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2009
SUMMIT

Innovating Toward Excellence:
Education Entrepreneurs and the Transformation of Public Education

A Report on the Tenth Annual NewSchools Summit

May 19, 2009

Empowering Entrepreneurs to Transform Public Education

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The NewSchools Summit is an annual event bringing together a select group of leaders from the public, private and nonprofit sectors to share ideas, resources and connections. This report summarizes each session at the NewSchools Summit 2009, which focused on innovation in education. The report follows the chronology of the day.

INTRODUCTION

Speakers:

Antonio Villaraigosa
Mayor,
Los Angeles

Ted Mitchell
CEO,
NewSchools Venture Fund

The NewSchools Summit 2009 was the tenth annual gathering of its kind, bringing together education entrepreneurs, philanthropists, policymakers and thought leaders to assess, debate, and advance the ideas that entrepreneurs are spearheading and the successes they have achieved to improve public education. NewSchools Venture Fund's mission is to transform public education through powerful ideas and passionate entrepreneurs so that all children—especially those in underserved communities—have the opportunity to succeed. Convening leaders in education reform is critical to pursuing this goal, both to facilitate their ability to learn from one another and to ensure that the whole of our collective work is greater than the sum of its parts.

In organizing the largest Summit yet, with close to 500 participants, NewSchools focused on increasing the diversity—in terms of both race and age—of the growing network of entrepreneurial leaders, in order to better reflect the growing ranks of the education reform movement and the demographics of the students we serve, and also to help develop the next generation of education entrepreneurs. "This is a movement that is at once very solid and stable, and a community that continues to refresh itself, to bring in new people, new participants, new ideas," said NewSchools CEO Ted Mitchell in his opening remarks. "That interchange is critically important to us. It is critically important to the institutions we're trying to build, and ultimately it is critically important to the children whose lives we're trying to change every day." As a result of these efforts, more than 25% of participants were non-white and more than 30% were first-time Summit attendees. NewSchools intends to continue to expand and diversify the Summit audience in the coming years.

Summit 2009 took place on May 19th in Pasadena, where Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, the 41st mayor of Los Angeles, welcomed participants. The Mayor reminded the audience of the sharp failures in public education that drive our work: "In urban schools across the country the [high school] dropout rate is about 50%. We're in a crisis." However, he pointed to reforms that are reverse these patterns of failure in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), one of the most challenging districts in the country. He highlighted the work of the Partnership for Los Angeles Schools, a nonprofit organization his office founded in 2007 in order to turn around some of the worst-performing schools in the district by taking over their management. He also noted other entrepreneurial initiatives that serve Los Angeles' students, including the important efforts of charter management organizations (CMOs) like Green Dot Public Schools, Alliance for College-Ready Public Schools, Partnerships to Uplift Communities, and ICEF Public Schools. Mayor Villaraigosa emphasized the powerful changes made possible through the entrepreneurial efforts like these: "I tell people that the role of the first is to open up the door for the rest …You all are part of a movement of folks who are challenging the status quo and breaking down the folks who make excuses for the lack of success."

This year in particular, education entrepreneurs' role in transforming the status quo has become substantially more visible in the public arena. For the first time ever, entrepreneurial thinkers are directly shaping federal education policy from the inside.

Arne Duncan—whose seven-year tenure as the chief executive of Chicago Public Schools was marked by deep collaboration with the entrepreneurial community—was appointed as Secretary of Education. The basic principles that drive education entrepreneurs' work—a "no excuses" approach, a conviction that all children can learn, and a demand for high standards and strong accountability—have now begun to take root in the halls where national education policy takes shape. Moreover, unprecedented federal dollars are becoming available to actualize this vision. For over a decade, entrepreneurs have been proving the possible by using new models and practices to produce better results among typically underserved students. As he framed the day for participants, Mitchell reminded the audience of the momentous shift that has occurred in entrepreneurship in education: "The living proof that you provide to this country has in the last 10 months done something extraordinary… it has served as the basic architecture of the nation's education policy."

Recognizing the advent of a new era in education reform, NewSchools chose "innovation" as the theme for this year's Summit. The power of innovation—doing something new to achieve a better result—has driven NewSchools' work since its founding in 1998. Recently, innovation has become part of the education reform vocabulary, particularly in the policymaking and philanthropic communities. NewSchools recognizes that innovation is a concept that many people define differently, and often very broadly, causing the word to mean everything or nothing at all. Summit 2009 provided an opportunity to explore what innovation really means and how it occurs, and to define its potential to transform student outcomes. Over the course of the day, participants engaged in deep conversations about innovation, including the structures and capital needed to support innovation in education, the federal government's role in promoting innovation, and the cutting-edge innovations already taking root in entrepreneurial organizations across the country.

On the morning of the Summit, Mitchell urged participants to think of innovation in three broad categories—**ideas**, **processes** and **products**. To begin, he described how new ideas themselves can lead to better results—indeed, even a new goal can be an innovation in itself. Innovative ideas can permanently alter the way people view an issue or question, setting a new framework or expectation and redefining people's sense of what is possible. Mitchell characterized the Declaration of Independence as one such innovation in ideas, which set forth a new way of thinking about how to organize civil society. He reflected on the similar role of powerful ideas in our own sector: "It may be that the innovation in ideas is the most powerful unifying force in this room," Mitchell told the audience. "One of the things we don't give ourselves enough credit for is the innovative idea that all kids can learn… that's a substantial innovation that drives our work. And KIPP has taken this to the next level with its innovative declaration that 'All kids *will* learn.'"

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Mitchell illustrated the impact of innovative new processes using an example from the healthcare industry. A striking new process can be seen in many hospitals' hand-washing policies—an innovation studied closely by doctor and *New Yorker* writer Atul Gawande. Although most hospital employees are well aware of the importance of hand-washing, only half of hospital employees comply with hand-washing regulations according to the Centers for Disease Control and Protection (CDC), which attributes this behavior to time and space constraints. Hospital employees' failure to conduct this simple act can have severe consequences—over 90,000 Americans are killed each year by intra-hospital infections. To address this problem, one innovative doctor piloted a new approach in a hospital in Pittsburgh: the engaged his entire staff in placing alcohol-based hand sanitizer dispensers in strategic locations in hallways and near patients' beds. By simply making hand-washing quicker and easier, and by engaging the entire staff in solving this problem, the hospital saw dramatic results. Within a year, this practice was adopted across every ward of the hospital and the rate of the most dangerous type of infection dropped to zero.

Product innovations, too, can solve far-reaching problems. Mitchell drew on an example from his home state of California. In response to the postwar economic boom, the rapid increase in the number of cars on the road caused an alarming increase in car accidents in the 1940s. Since the painted lines between lanes tended to become invisible in the rain, California transit engineers developed an innovation that both improved night visibility and alerted drivers who drifted across lanes: Botts Dots, the raised reflectors that separate highway lanes. The glass dots initially developed would pop under stress, and nails punctured tires, but over time the dots were refined, tested and adopted. Eventually, Botts' Dots were required by law on all California highways. Today, there are more than 25 million Botts' Dots in use in California, which awaken sleepy drivers and prevent numerous accidents.

Examples like these illustrate that while new ideas, processes and products often go down in history as a single stroke of genius, these game-changing solutions can in fact be attributed to the full cycles of innovation from which they emerge. To understand these innovations, Mitchell pointed out that it is important to reflect on how they come about. Often, these major breakthroughs seem like a cool stroke of genius that solves a particular problem. The notion that solutions simply "appear" reflects our tendency to think of innovations as occurring in a vacuum. Rather, Mitchell explained, innovation happens in a context, and there is a path to it. He summarized this path in four key stages:

- **Clarity of the problem** to be solved or goal to be reached

- **Ideas** to tackle that problem

- **Small space to test** followed by sorting process and refinement

- **Dissemination and feedback** loops for continuous improvement

In other words, innovation should not be thought of merely in terms of the final result; innovations rely on particular conditions in place, allowing innovators to see a problem in a new light, brainstorm solutions, refine these ideas to test their efficacy, and disseminate effective ideas, products or processes to tackle problems at scale.

While sectors like medicine, transportation, and technology provide compelling models of these cycles of innovation, the education sector lacks robust systems to cultivate innovation. "We're bad at innovation," argued Mitchell. "We don't have an innovation or research infrastructure… There's no credible equivalent to the National Institute of Health (NIH) or the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), and so the engines of research are so highly localized that it's difficult for them to be supported through this whole life cycle."

