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WHAT DOES THE 2020 ELECTION MEAN FOR
EDUCATION POLICY IN THE UNITED STATES?

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PARTICIPANTS:

Welcome:

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Panel:

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Former U.S. Secretary of Education (2016-2017)

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. VALANT: Welcome everybody. We have a wonderful group of panelists with us today. Arne Duncan served as U.S. Secretary of Education from 2009 through 2015. I believe he was the 9th secretary in the Department's history. He is now a managing partner at the Emerson Collective and a non-resident senior fellow here at Brookings.

Dr. John King served as U.S. Secretary of Education from 2016 through the beginning of 2017. I think he was number 10. And Dr. King is currently the President and CEO of the Education Trust.

And to help guide our discussion we have Alyson Klein, an assistant editor for Education Week. Alyson's current beat is Ed, Tech and Workforce issues and for many years she has covered education politics and policy here in Washington and beyond.

And with that, I will welcome the three of you to our stage and hand it over to Alyson.

(Applause)

MS. KLEIN: Hi, and thanks for joining us. I'm not going to introduce these gentlemen here because they've been introduced and they obviously need no introduction. You know them well.

(Laughter)

We are going to dive right into questions. So I know you've both been following the campaign. Senator Sanders recently called for a moratorium on charter schools. I know you've both been supportive of charters, in fact, Secretary King, you were a charter principal before, during and after your time at the U.S. Department of Education.

Do you worry that the current Trump Administrations embrace of choice has hurt charters among democratic constituencies including parents and teachers?

MR. KING: Yeah, well, it's not only their current policies around choice but it is also Secretary DeVos's history around choice. I think the reality is that there are really high performing public charters that are contributing very positively to the public educational landscape. I think about the charter sector in Boston or New York.

On the other hand, there are charter sectors that are quite terrible like the charter sector in Michigan. And Secretary DeVos has a history of having been a champion of low regulation, low oversight, low accountability for charters and so as a result in Michigan, you have a proliferation of low

performing charters, I think something like 80 percent for profit charters.

Schools that exist really to take advantage of communities rather than to serve communities and that has hurt the sector. And then when you have an administration that is so hostile to civil rights and to the interests of low income students and students of color, championing a policy of course then undermines confidence. People are right to be skeptical of the administration.

MR. DUNCAN: Yeah, just quickly I, the -- we as Democrats shouldn't and can't blame Republicans for our policy choices.

MS. KLEIN: Okay.

MR. DUNCAN: And shouldn't be swayed by that.

MS. KLEIN: Yeah.

MR. DUNCAN: And as John said so eloquently there are obviously amazing charter schools that are transforming, you know, students live and he helped start one of them and there are very low performing charter schools.

So I think as Democrats, as citizens we should have a moratorium on bad schools and we should want a lot more good schools, whatever that name may be, traditional, charter, magnet, ID, and so it's the wrong, it's the wrong frame.

MS. KLEIN: I hear that. Secretary Duncan, you've said one of your biggest regrets was not getting a big, new prekindergarten investment over the finish line during your tenure. I know there was some smaller boots in the Every Student Succeeds Act but you had had something much more ambitious in mind.

Do you think there has been enough discussion of that issue in the Democratic primary? Should the next Democratic president, whether that's in four years or eight years take up the Obama Administrations proposal on this? And what were the -- why weren't you able to get it done?

MR. DUNCAN: Yeah, so I always put it in both my successes category and my failures category.

MS. KLEIN: Okay, fair.

MR. DUNCAN: So we got an additional billion dollars in this space for, to provide access for literally hundreds and hundreds of thousands of additional three and four year olds across the country.

Historically our department has done almost nothing in this space. So proud about that.

But would have love to have had \$10 or \$20 billion and we did a race to the top competition for states to come in and we had like 36 states apply and we could only fund about half the first 18. And I remember one of the states that we couldn't fund to expand pre-K was Mississippi.

And that governor was Governor Bryant whose very hard conservative and he had I, you know, maybe agree on 10 percent of issues. But he was brokenhearted that we couldn't expand pre-K in Mississippi and I was too and I remember that phone call like yesterday. And the fact that, you know, we know children in Mississippi are usually 48th, 49th, 50th on every indicator.

And so the huge desire, the demand was there from Republicans and Democrats across the country. The fact that we couldn't get Congress to step up and do more and, you know, I'm biased. I think if I had one additional tax dollar, one of your guy's dollars to put in education I would put it into high quality pre-K. I just think it's an absolute game changer for kids and Dr. James Heckman, you know, Nobel Prize winning economist at the University of Chicago talks about a 7 to 1 RY for every dollar we invest in Pre-K, we get back \$7.

Less teenage pregnancy, less drop outs, less incarceration, more high school graduates, more people going into the workforce and for all of our scarce tax dollars, I don't know how often we get back \$7 for a \$1 put in. So that for me would be the top. The final thing I'll say, not to go on too long --

MS. KLEIN: No, no.

MR. DUNCAN: -- is the United States ranks either 28th or 29th relative to other countries in providing access to perks.

We should be absolutely ashamed as a country that we send so many five year olds to kindergarten a year to 18 months behind and the dirty secret in education is we often don't catch those kids up. Those young people often become our drop outs.

So yes, we should debate it, we should put it out there and this for me it's not a Democratic principle, it's just getting our babies off to a good start in life. There is nothing Republican or Democrat about hat.

MR. KING: And I would just add, you know, we proposed in the Obama Administration preschool for all. It's a \$75 billion cost over 10 years to give access to pre-K for low and middle income

four year olds and members of Congress said that was too expensive.

