



WEBINAR: Making Next Year Count: Equity in School Accountability
Monday July 20th, 1-1:45 p.m. EST
TRANSCRIPT

ANDY ROTHERHAM: I'm Andy Rotherham. I'm a co-founder and partner of Bellwether Education. It is terrific to have you all here, and it's terrific to have these great panelists. They don't need a lot of introduction, so I'm going to introduce them very, very briefly in a moment. We're a couple of decades in to standards-based accountability and standards-based reform. It's a theory of action around high expectations for students, measuring those, and accountability and interventions as appropriate for results. I think reasonable people can disagree about exactly what has and has not happened as a result of that, but the evidence clearly points that there's been some progress, but we're also not getting to where I think most people want to be in terms of the quality of our schools, and that's occasioning a lot of questions, how these policies should further evolve. We're obviously at a national inflection point in general around schools, and then, in particular with the times that we're living through right now -- COVID, an important national conversation that's happening around race, and so a lot of these things are coming together at once to point up a really important conversation about what should accountability look like. What have we learned, and what should it look like? We have a terrific set of panelists here. Jeb Bush is a two-term governor of Florida where he was nationally recognized in a very bipartisan way for a great deal of education success and improvement down there, including some very specific reforms around accountability that he then carried forward later with his nonprofit, ExcelinEd. JOHN B. KING, JR. founded a very high-performing school in Boston. He was the state chief up in New York, later became Secretary of Education for President Barack Obama. And so he's looked at this from a couple of different perspectives. Now he's at The Education Trust where he's leading work there, and that's obviously an equity oriented organization. And Carissa Moffat Miller, who John used to be one of her members. She represents state chiefs and state commissioners around the country. She herself has worked in a state, so she's seen this both sort of on the Washington side with the policy, but also in practice, and she's obviously keenly in touch with what the state chiefs are thinking about these issues. So I want to hear from all three of you. I'll start with you, Governor. All three of you have been at this a long time, different capacities. Do you still agree with the basic premise of standards-based accountability, or is it flawed and does it need to change?

GOV. JEB BUSH: You can always make it better, but if you don't measure, you don't care. I start with that premise, and so it's absolutely essential, particularly for low-income students, students that have challenges that we have high academic standards that we measure them effectively, and that there's rewards for improvement, and that there's an alternative when there's no gains at all. Particularly now, I would say. I mean, the kind of anecdotal evidence -- and there will be more evidence looking back

after we get through this pandemic -- of learning losses, flattening out of learning gains from March on, and then, you know, of course, the atrophy of summer, particularly for low-income kids, is a big issue, the lack of resources to deal with this, and now the siren call for less accountability in the midst of all this is deeply troubling. And I think people that believe in high expectations for every child, if you believe that every kid can learn, then we have to have robust accountability around them to protect them from the adults that seem to be pretty defeatist right now.

ANDY ROTHERHAM: John, Carissa?

JOHN B. KING, JR.: I agree with the governor. I would add two things. One, I think we have to remember that, before the current effort around standards-based accountability, there was a time when whole groups of students were treated as invisible, where you had states and districts describing their performance without talking about how English learners are doing, without talking about how students with disabilities are doing. So we need a system of assessment and accountability to make sure that we pay attention to the equity gaps that we face for English learners, students with disabilities, low-income students, students of color. But the second point, I do think a part of the theory of change that was under-emphasized over the last 20 years that needs more emphasis is the support and capacity building sign. If we're going to effectively hold people accountable, we have to make sure that the resources are there, that the training is there, that the quality curricula are there, and I think that support component needs more attention and investment.

ANDY ROTHERHAM: Carissa, what would you add, and particularly from the point of view of your members and what they're experiencing and thinking about right now?

CARISSA MOFFAT MILLER: Yeah, the benefits of going last is like, yeah, all of those things. Andy, I was just thinking, as you asked us to think back 20 years, I can go back to 2002, and I was in a state when we were implementing, at that time, No Child Left Behind. And some of the things that both Governor Bush and John have said came into being. It was performance by groups of students that we didn't have before. It's the uniform way to collect and compare information that we didn't have before. And then, it was our ability to direct needed resources. I do think John raises a really important point in something we're hearing from chiefs is that it's incredibly important for us to provide those resources. We have a project where we're working on high-quality instructional materials, and driving towards those kinds of opportunities can really make a difference when we see that data. But that data tells us where we need to focus and put our resources, and without it, it's just an open game.

