Hood kind of way and not get your head torn off?

MR. WEAST: Well, if I take off my coat, I can show you the arrow marks, okay? But I have been there eight years and got renewed for another four, so they haven't penetrated the heart yet. One of the things that we've done is tell the truth and I think Chancellor Rhee is doing a great job of that. The truth of the matter here is the brand of the county is what matters - that it works for all the kids in that county.

The second truth is that only 25 percent of the county has kids in school, 75 percent own a home. So they weren't interested, especially in this time that their homes retain their value and the county retains its brand. They also buy into the fact that in their own businesses and their own lives, how they invest their money, they invest in them. So if you then can convince them that this is the outcome that you have to get for all of the children, and you honestly put race and socioeconomics, and all those things on the table, they will allow you or at least have allowed us to develop the conditions where that child's a winner. When that child's a winner, then our schools can stay competitive with other counties around us. And that river that goes between us isn't the river of denial,

where we cover things up. We can actually put forth and stay competitive even though our demographics have changed 10 to 15 percent in the last eight years.

MR. DALE: Let me go one step – I'll summarize that. The key thing that has allowed, I think, both of us to engage in that because you are absolutely right. When No Child Left Behind first came on board, I was worried about a zero sum game because if you have to take resources away from your traditionally vocal, politically involved, affluent people, you will have a horrible situation. Fortunately, at least in my circumstance and when I was in Maryland – Maryland went through a study called the Thornton Commission which basically plowed \$1.3 billion, I think it was, more into public education in Maryland.

MR. WEAST: Yes, I just didn't get my share. (Laughter.)

MR. DALE: When I was in Frederick, we thought you got more. (Laughter.) In Virginia, the same issue occurred. The last thing you want is a zero-sum game, so that's part of having a county government who recognizes the downside of a zero-sum game. So we've both been blessed, I think, with local government that says, "We need to add resources to less – more impoverished or more needy situation to create a more equitable environment." Without that, if you're in a zero-sum game, I think you are right on: you have a horrible situation, but I think we've been blessed with not having to have a zero-sum game.

MR. WEAST: Again, we are teachers on special assignment. Our job is to teach our communities what the real issues are and to be advocates for those people who do teach children. And if they don't have the proper, coherent plan – we owe them a curriculum for example. So if you go into the district that doesn't have a curriculum, you've got a problem. We owe them the North Star. What do we want you to achieve? We owe them a building that actually works, a coherent set of supplies and the technology to improve productivity because we haven't given them more time. We owe them a parent that can advocate, not just beat them up, but advocate for the child, and we owe them a proper instrument in which to raise up the questions of how that child is progressing along this ladder or trajectory. They, in turn, owe us support and questioning and they owe us their allegiance to push their children in a way that helps a child get sleep, proper health, good nutrition and learn about how to get along with each other. Because we just don't want a bunch of smart people that can't get along.

Q: Good afternoon. My name is Judy Winston. I was struck by the comment that both of you made about the No Child Left Behind Act and the limitations on the statewide assessment given once a year and not getting results back for another six months. I wanted to know if you've adopted any innovative strategies for helping your teachers to evaluate other assessments perhaps given on a shorter term basis for the purpose of being able to then adjust instruction to meet the particular needs of students who are not demonstrating. And whatever the assessment instruments are used that they are learning what's being taught. So have you done anything to help teachers with that in the course of the school year and –

MR. WEAST: The answer is yes.

Q: Okay, good.

MR. WEAST: Absolutely.

MR. DALE: You could call them formative assessments. We've also in our school system – or our board just a year ago, basically, we worked together with the community to say, “We need to adopt a set of outcomes or goals or standards that go beyond the floor” as Jerry called it. So we're looking – I think Jerry does too – at many more different assessments: AP, IB, SAT. We're looking at it – pass advance rates which is the terminology in Virginia for more than just the basics, if you will. We're looking at completion of algebra by eighth grade. That's not even touched in the law, if you will, and well beyond that.

And then the other thing we're doing is we're moving beyond just the averages, if you will, in the system to not only break it down by race, that's fine, but the next step we're moving toward is to have some expectations for individual students. For example, while we haven't explicitly required this, we're on the verge of basically stating as an expectation that every one of our kids ought to be taking an advanced level class by the time they graduate: AP, IB, dual credit enrollment, advanced certification. You've got to be finding your passion and your area of interest before you walk across the stage with a diploma. And the way to do that is begin to get engaged in some of those advanced level coursework and then begin to monitor on a child-by-child basis and report what percentage of our children are meeting all these standards, not just what the average score was. So that's a shift that we're in the middle of making right now and then backward mapping all of those in elementary, middle, et cetera, and formative assessments and formative milestones along the way to make sure we make progress.

Jerry's example of math in sixth grade is a perfect one for the algebra. You can't do algebra unless you're prepared for it, so get back there and establish that benchmark.

