Leadership
FOR Change
Washington, D.C.
November 11-13, 2014
AASA, The School Superintendents Association, founded in 1865, is the professional organization for more than 13,000 educational leaders in the United States and throughout the world. AASA’s mission is to support and develop effective school system leaders who are dedicated to the highest quality public education for all children. For more information, visit www.aasa.org. Follow AASA on Twitter at www.twitter.com/AASAHQ or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/AASApagination. Information about AASA Children’s Programs is available on Twitter @AASATotalChild.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Leadership for Change

Schools are anchors of your communities. What you are leading is transforming kids’ lives. Great schools are doing a great job with academic rigor, transforming students’ lives with grit, tenacity, resilience, and community service.”

Arne Duncan, U. S. Secretary of Education
ASA, The School Superintendents Association, is committed to annually recognizing the state superintendents of the year and engaging them in a policy forum designed to expand participant knowledge while providing them with the opportunity to influence the ongoing legislative and policy process in Washington, D.C. Scheduled immediately after the midterm election, the forum concentrates on high profile issues such as student data/privacy, student discipline and disproportionality, education finance including sequester and federal funding priorities and flexibility, domestic policy, and national media coverage of education issues.

The forum began with a visit by U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, and a celebration of the accomplishments of the State Superintendents of the Year with a particular emphasis on the 2014 National Superintendent of the Year, Alberto M. Carvalho from Miami-Dade County Public Schools in Miami, Florida.

This publication endeavors to summarize the essential elements of the forum, while emphasizing the imperatives for action by those individuals who are leading our Nation’s school districts.

“Thank you for serving our children and thank you for serving our communities . . . you are significant. Our institution is responsible for making this nation what it is.”

David Pennington, President, AASA
School districts throughout the country are encouraged to aggressively scrutinize the use and security of student data with an emphasis on maintaining privacy levels that protect students and their families. The rapid expansion of digital resources in schools has spawned what is estimated to be a $7.9 billion education software market, one that challenges superintendents to create protections from the misuse of the same student data that has become an essential element in improving student achievement.

A panel, moderated by Noelle Ellerson, AASA associate executive director, policy and advocacy, included Paige Kowalski, director of policy and advocacy for the Data Quality Campaign and Chip Slaven, senior advocacy associate at the Alliance for Excellent Education. They offered superintendents their analysis of the importance of focusing on student data collection and privacy issues. Paige Kowalski cautioned that software companies were framing the discussion when school leaders should be at the forefront. She cited four basic questions superintendents should continually ask:

- Exactly what is the scope of the data that is being collected on students?
- Who is collecting the data and are they third parties?
- How is the data being used and what protections are in place by districts and their vendors?
- How exactly is the cloud involved in data collection and storage and what protections are in place?
While much of the protection policy discussion surrounded the provisions of the 1974 Family Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), it was acknowledged by the panel members and superintendents in attendance that FERPA, as amended, fails to adequately address the contemporary use of rapidly emerging technology in schools. It was suggested that legislation and regulatory revisions at the state level may be a more effective means for ensuring the necessary protections and transparency that, as panelist Chip Slaven pointed out, are so important in responding to the growing chorus of concerns parents have, while retaining access to understanding how their children are achieving in school (see Stephanie Simon article below).

The importance of these protections escalated when the discussion turned to the role of identifiable data in the growing use of predictive analytics. Because these analytics may result in denying services, unfairly labeling students, and facilitating vendors to use the data to build new products, they raise concerns in the minds of the parents whose children are being served by American schools.

Imperatives for protecting the use of student data:

- Teachers need better training on the provisions of the law (allowable under Title II);
- Districts need to monitor interactions between teachers to ensure that inadvertent exchanges of identifiable student data do not take place;
- Some federal state policies support clear and unambiguous management of data collection activities, and even require this as an element of school improvement plans;
- Districts must engage in purposeful efforts to educate parents on the type of data collected and the protections in place;
- Where resources allow, at both the state and district levels, a chief privacy officer should be designated.

Chip Slaven, senior advocacy associate at the Alliance for Excellent Education

“Parents trust teachers, but are concerned about others ... when we use the data for accountability, we lose that trust.”

David Keenan, Ohio Superintendent of the Year
Slaven concluded the session with his response to the inquiries of several superintendents regarding concerns that FERPA does not address what student data can or cannot be collected. Slaven noted that the data collected by school districts requires the continual questioning of why the data is needed. Supported by the comments of Paige Kowalski, superintendents were encouraged to build on current parental trust in their schools to properly educate children and keep them safe, by actively educating parents about the student data collected and the safeguards in place for student protection.

