



STATES' IMPACT ON FEDERAL EDUCATION POLICY
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

An Oral History Interview with

FED SANDERS



Interviewer: Anita Hecht, Life History Services

Recording Date: April 2015

Place: Angel Fire, NM

Interview Length: 3.25 hours

– Oral History Interview Transcript –

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Project Background

While U.S. education policy is widely discussed and well documented, the impact of our nation's states on that policy has received much less attention. Launched in 2003 and led by the New York State Archives, the States' Impact on Federal Education Policy Project has worked to create and foster the use of a comprehensive, accessible, nationwide historical record that documents the efforts of states to affect U.S. education policy since the mid-twentieth century.

The Project has connected leaders in state and national education with archivists to ensure the preservation of and access to the record of education policy, and supported sustainable connections between the two communities. The policymakers are themselves repositories of stories and wisdom not captured in the written record. The interviews presented here enrich the written record of education policy during this dynamic and critical period. Our narrators helped to shape the course of education policy in the United States over the past decades. We invite you to learn from their unique experiences and perspectives.

To the Reader

This printed transcript is a lightly edited record of the original oral history interview recorded in April 2015 between Ted Sanders and Anita Hecht of Life History Services, LLC, on behalf of the States' Impact on Federal Education Policy Project of New York State Archives. This transcript is accompanied by a digitally audiotaped oral history interview, as well as a narrative biographical summary of the narrator, both housed at New York State Archives.

Oral history interviews contain first-person accounts of historical events, individual experiences and significant memories. In this spirit, let it be understood that these interviews do not attempt to recount "absolute truth." Instead, they intend to relate the stories that hold meaning for the particular narrator. Interviews are not always chronological or complete with regards to specific data. Accuracy is always the goal, though there may be corrections, and certainly additions, to any oral history.

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PROJECT NAME: THE STATES' IMPACT ON FEDERAL EDUCATION
POLICY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
Verbatim Interview Transcript

NARRATOR: Ted Sanders

INTERVIEWER: Anita Hecht

INTERVIEW DATE: April 24, 2015

INTERVIEW LOCATION: Angel Fire, New Mexico

INTERVIEW LENGTH: Approximately 3 Hours, 10 Minutes

Editor's note

This document is a verbatim transcript of the oral history interview with Ted Sanders conducted on behalf of the States' Impact on Federal Education Policy Oral History Project of New York State Archives. The transcript has been reviewed, edited for clarity, and in some cases, supplemented by the Narrator with additional materials or notes. Audiences listening to the recorded interviews alongside the transcripts will note slight differences between the print transcript and the recorded interview, due to this editing process. In all cases, these changes have been reviewed and approved by the Narrator.

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| KEY: | NEA | National Education Association |
| | NSF | National Science Foundation |
| | ESEA | Elementary and Secondary Education Act |
| | NAEP | National Assessment of Educational Progress |
| | ECS | Education Commission of the States |
| | SREB | Southern Regional Education Board |
| | CCSSO | Council of Chief State School Officers |
| | TAP | Teacher Advancement Program |
| | TIF | Teacher Incentive Fund |
| | ACT | American College Testing |
| | AFT | American Federation of Teachers |

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HOUR 1

Hour 1/00:00 Family History

The date is April 24th in the year 2015. My name is Anita Hecht, and I have the great pleasure and honor of interviewing Ted Sanders in his home here in beautiful Angel Fire, New Mexico on behalf of New York State Archives and the States' Impact on Federal Education Policy oral history project. That's a mouthful. Welcome to this interview.

Thank you.

And thank you, Ted.

Thank you.

For agreeing to participate. The first general question is how and why you got interested in federal education policy, and I think the way to begin, perhaps, is with a little bit of your own personal background – where you grew up, who your parents were.

Okay.

And what shaped your views and experience?

I grew up in the panhandle of Texas, where there no one would generally refer to it as the panhandle. They would call it west Texas, but it's not nearly as far west as El Paso, on what had been the XIT Ranch¹, which was ten counties in the panhandle that were ceded to the company that would build the state capitol in Austin. And my family first came to the region whenever my grandfather moved his family from north central Texas further west for a couple of reasons. My paternal grandfather and grandmother both had college degrees. My grandfather's degree was in business and accounting, and he owned and managed lumberyards. Some of his cousins had come to west Texas, and he followed them, given an opportunity to take over a lumberyard just outside of the small city then of Lubbock, Texas, and a fledgling new university there. My grandparents thought that move ideal because they had seven children – six boys, one daughter. My grandfather and grandmother believed that if they came out to the Lubbock area, they would position their six sons to attend Texas Technological University [today it is called Texas Tech] and get degrees in engineering. They were focused on engineering specifically. The Dust Bowl and the Great Depression intervened. West Texas literally turned to a dust bowl in the late '20s, and just as my father would have been graduating from high school, the whole economy in that part of the world just went [down] – it literally depressed. My grandfather was not only managing the lumberyard, but he also farmed on the side. And suddenly the family was struggling financially. So my father, rather than going to the university to study as had been planned and as he thought he would do, he literally left home, because they couldn't feed seven children. He actually became a migrant worker in the northwestern part of the United States, working principally in pecan and other orchards, and returned to the area, returned to Littlefield, whenever the Civilian Conservation Corps was opened. He signed up for the CCCs and entered

¹ The **XIT Ranch** was a cattle ranch in the Texas Panhandle, which operated from 1885 to 1912. Comprising over 3,000,000 acres of land, it ran for 200 miles along the border with New Mexico, varying in width from 20 to 30 miles. (wikipedia.org)

the camp at Littlefield, Texas. I guess [he] must have stood out in some ways because he was moved up into the management group and actually was the top-kick enlisted person in the camp. The camp was managed by the military, and my uncle on my mother's side, who was a colonel in the US Army, was deployed to Littlefield to manage the camp. So my uncle was the senior officer, and my dad was the senior enlisted person over basically the cadre of most of the people who were actually working in the camp. There he actually began to learn engineering firsthand from the engineers in the US Army Corps and learned to build earthen dams and do a number of other things that he became quite proficient at. And so two things: it set him on a course and a career, took him into engineering, which his parents had hoped that he would do, and not only that, he met my mother, who had come out to visit her brother at the camp. They fell in love, conducted a courtship, mostly by mail, because they were living about three hundred and fifty miles apart. And they married in 1939, just as the economy was really picking back up in that part of Texas and just as the US Congress had created the Soil Conservation Service as a part of the US Department of Agriculture. So my dad actually became one of the first employees of the new Soil Conservation Service and was sent to Vega, eventually to Dimmit, and then to Friona, where I grew up, though I was born in Littlefield just two weeks before they left there. And the XIT Ranch was being broken up into farmable sections at the time, because technology had evolved that allowed the digging of really deep well irrigation systems. And so my dad spent a good part of his career assisting the farmers who were relocating into these smaller farm plots, that were not really small, to both locate and build these deep well irrigation systems. My father became an avid conservationist and advocated very heavily for not just the conservation of water, but the use of contour farming and a number of other techniques that are now common on the high plains. And [he] also has one patent that's owned by the US Department of Agriculture

to his name that is a technique in surveying that became generally applied around the world but is not specifically used any longer because we have whole new kinds of surveying equipment.

I'm curious to know if your father believed in big federal government in terms of it having a powerful influence on the development of, in his case, agriculture and how that shaped him politically and, in turn, you.

Hour 1/09:30

Father's Thoughts on Federal Intervention, Family Influences on Personal Development

Very good question. Obviously he actually did believe in government intervention, because he would tell you that it literally saved his life, and it provided a source of employment to him through the CCCs. And not only that, the opportunity to start learning a body of knowledge and a set of skills that allowed him to become actually an engineer, when you could actually take an engineering exam by setting forth, like you could a lawyer, and what have you. So yes, his personal experience – he also believed heavily, in fact argued for – he believed the federal government ought to regulate a number of things that were important to the larger well-being. I think, although I never heard him express it that way, it would be the application of the philosophical standard of the greater good. And he did studies in the early 1950s on the Ogallala Aquifer that he just did himself. He was not commissioned to do it. The common belief is that the Ogallala would recharge for the rest of history, that the watershed feeding that underground river would replenish every year and that we'd never use up that water supply. My dad did studies and came to the conclusion that in fifty years or less, that the Ogallala would actually significantly deplete, and many of the wells that he was locating at the time would be dry, and

these irrigated farms in the high plains would no longer be irrigated farms. They'd be back to dry land farming. And he advocated that the federal government ought to regulate the extraction of the water from the Ogallala, just as they were beginning to do in the Permian Basin and other oil fields in the country to regulate the extraction of oil. But there was – no one listened. And he actually lived to see his predictions come true.

Interesting.

So yeah, he would argue that government has a really significant role in at least two respects that I think that I believe out of his experience, too: that government's got an obligation for the well-being of citizens who are unable to make their way. We've got an obligation to make sure that everyone benefits from the larger economy of the nation. And second, that there are actions in the greater good of the nation that we certainly ought to take to benefit the greater good of the country, as opposed to the individual good or right of individual people.

So that was a political influence on you as well, your father's experience.

Yeah. Never directly in, you know, what he would say, but his experience.

Right.

Has to influence your world view.

Did he have a political affiliation, or did he become politically active in his life?