MR. WEAST: The answer's yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. Okay, but going back what I found is that it goes back to Roger's question. This is what's helped us with both our affluent area and our poor area. It also goes back to the question about the parents, about the more developmental material you get back to them. What we do is exactly the same thing. We look at the ready-for-college trajectory, ignore the state trajectory more or less, and do the benchmarks that are formative or about the child - on where they're at on that upper trajectory. And then try to drop a line down to see how that was measured at the state test level. And I think that's so important because you're not going to get progress if the child doesn't know where they're at on the top trajectory or the parent or the teacher. It's not very motivating to achieve the floor.

Q: My question, though, really goes to how in the course of the school year – say a test is given week one and you get results back week two or three or –

MR. WEAST: You teach your teachers how to... What else in America do we invest less than 1 percent on the training and the development of the employees who work in the business - other than education? So you have to really invest in your teaching workforce. And we're fortunate: we're up to 3 percent; big deal. But you've got to help them because they give unit exams. They get – it is a constant type of measurement that is broader, more robust, and doesn't hold people down. You can't hold the kids that are going fast down. We would – I wouldn't be sitting here if we held the speedy learners, the kids that can metabolize this back. We've raised scores in all of our more affluent areas or areas where we've got kids and we've got kids in all areas now that can achieve at high rates.

MS. ROCHA: Next question.

Q: Hi, I'm Garell Craig and I'm employed with Fairfax County Public Schools and I have a question for Dr. Weast and Dr. Dale. Dr. Weast, I believe I heard you say that one of the reasons why you feel that you can support No Child Left Behind and one the ways that you believe to turn around scores in your schools is by having frank conversations about race. I'd be interested in knowing some specifics about how you did that.

And then Dr. Dale, I heard you say something about how when race and poverty are ignored that's how school can begin to make great strides in terms of student achievement. So I wondered if the two of you kind of disagreed there or if I misheard.

MR. WEAST: I don't know that we disagree. I've had a career that has spanned more than one state and when I was in North Carolina, we were doing this thing of putting county systems together. And I had an opportunity on the front-end of one of those and then to operationalize for six years putting three school systems together. They were all in the same county, but nothing was the same, including the bus routes. Didn't bank at the same bank, didn't – any of those things.

You know what I found the bottom of it was? It was race. Two of them were majority African-American and one was majority white. And I found when we redistricted and did the school openings and all that kind of stuff, some of the same things that Michelle was talking about. There are real issues here. What we found is if you can put those issues on the table and merely be honest with them, people have to deal with them. And when I came to Maryland, we really didn't even want to put in our call to action, our first document, the word "expectations" because they thought that it might be racial overtones.

And we weren't disaggregating everything at the level we needed to to drive the equation. It's taken us about six years to actually bring that forward and really get it to the honest level and get people over the fear. And when we have now done that and we've done that with great preparatory work, with working with our staff and our leadership and talking about these issues over time, I'm feeling a comfort now in the

teachers and the staff members – the employees that work in the system and the administrators about really creating conditions for all kids to get ahead. And that’s what we really have to do.

So these are difficult conversations that I don’t think we can afford to run away from anymore, in this nation, because I don’t think we’re progressing fast enough. And while we are progressing, and I like the charts, schools aren’t getting worse, they are getting better, but they’re just not getting better at the rate they need to because the world’s changing faster than we are changing our proficiency level. And we can’t do that with just some of the kids anymore.

MR. DALE: Let me clarify my comment about the race - poverty thing. If you think of – we’ll go to Peter Singy’s comment about the mental models. Part of understanding your own mental model is discovering what it is. It’s so internal that you don’t know it until you begin to explore it. And what I’ve seen in schools that have maybe been going along an improvement and then they reach the tipping point, turning point and they are not taking off, is something caused them to shift their conversation from, “Oh, let’s see, this child has these impoverished circumstance or this child has this – circumstance at home, parents are” whatever the – they don’t talk about that anymore. They shift from talking about what the child is coming from and they shift into what the child can become and a true belief and passion that all kids can be there.

And so it’s not like you can forget about the – I think you have to wrestle with and I don’t have any answer for this one, but what I see in schools that are before that turning point is more conversations around some of the circumstances in the lives and backgrounds and other things, and I see a shift in these other schools to do more about sharing of instructional techniques to help this person because that technique will help them, and had nothing to do – it had some things to do with their background, but that’s – it wasn’t a limiting factor. It was a – “okay, so this person hasn’t had this experience, let’s give him this experience.” So that’s what I was trying to convey.

MR. WEAST: And how No Child Left Behind fits into that, which is a good question, is it actually put it on the table at a national level, but that’s no reason just to keep something that isn’t working to its potential the same way it is.

MS. ROCHA: Clearly from the presentations today, leadership and innovation is a significant part of the school reform equation, but I think the other piece of the equation is public recognition that high quality education is a moral imperative. So we all definitely have a work cut out for us. It’s almost like a national PR campaign. But I would like to thank our expert panelists today. It has been a very lively and informative discussion. And thank you all for coming.

(Applause.)  
(END)