

ANNOTATED TRANSCRIPT OF VIDEOTAPED SPEECH ON SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY

AND AYP

In May 2003, The Business Roundtable commissioned a series of focus groups — four with parents in suburban Baltimore and inner-city Chicago and four with teachers in those two locations. As part of the research, we asked participants to view a hypothetical speech about school accountability and Adequate Yearly Progress, delivered by a state school superintendent...and to record in real-time their likes and dislikes. The following annotated transcript summarizes their views.

Thank you for joining us today at one of our state's standout schools – Adams Elementary. I am so very proud of their progress and perseverance of these students and teachers. They are truly inspiring.

As you know, our goal is to improve the performance of *every* child in *every* classroom in *every* school in our state.

All groups respond well to the speech up to this point. Suburban Baltimore parents increase the most, starting from a mean score of about 50 and increasing steadily to about 70. Chicago parents increase to about 60 at this point. Chicago teachers: 65 Suburban Baltimore teachers: 55

Making these improvements must be our top priority. We know that if our high school graduates don't have basic skills in reading and math, they will not get into a decent college... get a good job... or be able to contribute to the well-being of our communities.

Teachers start declining here at the mention of voter priorities. Mean score drops down to about 50.

We know that voters say that improving education is their number-one priority.

And now, we have an additional reason to focus more attention on raising achievement. A new federal law requires it.

ALL GROUPS

Both teacher groups drop at this point. Suburban Baltimore teachers drop to just below 40, and Chicago teachers drop to about 35. Chicago parents drop from 60 to about 50. Suburban Baltimore parents stay relatively flat at just below 70.

Chicago teachers strongly dislike this initial section on adequate yearly progress. Their rating drops down to about 25. Suburban Baltimore teachers have a mean score of around 30.

Small bump in the ratings here, especially among Chicago parents, who increase their mean rating from 55 to 65 at the mention of “all students.” For Suburban Baltimore parents, there is a similar increase from 60 to 70. Both teacher groups improve to about 40.

Suburban Baltimore parents respond negatively to this statement, possibly to the mention of “parents.” Their mean score drops sharply from 75 to 60. Chicago parents also drop, though not as dramatically. Teachers like the collaboration talk. Chicago teachers improve about 25 points, going from 35 to 60. Suburban Baltimore teachers have a 20 point increase from 35 to 55.

Under the new law, we now must measure and report on the performance of all student groups — African-American students, white students, Hispanic students, high-income students, low-income students, students with disabilities, and students who aren’t yet fluent in English. Only students with the most severe handicaps are exempt from these new accountability rules.

Under the new law, each group has to reach the standards by 2014...and each has to make what is called “adequate yearly progress” every year. That way, we know that schools are all on track to have all students at grade level in reading and math 11 years from now.

This new way of measuring is important because it explicitly makes us responsible for educating ALL students... not just the students who traditionally do well in school...but ALL students...including kids who typically have not done very well in school. That’s why the federal law is called No Child Left Behind. That’s our commitment—to make sure that all students, no matter what their background, get a decent education from the public schools.

Clearly, this is a laudable goal. Getting there will require a new level of commitment and focus from all of us...policymakers, local officials, educators, parents, students and taxpayers.

THE LIST

Chicago parents head back up quickly, from a mean score of about 60 to 70 – they like the annual report component.

An important step in this process is to report results annually...so that we can see where we're making progress and where we need to focus more attention. That's what today's briefing is about.

Suburban Baltimore parents react negatively to the phrase "needs improvement." Their mean score drops below 50. Chicago teachers drop quickly also, from about 55 down to 40...

As you can see on the attached list, a total of 975 schools in the state failed to make adequate yearly progress. These schools are on our "needs improvement" list. This means that these schools did not meet the state's reading and math goals for one or more groups of students for two straight years.

A CLOSER LOOK

...Chicago teachers climb back up quickly to 60 here, when "needs improvement" schools are differentiated from failing schools.

This does not mean that all the schools on the "needs improvement" list are failing schools. Far from it. There are huge differences.

There is not significant favorability or unfavorability towards these general "success stories." All groups are fairly flat here around 50.

Some schools did very well. They helped many of their students reach proficiency or above on the reading and math tests, which is great. In many cases, these schools made very large gains with these students in the past few years...sometimes 10 points or more...but it wasn't quite enough to make the grade, and they still have a little more work to do.

Parents are fairly flat through this section, with a mean score fluctuating around 55. Chicago teachers drop to 40, and suburban Baltimore teachers drop to 45.

Other schools had a more mixed record. Sometimes, the African-American, low-income and English language learners made the necessary gains and reached the learning goals. But the special needs and white students did not. In other schools, the reverse was the case. In

some schools, the 3rd graders made adequate yearly progress, but the 4th and 5th graders did not...and so on.

And then we have some schools that are lagging badly. In these schools, many, many groups of students are failing to make AYP... these schools are not making much progress...and this has been the situation for years.

FAILING SCHOOLS?

It will be tempting for some in the community to label all the schools on the “needs improvement” list as “failing schools.” That’s wrong.

The medical analogy works fairly well with all the groups.

