

Session Transcript: 28-05-2020 University of Penn - C-SAIL 20/20 Breakout #3

ADAM EDGERTON:

Hello everyone, good afternoon and good morning from those joining from the West Coast. This is the breakout session based on standards-based leadership and governance. My name is Adam, I recently graduated from the University of Pennsylvania.

MEGHAN COMSTOCK:

Hello everyone, it's a pleasure to be here, thank you so much for being here.

ADAM EDGERTON:

We will briefly go over some logistics. Make sure that your audio is muted. However, we would like this to be as interactive as possible given the constraints of this webinar. Please put questions as you think of them in the question box to your right and Megan will be reading those held out as we go through.

We have some questions that we will post to the panelists but hopefully we will be a little bit more free-form and interactive. Closed captioning is available. Please do not use the link in the slide. There's an updated link in the chat window.

We have also shared this link in the questions box. We look forward to having everyone participate in the session. You also should also see the handout slide. We put together our relevant publications for this work. Three of them that have been recently published deal with students and teachers with disabilities do not believe the standards are appropriate for the students compared to general educators. Also qualitative work on how we might look at standards-based reform in a way that's politically sustainable and finally another survey paper that compares the attitudes among teachers, principals and superintendents and how they experience these policies different from each other.

I'm here to introduce our great panelists and they are joining us from all around the country and I'm excited to have this panel. Originally we had offered them an all-expense paid trip to DC. And we are happy they are still joining us.

Our first panelist is Chad. A senior associate partner from bellwether education partners. We have Meredith, principal from the school District of Philadelphia.

Brent, who you saw in the last session the Sacramento County office of education and Assistant Superintendent. We have Jeff, Superintendent of Newhall school district.

Bob, and Andrea who is the director of career technology and a special education. This panel is a range.

Without further ado, I'm going to mute my own Webcam and show our six panelists if you could please come online. Great! I'm going to post a series of questions and hopefully they will have follow-ups and of the audience can follow up with questions as well. Our first question will be for Brent one of the things that we have been focused on the is local control and what does that mean exactly is something that we hear in interviews with superintendents and officials all the time. What does it mean to you?

BRENT MALICOTE:

I was thinking about this, this morning. It's when policy is not done to you or for you but it's done with you. That's the real difference. I think we have a really keen anger example... Virtual learning and all those things that are happening, they are really starting to shift about planning for the fall.

Where it's fairly clear in California that at best, there will be some kind of blended approach as we come back to school in the fall. We will have cohorts of kids that are coming in and out of schools. But there will also be ongoing distance learning.

The idea of that – we as a County office of education decided that we would bring local experts all to the table. We have 13 districts in Sacramento County ranging from the River Delta school district between 200 and 200 students.

All the way up to 60,000 students. And we have rural and urban and all the rest of it. When I think of local context and trying to pivot and be able to be flexible as we are thinking about planning for the fall... The local context is probably... You could not get a better example of really meaning to address things based on need. We are seeing that in Sacramento County.

This process that we have gone through as we have pulled these local experts and we have representatives from all 13 districts in the county... That we have come together to do a few things.

One to set a set of guiding principles that include things like quality instruction that's the linchpin to success. Things like equity and access. As well as a set of planning considerations.

What we have created it is a document that has not been built for people. But built with people. We have a b standing. But in this planning document, we know that each of the districts will have a slightly different approach to the way that we go about the fall and what school will look like.

There's all kinds of learning that is happening across these examples as well. I mentioned real river delta with over 300 students. They are really talking about using the outdoor space as a way to think about social distancing.

I don't think that some of our big districts have really gone down that road. They were going straight down master schedules and those things you might think about in terms of grouping students and AB schedules and Monday Wednesday schedules for some kids and Tuesday Thursday schedules

for other kids. That local control idea allowed for these districts to be able to collaborate in a way where small districts are really helping the big districts and vice versa.

Again, I think that local control we are seeing in real time right now. The need for districts to be able to address local context based on the needs that they see with their community. I will pause there.

ADAM EDGERTON:

That's great! I wonder if people would agree or disagree with how he has put in local control and how he operationalized it.

JEFF PELZEL:

For me, when I think about that it's a classroom teacher differentiating upon the needs of their students. That's what we are talking about here. The district differentiating upon the needs of their community, and the needs of their students and making those decisions based upon the data that they have rather than it being imposed as Brent talked about, you make decisions based upon the path you are headed on. That empowers people to create ownership into the work that you are doing.

