COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
BOARD OF EDUCATION
**** FORUM ****
EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS & EFFECTIVE LEADERS
IN URBAN DISTRICTS FORUM

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
350 MAIN STREET
MALDEN, MASSACHUSETTS
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2000
4:00 - 6:00 p.m.

PRESENT:

Dr. David P. Driscoll, Commissioner of Education
Mr. James A. Peyser, Chairman
Dr. Roberta R. Schaefer, Vice-Chair
Dr. Abigail Thernstrom, Lexington

PANELISTS:

David Levin
Dr. Gregory Hodge
Nancy Ichinaga
Kim Marshall

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Good afternoon, everyone. I want to thank you all for coming to this event on effective schools and effective leaders. By way of background, I think there are a couple of reasons why this is important, beyond just the general value of having a discussion involving Board members and involving a larger community about what it takes to run excellent schools in difficult circumstances. Here at the state level, there are a couple of things that we're beginning to grapple with and need to start accelerating our work on.

One is on the issue of leadership itself, trying to understand not only what it takes to develop good leaders, but also what good leaders look like and understanding some of the more inner characteristics of good leadership, especially in the urban context.

The second thing is that we have, as many of you are no doubt aware, a school accountability system that is beginning to get going. One of the elements of that system is, when schools are found to be under-performing, there needs to be a turnaround plan put in place, a school improvement plan that is approved by the Board and is monitored over time. Understanding what it takes to actually create the potential for excellence in situations which are not only difficult, but perhaps far worse than that, is critical in order for us to do our job as part of the accountability system.

We have with us now four school leaders. I'd like to first turn this over to the Commissioner to make any comments, and then to quickly introduce the four panelists who are here, and then turning it over to our panelists, each to present about a ten-minute discussion about their own experience in their

schools, their own observations on what it takes to develop high-quality schools in urban settings, and what the role of leadership is in that process. Then, we hope to have as informal and open a discussion as we can among the people here around this table, and then open it up to questions from the floor to have as lively and informal interchange as we possibly can.

COMMISSIONER DRISCOLL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll be brief because I'm very anxious to hear from our guests. First of all, I want to thank Chairman Peyser for his leadership not only in organizing this forum, but also past forums. We even have one scheduled next month. Not only are they most appropriate subject matter, but we've been able to convince very important people to join us, as is the case today.

As Jim mentioned, this is a very appropriate topic here in Massachusetts. I've often said that the most difficult task in public education is faced by our urban principals and our urban leaders. Yeoman's work is done across this country in our urban centers, and it's just great to see people who have been effective with us today who can talk about their experiences. I'm delighted to be here.

I want to make sure that I let everybody know that we are videotaping this forum, which we will make available. We hope that MCET will also make the forum available on their broadcasts. We will also transcribe this meeting from the videotape, and we will make the transcript available, as well. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Also, for your information, Abigail Thernstrom and Roberta Schaefer, Board members, are here as well today. Any opening comments either one of you would like to make?

DR. SCHAEFER: No, I’m just anxious to hear from our guests.

DR. THERNSTROM: I’m delighted to have our panelists here today.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Let me quickly introduce the four panelists. On the far end is David Levin, principal of KIPP Academy in the Bronx. David founded the KIPP Academy, which is the Knowledge Is Power Program, in 1995, after working to start KIPP in Houston. The academy, which is part of the traditional New York school system, has both strong discipline, higher average daily attendance, better test stores, and a school-wide orchestra.

Sitting next to David is Gregory Hodge, principal of the Frederick Douglass Academy in New York. Gregory took over as principal of the school, located in Harlem, in 1996. The school’s goal was to provide low-income inner city minority children with the opportunity to meet the highest standards. The academy has produced pass rates on the New York's Regents exam that are nearly double that of the rest of the city.

Nancy Ichinaga is the former principal of the Bennett-Kew Elementary School in Inglewood, California. Nancy had been the principal of the Bennett-Kew Elementary School for twenty-six years before retiring this past June. She continues to serve on the California Board of Education. The school has been one of the highest performers in both reading and math in Los Angeles County. All students are promoted based on clearly defined standards, and all classrooms include bilingual students, who were taught exclusively in English even before the passage of Proposition 227.

Kim Marshall is the principal of the Mather Elementary School in Boston. Kim leads the country's oldest public elementary school. At the Mather, homeroom teachers keep students for two years, and parents receive weekly newsletters, outlining the next week's curriculum. From 1998 to 1999 the percentage of students scoring in the failing category of MCAS was cut in half in almost all subjects. With that, let me turn it over to David.

MR. LEVIN: Thanks. It's great to be here. I can't help but thinking of everything like a teacher. Every lesson starts off with a motivation, and I was trying to figure out this one. A little while before school started this year, I was reading a book about Einstein's work. One of Einstein's greatest discoveries was his theory of what created energy, that energy was equal to mc squared, where m was the mass of something. But his greatest discovery was c, the constant that allowed for the creation of energy. And so I couldn't help but relating this c to schools. What I realized was that the children that all of us serve -- kids who may be behind in school and whose lives outside of school are unpredictable -- often, they have a lot of variables in their lives. What they don't have is enough constant excellence. And so that was the theme that we had this year at our school. We're striving for constant excellence.

You already heard a little bit about KIPP. The school's mission is to prepare kids with the academic skills and character skills they're going to need to enter and succeed in top-quality high schools, colleges, and the competitive world in which we live. The reason we like that mission is because it's actually what we do. All the people here are in education, or related to schools, and all schools have these nice mission statements. The question is, is it actually related to what they do? We can say our mission statement to our kids, and it actually makes sense to them: academic skills and character skills.

We have 251 students at KIPP. They're all in grades five through eight. They all go to school every day from 7:25 a.m. till 5:00 p.m. They go home with a couple hours of homework every night. They come to school on Saturdays. They come to school during the summer. And they do so so they can have a better future and go to schools like Frederick Douglass Academy, run by Dr. Hodge. So that's basically what we do.

All of those hours are focused on their academic skills or their character skills. One of our requirements is that everyone learns music. Everyone learns how to play music and read music before they leave in eighth grade, although we don't believe that should be a requirement for all schools, but it's something we do. For the past three years we've been the highest-performing middle school in the Bronx, in terms of reading scores, math scores, and attendance. What's also exciting is we've also led the Bronx in terms of improvement in test scores, which is kind of a remarkable duality, to be the top-performing school, and also the fastest improving.

We got there as the result of five principles that we think have been essential, both for the success of our school in New York, as well as the success of our school in Houston, and probably the success of all the schools on this panel. We think it's pretty constant from one good school to another. We don't think that we created these things. We don't think that they're original or unique. We just think that we happen to be doing all of them in one place, and they've combined for our success.

The first aspect that we think has led to these results is administrative support and having strong leadership. That's not just including myself, but

it's including the administrative team. The entire goal is to allow teachers to teach. The critical aspect is letting the thoroughbreds run: You've got to find great people. You've got to train them. But then you've got to let them teach. And that's what we're doing at KIPP.

Not only are we letting them teach, but we extended the school day, extended the week, and extended the year. Actually, when we first started doing that, everyone thought we were crazy because they said kids would never work that hard. It was seven years ago. We were basically saying that the kids had to go to school more. In fact, our kids go to school about 67 percent longer than the national average. But, as someone I once worked for said, the definition of "insanity" is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. So we couldn't just extend the day; we had to extend the day and improve the quality of instruction. So our third critical element was making sure we had top-quality instruction.

Top-quality instruction is hinged upon making staff and students accountable for their work. Staff have got to be accountable for what goes on in that classroom. It has to be high-quality. At the same time, students have to be highly accountable for the work that they do. So that's the third thing.

The fourth thing is my restaurant theory. What makes people want to go back to a restaurant? Good food. Good service. Nice atmosphere. Environment. Cheap. We said good service, but along with that is also being treated with respect. I think that's the same thing that creates parent support for a school. So the fourth element is that we have a tremendous amount of parent support. But a lot of schools start off by saying, "Well, we need to have all this parent involvement." But it doesn't come from the beginning; that comes as an outgrowth of what you do in the school.

The fifth element, from all these things, which we didn't have in the beginning, was community support -- the support of the educational establishment, the Board of Education, the state board, and union. Also the support of the local community, community groups, religious organizations, the local YMCA, these types of groups in the community. Community businesses. Also the funding community. In order to make certain parts of our program possible, we have to raise the money that we're not getting. We've been able to do our entire program for 75 dollars more than the public school system. Unfortunately, we're short $2,275. So we have to raise that difference.

Those five things have allowed us to become this idea of a constant in our students' lives. Because of that, our attendance has remained at about 97 percent. We've been able to receive the attention that we've received because of the work that students do. That's why we think Einstein's constant is such a great discovery, and that's what we are hoping to do -- we're striving for constant excellence.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Thank you, David. Greg, let me turn to you.

DR. HODGE: Good afternoon, everyone. The Frederick Douglass Academy is located in Harlem. Central Harlem is one of the lowest-performing districts in New York City. In fact, it is the very bottom of the educational spectrum. We have grades seven through twelve, and this year we introduced the sixth grade. We graduated, last year, a hundred and two students. A hundred and one went to college. The students went to institutions like Princeton, Harvard, Yale,

Cornell, Dartmouth, Columbia, and Skidmore. The lowest-performing student in the school got accepted to a four-year school with $22,000 in financial aid.

We were able to achieve this by letting the students know two things. Every single day, there is a struggle that you have to deal with. The struggle is to remove yourselves from the drugs, the crime, the despair, the fact that they may not have a place to sleep. We have a lot of students who are in temporary housing. They may not have food, but when they come to the school, we give them a breakfast, a lunch, and an afternoon snack. We keep the building open until eight, nine, ten o'clock at night. We have the school building open seven days a week.

Inside of that building is the constant that David is talking about, the constant being adults that care for the students. The adults are all of the adults, from the kitchen personnel to the security personnel to the educational assistants, to custodial staff. Every single individual in the school building believes that the student can be successful, and they believe it wholeheartedly, and they demonstrate it by what they do. They keep the building clean because they see the students going to college; they see the students staying after school; they see the students are there on Saturdays. The custodian, legally, can close down the building at six o'clock, but, fortunately, we have a good relationship. I have the burglar alarm code, so I keep the building open as much as I want. That's because he believes in the students.

