

Roundtable News



Roundtable members focus on school-community collaboration

Every educator understands the conventional wisdom about school failure. But what if the conventional wisdom is wrong? What if the solutions based on that conventional wisdom—charters, vouchers, and accountability—focus on symptoms not causes, while turning a blind eye on the real challenges of poverty, ramshackle housing, transiency, malnutrition, poor health care, and schools trying to function in segregated and economically abandoned communities?

These are the questions that Roundtable members asked themselves early in July, during an intense 3-day examination of school-community collaboration in San Francisco:

- *How could critics have missed the fact that 1.3 million students in the United States are homeless?*
- *Or dismissed with the phrase, “poverty is just an excuse” the reality that one-half of the students enrolled in our public schools are eligible for free and reduced lunches?*
- *How could they have turned a sightless gaze on the desperate straits of communities all over the United States—urban and rural—trying to raise children while coping with addiction and community dysfunction,*

the residue of unrestrained globalization that shuttered factories and abandoned industries?

- *What is one to make of the studied indifference of policymakers to the orgy of gun violence that traumatizes children in urban, rural, and suburban communities alike?*

The inherited reform agenda has largely acted as though the children growing up in these brutal circumstances are the schools’ problem.

Educational leaders and communities need to insist that schools improve their performance. But they must also insist that policymakers address the out-of-school issues that research has documented contribute to the achievement gap and account for fully 80 percent of achievement outcomes.

It was to these issues the Roundtable turned in July. We explored how times have changed, what the research says about opportunity and essential skills, and several promising strategies for encouraging school-community collaboration to hoist students on to the graduation stage and then on to college.

Speakers’ PowerPoint presentations are at: www.superintendentsforum.org under “Roundtable in 2016.”

In This Issue:

The times they have been changing - 2

Structures of opportunity in the U.S. - 3

Poverty Matters - 4

Mayor and superintendent get together in San Francisco - 5

Community Schools - 5

Building trauma-free communities - 6

Bridging gap from school to college - 7

Here and There - p. 8



South Monterey County superintendent Daniel Moirao, brings down the house with memorable welcome to the City by the Bay

THE TIMES THEY HAVE BEEN CHANGING

Few people have had the privilege or opportunities to observe American schools that Michael Kirst and Michael Usdan have enjoyed. Over several decades, Kirst, as a Stanford professor, Congressional aide, and president of the California Board of Education, and Usdan, former school board chair, state superintendent of schools, and president of the Institute for Educational Leadership, have helped shape and critique national and state school policy. In a conversation moderated by Roundtable director James Harvey they shared their experience and insights with the Roundtable.



Michael Kirst (l) and Michael Usdan reflect on changes in American schools throughout their careers

Patience, Persistence, and Humility

Four decades ago, Kirst served as president of the state board under Governor Jerry Brown. In a *deja vu* moment all over again, the two of them are back in business at the same stands. We set out originally to “change the world and create a great system,” said Kirst. We’ve learned that it takes a lot of time and the task has to be approached with “patience, persistence, and humility.”

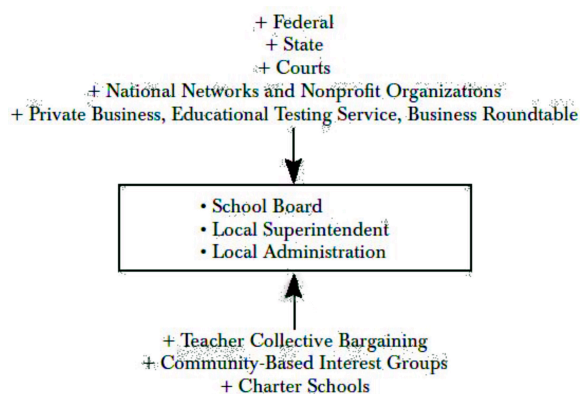
These are complex challenges, agreed Usdan, pointing to the unique needs and problems of an increasingly diverse school population. Schools are “bashed” and mayors have been obsessed with test results, but we need to look at the “cultural isolation of the schools” and pay attention to other issues such as poverty and hunger. “Schools cannot address these challenges alone.”