NewSchools Venture Fund is dedicated to providing the space and capital for building, testing and refining early-stage innovations. However, as innovation becomes part of the mainstream education system, we desperately need to agree on the problems we are trying to solve, create a research and data infrastructure and dedicate resources to support real cycles of innovation. Given the track record of failure in achieving system-wide breakthroughs, education as a whole must look for ways to support innovation in education in faster, bigger and better ways. "It's important for us to use examples from other sectors of society to help us think in new ways," Mitchell explained. "A part of innovation is the ability to think in new ways about old problems."

Successful innovation is borne out of coherent research agendas, sustained public funding, relatively nimble markets, and an enthusiasm about learning from productive mistakes. NewSchools' Summit 2009 served as an opportunity to collectively rally around, brainstorm about, and debate on the task of creating and sustaining those conditions that will transform the new energy behind education innovation into real actions that serve our students better.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS
Lessons in Innovation: A Conversation with David Kelley

Speaker:

David Kelley
Founder and Chairman,
IDEO and the Stanford Hasso
Plattner Institute of Design

Education entrepreneurs are constantly searching for new ways to improve outcomes for all students. Increasingly, this ethos of innovation is becoming part of the vocabulary of both policymakers and philanthropists in education. As this enthusiasm grows, it is vital to look to other sectors—like technology, business, and healthcare—that have excelled in building structures to support system-wide innovation. NewSchools Summit 2009 provided opportunities to learn from the best practices and wisdom from leaders across sectors where innovation has led to real improvements.

This year's keynote speaker, David Kelley, is one such leader. As the founder and Chairman of IDEO and the Stanford University Hasso Plattner Institute of Design (also known as the "d.school"), Kelley's name is synonymous with innovation in the Silicon Valley, California's hotbed of technology startups. His work has included design projects for corporate clients like Bank of America, Kaiser, and Xerox. He has also contributed to the design of familiar products and processes: the Swiffer, the computer mouse, and blood donation at the Red Cross, to name just a few. In recent years, IDEO has evolved beyond just providing product design services to private sector clients. Now IDEO uses a human-centered approach that is gaining national attention for solving big problems in both the public and private sectors, lending its perspective not only to enhance products, but also to bring innovation to bear on transforming giant organizations structures, entrenched social systems, and other far-reaching human experiences that have long resisted change.

NewSchools invited Kelley to kick off the 2009 Summit by helping participants expand their vision of how to innovate in the service of human needs. He described the basic principles of design thinking, and highlighted a range of examples that illustrate the power that this human-centered orientation can have on business, technology, and social sector initiatives.

Paramount in design thinking is what Kelley called "creative confidence." "Most people walk around not confident in their ability to innovate," Kelley explained. "Creative confidence allows them to innovate routinely. That makes it exciting to take on new problems as opposed to thinking that everything is so difficult." Armed with this confidence, design thinkers methodically approach design with empathy for users' needs and desires. This human-centered approach has transformed the way people build products and processes, Kelley suggested, arguing that an attention to the human user experience should guide business and technology design. "If you actually understand what humans value and what they really want," he said, "then you're on firm grounding to work on the business and the technical."

Routine, ongoing innovation has driven IDEO's own evolution and increased its impact as a design firm over the past decade. As Kelley explained, the organization has moved from calling themselves "designers" to "design thinkers." In other words, rather than merely fixating on a single product from the perspective of a user, IDEO views design as an approach to identifying the complex, varying, and often latent needs that arise in a user's whole experience. This in turn allows design thinkers to understand, piece apart, and work on much more difficult and systemic problems, like health care, energy conservation, and increasingly, K-12 education.

How do design thinkers approach a problem? First, a human-centered approach relies on close observation of users, applying many of the principles of anthropology: design thinkers emphasize physically being among users, to see what's going on at a minute or typically unremarkable level. Through immersion and careful observation, design thinkers uncover surprising opportunities. For example, Kelley described how IDEO worked with Bank of America to focus exclusively on their clients who were baby-boomer generation women. Upon observing the banking practices and needs of these particular customers, IDEO teams realized that to simplify their lives, these women were rounding up in their accounting records. This spawned the idea of offering customers "Keep the change"—a service by which Bank of America automatically rounds up the numbers on clients' checking accounts and then puts the difference into a savings account, matching the saved amount up to $250 a year. The offering resulted in a dramatic spike of new business in the following year, with over 2.5 million new customers, translating into more than 700,000 new checking accounts and one million new savings accounts for Bank of America, and helping new customers save money over the long run.

The insights that design thinkers gain through close observation are intentionally inexpert, Kelley explained. He noted that IDEO brings fresh eyes to products and processes, which in turn allows them to brainstorm and test out new ideas that may not have occurred to a leading company or expert in a particular space. For example, when asked to help the Shimano bicycle manufacturer increase sales, IDEO design thinkers went into bike shops and quickly noted that the salespeople were experts themselves—they were athletic, wore riding gear, and spoke in technical language. Upon studying potential customers, IDEO realized that many people in the market for bicycles are not looking for a technically sophisticated bicycle but instead are hoping to recreate childhood experiences and relish the sheer enjoyment of riding a bike. Noting this difference between the clientele and the company's traditional offerings, IDEO helped Shimano design a bike called Coasting. With automatic gears and a comfortable seat with storage space, Coasting was better suited to the users that IDEO had come to know. In other words, rather than better understanding bicycles, it was in better understanding the users that Shimano could dramatically increase sales. As Kelley told the audience it, "human centeredness is expecting that the big ideas are going to come from empathy with the user, not the technology or business."

Kelley also described how innovative thinking requires making advances by an iterative process of prototyping—doing small experiments and making minor changes—that can in turn have a more widespread impact on an organization or product. "We've seen the most progress from just jumping in and just doing an experiment," he explained. For example, when they contracted with Kaiser's hospitals, IDEO teams noted that chaos in the hospitals ensued when the nurses changed shifts. This had multiple negative effects—nurses scrambled to find quiet areas to transfer information to those on the next shift,

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David Kelley,
Founder and Chairman of
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and patients expressed distress that they could not keep track of their caregivers. Observing these moments of chaos, the IDEO team brainstormed where knowledge transfer would be most effective and least disruptive. They suggested that nurses change shifts in front of the patients, providing a quiet and consistent space for the transfer to take place and simultaneously introducing new nurses to their patients. The experiment worked—generating small shifts in each nurse and patient's experiences and bringing unprecedented calm to the ward. This successful pilot spurred the new practice to be adopted every ward in all 40 Kaiser Hospitals.

How can education entrepreneurs apply these methodologies to their own work? "Just try something," Kelley urged the audience. "If you can make some real inroads in a certain area, it kind of bleeds into everything else. This is the entrepreneur's point of view." He described the cumulative effects of such an approach, moving beyond single wards or departments to change larger systems: "People are empowered because they believe they can do it once they've seen it done. You've changed this big organization that you didn't think you could change. The nurses at Kaiser are now the innovation arm of Kaiser. An experiment can result in a wholesale change, rather than trying to change the whole thing by being clever."

The Kaiser nurses' role also illustrates the power of building a culture of innovation in an organization. A culture of innovation, Kelley insisted, must be built from the bottom up. However, leaders can contribute to this change by cultivating a safe environment for innovation to take place. "[Tell your employees] 'Trust me, we will try this, if it doesn't work for you, we won't keep doing it.'" In doing so, Kelley explained, the idea of failure disappears, and employees feel free to innovate more frequently and in more out-of-the-box ways. Furthermore, in cultivating trust, organizations mitigate resistance to change. "Once you involve everybody in the process," he explained, "nobody is blocking change from happening."

Finally, Kelley described how design thinking can inform our vision for the future. He encouraged the audience to foster innovation in education through storytelling. "Paint a picture of the future with your thing in it," he urged the entrepreneurs in the room. By giving a picture of how the world might be different, storytelling not only sets a goal, but it can be adapted as organizations grow, and accomplish new things. "Changing that story as you go along continues to be motivating," Kelley described. "You can tell the story again and put in the story of what you've accomplished."

