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PROMOTING K-12 EDUCATION TO ADVANCE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

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PARTICIPANTS:

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION: LESSONS LEARNED FROM EDUCATION REFORM
AND THE PATH FORWARD

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PROCEEDINGS

MR. LEONHARDT: Let me ask everyone to sit down so we can get started on our final one before we break for the morning. I'm David Leonhardt of the *New York Times*. We're here with Wendy Kopp and Randi Weingarten. Thank you both for joining us; we appreciate it.

And we're going to have a conversation here. I'm actually going to rely on someone else to tell me when we're out of time. So I wanted to start by mentioning my sort of torn feelings about the state of education today.

I feel like I bounce back and forth between optimism and pessimism. On the one hand it seems really clear that there are reasons for hope and each of you embody some of those reasons. We've learned much more about what works and we seem to have more teachers, and more schools, and more administrators, and more entire school systems focused on what works and trying to put it into practice. And all of that seems a reason for really significant long term hope.

I think you could argue that of all the mess of the last few years, there is a chance that we will look back decades from now and say that the biggest most important long term change that happened was in the realm of education. And all of that seems reason for optimism.

On the other hand, when you get beyond all of these efforts to change things and you begin to look at results, it can be significantly humbling. As we had a story in the *Times* this morning, college graduation rates continue to stagnate.

Men today are essentially no more educated than their fathers were, which is quite striking, SAT scores are flat or even declining, school systems that spend an enormous amount of money have relatively little to show for it in terms of results, reformers who have come in pointing that out find that reform is harder than they thought when they came in and the results they can point to are often humbling as well.

And so, I guess I'm sometimes left thinking that the reasons for optimism are some combination of efforts and anecdotes and the reasons for pessimism are data. And I'm guessing that the two folks around me at root are optimistic and so starting with Wendy, I guess I wanted to ask you to cheer me up a little bit and cheer us all up a little bit. But with some proper pessimism --

MS. KOPP: With some data.

MR. LEONHARDT: -- and -- yeah.

MS. KOPP: Yes -- no.

MR. LEONHARDT: And skepticism.

MS. KOPP: So, you know, I've actually been reflecting on whether I think if I look broadly at the state of U.S. public education I would be as optimistic as I am if I think about our schools in our urban and rural communities, which is what, you know, we're focused on through Teach For America. And I can't actually say that I have true reason for optimism when I think about it as an aggregate.

But let me share why I do feel enormous optimism when I think about, you know, the challenge of ensuring that all of our kids, including kids in low income communities, 15 million kids who live below the poverty line in our country, like the effort to improve their educational outcomes and to close the incredible gaps and achievements that still persist, you know, along socioeconomic and racial lines.

I just think back to where we were when I first got into this 22 years ago. When the prevailing notion, backed up by all of the research, was that socioeconomic background determined educational outcomes, we truly did not know of educational interventions other than super heroic teachers who we viewed as incredible outliers and made movies of, *Stand and Deliver*, Jaime Escalante, or you know, schools lead by people who we viewed as one of a kind, charismatic leaders like Marva Collins in Chicago where we assumed that her school was making it happen but when she left that school it would fall apart.

We truly thought -- we didn't know how to provide kids who faced all of the extra challenges of poverty with the kind of education that would actually put them on a different kind of life trajectory.

Today, I mean, and I think this is an enormous statement, we know that it's possible. And we know it's possible not just because one or two schools or ten schools, but because you know, dozens of communities have growing numbers of schools.

We could argue how many, maybe 3 or 400 of them, that are showing us that this is possible. That, you know, we actually can provide kids with the kind of education that regardless of, you

know, what they're bringing in, incredible challenges that meets them with both the level of expectations, and rigor, and the extra supports necessary to, you know, literally double, triple, quadruple college graduation rates for kids, like meaningful, meaningful impact. So that's one reason for optimism.

The conversation today is completely different around this issue. I mean it's not can we do this, it's can we do this on the level of a system. Can we create whole systems of these kind of transformational schools? And to that question, the verdict is still out but I think that there's lots of reason for optimism even there.

You know, you think about where we were a mere five, six years ago in this. If we had pulled together this room and said let's agree on the school systems that will never change, we would have had a big debate. We'd still be debating but we would've put New Orleans, Washington, D.C., Detroit, at the top of that list. There's just no doubt about it. And you know, those are systems where there is, in some cases, like true progress.

You look at New Orleans; the percentage of kids who are proficient based on the state exams has doubled in the last four years. In New York City, which 10 years ago we would've chalked up to -- I mean literally if you remember, and we have such short memories, but the state of affairs in the New York City Public Schools System, 1.2 million kids, 32 community school boards, had lines in the paper which were all about fights between mayors and chancellors and almost nothing at all about kids.