And then those very same members of Congress went on to vote for trillions of dollars of tax cuts for the top one percent. So this is question of what we care about, what we are willing to invest in. We ought to invest in universal pre-K for 3 and 4 year olds and we also need a huge investment in zero to three.

We need much better access to quality child care particularly for low income families and communities of color and that is all doable in the wealthiest country that has ever existed on the face of the earth.

MS. KLEIN: So speaking of money, we have seen a number of proposals to significantly ramp up the federal share of education funding and things like doubling Title I. Do you think that is the right way to go or do you worry about more money without some additional accountability into the system? Yeah.

MR. KING: We always do this. Both of us are very polite. (Laughter) Look, I think there is an opportunity to blend or connect a significant new investment of dollars with smart policies' around how we strengthen schools and we need both.

And the history is that states that have done both together see the benefit. So I think about Massachusetts in 1993. They passed the Massachusetts Education Reform Act. They had a huge infusion of new dollars particularly to their high needs communities along with raising the standards for teaching, for learning, investing in teacher professional development and strengthening teacher preparation. And they also included significant accountability measures where the state was able to take action when schools were failing.

The result is that Massachusetts went from somewhere near middle of the pack to the number one performing state. So my hope would be that the next administration would put in a very significant increase in dollars around Title I but also pair that with intentional efforts to increase school integration, intentional efforts to make sure kids have access to diverse, quality teachers.

Efforts to make sure that all kids have access to a well-rounded curriculum that includes art and music and science and social studies. Right. We have to think about the more dollars in conjunction with the things we know will make a difference for kids.

MR. DUNCAN: I think in education so often we get not these either or debates. I almost always think it's both and. We need more good charters and more good traditional schools. We need more young people going to college and more, you know, people prepared for careers. It is always both and.

You can't be pro teacher and want more money for teachers and not be pro teacher quality. Title I, you can't be pro more money for poor kids and not explicitly be saying you want more poor children to graduate from high school and go onto college or their other work.

And so you have to as John said perfectly you have to pair these things. It's both and. These values are not in conflict and in fact they complement each other.

MS. KLEIN: So on a related note, a number of candidates have said they want to use federal money and this a new, fairly new idea to increase teachers' salaries. It's a big proposal that Senator Harris put out for instance.

At the same time, states are backing away from something that you both championed when you were in office which is teacher evaluation based in part on a number of factors but one of them is student profess on test scores.

Should the federal government be boosting teacher salaries that states and districts won't? Like should the feds be on the hook for something like that? And again, should more, different kinds of evaluations or more accountability play into that. Or do you guys feel like the teacher pay crisis has gotten so bad in some places that extra pay is needed kind of no matter what.

MR. DUNCAN: Yeah, so try to come at this a couple different ways.

MS. KLEIN: Yeah.

MR. DUNCAN: It's really broken my heart that in a number of states, North Carolina, Arizona, you can go down the list where just, I'm just trying to be honest, where you have had Republican administrations, they've really starved public education. And teacher pay is not kept up with the rate of inflation or whatever.

And so I'll never forget, I met with a teacher in D.C. from North Carolina who was actually selling blood, who was selling plasma to make ends meet and that's unconscionable. So yes, we absolutely need more money that teachers should be paid a living wage.

I would say teachers are the most altruistic people you are ever going to meet. They don't go into education to make a, you know, become millionaires. But they shouldn't have to take a vow of poverty either and you want to sustain that. So yes, you need that.

Again you can't be pro teacher and not talk about quality and not talk about how important great teachers are. I met actually just coincidentally yesterday from someone from the Tennessee team. In Tennessee we saw these huge growths and maybe improvements and their analysis of what they did a lot of different things, but in their mind, the thing that drove their improvement the most was actually taking teacher evaluations seriously.

MS. KLEIN: yeah.

MR. DUNCAN: So I think we have to, you know, we have to try and do both these things, pay teachers a living wage and evaluate.

This is a little bit off topic, but the one thing, Alyson, the one thing I have thought about that would be maybe a little bit of a political compromise is that it's not just how much you pay teachers, it's their ability to make more money earlier in their career.

In every teacher contact everywhere is just very slow lane in step and you have to stay in the system for 30, 40 years and millennials don't want that. And I would love to see districts think about sort of two tracks. You know one would be more traditional lane and step if you want that and also sort of a higher risk, high reward where a great young teacher could make \$100,000 when they're 30 and some places like D.C. and Denver have played with that.

And let me clear, the union could negotiate both of those so you're not diminishing anyone's power. It's just saying to teacher's young, old, veteran, new, whatever, here are two different choices for you to make and you figure out what is best for you and your family and your current situation. And that's not even more money, it's just a different way of thinking about it. I think that would help us retain much more great young talent than we are today.

MR. KING: Yeah. The thing I want to add is we absolutely should be paying the teachers more and we should have a federal state partnership that uses federal dollars to push states to invest more as well. But as we do that, two things we have to do alongside.

One is we have to diversify the teaching profession. The majority of our kids in the

nation's public schools are kids of color. Only 18 percent of our teachers are teachers of color. Only two percent of our teachers are African American men. We know that matters for kids of color to have access to teachers of color.

The evidence is African American elementary school student has at least one African American teacher is more likely to graduate from high school, more likely to go on to college. I think it is important for white kids to see teachers and leaders of color in their schools and communities. So a smart, comprehensive strategy would include diversifying the profession.