ADAM EDGERTON:

I'm wondering as a principal, a lot of our surveys show that there is a disconnect between teachers and principals in terms of the amount of control they feel that they have of instruction. Could you share some of your experiences and how that fits in with this discussion?

MEREDITH LOWE:

I don't think anyone really likes things being done to them. When we talk with our teachers on what success would look like, that's one thing that I talk about with my team pretty regularly. Here in Philadelphia, we are in all kinds of different places with these standards. I previously was a high school principal for youth in foster care and we transitioned regular curriculum to a completely standards-based approach.

The school I'm in right now does not have a standards-based approach but we are trying to take steps toward that because it's something I believe in and I think bringing the research to the table about how that can support student learning is really important. And then allowing teachers to be part of the process on that. That's crucial.

ADAM EDGERTON:

Are there any other thoughts from the panelists before we move on?

BRENT MALICOTE:

I would just like to look at the importance of really bringing in the community and decision-making process. The idea that student voice really matters in this and we are trying to organize and put together this planning document for the fall. We are trying to organize a fishbowl activity where we bring local students from across the county for adults to... To just listen about what's working and

what's not. Additionally that you bring in parents and other community members to the table to define this idea of local control and really provide that input that if it's absent... Things just don't go as well.

That's one thing you can count on. If you're not bringing in the voice from students especially but also families and community just more generally. You're just not going to be in a positive spot as he would to be if you were just being really inclusive and thinking about that voice.

ADAM EDGERTON:

Great. I'm seeing a question in the box. How do you balance that buy-in and not being talked down but one of our questions asked... How does a leader ensure that standards are being followed. That's often the tension. Someone has to set them and presumably someone is informing them. How does a leader balance competing tensions? I wonder of Jeff, you can answer that?

JEFF PELZEL:

The reality is that you have to bring stakeholders in and engage them in a partner with them. And really... Voice, choice, opportunities to engage in the work.

We don't allow things to be seen through because we go to implement something or make change and when we don't get the results in year one, we think we have to abandon them.

It has taken us and our work around mathematics instruction... We are in year five of this work. We have created best practices through that work. It wasn't the district office it was teachers coming together to say this is what it looks like. We developed the document and now we shared it out. I really think the buying process is what's critical.

And bringing people to the table to engage in the work.

ADAM EDGERTON:

I think I was struck by the emphasis on how long it took. The development time and money. And even in thinking about the effort to implement this and how...

JEFF PELZEL:

We had a consultation that we brought in. In her skill set to relate to the teachers was critical. They wanted to go there. They did not want to miss out because she was so good and she had background. Interestingly enough, it's fiscal mess but we are an elementary district. She understands the standards and really can help press on our learning over time. I think that's a really important decision.

I took the time to drive up two hours away to see if she was the right fit for us. You have to know your audience of teachers and the type of personality when you work with someone, it does make a difference. Especially when you're talking about three or four days of professionals. Some teachers have been with her 16 – 20 days for full days of instruction.

ADAM EDGERTON:

That's a lot of groundwork. I think Megan has a question.

MEGHAN COMSTOCK:

She makes the point that local control can mean that districts and schools have the ability to differentiate because of additional autonomy but also that there could be more of a laissez-faire attitude about making sure that students particular needs are met. The question is, how can states do a better job of differentiating policymaking based on district need?

ADAM EDGERTON:

I'm wondering if Andrea or Chad could maybe jump in. Andrea, I think you are muted.

ANDREA TOWNSEND:

Can you repeat the question? I don't want to speak on intelligently.

MEGHAN COMSTOCK:

How can states do a better job at differentiating posse and support based on needs?

ANDREA TOWNSEND:

I'm come from Ohio. The state does a lot for guiding the districts and they give a lot of words like recommendations or guidance. Locally, our control is an elected position. Our control comes from our Board of Education which are elected officials. On the side, you might have more or less board members. That brings a political game into it.

I don't know if states could be helpful and to strengthen some words beyond guidance or recommendation. I know what ends up happening a lot of the time, especially a prime example way to be the current virus situation.

Where we have guidance and recommendations. It becomes a political conversation as to what level of implementation we are going to take on at the local level unless there's mandate or verb beyond recommend or preferred guidance.