PLENARY SESSION I
ENTREPRENEURS, INNOVATION AND THE NEW ADMINISTRATION

On December 16, 2008, President Barack Obama appointed Arne Duncan, Chief Executive Officer of Chicago Public Schools, to the post of Secretary of Education. The choice catalyzed a new wave in federal education policy: Duncan's track record in Chicago reflected the spirit of urgency he brought to the educational challenge, as well as his ability to both collaborate with a diverse array of partners and bridge multiple reform agendas, all while pushing for unprecedented reform in one of the nation's most challenging urban districts. Since his appointment, Duncan has brought this same urgency to the task of national reform, and has laid out a results-oriented vision for changing public education in America.

This shift represents a unique moment for education entrepreneurs, and presents new opportunities in the policy environment within which they operate. As such, NewSchools Summit 2009 was an opportune time to both celebrate Secretary Duncan's new role, and to explore how education entrepreneurship will serve as a driving principle in his administration. To describe this vision, Secretary Duncan joined the Summit via video conference from Washington, D.C. The Secretary shared his vision for the future of the federal role in education reform, and the fundamental roles that entrepreneurs will play in making this vision a reality. "We couldn't be more hopeful about the direction we're going and the chance for the entrepreneurial community to really step up and make a difference," the Secretary told the audience. "Your collective energy, your collective wisdom, the chance to leverage your resources and your ideas with our dollars, gives us a chance to fundamentally break through and try to give every child a chance to have a great education. We have an opportunity ahead of us that has never ever existed, with this combination of great ideas, great passion and real resources to put behind what's working."

The Secretary is also working to bring an entrepreneurial culture into the Department through the team he has built and the ideas he is championing. "The entrepreneurial community is going to be a huge part of my administration," he told participants. "And I want to continue to learn from you, to listen to you, and work together to fundamentally challenge the status quo." In this same spirit, he took the opportunity at Summit to announce the selection of NewSchools Partner and COO Joanne Weiss—an experienced education entrepreneur who has spent much of her career pioneering innovative ways of using technology to increase the effectiveness of teaching and learning—to oversee the federal Race to the Top Fund. This $4.35 billion competitive fund, which is part of the stimulus package, marks a historic level of investment by the federal government in results-oriented school reform efforts.

Following his remarks, Secretary Duncan fielded questions from the audience, moderated by NewSchools CEO Ted Mitchell. In his answers, the Secretary elaborated on the particular ways that entrepreneurs will figure into his work, how the Race to The Top and Innovation funds will be used to create lasting change, and how the federal government will seek to foster conditions that will encourage innovation and improve student outcomes.

Speaker:

Arne Duncan
Secretary of Education,
US Department of Education
[via video conference]

Secretary Duncan described the Race to the Top Fund as a one-time investment that will serve to build systems that outlast the current administration. Emphasizing that part of the stimulus money will only be distributed once states show that they have met a series of "assurances" or specific policy criteria, he explained that "with carrots and sticks, we want to create an environment that fundamentally changes the way we do business." He also identified the particular reforms that he is promoting in hopes of generating a lasting impact. For example, turning around the lowest performing schools in the nation is a strategy he plans to pursue in order to break—and hopefully reverse entirely—the cycles of failure that have plagued the toughest urban schools for decades. Similarly, creating robust data systems and common standards are the types of long-lasting, capacity-building reforms that the Secretary hopes will outlive his time in Washington.

The Secretary also emphasized that these latter reforms—high standards and clear data—should prove instrumental in changing how public education works. By establishing a clear, high bar for student achievement and by creating the infrastructure to measure their progress toward these standards, states, districts and nonprofits will be able to innovate with the means for reaching those goals. Secretary Duncan also pointed to this emphasis on innovation in the stimulus package's $650 million Invest in What Works and Innovation fund. While entrepreneurs in the audience questioned whether these funds would be spread thin and its effects diluted, the Secretary explained that the fund is intended to go deep, not broad. The money will be put towards increasing the scale and impact of organizations that have made a demonstrable difference; as he described, the fund will "make significant big bets in districts and nonprofits with capacity, ability and a demonstrated track record of improving student achievement."

In light of the goals of this fund, Secretary Duncan also called on the philanthropic leaders in the room, encouraging them to continue to embrace and fund innovation, by providing private capital to newer, more cutting-edge ideas. "The best, most thoughtful creative innovation has always come from the private sector," the Secretary told the audience. While the significant influx of federal dollars may tempt private funders to scale back, he urged foundations to remain engaged in helping to start effective solutions in public education and taking them to scale. These philanthropic funds, he pointed out, can complement the federal government's efforts, ultimately allowing public and private dollars to benefit more students in significant ways.

What you have created is a real movement," Duncan noted in his closing call to action. "It's so important that we collaborate much more closely than we ever have: we leverage our resources, we leverage our ideas, we challenge the status quo. I hope that everyone there understands what a historic moment of opportunity this is. We will never have this alignment of leadership from the president, great help from the nonprofit community, from the philanthropic community. … If we don't fundamentally break through now, I don't know if it's ever going happen, So this is a time for us to roll up our sleeves, to challenge each other, to push to get where we need to go. If we work as hard and as smart as I think and hope we can, I honestly believe that we can change public education in this country forever. Not for the next couple years, but forever."

"We have an opportunity ahead of us that has never ever existed, with this combination of great ideas, great passion and real resources to put behind what's working."

Arne Duncan,
Secretary of Education,
US Department of Education

PLENARY SESSION II
INNOVATION AS A DRIVER FOR REFORM

Innovation in education means finding new approaches that better serve students, and bringing to scale those solutions that are already generating impressive results in the classroom. While these aims have long guided the work of education entrepreneurs outside of the traditional system, shifts in the federal policy environment have brought these efforts into sharp focus inside the system. This plenary session took a closer look at the individual and collective roles of entrepreneurs and the real-life examples that will transform this focus on innovation into real changes on the ground.

Panelists gathered to explore and debate the conditions that need to be in place for innovation to flourish in the education sector. Fittingly, this discussion was moderated by Jim Shelton, a former entrepreneur, partner at NewSchools Venture Fund, and foundation program officer who was appointed by Secretary of Education Arne Duncan to run the Office of Innovation and Improvement, and to direct the $650 million Innovation Fund portion of the stimulus package. Shelton was joined by four panelists: education economist Roland Fryer, who is head of the Harvard Education Innovation Laboratory; Caprice Young, a thought leader in the charter school movement who now leads KC Distance Learning; Nelson Gonzalez of the Stupski Foundation, who leads the foundation's work on building the infrastructure to support innovation; and Tim Daly, President of The New Teacher Project, an organization in the NewSchools portfolio, which recruits and trains teachers and leads key research initiatives to define and catalyze policy changes in teacher selection, preparation, and tenure systems.

Shelton kicked off the plenary by establishing working definitions for the group (see graphic below).

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What is Innovation?
- **Invention** – an idea meade manifest
  vs.
  Innovation – an idea applied successfully
- **Innovation may be:**
  – products, processes, or organizations
  – incremental, radical, or revolutionary (disruptive)
- **Education Innovation – Development/ identification and broad use of products, processes, and organizations that significantly improve:**
  – student attainment and achievement,
  – educator effectiveness and satisfaction, and
  – system productivity

Source: Jim Shelton

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Given the short time frame in which federal stimulus dollars will be distributed, Shelton emphasized the great urgency to approach innovation in education in an efficient and rigorous way. To this end, he listed a number ways that innovation is being accelerated in the education sector. These included "forces of nature"—trends in favor of innovation such as increasing expectations and shrinking resources—as well as how public policy "game changers" such as the push for common standards are driving the innovation agenda forward. Shelton also highlighted the power of the new presidential administration's emphasis on social innovation, which represents an increased focus on the entrepreneurial energy through initiatives like the new White House Office of Social Innovation and Civic Participation.

Moderator:

Jim Shelton
Assistant Deputy Secretary for Innovation and Improvement, US Department of Education

Speakers:

Tim Daly
President,
The New Teacher Project

Roland Fryer
Assistant Professor of Economics, Harvard University;
Faculty Research Fellow, National Bureau of Economic Research;
Junior Fellow,
Harvard Society of Fellows

Caprice Young
CEO,
KC Distance Learning;
Vice President,
Business Development;
Alliances,
Knowledge Universe

Nelson Gonzalez
Chief Strategy Officer, Stupski Foundation

All of these reflect the convergence of energy and resources around the concept of innovation, and the demand for more efficient and effective solutions in a time of financial constraints. Shelton urged the audience to celebrate these shifts in favor of innovation in education: "Innovation has been a core of this group," he told participants. "It is now something that is the common parlance of the president. Attention is one of the things that this sector needs because it's through the telling of these stories that we're actually going to have impact."