ANDY ROTHERHAM: All right, so the three of you all generally agree on this, and yet, there's just a vociferous debate. So are you three odd ducks? Or where's the political will, or where's the breakdown? It can't just be the lack of capacity and support. There



must be something else. So why are we at this time when you have three leaders like you generally agreeing on this across a whole bunch of different political lines of difference, why are we so stuck? Where's the will?

CARISSA MOFFAT MILLER: I'll take a shot, if that's okay. I'll just start out by saying we can't ignore what's going on right now. And the circumstances in which we're living make this really a difficult conversation. Right? The focus on supporting schools to reopen is first and foremost in chiefs minds. The safety and well-being of kids, getting PPE and protocols and teachers, how we keep the folks safe. Then we have the academic and SEL needs of students and addressing all of that first and foremost. And then we talk about the ways in which we get to measuring. So what people are focused on right now is how we get fall back in place, how we address the needs for fall, and so it feels like a distant conversation in some places, but yet, we're trying to do the best we can.

GOV. JEB BUSH: Can I chime in here? We had four hurricanes and two tropical storms in 2004. Hurricane Charley wiped out the entire -- basically the entire school district of Charlotte County. Most of the counties, half the counties in the state were impacted by these hurricanes, and there was a call to say, well, let's don't do the test in the spring. It's not fair. And being the grumpy old guy I was about accountability, I said, "No, man, we got to have this test," because if you stop measuring and you don't have accountability, who are the losers? And the losers are those that have been left behind historically. And so we didn't do that, and actually, the counties that were most hit by the hurricanes of that year had the greatest gains on the FCAT, the end-of-year test. So I think the argument ought to be how do we make accountability -- how do we modernize it, how do we make it more focused in the 21st century? We don't have to defend something that was set up in, in our case, 1999. Let's improve it. But if we didn't have assessments -- We didn't have assessments this year for legitimate reasons. People were stuck at home. If we don't have assessments -- and I know some of your colleagues, the state school officers are suggesting we shouldn't have accountability or assessments for next year -- you're going to create massive drops in achievement for the people that desperately need the attention. That had been getting it more -- still not perfect -- with accountability. I hope that, you know, people step up and say this is a great challenge. We have huge challenges, which only means we have bigger opportunities to do the right thing.

ANDY ROTHERHAM: I want to come back on the waivers, but let's stay on this one for a second.

JOHN B. KING, JR.: Yeah. Yeah, just in terms of the question of how we modernize assessment and accountability, I think we have to accept that there were some things over the last 20 years that could have gone better and that need addressing. One is, it's important for parents and teachers and communities to understand, are kids performing

at grade level? But we also have to give credit to folks when they help students who are way behind catch up. So if a teacher gets a group of -- a fourth-grade teacher gets a group of students who are at the second-grade level, and they end the year at the fourth-grade level, they're not quite ready for the fifth-grade work, but they've made a ton of progress, we ought to create that rather than just criticizing that, and so, the inclusion of growth is an important improvement that we have made over these 20 years. Two, we have to acknowledge, in some places, people responded to assessment and accountability by allowing the assessment to crowd out quality instruction. And so we know that there are places where they were giving interim assessments constantly, and the amount of time spent on testing was disproportionate. That was a problem. And so that needs to be fixed. And I think we tried in the Obama administration to do some work to try to fix that. I think lots of state chiefs are working on that. We've got to make sure that we're not assessing to the disadvantage of instructional quality. And then, third, I think when people feel that they are in a situation that's chronically under-resourced, they can hear the accountability as blame in a way that feels unfair. And, you know, we did a study at Ed Trust that showed we're spending \$1,800 less per student in the districts that have the largest numbers of students of color, compared to the districts that have the largest numbers of white students. We've got to close some of those resource disparities so people feel like they have the support and investment they need to go do what students need.