He was not deeply politically active, although my grandfather was, and some of my dad's brothers were. But they actually were what they would call – they were Democrats in what in that part of the world they'd call yellow dog Democrats. The realities are that most of the Democrats – my father was best termed, I think, fiscally conservative but socially liberal – and most of those people that fit that, which are today in Texas called moderate Republicans.

Education in your family was highly valued?

Extremely so. Obviously my paternal grandparents, out of their own life experience, but my parents absolutely. My two brothers and I grew up knowing – there was no discussion about a decision whether you would go to college or not. You were going! And you were going to go as far as you could. Their view extended at least to a baccalaureate, but in reality to education beyond that level. And somehow, that was just communicated as an expectation, even though it was foreign to their experience. I mean, they didn't have the first-hand experience of college.

Your mother, either?

No. She did coursework beyond high school when she was young, in graphic arts, before she and my dad married. And then did not go back and do college work in fine arts until after I graduated from high school. But they believed that we were smart enough to figure it out. And that's basically what they said to us. "We don't know how you do this, but you kids are smart enough. You'll figure it out."

Were there any other influences – I'm sure there were many – but that you'd like to include here that shaped your own development?

Yeah. There were a number. Some of them tied to my parents, but my folks were – I wouldn't say religious as much as very spiritual people. So I mean, church was an integral part of our life experience, though my folks were not fundamentalist in any [way]. They were very moderate in their thinking about religion. But it was important in their life and it was important, therefore, in ours. So our experience of church yes, influenced, I think, the shaping of our values and ethics. But probably the thing that they did for us that shaped our development ethically and in a lot of other respects even more so, was the little community I grew up in did not have Cub Scouts or Boy Scouts. I was the oldest child and whenever I reached the age for Cub Scouts, my mom and dad started the Cub Scout pack. My mom was the den mother. So I went all the way through the Cub Scout experience through Webelos. And as soon as I was at the Webelo level and ready to go into Boy Scouts, my dad started the Boy Scout troop and he was my scoutmaster the whole time I was in scouts. The experience in scouting and becoming an eagle scout probably did more, I think, in terms of shaping the cornerstones of my ethical beliefs that I think basically continue.

Such as? Give me an example.

Well, I mean, you just take the trustworthy, the kind. Yet each of those tenets, my dad used the scouting opportunity to really engrain those in us – not in a preaching kind of a way, but in – These are the tenets by which you live your life. And I think it took.

Hour 1/20:05

College Years, Beginning of Teaching Career, Introduction to Educational Policies

Leadership skills? Do you think you also gained some of that?

I gained some of that from scouting, but also from a lot of other ways. I grew up in a – there were, like, sixty students in my high school class, so I attended a fairly small high school. And I played sports. I excelled in basketball. I was president of the math and science club. I was president of the thespians. Every club – there weren't many, but every club that was created in high school, I at least was a participant and oftentimes in the leadership role in those activities. And the same thing was true in scouting. It was a natural laboratory in which to learn leadership and exercise leadership skills.

So guide me into your entrance into the world of education. I know there's a lot in there, but just for the sake of brevity a little bit, how did your college years unfold and bring you into your interest in education?

Well, first of all, I went to college to become a mathematician. I always had had a deep love for mathematics, and I wanted to become a research mathematician. I really didn't even know what a research mathematician did, but that's what I wanted to do. And I didn't want to become an engineer, even though I seriously considered that. My folks also talked about – We'll let you get a teaching credential just as a backup in case. That's a nice – and so I took a couple of education courses, but I did not get a teaching credential. Beverly and I married our last year in college.

Which was 19 –

1961 we got married. And in 1962 – we were paying our way through college – our parents were not helping us, which we didn't expect them to.

And college was probably more affordable in those days.

It was accessible and affordable. We could do it by working and going to school, though it was not easy. But during our first year of marriage, we found ourselves about to have a family. And so we began considering – what do we do? Our strategy was one of us would drop out for a period, work. The other would finish, and then the other would work and finish. But I happened to see on the bulletin board at the school an ad for teachers in Mountain Home, Idaho, and they specifically needed music teachers. So they had a number there, and I called the superintendent. After we had talked over lunch, and lo and behold, by the time we had finished the conversation, he had offered us both teaching positions. So we ended up going to Idaho for three years, which we thoroughly loved, and started teaching careers. And I found out that I just loved working with kids and teaching. It was clearly a life calling. So changed the course of what I've done the rest of my life.

And can you talk a little bit about any awareness you had at that point in time of education policy or your beginning interests in the larger story of education and how it was done?

Well, to some degree. My second year, the teachers in my building elected me to be our – what was their, at the time, a very – it was the NEA [National Education Association], a local affiliate, but the days were very different than they are today – superintendant, principals, teachers – all were a part of NEA. And our superintendent made it very clear in orientation the first day we showed up to actually formally work, that you join the NEA local. And you either did or you didn't come back the next year, because he would not rehire you. And my second year, I became our representation to the local and, which actually led me, at the end of our three years there, to be a state representative. So I began to get at least some inkling of thinking more broadly about the things that were impacting districts and schools and teachers. My understanding wasn't deep, but it was at a period of time, too – I remember the NEA magazine had an article called, “The Angry Young Men in Teaching,” that I thought kind of described the way I felt because the compensation made it extremely difficult for you to support a family and teach. And not much has changed.

Not much has changed since then.

No. *(laughter)* But I felt, by golly, that article was almost written for me because I felt that, although that's what I wanted to do. You make the financial sacrifice to do it. Because, I mean, with a degree in mathematics, lots of other opportunities existed, because we were just in that period post-Sputnik, that the economy just had lots of places for people with degrees in mathematics.

But you had decided that you wanted to stay in the field of education.

Yeah I did, yes.

Tell me, this was a time when there started to be quite a bit of federal expansion into education and how aware you were of that and what you think that was about, why that happened and came about.

Yeah, but the first policies and programs that I became knowledgeable about did not impact the classroom. I mean, you had the school feeding program, the school lunch program. I experienced those kinds of things and fully understood and actually believed in what was going on with all those school lunch programs that existed decades before I appeared on the scene, well before I was professionally engaged. But during the Eisenhower years, the National Defense Education Act brought opportunities to actually strengthen the preparation of teachers in this country and new programs, particularly for math and science teachers. And I benefitted from that interest. The National Science Foundation paid for much of my graduate education through an NSF [National Science Foundation] fellowship. So yeah, those were the programs that I was more keenly aware of. And then it wasn't until 1965 that the Elementary and Secondary Education Act came into existence. But I was also aware of, of course, probably have to mention the federal policies about Indian education, because I did teach in a Bureau of Indian Affairs school, which actually shaped both a view of the federal government and how it can, in trying to do good, does extreme harm, and also in shaping my own understanding of teaching, because I hired on with the BIA [Bureau of Indian Affairs] to teach in a high school and to teach mathematics. When we mustered in in Gallup, they still had refused to tell me where I was going and what I would be

teaching, but I presumed I was going to a high school, but I knew it wasn't the one that they had told me when they hired me, which was in Utah.

Hour 1/30:45

Experience in Teaching Native Americans, Post-Graduate Teaching Positions, States' Influence on ESEA, Procuring Job with New Mexico Department of Education

I was going into the eastern Navajo, somewhere in western Mexico. I didn't learn until we had moved our family into housing in a remote area of Pueblo Pintado, which is [an] extremely isolated point up on the rim of Chaco Canyon – Only after we had moved our belongings into the house did I learn I was going to be teaching second grade, which was frightening. And Beverly and I spent every night thinking about reading and learning and helping me to figure out how to teach second graders who, first of all, did not speak English, and how to help them learn English, but to read and do math. I actually learned a lot about how humans learn, and I learned a great deal through my readings, particularly of Miles Zintz, about how to educate across cultures. And probably you couldn't pay for – and you could never learn at a graduate school what I learned that year by readings and experience.

Did you come to any conclusions about teaching kids, non-native speakers.

I came to a great deal (*chuckles*), but I also came to a bigger sense in how federal government, in trying to do things with good intentions, can do very, very dumb things.

Such as?

I'm teaching kids – I mean, the whole thing was because families were really isolated on the reservation, children, whenever they hit preschool age, came to live in a boarding school. So their principal relationships with their family were severed, and they're living in a matriarchy, where that whole family, that extended family structure, is important to who they are culturally and as individuals. And yet we completely severed them – we, the government severed them from that family unit. And I came pretty quickly to believe that's absolutely wrong. It's just wrong-headed. The second thing is – and it began to change during the time I was there – we did not allow these young children to speak their own language. And I think it's because adults, in their own insecurity, believe that even children, who are speaking a second language, are talking about them. You know, that may not be true, but there have to be reasons why adults will not allow others to speak their own language. And these children needed to be communicating with one another in their own language, because it was the only – so I came to see, and I thought for a period of time that I might be able to – there were a handful of other people who believed as I did, but but we were in the extreme minority at that time. I eventually concluded that, while I love the Navajo adults, Beverly and I tried to live in the culture. We went to church with the Navajo. We got to know Navajo families. We tried the best we could to learn the language. But I came to conclude – first, I was wanting to go back to graduate school. That had been my goal for several years. But I came to believe that I can't singlehandedly change this system, and if I stay in it, it will destroy who I am.

I see.