However, he also challenged panelists and participants to think of this as an opportunity to push the system in new ways. "How do you get [states] to get empowered to think creatively about taking that money and really getting innovative?" he asked. "It's about taking what's working in one place and pushing it across the state; about taking the bold steps on policy that are going to enable the kinds of long-term innovation that we've all been seeking. The innovation that we lack most is how to take the power and the energy of what happens in this room to the 30 states where most of us don't even operate. The next phase of work for us is to figure out how we get this stuff to scale."

Shelton asked each of the panelists to articulate how they felt resources could best be put towards innovation in education. A number of the factors that panelists described are summarized here:

Setting clear goals at the outset. All of the panelists agreed on the need to set clear goals towards which districts and entrepreneurs alike can innovate. Panelist Tim Daly stressed the importance of focusing on very specific goals and stressed the different roles that government and entrepreneurs should take in setting these goals. "It's important for the government to set the goals," said Daly. "We [entrepreneurs] have to push that focus even more… and once we set the goals, it's our job to figure out really creative ways to get there."

Studying what's working. Panelists also argued that taking innovation to a critical scale requires knowing precisely what is working in the first place. Roland Fryer endorsed studying the techniques and practices that are truly making a difference in students' outcomes: "Even the things we think work, we don't have a real good idea of why they're working and how they're working," he explained. "We get very excited about results that seem to have positive gains in terms of student achievement, and the next step is to really dig down and to try figure out how you're actually producing those gains."

Fryer used his studies of Harlem Children's Zone to illustrate the importance of setting rules or frameworks within which new approaches can at once grow and be evaluated. Although Harlem Children's Zone appears to be improving student outcomes, Fryer pointed out that this work involves over 500 discrete practices. Since these practices are not being studied in isolation, he is unsure which of those many practices are truly driving change, which in turn makes replicating their efforts in other cities and states nearly impossible. "We have to invest in things that we think are working, but we have to put them in a framework where we actually learn if they're working or not," said Fryer. Without such a framework, he pointed out that we run the risk of wasting vital and limited resources. "What would be really horrible would be if we spend $100 million dollars and at the end of it we have really no clue." He also acknowledged that this will require more meaningful partnerships with the research community: "We've got to call out our institutions of higher education and our social scientists, to help us try to innovate and solve these problems."

Removing barriers to innovation. Panelists also considered the factors that impede innovation in education. Daly pointed out that in public education, innovation may also take the form of undoing parts of the system that are broken. "Think about how we've innovated in the social sector before," Daly urged the audience. "Many of the biggest things that have happened have been laws being struck down by our Supreme Courts. We didn't say 'we want to innovate around integration and try some pilots.' We said, 'we have to undo some really stupid stuff that we've allowed to be part of our code.'" Daly argued that the same is true in education today. "We live in an environment where we have caps on charter schools, and bans on using data that we know is very important. We have tenure being awarded where the standard is 'not getting fired' rather than being good." Undoing these barriers could generate game-changing shifts in how the system operates, Daly suggested, which would in turn free up resources and information to allow innovators to focus on models and practices that increase student outcomes.

Creating ways to share and collaborate. Panelists agreed that innovators must exchange knowledge with one another and with the rest of the system. Gonzalez said that foundations are uniquely poised to broker these connections, to bring together different strands of innovation. "The most high leverage place for us is to be network masters … that serve as the connective tissues between the sectors, " he explained. "We can become the neutral brokers and begin to see how collective agendas can be brought together." Young added that this approach can also have

positive cumulative effects, by generating support for reform across sectors. "We are creating powerful constituencies funded on an ongoing basis to be able to be a countervailing lever against the forces of status quo," she explained. "Philanthropies can serve as networks and those constituencies can have a large voice."

Maximizing resources available to innovators. Shelton emphasized that scaling innovation is costly; even in the context of the stimulus money, funds may still feel scarce. But Young challenged the audience to resist this notion, noting two key levers that could increase the resources available in education without requiring more philanthropic and public dollars. First, she advocated for fully integrating technology with instruction. "That makes the pie bigger," Young explained, "because it allows us to focus our resources on actual instruction and actual student learning as opposed to all of the other stuff. It allows us to be much more efficient and effective in terms of student academic achievement and value-add." Second, she emphasized that the entrepreneurial community in particular needs to find new business models that get more money into the system. "How do we evolve our work as an industry to be able to attract more private sector capital?" she asked.

The other panelists agreed that both private and philanthropic capital will remain especially vital streams of startup capital, providing on-ramps for early-stage entrepreneurs who are less likely to receive federal stimulus dollars. Shelton emphasized the need to collaborate across federal, philanthropic and private sectors to maximize the potential of innovation in education, arguing that there needs to be a coordinated effort by which each of these three sectors would provide targeted support and strategic guidance at the specific stage of development where they can be most useful. "Ultimately," he explained, "each one of us have to choose our sweet spot."

The panel touched on an array of key levers in moving from a conversation about the potential for innovation, toward a real system that provides support for starting and growing innovative products, services and approaches that can make a significant difference in students' lives. In his closing remarks, Shelton called upon the audience to engage in these questions. He reminded participants that the spirit of innovation will be part of the Department of Education's work moving forward, and that true innovation in education can have dramatic results. "Innovation is about doing something radically different," he explained. "We haven't cracked the code yet about how we're going to get there.... I will keep pushing you to give me the ideas."

BREAKOUT SESSION
TURNING AROUND FAILING SCHOOLS: OPPORTUNITY AND CHALLENGE

Come September 2009, it is estimated that more than 5,000 schools across the U.S. will be in some form of restructuring due to ongoing failure to show student progress. To date few efforts to turn around failing schools have succeeded. As President Obama has noted, accomplishing this task "will require new investments in innovative ideas." At the Summit 2009, NewSchools highlighted a handful of entrepreneurial school management organizations (SMOs) that are taking on the challenge of making innovative ideas a reality by turning around entire failing schools. As these schools gain a track record of success, they may be showing the way by demonstrating that closing the achievement gap is possible even in schools marked by years of poor performance.

Unlike many other school improvement efforts, school turnaround is a method for realizing dramatic improvements for both current and incoming students in chronically failing schools over a very short period of time. To accomplish this successfully requires fundamental changes in people, school culture, operations, and academics. The market for entrepreneurial organizations passionate about this work is expanding, and in an increasing number of states and districts, opportunities are emerging for school management organizations (SMOs) to gain the autonomy they need to take on this school turnaround work effectively.

This session included experts from three such turnaround school management organizations: Scott Gordon of Philadelphia-based Mastery Charter Schools, which transforms failing district middle schools into high-performing middle-high charter schools; Brian Sims of Academy for Urban School Leadership (AUSL) in Chicago, which combines the management of turnaround schools with a unique human capital strategy that prepares new teachers to staff these schools; and Dan Chang and Christina de Jesus of Green Dot Public Schools, a charter management organization in Los Angeles which just this year embarked on its first turnaround of a large comprehensive high school, Locke High School.

Chang and de Jesus kicked off the session by providing an in-depth, "case study" review of the successes and challenges they have experienced in Green Dot's first year in operation at Locke High School. To start, the two helped paint a picture of the school before Green Dot took over the campus. They shared photos from riots at the school the previous spring, and described the dangerous and disorderly school environment. "If you think about Locke from a school climate perspective, this is a school that was unsafe, chaotic, and desperate," explained Chang.

Moderator:

Jordan Meranus
Partner,
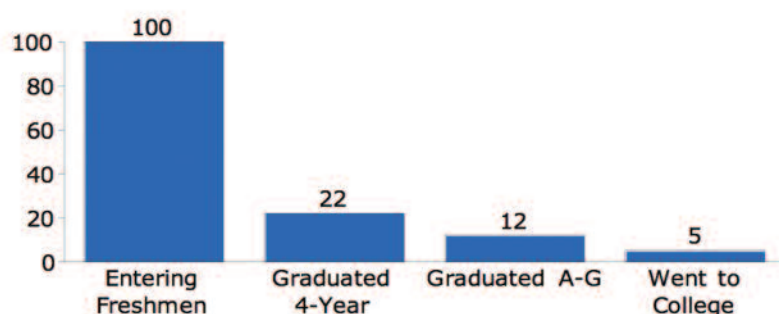NewSchools Venture Fund

Speakers:

Cristina de Jesus
Chief Academic Officer,
Green Dot Public Schools

Dan Chang
Vice President of New School
Development,
Green Dot Public Schools

Scott Gordon
CEO,
Mastery Charter Schools

Brian Sims
Managing Director,
High Schools, Academy for Urban
School Leadership (AUSL)

By every measure, Locke was a failing school

Source: 2007 UCLA Educational Opportunity High School Report for Alain Leroy Locke Senior High

"The students in L.A. who needed the most attention and the best teachers have gotten the least." Chang summarized the effects of this dysfunction in the stark graduation and college-going statistics among Locke's students: only 65 of 1300 freshman made it to a four-year university.