When you think about the fact that, you know, we've rationalized the New York City School System, I could go on and on, but just look at the fact that fourth graders today in New York, just based on the national norm test, (inaudible), you know, are a full year ahead of where they were seven years ago.

If you're a parent and you've got a fourth grader in New York, that is meaningful difference. So I actually think we are seeing, in some communities, that this is possible. And I mean, to the other side, we can certainly look at the aggregate data and be really pessimistic because as a whole, we haven't moved the needle at all.

I mean the same data that we were all citing 20 years ago we could cite today in terms of just the nature of the achievement gap. And I think that's worth exploring; like why haven't we seen the aggregate needle move but why is it happening in some communities. And I could really go on about that

but I'll leave it there for now.

MR. LEONHARDT: Thank you.

MS. WEINGARTEN: So I actually go back and forth between being pessimistic and optimistic as well. However, I don't think we have a choice, those of us actually who work with kids, we have to be optimistic. We have to be realistic and we have to be pragmatic, and we have to be very urgent and very deliberative at the same time.

Now some people think that's oxymoronic but I think we can do both of these things. So the reason for optimism is some of the reasons that Wendy said, which is that demography -- our value system is that demography ought not be destiny and I think we have found ways to -- and we have examples of both schools and districts, both nationally and internationally, where it isn't, where we bust through that.

The flip side is that it can't also be a slogan. Poverty does matter, socioeconomics matter; I don't know if anybody has read the other *New York Times* front page article today. This is not an advertisement for the *New York Times* though.

MR. LEONHARDT: But we'll take it.

MS. WEINGARTEN: But you know, front page, the nature of joblessness has changed the nature of the country. The fact that poverty has gone up for the first time in decades, the fact that 40% of African American youth are poor, the fact that 35% of Hispanic youth are poor; those numbers are actually not what knocked me for a loop this summer. The numbers that knocked me for a loop this summer were the census numbers that said that wealth of Hispanic families have dropped 60%, wealth of African American families have dropped 35%.

So the whole notion that the environment outside of schools doesn't matter -- you hear teachers -- the last -- I'm in every -- and I'm sure Wendy is doing the same thing.

I try to be out of Washington, D.C., not just in New York City, at least twice a week; all around the country and internationally because that's where you see and you hear teachers talk about this all of the time in the last couple of years, how the world has changed for kids and their families.

So the reason for my pessimism is oh my God, look at what's happening in terms of the economy, not just what's happening in terms of budgets and schools, but look at what's happening in

terms of the economy and what this means for our kids' families, not just for teachers themselves. We see 300,000 fewer educators in 2008.

But the reason for optimism, because I lean there, is I think, just like Wendy said, and I'm actually really optimistic because of what we've seen internationally. I focus on one thing these days, and I was sharing this with David beforehand when David, you know, asked us, you know, he gave us a homework assignment last night and asked us this question so we wouldn't go -- today. We have not just high flying charter schools; we have high flying public schools that are doing great jobs.

I can point to the green dot school that we started with; Steve Barr in New York City, UFT members working there every single day. They are on the trajectory of an 85 to 90% graduation rate and the stats of the kids who have just taken and passed their regions are really something that everyone ought to be proud of.

We can talk about what those things do. That's not what I'm interested in. I'm interested in whole district change, which is kind of like what we heard before. I'm interested in what countries are doing to actually break through to ensure that kids are really ready to compete in the knowledge economy.

So I'm much more interested right now in what's Finland doing, what's Singapore doing, what's South Korea doing. What are districts like the ABC School District in L.A. County -- what are they doing to help all of their kids? What's Plattsburgh doing to help all of its kids? And the reason I'm optimistic is in some ways the same reasons that Wendy said.

It's not -- control; it's not the -- leadership is important. It's not the accountability issues that are driving this, with all due respect. It's some of the systemic issues like the environment -- or, let me start with, kids are being engaged.

Yes, of course we have to have high expectations for kids. But we also have to have an engagement strategy so the kids want to be in school and stay in school and see a future for themselves. And we're seeing that in the districts and internationally where places are out competing us.

Number two; teacher quality is huge. Teachers matter. We know it's the largest most important in school factor and the sessions that we had beforehand in terms of how to incentivize or not, how to do evaluations or not, I think when the Superintendent said we have to make evaluation about

teacher development as well. It is a huge lever, Michael said it, Bob said it as well, it's a huge lever when we do it right.

Number three; districts that work, countries that work, not just truly respect their teachers, but there's also real collaboration and real working together, both inside communities, inside schools, and inside of communities.

So engagement, not just high expectation strategies, that means really good engaging curriculum, broadly defined, not just math and English, teacher quality hugely matters, collaboration hugely matters.

And the last thing, which is probably the most controversial, is that we can't say poverty doesn't matter. But we also can't pretend that we can't deal with it. And so that's why we are very big on this issue of wrap around services. Not that that's going to solve everything. But if you know a kid is hungry or something really terrible happened at home the night before, we have to try to find ways of dealing with that.