I just could not tolerate that. And plus, then I got an offer to teach at the university.

But your personal trajectory, your professional trajectory, did lead you into working in these bigger systems, which is interesting – eventually.

It did. It did.

And so bring me up to speed a little bit in that. You went to graduate school, and then you came back to Albuquerque to teach for three years?

Albuquerque, um-hmm. *(affirmatively)*

And at that time, again, there was a lot of federal programs.

There was. I mean, now we're into ESEA [Elementary and Secondary Education Act].

Tell me a little bit about what you think impacted the development of ESEA – I mean, were there states – were you aware of how states already were impacting the development of ESEA.

Yeah. I was aware, not broadly writ, but I was aware eventually pretty closely how the state of New Mexico, and how Leonard Delayo, who was state superintendent, who personally shaped how the state used, for example, Title I funds, Title V, Title III, because I got to know him very personally. His thinking and what the federal government would allow was transitioning –

Okay. So you teach for three years in the public schools. And then you go to work for the New Mexico Department of Education.

I did.

How did that come about?

A very close friend of ours who we had gotten to know at church was a former teacher principal and was working for IBM and their science research associates, which was their education publishing group, and New Mexico was a part of his territory. And we're at a church dinner mid-week one evening, and we generally sat with them. We did lots of things with them and one other couple, though they are about ten or twelve years older than we are. Bruce was anxious and was telling me when he first sat down to dinner that night that he had found the ideal job for me. He had been in Santa Fe. They were opening a position for a curriculum specialist in mathematics, and he believed that was precisely – that job was made for me. And he recommended to them that they look at me. And I applied. And among all of the people who applied, I was eventually selected for the position. It started the path, then, for my broader involvement in education leadership, because shortly after I was hired – I was part of an early experiment of Leonard DeLayo's, who was the state superintendent, who had been hiring both superintendents and principals who were nearing their retirement age to come to work in the Department of Education and had decided that, you know, the state might be better served if he

were able to pick out very young people who were short on experience but what he thought long on talent, and hire them and develop them. I was one of the early class of his transition in thinking. Then he and I had an intellectual debate one day. My office was right across from his on the second floor of the education building. And Leonard made a speech on Indian education, and I thought many of the things he said were right, and some of them were dead wrong. So I stopped him in the hall and told him I really appreciated the speech, and here are the things I thought where he was right, and here are the things I thought he was wrong. (*chuckles*) I was young and naïve. I just thought you could do that kind of thing. He at first took offense and invited me in his office, and we must have spent three hours talking about Indian education. I think that one conversation somehow started a relationship that became a very personal relationship.

Hour 1/41:00

Being Primed for New Mexico State Superintendent Position, Influence of Title V on Local and State Education, Governors' Desire for Greater Control, States' Impact on Federal Policy Developments

But a very different professional relationship, because he then decided, for however he made that decision, but he made it clear he thought that one day I should succeed him as state superintendent. And so he began the process of moving me about every year and a half to a different leadership position. And about the time I'd learn it –

He moved you.

He'd move me again. So I did every senior leadership position that existed in the agency, except for the state superintendency in New Mexico.

So what were those positions? Can you list a few of them?

You know, I first was the math curriculum specialist. Then we set up a new school improvement program to join school districts in bringing about school improvement and created a whole new unit to do it. He put me in charge of designing the program, hiring the staff to run it. And it was – Art Coladarci, who was dean at Stanford, thought that program was something other states should emulate. I mean, not many states were doing the kinds of things that we were doing.

Also using federal money to do it?

We used Title V and Title III of the ESEA. My position all the time through this, until towards the end, was funded by Title V of ESEA. The funds we used to innovate were Title III.

Can you talk a little bit about the relationship between your department and the feds and the role they played, and how you interacted, tried to influence? Any specific memories?

Yeah. No – I think there's something, and I don't know that anyone has ever written about it, but the reality, except in the handful of the larger, more sophisticated states like New York – most of them in the northeastern part of the country – states put very little money – the state education agencies were basically statistical collecting entities and managed a handful of state task, including the management of the first onslaught of federal monies, like for school lunch and so

forth. So they were really, until ESEA, most state education agencies were kind of the backwaters of state government. And suddenly, you've got this infusion of significant amounts of money focused on specific populations that need to be managed. And you also have the infusion of the resources to do it through Title V. So Title V basically funded the development of most state education agencies to play, really truly, a leadership role in the states. So my early days in state education in the two rural states where I worked – the state education agency could be viewed as an extension of the federal government and its policy, because in large part, that's what we existed to do, is to carry out that policy, even though those policies had been influenced by ideas that were extracted from local communities and other states. So I think it made for an interesting dynamic, and I don't think most state policy makers – state legislators and governors – fully understood what was going to happen to them and how they would become more activist, greater activists, in the role of local education, that would happen as a result of particularly Title V. I think that starts the process of states getting really deeply and thoughtfully engaged in their education policies even though they – I mean, they were doing things that impacted local schooling, clearly local control and dominated, really, the policies on teaching and learning. Then I think a handful of activists governors that come out of that, mostly from the southeast and driven by NAEP [National Assessment of Educational Progress], I believe, and the results, then just gets amplified out of President Bush's summit with the governors. Because suddenly governors were wanting to take greater control, and you can see it best in their securing state legislation to allow them to name the chief state school officer or at least have a significant role in that process, and naming the state boards. So they suddenly were seeing this as important. But it cascades across, I think, all of the evolutions of basically federal education policy and investment.

Interesting. So let's dig in a little bit into the '70s before we move up in the '80s and that turning point of the governors becoming more involved. Because if I understand correctly, you're saying that the federal influence of money and policy making helped to activate the states on some level.

It did.

And at the same time, the states helped to inform some big policy developments at the federal level in the '70s.

Yeah. I mean, it is really, truly a symbiotic relationship. And again, if I go back to the New Mexico experience, several things there. I mean, in the early days of Title I, Leonard's idea was – you can't educate a child if they're not well fed and clothed, cared for, provided a safe and clean environment. And lots of schools in New Mexico in rural areas didn't even have indoor plumbing. And in the early days of Title I, we plumbed all of those (*laughter*) – I mean, it would never be allowed today, but we did it, and the feds didn't object to it. Leonard was all –

What wouldn't be allowed today?

You wouldn't be able to add bathrooms to a school using Title I funds.

Oh, okay.

(laughter)

Because there is too much control –

Well, and, I mean, as the rules and the thinking has evolved across the years, I mean, the purposes have been more clearly focused to – what was the original intent? But Leonard was able to successfully argue that these things needed to be done for kids to be able to learn, and he did them. So it was kind of an interesting experience that evolved, and if you were just to look at the history of Title I in New Mexico, and I don't know if there are parallels in other states. I lived through the evolution of the education of disabled –

Hour 1/50:00

Implementation of Education for All Handicapped Children Act, States' Resistance to Federal Control, Influence of Federal Legislation on States

Handicapped children.

Handicapped children. It bothered me, I must say, personally, because I knew that there were families with children who were handicapped in Mountain Home, where we lived. Even when I was on the reservation, there were children who never came to school because of their disabilities. And I saw that in Albuquerque as well. They may have been good intentions, but the general view was there was nothing the school actually could do for those children. And in 19[75] – it had been happening in the states before that. We were progressing towards a sense, a national consensus. In fact, I think it pretty well takes a form of a national consensus to pass a major policy issue. So things are fermenting in communities and in states before they get seen.

Federal policy follows trends that are significantly happening, not just in one place, but across the country. And in 1973, we saw the language of Section 504 that actually made it a civil right for these kids to have access to an education and to an individualized plan. It wasn't called an IEP then, but a plan to address their handicapping condition so that they could succeed in school. I mean, the world turned on its head just, you know, it seemed like almost overnight. Suddenly we had a commitment, and yes, there was resistance but not a great deal of resistance. There was resistance. In fact, in New Mexico, in fact I think in the very conservative southwest, there was a lot of angst about accepting federal money. I saw that up close, particularly in the southeastern part of New Mexico.

What was the angst about?

They did not want the federal intrusion in telling them what to do, so they wanted to sustain their latitude and local control. And there are lots of communities that at first did not accept the federal monies.

Specifically related to the education of handicapped children?

Title I even. But yeah. New Mexico made a major decision relative to 94-142 [Education for All Handicapped Children Act]. I was assistant superintendent for instruction, so special education was under my management in New Mexico at the time. In 1975, the federal government passes 94-142, and lots of new money coming into the education – in fact, that was the Education of All Handicapped Act. We had been modeling our policy and our state legislation heavily after

Massachusetts, which actually was the model for the federal legislation. So we already were – there was leadership here in New Mexico that was taking us clearly in the same direction the federal government was going. So we're in the midst of thinking about whether we – in fact, we're working on an application for the 94-142 funds. That becomes a major issue with our board and the state legislature here in New Mexico. About two o'clock one morning, we were meeting with the legislative leadership in the legislative session. They offered to give us seven million dollars more than what we would receive from the federal government if we would turn down the 94-142 funds. We were fundamentally doing 94-142. There were a few things we needed to tweak, and we were in the process of doing that. And yet, here we had the – we were caught in this interesting dilemma about – we can actually secure greater funds for what we're trying to do if we will actually turn down the federal legislation. So I went back to Leonard with the – I was doing the legislative relations, and it was me that they made the offer to in this private session. And eventually Leonard decided that our smartest move would be to turn down the money and take the added state money. His belief, and I agreed at the time, that the state would not be able to withstand the pressure – once you have money from the state and the coffers for something, it never goes away. So we would actually at least get a one or two year infusion of these new monies, and they would be sustained, and then we'd get the federal monies eventually. And we charted that path, not because we didn't believe in what 94-142 was trying to do, but the fact that we could – we actually extracted greater money. It worked to the benefit of these kids.

