

Q&A with Miguel Cardona
Transcript

MEYER/VALANT: What worked well, or didn't work well in ED's response to COVID?

CARDONA: Sure. What worked well is what I call intentional collaboration, bringing people that have incidental contact, typically, but during a crisis, they have to work together around shared goals. So, with the pandemic in Connecticut, that intentional collaboration is why I believe I got on President Biden's radar. Then we got there, we reopened schools. The next body of work for intentional collaboration was ARPA. So, for me, this is just how business is. So, I would, I would say intentional collaboration was the thing that worked well. Sloppy at times, not linear, but that's a key ingredient in my opinion.

What didn't work well. I think it became political quick. It became political quick. It became almost less about—because now we had people starting to say, well, the science is not real, there is no need for a vaccine. So, now we had—what I leaned on—my experience from Connecticut to say, okay, we worked with epidemiologists that were at the table. At the federal level, we're going to continue to do that. But I believe when it became politically prudent or financially prudent to just skip that and not listen to scientists because we got to get our business open or we got to—then it became almost like, the foundation on which you are resting your decisions and your planning, when the foundation cracks, then you have other issues. And it became almost like a political thing, because we had Abbott and DeSantis wanting to be the anti-Biden to give themselves an opportunity to get some national attention. And then that kind of threw away the whole, this is what worked in the states that did it well. And this is not working in states that are just not paying attention.

And then I think, I'm proud of the fact that we went from 46% to 97% in nine months. I'm proud of that fact, and we did it safely, we did it with educators, not in spite of them or not threatening them. So, while it was a challenge, we found ways to overcome it.