The other piece is making sure that we get the strongest teachers to the kids with the greatest needs. And so you want to have incentives that attract people to work in high needs, rural and urban communities that attract people to pursue fields of study where we have huge shortages, secondary, STEM, bilingual teachers, teachers of students with disabilities, particularly at the secondary level.

And you could imagine structuring a package that accomplished the goal of rising salaries and lifting all boats but also tried to get at some of these equity challenges.

MR. DUNCAN: That's just a huge point I just want to emphasize that if we think great teachers matter and I think most of us in this room do, if we think great principals matter, there are no great schools without principals, you know, I get the principal of local control. I totally understand that. We had lots of debates around that but I always say we have 15,000 school districts in our country. 15,000.

And I don't know of a single district in America where they systemically, systematically find, identify their best principals, their best teachers and place them with the kinds and communities who need the most help.

And if we really do think that teachers matter and principals matter, that talent matters, that teaches change, you know, change kids' lives, it's a little stunning to me that not one district out of 15 has taken that step that John just talked about.

MS. KLEIN: Yeah. Well, speaking of, you've teed up my next question very well because the desegregation obviously is an issue that has surfaced in the Democratic debates. It's something that both of you I know value diverse schools. In fact, we were talking about it right before we

came in here.

How much power did you both feel like you had as Secretary to influence that discussion beyond obviously and I know you both did this drawing attention to whether the bully pulpit. What do you think a new administration could do to help work through that problem?

MR. KING: Yeah, well we both certainly tried to talk about the importance of it and tried to persuade communities to pay attention to the opportunities that communities have to be intentional about racial and socioeconomic integration.

We also proposed to Congress as you'll remember a \$120 million fund to support local efforts to integrate schools. And again, we heard from members of Congress too expensive but then they put all that money towards the tax cut of the top one percent.

So that was a missed opportunity. That bill is still out there. Senator Murphy and Congresswoman Fudge have been real champions of that effort, now called the Strength and Diversity Act. That's an opportunity that a next administration would have.

I also think there are ways to think about how you link other grant programs, other federal funding streams to the goal of diversity, whether its diversity in charters and thinking about that as an area of emphasis for the charter school program, thinking about that as an area of emphasis for how people might use Title I dollars and school improvement dollars. Expanding the magnet school problem. There is a lot of federal levers that are available, they just haven't been very much used since really since the early to mid-1980's.

There is also I think a need for real and for civil rights enforcement from the Department of Education and from the Justice Department. We know there are districts that are doing things that intentionally exacerbate segregation and we ought to take action on that where it violates civil rights law.

MR. DUNCAN: I think John actually did a much better job than I did of talking about this and putting it at the forefront, really getting into the nuances.

I do think there are absolutely federal incentives that could be put in place. But as we were talking backstage, not all of this actually takes any money and sometimes it's as simple as redrawing school boundaries, neighborhood boundaries around schools that literally doesn't cost a penny.

Now it's politically very difficult and challenging and we live in a country where people often choose to self-segregate based upon, you know, live in places to be, you know, have less diversity.

So federal incentives help but trying to get parents and students to understand the benefit not for black kids, not for Latino kids, but for all kids to being in those kind of environments, the benefits of having a diverse teacher force for all kids, there is a larger thing beyond money that sort of gets to I think some of the challenges that our country struggle with around race and diversity that are hard to talk about, but are absolutely coupled. You can't delink that from this conversation that we are having.

MS. KLEIN: Yeah, I hear that. So other proposals. We have seen a lot including originally from Senator Sanders on free college for everybody. All students. Other candidates like former Vice President Biden are pushing for something more limited, free, essentially fee community college which is something that the Obama Administration I believe during your tenure, Secretary Duncan, championed also. So what do you think the right strategy is on paying for higher ed? Should the federal government be on the hook for paying for all college for all kids? Just a portion of it? Should this be for everyone or just low income kids?

MR. DUNCAN: Well, I'll just say before I did free college, I would do free pre K.

MS. KLEIN: Okay, there.

MR. DUNCAN: So I would prioritize there just to --

MS. KLEIN: All right.

MR. DUNCAN: -- just to start.

MS. KLEIN: Yeah.

MR. DUNCAN: Secondly, free college again is not even a Democratic idea. The state that has probably done this the best is Tennessee led by Governor Haslam who has made free community colleges a hallmark there. And this is not charities and investment in what he sees as his greatest resource is the human capital in his state.

And I do think the K to 12 model in education in America is obsolete. I do think we should move to a pre-K to 14 model. K to 12 and compulsory high school drove the middle class in a booming economy for the past 100 years. I would argue that's insufficient for the next 10 let alone the next 50.

Our babies have to get off to a good start and then as we know, getting a good job with a high school diploma is pretty hard these days. So some form of education, you know, for universities, two year community college, trade, technical vocational training, some form of higher education learning beyond high school has to be the goal.

The thing, Alyson, that troubles me in this debate and it actually mirrors the teacher pay debate is there is no talk about results and outcomes at the higher ed side and accountability.

So there are a whole bunch of colleges I would love to send a whole bunch more students to but there are a whole bunch of colleges I don't want anybody to go to. They shouldn't go there for free. They're not learning anything. And those colleges are getting rich and, you know, leaving people in a worse situation than when they started.

So for me thinking about community college, not just for 18 years olds but for 58 year olds retraining and retooling coming back, and then we have to talk about results. Are people just being admitted to college or are they actually walking across the stage at the back need with skills?