While I don't want to see us lose our economy, I think there are certain situations... Like if you want to invest a bunch of money in standards-based education and then use words like "we recommend" or "we would like to offer you this guidance" and we know they will prevent real implementation, there might be more time to get more state or language or some sort of buy-in, in that respect. It's a whole gamut of feelings, and input.

Maybe all to do things that would impact student achievement and then when we don't do those things, that does not happen. I'm not sure if I really answered your question, but states... Especially in Ohio, we could really use a bit more guidance or better boundaries in places where it really matters.

CHAD ALDEMAN:

That's how I would answer this question as well. It's about trying to vest the decisions that handled the most... And to Andrea's point, there haven't been many states that have been clear on that. It's this balance between what the right decision is and at the right level to make it and there's attention there. I don't think any state has it quite right.

ANDREA TOWNSEND:

I just want to add one more point, I think we have to have folks that are informed. When we are taking on local control, it helps to keep everyone who is providing input into the decision informed and informed in a relevant way. An up-to-date way.

We know it changes, and always seeking information or input... I think it does help that local control level.

ADAM EDGERTON:

Great, great. I think since we answered question two already... We will skip ahead and answer question three. Maybe we can have Andrea, and Bob as well. I'm wondering, how can we increase on instruction, especially students on special education plan.

Maybe you can start of talking about building Brian's for standards when the students have very different needs?

ANDREA TOWNSEND:

I think this is where it's an excellent question because it talks about standards based instruction and supporting teachers but it's really getting out the heart of the major barriers which is buy-in. It's kind of our mindset and it has a lot to do with our history.

When you think about where we have come from, and we conceived it as being as successful in the past and where they are now, they are vastly different. Considering abilities of students beyond a label is a really great place to start. What we see a lot of times, especially in more rural areas, but it might not always be true is that we have folks who really feel that students with individualized special education plan because they have alerting different... They should have lower expectations.

That's unfortunate because I understand the correlation between low expectations and low postsecondary outcomes is pretty connected. When we say we have low expectations or you cannot meet the standards that everyone else with me, then you automatically will have less opportunity for an interest area of your choice in the future. That's a pretty heavy decision to make. I think you have to start there and I found it to be successful when we take a look at longitudinal data for students and their outcomes and when we take a look at students and their abilities outside of an academic setting so we can really see student strengths for what they are. And really build upon those. I think we have to hit the mindset of students with disabilities are not able to meet the standards. We have to tackle that and find the root cause. I suspect that's history or bit of bias but we have to tackle that

and grow past that together so we can plummet the standards.

The standards-based instruction for all instruction.

MEREDITH LOWE:

I would also add that I think when we see teachers pushback against something, it is often because they are not completely clear on how to do it, or they don't believe that they can. When I have 1/4, fifth, or sixth grade teacher that's really struggling or using some negative language around a young person in their class... Maybe they are saying something that they are too low.

Maybe they say something like that and it's often because the child sitting in front of them is reading at a second grade level and they are in sixth grade. As a middle school teacher, they don't actually know how to bridge the gap. I think a lot of the mindset issues BC with teachers can be addressed by building their scale and their toolbox so what we are asking them to do does not feel intimidating and they actually see a path toward helping the student achieve what we know they can achieve.

ANDREA TOWNSEND:

I agree with that, but I think there's power, or a lot of leverage in our intervention specialists that can partner with teachers and bring those skills to the table. A lot of what they talked about the collaboration piece, those shared services idea that you may not know how to teach that, but I know in intervention that has proven effective, let's share this time and see if we cannot get more bang for our buck and see the improvement across everyone. That they are really reading at a lower grade level. I think that's the collaborative nature or structure we can put in place where both teachers and a generalized setting, or other support personnel... However the infrastructure is designed. I think that's a critical piece. That sometimes is where I see some pushback.

They don't know how to start the conversations and they do not know how to power through a problem. Like a bit of adversity or disagreement among the team. I think that's a really good place to leverage support for this teachers.

BRENT MALICOTE:

I can jump in as well, we are really good at tranquil's and pyramids in education and I think what happens many times is that it comes back... Both Meredith and Andrea have talked about mindset. The idea if you are looking at a pyramid and the foundation is something that's built for all you do have some and a few... A lot of times our students that have individualized education plans, they get plopped in the tier 2 or tier 3 without recognizing that they are first a tier 1 student. That's where we have to start. And we have to look at things like EU DL kinds of processes to make sure that our teachers are designing that first good instruction in a way that all students... Including the students with the IEP is getting the support that they need.