The school operates, basically, as a very traditional 1950s school. Some of the panelists on the other side visited the school. You'll remember that it's just like going back to the 1950s, where the students have to wear a uniform -- white shirt, blue tie, blue skirt. The students are required to come to school every day. When they fail tests, students must stay after school. If they did not perform well on the state exam, students must stay for extra classes on the weekend. With that type of structure and great support, especially from the teachers -- and we have probably the finest teachers in New York City. If there's anyone here who would like to try a chance at working in Harlem, I welcome you come in to visit, and we'll give you an opportunity to see what real education is, when you're really fighting every day.

This last year the Board of Education decided, in its infinite wisdom, to give me 150 additional high school students. We have 1150 students in the school. They gave me an extra 150 ninth graders. I guess it was a test to see whether or not we could continue doing what we're doing very well. So I took the students during the summer. All the students had to attend a summer program for six weeks. All of my new students in the grades six and seven had to attend for the month of July, and my seventh and eighth graders had to attend for the month of August. Well, you figured out, I didn't have vacation. But the most important thing that happened during the summer was, we said to the students, "Number one, you will be successful. We will teach you how to study, how to read, study skills. We will give you a tremendous amount of homework, and we expect you to do it." I took my strongest teachers, my calculus teachers, and moved them down to the ninth grade.

Sequential 1 Algebra is a very hard exam in New York state. Two exams are killers: The global history exam is a two-year course, and the exam takes place at the end, which is ludicrous, and the algebra. We had all of the students pass the exam. The cumulative total performance for the school year was 92.7. The high school district's numbers were about half of that. We massacred them.

We told all the students, "You will pass these tests, or we will break your legs. You will go to Saturday class, or we'll break your legs. We will make sure that you're there." And, basically, we didn't injure anyone. We've just made sure the students understood that we were serious about what we were talking about. We did the same thing in the Global Regents. In the Global Regents we had 98 percent passing; all of the students took the exam. In the U.S. History and Government Regents, we had 99 percent passing the exam, compared to the city average which was 20 to 30 points lower. Is that because of the leadership? No, it has something to do with great teachers. Great teachers and a student body that may not be intact, but when they see that their classmates are going to college, they model the classmates and they want to do well.

We believe that we can take any type of student -- and we have students that are poor readers, average readers, low readers, good readers -- we can take any student, on any level, and if we can transfer our understanding of the reality that we believe in, that every student can be successful, every student will be successful. Every student must take the rigorous courses we demand of them -- they must take calculus. That's not a choice; it's not an elective. They must take physics; that's not an elective. They must take all of the rigorous courses, so when that student gets accepted to Princeton or Harvard or Yale or Cornell, that child's accepted not because of Affirmative Action or a quota system. That child is accepted because the child met the standard, the child is fully prepared, the child has worked hard, and the child has actually earned the right to sit in that seat and get that quality education.

We offer Latin and Japanese in the middle school, which a lot of people say "You're nuts." But the Latin helps us out. Today, in fact, while I'm here, my school administered the PSAT to every student in the school. Special education, regular education -- every student from grade six to eleven took the PSAT. Why? Because if you take the PSAT every single year from the sixth grade, by the time the child gets to the eleventh grade, they will be able to perform better. What is that called? Test wiseness, exposing the students to what is possible, letting the students know that they can achieve.

Not all of our students are able to do extraordinarily well, but every student is able to graduate. Every student is able to go to college. Most importantly, we tell them that they can achieve their goals. If you'd like to visit, Wednesdays are usually a good day. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Thank you, Greg. Nancy?

MS. ICHINAGA: I had an elementary school, kindergarten through fifth grade. I was there for twenty-five years. I was about to start my twenty-sixth year when I thought, it's time to go. Now my school is being administered by my former assistant principal, who's doing very well, in fact, a lot better than I ever did because she's a lot smarter. She's building on what I started, and she has her own things going.

Twenty-five years ago, when I became principal, my school was a K-3 school, and it was about 95 percent African-American and 5 percent leftover whites, who still hadn't moved out. What had happened was the state had bought all the houses around the school to build a freeway. They turned those houses into low-income rentals. So that's why the school became poor. The constituents were very poor. And, on top of that, the school had been chosen as an experimental open-structure school, patterned after the British Infant School, where the

utmost in progressive education was being practiced: The kids decided what the curriculum would be. They decided what they would do in school.

So when I got there, the school was in great disarray. The teachers, of course, didn't like the open structure school, so they fought the administration. I got there because both administrators quit. When I got there, on the first day, the last administrator drove up to the school, as I was waiting in the morning, threw me the keys, and said, "Here, Nancy, they're all yours."

When I started off, the whole school was just a mess. When I opened the office door, I found that the office had been plundered by kids who had come in, broken in, and that everything was all over the place. We cried and we got everything in order. When the teachers did come to school, about two or three weeks after that, half the staff was new because the old staff who believed in open structure had left with their administrators.

About a month after that, the state test scores came in. That was the first year, in 1974, that the state of California had tested all the third graders in reading. My school scored in the bottom 3 percentile. I was really shocked. I shouldn't have been shocked, but I was, because 3 percentile is really very bad. When I approached the teachers, I said, "Do you know what 3 percentile means? Statistically, it means all those kids are retarded. Or else you guys just haven't been teaching them. Now, you tell me which one it is."

They gave me all kinds of excuses, and the biggest excuse that I got -- they didn't put it in exact words -- was, "What do you expect? These kids are all black." When they did give me that feeling, I really got very angry. I got very angry because I'm from Hawaii, and in Hawaii, any kind of racism is the worst sin you can have. You know, after all, it violates the spirit of aloha. So when they said that, I said, "Don't you dare say that again. You know, I really do believe that everybody can learn. And if you think the way you do, you had better leave because I'm not going to accept it." They all kind of cowered, because they were shocked that I would be outright frank and say what I did.

They came in and they said, "Well, we really haven't been teaching the kids, because of the open structure." There were no books around because they had been told that books were obsolete, in this technological world. And this was in 1974. So I said, "Well, what are we going to do about this? Because I'm certainly not going to hang around a school where you're satisfied with the kids scoring at 3 percentile, because I'm not about educating dishwashers and field laborers. I'm about educating kids to go on to college."

After a couple of weeks they all came around and said, "Okay, we're with you." So I said, "What do we do now?" They said, "Well, we got to teach the kids to read." Because, out of four hundred kids, maybe a dozen kids could read. So I said, "Well, what do you do? How do you teach kids how to read?" They said, "Well, we’ve got to teach them how to decode, teach them the sounds of the letters, teach them how to read." I said, "Okay, that's what we'll do."

Now, there are materials out there which will do just exactly what you want to do. You don't have to reinvent the wheel. What had happened was, as I walked through the school, it seemed that every teacher knew how to teach the initial consonant sound, they all knew how to teach the ending sound, and that's all they knew. They didn't know what to do after that. It's easy to teach the consonant sounds. So they said, "We've got to teach the kids to decode." So I said, "Okay, go out and look for materials." The entire staff kind of combed

through the market for what was available. We found several programs that were, essentially, phonic-based beginning reading programs. There was Distar, which is now Mastery of Reading. And there was the Sullivan reading program. The teachers chose the Sullivan reading program because it looked like it was more manageable.

We tested every kid and put them in a range, from the lowest to the highest. We had about four hundred kids. That was not hard to do because I had been a school psychologist for several years, and I knew how to test kids, and could test four hundred kids in about five days. We did, and then we grouped the kids, school-wide, into teaching teams, because I felt that if you had a broad range, it would be difficult to teach. I wanted teachers to be able to teach narrow ranges of achievement levels. For about a year and a half, we had all the kids in reading teams, and we thought that we taught them how to read. It took us four years. The fourth year, when the state test was administered to our third graders, our third grade class, which had been in our program for four years, beginning in kindergarten to third grade, scored at the 68th percentile. At that point we knew that we had arrived. And that was in 1979. We've been doing about as well ever since.

In about 1980, I was ready to start on the more intensive comprehension. I wanted my children also to be exposed to the best literature in the world. So we scouted around and found anthologies. These happened to be the Open Court readers. And so we use the Sullivan program to teach them how to read, and we used the Open Court anthology to teach them the best literature in the world.

In 1990, when the last third grade state test was given, our kids had scored in the 78th percentile. So we knew that we were on the right path. And that's exactly what we've been doing. About 1985 I found out that Open Court had also a phonic reading program. I read *Why Johnny Still Can't Read*, by Rudolph Flesh, and it said, "Johnny still can't read because the schools still aren't teaching kids how to read." He said that the best program is the Open Court readers. I was very surprised because I had been using the readers. I didn't know anything about the phonics program. So I called their sales rep and said, "Bring them in." And he brought them in, and we piloted in one room, one first grade room, the Open Court readers. I had put the slowest kids and the least experienced teacher in that classroom. I told the sales guy, "If this program works with these kids, then you'll have me sold."

What happened was, at the end of the first year, all my kids born September, October, November, mostly boys, by the end of year they were all pretty good readers. And during that year, the rest of my teachers used to sneak to watch the program, and they were all ready to do it the next year. We've been doing it ever since.

There are two schools in Inglewood which had done very well throughout the state, and we were noted for that. We had a new superintendent come in, in 1995, and he said, "It's not right that only two schools are doing so well and that eleven others are way down on the bottom. Nancy, I want you to take those principals and tell them what you do." I said, "You know, I tried. For ten year, fifteen years, I tried, but nobody wants to listen to us. You tell them." So he told the principals, "You had better raise your achievement level, or else you're not going to have a job next year." This was about 1996-97. With that threat, all the principals came to a meeting, and they all said they wanted to do what we were doing. So they did.

In 1999, when the state test scores came out, instead of two Inglewood schools doing well, there were about eight. Inglewood right now is the highest-achieving poor district in the entire state. This past year there were thirteen schools in the state, Title 1 schools, which were selected for being the highest-achieving schools. Of the thirteen, eight were Inglewood schools. When that happened, I thought, now I can retire because I've done it for my school, and now I've done it for entire district. Now all of Inglewood schools are doing very well because they've decided that they had do what my friend and I had done for the past twenty-four years.

So we do have a formula on how to raise your achievement. It's not complex. It's very simple. You decide what it is you want to teach them. In the elementary school, we figured that learning how to read is the most important thing; everything else is secondary. And, of course, right along with reading is math. Now, I cannot brag, as these gentlemen can, about how well their kids score. But I would say in first, second, and third grade, our kids' reading score is about the 70th percentile. And the math score is over the 80th percentile.