The last thing I'll say on this is we tried and totally failed on this. All of our funding for higher education in America, 100 percent of its goes to inputs. It goes to enrollment. We don't do a penny of grants or loans or whatever for higher ed for those that are increasing graduation rates for Pell grant recipients, the first generation college goers, whatever.

So changing again, not even more money, just changing how we fund education, just a little bit of money around outcomes, I think that's a huge change and we got zero of that done.

MR. KING: Yeah, I agree completely with Arne on the urgency of the completion agenda. The reality is we have a national college dropout crisis. You know, of every 10 white students who start a bachelor's degree program, six will have graduated six year later. Of every 10 Latino students who start a bachelors program five will have graduated six years later. Every 10 African American students who start a bachelor's degree program four will have graduated six years later.

And we have colleges, community colleges around the country with graduation rates in the teens, all right. That is a problem we ought to tackle so that folks don't just start but actually finish. And that requires investment and policy change.

The other observation I'd make about free college is the devil is really in the details and

as you know, looking across states, there are states that say they have free college but what they mean by that is they've put in a tiny little bit of money for middle and upper income students to get subsidies for tuition and done nothing for their low income students.

Because there are last dollar program and they're structured in a way that doesn't match the tuition subsidy with any further investment in the kinds of supports that low incomes students need.

We know we have students in colleges today who are hungry, who are homeless and we should be talking about the total cost of college, not just tuition. So that those details matter. There are states that have all kinds of acthes in their free college program so that if you move to another state then your free college tuition converts into a loan. Lots of fine print, that is a problem.

So I'm glad we are having this conversation about the need to invest in public higher end. The reality is that in probably 9 out of 10 states they are spending less on public higher ed today than they were in 2008. So we should be talking about investment in public higher ed. We should be talking about making college accessible for everyone but the details of the policy matter and we have to design them in a way that is focused on equity, fixed on low income students and students of color who are most vulnerable in our current higher education system.

MR. DUNCAN: Two quick adds and --

MS. KLEIN: Yeah, sure.

MR. DUNCAN: I love hanging out with him it gets me thinking.

MS. KLEIN: Yeah, yeah

MR. DUNCAN: But what he just said, if you look at the trends and again, looks at any state over the past 10 years or 20 years, looks at the percent increase or decrease going to education general or higher ed or look at the increase or decrease for incarceration.

And I guarantee you in every single state across the country the rate of increase and span for incarceration is going up much faster than the investment in higher ed or in -- any education. And we just accept that. We don't debate that, we don't vote on that. That's just like a given and I just think that's -- we will lock someone up at \$60,000 but debate, you know, forever, a little more pre-K or a little more teacher pay or a little bit more higher ed so again I want to challenge us as voters across the political spectrum to think about that.

The larger challenge I have, Alyson, with so much of this is take free college as a prime example. Free college is a strategy. We never talk about goals. For me what is the goal? The goal is not free college. The goal I think would be to lead the world in college completion. A generation ago we led the world. If we want to keep high wage, high skilled jobs in America, we should try and lead the world.

We were first a generation ago. It's not that we've dropped, we've flat lined. We have stagnated and about 12 countries have passed us by. But we never sort of stepped back and say to what end? A moratorium on charters to what end? What academic dividends come from no more charters?

And I would just propose a couple goals for the country that I think are nation building goals, not left or right, Republican, Democratic. I think we should try and lead the world in access to high quality pre-K.

We were able to get high school graduation rates up to all-time highs of 84 percent. We were proud of that but that's still hundreds of thousands of kids dropping out each year. I desperately wish the current administration had a goal of getting it to 90 percent. You'll never hear the current administration talk about better education or outcomes.

I'd love to lead the world in college completion and if we started every conversation with here are the goals, then let's have lots of vigorous policy debate about the best way to achieve those goals but we never come up for air. We play small ball. We get caught in the weeds and don't talk about where we need to go as a country to have a thriving middle class, to break cycles of poverty, to keep good jobs in America and we need to elevate the conversation to a different level.

MS. KLEIN: I hear that. So we are not seeing a ton of talk yet in the campaign about some of the things that the Obama administration pushed really hard on, especially in its first term and I'm thinking their rigorous standards including common core, teacher evaluation which we have talked a little bit about, robust data systems and fixing low performing schools. You had a very ambitious plan for that.

Do you think just enough progress was made during your tenure that there is just nowhere to go on those issues? And that's why people aren't talking about them? (Laughter) Or do you think the candidates are avoiding them because, you know, you both faced, you especially as state chief in New York, Secretary King and U.S. Secretary of Education, Secretary Duncan, some serious political

backlash for those issues. I know they can be tough to wrestle with, you know, why do you think we are not hearing about them right now?

MR. DUNCAN: John had an easy time in New York. (Laughter) He had no challenges there. Go ahead.

MR. KING: Well, so a couple observations. One is I think part of why we are not hearing about standards is because 40 plus states are still doing the college and career ready standards and still doing that work and really the challenge state by state is now at the level of do they have the right curricula available to teachers and are they doing the right work on teacher professional development? And historically as a country we have treated those as local control issues.

I do think there are some states that are doing really smart things. I think about Louisiana which has tied access to funding for curriculum to districts choosing curricula that are highly rated by ed reports as well aligned to their college and career ready standards and I think they are going to reap the benefits of that.

There are districts around the country that are making big investments in teacher training because higher standards in math for example require much more understanding of the math concepts as well as how to teach them and they're investing in that professional development and I think that's a good thing. So that issue I think is sort of underway but could use probably more resources.