And tell me about the intention of the legislature – that they wanted to turn down the federal dollars. Was it because they didn't want the federal regulations?

They did not want the feds telling them what to do.

But then they would, in turn, be able to tell you how to use the money?

Yeah. But the truth of the matter is that there were only a couple of legislators who were really shaping the legislation that was supporting what we were doing. And they were pretty – I mean, it's part of the division of labor, too, in the legislative process. You only usually have a handful of people who really deeply understand the issues, and they actually shape the policy, along with the professionals that are, in our case, over in education.

And so the state legislature could turn down the federal monies.

And did.

And did.

Lasted for – actually, they didn't start accepting the federal monies until just as I was going to Nevada as state superintendant.

Interesting. Anything else about the '70s? I mean again, there are a lot of other policy developments in bilingual education; there was money to desegregate and integrate the schools.

How did that play out here in New Mexico, and what kinds of interactions were there with the feds?

Yes. It wasn't as much the monies, but we didn't have a lot of schools that were situated to where there was intervention on the civil rights basis. The biggest case that I recall took place in the Gallup-McKinley county schools, which was a large county school district. The Office of Civil Rights and the Department of Education – what became the Office of Civil Rights – staff did, based on the complaint, did a survey, a study out there and concluded there was evidence of discrimination and disparities that could only be addressed by changing teacher compensation – difficult to deal with the segregation, although there were modest efforts at doing so, in transporting, but students would have to be transported great distances to begin the kind of integration that really needed to take place. And some of that transportation took place, but New Mexico was, in spite of how diverse the populations were, did not have the impact that, for example, I would learn about whenever I went to Illinois as state superintendant. But yes, I mean, lots of other impacts we could talk about. We could even look at vocational technical education. Almost every aspect that you can think of in some way was touched by federal legislation. You know, again, Title V building the capacity of states to become active, really, and Title III allowing them to innovate, just were essential for state education agencies to reach the point where they are today, that they exert a great a deal of influence and control.

Well let's pause, because we're at the end of our first hour and we'll pick up there next.

HOOR 2

Hour 2/00:00

Interaction Between State Agencies and Federal Government, Positive and Negative Consequences of ESEA, Development of Department of Education

This is hour number two of my interview with Ted Sanders. We're in the 1970s still talking about the State Department of Education in New Mexico. Maybe you can give me your thoughts again on the interaction between your agency and the federal government and whether you thought it was effective structure to implement the policies that were –

Yeah. I think first of all, that the small western states, particularly mainly because those are the ones that I knew best because that's where I worked and had lived – Idaho, New Mexico, and Nevada – I suspect had a very, very different view in relationship with the federal government mainly because they fundamentally owed their existence to the passage of ESEA. And so [they] probably may have been better instruments of federal policy and more sensitive to the thinking in Washington and direction, because there was sufficient money at the time to not only, through Title V, to actually support the vast expansion of staff in these small rural states, but there were significant investments by the feds in calling conferences and training and what have you at the federal level, which did a great deal to build both the staffs' capacity, but would – I wouldn't say indoctrinate, but at least have them leave those many experiences interacting with feds and, in many cases, far more sophisticated professionals than the large urban sophisticated states who had been at state education and had matured as state education agencies, and so would bring back, and I think actually did a very good job probably of carrying out, the intent of federal

policy, because they owed their positions fundamentally to the federal investment. Actually most of them believed deeply in what they were trying to do and what the feds were trying to do. So the greater tension was not accepting like I talked about with 94-142, where you're dealing with a set of legislative forces that are external to the agency. Internal to the agency, there would not be a great deal of push-back against the federal policies and programs, because staff saw themselves as instruments of those. So the tensions were with local districts where they were trying to implement and adhere, sometimes very rigidly, to a narrow interpretation of the federal policy.

Did you see in general ESEA working to affect the intended outcome, achievement of kids?

Yes. Yes and no. Yes, I think it had a tremendous impact. I mean, for the first time, Title I, we were adding additional professionals, but more often other staffing in the form of teacher aides, which were devoting a lot more individual time to children having difficulty, principally reading. And you also saw out of that, you saw school faculties, schools, and districts beginning to think about and build capacity to actually better serve disadvantaged and low literate children. And oftentimes the intentions were better than the results, because there wasn't a great deal of research that would guide you specifically in what to do. But I saw schools and, in some cases, districts, during the '70s who actually were deeply committed and doing what I thought at the time wonderful things for the children they served. And I believe the children were better off, both educationally, though there was no hard, empirical evidence to prove that that was true. But it also – as we progressed through the '70s, we built up a bureaucracy inside of Title I. I mean, we added all of these teacher aides, and we began to learn from the emerging research that probably there were better ways to invest the monies to see much better results. And now we had

staffing built up that you could not undo and redirect funds. Or you couldn't do it easily, which was one of the troubling parts of our experience in the latter part of the '70s, when we tried to take corrective steps to the missteps that we had taken early on in the implementation.

Because there wasn't enough flexibility built in?

There's plenty of flexibility. I mean, we clearly had the authority to do it, but you have to remember that in New Mexico at the time, the biggest employer in most communities was the K-12 school district. And just to be candid, local boards were – that's a political position, and quite often people act out of their own personal interests and not out of what's best for – and so these were jobs. In fact, I saw this in Illinois when I was state superintendent. You couldn't control from the board who gets appointed to a professionally certified position, because those people had to be credentialed. So the employment was in teacher aides, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, and there was a lot of local political control. We built up a large cadre of teacher aides in Title I. You could not undo that easily because of the politics of a local community. We found it not just challenge – virtually impossible.

So that was an unintended consequence then.

It was. Good intentions to start with, thinking that adding to the people working with children would produce results. We find out that there would be better ways to invest the money, and then you can't undo what you'd done earlier, because local employment depended upon it.

That's a tough spot. So in 1979, the Department of Education came into existence?

Right.

Under Carter?

Um-hmm. *(affirmatively)*

What were your thoughts about that – good or bad – for state/federal interaction?

Actually, at the time, I did not have a really strong leaning one way or another. I understood why it was happening politically, particularly to win the support of the NEA in getting elected, which made sense politically. I thought on the one hand, that it was desirable to actually elevate education and the national conscience that would happen. On the other side, I spent my career, local and state education, and I must say I had some concerns about federalizing our education system, but it certainly didn't give me heartburn. It was all philosophical, because I wasn't influencing nor was I trying to influence the decision at the time. I became much more interested in it when I finally ascended to the state superintendency, and then how to help the first Republican secretary of education actually use the power of the cabinet position to do good for the system.

Hour 2/10:45

ESEA's Impact on Development of ECS, Governors' Collaboration in Education Attainment, Elimination of Titles III and V

Any other thoughts on the '70s? There's a lot there – in terms of the highlights of states' impact on policy that we haven't covered. And you said Title III and Title V, you think, were so essential in building capacity.

I do. I do think there's one other dimension that happened out of ESEA, that happened alongside, but because of ESEA. If ESEA had never happened, the Education Commission of the States would have never happened. You had a handful of governors who were true activists in education. I mean, education was central to their legacy. It was driven mostly by governors in the southeastern part of the country, because you also had this huge federal investment in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). And the states had pushed back so that you could not look at state-by-state data, which is something we ought to talk about when we talk about the mid '80s, because that change becomes, I think, very important. But having state specific data, no political leader in the country, I think, wanted that when National Assessment (NAEP) was created. So all the data was reported out by these four big regions of the country. Consistently the southeast came up short compared to the rest of the country. And that spawned, Lamar Alexander and Dick Riley and Jim Hunt and Bill Winter – a handful of really smart governors who understood the connection between the educational attainment and the economic and general well being of their populace and became very activist governors. And it was out of their efforts of wanting to join together that you eventually see that and the clear leadership of (James Bryant) Conant who was, at the time, president of Harvard – principally his idea, but these guys drove it politically, with him to create this place where you could bring together governors, key legislators, chief state school officers, state heads of the higher education system,

and have a safe place to share ideas, have conversations. ECS [Education Commission of the States], I think, became probably the vehicle that cross-pollinated the kinds of things that would happen and actually eventually bring federal legislation. So you had this whole new sharing of ideas across the states, and it happened because this vehicle gets created, just to parallel ESEA.

At the same time?

It's happening right alongside of ESEA.

In the '70s.

In the '60s. ESEA is 1965.

Right.

The mid '60s is also the creation of ECS. You see, because of that, and because of the regional entities that governors also created in the same period of time, you've got the SREB, the Southern Regional Education Board, where these guys came together – another vehicle, but regionally to share with one another and other political leaders. You see a Lamar Alexander and a Dick Riley and a Jim Hunt literally working hand-in-hand, even though Lamar is a Republican – very different political orientation in many respects than Jim Hunt or Dick Riley – but single-minded together about, you know, what they should be doing and sharing ideas with one another.