ANDY ROTHERHAM: John, let's stay on that just for a second 'cause we're at this moment in our country where we're having a really important conversation, overdue conversation about race and racism, and, obviously, those are big issues in our school system -- resources, accountability, outcomes, and yet, at this very moment, this tool we have to try to shine a light on what's going on and understand is more imperiled than it's been in a long time. That seems like a paradox. What do you think explains it?

JOHN B. KING, JR.: Well, again, I think it's a reaction to the sense that the task outcomes are being used as a cudgel, rather than as the basis of infrastructure of support. So I think it's right for people to be frustrated that, 60-plus years after Brown v Board of Education, we have places that are more segregated today than they were 10 or 20 years ago. And to the extent that they see the conversation about assessment and accountability as ignoring that issue, people are going to be frustrated by that. People are right to be concerned that a majority of the kids in our nation's public schools are kids of color, but only 18% of our teachers are teachers of color. We know it matters for kids of color to see teachers of color in their schools. We know it matters for white kids to see educators of color. So I think we have to have a both end response and not just say accountability and assessment is the only thing that matters. It is necessary but not sufficient for improvement. And then, we've got to tackle all of these other issues of equity, as well.

GOV. JEB BUSH: John, you're totally right. And so accountability can't just be eat your broccoli and that's the end of it, you're a loser, you're a winner. It's to point out where the challenges are and then develop strategies to make sure that that gap closed. So I'll give you an example. When I was governor, we graded schools A through F. F schools were schools that were underperforming, obviously, and As were doing well. So I asked how many kids in the A and B schools had access to the practice SAT, and what percentage of kids in the A and F and then the D and F schools took AP classes. And the gap was, like, enormous. So the access to opportunity there was so clear. So instead of -- The districts said, "Well, it's voluntary, blah blah blah," so I said, "Okay, we'll pay for the practice SAT, and we'll start training teachers to be able to teach AP in the D and F schools. That's the kind of thing that has to be done. If you're just using accountability to say this school is doing well and that school is not, and then not having strategies around it, I think it's easy to see why accountability would lose its steam as a policy tool.

ANDY ROTHERHAM: I just want to point out, I like that we can bring history to this. A Bush making a broccoli reference is exactly the kind of reference that people of a certain age appreciate a great deal.

GOV. JEB BUSH: Spoken by a guy who has a "Nixon Resigns" paper in the back.

ANDY ROTHERHAM: I'm living in the past. I'm living in the past. Carissa, you hear this conversation both on sort of why we need the pressure and so forth, and then, also, the need for more capacity. Like, you know, how do your members experience that conversation, and you know, how do they fundamentally weight those two different things?

CARISSA MOFFAT MILLER: Yeah, it's a mix. And I think part of it has to do with the circumstances of today, right? And we've talked about, like, the reopening of schools is going to have to be contingent upon what's happening in a local environment. And so I think state leaders are having to look really closely at how they address the needs for those local environments, but also, still to the point of my colleagues, have some transparency, and I think -- I want to just walk back to that where, you know, John talked about the accountability waivers that were put into place. I was still back in the state back in that time and helped write an accountability waiver that was more than just the assessments. It included growth, it included some of those other components, and there's that opportunity for us, is like the kinds of opportunities for us to see more information. Governor Bush talked about, you know, knowing how many kids had taken practice SAT and ACT. Those are indicators that help us get to greater transparency. Universally, my members absolutely want transparency and be able to know where to put resources and help students. Like, how do you connect that to what we know today as an accountability frame or an accountability system is a question, right? Because we're living in unprecedented times. But transparency, for sure, and how we use that



information to get to kids and address equity issues is universally something that chiefs care about.

ANDY ROTHERHAM: Let's stay on that issue, though, of how do we use it. So, John said people feel like it's a cudgel, but in general, it's hard to miss that everyone is for accountability until there's like a sharp edge that's put in place or a consequence. Florida had a very consequential accountability system in terms of things that would happen to low-performing schools. Where do those lines lie, and do we have -- fundamentally, are we talking about an assessment problem, or are we talking about an allergic to accountability problem?