On the data system piece, I'm actually optimistic that if there is a Higher Education Act reauthorization in this Congress that it will include the College Transparency Act and that we will see better post-secondary data that then can be connected to K-12 data. So I actually think that's a place where there is good progress and momentum.

You know, the, on the low performing schools and this goes to Arne's point earlier about sometime things aren't about money, they're about political will and courage and I do think there is a reluctance to talk about struggling schools and what it would take to improve performance in struggling schools.

And I hope we hear more about that because the reality is in state after state, you still see very large achievement gaps for low income students and students of color and given that a majority of our kids are kids of color, a majority of kids in this country are eligible for free or reduced price lunch,

we have no future. Our economy has no future, our democracy has not future if we don't get better at educating low income students and students of color.

So I hope there will be more conversation about that and more conversation about the federal role in leading on this. I mean because of things that Arne really started early in the administration, we had a national attention on graduation rates, national attention on drop out factories and cut the number of high schools that would be described as drop out factories in half over the course of the administration. That's thousands upon thousands more students graduating from high school. That's powerfully important and we need that kind of conversation I think amongst the candidates.

MR. DUNCAN: So I'll try and little to I said to talk about goals and not strategies or talk about the goal and why the strategy is important. So why is it important to have high standards? We just talked about college costs and college is too expensive.

What we never talk about is the cost of remediation in college. And as a country we spend \$7 to \$9 billion each year, billion dollars to have college students pay college tuition to take high school classes. Noncredit bearing classes. And that's all of our grants and loans, that's all of our tax money going into that \$7 to \$9 billion every single year.

That means that young people aren't prepared to take college level classes that are credit bearing. I learned this recently. This stunned me. The average -- the average high school GPA for a college student taking remedial classes, guess what that is? In high school they had a 3.2. These weren't 1.3. This wasn't 1.7. They had a better than a B average in high school and they go the college and they don't have the skills necessary to take credit bearing classes in college.

That's not the students fault. That's our fault as educators that we failed to prepare them. So that's the need for high standards.

Now you didn't ask but I'll say so common core sounded like a good name at the time. We didn't anticipate Obama care. We didn't anticipate the push back as strong as it was to the nation's first black president. We didn't anticipate the push back from Obama care to Obama core.

In hindsight we should have called it the highly uncommon core. (Laughter) The very unique to every single state core. The Buckeye core, the Illini core. (Laughter) The whatever, the Husky core. But at the end of the day that's a branding issue.

MS. KLEIN: Yeah.

MR. DUNCAN: What we need is to make sure that every -- we are raising high school graduation rates which is important. We need to make sure those high school graduates actually can go to college and take a college level class. That's the simple goal that we are trying to accomplish.

MS. KLEIN: So on another topic, you both have spoken passionately about gun safety and I know that's what you've been working on primarily since leaving the Department, Secretary Duncan. Do you see that as an education issue? And do you think it will motivate young people and parents during this campaign?

It's traditionally in the past mostly motivated folks who really don't want to see gun control to get out and vote and do think -- I think -- do you see that starting to change?

MR. DUNCAN: I'll just take one second and say that I led the Chicago public schools for seven and a half years before I came to D.C. Happy to talk about lots of things I'm proud of in terms of improvements, you know, talk about that all day.

But I'll say the place where I don't think I failed where I know I failed is we as leaders and myself as a leader, we failed to keep our students alive. And during my seven and a half years in Chicago, on the average we had a student killed every two weeks due to gun violence. Never once in a school but on the neighborhood, on the block, on the bus going on home, in a living room. William shot by an AK 47 from 100 yards away.

I thought things couldn't get worse when my family and I moved to D.C. I thought Chicago was the rock bottom for a whole host of reasons. Things got a lot worse. So I often say the we are motivated by our successes but we are haunted by our failures and this is why I'm, this is my life's work for now is to try and remove some of that fear and trump and violence in Chicago that is absolutely overwhelming for kids on the south and west sides.

President Obama dealt -- president of the United States deals with the hardest issues on the planet. He has said publicly his hardest day in D.C. was the day of the Sandy Hook massacre. And he went down the next day, Vice President Biden and I went down a couple days later and it's just -- you'll never forget. You'll never forget.

I will say and I'm not proud to say this, but I will say that when I was in Chicago what I

really thought is that no one cared that black and brown kids were being killed and it would take white kids being killed for anything to change. And then Sandy Hook happened.

And no one ever in their worst nightmares imagined 20 babies and five teachers and a principal being slaughtered. And the fact that as a country we got nothing done, zero done in terms of gun legislation subsequent to that actually that me a pretty painful lesson that yes, we don't care about black and brown kids but we also don't care enough about white kids. We don't care enough about life, that we value our guns too much.

So I have been deeply pessimistic on this. The Parkland massacre changed some things. Those young people, we have sent kids from Chicago down and we had four kids from Chicago, our kids speak at the march for our lives rally. We as adults have failed on this issue. I think our young people are leading us to a very different place.

So after Sandy Hook I was extraordinarily pessimistic. I'm more optimistic now than I have ever been. Honestly not because of anything of us in this room are doing, but because of 18 and 19 and 20 year olds are leading us as they have with the civil rights movement, as they have with the Vietnam War protest and its often young people who push the silo of change. So we need to get to a better place.

I'll say in Chicago I'm in schools all the time on the south and west sides. 100 percent of young people know someone who has been killed and I often say how many of you know 4, 10, 15, 20 who have been killed and usually half to a third of the hands are still up.