In the fourth and fifth grade, however, the reading score is only at about the 50th percentile and our math score is about the 65th percentile. I think this is for two reasons. Number one, there is a lot of transiency. We have a lot of kids that haven't been with us since kindergarten. Also, I think that the fact that half of our children are second-language kids, the background kicks in. I think that the repertoire of cultural knowledge is not deep enough for many of them, and I see this as a problem.

I want to tell you that the secret of teaching kids in elementary school is that you must start in kindergarten. If you start in kindergarten and, by the end of kindergarten, if the kids learn all the sounds and learn how to blend the sounds, they can read. In the second grade -- if you know anything about Open Court, it's a whole, big reading program. We do not allow any child to go beyond the first grade if they haven't mastered the reading program, the ability to read.

I mentioned the fact in the fourth and fifth grade, my kids don't do nearly as well. And I mentioned the fact that I think their cultural knowledge is a bit shallow. I think I found a way to do better there. This program is called the Waterford Beginning Reading Program. It is using technology to enrich and to lighten the burden of teaching the children. In kindergarten, our kids are on the Waterford computers fifteen minutes daily. In the first grade they're on half an hour daily. The program really does enrich their background, and I think if I can have it go on through the second grade, my fourth and fifth graders will do better because the Waterford program does develop their fluency, does enrich their vocabulary, and does teach them higher-level thinking skills. I think that that's what I need to do.

I've mentioned commercial programs, and I hope it's okay. I've mentioned the Open Court reading program, which I think will do the trick for anybody, and I've mentioned the Waterford program. A third program I'd like to mention is the Saxon math. We use that, and our kids are very good math students. We had the chairman of the math department at Cal Tech come to visit our school and observe our math classes. His remark was, "I was just blown away by the way the kids were doing algebra problems in the third grade."

If you really want to succeed, you've got to have a school-wide program that does teach. These are all proven programs. If you do that school-wide consistently, it's easy to train the teachers because you train the teachers to deliver these specific programs. You do not talk about reading in general or math in general, but you teach them how to deliver these programs very well.

I like young teachers who have no teacher training because they don't have the baggage that the schools of education give them, and we can train them from the start. If they're bright, they learn very quickly. Even after the first year, their kids can score at the 60 and 70 percentile in reading and in math. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Thank you, Nancy. Kim?

MR. MARSHALL: Well, it's very humbling to speak after three people who have produced such incredible results. I've been to David's school, the KIPP Academy, and was incredibly impressed. I went there with Abby Thernstrom last March. Our school is not at this level of achievement. We're getting there, but we're not at that level yet. And so what you're going to hear here is a somewhat humble exposition -- a little more theoretical because I've really been a student of the effective schools research from way, way back, and I've always been intrigued with the question of what are the real factors that turn the school around.

In each one of the three cases we've heard about, was it the incredible charisma of the leader? Was it the fact that the leader never took a vacation? Was it the Open Court program? What were the real quirks in there that were turning these schools around? And, frankly, the practitioners don't always know what they are. You know, we can sit up here and talk about what we think happened, and tell the story, but we may not have our finger on it. It may be that there are other factors.

For example, it just struck me, when Nancy was speaking, was it Open Court or was it the fact of having a school-wide program, that everybody did it together in a coherent way -- is that the effectiveness factor here? You know, Open Court may be great. Maybe not. Maybe there's a better one. But maybe that's the real factor.

So let me just talk about that and about my experience for a few minutes, and see if I can add a little value to the superstars to my right here. I was a teacher for eleven years in a middle school in Boston, right out of college -- I'm actually a classmate of Al Gore's; we kind of went in separate directions here -- and it was a school that was ineffective; it was a school that wasn't working. One of the highlights of it was that every teacher was isolated. I was very, very isolated in my classroom. I didn't get out very much. I did my own thing in my own classroom. And I kept getting asked the question, "Well, what happens to your kids after they leave you?" I didn't have a very good answer to that because it was sort of me in the classroom. Thought I was performing heroics. Kind of stumbled around, did some good things.

In 1978, I remember very clearly, I read an article in the New York Times about the research of a guy named Ron Edmunds. Anybody hear of Ron Edmunds? The effective schools man. He claimed to have isolated five factors in urban schools that made them effective, the real underlying factors in some schools that made these schools really tick and produce very high results, and also equitable results.

His standard of an effective school was extremely exacting. His standard was that in an effective school, whether it's suburban, urban, rural, that the bottom quintile of the richest kids are achieving as much, in terms of the standards they need to move on to the next grade level, as the top quintile of the poor kids. In other words, that there's a real basic equity. Maybe there's a gap between the top and the bottom, but in terms of the equity of outcomes of what you need to go to the next grade, they're very similar.

What Edmunds talked about, also, were the correlates. He didn't really get into causation. He didn't really get into the stories of how schools got to be effective. There are other books, around the same time: 15,000 Hours, a classic study out of Great Britain. A similar kind of finding, that some schools are doing it, and most schools aren't. In most cases, poverty is a death sentence, in terms of educational outcomes, but in some cases it isn't. They were trying to isolate what were the factors that made the difference.

Edmunds' original list had five factors on it, and they're very familiar to many of us in the room here. It was the principal being an instructional leader. It was high expectations. Ron Edmunds coined the term "All children can learn," which we're very tired of hearing now, but he was the guy who started it. The third was a safe and humane climate. The fourth was a focus on basic skills. No basket weaving here. You know, really focusing on basic skills. And the fifth was an effective use of student data, as kids progressed.

Since Edmunds' original list, there have been a couple of factors added. The one that's up on my office wall now has two more, which is effective teamwork among staff members -- and I think about, again, what I was saying, about the people on the very same page programmatically -- and then parent involvement, which, very interestingly, was not on Edmunds' list to start with. He didn't find that jumping out of his research as a factor. Maybe he wasn't asking the right questions. But, definitely, parent involvement. That's been added on. But what do we mean by parent involvement? That's a whole other forum, so I won't get into that now.

I left the King School, where I was a teacher for eleven years, went back to college, got a degree, and wanted to be a principal. I kind of blew my timing. Proposition Two and a Half passed. I ended up working in the Central Office for two years, trying to push change into schools from the other end. I did find it was like pushing a string: you had to have people in the school pulling it in. You had to have a certain kind of person in the school. It was actually a pretty frustrating experience, working in the Central Office. I think we got a lot done. It was when Bud Spillane was superintendent here. I finally got to be a principal in 1987, came to the Mather School, and I'm in my fourteenth year now.

What's most striking to me is, number one, what a slow learner I am. Because this is a very hard, slow business. There are no immediate, magic turnarounds. We poured in a tremendous amount of time, hard work, smarts and money -- by the way, there is a heck of a lot of money for this school -- and produced pretty flat results for a number of years. Finally, we began in the last few years to see an uptake in results. Nothing like the drama that these people talk about. It just keeps me asking those questions: What is it? What are those key factors? What is it that makes a school turn around? Because it can't be dependent on genius. We're not going to have a genius in every principal's office. And it can't be dependent upon superhuman work. Because some people want to take vacations. Some people want to have a life.

So what are these factors? How can we work smarter? One thing we've got to do is to tell the stories, the real turnaround stories. It would be wonderful to have all of these panelists really get into the guts of, when they came in, what was there, and what did it take, and really tell the stories. Because I've never met a principal who didn't come into an ineffective school and fire a few people. So we've got to talk about that. We don't always want to talk about that. And so what was the story?

Let me talk about just a few just brief lists of the things that I think are the things that we've learned the most about working smart. If I had to go back to 1987, when I first started as principal, there are a few things that would have helped me enormously. You know, better brain, all these other things, but a few external things.

For example, the MCAS, a strong external standard that is detailed, that is public, and where the assessment, itself, is public, is a huge help to school leaders, an enormous help. Having that kind of standard out there publicly, having the exemplars of it on the web -- now everybody's got a clear target.

One of my biggest struggles, as principal -- maybe I haven't been strong enough about this, and maybe other folks are stronger -- is breaking the isolated teacher syndrome. Grant Wiggins talks about schools being a bunch of classrooms, loosely coupled by corridors and ventilation and stairways. That's not the way we're going to produce results, especially for poor kids. We've got to have a coherent structure.

The MCAS is an enormous help to principals, and tests like it. I happen to think the MCAS is one of the better ones in the nation. Speaking about it, another factor is the tests being good-quality tests. One of the things that Ron Edmunds' research was criticized on was that they were relying on very low-level multiple choice tests to declare which schools were effective and which were ineffective. I think now we're talking about better tests that are measuring higher-order thinking skills that are getting more at the kind of knowledge and skills that are needed for the twenty-first century.

Other factors that are helping nowadays that I wish I could have taken back to 1987, when I got started: Rubrics. Having a public description of what good work looks like. And exemplars. The kind of things that are, again, on the Massachusetts Department of Education's website, where you can actually see an example of student work at level four, level three, level two, and at level one. It's wonderful for a teacher and a kid and a parent to be able to say, "This is what good work looks like." When people look at those top-rated essays from the fourth grade and the eighth grade and the tenth grade, the main reaction is, “Oh, my gosh, this is quality work? We haven't been demanding this of our kids." It has a tremendous impact, I think particularly on the children who are the lowest-achieving and who come from the greatest disadvantages, because it shows a model; it shows an exemplar of what good work looks like.

I think the process that we're hearing a lot about now -- this is more in the category of working smart versus just working hard -- is the whole business of looking at student work. This is going on a lot in schools now, is teachers sitting together, looking at their students' work, and analyzing it. And they're looking at the data. They're actually looking at the breakdown of their work.

I think coupled with that is teachers working as part of teams and not working in isolation. Not individual heroics, which may make a wonderful book. Remember that whole slew of books, the heroic teachers, you know, of the sixties and seventies? You've got to have more than individual heroics. In fact, I'd almost rather have a number of people working effectively together than to have a few isolated superstars. You've got to have teamwork. And I'm sure that's what's going on in every one of these schools here.

Another thing that's new, and I wish we had back in 1987 -- and it's no excuse because there were effective schools back then -- is effective programs. I'm talking about programs like the Literacy Collaborative, out of Ohio State, where smart people like Marie Clay from New Zealand have taken the best research and created a wonderful program. And Slavin's program, Success for All. Reading Recovery. Programs where smart people have spent an enormous amount of time, sometimes twenty years, putting together programs that are highly, highly effective.