The Vice of Pressure from Above and Below

Asked who’s in charge here, Kirst introduced an image of increasing pressure from above and below on local

schools in recent years (below). From above the courts, and federal and state governments allied with the business community and national networks of various kinds, have increasingly handed mandates to local schools. Meanwhile, from below, collective bargaining, community-based interest groups and charter schools have increased pressure on school boards and local administrators.

Local and State Capacity. One assumption these dictates make, Kirst and Usdan agreed, is that local educators have the capacity to respond appropriately. They know what to do and how to do it. But localities often have neither the resources nor the technical ability to respond to these demands. The same is true at the state level—salaries are so low in many states that good young people move on as soon as they can. Being forced to hire people from “picked over” civil service lists increasingly encourages state policymakers to outsource technical needs to universities and think tanks.



Feds Overstepped Bounds

“With the best of intentions,” said Usdan, “the federal government set the country back 5 or 10 years.” A Common Core is required, he thought, but the administration “underestimated how deeply embedded localism is. People move to communities because of ‘schools, schools, schools.’ Policymakers need to understand how powerful localism is.” It’s hard to predict where things are going at the national level, suggested Kirst. “ESSA was a revolt against the status quo.” What’s missing, he thought, was leadership from professional educators. Turning to “reformers who have no experience at the local level and academics who face no consequences if they are wrong” is a poor strategy. We need the return of a “strong professional voice” if we are to succeed.

STRUCTURES OF OPPORTUNITY IN THE UNITED STATES

Irwin Kirsch of the Educational Testing Service and Henry Braun from Boston College have recently overseen a massive review of the research on “structures of opportunity” in the United States. The gist of their message is that opportunity for some young people involves advantage piled on advantage (solid family income, excellent schools, and foreign travel) while for other others disadvantage multiplied by disadvantage is the norm (income at poverty levels, underfunded schools, and travel rarely outside their own neighborhood).

Their evidence is available in an edited volume (*The Dynamics of Opportunity: Evidence and Perspectives*) and a more accessible narrative, accompanied by video segments and animated graphics (*Choosing Our Future*). Each can be downloaded at the project’s ETS website: opportunityproject.ets.org

Braun and Kirsch’s presentation of their findings was an intellectual *tour de force*.

A Nation in Crisis

The central message said Kirsch is that the nation is facing a crisis that has been developing for decades. It’s not just that the 1% is growing apart from the rest of us, it’s that the top 20% is growing apart from the rest of the middle class.

Meanwhile, enrichment spending on children by wealthy families has jumped 270% since 1972, compared to just 57% for low-income families. Kirsch pointed to lack of social capital in many communities, persistent



skills gaps, stagnant wages, and widening inequality. While 83% of college graduates vote, just 39% of high school dropouts do. “How can we have a participatory democracy?” in these conditions, he asked.

What Can Be Done?

How do we respond, asked Braun? The achievement gap is the result of at least two generations of complex forces, he said. Dealing with it requires what psychometricians think of as a “framework.” This framework is made up of 6 design principles:

1. Employ a systematic approach
2. Adopt a systemic strategy
3. Develop sustainable initiatives
4. Focus on continuous improvement

Irwin Kirsch (l) and Henry Braun describe structures of opportunity in the United States

5. Employ metrics and indicators
6. Adapt to local contexts

A lot of people in the middle class are “fragile and living in fear” they stressed. Echoing Kirst and Usdan, they noted, “It is clear schools can’t do it all. “The entire community needs to be engaged. Two areas of consensus should be seized: the importance of investing in the first 3 years of life and the need to turn around recent disinvestment in post-secondary education.