GOV. JEB BUSH: [Chuckles] I think it's both, probably. One thing is for sure -- there's a great variation between the collection of data state by state. And whether you like the Florida accountability system or like the California one, which would be maybe the exact opposite, having the data is really important, and I think now, given the fact that we're moving towards this career orientation along with college readiness, to be ready for career, I think we need to connect the student achievement, particularly for low-income kids, to see how successful it is, how do they do in community college? How do they do in college? How do they do in getting a nationally recognized certificate? And if you're going to have learning gains be an element in our accountability system in Florida and the states that we advise people on accountability, we encourage at least half of the accountability system be derived by learning gains to deal with the issue that John brought up, then you have to have really good data. And you can connect student achievement with how teachers are doing. You can measure effectiveness between school districts. There's a lot that can be done. And the final thing, as it relates to accountability, is another subject John brought up, which has always something that frustrates me, and that is the big differences in funding for different school districts. Florida has, you know, big school districts, so we don't have the same problem, but inside of big school districts, because of collective bargaining, you find that the teachers that are getting paid more, have been there longer, migrate toward schools maybe closer to where they live, and the low-performing schools are typically in the low-income communities where the challenges are greater. And yet, that number is typically not -- it's not school-based budgeting. It's done by collective bargaining by the school district, and so you have big inequities in funding that are just unfair, and un-American in my mind.

ANDY ROTHERHAM.: John, do you want to respond to that? And, Carissa, do you want to respond to this question of sort are we talking about assessment and accountability? I know you have some thoughts that you've been thinking about about these two issues and how they relate.

JOHN B. KING, JR.: Yeah, well, just want to build quickly on something the governor said about the disparities within districts. One of the things that we propose at Ed Trust

is I'm expecting that Congress is going to put a lot of money towards schools in the next few weeks here, which is good and necessary and desperately needed, but one of the things that ought to be tied to that money as a requirement, we've called it a maintenance of equity, where you would say to states that you've got to make sure that your highest-needs districts, if they're going to have cuts, have cuts that are smaller than your most affluent districts, and similarly, that you've got a set of districts, if you're going to have cuts, those cuts are going to happen in a way that protects the highest-needs schools. 'Cause what we know from the recession in 2008 is that, because of what the governor was describing, you had districts where the layoffs and program eliminations fell disproportionately on schools with the largest numbers of low-income students of color. And that can't possibly be right. Congress has an opportunity to do something about that by tying useful accountability measures to the infusion of desperately needed new dollars.

CARISSA MOFFAT MILLER: Yeah, I'll go back to your question, Andy. I don't know that it's necessarily an assessment or an accountability problem, but it's the framing around system improvement, right? So if we think about assessment as a way to address and identify and build improvement for kids and for systems, and then we feed that into an accountability system, then we're moving in the right direction. I think there's lots -- Governor Bush said this at the beginning. There's lots that we could do differently to address that. If we think about, you know, accountability has evolved or assessment has evolved over these past 20 years. I hesitate to say that I even know that. But there was a point in time when we didn't even look at outside of grade ban testing, and now we have adaptive testing. And we look at assessment that is attached more directly to -- They have an innovative assessment pilot in Georgia and Louisiana are looking at attaching to some of the high-quality instructional materials that they're working on. There's obviously opportunities for innovation around that, but I think the thing that remains is still having that consistent information, that consistent data, so that you can make an overall improvement around systems. And I guess I would just go back to those are the fundamental principles. That hasn't changed in those 20 years, but how we have evolved and how we've thought about improving has and should continue.