The whole discussion that Jeff Power has brought up, about effort versus ability, getting away from the deeply ingrained American paradigm of "You're born smart, and that's the way you are. You're either very smart, sort of smart, or kind of dumb, and that's the way you are for life" versus the Asian belief that he's been responsible for importing, forcefully, into the United States, that you can work hard and you can get smart, which two or three of the speakers talked about -- refusing to accept that kids are born in a particular way.

I want to also talk about the warm side of schools, too. Because it's not just demanding expectations and beating kids' brains in with rubrics and looking at student work. Claude Steele has a wonderful way of talking about smart schools, where you've got to have a relationship between valuing relationships with kids, where the kids feel valued by the adults who work with them. They're not slave drivers. They value them. And he says that it's a two-way street: The kids won't accept challenge from adults unless they feel valued, but they won't feel valued unless they feel challenged. I think that that two-way relationship is terribly, terribly important.

I'll add one more thing here, because I just want to provoke my union friends who are here. There's got to be more of a relationship between academic outcomes and teacher evaluation. I think that, probably, on each one of the good schools there is some dialogue going on. Not standardized tests, because they're not good for that, but there's got to be some dialogue around accountability, for what the kid knew in September and what they knew in May and how you're measuring that, and that being part of a conversation when we're evaluating teachers.

So we need more details about how good schools got the way they are. Can't be dependent on genius, and so forth. But no matter how smart we work, it's also going to be extremely hard work, and I think we can't get away from that. But if we're working hard and we're working smart, I think we're going to produce a lot more effective schools. As Ron Edmunds said -- I come back to my mentor here, "If we can do it in one place, it proves conclusively that we can do it everywhere, if and only if we can figure out what it was that worked in that one place."

And so let's keep studying and figure out what are those factors. We're only guessing with some of them. Some of them we know for sure. But we've got to

know that so that people aren't beating their heads against a brick wall. They've got to do the right things to turn schools around.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Thank you, Kim. Thank all of you. There have always been great stories about great schools or schools that were lousy schools that turned around to become great schools. The source of that turnaround, or that excellence, cuts across all the things that you've been talking about. However, I think there's an equally prevalent pattern, which is that, overall, the number of great schools seems to be sort of constant over time, that good schools emerge and then disappear and begin to decline. Or that, for whatever reason, there is an ebb and flow of quality in schools, and the aggregate number doesn't seem to be growing very much, which leads to this question: Are there structural, systemic impediments to successful schools? Taking Ron Edmunds as an example, if we document what the basic characteristics are and if we have panels of people like this who reiterate what those principles are and describe, in their own personal terms, what it takes to turn something around, is there some reason why that can't be sustained over time? Why hasn't that expanded to far more principals and far more schools, in the many years that this has been a burning issue?

DR. HODGE: I think when you look at effective schools, you also have to look at leadership. Many principals are not willing to take risk. In order to be effective at what you do, you have to buck the tide. You have to look at the system. You have to look at the structure. You have to look at regulations. And you have to discard them. You have to say, "What is important?" If you look at a group of children, and the children come to you with varied levels of skill, you can't say, "Well, the elementary school didn't do their job" or "The middle school didn't do their job" and start pointing fingers. You have to deal with what you have at that moment.

You need to be willing to fight the battle. You have some ineffective teachers in some of these schools, and you have teachers that are not fully certified. You have schools of education that produce large numbers of teachers that have never taken classroom management as a separate course, where they learn how to deal with children. I think there's a lot of bureaucracy that we tend not to follow. We go out of our ways to eliminate them, including helping teachers find new professions. If you have a teacher in your building and that teacher is killing off children, then it's the principal's responsibility to remove the teacher. What happens in many schools, as the school matures, the principal may say that, "I don't have enough energy, or time, to go through due process to remove that teacher from the building." I think risk-takers find creative ways: Get them out of your building, sue me later. But do not have that teacher sitting in that classroom, destroying a whole generation of students.

Also, asking very pointed questions. If you look at the level funding in certain schools, there is a disproportionate amount of money sent spent in certain school districts. In other school districts it's not the same.

And what you really have to ask yourself, as a principal, is, what do you want to do? You want to give your child, that student, the same opportunity that they would have at any other school. What does that mean? Yes, we have to open a school longer. Yes, we have to offer students the same opportunities, the same ability to take languages, sports, what have you.

So looking at this whole cycle you're speaking of, I think a lot of it has to do with structures, bureaucracy, and whether or not people are willing to look at things objectively.

MR. LEVIN: Just to echo some of what Dr. Hodge has said, I think there are a couple of major structural issues. One of the things that we've just been recently challenged to do is to replicate KIPP nationwide, in a variety of different mechanisms. We have what we call five pillars. We have three Fs, three Rs. Just to touch briefly on them, the three Fs -- and these are all related to macro policy issues, which you're getting at -- are what a school needs to succeed, one of which Dr. Hodge mentioned, is the funding. You've got to have access to the funding that you need to be successful. Forget the issues of equity -- just access to what you're supposed to have is critical. The second is facilities, adequate facilities for what you're supposed to do. Whether you're a regular public school in a traditional building or a public charter school, facilities are a critical issue. The third F is freedom. And freedom in two areas, which then dovetails right into our pillars. Freedom -- and this goes to the power to lead, which is our first pillar. A good school needs a principal who has the power to lead. Now, Dr. Hodge said that good principals take the power to lead. But the system can't function that way in a macro level. You need to be granted the power to lead.

In that regard, you need two aspect. One is access and control of your budget. If you want to spend your budget this way, you can. Obviously, you've got to be accountable and general accounting procedures and all that good stuff. Two is freedom regarding the personnel that you hire, and that's both in term of selecting them, training them, and keeping them. I think those are the issues of power to lead.

Briefly, just to mention the other pillars we have is this idea of an extended schedule. There’s got to be some mechanism of choice for families, where they can choose certain programs that fit their interests. Incentives and disincentives for staff and students, based, as Dr. Hodge said, on academic performance. And the fifth one is this idea of this relentless pursuit of excellence.

I guess I'd differ a little bit with Mr. Marshall on this, is that the job is so hard, and the problem is not that we're going to solve it by making it easier. The problem is, why aren't the people who are capable of doing it coming into the profession? We don't ask why the CEO of Coke or the CEO of IBM works all these hours. No one thinks they're crazy. We don't ask why investment bankers work a hundred hours. We don't look at them like they're martyrs. So why, when I say I work ninety hours a week, do people think that that's unrealistic, when most of the people I went to college with are doing it? Obviously, they're getting paid more than I am. But why is the expectation that, somehow, this is going to be solved in a forty-five to fifty-hour workweek, where no other profession in America that requires excellence expects that?

So this idea of relentless pursuit of excellence, how do we get the right people in, why is the salary structure inadequate for teachers, why is the training inadequate, is fundamental to the profession. I think as long as we continue trying to do it with the folks that we have, I don't think we'll get those results. You need good schools to prove what is possible. I think that's essential. I think we need an Oprah-like figure, who is going to convince people that we need to sacrifice more for education, so that teachers are paid more, so that there's a greater incentive.

Why do people work a hundred hours a week for Morgan Stanley or an investment bank or a law firm, and they're making hundreds of thousands of dollars? These are talented, smart people, who would make good teachers. They don't even need to make that much money, but they're not going to do it for $33,000 and go into a hostile environment, without the right training. That's foolish.

I could make more money being a manager of Barnes and Noble or Borders. A friend of mine manages the Borders around the corner. He makes more than me, as principal, and the books don't yell at him! There's a degree to which I think we're looking at it a little bit wrong, in regards to the personnel issue.

DR. THERNSTROM: Actually, I'd like to kind of restate Jim's question slightly and, therefore, ask it again. Kim Marshall talked about the isolated teacher syndrome, which is, I think, is fixable. But what Jim was asking about was the isolated school syndrome. That is what happened in Nancy Ichinaga's district; that is, the superintendent looks at the success of her school and says to the other schools, "Hey, how about you, too?" Doesn't often happen, and certainly hasn't happened in New York, where the system has looked at Gregory Hodge and David Levin, who are both running utterly fabulous schools. In New York, the system hasn't looked at these two fabulous schools and said, "Wait a minute, what are the rest of you guys doing?" So the question is, why not? What is it going to take?

MS. ICHINAGA: It happened in Inglewood in the past two or three years. All the elementary schools are doing much better than the statewide average, and it's primarily because we're all doing the same program. Our program is very, very structured. The whole curriculum is paced so that one teacher cannot be six weeks ahead of the other; they're all at the same place, and they all take tests at the same time, using the same tests and the same standards of grading, and this is done every eight weeks.

It took our superintendent to say, "If they can do it, you can do it. And you'd better do it, or else." Then they came to us and they said, "We want to do what you've been doing because what you've been doing for the past twenty years apparently has worked. Because we have the same kind of kids."

The second thing is that what has happened in Inglewood is being replicated in other districts in California. Sacramento is one of them where they're all doing the same curriculum. LA just started it this year. Los Angeles, you know, is this great big school district. Over two or three thousand teachers were trained this summer, for two or three weeks, to implement the reading program that we're using. And over seven hundred principals were trained on how to monitor the schools.

If you want to know what schools have to do, you have to have a school going in one direction. Everybody has to be in on it, and everybody has to agree to do it. It has been my experience that there are some teachers who don't want to work as hard as the rest, and in my school they've kind of left on their own. I really haven't had to ask more than two or three teachers in twenty-five years to, "Come on, you'd better go, or else I've got to write you up" kind of a thing. And they have left voluntarily, primarily because they knew that they just didn't want to work that hard.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Have they left teaching? Have they left to go to another school in the district?

MS. ICHINAGA: Some of them have left teaching. I had one guy who came in and he said, "I think I'll go back to my computers." A few of them have gone to other schools and are teaching at other grade levels, for example, kindergarten, because in kindergarten we don't do a lot of testing and we don't monitor --

DR. THERNSTROM: But Dave Levin is in a school with three other schools. You know, those three other schools aren't looking at his success and saying --

DR. SCHAEFER: You mentioned, earlier, that the mission statements have changed, whereas yours have stayed the same. Your test scores are going up. I was wondering how come they haven't looked at what you were doing.