And Bill Clinton would eventually join those ranks after he becomes governor of Arkansas and truly became, you know, an education governor.

I guess I hadn't realized that it had started back as early as that.

Yeah. That's where I think it all began to ferment.

And influenced by ESEA and this federal priority.

They're literally informing and feeding off of one another. With most of these folks, the federal actions – they're not taking offense at those things. They're trying to shape them and to use them.

So Title III and Title V, did they survive the '80s?

No.

So what happened? Give me a historical perspective on the shift of the federal [side].

I'm not sure that I know all of the reasons why Title V or Title III – I think they ceased to exist for a variety of reasons. But I don't know that I know them all, because I wasn't sitting in a position in Washington to know the conversation. But I suspect that a lot of policymakers were looking at ways to direct more limited resources into programs that they thought more directly impacted students and thought that, I would presume, thought that – at least the couple that I

talked [to] – thought that it's time that states picked up the responsibility for supporting these staff that they had come to see as subsidized by the federal government – build the capacity, but not sustain it across time.

So now we're talking into the early Reagan years.

We are.

The shift.

As those shifts took place, yes. Title III, I mean, there became other funds for innovation that displaced Title III, so funds for innovation didn't cease to exist. They were replaced by other federal programs intended to spur both research and innovation.

And at this point in time, in 1979, you went to the state of Nevada as the chief state school officer.

I did, yeah – early January '79.

Tell me about your role and your priorities, and the specific – looking at working with the feds from that position at this time of more limited resources.

My engagement changed and actually escalated greatly, because my mentor, Leonard DeLayo, had developed a very close friendship across their years, whenever Ted Bell was chief state school officer in Utah, and during the time he was commissioner of education under Nixon and Ford. They didn't have just a professional relationship. They had a close, personal relationship. I benefitted greatly. I just inherited, because of my relationship with Leonard, a natural relationship with Ted, or Terrel Bell.

Hour 2/20:20

Disagreement with Reagan's Vision for Public Education, Developing Projects with Ted Bell to Emphasis School Successes, Blue Ribbon Schools, Regional Education Labs, Creation of Nat'l Commission on Education

So after Bell became the first Republican secretary of education under Ronald Reagan, he gave me opportunities to get engaged with him, and what was going on more politically than policy-wise, okay? Although many of these things would eventually shape policy. But Ted Bell was in a peculiar situation that lots of people have speculated, some people have written about, but probably something that should never happen, and that is to have a cabinet official appointed who doesn't at least generally share the philosophy and goals of the President. Ted Bell, he believes in the system, both of K-12 and higher education, and he had run both systems in Utah. He was effective, but he was a very humble, quiet, but persistent man. And it probably served him well. Had he been a high profile, vocal secretary of education, he probably wouldn't have lasted through the first week with President Reagan. But he systematically set out, in his own way, to shape a President's thinking and to shape what was going on with the Congress as well. And part of it fueled by – since I was a chief state school officer, and I sat in several of these meetings early on, where we would meet privately with Ted Bell and my colleagues would just –

he would just leave, demoralized and bloody because of the reaction to where the President wanted to take education policy – abolish the Department of Education, potentially focus on privatization and vouchers and so forth. Early in his tenure after one of those, he invited me to come back to his office after the – and a couple of other people who he had personal relationships with and who were known Republicans. We became a part of a small group that he called his pouting pals. We did group therapy, I think.

Because you were not in agreement with Reagan's vision for public education?

Right. And we're certainly wanting to help him to shape and influence the federal direction. The first thing that we did was – our first discussion was – how do we find a way where Ted Bell can demonstrate that there are public schools in this country that are working and are working well, and so forth. And we in that first session came up with an idea for what we called Blue Ribbon Schools. We shaped it politically. We presented that in every congressional district in the United States there'd be one really outstanding school. And what we would do is set up a program to find and recognize those schools. We would do our level best to get the member of Congress to go out with the secretary to give them a flag to run up their flagpole. And where we could, we would try to get the President to – and I was in a meeting just following that in Boston, and Ted actually sent two staff members with me. I assembled a couple other Republican chiefs – and again, there weren't many of us – Cal Frazier, who was from Colorado and significant. We literally, instead of attending meetings, crafted the details. We took the effective schools literature, took those criteria, because they were driving a lot of what schools were trying to do to improve, and we wrote those criteria into a selection process and created a mechanism that the

secretary would put in place with his discretionary funds to actually search, find, and recognize those public schools.

With the hopes of shoring up support?

I mean, we wanted simply to demonstrate that – you know, by golly, in spite of what is being said, there are public schools in this country that are working and they're working well, and others can too. That was all we were trying to do. We tried to change a conversation, and it did. I think it probably had a much bigger impact than certainly anybody has written about, but it did a great deal to shape even public thinking. In fact, it became so successful that within two years, we had to include private schools in the process because they wanted in. And yet we had a president that would lean towards privatization and private schools. [We] did something very similar to that with the regional education laboratories were deemed not to be working, even by a lot of people in the profession, because of some fraudulent activity, Ted had had to shut down the north central laboratory, which was based in St. Louis, and gave us a chance to actually, in a cascade of two steps, to inform and to shape and hopefully to assure the future of those regional laboratories, because all of us believed that their work could actually drive research that could actually bring greater improvement. So I was a part of the committee that managed the competition for the new laboratory. We used that to develop the model that would be used as we re-competed the rest of the labs, then, a year or so later. As a result, out of that built up enough support for the regional labs that they survived in the appropriations in Congress, in spite of a lot of people advocating against them. But the biggest thing that Ted Bell did was –and this was strictly his idea, it didn't come from anyone else – the creation of this National Commission on

Education. He named a close friend, the president of the university in Utah, to head the commission, so he knew that its leadership would stay close to him. He named Milt Goldberg, who had come out of the Philadelphia school district in a leadership position and was now in the Office of Research, and Milt was a solid, smart, savvy professional who knew not just education, but the politics of education, extremely well to actually lead the staff that would do the work.

Hour 2/30:00

Response to *A Nation at Risk*, Move from Nevada to Illinois

Their marketing strategy was brilliant. The committee did not leak anything that was going on in their deliberations. They didn't release that report to anyone until they did the major national release. I mean, the President knew this was going on, but I don't think he really had a clue as to what was in the report until at the very last minute, Ted Bell briefed him, and he didn't know – no one knew that *A Nation at Risk* was going to – I mean, the ferment in the country was just right for this report about the need to suddenly improve the schools and that we had done this to ourselves. We'd allowed our schools to deteriorate and that we were now a nation at risk when you compared us to – it resonated. Ronald Reagan was smart enough, savvy enough, to quickly – I mean, he embraced that report, seeing its potential. And we planned a series of, I think, four regional meetings in which we'd bring together all of the political and educational leadership in a region to go through the report and to talk about what kinds of actions could be taken. Suddenly Mr. Reagan became an education president, because he embraced (*chuckles*) – you know, and it changed the whole character of the first Reagan term, thanks to the very quiet, but brilliant, leadership of Ted Bell.

Did it spur, however, more resources being poured into education or have the intended effect that you wanted it to or that Bell wanted it to?

I don't know that you could – I've not gone back and tried to look at what happened to appropriations. But you certainly didn't have the cuts that people were wanting to make.

Okay.

And I certainly think it – and again, it changed the character for a period of the national conversation, and it spurred – I know, because I lived it out on the other side. It spurred a whole new round of what became several waves of education reform, and those waves are still repeating today. I think the genesis is principally out of *A Nation at Risk*.

So let's talk about that. I'm curious as to whether it also was used to make any conclusions of Title I or ESEA, because here you had had a lot of federal money and activity in the '70s, and then the Nation at Risk report comes out and says we're still greatly at risk.

Right.

Was it a perceived failure of Title I?

Not either in Nevada or Illinois. Whenever I worked there, no one was blaming the federal investments. And in fact, Illinois had never passed single comprehensive educational reform

policies until I came. And the only reason why I was able to do what I did by the end of my first year's tenure was because *A Nation at Risk* was driving a deep concern. And a person who became my deputy, but who had been deputy superintendent in Illinois for my predecessor, had done some very nice research policy studies, which happened to match very, very well with the thinking that I had evolved across my time in New Mexico and in Nevada. I was shocked at how closely aligned Nelson's view and mine were whenever we get partnered up, whenever I assumed that new position, and we were able to take – because he had been actually developing very, very thoughtful policy papers across a variety of areas, and only missed two or three that I thought were important.

So you're talking about Nelson Ashline.

Ashline, um-hmm. *(affirmatively)*

And at this point, from '85 to '89, that's when you moved to the state of Illinois.

Right.

Just for the record.

Right. It is, yeah.

You left Nevada.

Yeah. I said 1985, yeah. So *A Nation at Risk*, it helped to drive the policy agenda I had in Nevada and in Illinois. So I think, again, that it had a profound effect. And it allowed, oftentimes, the latitude to do some reshaping of how federal funds were being spent. I talked about the difficulty with teachers' aides. Those decisions became easier when you had, now, this discussion that is being driven by the failure of the system from *A Nation at Risk*.

It's interesting just because you're seeing first hand, or I'm seeing Ted Bell going in from the state's perspective, you going in from the state's perspective a little later, and then influencing, from the inside, the federal policy.