GOV. JEB BUSH: Carissa brings up an important point, which is that the vulnerability of accountability, I think, is the testing because it's easy to attack. And, so, improving that is really important, and my suggestion would be we now have the ability to have an end-of-year test be at the end of the year. [Chuckles] Novel idea. Instead of March, you can make it the end of the year so you have a full year's learning, rather than two dead months, where you're looking at video games or whatever. I'm being very cynical about that. Of course there's learning going on. But if you have the end test at the end of the year, that would be helpful. A test that's diagnostic would be helpful so that you can give this information to parents. We now have AI that makes it easy to be able to describe where their child is deficient and where they're doing well, and give them a

thread to how they could help in the summer, to be able to make sure that there's not atrophy as it relates to learning, and then connect that to the next year's teacher. So assessment's important for accountability, but it also could be used effectively as a diagnostic tool. And then, I think this whole teaching to the test thing has to be blown up. The idea that we're testing over and over again, that students do well by rote memory or they learn how to take a test. There are certain test-taking skills that will help them the rest of their lives, for sure, but the districts don't have to go overboard with this. If we do those three or four things, I think accountability can be protected, and the beneficiaries of that will be everybody, but particularly kids that are struggling.

ANDY ROTHERHAM: Let's stay on this. We were going to talk about the waivers -- we can come back. Let's stay on this issue of what do we want these assessments to look like going forward and sort of modernizing them. John, with the work you all do -- I mean, you know, the governor has put a few things out there -- what are some other things that you all want to see in terms of, you know, the next three, five, ten years in terms of modernizing and evolving these assessments.

JOHN B. KING, JR.: Yeah. Well, I think there's an opportunity with technology to make sure the results come back faster, that the information can be more quickly and efficiently shared with teachers. There's an opportunity to introduce adaptive elements, where you might be able to give more information to teachers about students who are further below or above grade level while still giving them information about whether or not a student is performing at grade level. But I think it is critically important that the information be comparable across the state. One of the worries I have is that people are using the word "innovative" as a kind of Trojan Horse to say, "Well, everybody will just make it up on their own." And in that kind of environment, you won't be able to compare learning loss across districts, and that will be a real problem. Part of the work that we do as civil rights advocates is make the case that we need equity, and the only way we can do that is if we have information that is comparable between the districts that serve a lot of low-income student of color and the districts that serve a lot of affluent white students. If everyone is using a different indicator, we won't be able to know, we won't be able to make those comparisons. That is very dangerous to civil rights.

ANDY ROTHERHAM: Carissa when your members -- and, you know, they're the ones who ultimately end up paying for this and driving the market by hiring the various vendors -- when they hear modernized assessments, like, first of all, what do they hear, and then, what do they want?

CARISSA MOFFAT MILLER: Yeah, so I think there's a couple of things, and I'll just say that a number of the assessment vendors in the field right now are thinking about things very differently, like trying to address what's needed in the fall with what they may have been put together in the spring, and so adjusting and maybe breaking that up over time, that's one of those options. We've talked about through-course options so it's a point in

time where you're collecting that information. The issues about college and career readiness, so the career readiness opportunities to measure are wide and vast, and so there have been a lot of opportunities to look at that. I will pressure test something that I think the assessment world would benefit from, and that is this idea that things have to be exactly the same. There's a way to make things comparable and not have to be exactly the same. We look at SAT and ACT -- there's a table that matches those things up. And it's not exact, but at least we have information on that. And I don't disagree with John because one of the fundamental things about making sure that we're serving all kids is to not do something that's lesser than in one place, and something else. But I do think there are ways to, measurement-wise, pressure test this idea that it has to be at the same time, in exactly the same way, that we could get a plethora more information and way to go about that. But I will say, you know, pretty universally, the state chiefs that I talk to are committed to giving this spring test, if it's at all possible. And we have a few folks who are looking at ways to do that in a different way because they're obviously worried about the environment right now. But this idea of transparency and having data is universally important.

ANDY ROTHERHAM: Where is the money going to come from for better tests? Is K-12 always destined to sort of be a laggard? I mean, you look at the interesting things that are happening out there on assessment right now, they're in the employment space. There's like a company like Imbellus that a woman named Rebecca Kantar founded, and they're doing some pretty interesting stuff on sort of performance testing for employment. You see sort of different kinds of employers demanding that, and there's a market there. Whereas K-12, I don't know, maybe I missed it. I've never seen anybody run for governor on a platform of spending more on testing. And it's not popular, right? But to do some of the things we're talking about requires investment, and it requires some sort of market where these things can be created. How do you see that playing out?