MR. LEONHARDT: Let's talk for a minute about how we know what's working and what's not because -- I don't mean to make every question a version of I'm torn between two things, but there seems to be this fundamental question of how do we know what works and how do we measure and hold systems, and schools, and even individual teachers accountable because I'm aware of the weaknesses and the flaws with using test scores; right. I'm aware that people can teach to some test. I'm aware that they can be less meaningful than they might seem.

But I also feel like a lot of the critics of test scores ultimately are arguing for no accountability. That's not what they say, but what they basically are -- at the end of the day they are not replacing test scores with something that we can actually look at and say okay, we know whether this school is working.

And so that if we simply rely on schools to tell us whether they're working. Whether they're actually working or not, they'll use many of these words, right. You didn't use holistic, but they'll use engaging and holistic and they'll say we care about all of these things.

And at the end of the day, we shouldn't just use test scores because they're imperfect, but how can we actually get some sense for whether they're working or not rather than just asking them

whether they're working because I'm pretty sure of what answer we're going to get if we do it that way.

MS. WEINGARTEN: So you know, we actually have to have all of these measures. We have to have measures of success. I often say that we don't actually have a good definition, a good common definition, for what constitutes success. And so as a result, we default back to English and math test scores.

There are some places that also now default back to attendance rates for students. We default back to dropout rates. But now we're seeing what are the completion rates in college. So I'm not against data and I'm not against accountability. We need it. But does accountability -- does the measurements actually drive everything that we do or do they guide and inform everything that we do?

And so when you actually look at the PISA results -- PISA is a random, you know, randomly selected test, not given to every child, countries are opt to be part of it, and it is a huge touchtone for all of us. But then we then look at what is Finland actually doing to get to where it's gotten. What is Singapore actually doing?

So I think we need to actually balance better between the accountability measures as a guide and as a touchtone as opposed to as a goal. The last thing I'll say is this, the best accountability systems are the ones that are -- where everyone reinforces each other, where it's not top down but where it's what I keep calling 360 degree accountability, so that people feel much more responsible as opposed to accountable to somebody else.

The districts that seem to work, meaning that seem to move the needle for helping close the achievement gap, helping all kids succeed, showing growth, showing real knowledge, are the ones where you see everyone, parents, community, teachers, principles, students, taking responsibility.

MS. KOPP: I think all of that is true. I mean I'm just trying to think, you know, how to put forth what I really believe about this because I think it's -- we clearly, as Randi said, we need to, you know, we need better and better assessments.

We should be investing in the quality of our measures to, I think a discussion that took place earlier today and gain more and more meaningful assessments. And we certainly have to have them, I think, so that we can -- first of all, for teachers.

I mean any good teacher is constantly figuring out where are my kids versus where I

need them to be and using that information to inform their practice. We need it for parents, and principles, and to Randi's point, for everyone to inform our practice.

I think one of the problems in the nature of the discussion and the debate around all of this is we somehow think -- I mean the real trick is it is a people question and it's a leadership question. And you know, I think David Brooks wrote a beautiful column on this earlier in the summer where he said you know, we shouldn't be blaming the tests, we should be blaming our leadership.

You know, when we blame a standardized test for the fact that principles pull their kids out of classrooms and put them in the cafeteria for two months to do test prep. Really; should we blame the test? Or is that an unbelievable lack of leadership and commitment?

And I guess that's, you know, when you spend time, and I think it's worth just, you know, every question we're going to ask all I can think is are we fully, fully grounded in what is happening in the schools, in our highest poverty communities that are getting results that are meaningful for kids, not just incrementally better, not the schools where we've got 33% of the kids reading on level instead of 30% in the school next door, but the schools that are actually meaningfully changing kids' trajectories, which is what we need given the magnitude of the problem that we currently face. What is happening in those schools?

I, you know, my simple explanation for why we haven't moved the needle at all in an aggregate sense as it relates to the achievement gap but we are moving it in some schools and systems is that in some schools and systems, we now have a constellation of leaders who are deeply, deeply grounded in what is going on, what has been learned in those schools. So I think it's worth spending some time on what is happening in those schools. And I mean -- and Randi cited the results from their school.

I have spent time as well in I don't know how many dozens of these schools by now and always, always, always there is a school leader who has assumed full personal responsibility for ensuring that their kids make the kind of academic progress and gain the kind of character strength necessary to usually have access to college and ultimately get through college and have access to a full range of professional options; like they are on a personal mission and they then do what a great leader does when they are pursuing something very ambitious because I mean to Randi's point again, this is very ambitious.

To take kids who face all of the, in some cases, inconceivable challenges of poverty and actually afford them access through an excellent education, did the tools to get out of poverty, that's exceedingly ambitious. We've done it so few times so they go after it with a level of energy and discipline that great leaders use to accomplish anything in any endeavor.