They are getting the instruction that they need. When they are placed in the tier 2 or tier 3 part of the pyramid or triangle, they already have the foundation that sets them up for success. I think it becomes a mindset issue a lot of times where it's easy... It should be, but it happens where we

place kids automatically in the tier 2 or tier 3 without recognizing that they are a regular education student first and we have to meet their needs there.

JEFF PELZEL:

When you are doing professional development, you bring your special education teachers in with your general education teachers. When we rolled out others, when we have collaboration Fridays, and PLC time, they are in with the general education teachers talking about the work that's going on and you give them access and help them differentiate. I also think you have to find areas where you can water the green spot. You find those teams that are willing to do an inclusion model and then you do data... Data never lies. When you find success into those models then you build on and showcase it. You get teams to observe what that looks like. You just have to start however small. It doesn't matter.

You start, you water it, and it expands over time. You have to be patient with that and provide them access and support over time. I agree, it was talked about earlier, in terms of helping give them knowledge and support. Often times we want to send kids out to get fixed and that's because we do not have the tools to fix the kids and support them. People cannot lead what they do not know. That's our job is to provide that training and support for our classroom teachers.

BOB SALVIN:

I want to take this conversation in a completely different conversation. What's that? I think the question is not the right question. The question is about how we can increase support for teachers. I would rather see vehicle conversation around increasing support among teachers for proven instruction. This is what the C-Sail findings are telling us among many other bits of information that standard alignment is not the goal. Standards are good, and I'm not opposed toward the movement of career ready standards. The idea that standard alignment in itself is going to be beneficial was not found in any of the studies that were like it before. We did a big review of research on elementary mathematics instruction. And there were nine studies that all had the basic idea that the way to improve mathematics outcomes was to provide coaching and extensive professional development to help the teachers understand mathematics and understand pedagogy and align with standards. And not a single one of them... Not one of them found positive impact on student achievement! Despite the enormous investments and time and money.

Another way of causing change and bringing about change is to find programs and practices that have been proven to be effective and helping teachers to implement those. Simply aligning with standards is not going to get us there but if we have programs that have been evaluated and proven to be effective, then you can get... That's the thing to invest the time and energy and. Then, it becomes... There is a different question that's very important that Andrea mentioned, how do you get support for proven programs. Not for alignment, but proven programs. One of the things that we do in all of our programs... We help the teachers learn about the program that we are offering them. We hopefully get a delegation of teachers, parents, and administrators to go look at a school that's using the program ended they come back and vote. And we require a vote of at least 75% of the teachers to take it on. That does a lot to help teachers realize that they had overall. They could have

said no. They did not have to do this. That they were truly in authority and willing to become educated and make those decisions. Then getting to the question about teachers of students and individualized education plans... Once again, there's a lot of evidenced on how to help children who are struggling... I'm talking about high incidence kids. Kids with relatively mild disabilities.

There is a lot of evidence on how to get those kids to be successful. First off to not have to be in special education or have an IEP at all. Because they can be served in the regular classroom or served with additional services. A lot of that evidence goes to various forms of tutoring. 121 small group were tutoring. Which can be successful with teaching assistants as well as with teachers. So if we are talking about ways of understanding things that have been proven to be effective many times... Then getting support for that and getting quality implementation of that, then you are talking serious business.

As long as you are only talking about standard alignment, I think we have loads of evidence that it will not get you there.

JEFF PELZEL:

I would agree with you, one of the missing components in my experience is the fact that school districts do not use a research-based instructional framework that has proven research around what effective teaching looks like. There are frameworks out there that when implemented through multiple research studies. We are using one right now that shows that when implemented with fidelity, that opportunity gap and achievement gap can be eliminated when teachers know the right teaching. A way to engage students and differentiate how to use the resources how to assess and monitor. And that's what will ultimately impact student achievement with the knowledge of those standards. I think you have to marry those two things to get the results that you really want. You cannot just do either in isolation or a multitiered system. I think it all has to be joined together in order for you to really get down into the weeds of making that achievement happen for all kids in our school district.