**Resources**

Health and Human Services: Comparison of FERPA and HIIPA  
http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/faq/ferpa_and_hipaa/

Stephanie Simon’s Article in Reuters (3/3/2014) *K-12 Student Database Jazzes Tech Startups, Spook Parents*  
http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/03/03/us-education-database-idUSBRE92204W20130303

Data Quality Campaign – Paige Kowalski  
http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org/

Alliance for Excellent Education – Chip Slaven  
http://all4ed.org/
Citing the Justice Center and Public Policy Research Institute’s seminal report, Breaking School Rules, Sharon Adams-Taylor, AASA associate executive director, children’s initiatives and program development, began the session by proposing that, “Exclusionary discipline isn’t working very well.” Her panel consisted of superintendents who were deeply involved in the reform of student discipline processes in their districts, including José M. Torres, president of the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy (previous superintendent of Elgin District U-46), Lolli Haws, superintendent of the Racine Unified School District (Wis.), and Alan Johnson, superintendent of the Woodland Hills School District (Pa.).

What followed was an account of the challenges faced by each superintendent in reshaping the exclusionary policies and practices in their respective school districts. Their reflections on exclusionary practices were stark and candid.

- “They don’t work.” (Haws)
- “Self-perpetuating cycle – the more you suspend the more you need to suspend. Eventually it becomes a runaway cycle.” (Johnson)
- “(Exclusionary practices) lead to greater risk, long term impact, and dropping out.” (Torres)

“It comes down to what is our mission? Our mission is to provide for the needs of children. The good kids. The troubled kids. The indifferent kids. And suspension or expulsion of kids who, more than anyone else, need to be in school is inappropriate.”

Dan Domenech, Executive Director, AASA
Engaging the superintendents in attendance, the panel explored the consequences of confronting exclusionary discipline reform – including the realities of media backlash, the failure of zero tolerance policies, the impact of poverty, and the stark reality of statistical profiles on exclusionary discipline.

The panel members discussed with their colleagues examples from their own districts and shared revealing data which demonstrated that “red letter offenses” (drugs, violence, weapons) accounted for less than 5% of the suspensions. And when the discipline referrals were closely scrutinized, African-American males were suspended at 6-7 times the rate of white students for essentially the same offenses.

Superintendent Torres, after studying the interactions between adults and students leading to disciplinary actions, concluded, “No student will be more accountable than an adult.” Torres further suggested that without culturally competent adults in charge, “We cannot suspend students for discretionary offenses.” During the discussion, the reading of Glen Singleton’s book, **Courageous Conversations**, was suggested as a necessary first step to addressing this issue. Alan Johnson challenged those in attendance to look critically at their foundational documents and practices; and to question the convenience of blaming student discipline on poverty and special educations. He urged them to replace that blame with an honest discussion of race and its relationship to current discipline practices.

Conversation among the state superintendents of the year also turned to an initiative underway to curb the negative impacts of disproportionality, the use of positive behavioral interventions and supports (see link below), the warehousing of minority students in alternative education programs, and the importance of mental health services for children.
Resources

Courageous Conversations About Race By: Glen Singleton
http://www.corwin.com/productSearch.nav?siteId=corwin-press&subject=C00&qsupId=false&productType=&q=singleton

School Discipline Consensus Report By Justice Center

Additional Resource Materials from AASA Website
http://www.aasa.org/schooldiscipline.aspx

How to Discipline Students Without Turning School Into a Prison Atlantic 1/9/14
http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2014/01/how-to-discipline-students-without-turning-school-into-a-prison/282944/

School Discipline in the Eyes of School Superintendents
AASA survey 7/2014

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)
http://www.aasa.org/uploadedFiles/Childrens_Programs/PBIS%20factsheet.pdf

Leadership for Change

Conversation with White House Domestic Policy Counsel

To complement the earlier presentation by Secretary Duncan, Roberto Rodríguez, special assistant to the President for education policy, invited superintendents to the White House to offer their suggestions for action during the remaining term of this administration. The tone was set by National Superintendent of the Year, Alberto M. Carvalho, who framed several of the major questions facing local school districts regarding the federal role in education:

- Reauthorization of ESEA – what direction will it take?
- Competitive versus formula funding of federal programs – what are the prospects for reducing competitive grants and increasing formulas?
- E-Rate flexibility – what is the administration’s position on additional flexibility for use of E-Rate funds for purposes beyond Wi-Fi zone service?
- ELL student testing – what is the administration’s view on allowing greater flexibility in the waiver requirements for the purposes of accountability after only one year of home language instruction?

