

Roundtable News, January 22, 2016

Greetings!, The Roundtable continues to grow and we have 2016 meetings scheduled in San Francisco and Washington, DC. In other news:

- How will states use new authority under ESSA?
- State court strikes down Nevada vouchers
- A public service campaign on bullying
- Schools and the State of the Union address
- Slow and steady wins the race, not silver bullets
- What the polls say about schools
- The stiff cost of sending your kid to private school
- Where can we find hope for our schools?

Please note: Our web page will be off-line for 48 hours during maintenance in the next week. Happy New Year to all!

How will states use new authority under ESSA?

The Every Child Succeeds Act, the latest name for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, dramatically alters the accountability provisions of NCLB and reins in the U.S. Department of Education's waiver over-reach.



Sen. Alexander (I) and Rep. Kline discuss ESSA

The legislation returns power to state education agencies. How they will use this authority is the question posed by Moriah Balingit and Donna St. George in a January story in the [Washington Post](#). The story suggests that states chafed under the heavy hand of former U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, are dissatisfied with the accountability systems they have in place, hope to develop metrics that take school demographic variables into account, and are eager to embrace their new role. Stay tuned.

State court strikes down Nevada voucher law

Well, that didn't take long. At its July 2015 meeting in Chicago, the

Roundtable benefited from a **tour de force presentation** from Storey County superintendent Rob Slaby about Nevada's new program to provide vouchers of some \$5,700 to every student in the state.

In early January, according to a **recent announcement** from the Education LawCenter, a state court declared the Nevada school voucher law (SB 302) violates the state constitution and issued a preliminary injunction to prevent its implementation. The Court will next schedule a trial on the merits of the case.



Molly Hunter, ELC, meets with Roundtable in 2014

A public service campaign on bullying

The Roundtable wants to draw attention to a new public service campaign on bullying. Developed by the Ad Council, "I am a Witness" is, according to a



November **New York Times** account, an example of how public service campaigns are adapting to the digital age. These campaigns are no longer messages such as "Only you can prevent forest fires" broadcast late at night over three

networks. Today's campaigns rely on emoticons and social media to reach young people in real time. Also of note: **Paper Tigers**, which the Roundtable viewed in October, is a documentary demonstrating how responding to the trauma in high school students' lives dramatically reduces fights and suspensions while boosting graduation rates.

Schools and the State of the Union Address

In his final **State of the Union** address, President Barack Obama took time to comment on American schools. According to a January 12 report from Lindsey Layton in **Education Week**, the president highlighted his achievements in education and pressed for more.

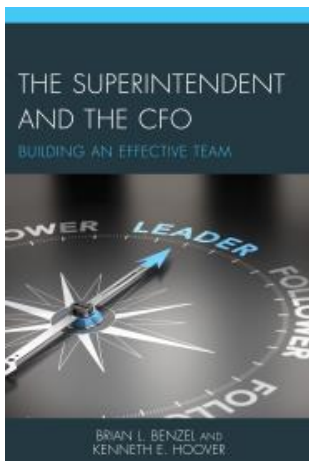
Obama emphasized what had been accomplished during his term in office, including record high-school graduation rates and caps on college-loan repayments, while lamenting Congress's failure to enact a program of voluntary universal preschool for 4-year-olds, a goal the White House has been promoting. He emphasized the need to reduce college costs, to make

community college free, and to make sure that every student graduates from high school with experience in hands-on computer science and math classes. The president's complete remarks can be found [here](#).



Slow and steady wins the race, not silver bullets

In the latest illustration of Aesop's fable about the tortoise and the hare, it turns out that slow and steady wins the school reform race too, not headline-grabbing silver bullets. About 25 years ago, writes [David L. Kirp in the New York Times](#), Newark and nearby Union City schools in New Jersey were poster children for urban school dysfunction. According to Kirp, Union City opted for homegrown gradualism and has a graduation rate of 81 percent; Newark's graduation rate, in a city blinded by a billionaire's \$100 million gift and the exaggerated expectations of the governor and mayor languishes at 69 percent. "There's no miracle cure for what ails public education," says Kirp, from the University of California at Berkeley.



An important part of turning schools around lies in a budget that supports learning. Significant new initiatives can't be tacked on after everything else has been funded; they need to be at the heart of financial planning. A useful new book, [The Superintendent and the CFO](#), drives home that message. Co-authors Brian Benzel and Kenneth Hoover, both former superintendents, argue compellingly that fiscal leadership needs to be harnessed to learning goals.

What the polls say about schools

Figuring out what polls tell us about schools can be a tricky business. In [December](#), for example, Reuters reported that 86% of Americans think it's "important that education be addressed in the United States." But what does that mean? In [November](#) Reuters reported that just 4.2% of Americans considered education to be "the most important problem facing the U.S. today," a backwater concern compared to terrorism, the economy, immigration, unemployment, and health care.