They focus first and foremost on their team. They are obsessive about recruiting the teachers into their school and investing in them. They invest massively in their development. They work together with their faculty to build a powerful culture at the school level that aligns the kids, and the faculty, and the parents all on the same mission.

They are aggressive about managing to where they want to go and they do whatever it takes and they realize it takes more time, it takes more supports, and so they figure out how to lengthen the school day and lengthen the school year and partner with the local community organization that will provide various services and what not.

And this is what gives me hope about urban and rural schools versus the state of affairs at large because I think there is a growing sense of momentum and sense of energy around improving educational outcomes in low income communities and I don't sense the same level of momentum when we look at the aggregate. But this is about, I mean most fundamentally, it's about purposefulness, it's about our saying we've got a big goal and we've got to go after that goal and do whatever it takes to get there. That's what I don't see in my own kids' school and what I do see in the schools that are working for kids in the communities where Teach for America is working.

MR. LEONHARDT: Randi.

MS. WEINGARTEN: You know, we were talking before and I don't know how many people have read the book *Drive* by Daniel Pink, of late, but it's probably been the most important book that I've read in the last five years because it does actually show a very different view about motivation and about motivation being about people having autonomy, mastery, and purpose. And I think Wendy just, I'm sorry, David too --

MR. LEONHARDT: No, no.

MS. WEINGARTEN: -- to jump in here, but Wendy just hit it. Both of us are very concerned about kids who have been left behind in the past. That's why we both focus very much on

rural and on urban environments and on how you actually change the trajectory for those kids. And again, what keeps on running through my mind is we are littered with gray pilots.

David Sherman is in the audience. David and I, with Sandy Feldman and Rudy Crew, did the Chancellor's District in New York where we actually -- you know, Mayor Bloomberg and Joel Klein, where every single elementary school was turned around within a year or two and we did a combination of things, which is part of what's so hard in public education, it's not just one thing. You do have to have a good leader. But you also have to have a combination of other things taken together.

So the issue becomes -- again, I go back to how when you do something that works, what do we need environmentally to sustain that and to scale it up. And that has become the issue that I've now become much more concerned about. Like when we see schools that work, how can we share that practice so that people believe that the sharing of it is important, not competing with it is important.

MR. LEONHARDT: Let me throw out an idea and ask each of you to react. Last year, I think it was, the *Los Angeles Times* did this project that garnered a huge amount of attention, and controversy, and criticism in which it published the individual test scores associated with teachers.

Let's set that aside for a minute and twist it and say what if we had a system, a state for example, spent a lot of time developing tests, right, tests that they didn't think could be easily taught to, tests where the kids weren't locked in the cafeteria, tests across a range of areas, not just fill in the blank tests but tests that had scores on them and they said we are going to publish the input scores and output scores at a school level, not a teacher level, but a school level.

The principle will get all of the teacher level scores and can react as appropriate with Union leaders, but the school level scores, inputs and outputs, right, we don't want to know the kids in Scarsdale are doing better than kids in the Bronx, we know that.

It will allow us to focus on which schools are actually making progress. It'll allow us to find more of these kind of gems that you're both talking about. It will also allow us to find suburban schools in relatively middle class or even upper middle class places that simple aren't doing that well; that are coasting --

SPEAKER: Yeah.

MR. LEONHARDT: -- off of their inputs. What do you think about that?

MS. KOPP: I think that's the answer. I mean, yes. That's what we need. We absolutely -- I think we've got to focus on the school as the unit of change. And I won't since you said let's not go there, to the *L.A. Times* thing, but this idea that we should fix the system by fixing 3.7 million teachers is just -- I still -- it's the latest silver bullet.

It's just we're not going to get there and in three years we're all going to be making speeches we thought it was the teachers. We all know teachers are important, it's just, it's very hard to be a teacher who produces truly transformational results.

Again, in the urban and rural context in which we work, that's what we would need to do to serve kids well outside of an environment that supports that. It's much more sustainable to be an effective teacher in an environment that in fact -- within a transformational school. And so to blame the teachers for the weaknesses of the system, I mean, yeah, I could go on and on and on. I just think -- but we -- absolutely, we need to figure out how do we create whole systems of transformational schools.

And we should be holding school leaders accountable for that and freeing them up in my view over how they spend their resources and giving them much more autonomy over how they build their teams and the inputs that they need in order to get the results that we should hold them accountable for.

MS. WEINGARTEN: So, I think you'll find it surprising that I agree with Wendy. I mean we have to -- what the *L.A. Times* did in terms of individual teachers and where teachers actually have to work together, build on what each other does, it just totally misunderstood the nature of the work that we do as school teachers.