To reverse these patterns of chronic failure, successful school turnaround requires dramatic changes in school model. Successful turnaround operators like Mastery and AUSL resemble high-performing charter management organizations (CMOs)—being centrally organized, regionally concentrated, and designed for scale with a core common school design. But they also must meet unique challenges. For example, in addition to requiring supplemental resources, such as specially trained staff, turnaround SMOs must have an intense focus on culture and community at the outset. All of the session experts agreed that a key task of any turnaround operator is changing the culture of failure. For all three, changing school culture has meant taking steps like requiring uniforms and structured discipline, boosting expectations among both students and staff, creating a robust system of accountability for both students and adults, cultivating a college-going culture in all grades, and building a safe, clean and organized school environment.

Green Dot's experiences at Locke underscore these features of whole school turnaround strategy and execution. In order to make informed decisions about how to tackle this turnaround challenge, they reflected on the core capabilities of the organization as a whole. Prior to the Locke takeover, Green Dot operated on the typical model of a charter management organization: starting with 140 9th graders, growing schools grade-by-grade, and taking 4 years to scale up to 500 students. They quickly realized that this new work of taking over a whole school would be a stretch beyond this model.

To rigorously assess what that stretch would actually entail, the Green Dot team created a map of the challenge ahead. They identified over 150 points of departure from the existing Green Dot model of school start-up. This allowed them to benchmark their progress in their first year of operation by identifying how many of these points they managed to address. This emphasis on culture—rather than strictly on academic quality—has played out this year. "As far as hard-core student achievement gains, we're going to see those more in the out years," Chang explained. "Up front, what we have is a lot of evidence that we've actually been successful in changing student culture."

As Chang explained, Green Dot selected their model based on a thorough study of the range of approaches, with a Bain consulting team reviewing different approaches to addressing the needs of both existing students and new students who had not been exposed to the school's previous incarnation. Chang and de Jesus explained how Green Dot chose a "phase-in/phase-out" model with the creation of a new academy to serve 10th-12th graders, started seven new campuses in order to create small learning communities for ninth graders, and developed a plan for each of these campuses to grow each year and eventually serve students in grades 9-12. "We already had a model and knew we wanted to protect that," said Chang. "It [phase-in/phase-out] allowed us to do what we do well, which is open small schools with high expectations and great cultures and incubate them over time. The second thing it allowed us to do was to treat the

existing students as a separate population that we could focus on and apply the right resources for those students so they would have the best experience as part of this transformation." By considering their existing core competencies, Green Dot chose an approach that focused on preserving what they did best.

Green Dot's careful assessment of what approach to school turnaround best suited Locke demonstrates that there is not one universally accepted approach to school turnaround. Given that there is not one proven model, different operators may consider different strategies depending on both the school and district where they are working, as well as on their strengths as operators. All of the panelists agreed that context, community, timeline and organizational expertise should all be weighed in considering turnaround strategy.

For example, Sims described that when AUSL took over Orr High School, it took precisely the opposite approach to that of Green Dot. At Orr, the large high school had already been divided into smaller schools through district initiatives in prior years. Upon taking on the management of the school, AUSL reverted back to a whole school model, both to honor the wishes of the community and to streamline their own management structure. "Part of what we heard from the community was that the three small schools just created inefficiencies and confusion," Sims explained. "They wanted to get back to old Orr high school: one mascot, one football team, one principal, one coherent curriculum." Beyond the cultural advantages of getting back to the old proud history of the school, this also presented advantages to AUSL's management team, who only had to manage one facility, one security team, and operate under one bell schedule. Like Green Dot, though, AUSL remained dedicated to thinking of creative ways to foster smaller communities within that larger structure. "In moving to the one school, the idea is that we will have a freshman academy and 10th-12th grade pathways that students will be selecting into … getting to a similar small learning community feel," said Sims.

Still, Sims said, the large school model has disadvantages, particularly in terms of mixing existing and incoming students. "Our ability to get the tipping point for success certainly was compromised because our 9th graders saw things that we didn't want them to see," he explained. "The ripple effect down on them and their sense of school and what it means to be at the school was certainly chipped away at."

Gordon added that these are all important considerations as Mastery moves towards incorporating high schools into their turnaround model, which currently only includes middle schools. Hearing Green Dot and AUSL's different approaches, Gordon acknowledged the pros and cons of maintaining a single comprehensive school model versus breaking the original school up into smaller academies. Ultimately, he observed that to have the degree of success Mastery has had at the middle school level, he will focus on whatever model best allows him to establish a culture of high expectations. "It is all about culture, and having someplace where you can isolate kids and change that culture would be a big advantage" Gordon explained. "A principal can know 500 or 600 kids by name, which is an important piece."

As members of the audience considered what turnaround in their own cities might look like, operators described factors that should be taken into account in both planning and execution phases. While none of the operators had the luxury of time when launching their current turnarounds, all agreed that planning for a turnaround would ideally involve at least a year of preparation work and weighing how different models fit the local context.

Their experiences also illustrated the importance of turnaround operators being nimble and poised to address the unintended or unexpected shifts that may emerge from turnaround efforts. For example, De Jesus explained that one of the unexpected effects of separating existing students into a "phase-out school" has caused this to become known as "the disappearing school" on campus by staff—a message that her team has been trying to combat, especially to ensure that these students are aware that they have access to all of same resources as their peers. Another surprising trend occurred after the school opened its doors. "We didn't anticipate that once people found out that there was going to be something new, students who traditionally went out of neighborhood to go to school came back," explained de Jesus. This dramatically increased the number of students Locke served this year, with 400 more students than expected.

Given the scale and new territory of turnaround work, Green Dot is learning as they go. "We're still in the *trying to turn around* stage, and want to share lessons learned rather than saying we've cracked the nut," de Jesus explained. All three operators emphasized that this is an emerging area of innovation in education, where sharing best practices and successful strategies will prove vital to scaling these efforts.

While Green Dot is a new entrant to the field, both Mastery and AUSL have seen dramatic and sustained year-over-year gains in student achievement at their turnaround schools. All of the panelists agreed that they look forward to further scaling these efforts and helping to create new approaches as the demand grows at both the federal and local levels for the transformation of schools in communities that have been underserved for decades.

BREAKOUT SESSION
DESIGN THINKING WORKSHOP: CULTURES OF INNOVATION AND SYSTEMS CHALLENGES

How do education entrepreneurs create an organization that constantly promotes innovation? How can practitioners apply general human-centered design principles to the work of education entrepreneurship? How can leaders balance executing and innovating in order to get the job done? The afternoon Design Thinking Workshop was set up to help answer these questions in tactical ways, and to help entrepreneurs and their champions think about bringing innovative practices into their own organizations.

This workshop was a follow up to David Kelley's keynote address on human-centered design (see page 8) and was co-led by leaders from both IDEO and the Stanford "d.school," who helped participants to better understand the design methodologies on a tactical level. As Kelley explained in his morning address, design thinking is a methodology to cultivate innovative practices and design better solutions based on users' needs and preferences. Design thinking is inherently optimistic, requires one to try things (prototype), relies on story-telling to discover opportunities, and is an evolving process.

Participants were encouraged to use their imaginations and think outside the box in real time. Teams from IDEO and the d.school energized the room by describing techniques for innovating inside existing organizations, providing engaging examples, and helping participants exercise their imaginations and learn from each other in group-wide brainstorms.