POVERTY MATTERS: THE CASE FOR SYSTEM OVERHAUL

If there's a debate about the relationship between poverty and student achievement it's over. That was the central message from Harvard's Paul Reville, former Massachusetts Secretary of Education (right).

There is a "persistent and iron law of correlation between socioeconomic status and educational achievement," he said, producing an array of data to support his view (some below).

He became the third major speaker to state explicitly: "Schools alone cannot get the job done." Schools, he said, are overwhelmed with students too traumatized to learn.

Past Strategies: Insufficient

Past strategies, he thought, were not necessarily wrong, but they were insufficient. The old system is outmoded, he argued, predicated on the idea



that kids are all the same and can accept the same treatment. Educators don't have enough time to deal on the fly with challenges of poverty and racial discrimination, and insufficient access to medical care while trying to educate children at the same time.

The curriculum debate is the wrong conversation, he argued. "We have inherited an old engine capable of going 30 mph; we can get it to 60 with some jerry-rigged modifications; what we need is a new engine that can get 90-100 mph." A Tesla instead of Ford.

Medicine isn't a perfect example, said Reville, but if education was medicine, we'd open up a new hospital, provide individual attention, and go to school on our mistakes.

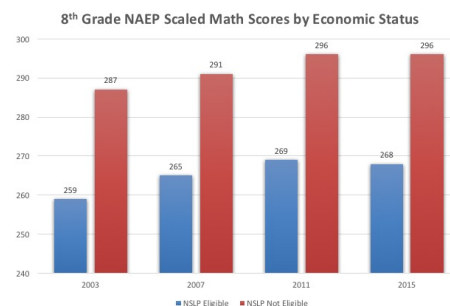
Education Redesign Lab

Arguing for a new kind of system that draws on all the community's resources, Reville described the Education Redesign Lab at Harvard as a new effort drawing

together advocacy, convening, lab field work and research. It aims to customize learning, integrate services and promote out-of-school learning by working with six communities led by mayors and superintendents committed to the work: Louisville, Oakland, Providence, and Somerville, Salem, and Newton in Massachusetts. "We are trying to do education on the cheap right now. This is an effort to see if we can pay attention not only to schools but also to the outside agencies that need support as well."

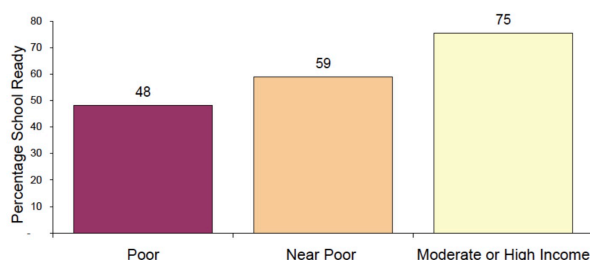


Website: edredesign.org
Twitter: @edredesign, @PaulReville

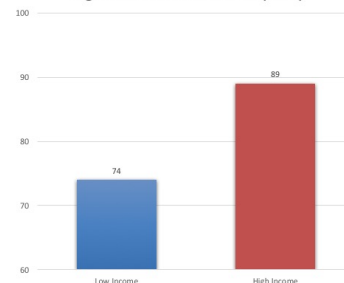


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Figure 1: Likelihood of Being Ready for School at Age Five, by Poverty Status at Birth



High School Graduation Rate (2013)



Source: Stater, M. & Kellwell, R. (2014). Public High School Four-Year On-Time Graduation Rates and Event Dropout Rates. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics; U.S. Department of Education (2013).

2

MAYOR AND SUPERINTENDENT GET TOGETHER IN SAN FRANCISCO

“Anonymous” once observed that what works in theory should also work in practice, but in practice it often does not. After heavy lifting in theory, it was time to turn to practice. Could we translate what sounded sensible at 30,000 feet into concrete actions on the ground?