And I've never been to an actual war zone in Iraq or Afghanistan but our kids in places like Chicago are living in war zones and it's entirely unacceptable. And we are making progress, we are getting better, violence is going down. We have a lot of work to do at home.

MR. KING: Yeah. I mean, I'm so grateful for the work that Arne is doing and I think part of what the work that you're doing points out is that we have to have a strategy that is about having fewer guns and having fewer guns that can inflict mass casualties. And that is about changing laws and I do think we have this moment where young people are asking their voices to try to change those laws.

And we have a violence taking place in Chicago or in Baltimore that is also about all these other intersecting issues in communities. Lack of access to economic opportunity, lack of access to

substance addiction treatment. A history of racism, policies of mass incarceration and all of that intersects into this toxic mix that results in communities that are awash in violence.

And we have to do work on that to so that the education dimension to this issue is both about changing gun policy but it's also about changing our social policy and changing how we think about communities.

MR. DUNCAN: Just quickly for this audience is this important so school shootings are horrific but to be clear, 98 percent of people killed, kids killed aren't killed in schools. This is not a school safety issue. This is a societal issue.

And the vast, vast, vast majority of people killed are killed at the park, at the mall, at the movie theater, waking down the street. So it's related to schools but just a little bit.

To echo Johns point, what I'm doing now is working with young men who are most likely to shoot and be shot and they have lived with trauma all their life. Many have been shot multiple times. We have one guy who has been shot 23 times. Many had done unfortunately their fair share of shooting and I don't say this lightly. We don't have one bad man that we are working with.

And we are giving them an opportunity to move out of that street life and to move out to the illegal economy and give some economic opportunity and have life coaches and a bunch of trauma care. And we have had lots and lots of the guys get their high school diplomas and a bunch going to college.

And I just want this audience to understand that in those instances the men caught in that life, they're the solution, they're not the problem. We have to walk with them, we have to learn with them but they're going to lead Chicago and Baltimore and other places to a better place. It's not your job.

MS. KLEIN: So we are winding down on our time. I've got about a few more questions, we will try to move through them quickly. The Trump Administration has talked a lot about vocational education. But Secretary Duncan, you pointed out in another recent forum they haven't really provided new funding in this area.

So I'm wondering, do you think four year college is a must for all students? And what would you want to see this administration or another administration do to strengthen job training? I know that's something close to your heart, Secretary Duncan.

MR. DUNCAN: Well, I just want to be clear that the Trump Administration does not want an educated citizenry. That is not in their interest. When you are an authoritarian leader, when you want to become the source of truth and when you say that the media is the enemy of the people, you don't want people to be able to think for themselves.

So all the things that we talk about and John taught in the classroom how to think critically, how to weigh arguments, the current administration has zero interest in doing that and so they're not going to do anything.

The less educated we are the more we will follow an authoritarian leader. So I just want to be very honest and upfront about that.

And for me his election, we can debate the intricacies of education policy all day but this election is really a fight, can we preserve our democracy and can we remove a criminal enterprise from the White House. And so this is much, much bigger than any education policy.

Does everybody have to go to a four year university? Of course not. I do think everyone has to graduate from high school. I don't know any good jobs out there for a high school dropout and I do think everybody has to have some form of education beyond high school. Again four year university, two year community college, trade, technical, vocational training.

And the last think I'll say is that other countries track kids at 13 or 14. You are going this way, you are going this way or frankly you can't go this way. I reject that 100 percent. I just want to give kids great options and let them figure out what is their passion what do they want to do.

And the final, final points it that none of us are ever going to be done learning. It's not like we can, you know, stop going to school, go get a job and we are done. The day any of us stop learning is the day we become obsolete so how do we teach young people to be lifelong learners? How do we all keep improving our skills in whatever we are doing? That's got to be the mentality.

MR. KING: Yeah. And we ought to be willing to invest in that because our future depends on it and so we need more young people who leave high school with a plan and with a past to real economic opportunity.

So I think about the PTECH school which both Arne and I visited and President Obama visited. Partnership between IBM, City University of New York, the New York City Department of Ed, kids

graduate with a high school diploma associates degree, first in line for a job at IBM.

And when we made an effort to replicate PTECH across New York State when I was at the state level, we had more demand from employers and university partners than we could meet. And we used federal Perkins dollars to support that effort and we had folks in the healthcare industry, advanced manufacturing, IT who were eager to partner with schools so that young people would leave ready for what is next.

I was just in Somerset County Maryland visiting a career and tech center that's newly built there and I was struck by how motivated the kids are, the kids in the biomedical program, how excited they were about what they were learning.

Like there is huge potential in smart, career and tech ed but we have to acknowledge the risk that in some places as Arne pointed out, career and tech ed is used as a way to track kids to less opportunity, to jobs that used to exist 20 years ago and don't exist anymore.

That is a problem so we need to invest in career and tech ed but we also need that same accountability around the goal and the goal has to be readiness for post-secondary success and a successful career.

MS. KLEIN: Okay. One more question from me before me move into Q and A. Neither one of you has endorsed a candidate in the Democratic primary. (Laughter) Do you want to make some news today? (Laughter) And tell us who you are supporting or at least who you find intriguing?

MR. DUNCAN: You running? (Laughter)

MR. KING: What I will say -- and I'm not going to endorse a candidate --

MS. KLEIN: Oh, okay. All right.

MR. KING: But what I will say is that I, you know, in 2016, there was very little discussion about education and I have been heartened that there have been more candidates talking more about schools and education so far and I think that is a good sign about our direction as a country.

MS. KLEIN: Okay. Secretary Duncan?