The very design methodologies that are used to redesign products and processes can also become embedded in the DNA of organizations. To help participants anchor these tactics in their own organizations' needs, the design team started off by asking participants to write down two challenges they are currently facing in their organizations. To methodically work through these challenges in innovative ways, presenters then shared "*7 Tips for building a culture of innovation. Starting tomorrow.*"[1] These included:

1. Start with what people care about

2. Have a process

3. Seek inspiration

4. Build to think

5. Radically collaborate

6. Foster emergence

7. Incentivize innovation

With limited time to walk participants through each area, the design team guided the group through exercises to illustrate the power of two of the seven tactics—seeking inspiration and radically collaborating. For the first, they highlighted a way to systematically seek inspiration by "considering analogous observations." Through this approach, organizations can be inspired by looking to other contexts where similar challenges arise, and borrowing strategies and solutions from these analogous situations. As Speicher explained, Kaiser Permanente used this strategy when trying to manage chaos in hospital emergency rooms. To analyze this problem, IDEO studied situations where a similar degree of pressure and chaos ensue. In this case, they landed on NASCAR pit stops, where

Speakers:

Rich Crandall
Director, K-12 Lab,
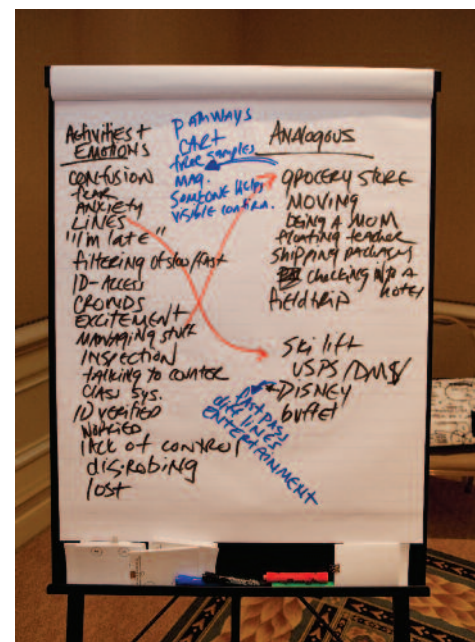Hasso Plattner Institute of Design,
Stanford University

Adam Royalty
Lecturer, K-12 Lab,
Hasso Plattner Institute of Design,
Stanford University

Sandy Speicher
Director of Design for Learning,
IDEO

Beth Viner
Business Lead,
IDEO

mechanics and other experts descend on a car to refill and tune it as quickly as possible. What inspiration can be gleaned from this analogy? In the case of NASCAR racing, a single person is assigned the job of observing the pit crew and signaling to the driver when to go—so that the driver need only pay attention to this one team member, rather than trying to keep track of the entire crew working on his car. Kaiser lifted from this example, by assigning a single person the responsibility of observing and overseeing all of the moving parts of emergency room procedures, in turn streamlining a chaotic process and decreasing the likelihood of crossing wires, fatal mistakes, and miscommunication in patient care.

To help participants grasp the power of analogous observations, Speicher walked them through a brainstorm of a challenge they had all experienced: going through airport security. Participants listed the emotions and activities that govern this experience—confusion, fear, presenting your identification, disrobing, worrying about being late, etc. Based on this list, participants were then asked to brainstorm what other activities and experiences demand similar processes or evoke these emotions. After coming up with a host of analogous experiences—ski lifts, grocery stores, being a mom, food buffets—they considered some of the solutions that these other industries use to streamline user experience and mitigate negative emotions, such as calm music, clear labels or maps, or prominently displayed clocks. The exercise demonstrated that identifying the particular emotions or experiences that your organization may be struggling with can lead you to find solutions in unlikely places.

The second tactic that the participants explored was to radically collaborate. The presenters espoused the power of creating "hybrid" teams in order to maximize innovative energy in an organization, and to combat the frequent temptation to group people by common expertise or similar dispositions. To illustrate this idea, they handed out cards with different characters, each endowed with "superpowers" that involved particular strengths, weaknesses, and eccentricities. For example, some participants received "the storyteller," whose special power was described as: "The storyteller knows the histories of every organization in existence. He can tell many a tale about the successes and learnings from new and different ideas." Keeping these admittedly extreme and bizarre powers in mind, participants were tasked with brainstorming who on their own teams they might group with such characters to play off of one another's areas of expertise and interests. In doing so, participants were able to see their team members in new light, and think about the unlikely combinations of team members from across a broad range of disciplines that might be better able to solve hard problems in creative ways.

Design thinking can define an organization's approach to particular products or processes, but it can also serve as a guiding principle for organizational structure and culture. Participants left this workshop armed with some of the techniques of design thinking that they could bring back directly to their teams. As one audience member said, "My organization is meant to be innovative but I realized I'm thinking through a 'non-innovative' lens." Tactics like those shared at the workshop help leaders reorient themselves around not just doing innovative work, but working in an innovative way.

[1] To read about other ways to bring innovation into your organization, see "Design Thinking," an article by IDEO's Tim Brown in the *Harvard Business Review*: http://www.ideo.com/images/uploads/news/pdfs/IDEO_HBR_Design_Thinking.pdf

BREAKOUT SESSION
EdTech Debate

Is technology central to the greatest 21st century innovations in education? How can existing systems incorporate technology to generate breakthrough results? Can technology be a key tool in advancing teaching and learning? Or have policymakers and educators failed to use technology effectively to enhance education? Is technology simply a distraction from the proven and direct influence that great teachers have on student achievement? To explore these questions, the EdTech Debate served as a follow-up to the plenary on "Innovation as a Driver for Reform." Presented with the proposition "**Technology offers little value to students' learning**," a panel of six experts engaged in a lively Oxford-style debate, a formally structured debate in which panelists are given the opportunity to argue for or against a proposition and then respond to one another's arguments in a moderated question and answer period.

> **For the proposition:**
> • John Deasy, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
> • LaVerne Srinivasan, New Leaders for New Schools
> • Larry Cuban, Stanford University
>
> **Against the proposition:**
> • Larry Berger, Wireless Generation
> • Susan Colby, The Bridgespan Group
> • Nichole Pinkard, Urban Education Institute, University of Chicago;
>   Digital Youth Network.

The debaters embraced this format to engage in a light-hearted—but at times heated!—back-and-forth discussion about technology as a tool in education. They considered the power of entrepreneurs to build and leverage technology, analyzed the potential of technology to level the playing field across different demographics of students, and weighed the evidence of technology's real value in classrooms, schools, and beyond.

Panelists against the proposition argued for the practical, pedagogical and political value of technology in education. All three emphasized that technology is an inevitable component of education in the 21st century. "We need to stop looking in the rearview mirror and look ahead," as Bridgespan's Susan Colby put it. "Our kids are already living in the future, let's join them there."

Technology entrepreneur Larry Berger took this even further, arguing for the intrinsic value of technology, claiming that depriving students of technology runs counter to the very premise of educating youth: "As human beings, we are described in terms of evolutionary genetics as tool builders," he insisted. "The end of schooling is sometimes not just the learning of the things you need to do to score well on the test,

but it's about encountering the great works of the human imagination. I think one of the great works right now is the computer." He went on, "To not expose kids to what that is and how that machine works is in some ways tantamount to not exposing them to Shakespeare or Mozart, or other things that are the end of schooling."

Beyond the ubiquitous nature of technology and its intrinsic value, panelists against the proposition also argued that technology holds a unique potential to improve instruction, strengthen the ability to measure what's working and use that to inform future work, and boost student engagement. Colby noted that technology as a tool should not be considered so radically different than tools that have always enhanced learning, like chalk, blackboards, and textbooks. "Like all things, there's pros and cons. There's technology that's used well in our system, and technology that we need to use better." She espoused the power of tools for teachers and open source curriculum sites, like Berger's own Wireless Generation, Synaptic Mash, Currriki, and MIT Open Course, all of which are enhancing instruction and providing teachers and students with greater access to academic resources and tools.

On the other side, Larry Cuban, John Deasy and Laverne Srinivasan all argued that technology is only a tool, and is not a primary driver of student outcomes. As such, they argued, technology does not merit more investment than that allotted to teachers and leaders, who would use these technologies in the first place. "The most important factor in driving student outcomes is the effect of teachers… no matter what tools they use," Srinivasan asserted. She pointed out that a student can master as little as half a year and as much as a year and a half of material over the course of the school year, directly depending whether than student is taught by a bad versus a good teacher. "We have yet to figure out how to manage these human resources well," Srinivasan argued. "Individualized feedback between a teacher and a student can be one of the most significant drivers of academic success for children." Cuban reaffirmed this argument in terms of the policies that are designed to enhance outcomes: "The crucial link between any policy and student learning is the teacher, not the device."