GOV. JEB BUSH: Well, you know, I don't think better tests will necessarily mean that they're going to cost more. In fact, I think they could possibly cost less. So I don't think it's an economic issue. It's just, you have to be -- You have to really believe in accountability. You have to believe that the mission here is a year's worth of knowledge in a year's time for everybody student, and that, ultimately, those gaps will subside. And if you believe that, then you have to measure, you have to assess. And I mean, I don't know, I mean, there's -- The problem is that you're going to see failure, and in politics and policy world, failure's not a fun thing to be around, but we have failure. Just because we don't measure it or, you know, we don't discuss it, doesn't mean that students are being failed by a system that doesn't make sure that they have every opportunity, that everybody has the same opportunity. So I'm, you know -- I have a hard time with people that don't believe -- truly don't believe in accountability, because it's not fair. There are all sort of reasons why they oppose this stuff. 'Cause at the end of the day, the beneficiaries of this are the students that have been left behind



historically, and we have seen gains, particularly among low-income kids. It's waned a bit in the last few years, but accountability has waned, as well.

ANDY ROTHERHAM: John, how would you respond to that, and do you think we can actually get the testing we want on the budget levels we are? And put your old New York hat back on again.

JOHN B. KING, JR.: I think so. I agree with the governor. I don't think that the cost and quality are necessarily as tightly linked as maybe the question suggests. I think folks have to present a package of activities, not just testing and accountability. So I think about the gains that Mississippi has made, for example, around reading. There's a comprehensive strategy to say we've got to have better quality curriculum that reflects the science of reading. We've got to improve teacher training. Not just through professional development in school districts, but changing the practices in teacher prep institutions. And, yes, we need assessment and accountability so we know where we have to target resources to close gaps. And that sort of package, I think, helped drive some of the gains that we've seen in Mississippi. We'll see over time if they're able to sustain that. I hope other states will take that kind of serious approach to the science of reading. And I think, politically, for governors, for state legislators, they should be thinking in terms of improved outcomes for kids of which assessment and accountability are a part of the strategy but not the whole of the strategy.

ANDY ROTHERHAM: And where does choice figure into this? Like, it's hard to miss. There's few other sectors in American life where we'd be having this conversation about accountability, really in this context of how do you derive it from the top and measure and consequences, without some degree of pressure from the bottom. So how does choice fit into all of this? As an accountability tool?

GOV. JEB BUSH: It's the ultimate accountability tool for a parent. If they're not empowered to make choices, they don't have much of a say, but if they do, the system - - at least my experience has been -- that if you have that, what John describes as a full strategy, not just accountability, but a real focus on using data to make sure that teachers are equipped to be able to teach students that have been left behind, particularly, you're going to get a better result. You know, so that gets into the economic interests of the adults in the system, and it politicizes everything, but parental choice empowers parents, makes them more informed, gets them more involved. And so, we support, through ExcelinEd, every possible way that parents can be empowered for options that otherwise they will never have.

ANDY ROTHERHAM: John, and how do you think about that? You know, you've worked in choice schools. You've also administered large school systems.



JOHN B. KING, JR.: Yeah, and I think, to make choices, whether it's in the context of charters or in the context of within-district choice -- we have many public school districts, including my own, in Montgomery County Maryland, where there is within-district public school choice -- to make those choices well, parents need information about kids' learning progress, and the reality is affluent parents will always get it. Affluent parents will always use their social capital to find out the real deal about what's happening inside of a school. If we want low-income parents, immigrant parents, communities of color to have access to that same information, we need to have transparent accountability and assessment systems. And if those choice models are going to make the argument that they can add something different, add something better, add something positive to the world of public education, they need to be a part of that assessment and accountability system, and they need to show that they can make real gains. And one of the problems we have in the charter sector, for example, is that some states take accountability for charters seriously, and others do not, and so charters that are serving students well get lumped in, I think, at times with charters that are doing a terrible job, and to me, part of the original philosophy of charters was public schools, public dollars, public accountability, a willingness to close schools that are chronically low performing. That's got to be a part of how we think about the next iteration of the charter sector.