Having said that, even though we have to actually move entire districts because that's how you move and how you ensure that all kids, not just some kids, are meeting -- are succeeding. The school, in our -- the school is the unit of work. That's the unit of work. That's the environment, that's the place that kids go, teachers go, principles go, community goes. So there has to be a way of transparent data for the school. Having said that, that's essentially what No Child Left Behind did. But it focused simply on the sanctions and the penalties and not what do we need to do to create the supports.

MR. LEONHARDT: Is it school level? I'm not aware of being able to get input and output data on any school.

MS. WEINGARTEN: Well not -- what I'm saying is that it is -- if you think about the architecture of No Child Left Behind, No Child Left Behind says if you do not get to X or Y or Z, cut scores in a school, then the school will be closed or this will happen with the school. So it is -- the accountability system was school based, based upon these kind of -- this annual yearly progress.

But what I think you're saying is you're suggesting a much more both nuanced and complicated multiple factor assessment and accountability system, which roughly some states have done in terms of the A, B, C, D, E, F, report cards.

We actually proposed something like you're proposing, David, in 2007 in New York, like a report card per school that was nuanced in the way, or multi factored, in the way you're proposing and we actually I think still have some of the kind of report cards that we proposed at that time.

MR. LEONHARDT: That's interesting. To me one of the big problems with No Child Left Behind is that it's not market based, right. If individuals want to go and look at how much progress kids are making in a school they just can't do it. Right, it's all sort of bound up in what the Government ultimately does in terms of the sanctions.

Let's talk for a minute about structure of schools and particularly about boys. Allen Blinder, who I presume is not here, but has written -- a former Vice Chairman of the Federal Reserve, Princeton Economist, has written a paper raising this question of do our schools look too much like the 20th Century economy that we don't now have.

Do they basically look too much like factories? Are they organized in terms of time of day, in terms of desks, in terms of everything essentially to produce factory workers? And I'd be interested in getting each of your thoughts about that. Should schools look and feel much different than they do now? Although, I understand they've already started to change. I'll let you decide who should go first.

MS. WEINGARTEN: Both of us have said I think my stock speech is our schools are organized for the economy of the 20th Century. And a lot of people who say our schools are organized for the agrarian society, but if you -- anybody been to a high school of late? Our schools are, you know, they're basically organized as factories, as very large factories. Even our small schools are organized that way. And we need to be organized around knowledge and skill, as opposed to around factories.

Now, they're organized this way because, you know, in the 20's, the 30's, the 40's, if somebody dropped out there was work. There's no longer work. Having said that, there's also a huge need for -- and I know Michael, I don't know if you got into as much of this before, Michael was an amazing Career Tech-Ed teacher who really spent a lot of time in transforming schools in New York City from the old vocational model to a career, technical, and engagement model.

So there's a whole bunch of things that we can do to have much more project based learning, have many more internships, have ways of really engaging kids so that they're prepared for the knowledge, economy, and prepared for what some people call the soft skills, not just for math and English, but skills like problem solving, creativity, ingenuity, application of knowledge. Those are the skills that we need to prepare kids for and right now we're still much more focused on (inaudible) memorization.

MS. KOPP: I mean I just think that there's a hierarchy of issues. Like I think, you know, when I think about the things that have been on the agenda here this morning as well. I mean, you know, we could get into the micro details of lots of stuff but there's so much that is wrong foundationally about the system that I can't even let a 10th of my mental energy go there.

So like if we had the right set up then yes, bring on the innovation. And honestly, the right set up would foster the innovation. So the question is, you know, are we setting up our systems to foster more of the absolutely transformational schools that we now know it's possible to build?

It would take pushing out a lot more responsibility and freedom. It would entail trusting our educators, something that we're not inclined to do. I mean I don't know how much time you all have spent talking to the folks on the hill or the folks in any state department, but driven out of the best of intentions because we want to protect our kids and keep them safe, we just think we've got to micromanage everything and yet find a school that is getting the kind of results I'm talking about and you will find educators who are saying either they've been given through the charter system or they have just taken through the force of their own like will, the flexibility to do what it takes to meet the needs of kids.

So it's about putting in place a system that fosters that and then investing in our people, in education, in a way that we are not even remotely in the vicinity of doing; to develop the leadership pipeline necessary to actually, you know, then execute on that.

I don't think anything short of those two big strategies will have a -- we can tinker around

the edges, we can test out giving kids a dollar for reading a book, we can test out all sorts of things but in the end it will only amount at best to incremental change until we can get the foundational elements right.

MS. WEINGARTEN: But in Singapore and in Finland they actually -- even where you see schools that also still look a little bit like factories --

MR. LEONHARDT: Mm-hmm.

MS. WEINGARTEN: -- they invest in their teachers, they do a lot of preparation, they treat preparation, and this is not -- I frankly believe in the alternative pipeline too. So this is -- every time I say this, I just say this is not a knock on Teach for America. They believe in training their teachers like we train our doctors and then they also spend -- in Singapore they really invest in evaluation as a teacher development tool and as a focus on continuous improvement. And they also have real collaborative environments.