The answer to the question is yes, based on the evidence from two impressive San Francisco public servants, Hydra Mendoza, senior adviser on family services to Mayor Edwin Lee, and Laurie Scolari, director of the Children and Families Council for San Francisco Superintendent Richard Carranza.

Leadership Commitment a Key

One key to the success of the effort is the attendance of the mayor and the superintendent at the monthly meetings of the 42 school and municipal leaders from around the city who sit on the Children and Family Services Council. In a city characterized by growing gentrification and inequality, it is a great thing, said Mendoza, that the mayor wants to be part of the solution.

It’s essential to have all the agencies that can contribute working together, she said. It goes beyond social services or health care. The family council identified major plans for new housing in an area without a school. Potentially hundreds of new students were

arriving, but nobody had informed the school district. At an alternative high school, student absenteeism was a significant problem because many students had to make multiple time-consuming bus transfers to get to the school. The transit authority was able to step in and get more direct routes.



Hydra Mendoza, senior advisor on family services to Mayor Edwin Lee



Laurie Scolari, director of Children and Families Council for San Francisco Superintendent Richard Carranza

“Vision 2025” aims to pull together families, educators, civic, labor and business leaders, along with funders and experts to prepare graduates to live and thrive in San Francisco.

It’s a daunting assignment, noted Scolari. While San Francisco’s wealth provides generous support (including

college savings accounts for all kindergartners, the “self-sufficiency standard for a family of 4 is \$79,000.” Organized around 5 goals - safe and nurturing environments, economic security and housing stability, physical, emotional, and mental health, a 21st-century learning environment, and success in postsecondary pursuits - the council aims at 4 major deliverables: an outcomes framework, a 5-year plan, data sharing, and an inventory of services. The hope is to create a “one-stop shop” for city services.

“What’s this got to do with me?” has been the biggest challenge, but there has not been a lot of pushback, Mendoza and Scolari reported, in part because of the commitment of the mayor and superintendent.

Community Schools

“You can’t improve a closed school,” noted Julia Daniel of the National Education Policy Center, and offered community schools offering wrap-around services as an alternative. NEPC’s research indicates that community schools help:

- improve student achievement;
- engage students in learning;
- provide essential supports for learning—student-centered climate, professional development, aligned instruction, and meaningful parent engagement;
- reduce dropout rates and grade retention; and
- lead to more positive discipline outcomes combined with ease of implementing principles of restorative justice.

Like all that? Now consider this: economists estimate that for every \$1 invested in community schools, communities get a return of \$11.60.

BUILDING TRAUMA-FREE COMMUNITIES

"It's a staggering statistic," said Esta Soler, founder and leader of Futures Without Violence. "Fully 60% of American children are exposed to violence, crime, or abuse in their schools, homes, and communities." The research is clear, she noted: Trauma induced by violence affects the developing brain of the child. Soler was one of three panelists who helped the Roundtable examine student trauma from the national, state, and local levels.

Changing Minds

"Childhood trauma is not destiny. The effects can be reversed," said Soler (below). She introduced a planned public service campaign with which the Roundtable is collaborating, "Changing Minds." To be rolled out in 2017 and aimed at educators, doctors, nurses, volunteers and other community leaders, the campaign intends to raise national awareness about childhood trauma while motivating adults to care and take action.

Mounted with the support of a number of educational groups and the Ad Council, the campaign website will provide videos and other materials to help adults understand and tackle childhood trauma.



California Cities Violence Prevention Network

Ernesto Olivares (top right) was a senior law enforcement official before taking on the job of directing the non-profit California Cities Violence Prevention Network. The network aims to examine root causes and help police officers play a constructive role by collaborating with community agencies to help young gang members become re-engaged positively with their neighborhoods. "We found that increasing a heavy police presence and putting you people away was not solving the problem."