The **47th Annual PDK/Gallup Poll** provides more concrete evidence. Even here, the answers depend on whether respondents are talking about the schools their children attend (70% give an A or a B to the school their oldest child attends) or schools generally (just 19% award an A or a B to the "nation's schools"). Lack of financial support is the biggest problem facing schools, says the public. The public's utter disenchantment with testing comes through powerfully in the results. Here are a few key findings:



Issue	Percentage
Teacher quality as most important factor in improving schools	95%
Grade of A or B for school my oldest child attends	70%
Testing over-emphasized	64%
Favor charters	64%
Oppose vouchers	57%
Oppose using tests to evaluate teachers	55%
Oppose Common Core	54%
Lack of financial support is biggest problem facing schools	23%
Grade of A or B for nation's schools	19%
Test scores give most accurate picture of student progress	16%

The stiff cost of sending your kids to private schools

Public officials, business leaders, and analysts in think tanks and philanthropies often inveigh about public school costs. Half of school employees aren't in classrooms, they point out. "So what?" says Brookings analyst Susanna Loeb **in a recent posting**. Public schools, like their private counterparts, can't function without nurses, librarians, counselors, assistant principals, bus drivers, custodians, and cafeteria employees.



Salisbury School, Connecticut

A very telling contrast can be found in the high price of tuition at high-end private schools (see **Business Insider**) and costs in public schools. Business Insider identifies 50 private schools in the United States in which tuition and fees exceed \$42,000 annually. By

comparison, average per-pupil expenditures in public schools in 2011-12 amounted to \$12,401. Below is a

sampling of private school prices.



Detroit Public School, 2015

School	Location	Tuition	Rank
Salisbury School	Salisbury, CT	\$49,092	1
Lawrenceville School	Lawrenceville, NJ	\$48,700	2
Riverdale Country School	Bronx, NY	\$46,600	5
Lawrence Academy	Groton, MA	\$45,075	14
The Cate School	Carpenteria, CA	\$44,260	29
Madeira School	McLean, VA	\$42,461	47

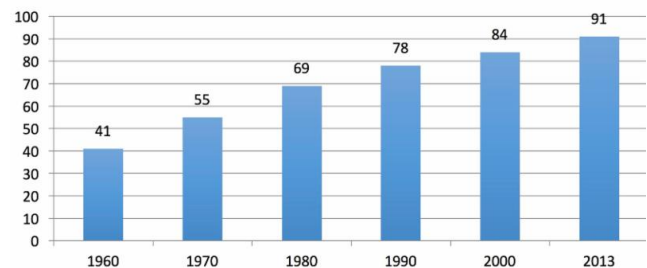
Where can we find hope for our schools?

Acknowledging that test scores are important to students, parents, and policymakers, Roundtable director James Harvey brought a message of hope about schools to Everett, Washington with the help of Superintendent Gary Cohn. In a January 10 column in the [Everett Herald](#),

he argued that American policymakers have let themselves be misled by international assessments, which, he said, compare apples with oranges.

During a presentation to the Everett Rotary on January 12, Harvey made the case that the nation's schools are incomparably better than they used to be. Presenting an array of data on graduation rates, enrollment of students with challenging needs, and opportunities for girls and women, he concluded that these developments are in line with the nation's values and the needs of a democratic society. "Sure, we still have a lot of work to do," he said. "And the next steps are even more difficult. But we have a world-class system that opens its doors to all. Let's acknowledge what we've accomplished while rolling up

Proportion of Americans 25-29 with a High School Diploma, 1960-2013



our sleeves to get on with the job." [You can download the data here.](#)

Roundtable's 2016 Semi-Annual Meetings

Getting Organized to Help Kids -- The Roundtable's "Iceberg effect" report



indicates that the U.S. has the largest proportion of low-income children in the developed world. They live with remarkably high levels of stress and little support for families. This July 15-17 meeting will gather near Union Square to foster greater collaboration with units of general purpose local government.

School Governance -- October 7 -9 will find the Roundtable in Washington, D.C., to examine school governance. What do superintendents, boards, and unions need to do to get their act together to improve outcomes for students? The meeting will be held near the national capital's historic Rock Creek Park.



New Members

We are pleased to note several new members who have joined the Roundtable for 2016. They include:

- Jeffrey Baier, Los Altos, California
- Yvonne Caamal Canul, Lansing, Michigan
- Charles Dumais, Woodbridge, Connecticut
- John D. Ewald, Caroline County, Maryland
- Mary Kay Going, Moreland, California
- Laura Kagy, Attica, Ohio
- John Kopicki, Altoona, Pennsylvania (new assignment)
- Tammy Mangus, Monticello, New York
- Ralph Marino, Jr., Hewlett-Woodmere, New York (new assignment)
- Thomas McMorran, Easton-Redding, Connecticut
- Thomas Parker, Ecorse, Michigan
- Alan Peterson, Merced, California
- Elizabeth Polito, Woodside, California
- Kathleen Smith, Brockton, Massachusetts
- Nikki Woodson, Indianapolis, Indiana
- Paul Zinni, Avon, Massachusetts

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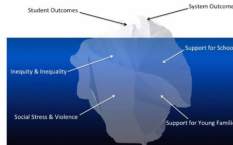
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School Performance in Context: Indicators of School Inputs and Outputs in Nine Similar Nations

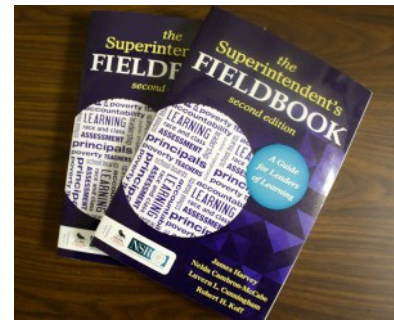


January 2015

The Heritage Foundation



Iceberg Effect Report
Free downloads or purchase copies [here](#).



Best selling volume from the Roundtable. Order *Superintendent's Fieldbook* **from Corwin Press.**

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