This is like saying that anyone who sees a doctor automatically should be rushed to the hospital. True, some patients do need open-heart surgery. Their health is failing and they need an ambulance. But other patients might just have a broken arm; out-patient surgery should do it. Still other patients may have nothing more serious than a sprained wrist; two aspirin and an ace bandage should be enough for them.

Isn’t this a more realistic picture of the world of health care than simply assuming that all patients belong in intensive care? We should use the same common-sense approach when judging the health of our schools.

Chicago parents like the language about different levels of intervention for different schools. Their mean score improves to about 70 from 55. Teachers also improve, with the mean scores gradually improving to about 60.

The reality is that not all schools are in the same position. And not all schools need the same level of intervention. That’s why we have

different categories to describe the schools on the “needs improvement” list.

ACTIONS

At the state level, we plan multiple interventions to help the low-performing schools:

First, we’re going to be more proactive in sharing information about our schools—not just the good news, but the bad news as well. It’s the only way we can target help where it will make the most difference and hold ourselves accountable for results.

Suburban Baltimore teachers do not like any mention of school choice. Their mean score drops down to 25. Chicago teachers have a fairly flat rating for this section, but it is not a favorable rating as the mean is around 40.

Suburban Baltimore parents don’t have a strong opinion, until the language shifts to “priority for low-income students.” Then their mean score drops 15 points from 65 to 50. Not surprisingly, Chicago parents like the offer of parental choice. Their mean score is 70.

Chicago parents continue to feel favorably towards the actions in No Child Left Behind. After the tutoring services for low-income parents, their mean score increases to 75.

On the opposite side, suburban Baltimore teachers have a mean score of 30.

Second, parents can use this detailed information to make informed choices about where to send their children to school ... and how to get extra help.

For parents whose school makes the needs-improvement list for two straight years, they will be able to transfer their children to a better school. Top priority will be given to low-achieving, low-income students.

After three years in a high-priority school, low-income parents can ask that their children receive tutoring and other special services to help them catch up.

Third, we are making sure that our curriculum...that is, what teachers teach in class...is aligned with our tests, which in turn are aligned with our academic standards.

All groups see an improvement in scores after talk of targeting resources to high-priority schools.

Fourth, we plan to target resources where they are most needed and where they will make the most difference—in our high-priority schools.

We will offer more before-school and after-school programs for students who need extra help in reading and math.

Perhaps seeing this as a direct attack on their competency, Chicago teachers react unfavorably to this section. Their mean score drops from 55 to 45.

We will send teams of our best teachers and principals into schools that need the most help. We will start mandatory leadership academies for principals in schools on the “needs improvement” list.

Chicago teachers continue to drop, this time down to 35.

We will create incentives to encourage our best teachers and principals to work in our poorest schools, which tend to have far too many unqualified teachers.

Both parents group like the initiative shown to involve parents, Chicago parents with a mean score of about 70, and suburban Baltimore parents increasing their mean score from 50 to 60. Suburban Baltimore teachers also like the stated goal of involving parents. Their mean score rapidly improves from 55 to 70.

And we will make special efforts to reach out to parents who haven't always felt as welcomed in our schools as they should.

DOABLE?

Is this *worth doing*? Absolutely.

Suburban Baltimore teachers do not believe this can be achieved, dropping back as quickly as they climbed down to about 50.

Is this *doable*? Absolutely.

All groups are fairly flat here, with some more favorable than others. Suburban Baltimore parents: 65 Chicago parents: 60 Suburban Baltimore teachers: 50 Chicago teachers: 30

For evidence, look at the many high-poverty schools all across the state that are making adequate yearly progress ...schools in poor neighborhoods such as Green Elementary School, Lincoln Middle School and Washington High School, where more than 80% of students are at grade level in reading and math. They're getting results...not using poverty or race as an excuse. Instead, they are working hard to ensure that their students get the extra time and resources they need to succeed.

Or look at Adams Elementary School, where we are today. This is one of many examples of what we call "turnaround schools." These schools were failing many groups of students not too long ago, but they now have huge majorities of students in all groups performing at grade level. Again, there are dozens of schools like this all across our state.

Results like these prove that ALL kids indeed CAN learn to read and do math well ... as long as they are taught to read and do math well.

Both teacher groups drop about 10 points during this "all schools can do it" section. The suburban Baltimore teacher mean score goes from 50 to 40, and Chicago teachers decrease their rating from 40 to just over 30.

And if students in Green, Lincoln, Washington and Adams can do it, it's reasonable to expect all schools in this state can get the same kinds of results.

That's our collective challenge...to use test results and other indicators of student success to measure progress...and then to use this information to provide students and schools with the help they need to improve.

Teachers steadily increase at the end of the speech. Suburban Baltimore teachers rise from 40 to finish with a mean score of around 70. Chicago teachers improve from 30 to 50. Parents also finish high, with suburban Baltimore parents around 65 and

And we need to celebrate schools like Adams Elementary, which shows what's possible when educators, parents, students and the community work together to make sure that ALL CHILDREN get the kind of education each of us wants for OUR OWN CHILD.

Thank you.

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