Or trying, yeah. (*chuckles*)

Or trying! What was the shift about for you, personally, from Nevada to Illinois, just to get that as part of the story here. Were those appointed positions of four years, or were you looking for a new venue?

Actually, I loved the position in Nevada. I had a lot that I still wanted to do. I had accomplished some things that I was really proud of, just extremely proud of – some of them driven out of other reports that were occurring at the time. The equity report from The College Board shaped my thinking dramatically on setting clear standards for high school completion and some other ways. Reports do influence what happens in policy. I had things still to do, but also I went to Nevada. Leonard's whole grand scheme is I would go spend six years in Nevada, and I would

come back to New Mexico as state superintendent. That was his – I mean, he had invested a great deal across almost a decade of preparing me for the state superintendency. The eventual beneficiary was to be the state of New Mexico, in his mind. And I was contacted then in the fall of 1984 by Vern Cunningham, who was the dean at Ohio State University, who was doing the search. He had been a continuing consultant with the Illinois board. [He] asked me to allow my name to be considered and to submit an application. My first thought was – there's no board in this country that's going to hire a new superintendent from a very small western rural state to come to a large, industrial complex state like Illinois, but just as what Leonard had told me when I went out to interview with the Nevada board, what did I have to lose, you know? Maybe a little bruised ego, but I could deal with that.

Hour 2/40:00

Illinois Superintendency, Work with Nelson Ashline on Policy Initiatives, Policy Reform Goals

So I allowed my name to be considered, submitted all the paperwork, responded to, I think, a set of ten questions in which I wrote fairly lengthy essays and got into the final group that was being selected and flew to Illinois to meet with the board. I think I was scheduled to meet with them for two hours. I don't think I ever did an interview where I could feel the chemistry just almost sparkle in our interactions. I've never experienced something like that with a very diverse group of – a fairly large group of people. They had their prepared questions to ask, about my experiences in the past. I'd give answers, and they'd ask a couple of polite questions. Several of the questions they asked not just led to another set of questions, but into a spirited discussion that just felt good.

So that's how you got there.

Two hours came and went. So I called Beverly right afterwards, and I literally was on the phone talking to her. I said, "I think this interview is just – I think it's gone really, really well." And Vern Cunningham is knocking on my door and said, "Come back downstairs."

So it was immediate.

Immediate.

So these were the last four years of the Reagan years. What were your priorities. Again, this is the time you were already talking about where you were working with Nelson Ashline, and you were getting some pretty significant policy initiatives going.

We were. In the second Reagan term, I did a couple of things for the US Department of Education, generally enlisted to do so by Milt Goldberg and Emerson Elliot over in the Office of Research. But I was completely absorbed with what I wanted to accomplish in Illinois. I think I had a greater sense of urgency in Illinois than I did in Nevada. I'm totally absorbed in every job I've had, much to the detriment of family and what have you, too. In Illinois, I had to cover so much ground so quickly, because my board had felt that they had been virtually impotent in getting legislation passed. I was bound and determined that I would take this work that had been going on, which I basically embraced and quickly added a handful of other things like a

preschool initiative and initiative focused on bilingual learners and some other elements. But I also had to lay – I had six months, or had less than that, to lay the political ground where I could build the relationships to get things done. So I'd be working weekends with Nelson and a handful of staff on getting ready for me to be able to sell this legislation. And during the week, I visited every significant legislator in the state, out in their home district, and got to know them personally, quickly, and found out where their thinking was and literally worked – at least they knew me, if we didn't have a relationship.

What reforms were you fighting hard for?

I wanted to create a whole new set of expectations for the outcomes of schooling. I wanted to specify what every single child ought to know and be able to do when they finished high school. I wanted to build a whole new assessment system that was patterned after national assessment (NAEP), where we would actually hold districts and schools accountable by using a NAEP kind of test where we didn't give the same test to every single child. I wasn't looking at student accountability. I was looking at a way for communities to hold their schools collectively and their district leadership accountable. So that was the biggest thing I wanted to accomplish. I wanted to change the character of how we credentialed and qualified and selected, and to actually allow communities to rid themselves of underperforming teachers. Because I'd heard in Nevada, I'd heard in New Mexico – even though it wasn't true – and I heard it when I first came to Illinois, that you can't get rid of a bad teacher. And yet that's not true. But in Illinois, you've got a strong collective bargaining agreement – law and agreements. Nowhere – I mean, the law itself – yeah, if you were guilty of moral turpitude, you know, you could be discharged. But there

was no provision in Illinois law that allowed a board to use progressive discipline and dismiss a teacher who had uncorrected, unsatisfactory work performance. I wanted to build that into the [law]. I wanted another thing – to actually prepare principals directly, but superintendents as well, to actually implement the new law. I wanted to add a major emphasis on preschool education, which, I mean, in spite of the flaws in the Ypsilanti research, it provided, I thought, a compelling story about why we ought to, with very young kids, give them earlier experiences, and Head Start didn't reach all children. And oftentimes, Head Start had really weak educational programs in preparing kids to be ready to succeed in school. Those were the kinds of things I wanted to do.

And here you are at the state level and really talking about accountability and standards, and this is the moment in time where all that's fomenting across many states.

Sure, it is. And doing some of the same kinds of things in Illinois. And I think the focus on learning outcomes and what have you, doesn't have much of a genesis, but some, in *A Nation at Risk*. But I think the report from The College Board did more to shape my thinking about – and I had absolutely no use by the time I – I'd worked on several forms of creating state assessment systems in New Mexico. And the very best that we created we were never able to take it to its full maturity.

So you wanted to see this happening on a more national level?

Yes, I did. But right now, I want to do it and do it right and show how I think it ought to be done in a state. That's where my focus was.

At the same time, wasn't it when the CCSSO [Council of Chief State School Officers] was arguing for state-by-state NAEP?

Yep. And I was a part of that leadership group doing that.

Tell me about that.

Hour 2/50:00

Goal of Using NAEP to Collect State-by-State Data, Negative Impact of Goals 2000 and No Child Left Behind, Work with Nelson Ashline on Policy Papers under George W. Bush

There were a handful of us: myself, Gordon Ambach, and a couple of others who really wanted to be able to increase the scope of NAEP data collection so you could actually speak to state-by-state data. And it led to spirited debates, both as groups, but between individuals across a period of time for us to actually garner enough votes to change the position of CCSSO. And when we changed the CCSSO position, the federal legislation fell into place very, very easily. So clearly the leadership of the chiefs, both individually who were committed to that, and then collectively, paved the way politically so that Congress could actually do that. And I think that was – being able to talk about state-by-state results helped to continue and to drive deeper into the debate about how we improve the schools in America, because you could see. And then when we were able to get to the point of oversampling and doing urban districts – and that's what I wanted to

do. I wanted to do it not just in every district, I wanted to do it in every school. And that's the path we charted, and that's what we were doing until No Child Left Behind completely undid the work in Illinois, because the federal government chose to go, actually even as early as Goals 2000, in a way that made it impossible to do and sustain philosophically what I believed we ought to be doing.

Help me understand that a little bit better in terms of what you believe. Your reasoning for state-by-state initially was so that you could see what was working and what wasn't, I presume.

Correct. And I wanted to build something that actually worked, and yes, I hoped it would become a model for others. But the most important thing was that I wanted something that actually worked and created a policy lever for change in communities. All my life, operated off a belief that communities have the schools that they want and demand. One of the biggest problems we face, and I saw it across time in the Gallup poll – I mean, parents of school children will tell you that the schools in America and the schools in their state and the schools in their district are failing, but the school where their child is going is good, and its teachers are good. Most oftentimes, those are so ill-informed positions that parents are taking. If they really knew what was happening in the performance of students out of the school where their child attended, they would become, I thought, advocates for bringing improvement. But the only way to do that is to give them information. And that **THEY** will drive change more than policymakers or anyone else. You can't make the kinds of judgments that a single kind of high school exit exam or a single third grade test – it doesn't tell you enough about the broad ranges of achievement. You have to pack items around a cut score, and all you know is about who falls above and below

that cut score. I mean, you can't build a test big enough and robust enough to have enough items to talk about the whole range of achievement and learning and individuals in a particular class or a school or a district. If you take the NAEP approach, you don't have to give every single child the same test. You have to give a large enough sample to meet all the statistical test, but you can test across a wide range of learning. And so you actually have a very robust understanding about generally how a school is performing and how it's educating its children. That's what I wanted. And it happened in Illinois for a short period of time, and federal legislation destroyed it.

When? What destroyed it?

As Goals 2000, and then the final blow was No Child Left Behind.

Okay. But before that happens, you actually go to the federal level under George H.W. Bush, right? You're invited to serve?

Yeah, who's got a very – in many respects, shares a very similar philosophy to my own. Yeah, I went to Washington. I actually went to Washington very reluctantly. I didn't feel like – I certainly – the only way the things that I had started in 1985 were going to survive is if I was confident that I needed to stay there ten years to see them mature and be to the point where no one could undo them. Because I learned early on that you could get some things done, but once you're gone there may be no advocacy and they change or disappear. But I did go.

And you went because of these policy papers that we should talk about a little bit, that you wrote with Nelson Ashline.