Philanthropic leader and former district official John Deasy conceded that technology, when used well, does increase the opportunity for gains in student achievement. "However," he pointed out, "it's impossible for that to happen without youth having access to the most effective teachers and those teachers having access to effective leaders." Srinivasan echoed this point through an analogy from medicine—she noted out that with inventions like ultrasound, the technology is only as useful as the technicians and physicians who can interpret, diagnose, and use the data provided to enhance patient care.

However, those panelists opposing the proposition insisted that technology can tap into human behavior and enhance these interactions, by increasing student engagement and in turn improving student outcomes. Beyond the classroom tools that Colby and Berger described, scholar Nichole Pinkard also argued for the power of social networks, virtual worlds, and games. According to Pinkard, these technologies that are often seen as frivolous actually have the potential to develop students' sense of ownership over their learning process. She argued for the particular pedagogical and social benefits of such technologies: immediate feedback on projects that can motivate reflection and revision, opportunities to collaborate with peers, gradations of difficulty according to students' particular ability and learning pace, and 24/7 access.

On the other side, panelists also argued against the value of technology in terms of actual dollars invested towards improving student outcomes. As Deasy put it, "The money spent on developing, maintaining metrics around teacher effectiveness and then using those metrics to hire and fire, to distribute, place, promote and compensate teachers is the single greatest investment that can be made in the system—far more so than the kind of constant reinvestment that is frequently required as a result of the constant obsolescence issue around technology." Berger countered that our investment in people already far outweighs our technology budget: "We spend 83% of our budget on human capital, and as most of the metrics go, we were spending 2% on technology, making [educators] people who invest in technology less than half as much as the construction industry, and less than one-third as much as the healthcare industry. The question is, should we reset that balance?"

Finally, panelists debated the larger scale impact that technology can have on a student's life trajectory, and its potential power to level the playing field between underserved students and their more affluent peers. Those against the proposition argued that technology in education has the potential to equalize access and opportunity for typically underserved students because it enables educators to differentiate learning according to students' interests and needs. As Pinkard argued, "This is the first real opportunity to provide stronger bootstraps for all, by empowering youth despite the limitations of their geographical limitations."

Professor Larry Cuban, however, debated this from a historical perspective. He cited the over thirty years of failure to improve student outcomes by implementing technology in schools. "That failure is due to sloppy thinking about schools, teachers and learning," he insisted. He pointed to common misconceptions about access versus success in efforts to leverage technology in education. "Expanded access to technology in schools has been an unvarnished success… 3% of U.S. schools had Web-connected computers fifteen years ago; now 95% do. The digital gap between high-poverty and low-poverty schools has gradually dissolved," he explained. However, Cuban explained, researchers often find that only the minority of teachers actually use the technologies available to them in the classroom. "Policymakers, reformers and vendors overestimate the importance of access and underestimate teachers influence on students' learning," he concluded.

> "The end of schooling is sometimes not just the learning of the things you need to do to score well on the test, but it's about encountering the great works of the human imagination. I think one of the great works right now is the computer."
>
> Larry Berger,
> CEO,
> Wireless Generation

Audience Poll: Technology offers little value to students' learning

Before and after the lively debate, audience members were invited to use voting technology to weigh in on the proposition. The results of this survey are summarized below:

Before

14.29%
12.24%
73.47%

After

5.8%
20.29%
73.91%

Agree   Disagree   Undecided
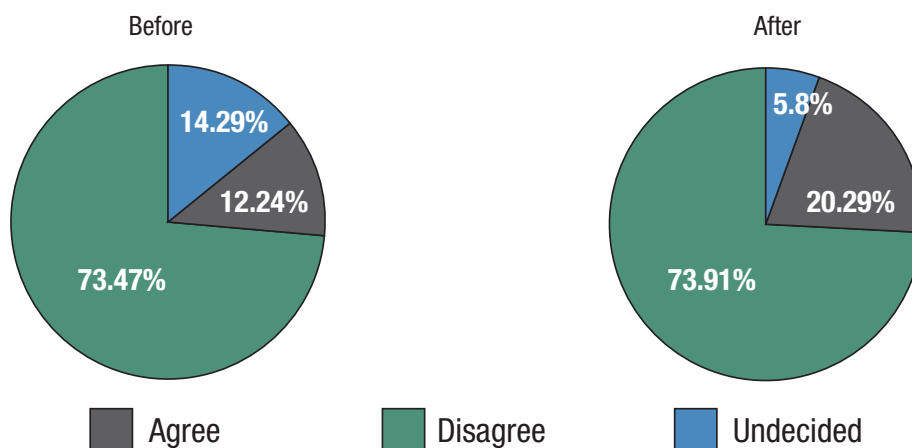
BREAKOUT SESSION
NATIONAL STANDARDS AND 21ST CENTURY ASSESSMENTS

Moderator:

Byron Auguste
Worldwide Director,
Social Sector Office,
McKinsey & Company

Speakers:

John Maycock
Founder and Chief Program Officer,
Massachusetts Public School
Performance (MPSP)

Rick Hess
Director of Education Policy Studies,
American Enterprise Institute;
Executive Editor,
Education Next

One of the greatest levers for change in public education is improving how we define and measure student success. Currently, it is nearly impossible to understand and compare what is working in public schools, given the different standards students are expected to master in different states, the infrequent assessments during the school year, and limited tools available to analyze and use data effectively. However, a growing number of state and federal leaders are championing the creation a set of common standards that would help guarantee that all children are held to the same high expectations. Education entrepreneurs are among those who have long understood the power of a high and clear set of standards to drive instruction and measure what is most effectively bolstering student outcomes. Moreover, a number of entrepreneurs are pioneering tool builders, creating the assessments and providing the analysis and coaching that tap into the potential of higher standards. This session was designed to help Summit participants consider both this potential and the ways that entrepreneurs must continue to play a role in both setting and working towards a high bar for achievement across the country.

The creation of common standards and assessments brings with it a host of challenges and questions: What will it take to quickly create a set of such standards and encourage states to adopt them? What will it take to make standards really effective agents of change in the way work and purchasing decisions are made? What are the implications for instruction, assessment and accountability? To explore this timely topic at NewSchools Summit 2009, Byron Auguste of McKinsey & Company moderated a discussion with John Maycock, an entrepreneur who has wrestled with state standards and assessments as founder of Massachusetts Public School Performance, and Rick Hess, a scholar who has done written extensively about standards and accountability for the American Enterprise Institute.

The goal of this expert discussion was to engage audience members in the latest work at both the federal and state levels to move toward a common core set of shared state standards, and to understand the implications of this policy shift for education entrepreneurs. While there has been a clarion call for fewer, clearer, higher standards, the relative merits of these characteristics (e.g. is it more critical to have fewer standards or higher standards?) are still under debate. In addition, these standards will not be a silver bullet to reform: standards will have little impact if they are not paired with tools that allow teachers and administrators to use data to assess and improve their practice. However, building and disseminating such effective tools is still a relatively nascent market in education.

To explore both the opportunities and challenges in this space, Hess and Maycock envisioned the "dream" and "nightmare" scenarios which could emerge during the course of this policy debate. In the worst-case, they observed, even with energy and resources converging around the creation of better standards and assessments, an attempt to create common standards could still fail, and could actually hurt progress that has already been made in certain states. Hess warned that if the process of developing standards gets captured by special interests and the forces of the status quo, we run the risk of creating misaligned systems and an overall lower bar for achievement. Ill-conceived common standards could also result in a set of standards that are inconsistent with the assessments

that are being used, making it difficult or impossible to measure progress against those standards. Using the same standards across a large number of states (and therefore a large number of schools and students) also runs the risk of resorting to the lowest common denominator of standards, producing what Hess called "a watery and unhelpful set of standards." These not only would set a low bar for achievement, but would dilute the good standards that already exist in some states.

Maycock also stressed that the standards themselves are almost irrelevant unless they are paired with high-quality assessments, since in effect the "real" standards are the ones measured on summative exams. "The assessments demonstrate what the standards mean in practice," he explained. Therefore, while a standard may be written more clearly than ever before or be more rigorous, if we don't create common assessments across states from these standards, the standard itself becomes somewhat irrelevant. He shared examples from Massachusetts and Washington, DC in which exactly the same standard is assessed in dramatically different ways on standardized tests. He also emphasized that setting a high bar will mean little unless we proactively help educators and schools reach that bar. "Even if we achieve fewer, clearer, higher standards, we need to provide the tools and support for schools to meet the standards, whatever they are," he explained. Maycock's own organization, Massachusetts Public School Performance (MPSP) is one of the entrepreneurial groups aiming to build and implement such tools in classrooms and across school networks. MPSP creates, scores, and analyzes tests throughout the school year to check in on student learning more frequently than just the annual state tests. MPSP then provides ongoing coaching to teachers and leaders to help them understand and effectively use real-time data to improve instruction and ultimately increase student achievement. Without tools and coaching like this, it is unlikely that higher standards will ever drive better outcomes among students.