In response, Rodríguez indicated that the presidential focus would remain on college and career readiness but that he would take a “fresh look at accountability” including Titles II and III and the use of technology funds (E-Rate). He expressed cautious hope for the reauthorization by Congress of ESEA, but assured attendees that the administration plans to be “strong stewards” of the federal requirements through its regulatory authority. Regarding ELL accountability testing, he indicated that the “concern was a fair one” and committed to taking another look at testing.
requirements, particularly those for newly arrived students. Finally, and in anticipation of the November 16 announcement of Tom Wheeler, chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, Rodriquez indicated a willingness on the part of the administration to rethink how to modify E-Rate coverage with the goal of supporting “digital and blended learning” while retaining an emphasis on the need to connect rural schools.

New York Superintendent of the Year, Clark Godshall expanded on Carvalho’s concern over the waiver requirements, and also inquired about the lack of resources available to meet these challenges, citing as an example the more than 2,000 undocumented students that arrived in his own district this year. Rodriquez indicated that “on waivers, we are open for business,” while it is the administration’s intent to hold fast to the three core areas for the waivers: (1) standards and expectations, (2) accountability, and (3) teacher effectiveness.

In an important commitment on the part of the administration, Mr. Rodriquez said, “We are willing to work with any state that is willing to come forth and work in those three areas. We will entertain other ideas too but do not have a list; where common sense adjustments are needed to preserve the principles, we are open for dialogue. For unaccompanied minors, we have looked at Title III that could be freed up to impacted districts.”

AASA President, David Pennington, reminded those in attendance of the long-standing opposition of the association to the enactment of NCLB, citing that it would “upset the balance of control of schools and represented a federal overreach.” He also brought up the need for greater partnership with the Department of Education and fewer burdens; and he reiterated the need for more formula grants and fewer competitive grants.

In response, Rodriquez repeated his commitment to “recalibrate” the accountability requirements in an effort to “get it right,” but also reminded superintendents that Congress has to provide more money, particularly for Title I and IDEA.

Finally, concern from superintendents in Iowa, Oklahoma, Connecticut, Colorado, Kentucky, Arkansas, Pennsylvania, Utah, and Florida, was expressed over the burden of accountability activities that were diverting attention from promoting achievement and exercising instructional leadership. Repeatedly

“(The administration will) try to do more and recalibrate the federal role and ensure flexibility, while retaining some level of focus on moving the ball for all of our learners and empowering you - who sit at the helm of this great change in public system - to do more to help all our students become more successful.”

Roberto Rodriquez, Special Assistant to President for Education Policy
mentioned was that the required accountability measures were not widely supported in the research literature as materially contributing to increasing achievement. In response, Special Assistant to the President, Rodriguez indicated that, “The next frontier is developing the level of student assessment and assessment of teacher practice beyond the student assessment that in a multiple measurement environment can factor into teacher evaluation in a better way.”
With new political realities emerging a week after the November elections, the superintendents ventured to Capitol Hill to hear from two insiders on what could be reasonably expected from the new Congress. Joel Packer, Executive Director of the Committee for Education Funding, was joined by Stan Collender, Vice President of Qorvis Communications, in a panel moderated by AASA’s Noelle Ellerson.

Collender began by predicting that if the president and Congress do not come to an agreement, there is a possibility of another government shutdown. This represents a “politically irrational” prospect. However, what Collender predicted would be more than likely in one of the following scenarios:

- A short term continuing resolution until the new Congress arrives;
- A continuing resolution for the entire year;
- An omnibus appropriations bill encompassing all 12 appropriations that would last the entire year.

Armed with considerable experience in predicting the actions of Congress, Collender suggested that

If the $1.4 billion hole in our slice of the pie is not addressed, it means a mini-sequester for us this year. While the last sequester was divided equally among defense and non-defense discretionary, there is a move to protect defense which would mean doubling the impact on non-defense discretionary funding, which includes education. What is important is that messaging take place to make cuts across the board and not only to non-defense discretionary spending.

Noelle Ellerson, AASA Associate Executive Director
either a short or long term continuing resolution would be passed in order to get the 2015 appropriations out of the way and allow the Republican majority in both houses to concentrate on 2016. He also believes there may be some additional spending brought on by the reduced deficit – but with the Republicans in control in Congress, he certainly would expect continuing pressure to reduce the debt through reductions in spending. Finally, he boldly predicted that Congress would pass a budget resolution for the first time in six years. Collender believes the pressure on non-defense discretionary programs will last until at least 2019.