MR. LEVIN: I think in both Dr. Hodge's school and in KIPP, there's no package -- I do think that we've identified the elements. I actually don't think we need more research. I don't think we need more studies. I think we need to just get down and do what we know works.

Vegas Lott, in Houston, Texas, back in the seventies, has been using the SRA, Distar, decode and direct instruction. He weathered about six different revolutions in reading programs. He just kept with this direct instruction of reading skills, and his elementary school was ranked as one of the top ones in the state of Texas.

Why we all didn't just look at that and say this was a program that could be used? SRA, which is similar to what Nancy spoke about. The problem is, even those programs, is then what happens? To get the type of results that we want from our kids is not programmed. It's not just a program, although I agree that there are programs that would help us take steps in that direction. It is a fundamental shift in attitude, like Dr. Hodge said. It's "You will succeed. This is where you're going. It's your academic skills and your character skills." Those are the things that have been so problematic.

As Nancy also indicated, the older the kids get, the harder this job becomes. As people who know adolescents and post-adolescents and adults, the hardest people to work with are adults. That’s one of the problems with what New York City has faced with and other schools have faced.

I think a separate problem is this relentless pursuit of the magic program. Districts do this all the time. This is only the ninth year of my career, so I'm the baby of the panel. I'm not the baby of most panels I'm on. But, in nine years, every school that I've been in before KIPP, they keep changing the reading program. You know, you get all these reading textbooks, and they say, "Oh, no. I'm using this." It doesn't matter; the program doesn't matter. It is a structured approach.

So that's the problem. Once again, it goes back to personnel. Why do you need a program like -- why is Success for All proving to be the new hot ticket? Well, it's proven to be a hot ticket because it requires -- and Dr. Lott will tell you this, for SRA -- it requires little independent thinking on the part of teachers. It's easy because you can give it to them: You follow a script, and you can do it. I'm a fan of that kind of stuff, but it's only going to get us so far. The problem is you need to make sure you have the right people in the position. I think that's why the school systems have had such a big problem addressing that issue.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: To follow up on the last point you were making about the churning of programs through schools, which may be one of the reasons why you go through these cycles in school where successful schools stop being successful schools -- it seems to me that this is potentially pointing towards one of these structural issues which is, in a typical school, especially within a large district, the school itself is not a freestanding institution that stands for something. It isn't a KIPP Academy or Frederick Douglass Academy; it's PS 1638. So when a new principal comes in, the way the new principal makes a mark is to say "Let's reform the program. Let's put in something new." Then he or she is there for three or four years, and then someone else comes in, and you go through the same thing. The thing that seems to be absent is any sort of institutionalization of the school itself, so the school stands for something and the people entering the school have a certain ownership and understanding of what the school itself stands for and their mission is to perpetuate the mission of the school and the methodology and approach of the school. Without setting schools in concrete, it seems to me the absence of that sort of ballast makes what goes on in schools unstable.

DR. HODGE: At the Frederick Douglass Academy, we looked at what we were doing, and we wanted to know if we could do it again. So now we've opened up the Frederick Douglass Academy II on 120th Street in Harlem. Next year we'll be opening up the Frederick Douglass Academy III on 168th Street in South Bronx. So there are attempts to replicate what we are doing. However, it does come back to, again, whether or not the mission is simple -- and our mission is very simple: Every student will get to college. And if you keep it that way, it makes it very clear to the teachers what they're doing. When the students start to misbehave and you ask the students, "Is that behavior going to get you into college?" then the student can internalize it and question what they're doing. And when the parent comes in and calls you an obscenity, then you can ask the parent the same question: "Is that conversation going to get your child to where the child needs to be?"

There are problems within these big bureaucracies. Again, it's not simply just the churning of the personnel. Whether or not you can institutionalize within that school building what it is that you believe you're about. At the Frederick Douglass Academy, we’ve been able to do that. It doesn't make a difference if I'm the principal, or whoever is the principal, because the teachers all agree that what they do every single day is important. What they do in grade six is the foundation for the student to be able to take physics in grade eleven and for the students to be able to take AP physics and AP calculus.

When you have that conversation with the students at a very early age, that they will go to college, and you tell the teachers that they're going to go to college, and you tell the administrators and the Board of Ed, "No matter what you do to impede us, we're going to go around all the bureaucracy that you set up. Even if you tell us, 'Oh, by the way, you're doing a great job, and we're going to now create the environment for you to do a lousy job, by making your school overcrowded.'"

If the school houses X number of students, the school is doing very well, why would you put more students in that school to kill it off? Or why would you send students that are so ill-equipped, where I'm getting kids in special ed that can't write their names? That's what I'm getting in sixth grade. They aren't three years behind; these kids are five, six years behind. And they're saying, "Okay, you're doing a good job. Okay, now, deal with this group, and let's see if you can pull it off."

There are structural issues. I think the biggest thing that happens in schools like ours is we work very closely to make sure that, with every teacher we get, we train them ourselves. We don't care about any teacher training program. What we do is we say, "You want to work at Frederick Douglass? Fine. You come to Frederick Douglass during the summer, where the students are learning how to become Frederick Douglass Academy students. You, as a teacher, are going to learn how to become a Frederick Douglass Academy teacher." We do our own teacher training program because the major universities are so poorly equipped to train the teachers coming in that they get there and they just look at you like you're crazy.

I went into a Japanese teacher's class the other day. He's sitting up there, working, sweating, just really working. I looked at him and I said, "Sit down and shut up. When are the students going to speak Japanese? If you're speaking Japanese constantly and they're not practicing, guess what? They're not learning."

You have to get back to the fundamentals of education: What are you supposed to be doing? At the end of the day, did any student learn anything in that class? At the end of the year, did they learn anything? At the end of the month? You don't wait for some school district to print out a report to tell you, "Oh, your child isn't reading." Guess what? If you're in that classroom, you know what's going on. Then you have to adjust your methodology. You have to work in teams. You have to use all the experts.

Another really unhelpful thing the Board of Education does, and this is the dumbest thing they do -- how can you take teachers out of a school building to go for staff development ten times during the school year? The teacher's absent ten times. That's twenty days. Now, think about how much instruction is lost in the building. Do the training in the schools, right in the classroom, where it takes place.

Is there a political issue with this whole conversation in education? Of course there is. But you know what? I don't care about the politics. I don't care about who you give me. I don't care about what you send me. I'm going to educate these kids, by hook or crook. By the end of the year, they will be students. And I think that's what we bring.

At the end of our school day, the question will come to me in June, "How many kids did you get in college?" That's the question. Not about what the score was, but "Did you get all these kids to graduate, and did you get everyone into college?"

I don't care about some Board of Ed asking me how I'm doing. It's how I'm doing as an individual, how the community knows and feels about what we're doing, how the students wake up in the morning and say, "I know I'm going to get to college, even though I'm poor, even though I'm black." We have 80 percent black children, 19 percent Hispanic, 1 percent Asian. The majority of kids are eating free lunch. These kids are going to make it because someone believes. And we do it in spite of the structure.

MR. MARSHALL: You know, I think you've just asked a very provocative question. I'm not sure we've answered it yet, but I think the ingredients are here. You're talking about scaling up. How do we get beyond this small number of schools that are highly effective to a much larger number? How do we reach the majority of kids?

We have models here. When you start from scratch, you hire to a mission. You get a whole bunch of people in who believe in that mission and what it is to be a Frederick Douglass student, what it is to be a KIPP student, what it is to be your kind of student. That's a nice way to do it. But it's happening so slowly that I'm not sure we're gaining on the losses here. We've got our car idling at the filling station and we're filling it up. The motor is eating up more gas. We're losing ground here.

Selecting teachers to a mission is a very slow process. I'm only selecting a couple of teachers a year. So to turn around a school and put an imprint on it takes a long, long time. I think, perhaps, the thing on a large scale that's necessary is what Nancy said, which was a very strong mandate from above. In a sense, we certainly have that in Texas. We have it, to a slightly lesser degree, in Massachusetts, perhaps in more enlightened fashion. But somebody is saying, "Darn it all, we're not accepting excuses anymore. You're going to lose your job." And all of a sudden people paid attention. Right? They changed their attitude.

There's a great phrase from an article a few years ago, "a stinging mandate, followed by a powerful technical assist." That's the kind of thing that is going to get results-- taking no excuses.

The other thing that was mentioned in this colloquy here, is the turnover, the changing of the guard, and also the idiocy, as you've described it, of some of the people at the top. I mean, you clearly don't have respect for your Board of Education. And that's no way to run a railroad. I mean, you've got to have the right thinking at the top, and it's got to permeate the system.

So it's striking what a mess this is. How on earth are we going to turn around large numbers of schools, when the genius is at the building level, when you don't really have the right people at the top, when you don't have coherence? I heard Diane Ravitch speak, over at Harvard the other night, and I asked her the question, "What about a national curriculum? What about some national standards here?" Is it right that every state and every city is inventing this thing by themselves?"

The other thing that deeply troubles me, in thinking about not getting anywhere and gaining, is this zero sum game, stealing from each other, is the dance of the lemons. I persuade my mediocre teachers to go up to another school, and, I steal the good teachers from somebody else. That's not getting anywhere. We've got to expand the pie. And that goes to some even deeper issues: Teacher pay. The kind of climate in buildings. The kind of way it feels to be a teacher.

DR. SCHAEFER: Do you have control over your budget and who you hire?

MR. MARSHALL: No. And -- sometimes.

DR. SCHAEFER: I think it's really important. You said you do. And do you?

DR. HODGE: That's why my school's good. I don't let any lemons in.

MR. LEVIN: That's what I addressed as the issue of freedom. What's amazing, in this last year, is we've converted to a type of charter school, converted to a chancellor's charter school, which in New York state means we work with the City Board of Ed rather than the district. And --

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: There are thirty-some districts in the city, right?

MR. LEVIN: Right. But we're working directly with the central offices. What I think is important is there are a lot of good people in this struggle at all levels. Once again, it scares me that we think that education is going to fix itself any differently than any other enterprise in the world.

There's an expression around the Bronx -- "Stay conscious long enough to tell them not to take you to Lincoln Hospital." Whatever happens to you, stay conscious long enough not to go to Lincoln. Why is Lincoln not as good as Bronx, Lebanon, or Mount Sinai or Lenox Hill or Bellevue? What is the deal? Why do you want to go to Bellevue if you have an emergency, as opposed to others? Because the quality of doctors there are better.