Despite these challenges, Hess and Maycock still celebrated the enormous potential of fewer, clearer, and higher standards. In the "dream scenario," common standards can serve to create a consistent set of expectations and ground rules which in turn make it possible to look more systematically at what seems to be effective, and assess which solutions work at scale with similar populations. A single streamlined set of metrics could also open up a number of new opportunities for entrepreneurs. Having a single set of standards that is used by a number of states provides a compelling incentive for more entrepreneurs to develop innovative approaches for teaching those standards, assessments that build on those standards, ways of training and supporting teachers in their efforts to accomplish those standards. Moreover, this would provide robust year-to-year data for researchers to study what the best school models and instructional approaches are to help different types of students reach those standards. Finally, this information would allow reformers to focus on the particular models that are most effective and in turn spearhead the growth of effective school models.
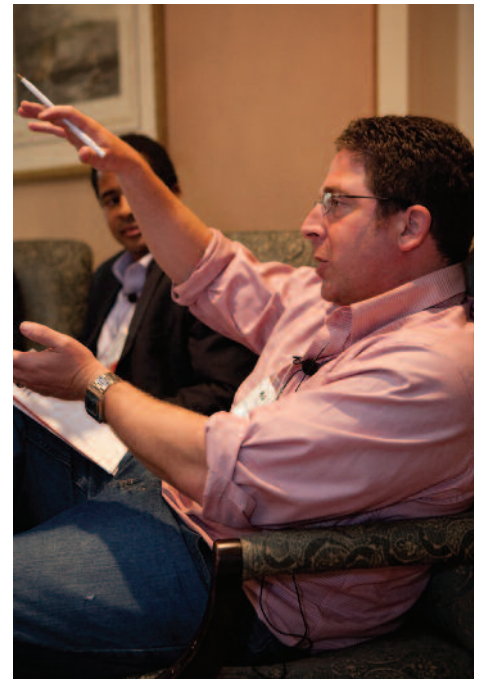
"Even if we achieve fewer, clearer, higher standards, we need to provide the tools and support for schools to meet the standards."

John Maycock,
Founder and Chief Program Officer,
Massachusetts Public School Performance

AWARDS

This year, NewSchools announced five awards for outstanding individuals and organizations. These awards celebrated entrepreneurs, organizations and other change agents that truly embody the spirit of entrepreneurship: visionary, passionate, action-oriented, tenacious, focused on improving outcomes for students—and willing to do whatever it takes to achieve those results. This year's award winners were:

Organization of the Year

KIPP DC

KIPP DC, a growing network of four charter schools in Washington DC, has posted impressive results since its founding in 2001, serving the communities in the highest poverty neighborhoods: 80% of KIPP's students qualify for free- or reduced-price lunch, 99% are African American and 85% will be the first in their family to graduate from college. KIPP's middle schools outscore every public school in DC, including many that serve more affluent populations. By 2012, KIPP DC will run 10 schools which, at scale, will serve 3400 students in grades preK-12.

Past recipients of this award include Aspire Public Schools and Mastery Charter Schools.

Entrepreneur of the Year

Don Feinstein

Don Feinstein, Executive Director of Academy for Urban School Leadership (AUSL), was recognized for his entrepreneurial spirit and the remarkable results of the model he has built. Feinstein's collaboration with Chicago Public Schools exemplifies the power of entrepreneurial thinking to transform systems. As NewSchools Partner Jordan Meranus explained, "AUSL demonstrates the direct and catalytic impact an entrepreneurial organization can have. Don Feinstein is relentless in his efforts to scale AUSL with quality and take on a growing number of the lowest performing schools." AUSL, which serves 6,500 students across 11 schools, has demonstrated national leadership in improving education for low-income students through training new teachers in an innovative residency training program and turning around failing public schools. In its first three years of operation, AUSL's first turnaround school has nearly doubled the proportion of students performing at proficient levels.

Past recipients of this award include Norman Atkins of Uncommon Schools and Teacher U, Susan Cunningham of EdBuild, Sarah Usdin of New Schools for New Orleans, Ref Rodriguez and Jacqueline Elliot of Partnerships to Uplift Communities, Scott Gordon of Mastery Charter Schools, and Scott Pearson of Leadership Public Schools.

Change Agents of the Year

Marguerite Roza

Marguerite Roza is a Research Associate Professor at the University of Washington's College of Education. Dr. Roza's work focuses on quantitative policy analysis, particularly in the area of education finance. Over the past year, this research has directly informed education policy at the federal level. NewSchools Partner and COO Joanne Weiss described Roza's important role in building a sound evidence base for effective policy: "Unknown to most, it is Marguerite's thoughtful analysis and financial acumen that provided much of the data to support the economic stabilization part of the stimulus package for education." Roza has published widely, testified before Congress, and calculated the human costs to our country of policies that would deprive all students—particularly those typically underserved—from the benefits of effective teachers.

Jonathan Schnur

Jonathan Schnur is co-Founder and CEO of New Leaders for New Schools, a national nonprofit that recruits and trains outstanding principals in order to boost academic achievement in urban public schools and provides support to enable these schools to succeed. To date, New Leaders has recruited and trained more than 550 outstanding school leaders. Last year, Schnur took a leave of absence from one of the most potent entrepreneurial reform organizations in the country to advise Barack Obama and later Arne Duncan on national education policy. Schnur was a key architect of the new administration's education policy, and in particular in designing how new funds could be structured to have the greatest possible impact on student outcomes.

Past recipients of the NewSchools Change Agent of the Year award include Michelle Rhee, Chancellor of DC Public Schools and Bart Petersen, former Mayor of Indianapolis and co-Founder and Chair of the Mind Trust, a venture fund focused on seeding new organizations and bringing education entrepreneurs to the Indianapolis community.

Career Achievement Award

Don Shalvey

NewSchools awarded the first-ever Entrepreneurial Career Achievement Award to Don Shalvey, Co-Founder and CEO of Aspire Public Schools. Shalvey authorized the first charter school in California when he served as superintendent of the San Carlos Schools, and went on to found Aspire, the first charter management organization in the country, in 1999. A decade later, Aspire operates 21 schools, serving 6,400 students in the Bay Area, Central Valley and Los Angeles. Aspire serves more students than 75 percent of all California districts and their similar schools rankings are better than 94 percent of the state's districts (14 of their schools are ranked a 9 or 10 out of 10 in the state's ranking system). NewSchools celebrated Shalvey's contributions not only to the students and families that Aspire serves, but to the entrepreneurial education movement as a whole. As NewSchools Founder Kim Smith described, "Don's vision, humility, and incredible leadership have shown us the enormous power of a good idea in the hands of a pioneer willing to do the hard work of building a new organization. His dedication and tenacity over time have proven that we can create better public education systems at scale." Shalvey has since joined the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

About NewSchools Venture Fund

NewSchools Venture Fund is a national nonprofit venture philanthropy firm that is working to transform public education so that all children have the opportunity to succeed in the 21st century. We do this by increasing the supply of high-quality public schools for underserved students and by supporting entrepreneurial solutions that enable traditional and charter school systems to become performance-driven in their practices.

Founded in 1998, NewSchools has since raised nearly $150 million for investment in nonprofit and for-profit entrepreneurial organizations. In addition to the direct support we provide to entrepreneurs, NewSchools plays an important role in connecting their work to the broader landscape of public education reform.

For more information, please visit **www.newschools.org**.

About the NewSchools Summit

The NewSchools Summit is an invitation-only gathering of education, business, nonprofit, government and philanthropic leaders who are passionate about the power of entrepreneurs to transform public education for underserved children. NewSchools believes that creating dramatic change in in K-12 public education requires a creative combination of expertise and resources from across education's many and varied stakeholders. The NewSchools Summit brings a select group of leaders from the public, private and nonprofit sectors together to share ideas, resources and connections.

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