It's not just a program. If it was a program, we what have already all adopted that program. I'm still in all... 27 years into education, I'm still in all that we don't know and have not figured out what that effective teaching really looks like and why we are still... Why is it so slow in that process? I think it's a lot of ongoing training, deep understanding, and really using data and research to inform our instruction. Which is what I have loved in our conference of. It's really research that striving what we are doing.

>> I want to leave time for audience questions. I'm also dropping the link to one of the most recent topics that I really liked. That's in the chat box if anyone is interested.

MEGHAN COMSTOCK:

Standards focus on English and math. The question is, what is leadership's role in sharing a holistic approach to standards? So schools don't become top-heavy in English and math to the detriment of other subjects.

MEREDITH LOWE:

this is something that we have really started to work on for our next school year. Because I think that right now... A lot of schools here in Philadelphia teach English and math. And they do not do a lot of teaching when it comes to science and social studies.

I don't say that as a judgment, I say that as what has been prioritizing and incentivize. When we look at what our young people need to be successful in those subjects, they need a lot of knowledge building and content. One project that we are working through right now... As a school team is doing backwards planning and unit planning for science and social studies next year and a way that provides because our students really need that. It's not because our students don't know how to make inferences, or don't know how to use those skills. But they don't know how to use it as an academic setting. Using that is a huge opportunity and one that we really need to capitalize on moving forward.

BOB SALVIN:

I think at this moment, the phenomena that we brought upon ourselves we are paying the price on. We have not built scientific literacy in our population and we are paying a price for that. What's going on in the news every single day as the discussion goes on how to deal with the pandemic, you have people have no... Not the remote idea how science operates. What levels of evidence are needed before things can be used on a grand scale. That not everyone's opinion is correct in science. Most people's opinions are wrong and things have to be subjected to proof. People are talking and making life decisions based on appalling scientific literacy. We have spent the last 20 or 30 years pushing math and reading alone and doing as little as possible on the fundamentals... Not only by science but also social studies that have many concepts that are undermining our ability to take collective action. Something else right now is a life or death scale.

With that, there's a focus on math and reading. I love that, I'm not against it. But in the inclusive focus, we are not making a huge difference on math and reading either. That makes it much more difficult to say science and social studies have to wait their turn.

While we deal with all this heavy math and reading problem. Yes, those are key and extremely important. But there's more than that. And beyond our current problem, to expect that we can have a modern economy and compete in the modern world and to just give up on science... Really? Every other country doesn't think that way. I just don't understand why in America that particularly science is a minor subject. Everywhere else, it's a huge deal! I just don't... I will leave it with that.

BRENT MALICOTE:

If I could jump in just for a minute... It does feel like it could be another turning point right now. I do feel like I have seen in California, at least in Sacramento County, we have seen schools that are making the shift. Where there is a new focus around social science. Maybe we have not talked about social and emotional mental health. I think all of this is something we are worried about with families, kids, and dealing with isolation and all that's going on right now. It's a lot for folks to handle. What I

fear is often when we get into the financial tough times... We are in California and everyone is talking about 7% – 10% cuts and those are real conversations that everyone will be dealing with and I'm sure it's not just in California. This is the time when people make decisions about what they are going to cut. If we are already worried about the level of science, and support around wellness and social and emotional learning and mental health, those are often the first things that are on the chopping block when these budget tough times and that really worries me because I felt like we made some shifts and we focused a lot on mental health and wellness here in Sacramento. We are committed to it, and it's not going anywhere. But I do worry about it more broadly. I wanted to put that out there. For those of you who have... You have connections to those first strings. Hold onto these supports that are so needed rain. Maybe more needed than another.

JEFF PELZEL:

Don't forget about arts/music. I honestly attribute our academic success in our district to the long-standing music and our program that we have had, it's never been cut through these crazy times. Art and music is really important for kids.

ADAM EDGERTON:

Thank you. We will have to ended there. If we could go to the last slide. This was a really amazing panel, and again, they volunteered their time and people that I respect and admire and I love having you here. Thank you for joining us, and thank you for the audience questions. We will take a 15 minute break and we will have our closing session with Andy Porter and Linda. My future boss in two weeks. We will began at 1:30 p.m.

If you have prior obligations, this will all be made available on our website along with all of our applications. Thank you for taking your time and I hope you are all staying safe and healthy.