We're talking about scaling up. Who in here would marry anyone -- "Do you have a college degree? I'll marry you." I mean, we wouldn't choose our wives or husbands that way. We wouldn't choose our doctors that way. Why do we expect to choose teachers in that way? Until we address that on a macro level, this issue of stealing, it's the way of the world. So I think until we address that issue, I think we will always see it.

DR. SCHAEFER: But, Dave, aren't you really saying -- aren't all of you really saying, "Look, this problem might be solved if every school was a charter school in the city"?

MR. LEVIN: I think all schools need certain freedoms of charter schools.

MS. ICHINAGA: I agree.

MR. LEVIN: And, with that, I would say if you give us freedom, then you should hold us accountable, to the letter and immediately. That's the way state supervision should work. If you say, "Your students must show 10 percent progress, or I want to know, to the letter, why not," if you give me all the freedom in the world to do that, then I should be held accountable. And then you should be held accountable, whoever is my supervisor should be held accountable to someone, who should be good. And that person should be rewarded at a rate that we're going to get top-quality people.

DR. HODGE: I don't know whether or not it's as simple as charter schools or public schools. When you look at the whole structure, if you look at it in terms of the end product, if you're constantly producing young people in the inner cities that are graduating to the criminal justice system, there's a certain course associated with education. And if we don't intervene dramatically and in a very unique way, we will continue to build more prisons and less schools.

When you look at inner cities, they are overpopulated. The school districts are overpopulated. They have the least prepared teachers, in terms of experience, and the least amount of formal training to go into that classroom.

I think if you look at some of those issues and then you look at the structural issues and ask yourselves why certain schools have classrooms in bathrooms, in hallways, why certain schools have classrooms in auditoriums, in cafeterias; why certain schools are operating two or three split shifts, and then you want to ask yourselves why that school is on a state list to be under review? Well,

guess what? The structure is creating many of these large schools and these warehouses of failure, because no one wants to address the reality.
If you look at some of the big schools in New York City, the big schools that are on that list, they're not there by accident. They're there because it was politically expedient to have a connection with the criminal justice system. And they go from this high school to the jails, and from this jail to Upstate. That is the reality of certain schools in New York City. There's no question about it, statistically. You can look at it. There are other schools that refuse to allow that to happen.

The question is whether you have the capacity to change and whether or not you have the willingness to be honest about it and to recruit premium, qualified teachers and administrators to operate the most important institution in this country. There is nothing more important than education. Until we, as a society, start to recognize that and until we, as a society, are willing to put our money where our mouth is, we're going to continue to play, as you consider this thing, a moving over here, moving over there -- a little shell game.

We're going to have a few of us principals that won't take any garbage, to prevent these rejects. If you have somebody that has mental health problems and they are a teacher, and you still have that person sitting in that school because they have a union or they have a contract, or whatever, that's not the place for them. They really belong -- maybe making the house or car, but no place around children.

We must get very serious about education. We must stop this mediocrity that exists within the Boards of Education, the state departments of education. All these agencies that oversee education have to be put in check. You know what the problems are. And guess what? You know the solutions. So let's stop talking all this stuff about research. Let's get back to the reality. Let's roll up our sleeves. Let's do it, and let's stop making excuses.

MR. LEVIN: The thing is, there are not that many good schools around. Why do wealthy families pay people three hundred dollars an hour to tutor for the SAT to get into private high schools? These are people already who are paying fourteen, fifteen, sixteen thousand dollars. Dr. Carter G. Woodson -- and I'm probably not as well-read as others on the panel, but there's a long line of thinkers who think that our schools have been designed to perpetuate the class structure and social structure of this country. And there is a high probability that this could be correct. Because I would argue that the quality of education in these private -- they're not that good. If they were so good, why would these families pay this amount of money for these SATs?

So the reality is, if you go to private school X for grade school, then you're going to go to private school Y for high school. Then you go to a good college, right? And so the families are on that track. And how do you get into private school X in kindergarten? Well, you have to come from the right socioeconomic group or background. While if you would grow up in the South Bronx you go to PS this, IS that, then you go to Taft or Morris or Roosevelt, and then only 20 percent of those kids apply to college, or go to college. And we're talking about that some of those are questionable colleges. Then you allow a few kids into Harvard and Yale and four-year colleges so we can feel good about ourselves.

So I think, fundamentally, that's the issue. And it's why we outperformed -- our eighth graders outperformed all but one middle school in Manhattan and the

Bronx this year. It's about addressing those issues. Then I think those issues come back to the people. And then holding people accountable. You're not going to get those type of people, in the current structure.

I believe in strong accountability measures. But you also got to get the people to do the job, and this is a great job. Any of you who are looking at teaching know Dr. Hodge already invited you. I'm going to invite you. This is a great job, especially if you like puzzles that have no solutions. Imagine getting a puzzle in a plastic bag and you don't have a box top, so you don't know what it's supposed to look like. That's what it’s like, basically, when you take over a school. They don't give you a box top. They give you all these pieces, and so you have to come up with this box top. That's pretty cool if you're internally motivated and have a good picture of what you should do. So it's a great job. It's a great profession. But we're not allowing people entry and then giving them the right training.

DR. HODGE: It came off that industrial model. That's the most important thing. The industrial model did not work in 1940, because in 1940 you had a tremendous amount of dropouts. No one wanted to talk about it. The industrial model is different. Today we're in the 21st century. We have to look at different educational models, to allow children and parents an opportunity to have choice and to be able to attend good-quality institutions, and not get stuck in their local schools.

DR. SCHAEFER: I'm trying to isolate what the factors are. To come back to what you said, Kim, you've got the control over the budget, control over the teachers. You talked about the size of the school. And, earlier, David had referred to -- and this is something we've talked to a lot -- even if you've got a large school, the need to break it down into smaller units.

Is there a difference between the two schools, or are you both following the same kind of principles? Is there a difference in the way the students come to the school? Do you have a choice of students? Yours is first come, first served. But I gather you're going to a lottery. All our charter schools if they're oversubscribed, it's a lottery system, so there's no choice. They have to be reflective of what's the population of the district.

So let me come to that issue of the students. You're successful schools. Is there something about the students?

DR. HODGE: Well, we're in District 5, the lowest-performing district in New York City. There's nowhere lower than us. My sixth grade class was 100 percent from that district. My seventh grade class was 95 percent from the district. The reason is because the school district is overcrowded. My ninth grade class is all the students from the district, plus the computer does a random selection. So I get to select 50 percent; the computer selects 50 percent. Last year, as I said to you, I didn't have any selection. They just gave me an additional 150 winners.

So we don't necessarily have choice, in the sense that we do have some input and some selection. The key is whether we can transmit the value of education to the student, to the parent, and let the parent know, "You let the child get to school" -- because sometimes the children have to be day care providers, caretakers, to take care of sick brothers, sick mothers. If we can get the child into school, that's the biggest part of the battle. The most important thing is to get everyone on the same page -- the teachers, the security

officers, the custodians. If everyone believes that child is important, when the child walks in the building, the child's attitude changes, and then you have enough time to educate the child.

We probably have very similar structures in terms of time on task. If we lose five minutes in that classroom for disruptive behavior, we can't regain it. Then what we do is we have similar concepts in terms of having a student stay after school, the weekends.

My reading performance -- I think when I'm twenty points in from last year, in terms of the middle school performance, and the math performance went up something like twelve percent. We're outperforming not because we're doing anything special. We just, basically, have the kids for a longer period of time. We do very creative things, in terms of if the child -- we identify the weaknesses of the child, and then we give them additional support. So if the child is weak in math -- my ninth graders, we give them a double period of math, a double period of English, plus their resource room, even though they're not special ed. Because those kids are weak in English and math, so what we do is we customize the programming for the child, and not make a program that is so general.

Sometimes we have to do things that we're not supposed to. Like we drop off a few subjects. But guess what? The child cannot read and the child cannot do math. Why is that child sitting up there with five periods of basketball or gym? Guess what? They played basketball before they got to school. What do they need gym for? Health? There are a lot of courses that you can manipulate. But what I'm saying is, you've got to structure the instructional program to look at the deficits of the child.

DR. SCHAEFER: What are the hours for your school?

DR. HODGE: We start at 8:00 and we go to 9:00. But the instructional time is -- 7:30 we have breakfast, we start at 8:00, and we finish about 5:30, 6:00. We have Saturday class from 9:00 to 4:00. And then Sundays we have additional activities.

MS. ICHINAGA: One thing that you forgot to mention is that the curriculum that you choose for your school is very, very important. You have to pick a curriculum that has proven itself, instead of trying to reinvent the wheel. And there is no private practice, for example, at my school. Everybody's on the same page. Everybody's teaching the same thing, using the same materials. Of course, the more experienced teacher has a broader repertoire and can bring in other things, but, essentially, everybody is doing the same program, which is sequenced grade level by grade level, so that a fifth grade teacher knows exactly what the kid was taught in the fourth and third and second grade.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: (Inaudible question)

DR. HODGE: This is our fifth graduating class. We have not been able to get all the data yet, but we are going to have a party. We're very fortunate that the Gap Corporation funds us, in terms of our uniforms, and HBO provides help with our computers. We have one person creating the database, and the other person is organizing a party. So this year we're going to look at our first graduating class to determine how many of the kids have stayed in college, how many of them have graduated. We have some data that says most of them are doing well.

The first group of students, like from last year, that took the summer program in college, we did get some very interesting data. The students who were in college outperformed their classmates because they had taken the AP calculus, AP physics, AP English, AP social studies, and AP foreign language. So when our students actually finish, say, the eleventh grade, they start to take the advanced placement courses. This year they're going to a program at the City University where they're taking college courses while they're in high school. So we anticipate we're going to have a very high success rate. We don't have any concrete data, but we are tracking.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I've been hearing a lot of great things, but I guess what concerned me a little and what I was questioning, is that I'm hearing a little bit of "if you're not up to our standards when you come in" or "if you're not good enough when you come in." And I guess one of my questions is, isn't that taking away that if every student should be able to succeed that that means every student, regardless of where they are when they come in? But, also, how is a setting and a standard being given so that when they go back into the environment that they're in on a daily basis that puts them where they're not feeling safe -- they tend to feel safe in school, but they're not when they leave the building when they are afraid of other individuals. How can we bring them back around, to bring it back up, that through the school, that pushing it through to those individuals and saying, "This is not what we're going to tolerate. And I don't care how you come to us, when you come to us, why you come to us, but we're going to help you succeed whether or not you meet our standards when you come in"?