Olivares used a brief video (available on the Roundtable website) to make his point. In 2002 in the Santa Rosa community, 4 people were shot and 2 were stabbed amidst numerous assaults during Cinco de Mayo. What

should have been a wonderful day for families turned into a dangerous and chaotic brawl. Today in the same community, Cinco de Mayo is a beautiful, colorful, peaceful celebration, involving hundreds of vendors and musicians and more than

8,000 participants. The turnaround rested on a concerted effort to examine root causes, promote cooperation, and share data with schools and the community.

Creating Trauma-Free Schools in San Diego

"We don't believe in suspensions," said Godwin Higa, Principal of San Diego's Cherokee Point Elementary (below). "We've gone four years without a suspension," he said to applause. Distributing a sheet with stick figures on it, he asked participants to crumple up the paper then straighten it out. "Despite the trauma, the figures are still there. But you can see the creases, They have been hurt and wounded."

The Roundtable's *Iceberg Effect* report had a big impact on his thinking, said Higa. Young people aged 10-24 have very high suicide rates, apparently arising from a sense of hopelessness about their lives. With the support of Superintendent Cindy Marten and the council, the county and district have adopted a trauma-informed approach to students. (Video <http://tinyurl.com/h2nqjq2>)

Higa reported doing surveys to find out what was needed, unloading "toxic" teachers, providing an emergency pantry and other resources for families and students. "Sometimes asking questions is all that's needed to alleviate anger," he said. "You can give hope, just by being compassionate," concluded this gentle man.



BRIDGING THE SCHOOL-COLLEGE GAP

One of the great anxieties of analysts and university leaders in recent years is the documented gap in postsecondary attendance between traditional students (white and middle class or well-to-do) and today's demographic (increasingly made up of students of color, many of them living in poverty).

Several promising projects aim to do something about this situation. The Roundtable heard from three. These summaries do not do justice to the presentations which are available on our website.

Say Yes to Education

This program is premised on the belief that entire communities need to come together to ensure that each child has the opportunity and support to go to college, said chief operating officer Eugene Chasin. Foundation funded, the program puts \$15 million into each community it works with to leverage additional support and has partnered with 103 colleges to place its students. Chasin outlined a detailed and impressive set of goals and benchmarks as part of the program which operates in Syracuse, Buffalo, Philadelphia, Cambridge, Hartford, and Harlem.

Every student has a guaranteed scholarship, reported Chasin, a huge carrot he can use in working with these communities. "No one wants to lose these scholarships."

NJ Seeds

NJ Seeds has a different focus, according to director of guidance Alan Heaps. It aims explicitly to identify highly motivated and potentially high achieving students in middle school. It then aims to give them the knowledge, skills and support to succeed in selective day and boarding schools and in colleges and universities.

Heaps reported that urban decay and hyper-segregation are huge challenges for urban schools, which he thought would not get better. It is tough work, he acknowledged. Many families are living on the edge; a car breakdown can tip the family in the wrong direction very quickly. Parents don't understand their choices and many do not want their children to move from home.

The Long Beach College Promise

Long Beach is a gritty port town. In *Below: Chris Steinhauer speaks while (l to r) James Harvey, Gene Chasin, and Alan Heaps listen.*

recent years it has transitioned from being a predominantly Anglo community to an enrollment that is 96% children of color, said Superintendent Chris Steinhauer.

Steinhauer described a formidable commitment to the students in his district. "Promise Pathways" has helped increase graduation rates and 75% of graduates attend college within a year, 80% within 2.

Ninth-grade is too late to start thinking about college, said Steinhauer. The program makes sure that every 4th-grader tours Long Beach City College and every 5th-grader visits California State University at Long Beach.

"It's remarkable what can be accomplished when people pull together," he concluded.