Nelson and I didn't write those policy papers –

Oh, okay.

To give me a chance to go to Washington.

I understand, okay.

That was actually the furthest from my mind! But what I wanted to do was, I wanted to take a handful of ideas and hopefully inform the early thinking of any candidate that might be fertile ground to take them. Nelson and I spent a great deal of time not trying to find lots of ideas, but a handful of ideas that met philosophically where we were that could be levers in doing things that we thought actually could help spur and create the climate – so that we could be successful in what we were actually trying to accomplish. So we ended up framing these three papers, and we spent a lot of time boiling them down to a point where they were – no one of which was more than two pages long, because we didn't think a candidate, him or herself, would ever read something that was longer than that.

Can you give me sort of the bullet points of what you were calling for?

Yeah. I mean, they were pretty simple. Just looking at our past history, we knew that a President could engage the thinking of governors and therefore the whole country. Everybody espouses, you know, the fact that education's a national interest, but is actually a state responsibility. And our question is – what if the President of the United States were actually to treat governors of heads of state? You'd actually have a president engaged with governors in the way governors engage with governors at ECS. If we could get a President to call for a national summit of governors and actually talk about the condition of education in the country and what are promising ideas that governors ought to be thinking about – not their staffs, but them. And so we shaped that idea of a presidential summit.

Hour 2/01:00:00
Specific Suggestions Noted in Policy Papers

The second was we harked back to the early 1900s and the Committee of 100 and thought about how could you actually more strongly express a set of national aspirations or goals? We thought a President ought to create a committee of one hundred, chaired by the chief justice of the Supreme Court and including Nobel Laureates – the finest minds of the country – to think about what are the purposes of American education, and what ought to be the goals that our system aspires to and achieves? The third fits with my view of what I was trying to do with the Illinois assessment of educational progress. It hinged on my belief – if you could just get reliable, robust information in the hands of parents, they will force schools to change. I didn't want to create a whole system of national tests. But if we're creating these national aspirations in the form of what a high school student ought to know and be able to do, why don't we create a voluntary national test so that parents could decide and opt in and have their child – and if you had enough

parents in the school who were willing for their children to take the test, you could actually collect – roll up enough information about the school. But even if you just get a single parent who's concerned enough and would actually see their child take the test, they're going to draw some conclusions about –

So this was a nationwide high school exit exam that would be voluntary.

Right, voluntary.

And designed along the lines of NAEP sampling.

That's right. We actually wanted to – just like we were doing in our assessment, we wanted to draw heavily from the work that NAEP had done across the years. And that, of course, ended up being very much the downfall of the idea, because people and members of Congress feared what would happen if you began allowing NAEP to be used [for the voluntary national high school exam?]. And that idea fell pretty flat.

Well, let's pick up there on the next hour.

Okay.

HOOR 3

Hour 3/00:00

Failure to Implement Voluntary Nationwide HS Exit Exams, Joining Bush Administration, Creation of National Goals Panel

This is hour number three already. It goes fast. So Ted, these three policy papers, you said the last piece where you were all recommending these voluntary, nationwide high school exit exams fell flat. Tell me why you think that was the case.

Well actually, I think there were a variety of forces. I mean, that approach is a theory of action I don't think resonated with hardly anyone but Nelson and myself. But one of the things that we also have found as I talked to close allies, both parties, in Congress – I mean, there was a real fear that that use of NAEP might actually undo the progress that we had made in moving National Assessment from reporting by region to reporting by state and the desire to move it on to hopefully begin reporting, at least by large urban centers. Because all of us who were thinking about NAEP and trying to move to this greater impact, were trying to move it down further and further. I think there was a very legitimate fear that a move this far might actually undo the progress that had been made. I never found support sufficient to actually do anything with that idea. And I think, truthfully, that the idea of a national summit – I am confident that Nelson and I were not the sole source of something like that, but I never heard anybody else espousing that. And I certainly never heard of anybody who actually wrote the papers and sent them. The strange thing is I heard almost immediately from Senator Paul Simon. I knew Paul. I worked with Paul as the senior senator from Illinois, but also had built up across, beginning back in the

years I was in Nevada, a kinship and a friendship with Paul, which would span the rest of my career, because Paul would eventually come and head a center I created – a non-partisan, or bipartisan, really – to work on important state policy issues at Southern Illinois University. But, I mean, within days, Paul called me and had a lot of really good, deep, well thought out questions about these ideas. The problem was is Paul didn't make it through the Iowa caucuses. I suspect that the reason why the ideas found their way into the Bush thinking is, first of all, they mesh with the worldview of George H.W. Bush. But also a very close friend of ours, Bill Phillips, had been the vice chairman of the Republican National Committee during much of the Reagan presidency. We'd gotten to know Bill – I guess he went in Reagan's second term, but as we'd gotten to know Bill, because he was fundamentally chief of staff, the key advisor of Robert List, who was governor in Nevada – and we became friends with Bill and Candy from our relationship at church. But also Bill and I worked closely together because Bill was the key person to deal with on Governor List's staff, and so developed a close relationship that would play into our later experience in ways we never would have anticipated. And I suspect Bill is likely the reason – and he probably has long forgotten this – that the couple of ideas found their way into speeches by candidate Bush, because Bill was running the vice president's Fund for America. So he was running the vice president's political action committee.

But that's what you hope happens with policy papers, right?

Right. That's right.

That they make it to –

They become somebody else's. In fact, that's the only way to get things done. Your ideas have – you've got to be able to let them, especially in the legislative process, you've got to hope that somebody else who is of significant influence takes ownership of those ideas, or they don't ever happen.

So tell me what happens, then. You go to Washington, and this becomes part of the national –

Yeah. I go reluctantly to Washington, and that's because of Bill Phillips. The president wanted – they didn't know whether they – there was some debate, apparently. Bill was on the transition group doing the staffing for the new administration then, and –

Well, we don't need to get into the nuts-and-bolts of getting there, but –

Yeah, but anyway, Bill is the one who presses for my joining the Bush administration. And Beverly and I decided no. We went back a couple of times and decided no and no, until you find out you can't say no to a president. But it also lays the groundwork where we can work on these three ideas. There was a lot of tension within the administration because of a belief by a lot of the Republicans that any effort in education means more money. They were not interested in this agenda, and yet it prevailed. The president resonated to the idea enough that he had already talked about it in the campaign. And we, along with the domestic policy council staff, did all of the work behind the scenes to create and do the national summit. And it looked an awful lot like what was framed in Nelson's and my policy paper, although nothing was fleshed out. Nelson had joined me in Washington. We had Milt Goldberg and Emerson Elliott and a couple of other staff

people working with us very, very closely to help produce the issue papers and kind of the intellectual fodder that would drive the whole summit and figured out a strategy to – because every governor was going to bring their education staffer, and everyone of those staffers wanted to be sitting at the table with their governor. And so we came up with a strategy that I would host a parallel conversation with the governors' advisors so that the meeting between the president and the governors was a very private, personal set of exchanges, although there were times that I got to sit in. We've got nice photos of me sitting right behind the president, which are kind of nice for family in the future. But the summit happened, and out of the summit, the national goals panel came. It didn't look anything like what we had envisioned but was shaped very, very heavily by the leadership of the governors, which was being provided, quite candidly – two governors just got deeply engaged in the process from the beginning: Bill Clinton from Arkansas, and Terry Branstad from Iowa, who were both formal and pretty strong informal leaders of the National Governors Association. They and, to some extent, Tommy Thompson and some others, really did take – I mean, they picked up and drove the momentum from there.

Hour 3/10:10

George W. Bush's Views on Standards and Accountability, Bush's Implementation of Educational Policy, Importance of Accountability Data

And so it really did affect much more state activity.

It did. I mean, if you take a look at the analytical work. We created the staff to go with that national goals panel, and they actually, for the governors and more than for us, poured over the

national data and helped to inform and tried to not just report to the nation, but to drive state activity.

Which had a lot to do with setting standards, is that right?

It did. It did. And eventually would bring – I mean, it set the stage. It became the intellectual base for a lot of what would happen under Lamar Alexander, which again, fundamentally fit with the president's view of the world, and that is to try to lead and influence but not to presume that this was the national responsibility, but to lead. And led to the grounds where, under Lamar's leadership that created America 2000, and another round of meetings in the country, patterned very much like the strategy out of *A Nation at Risk*, and laid the groundwork for as soon as Bill Clinton takes office and names Dick Riley, that they've got the groundwork to pass Goals 2000, which is the next reauthorization of ESEA. [Narrator correction: Goals 2000 was a separate piece of legislation from the reauthorization of ESEA] And to actually codify into federal law this new expectation on standards and assessments and accountability that kind of had become lost or diluted in the reauthorizations of ESEA across time. While there was testing and intentionally some accountability, not anywhere near to the level of thinking that would happen with Goals 2000. Then you've got George W. Bush assuming the presidency and taking this to a whole new level that probably only a Republican president could actually do – to actually put in harder standards and harder accountability measures, which would come in the reauthorization of ESEA under his leadership. It's kind of like, I think, Nixon going to China. It was going to take a deeply committed governor with a view of education. And George W. Bush had had education at the center, and the staff around him had shaped pretty clear ideas about what federal policy ought to

look like out of their experience in Texas. They nationalized their learning from Texas in No Child Left Behind, and a whole new – . It had been a long time since you'd heard of a president talking about education as THE civil rights issue of his generation. And yet, that's where George W. Bush was. And he was smart. And (*chuckles*) you have to give him a lot of credit, because he put a framework for a piece of legislation, but he was smart in how – and he had been successful in Texas working across the aisles. He put on the table when he released No Child Left Behind – I was a part of his education advisory committee, but his education advisory committee just met a couple of times, and they bounced ideas off of us. That group didn't drive or shape the president's thinking. But his strategy was, I thought, ingenious, because he put a framework of ideas on the table and announced it nationally as if it were legislation, which it was not, and asked Congress to convert it into policy. You've got incredible leadership from Senator Kennedy. You had a bipartisan group of very powerful Democratic and Republican legislators at the national level who were more than willing to take the opportunity that that framework provided to put meat on those bones and take the next steps that they believed necessary in the country, through the reauthorization of ESEA. And clearly here's a case where that thinking was shaped in its underlying philosophical framework by the experience of one state, but the collective thinking of various states as Teddy Kennedy or others would bring their own experiences across their whole career to that one opportunity. And it's a reminder of our failure to be able to – I mean, I think that's the last big bipartisan set of decisions on any kind of legislation of great magnitude.