In Ontario, which went from 5, or 6, or 10 years ago having a terrible achieving gap to now being -- closing at further than any other country; they focused on two things, building teacher capacity and the investment in teachers and the respect of teachers, creating those supports, and also collaborative environments.

So it is doable. When you look at -- I go back to the optimism. When you look at the countries that out compete us, it is doable if there's two, or three, or four things we do at the same time.

MR. LEONHARDT: Perfect segway to questions. My little mention of boys, which is -- we have a question here. How do you account for boys? I'm cutting it off but I mean how do you explain just how much worse boys are doing in school than girls, which isn't for a second to suggest that sexism still is not an enormous problem in society and we look at the Fortune 500, we look at anything, you name it, but in schools, boys have really fallen behind.

MS. KOPP: You know, I'm actually not an expert on the gender differences here but I have to just say, I mean, okay, 15 million kids growing up below the poverty line, half of them do not graduate from high school. The half who do, who we applaud, they go across the stage, they graduate, they have an average 8th grade skill level; 80% of our top -- kids get through college within six years, 8% of our 15 million kids living below the poverty line will do that.

It's -- and I know you're right. I mean clearly, we've got -- within that, within that tiny

percentage, more girls than boys are going to make it. The problem is, we've got our kids in low income communities who face literally challenges that it's hard to relate to, just massive, right, who show up at schools that are there, just like the school I went to in Highland Park in Dallas, Texas. It was there. It was waiting for us.

Now, I showed up as part of a community that calls itself a bubble for its complete lack of diversity or disadvantage, you know, destined to go to college and graduate from college like 97% of the other kids in Highland Park. And I went to the same school that we expect to meet the needs.

Essentially, I mean I guess you could argue more resources; they had like a much better football field.

But literally, we meet all of our kids with schools that are waiting for kids, are expecting that some of them are going to be on a real mission, others, you know, it doesn't work. It's not going to work for our kids and what we've seen does work is to align our -- like to actually build schools that are on a mission to put their kids somewhere else, that get the kids on a mission.

That's what engages boys and girls who face so many extra challenges and it's what -- I mean go visit these schools and you see kids who are fired up and will be our future leaders of the country by the way. Thank heaven there is hope for us as a nation because these are kids who have overcome every challenge and are gaining the kind of education that, you know, is going to set them up to assume real leadership roles.

MS. WEINGARTEN: So there's a lot of data on this and I don't want to, also like Wendy, this is not an area that I'm an expert on, but if you think about boys, every one of our children need mentors, need role models, and we need to ensure they are not anonymous. I've spent a lot of time with groups that have tried to figure out, like Council for Unity and others, how to deal with gang behavior, how to deal with bullying. And when you look at gangs, what gangs are about is people having a structure and a place to go.

And so if you look at some of our communities, some of the instability in families now because of everything is going on, some of the enmity, we have to try and find ways to engage kids and help kids where they are, not where we want them to be.

And so part of -- I was at Ed Nation last night and there was a CEO panel and people said -- and Tom Brokaw asked, what's the one thing you could -- if you were Czar, what was the one

thing you would do and to that group I asked them -- I said there are 100,000 public schools in the United States of America, adopt one of them. Have your employees work with kids.

Kids need to see, boys, girls, they need to see that there is a future for them. They need to -- so it's this engagement, this mentoring, this loving, this look that even -- David Brooks said, you know, we need to love kids. So we have to actually get -- understand that there's a lot of enmity and of kids that we have to get through. And boys have it more than girls.

MR. LEONHARDT: We have a question here from an optimistic Teach for America alum. Do the two of you envision working in some kind of partnership to improve the educational outcome for all students?

MS. KOPP: Um.

MR. LEONHARDT: I can leave.

MS. KOPP: I'll -- well I mean, what is going to improve outcomes for kids in my view is reaching the point where we have enough leaders at every level of the system and of policy and in our Unions who are actually grounded in what you learn when you've taught successfully in a low income community, which is basically that we've got a big problem but it is solvable and who have the kind of grounded understanding of what it takes, know that no one silver bullet is going to solve the problem, understand what is going on and what we have learned about what it takes to provide kids with a whole school that works for them.

When we reach that point we are going to have real change and I'm actually optimistic. I mean it's about leadership. We need strong leadership from within the Union, from within our systems, from within policy and we're hoping to generate more of that leadership that's clearly Teach for America's mission.

And I'm hopeful that some of our folks will in fact assume leadership within Unions, as well as within school systems, and that ultimately that will create a much more collaborative kind of -- not just that it needs to come from Teach for America, but meaning yes. Like I think we can have reformers from within the Union work with reformers from within the system and within policy to get where we're trying to go.