Reflecting on the battle over entitlements, Packer noted, “The outlook for breaking the stalemate is ‘slim to none.’ Two-thirds of the budget goes out the door forever.” The remaining one-third is defense and non-defense discretionary where “members of Congress want their cuts and to eat their cake too.” Reflecting on the FY2013 appropriation, he reported that it was lower than nine years before (2004). While there are some modest increases for early learning, most of the increase went to Pell grants. The President’s budget finds that most of the proposed increases in the past were for new programs, not foundational programs. The real impact is felt at the local level where, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, there were 300,000 fewer jobs in education.

Both agreed that the messaging must concentrate on Title I and IDEA with clear examples of reductions in services to children and the long-term implications of those reductions on our economy.

When asked by Carvalho of the potential for additional support for unaccompanied and undocumented students, Packer provided a sobering response, “Not likely.”

Ohio Superintendent of the Year, Daniel Keenan ventured into a sensitive area of the perceived backlash against unions and the unfair labeling of superintendents as aligned with unions; to which both panelists opined on the need to focus messaging on the direct impacts of cuts on children, the influence of cuts on local economies, and the need to engage and seek the support of business, including chamber of commerce members.

In closing, Collender quipped, “I hope this makes you angry.”
Resources


Committee for Education: www.cef.org; Twitter: @edfunding

Stand Collender’s Twitter Account: @thebudgetguy

www.capitalgainsandgames.com

AASA Advocacy Team:
@Noellerson
@SPudelski
@LeslieFinnan
@fm_duffy

http://www.aasa.org/uploadedFiles/FederalEducationFunding.pdf
Alberto M. Carvalho began by expressing that he was humbled by this recognition and recognized the accomplishments of every superintendent in the room. His account of his humble upbringing linked with his experience in Miami-Dade County Public Schools was the focus of his remarks. Carvalho acknowledged that upon his arrival in Miami, he realized that the district was bankrupt financially, academically and ethically. This was magnified by the severe economic downturn the community was facing. He began by delivering necessary services to the community, such as health care. This was followed by increasing the choices that parents could exercise, which in turn created some high-quality high-demand programs. At the same time, he aggressively pursued competitive funding opportunities to activate what he identified as his “four things that make a difference.”

- Leadership that understands instruction
- Teacher effectiveness
- Social safety net around schools, particularly for those at-risk
- Digital connection

To facilitate these themes, he created and empowered an Office of Innovation, funded by the Race to the Top. In addition, he instituted a “respectful” rewards program and began comparing “apples to apples” with the disaggregation of essential data. His moniker for this purposeful use of data became, “Do not let the blanket of the majority hide the needs of the minority.”
Encouraged by the passage of a large general obligation bond, 450 schools received Wi-Fi access with bandwidth expanded by ten times, which permitted an emphasis on instructional content rather than the technology. Digital equity and access were followed by the alignment of digital content. All textbooks were required to have a digital link, not just a hyperlink. The content requirements indicated that the content must run on any platform. Because of the E-Rate match requirement, the district raised $7 million to get $70 million – creating a digital umbrella for every school. A parent academy was developed and included a digital content component, and finally, the poorest schools received devices and air cards.

Carvalho said his District is looking forward to achieving cutting edge priorities, including:

- Abandoning seat time requirements
- Class schedule revision: eliminating class blocks and empowering teachers to digitally control learning

Carvalho closed by challenging his fellow superintendents to “Exercise the will to defy the status quo.”

**Resources**

- Reinventing Opportunities-Alberto Carvalho, 2014 AASA National Superintendent of the Year, video by Lifetouch Media Productions
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KOKEV8ingPs&feature=em-share_video_user

- Miami-Dade County Public Schools video “Brilliance Rising-Singular Goal: Student Achievement”
A distinguished panel of journalists responded to a series of questions posed by Daniel A. Domenech, AASA executive director. Participants were Lauren Camera from Education Week, Valerie Strauss from the Washington Post, Claudio Sanchez from National Public Radio, and Nirvi Shah from Politico.

When asked about the implications of the recent election, Valerie Strauss predicted that Congress will attempt to change back to block grants and that the administration would oppose that move. Additionally, she reminded the superintendents that Senator Lamar Alexander has been openly critical of the Obama administration, and Arne Duncan in particular, claiming that the department was micro-managing education and referring to the actions of the department as being like those of a “national school board.”