MR. DUNCAN: Yeah, we are not going to make huge news, sorry.

MS. KLEIN: All right. That's okay.

MR. DUNCAN: I'll break your heart.

MS. KLEIN: I had to try.

MR. DUNCAN: You have to try. So two things. I, I'll repeat what I have said that this election will not and honestly should not turn on any one education policy that always this is modest, I think this is the most consequential election of our lifetimes. I hope we are never in this position again as a country.

I'm not a scared guy and I am scared for our country. I am scared for our democracy. And so this is not a time to, you know, support and not support any given candidate based upon some agreement or disagreement on some education policy.

We are fighting for our country and stuff that I'll just say for myself that I took for granted my entire life, some just given truths, that has been rocked to its foundation here. And so I just -- that's what's at stake. And again, it's not left to right, Republican, Democrat, its democracy versus not a democracy anymore and it's that real.

Having said that, in a normal election I just wish again, left, right, Republican, Democrat, I honestly -- education should be the ultimate bipartisan, nonpartisan issue. Again, from nation building goals. I just desperately wish we had more people go to the voting booth. Mayors, governors, congressmen, presidents, voting around education. And the fact is almost none of us do.

I think I saw in the 2018 midterms I saw some stat that six percent of people voted based upon education. So, Alyson, I've never met a candidate who was anti education. I have never met a candidate who didn't like photo ops and reading to kids and patting little kids on the head. (Laughter)

But I know very few candidates who say I want to be reelected because I'm going to raise high school graduation rates. I want to be reelected because I'm going to close achievement gaps. I want to be reelected because I'm going to fight for more pre-K.

Let me be clear. I don't blame any of the politicians, I blame us as voters. And if we voted based upon these issues we would have more candidates across the political spectrum who would be in office based on their ability to increase achievement, close those gaps, have more young people prepared for the world of work. And so that's my hope going forward.

MS. KLEIN: All right, thank you. So I'm sure you all have some great questions. It looks like we have got a hand right up there. If you can tell us your name and the origination that you work with

for context.

QUESTIONER: Thank you. I'm Leon Pease (phonetic), I'm not working with an organization but I'm the NAACP parent's council of Montgomery Country.

My concern is that not every student comes into the classroom ready to learn. What suggestions and proposals would you have in terms of going forward as to how to assist these school systems, the teacher and working with the parent to prepare those students that do not fall within that ready to learn every day category?

And by -- and a side, as Secretary DeVos has in legislation that's apparently being looked at in Congress right now that is geared towards charter schools, could that be tweaked to the Education and Freedom Scholarship Act. Could that be tweaked to possibly give some support to those students?

MR. KING: Well, a couple thoughts. One is that I think the agenda, the voucher agenda of the administration is not intended to address equity goals. I think it's intended to undermine public schools.

So unfortunately I don't think there is a lot of room for a conversation around that proposal but I do think there is much more that we could be doing to connect schools with other supports to address kid's needs.

One of the things that we did in the Obama Administration, we had promised neighborhoods initiative. The idea there was consistent with what Jeffrey Canada did in the harm children zone, trying to match schools with other supports around mental health services, around parent education, starting with new parents of new babies and helping them support their kids academic and socio emotional development.

Matching schools with programs after school and in the summer. Access to healthcare, access to dental care, access to vision care. We should remove barriers that get in the way of kids success.

And I think too often, Arne made this point earlier about false dichotomies. Right. too often people say well, there is nothing we can do in school because kids are poor and kids have these challenges outside of school. That can't possibly be true. Schools save lives every day and I always tell

folks, you know, both my parents passed away when I was a kid. My mom when I was eight, my dad when I was 12. School saved my life. Right. So schools save lives and we ought to invest in schools.

At the same time, when people say schools all that matters, well that can't possibly be right either. Because if kids are homeless and hungry, if kids don't have glasses to be able to see the board of course that's going to hurt their education.

So we have to not get into that kind of false debate and we have to say how do we connect supports in the community with schools and how do we invest in those things? You know, if we invest in school counselors and mental health services, we will more than save the cost later when those kids are successful instead of ending up in prison or addicted to substances or reliant on social services. So if we were smart about our investment we would provide those supports to our kids.

MR. DUNCAN: I'll just tell you one quick story that after the Freddie Gray riots we went and visited there was one school right there in Baltimore that was beating all the odds where results were away better than in the, you know, more affluent communities. And we went in, I sort of said I want to go to see this. So we went a couple weeks after.

It was Liberty Elementary. Mr. Mayco (phonetic) was the principal, I think he still is the principal. And they were crushing it, getting again outside results and I just wanted to hear why, you know, how? What were you doing?

And amazing teachers, obvious extraordinary principal, but that school had turned itself into a food bank and that school was giving out I think it as 16 tons of food a month. Now I can't draw a direct line from 16 tons of food to much better results but I know there is a direct line there.

Now that's not in any principals job description. I don't think our schools of education are teaching principals and teachers to figure stuff out, but what he identified was a real challenge in his community. And what my mother always says is it's hard to learn when your stomach is growling.

And if you start to meet kids and families where they are whether its food, whether its eye glasses, whether its trauma support, then we can talk about all the high standards and things you want to talk about. But that's the ticket to entry. That's the foundation that John talked about, the physical, the social wellbeing, mental health well-being of our kids.

And so schools have to do that. They have to do it with the community, not in isolation

and these things as John said these things are not in conflict. That's the kind of leadership our kids and our communities deserve.