MS. WEINGARTEN: Look, I think we have to work together. We have -- if we actually

really both believe as we do in ensuring that all kids, particularly poor kids, have an opportunity to do what they want and need to do in the world, then we'll have to.

Too often in this debate in the last few years has been about how you get somebody else off the stage as opposed to how you actually work together. You know, how this person shouldn't be in the room, this person shouldn't be at the table. It's ridiculous.

There is not a monopoly on good ideas, you know, and much of what we need to do is how we implement and we both think about it a little bit differently but, you know, Wendy leans into leadership but that's a way of scaling and sustaining.

I lean into, you know, how we help create capacity of educators and how we help create collaboration because I worry that if the charismatic leader leaves, what happens the next year when you don't have that same principle. But we're actually spending more time together thinking about how to do this as opposed to, you know, how people point fingers at each other.

MR. LEONHARDT: Roger.

MR. ALTMAN: I want to ask a question about something Wendy said and hopefully you'll (inaudible) address it. You know, Wendy, you said that invariably the success at the school level comes down to leadership and what we now -- we now know so much about what it takes to succeed, which we didn't know 20 years ago. That statement puzzles me.

Is it to say that 20 years ago or 30 years ago we did not have leadership at the school level? I personally attended a public elementary school and I thought we had passionate teachers and extraordinarily skilled people in that school. So I'm confused by what you mean by that.

MS. KOPP: I'm not saying we didn't have committed people in schools --

MR. ALTMAN: I mean is it your point we have more leadership today than we used to? I'm just baffled by that.

MS. KOPP: No. Well, my point is that I actually think that we know something today that we didn't know 20 years ago and that is how to create -- I don't want to either minimize the challenge of poverty. Poverty is a very, very real challenge for kids. What we've learned is how to create a school that actually meets the needs of kids who do face the extra challenges of poverty.

I'm not saying there weren't some teachers who figured out how to beat all of the odds. I

mean there clearly were. I mean we made a whole movie out of Jaime Escalante. But instead of diving in and saying what did he do differently, we just assumed the guy is a charismatic super hero.

And we have, as Teach for America, dived in. I mean it took me 10 years to say let me go back and sure enough what we learn differentiates our most successful teachers in urban and rural areas within Teach for America. It is exactly what Jaime Escalante did. I think what we've learned in the last 20 years is how to describe that, how to replicate it.

It turns out it does take a super hero. I mean honestly, if you look at what Jaime Escalante did, if you look at what our rare transformational teachers who do work within the classic underperforming urban school do, it's hard to replicate and it's why I keep focusing on schools because I think, you know, literally we didn't have -- I mean I think so much of the education community actually doesn't understand what we have learned in the last two decades.

If you go spend time in the KIPP schools, and the uncommon schools, and the achievement first schools, and to Randi's point, in the growing number of schools within the system that are producing transformational results, they're doing something very differently than most people would describe as the function of a school. They're certainly operating differently than the school I went to, which didn't have the same set of challenges on its hands.

So yeah, I think we know now what to do. I don't think there's any way to produce, to create, one of those schools without extraordinary mission driven school leadership. Now, I believe you can develop that; absolutely. We need to become about -- we need to create -- if we don't become leadership development machines and people -- I mean I think teachers are leaders too. I mean I think we need to understand, just like great companies understand that their greatest asset is their people.

I mean if we had a group of CEOs up here explaining how much they spend on the development of their work forces and then we looked at what we do, like what they do, and what we do in education, it would be absolutely humiliating; right.

Like we don't come near, we're not even on the same planet of what any high performing company does and yet we're trying to do, especially in urban and rural areas, we're trying to accomplish extraordinary outcomes.

We will never get there; we will never get there in a sustainable way if we don't create

that kind of capacity within our school systems. So yeah, I think we need a lot more leadership. You know, we need to develop it. I don't think we've done that well.

MR. LEONHARDT: That reminds me of something you said before about scaling. And let me just throw this in that you can address either in your answer. You talked about how hard it is to scale, right. You both have and is the main problem there that the things that work little don't actually work big? Or is the main problem --

MS. KOPP: It's leadership.

MR. LEONHARDT: -- that we haven't yet figured out how to expand the things that work small?

MS. WEINGARTEN: That's actually really -- I know that the issue, or I think that the issue is how to scale and how to sustain. But we're just starting to figure out how to answer your question. So let me try to answer Roger's and then try to answer yours together.

MR. LEONHARDT: Yeah.

MS. WEINGARTEN: If that's okay. Something, believe it or not, Roger, that Rahm Emanuel said and then Lamar Alexander just said it in an op-ed too, actually I think goes to your question. And they both have said it different times. Rahm, at a CGI meeting in June in Chicago when he was welcoming everybody, said my job as Mayor is to create an environment that is conducive to business; that's my job so that you will actually employ people in Chicago. Lamar just said -- Senator Alexander just said in you know, criticizing what Arne Duncan had just done in terms of the waivers, he said something about how environment -- creating an environment is really important.