NPR education correspondent Claudio Sanchez quoted directly from soon-to-be Chairman Alexander, “We Republicans will propose a bill which would transfer back to states the decision of whether schools are succeeding or failing.” In addition, Sanchez reported that it is Alexander’s plan to take the $22 billion spent on childcare and voucherize it, which would undoubtedly result in a presidential veto. Finally, he suggested that Congress would show greater interest in more accountability and transparency for higher education.

In contrast, Lauren Camera was more optimistic about NCLB. She noted that both Senator Murray and Senator Alexander are “deal makers” and would likely attempt to roll back federal involvement, and create an initiative for charters rather than vouchers, competency-based programs for higher education, and a “one loan policy” for higher education.
Domenech reminded the panelists that “the House passed the reauthoriza-
tion of ESEA and the Senate almost passed it. Are the differences great? Would the President veto it?”

Camera reminded the superintendents that the House bill was one large block grant without Democratic support, and speculated that if faced with a similar bill, the President would veto it. Claudio Sanchez responded, again directly quoting from Senator Alexander, by saying, “It is a matter of rolling back. We are not going anywhere. I repeat that it is up to the states to find some common ground, where the Common Core is a huge issue.” In a dose of reality, Politico’s Niri Shah indicated that Republicans are going to be forced to listen to the voices of more conservative members.

Asked if the media panel could react to the recent AASA survey of superintendents on the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) where respondents overwhelmingly indicated that they were not reversing their present path. Mr. Sanchez reflected that CCSS was producing strange bedfellows from the left and right, but that there was little discussion on the actual content of the standards. Valerie Strauss suggested, “A lot of the discussion isn’t about the standards but the tests.” She further reflected on teacher assessment by saying, “Using test scores to evaluate teachers is a really horrible idea.” Finally, referring to the spring 2014 statement of the American Statistical Association (see link below), she concluded, “The test regime for CCSS is falling apart. State to state equivalent tests are dead.”

Sanchez commented on the intensity of the discussion around education, also suggesting that extremes were filling the void that the media had not reported on earlier. He concluded by saying, “I think education reporters might do a better job of educating the public.”

As a follow-up to Sanchez’s reflection, Domenech posed a final question to the panel – What can we do to combat the bashing of education in public opinion?

- Sanchez: “Have a conversation with your community – the public is hungry to know what is at stake. Demand that local media gets it right. Translate data and numbers. Think about how data is used. Translate the data to media.”

- Strauss: “First of all you must talk. You have to get out and tell your story. You must find examples. Tell a story about what happened to a kid. Reporters like having stories handed to them. Tell the truth publically even

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“If anything is going to happen it is going to be in the states, Washington is pretty dysfunctional.”

Claudio Sanchez, National Public Radio
if it is scary to do. Say what is true; what's real. I don't think the public knows what is at stake. You know this administration hasn't placed enough money in the budget? I don't think the public knows. NCLB was passed without one teacher voice.”

Shah: “Don't make the press go through a lot of hoops to get the story.”

Resources

AASA Common Core and Other State Standards:
Superintendents feel Optimism, Concern, and Lack of Support

American Statistical Association’s Statement on Value-Added Model for Educational Assessment
The 2014 State Superintendents of the Year attending AASA’s forum underscored their commitment to advocating for effective teachers, strong school leadership and the resources required to ensure success for every student. Their voices help ensure parents, community members and other stakeholders across the country are well-informed about school improvement efforts and the difference they will make for students.
2014 STATE SUPERINTENDENTS OF THE YEAR

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<td>Nebraska</td>
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<td>Nevada</td>
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<td>Carson City School District</td>
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<td>New Hampshire</td>
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<td>Al Leber</td>
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<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>Dale Lynch</td>
<td>Hamblen County School System</td>
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<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>Terry Grier</td>
<td>Houston Independent School District</td>
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<td>Utah</td>
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<td>Vermont</td>
<td>Elaine Pinckney</td>
<td>Chittenden South Supervisory Union</td>
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<td>Virginia</td>
<td>Rita Bishop</td>
<td>Roanoke City Public Schools</td>
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<td>Washington</td>
<td>Edward Lee Vargas</td>
<td>Kent School District 415</td>
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<td>West Virginia</td>
<td>Susan Collins</td>
<td>Harrison County Schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>Ronald Walsh</td>
<td>Elk Mound Area School District</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>Brad LaCroix</td>
<td>Weston County School District # 1</td>
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2014 AASA State Superintendents of the Year video presentation
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JHgAzBSreNk

For more information about the AASA National Superintendent of the Year program, please contact Paula Dearden, director of awards and scholarships at pdearden@aasa.org or 703.875.0717.
Notes
National Superintendent of the Year Program

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