DR. HODGE: My students range from special education students all the way through the gamut. So we have students on varied levels. We have a student creed that comes from Moorehouse College, and we tell the students they all must learn the same student creed that Dr. Martin Luther King had to learn. That helps them to make good decisions, on the weekend and in the evenings, so they don't get involved in the criminal justice system. So by, again, inculcating a value system with the student that emphasizes education and also telling the student that they will do well.

Last year, 75 percent of my special ed students were able to pass the state assessment, even though they came in with very low scores. What it simply meant is they had to come to school on the weekends and every evening. We had a few of my parents who cursed me out because I added additional time to the school day, and they walked in and said, "What do you mean, you're adding time? What, are you crazy? My kid has got to play basketball." I told them, "The kid can't play basketball if the kid can't read. So the kid has to be there." So you have to be willing to say to the parent -- and this is not legal. I say to the parent, "Your child must take an additional reading class. Why? Because they scored so poorly." And I get away with it, but -- it's not advisable, but it works. Tell the parent you've got to do it.

MS. ICHINAGA: Let me tell you what I do. I have a lot of transiency. Kids from the Los Angeles city schools come to my school every year, and, generally, they are far behind. I have third graders who come into my school from Los Angeles, someplace else, who can't read. What do I do? Do I put them in the third grade class? No. I don't want to perpetuate the failures. So I make them into first graders, where we really teach them how to read, but I promise them that when they catch up, I will double-promote them later on.

I do not put the burden of the far underachieving student on the teacher, necessarily, on that grade level because that teacher is expected to teach a third grade curriculum, and you can't teach a third grade curriculum to a kid who can't read first grade stuff.

So I test every new kid who comes in. I find out which level he's at, I conference with the parents, and I reclassify them. So that's one thing that we do.

MR. LEVIN: One thing that's critical for schools -- maybe this may have been what Dr. Hodge said, in terms of being up to our standards -- is that doesn't mean that he doesn't accept kids. And it doesn't mean that we do, either. But it does mean that we believe that we have standards.

I think that one thing that schools have gotten away from is being able to say, "Look, you can't behave that way. That's wrong." And I used to get asked this often. I get asked it a lot, too, still: "Who are you to make this decision?" Well, I'm the principal.

MS. ICHINAGA: I'm the boss.

MR. LEVIN: There are, obviously, wrong values, and you wouldn't want to run a school based on wrong values. At the same time we can't be afraid of what is generally accepted as the right values. Because, remember, that was the purpose of school in the first place. There's a guy, Larry Kremins, who wrote these three enormous volumes on the history of education. He said the purpose of school is twofold -- one, to socialize and one to liberate. And they're equally important.

But you do have to admit, good schools have to provide these social norms. Then we have to liberate kids so they can change the path that they're on. One thing I think that both Dr. Hodge and, I'm sure, all of us, we're not afraid to set those values and to enforce them.

DR. HODGE: Civility is critical. You cannot have kids come in that school, disrespect you, disrespect your teachers, fighting, knocking down. When they come in, you got to check them at the door. I'm at that door every single morning. I greet my students, and I confiscate the things they shouldn't have. You don't bring beepers in. You don't bring telephones in. You're expected to have a belt. "Oh, you don't have a belt? Well, here is a belt."

There are some standards that you must enforce, and you must not be afraid to go and fight. I've had to fight with the Board of Education about the fact that I am very demanding of the students and the parents. Those standards are the same, whether you're special education, bilingual, black, Hispanic, white. It's no different. You must expect the bare minimum from children. If you don't do that, then the kids are going to read you and they're going to make your September seem like June, and you're you'll be praying for the end of the semester. Don't take nonsense from kids. They’ve got to know who's the boss. And you are the boss.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I work with a Title 2 grant from the U.S. Department of Education, and we are trying to look at how to better prepare teachers. I've heard most of you say that you would prefer to train your own teachers -- you know, "Let's do away with the schools of ed." I suppose I have something else to propose, which is not the most popular stand here, and probably around the

state, but why not make a partner of the university and work with the students who want to become teachers and get them prepared, so that your job becomes a little less burdensome in that regard? I'd like to know, actually what all of you are doing with regard to that.

DR. HODGE: We have a partnership with the college. They send their teachers down to our school. The most important thing is that their student teachers spend the time with the students. Their faculty members come down from the college, and they work in the school building with the students. So the student teachers get firsthand knowledge as to what happens. There's a tremendous amount of effort that's placed on the reality of education, not all this theory stuff. You know, they can learn that the first year of college. Let's get them in there and see if they can teach. So we're very fortunate. I think the college is working very closely with us.

Again, teacher prep belongs in the school systems. Colleges that you're working with should be applauded for their willingness to work with the schools. Every college in the United States that has a teaching program should be connected with the public school. And I mean in the inner city, not in Scarsdale.

MS. ICHINAGA: Lots of times the faculty at the university really do not wish to work in the schools because we're too down to earth. They would rather talk something up here. In fact, we've had quite a conflict with the UCLA's training center. They teach their student teachers about social justice rather than about academic achievement and rather than about discipline. So that while it sounds good to be in partnership with the universities, sometimes it just doesn't happen. Not because we're not willing. We're willing to take them and teach them, but they want to teach us.

MR. LEVIN: The other thing is, the empirical data for those who are dealing with university people, if you talk to enough principals, you're hear enough of the same message. So it's remarkable to me that this isn't starting to take greater hold. It appears that we're actually moving in the opposite direction. It’s one of those interesting things: "We need higher standards for teachers." You hear that all the time. "We need increased certification. Increase the number of certified teachers." And I'm not even going to tell you my favorite line about the similarity between "certified" and "certifiable." But, somehow, you're not hearing that from principals; you're hearing that from policymakers. Principals aren't saying, "We need more certified teachers." They're saying, "Let me go get the best people I can go get." So it's just remarkable.

I agree, by the way, with the partnership with universities and the idea of having student teachers come down and teach. Fine. All that's good. But you just don't hear that message from the people who are making those decisions. And it seems remarkable that, somehow, nationwide, we're moving, apparently, in the opposite direction.

MR. MARSHALL: Having interviewed forty-two teachers last summer -- we had a lot of turnover in our building -- I've been absolutely horrified at some of the gaps in people's preparation and knowledge. Here's what I'd like to see, in answer to your question. First of all, a first-rate liberal arts education for all teachers, at a high level. I mean really bright, committed – the best people. And then how are you going to attract the best and the brightest, I guess, is a larger question, but first-rate liberal arts education.

Secondly, a really good crack at the knowledge base. The knowledge base of teaching is as extensive as the knowledge base of brain surgery. And this is a difficult field. John Saphier and others have done work on this. There's a knowledge base that they should know.

Thirdly, I'd like to see teachers having been through a real honest-to-God course on classroom management. Not a theoretical lecture, but a real training course. Something like a Fred Jones' positive classroom discipline, something that is really hard. You can't learn that on the job; you've got to walk in having been trained. And it's not just a question of either you have it or you don't. I think people can be trained on that.

Then the final piece that should be done, right in the school, is the specific literacy program and other curriculum programs that that school is using. For example, we're using Literacy Collaborative, having been trained in the classroom, having coaching, having after-school classes taught, preferably by people who work right in that school, in collaboration with universities. That's a good model because those things are quite specific to the school. The others are more generic.

DR. HODGE: Also, you need to eliminate these bogus licenses. You have people who have a license: special education in the high school area. Those people do not know the content area. What happens is you have a child in special ed, with the greatest amount of need, and they have the teacher that's least prepared, academically, to teach the child. These bogus licenses called special ed have got to be eliminated, number one.

Number two, you have the same issue on the elementary school. If you have a teacher teaching first or second grade, teaching mathematics, and the teacher hates math, the teacher doesn't want to do math -- what's the sense? Let's be real. Put teachers where you need to place them, based on their academic skill. If the teacher got a C in college math and logic, what is that teacher doing teaching math? Think about it.

And this goes on, day in and day out, because we have these bogus requirements. Let's get real. You want to teach mathematics? You better know a little calculus. You want to teach science? Make sure you know some science. And you get these teachers with that special ed license, they're devastating. They will kill off more kids, without anybody recognizing what's going on.

MR. LEVIN: By and large, the most difficult students have the worst teachers. And the reason for that is -- because they're the most difficult students, and so a lot of people don't want to work with them. But there's another reason. One, you need the most complicated license to work with these kids, and so it is time-consuming and painful to get those licenses, so that it's not an incentive for highly motivated kind of free-spirited people, who you really need those highly motivated free-spirited people with some of these most difficult kids because that's what's going to motivate the kids.

The third, going back to the salary structure. It’s like supply and demand. You’re dealing with some kids whose behavior or their learning deficiencies are at a level that it makes it really difficult to go to work. And you need to change the whole structure.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: (Inaudible question)

MS. ICHINAGA: I think that the answer to that question, and a very important question in education, is that the principal, the site principal, should be held accountable for whatever happens in that school. Therefore, I think that the school principal should be the highest paid school person under the superintendent. All the offices in between, to me, are superfluous. I ignore them. We have done well in spite of them, not because of them. All of Inglewood, which is doing quite well, is doing well in spite of the curriculum department, which is in the dumps.

So to answer your question, the action is in the schools, not in the district office. You need a strong leader to encourage a site principal, but other than that, not much more.

MR. LEVIN: I would agree with that. But I think in terms of the ideal scenario and what charter school offices are grappling with -- so the charter school offices very often reflect the bureaucracy that Nancy is talking about. It's so frustrating because here they are supposed to be reinvigorating stuff. But schools do need support.

Charter schools need a unique type of support; for instance, insurance, special ed accounting, financial accounting, student support services, food services, financing loans for facilities, retirement benefits, health insurance -- these type of issues, which occupy an inordinate amount of time. I think regular public school principals don't deal with that at all; they have no conception that these things are as complicated as they are. Charter schools are out there to deal with those things, and they're hard. And it's where a lot of charter schools go awry. And so those are very good uses of a charter school office, directing services in those areas.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: …all noninstructional…

MR. LEVIN: Yes, those are all noninstructional areas. But you should not accept a charter school application that doesn't know what they're doing instructionally. If you give a charter to someone who doesn't know what they're doing instructionally, they're doomed. I mean doomed because they're going to be poor and mediocre.