Superintendents Speak

Here's what superintendents made of this packed agenda:

- New understanding of the extent and impact of poverty
- Harmful effects of community disinvestment are very apparent
- Need to step up to the challenge and promise of diversity
- Raise consciousness and make the conversation about the 99%
- Do communities really want equality? Do they believe "All means All?"
- We can't do this ourselves. Need to involve other agencies
- An "Aha" for me: The systemic issue is that all service agencies are stressed
- No mark at birth on the brains of poor children saying they can't learn
- Great value to dealing with thought leaders in this intimate NSR environment



Here and There

Twitter

Follow the Roundtable on Twitter (right). Here are some highlights of recent months:

- Wraparound services like those at NSR SF meeting return \$11 for every \$ spent, says new analysis <https://t.co/D50jJlJBeC> via @BrookingsInst
- Useful comparison of major presidential candidates on school issues. Where do they stand? <https://t.co/mt9UgBDRoL>
- Check your district here. 6th graders in wealthy districts, 4 years ahead of poorest. <https://t.co/xjDuSOigPh> via @UpshotNYT
- Confirming Iceberg Effect report. US invest "little to nothing" in nation's youngest. <https://t.co/6R7GKnu7ie>
- US students in Math Olympiad lead world for 2nd time in row after years of poor results. Team USA rocks! <https://t.co/F6VyLFITHF>
- ACT: Interest in becoming teacher continues to decline among high school students. <https://t.co/dlci-U9Sxtl>

New Members

New members in 2016 include: Jeffrey Baier, Los Altos, CA; Yvonne Caamal Canul, Lansing, MI; Tammy Campbell, Federal Way, WA; Suzanne Cuzick, Longview, OR; Charles Dumais, Woodbridge, CT; Mary Kay Going, Moreland, CA; David Hicks, Sherman, TX; Laura Kagy, Attica, OH; Salah Khelfaoui, Lowell, MA; John Kopicki, Altoona, PA; Robert Kravitz, Englewood, NJ; Thomas Langdon, Sturgis, MI; Tim Mains, Jamestown, NY; Tammy Mangus, Monticello, NY; Ralph Marino, Jr., Hewlett, NY; Thomas McMorran, Easton-Redding, CT; Mark Miller, Dillonville, OH; Thomas Parker, Ecorse, MI; Alan Peterson, Merced, CA; Elizabeth Polito, Woodside, CA; John Ramirez, Salinas, CA; Sarah Shubel, East Grand Rapids, MI; Kathleen Smith, Brockton, MA; Rick Stout, Jacksonville, NC; Julie Vitale, Romoland, CA; Nikki Woodson, Indianapolis, IN; Paul Zinni, Avon, MA

WELCOME!!

Calendar & Contact

October 7-9, 2016

Fall Meeting, Washington, DC
School Governance

April 8-17, 2017

Study Mission to Cuba

The Roundtable:

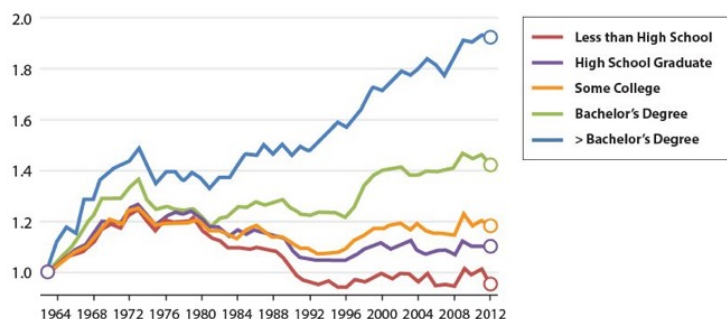
National Superintendents Roundtable
9425 35th Avenue, NE, Suite E
Seattle, WA 98115
206-526-5336
harvey324@earthlink.net
superintendentsforum.org
Twitter: @natsupers

Source:

Presentation by Irwin
Kirsch & Henry
Braun at NSR
meeting, July 2016.

From: D. Autor,
Science, 2014

Changes in Real Wage Levels of Full-Time U.S.
Male Workers by Education, 1963 - 2012



Source: David H. Autor, *Science* 2014; 344:843-851



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13