ANDY ROTHERHAM: Carissa, I want to give you a chance to respond on the choice thing if you want, but also to pivot to this question on waivers. What do your members want to see out of Washington on waivers around these questions of assessment and accountability for the coming school year?

CARISSA MOFFAT MILLER: Yeah, I think the choice question has probably been answered, as it was answered for me. I will just say I want to add to what John said about this full package. I didn't weigh in earlier about the idea that I think sometimes accountability and assessment are seen as something outside of and other than. And so this -- the innovations we see are the full breadth from the states bringing that in. Mississippi is a fantastic example of that, but there are also others who have brought it full circle. And I think that's part of how this will evolve over time. In the terms of waivers, we have a handful of states who have asked for waivers, and that has not been entertained by the secretary as of today, and then there's a good number of states who are looking towards what they're going to do for the fall, addressing the issues that they need to address, and would like to give the assessment in the spring, pending what happens, you know, in the next three to four months. I think a couple of months ago, when we started talking about this, we thought we were going to be heading back into school. We thought we were going to be into a system where it looked somewhat similar, hybrid maybe, and now that we're seeing a lot more virtual options, we're having to think about maybe plan B. But, again, it's -- you know, finding the way in which we have transparency, and go back to the fundamental reason why we give assessments



and why we have accountability is transparency and making sure we're delivering for kids, is the key here.

ANDY ROTHERHAM: Governor, John, thoughts, anything else on next year and what you hope you'll see out of the department will or will not do for the next coming school year?

GOV. JEB BUSH: I think the threats of withholding money is a threat only. I think it's a political -- it's part of the D.C. political game. I don't want to watch it that carefully. I think when leaders at the local and state level have to make these difficult, complicated choices, they have to take into account the social and economic and education costs of being quarantined at home, as well. We've seen drug addiction rise, domestic violence rise, the foster care system is pressured because of this extraordinary time when we're stuck at home. Now, if you're living in an affluent place, you can live your life pretty productively and safely, but if you're in a low-income family or low income community where you have to work outside your home, your children have to go to school in some fashion. It has to be done safely, but to cavalierly say that the only question is opening a school, yes or no, I think misses the whole social impact that goes way beyond that decision. And I don't think the policy makers have taken that fully into account because I think the cost, the education gaps, are going to grow dramatically if we spend another - - a full year outside -- or some version where classroom education is really secondary to remote learning. And, secondly, you know, there are districts that have done really well in remote learning, and others completely belly flopped, made massive failures, and low-income kids, once again, are the ones that get hurt, where they have no access to education. And, so, man, I mean, if you want accountability, it ought to be make sure that, if you have to, you can open, and if you're doing this remotely, make sure every kid has access to a device, make sure they have broadband that they can access, make sure that they're not cast aside. And, frankly, you know, if teachers have preexisting conditions, and many probably do, and they're, you know, closer to my age than the kids they're teaching, maybe they should be remote, and the kids could be in the classroom, and we'll take unemployed people just graduating from college that can't get a job in this circumstance to proctor, if you will, these students, have an incredible experience, and let the teachers Zoom in and teach responsibly. There's got to be a lot of creative ways of doing this, and I'm just not confident that everybody's embracing the idea that we have to get back to school in some fashion so that children can learn.

ANDY ROTHERHAM: John, what would you add there? Both just on this question of the waivers, and then this more general, we're getting into just because it's so topical in the moment, this more general restart question with the fall.

JOHN B. KING, JR.: Well, three quick things that Congress could do that would make, I think, a positive difference here in our ability to get back to school. One is we need testing. It's a different kind of testing. We need an effective system of testing for