DR. HODGE: I think on the instructional level, I think bureaucracy does have its place in every school system. I think when you look at bureaucracy, one thing that it does is it has access to information. Now, when you look at the nature of this conference, you have a bureaucracy that says, "Okay, well, we'll go around the country, find schools that are working," and what happens is you bring that information to the public. Bureaucracies exist to support the line. So anytime a bureaucracy can get information, it helps the school become more productive, that's the role of bureaucracy. It is not to be an obstacle in the school system. I think that when you look at not trying to reinvent the wheel and trying to expedite the learning, you go around and you get that information and you share it; that's the good purpose of bureaucracy. But when a bureaucracy tells you, "You cannot do something," and you're not willing to try it, then that's a little bit difficult to understand.

MR. MARSHALL: When I worked in Court Street with Bud Spillane, we used to joke that there were the three most common lies, the third one of which was work for the central office, and we're here to help you. But we did help sometimes. I think the most difficult and tricky thing right now is getting the instructional and testing thing right. Not being overdirective, down to micromanaging the

schools and smothering the creative, good people who are needed to run good schools. But not being too permissive and too general. And I think that's a real struggle.

I want to compliment Massachusetts. I think that is being done very, very well here, and on a steep learning curve. I mean, the combination of frameworks which were a little too general, but then learning standards, actual examples of tests, and exemplars of student work at the level of detail that we have now is quite good.

I think the other thing is having the courage of your convictions. Because I think bureaucracies are not just there to assist; they're also there to lead. Dave Driscoll and Jim Peyser are being paid to really lead education in Massachusetts. And having the courage of your convictions about social studies, for example, getting that one right, and making it stick. Things like that make a huge difference in the schools. We can't figure it out by ourselves in every building. Getting that mix right, between specificity -- being too specific and not specific enough and being forceful and leading.

DR. SCHAEFER: Do charter schools in New York have boards of directors?

MR. LEVIN: Yes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'd like to ask David and Gregory about your mobility rate of students. Has it changed since you first opened, as parents and students have understood the demands that you've put on them and what effect that's had on the students you're teaching?

MR. LEVIN: Sure. Our attrition rate, which includes mobility, students who opt out, a couple of kids who we find alternative settings for, is 2 percent a year. And that's in a community where the mobility is 28 percent.

DR. HODGE: Our school loses maybe one or two students a year, in the middle school. And part of that is because the teachers establish such a positive relationship with the students that, even though the student has moved from the Bronx to Brooklyn and Staten Island, the student still remains in the school. Even though the student is now in the custody of the state, the school is the only stable factor in the child's life -- which goes back to what we started with, the idea of constants, that if you have teachers that are caring, supportive, nurturing and that are there and that believe in the mission of the school, the students don't disappear. They don't leave.

The students who graduated from our school in June, even though they're in college, some of the kids had break last week, a little holiday break. They were back at the school. And when they came back to the school, do you know what they were doing? They came in, they start participating in the chess club and the dominoes club and the theater club. They're involved in the things with the school, and you don't even know that they left.

So it's really a testament to when you have excellent teachers. They make it an environment that's stable, when nothing else is stable in the child's life.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'm at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, where we study a lot of nice theories. First of all, I want to personally thank you for all of your fifteen-hour days and eight-day weeks that you put in.

I'm on sabbatical from a nonprofit organization that supports teachers and students. It's a human rights organization called Elevation of Human Rights. One of the things we do is work inside juvenile detention facilities to try to reconnect ties between students in the facilities, young people who used to be students, and the teachers they go back to. And I was really devastated by your comment, Dr. Hodge, on the tracking that occurs out of public schools in New York into the criminal justice system.

So if you all could address that particular challenge, the growing role of criminal justice system in many aspects of our community, particularly the schools, and how you're grappling with that.

DR. HODGE: Well, we're fortunate that we haven't lost any of our students to the criminal justice system. That is because we firmly inculcate the students with the value systems that allow them not to get in trouble. I'm not going to tell you none of my kids got arrested. A few of my kids got arrested. I had to go in front of the judge. I had to sit there and talk about why the kid should not be treated as an adult, the whole nine yards.

But 99.9 percent of the time, if you start with the children in elementary school and you start delivering the message and the values of the school, you won't see that. In the larger urban schools, where you have 4,000 students in a building that was built for 2,000 kids -- What do you think's going to happen? The kids aren't going to come to school. They're going to be disaffected. They're going to get lost. They're going to be alienated. They're going to be involved with that street economy.

You know, drugs right now is a killer. I mean, kids are making ten times what we make, and they wind up getting into a very complicated system. In some of the schools, they have outreach programs. In the criminal justice at Rikers Island, they have an educational program where they do try to bridge to kids.

But I do think the most important thing is to prevent it from happening. When and how can you do that? In grade K, 1, 2, 3. This is where it happens, down here at the bottom: K, 1, 2, 3. If you don't have an effective program where the students have some level of success, by the time they get to the fourth grade, it's all over.

Okay, so we're hoping that, the elementary schools, the trend would be to continue to decrease the class size, provide them with support, have a lot of innovative educational programs, so that by the time they get to the middle school, we will prevent them.

But in my school it's so structured and disciplined that if the kid gets in trouble, they're more afraid of me than going to the precinct. Another thing that we have in our school that's very unique is we have a very good relationship with the 32nd precinct. That's the local precinct in Harlem. If one of my kids get in trouble, they call me before they call the parent. We also have a very good relationship with them because we play basketball against them. We beat them up all the time in basketball.

When you have that relationship and you have the cops sitting down and working with the students, discussing with the students how to deal with the police officers in a very complicated situation, that helps to prevent the student from becoming part of the system. It only takes thirty seconds for a kid to become part of the criminal justice system: The child says the wrong thing to the cop.

One of my students said to the cop, "Look, why do I have to leave? I'm on the corner. I have my constitutional rights. My teacher told me we have the right to peacefully assemble." The cop said, "I got the right to peacefully kick your behind and then lock you up," and that's what happened. I had to go to down to the precinct and talk to the cop about this whole thing and -- but the cop was nice. He called the school and he says, "You know, you got one of your kids being smart." But if we can teach the kids how to deal with society, we'll keep them out of trouble.

MR. LEVIN: Middle school is when we lose kids. The research is pretty conclusive on this. Obviously, it starts younger because they come very unprepared, often, to middle school. That’s why KIPP is five through eight; it's a critical turning point. Then you're fighting odds with the criminal justice system because you're talking about patterns and cycles of behavior that are way more complicated than we can get into in a panel like this. I mean, you have family expectation -- it's just a very complicated cycle that you're trying to break, very often, with children.

One of the nights where I had to go up to the 44th precinct for something, you walk into the 44th precinct, which is our precinct, and you see "Home of the World's Busiest" -- it's the world's busiest precinct. They have a big banner. The community in which we work has the highest crime rate in the country, the 42nd and 44th precincts.

Trying to counteract that is, as Dr. Hodge said, a critical battle in values. Not only values, but skills. Once again, do you have the skills to realistically do something different than get involved in criminal activity? Do you not only have the skills, but the belief that those skills will take you somewhere better? And if you have those two things, the skills and the confidence, you have a chance of avoiding some of the pitfalls of the community that too many people fall into.

You also have to openly address it with the kids. You have to be honest with the kids and, basically, let them know, unfortunately, you're dealing with society's racism, you're dealing with society's expectations, and that in order to counteract that, you’ve got to be conscious of these things.

It's a tremendous struggle. Thus far we've been very successful with it, as well. As you watch the kids get older, you see some of that work -- you can see it differentiating. But you can make a huge difference if you provide the kids with the academic skills and the character skills to believe that they can compete in this society, and to be right in that belief.

DR. HODGE: And to avoid the gangs. That's another lure in the street that the young people have to deal with. If we can provide -- we keep our schools open late because we know the reality: It's better for us to have our children in that building at ten o'clock at night than to have that child on the street. If we had enough money, I would have my school operate from seven o'clock in the morning to ten o'clock at night. Because guess what? At ten o'clock I know where my kids are. They're not in the precinct.

That's what we need to look at. More after-school educational activities and weekend activities to keep the kids out of those opportunities to become part of the criminal justice system.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: I'd like to give the panelists -- and this is entirely voluntary -- an opportunity to make any closing, summative remarks.

MR. MARSHALL: I'm actually going to pass. I think I've said everything I wanted to say.

MS. ICHINAGA: I think that if all people realize that the mission of the elementary school is to make each child English-literate, they'll be okay. You’ve got to make them literate. And that's what we try to do, first and foremost. All our kids learn to read in kindergarten. By the time they go to first grade, they can all read three-letter words. By the time they finish first grade, they can read four- and five-syllable words.

But this is what you have to do: Make sure that the mission of the elementary school is to make the kids literate. If you are passing on kids who can't read into the second and third grade, you're already beginning the cycle of failure, and you must stop that.

DR. HODGE: I think every individual in this room has to look at themselves today and ask themselves, “What are you going to do differently tomorrow?” Every person in education can affect the lives of children, and they can change it in so many ways that we can't measure right now.

But if you look at the belief systems that we have in our heart -- and all of us really believe that we're in education because we care about kids and we care about our future. If you go into that school building, or whatever function you serve as, and you say at the end of the day, what did you do differently to help the children be successful, I think that's going to carry us a long way in the future. And it will lead to more discussions and more reform that will allow people to be honest about what they're doing.

Anyone in education, usually, is very committed. We just need much more of it. And we thank all of you for your commitment to education, as well.

MR. LEVIN: Thanks, all, for staying so late on a Tuesday. We can do this. We can really make a difference in what's going on in the lives of kids in this country. But we can't do it when we're fighting amongst ourselves. The kids are depending on us. They're dependent on us to get ourselves together, because we're leading them. And we really can do this. That's what some of these schools have proven, that you can take kids from wherever they're coming from and they can achieve at the highest possible levels.

So everyone has an open invitation to the school in the Bronx. And I just hope that, as we go forward and we have conferences like this, that we kind of spread that message that we need to get ourselves together and work together, so that the kids get the best possible future. Thanks.

DR. SCHAEFER: Thank you all for coming.

DR. THERNSTROM: Yes, thank you. It was really terrific.

CHAIRMAN PEYSER: Again, thank you for all the work that you're doing every day. And, certainly, thank you for participating in today's panel. We appreciate it.