When I go to schools that are working and I pull teachers aside and I say so what makes this school work, they will inevitably say several reasons, including the principle, to Wendy's point, but when I just then push down on that and say -- or push at that and say well what about the principle and they'll say things like well, whenever I need something the principle will make sure that I get it.

She'll make sure that the, you know, that the environment is there for me to actually succeed in teaching. She'll create an environment or he'll create an environment; there'll be a real collaboration. So I think that there's a big difference between the way in which we see leadership today versus several years ago.

Several years ago it was I am the school. I am the Union. I am the nation. Now it is how do you create an environment for the people who actually are closest to the kids doing the work for them to be successful. So in terms of attributes of leadership that I see now, that's why I lean towards collaboration in terms of how you ensure that so many other people can actually do that.

And that's a big difference today in terms of what makes a good leader in schools versus maybe years and years ago. How you create the environment so that others can succeed because now it's about knowledge as opposed to about -- memorization. It's about application -- the skills we have to teach kids these days are so much more complex. Not that some kids didn't get that before, but now for all kids to be successful, all kids have to get it.

MS. KOPP: Can I just say one more thing to both of these questions?

MS. WEINGARTEN: I think -- and that's why scaling is so hard because it's creating the environment.

MR. LEONHARDT: Mm-hmm.

MS. KOPP: If you pull together the people who run the big charter school management organizations and the superintendents who have seen lots of good stuff proliferate and are trying to figure out how do we scale it and you say to them, what is your biggest problem, they will say numbers one through five, talent and leadership at every level.

MS. WEINGARTEN: All right.

MS. KOPP: They are desperate. The bottleneck is enough people who can run great schools. You can't have a transformational school without a transformational leader; there's no way. But how do you speed up the development? You can't just have them. You need to develop them. They need to come into teaching with the personal characteristics necessary to be an exceptional teacher. I've never -- you can't have -- you can't become a transformational school leader without having been a highly effective and transformational teacher in all honesty, in the same environment. It's a very rare person who can get there without that.

And then they need to gain the experiences necessary to develop the leadership skills necessary to do it at a school level. Talent and leadership; it is -- I mean I'm sure I'm preaching to the choir of anyone who is out there as a former superintendent or a superintendent or someone trying to

scale what works. This is the constraint.

MR. LEONHARDT: You've walked right --

MS. WEINGARTEN: But we learned in the Chancellor's District that leadership was not the be all and the end all. We still had the same leaders as we had beforehand in many of the schools. We did not have -- and yet we were able to create -- to your point about talent, we were able to help prepare and develop teachers in a very different way and also have a bunch of other resources that turned around those schools. Because at the end of the day, the reason I'm just pushing back at this is we have 100,000 public schools. We have to actually help all kids. You know, if we can't get 100,000 great leaders, we still have to help all kids.

MS. KOPP: It's just that we haven't begun to even try to develop the people and leadership force necessary to have a purposeful, effective education system. So I'm thinking let's try and when we try and we come up against the wall, then resort to something else.

But I've never seen the kind of change we need for kids, something more than incremental improvement, because that doesn't get us anywhere when we're dealing with the situation we're dealing with without -- and I think you might agree at some level, Randi, like without a different -- and I'm not saying it's about the people. Like I actually think we bring good people into a system that does nothing --

MS. WEINGARTEN: Right.

MS. KOPP: -- to bring out the leadership and talent that exists. I mean I think we need strong people coming in and we need a system --

MS. WEINGARTEN: Right.

MS. KOPP: -- that then fosters their leadership.

MS. WEINGARTEN: Right. I'm all for trying to get great leaders to -- and I'm all for that.

MS. KOPP: Yeah.

MS. WEINGARTEN: But what happens to kids right now? And I think that what we've learned from the international comparisons is that when we have leaders who can create an environment so that the teachers get the tools and additions for success and when we also really invest in teacher ongoing preparation and development and use evaluation --

MS. KOPP: I think teaching -- yeah, I think it's all one thing.

MS. WEINGARTEN: -- as that, I think we --

MS. KOPP: Definitely.

MS. WEINGARTEN: -- but we have to work on three or four things at the same time and that's when you see schools and districts move the needle.

MS. KOPP: Just to be clear, I think this starts with teachers. I don't think you can look at leadership development separately --

MS. WEINGARTEN: Sorry.

MS. KOPP: -- from teachers. Teaching is the foundational experience for the leadership we need to develop our teachers. We need to develop our overall people pipeline in a way that we just never have.

MR. LEONHARDT: I just got the time is up sign, I'm sorry to say. Thank you both.

MS. WEINGARTEN: Thank you very much.

MR. LEONHARDT: It's been great.

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