COVID-19, an effective system of contact tracing, and an effective strategy of helping people to quarantine. Our international competitors that have already gotten kids back to school have those things in place, therefore, they have the pandemic under control, therefore, they can operate their schools. Now, it's clear there are things that schools need to do to operate more safely, but largely, in this debate over school reopening over the last two weeks, we're actually not focusing on the core question, which is, has society has done the necessary things to get the pandemic under control? That's step one. Right? Congress can do something about that by setting aside significant resources for testing and contact tracing. Second, schools need dollars to operate safely. The governor makes some excellent points about innovative ways to do that, how we leverage tutors or young people through something like expansion of AmeriCorps, how we make sure that every kid has a device and Internet access. That means a device for every kid in the home to be working on their work simultaneously. Not just a device in the house, but a device for every kid to do their work. Congress could set aside significant resources to do that. Senator Markey has a bill, for example, that would put \$4 billion towards E-rate that would help to fund Internet access. We need a big investment to make it possible for schools to operate effectively, either in person or hybrid or distance, but those resources will be critical. The third is we should be clear that assessment and accountability are important here, including accountability for actual instructional time. You know, if you look at some of the data on the plans that school districts had in place last spring, a lot of places didn't take attendance. We have no idea what kids got last spring, so we need assessment and accountability. Yes, it's about measuring academic learning loss, but also, it's about measuring academic engagement. Are kids actually getting learning time?

ANDY ROTHERHAM: All right, so we're coming -- Sorry, go ahead, somebody want to say -- somebody? So we're starting to come up on time. I've been working in some questions that we've been getting from attendees, but one that came in from a policy maker was about this question of there's starting to be more and more research on assessments and long-term life outcomes, various measures of well-being that people bring into adulthood -- how do you all think about that in these tests? A common critique you hear, whether it's at a backyard barbecue or education conference, is these things don't measure anything that's important. How do you think about that question about what they measure and are they robust enough and why they matter? Or are we having a conversation that's sort of divorced from the actual lived experience of Americans?

JOHN B. KING, JR.: Two responses to that. One is, you know, when you poll parents, they are eager to have information about whether or not their kids are making progress. So I think the reality is there is a more political conversation about assessment, but fundamentally, people want to know, "Is my kid learning? Is my kid on track? Is my kid going to be able to have access to a good quality life, a good quality job?" So that's one. Two, we should keep getting the measures better, and we should broaden the

measures. There's probably no one measure that's going to tell us everything we need to know, but the governor mentioned earlier, we do have the ability now, if we use the data well, to link high schools to post-secondary experiences, to be able to tell families, did the students who graduated from this high school actually enroll in college, did they enroll in credit-bearing courses, did they persist in college? We can make the connections, we can ask about a career tech assessment. Did students get the credential, and did the credential help them get a good job after they graduated? So we ought to compliment the traditional test-based accountability with those other measures, but I think most people would agree that kids knowing how to read and do math is important, and they'd like to know, are their kids making progress in those areas?

GOV. JEB BUSH: Yeah, I mean, particularly at the early grades, you know, if you're a below basic reader by the start of 4th grade, the gaps grow quickly. But I think all the way across, if you can't read, you're not going to be worried about your team-building skills or whatever the new thing is that people are interested in to make assessments relevant. Or, you know, that your critical thinking skills are not being measured. If you can't read and can't do math, you're not going to be a critical thinker. I'm not that smart, but I'm pretty sure that that's the case. And so we have a large number of students that never even get the building blocks to be able to do the things that, you know, when you're having your barbecues in the backyard, people talk about. That's not the problem for a whole bunch of parents who see their children lagging behind in a system that isn't adjusting to their needs.

CARISSA MOFFAT MILLER: I would just say, too, that assessment's critically important, and there are also other indicators that are critically important. And so packaging those things together can help us have a wider picture and know better how to make some adjustments. You know, I think, even as a parent, knowing if my kid is not on track, then what's the plan for where they're going and how they're going to get there? And that I can actually see meaningful progress on that. And, also, the other indicators that have been mentioned already about success long-term. I think putting everything on one test is probably ill-advised, however, that test is an important part of the component of getting information.

ANDY ROTHERHAM: Well, we're at time. I want to thank you all very much for your candor, for your thoughtfulness. This was a great conversation and bringing together three really interesting people looking at this from different ways, but a great deal of commonality, which I think bodes well for some big both near-term and long-term challenges, so thank you very much, and thank you to everybody who joined us. And like I said at the beginning, the webinar will be up online at Bellwether's web site and our various publication outlets, and so you can go back and watch any part of it or share it. Thank you very much.

GOV. JEB BUSH: Thank you.