MS. KLEIN: Any other questions? One over there. Actually why don't we take a few at a time and then these gentlemen can -- did you have one too right here? And then one in the back. Okay.

QUESTIONER: Okay so I'm Frank Baldwin with NASCAF, the National Association of State Children Grant and Aid programs. As Secretary Duncan mentioned, investing in higher education is not a partisan issue in the states. Tennessee has free college, Indiana with Governor Daniels had the first dollar free college free program and Governor Perry in Texas was the first pride need based aid to dreamers and 30 some states have outcomes based performance funding.

So my question to the two secretaries to be is we tried to reauthorize the Higher Education Act. What would you see as what should be the federal state partnership and how do you go about accountability and metrics?

MS. KLEIN: And then I think we had one here and then one in the back and you guys can kind of decide what to address and what order.

QUESTIONER: Hi. My name is Lisa, I am an intern at Center for American Progress. I am also a former CPS school teacher, special education school teacher. I actually was in a charter school and we were part of, some of the first charter strikes in the nation last year.

I just wanted to hear from you guys if there are any particular initiatives coming out to address specifically the special education teacher shortages and the funding shortages that we are facing every day in our classrooms? Thank you.

MS. KLEIN: Thank you. And then I think we had one in the back?

QUESTIONER: Hi, my name is Angel and I'm actually a student from Teachers College Columbia University. So I have a question regarding that the college enrollment rate has dropped for, continuously for eight years in the United States. And can you just make some more comments regarding that? Thank you.

MS. KLEIN: So can you take those three in lightning round? Yeah.

MR. DUNCAN: Yeah, you want to do higher ed and I'll do teacher shortage?

MS. KLEIN: Okay.

MR. KING: Sure. So on higher ed, look I'm, I think there is a great opportunity in the Higher Education Act reauthorization conversation to increase investment. So I would love to see a doubling or even tripling of Pell grants and a massive investment in helping low income students to not just start but finish.

I would love to see an investment in evidence based supports so there is a program at City University of New York called ASA (phonetic) which has been shown to double completion rates in community college through wrap around supports, better advising, that's, that program is being replicated in Ohio and looks like the results are going to be similarly positive.

We ought to invest in evidence based interventions like that that are focused on completion. We ought to have an accountability system that looks at are students finishing? When they finish, are they able to pay off any debt that they may have and are they able to get good jobs?

And we worked very hard on this in the administration and the current administration has rolled back a lot of the work that we tried to do on for profit colleges that were fleecing students and tax payers but we ought to have an accountability system that shuts down the bad actors. We ought to have an accountability system that includes an additional investment in the schools that serve the highest need students but then focuses everyone on outcomes.

The last point I'd make about higher ed act I'd love to see us bearing significant investment in HBCU's and MSI's. There is just no question that HBCU's and MSI's are driving access to economic mobility, access to the middle class for low income students and students of color all over the country and have a long tradition of doing that.

I was just at University of Maryland Eastern Shore last week and my grandmother graduated from there in 1894. So that's many generations of folks all across America whose lives have been changed by those institutions and yet we are under investing in them as a country. So there is lots of opportunity around the Higher Ed Act.

I do think as the population of students who are high school graduates, you know, the population of 18 year olds goes down, we have got to think differently about what college means and who college students are and we have got to do a lot more to support college students who are parents.

Today a quarter of our college students are parents. And yet very -- it's very rare to have good childcare programs on higher ed campuses. We ought to have a lot more of those. We have a lot of working adults who are in college. We ought to have a lot more support for them around things like transportation and housing and food. Right.

So as we change how we think about who college students are, we can help the students that we have and we can also attract other folks back in. One of the great things about the Tennessee effort is that they've expanded their college promise program beyond just immediate high school graduates to something called Tennessee reconnect to help working adults come back to school to finish. We should see a lot more states doing things like that.

MR. DUNCAN: So two things on teacher hiring shortages, compensation that not everyone is going to agree with. But I just want to restate what John and I both talked about of having some incentives, pay being just a piece but other things to have great teachers and great principals go to undeserved communities.

And the fact that we have been so unwilling with 15,000 school districts to step into that space. Charlotte Mecklenburg did a little bit a while back. They would move a teacher and like five principals to a school. I remember taking to one principal who had been at a very high performing school, went to a really struggling school at the end of his career he was going to retire and I said you could have retired, why did you do this? And he said it's a privilege of a lifetime to have this opportunity.

And that's the mentality that we have to have in education, that's it's the privilege of a lifetime to go work on the Native American reservation or enroll America or in inner city Baltimore, D.C. or Chicago.

On teacher shortages, again we pay everyone lane and step the same and whether its special ed, whether its math and science, where we have areas of critical need, a piece of attracting teachers will get just a piece should be I believe additional compensation.

And so those are the two fundamental changes I would make to paint everyone the same would be to identify excellence, reward excellence and encourage that excellence to work with the kids and communities who need the most help. And then when we have areas of critical needs which we know we have, special ed being right there but math and science, actually interestingly PE sometimes.

We should compensate based upon that and our lack of creativity from the school district side is pretty stunning and part of the problem that feeds this engine or the engine that feeds this problem is you don't hear any schools of education steering kids in one direction or another.

They just let kids come through and there may be lots of jobs for them or there may be very few jobs and they're not helping to push students in the right direction. And that's a morally I think that's pretty bankrupt.

MS. KLEIN: Well, on that note, that happy note, (laughter) I think we are going to wrap up and I just want to thank both of these gentlemen for their time and for sharing their expertise with us. Thank you. Both of you. (Applause)

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