And it's 2001, fourteen years ago.

(laughing) Yeah.

Well, can you talk a little bit for the record, just for the scholars and people of interest in the future who are interested in this, what the philosophical underpinnings are behind the standards and accountability movement, what your beliefs were about – or your intentions, goals, in creating these standards? And then what the consequences were of implementing them?

Well yeah. First of all the belief that there was hodgepodge of aspirations and very little definition of what those aspirations were community by community, state by state, or even for the country, while we came closer to having a common curriculum, because we all use the same textbooks. Teachers, in fact, do teach in a very isolated environment. They close the door and basically the real curriculum is whatever they believe the curriculum ought to be. So we've not had very good definition of the curriculum standards. If you're going to be able to improve the schools, you need to be able to do comparisons and understand, and you have to have some way, I believe, of expressing your aspirations. And, you know, accountability works. It works in our private life. It works whenever – if we're trying to lose weight, if we join Weight Watchers, and we impose upon ourselves some form of accountability, we're more likely to produce the results we're looking for. Plus, accountability also gives us the basis to gather more information and act and intervene, whether it's in the case of an individual teacher or a school or a district or a state, because we can see and act on failure. Although I don't think that's the – I've never thought about that's the final result. I've always thought [about] this more in the idea of Weight Watchers – if you could give good accountability data to parents, they would actually, as I said earlier, demand the kinds of changes that are necessary.

So it's a feedback loop that you need in order to –
Right, to act.

As a means to an end?

Yeah.

Talk about these Opportunity to Learn standards that were also part of the discussion, because you're talking about curriculum standards, but then you also have to have, it seems to me –

Hour 3/20:00

Opportunity to Learn Standards, Consequences of No Child Left Behind, Lamar Alexander's New American School Movement

The Opportunity to Learn [standards] actually comes fundamentally out of the writings of a couple of people who were very active in the Clinton administration. The Opportunity to Learn standards are really integral to the Riley secretariat. They were cascading and thinking about opportunity to learn, I think in large part because they feared that these Republican administrations would actually impose accountability standards, goals, and measures, but without providing the necessary means for actually schools and districts and states to improve, that there are enablers that have to be in place to be able to accomplish goals. I think everybody would, on some level, agree to that. These kinds of conditions have to be in place for someone to actually have the opportunity to learn and to meet the standards.

So it's because all school districts and all schools don't have the same resources.

That's right. And so it's a good – it is a smart means to actually single out a set of major problems that you need to address if you actually want to see all schools and all children meet the aspirations that we have for them. You've got to lay the conditions so they have the opportunity. That's the way the political process works. Those two sets of ideas come together to, you know, create Goals 2000, which is, you know, just another reauthorization of ESEA.

You had mentioned earlier that Goals 2000 was a turning point in a negative way, in a sense.

Well, every action that we take when we make things uniform, have negative consequences. It means that some good things have to go by the wayside because we have to conform. And that tragically is what happened to what we were trying to do with a very different view of how accountability and assessment ought to work.

So tell me more on what you mean by that, specifically.

Well, particularly that No Child Left Behind becomes really the big driver of setting the conditions [of] what we were doing. No Child Left Behind would require sweep testing of every single child at select grade levels, in every school in the country, so all taking the same measure, and disaggregating the results because of the president's view about this being THE civil rights issue of his generation. So you've got to disaggregate the data in a way that actually points out how we're failing segments of the population. And you can't put that requirement of every single student taking the same test – make that federal policy and see the system that we had created.

The two are so contradictory that you can't continue to do [our system], because you can't test to the extent to maintain what Illinois was trying to do. You just can't test that much.

This was not testing in the sense of NAEP testing where you were sampling.

No. We were sampling.

This was an altogether different kind of testing.

But yeah, you had to sweep test, yeah. It basically, it finishes undoing the philosophical approach that we were taking in Illinois.

So were you against No Child Left Behind in the sense of seeing what that was going to do to the [program].

Was I against No Child Left Behind?

Or, I mean –

No, I was not against –

Maybe that's not my question.

I actually wasn't against it, but I did not appreciate what I could see what it was going to do to the work that I'd done previously. But I fundamentally thought, as I did with Bill Clinton and Dick Riley's Goals 2000 and No Child Left Behind, I thought fundamentally, writ large, that both had far more good in spite of the fact that there would be consequences to something that I not only deeply believed in, but had invested a portion of my life in trying to do.

So at the time, if we want to dig in just a little bit more to the Clinton years, you were in Ohio at this time, right?

I was in Ohio during the Clinton years, yes, and trying to accomplish a number of things there. One of the things that Lamar Alexander brought that I thought was a brilliant idea to his America 2000 initiative was this new generation of American schools, the new American school. He wanted to set a number of smart groups and people to work on trying to create the new American school. And he had some pretty crisp ideas about what they would look like and what they would have to do in terms of changing the basic character of teaching, to the use of technology, and so forth. He raised private money. He got corporations involved and used the leverage of his office and the presidency and resources of the federal government to start a competition to fund and sustain across time, groups to work on these next generation or these new American schools. Personally I thought that was a brilliant strategy. Lamar is a smart, committed guy who has his own way of working out his thinking and ideas, and this was a profound idea that he had. So when I went to Ohio, I wanted to actually capture and use the thinking that he had, but I needed to do it in a different way. But I wanted to reshape how we were using our federal and our state

funds and to be able to set the conditions for schools to adopt and to work on what was going to come out of these new American school experimental beds.

Now was this new American school movement also shaped by states in any way? He was bringing from his own experience or from hearing –

Well, it had to have been because Lamar had been very much engaged. He was one of the education governors. He had done an incredible work as governor, and things that happened under his leadership are still shaping education in Tennessee today.

Hour 3/30:00

Use of Venture Capital for School Improvement in Ohio, Importance of Communities Being Vested in Education, Use of Assessment Data to Drive Improvement

So I'm sure yes, the New American Schools movement was shaped by his thinking, but by a number of scholars that he listened to, to people like Mark Musick at SREB [Southern Regional Education Board]. He engaged with and listened to Checker (a/k/a Chester) Finn. But he also – there were a number of key corporate CEOs that he listened to that I think probably – I mean, lots of people probably shaped his thinking. However he put it together, I'm pretty sure that he took a lot of ideas from a lot of places and came to this kind of a strategy. But how do you actually – you can't impose these models, so how do you set a condition? I was able to persuade the legislature in Ohio and the governor to sign legislation that would give me a sizeable pool of money across several years, which I called, and they bought, as venture capital for school improvement. And the idea I proposed to them is that we set up a venture capital fund that we

would manage out of my office, and that we would look for schools where the principal and the faculty could clearly demonstrate that they understood from an empirical basis the kinds of conditions that existed surrounding their school and in their school, and understood their students and their needs, and had a deep commitment to solving the problems that they could see in their school, using the monies that we would commit to them across a five year period. They actually had to come into Columbus and defend their application before a group of people that I put together. We didn't direct them that they had to adopt one of the new American school models, although we exposed them to every one of them. And, in truth, many of them did. But they did other things. It's one of the few things I did in my life where we actually put the funding behind the research to determine whether or not what we were doing worked or not. A faculty member out of Ohio State University did a longitudinal study from the very beginning through the very ending of this program to see what kind of impact [it had]. There was another source of information that I was using in framing the program, not just Lamar's New American Schools, but early in my career, Bob Bush, who had established the Stanford Research Institute – Bob was in his eighties and retired. I'd met him, and he and I struck a friendship. He would come spend the day with me (*chuckles*) in Carson City if I'd pay his gas money. Bob had done a lot of research that he had never written to share with the world, some of which had to do with school improvement and had implications for school improvement. That led me to believe out of discussions of his research that the only way that you're going to see schools improve is if the people who make up the school and the community surrounding it, understand their overall condition, and figure out a way to solve their problems through their own development and growth, because it's actually humans that actually change their behavior. So I had that idea embedded into this. Bob had shaped my thinking. That's why I thought communities would

figure out ways to solve things. And turns out the final evaluation – we had a pretty profound effect by that program. The problem is is that it starts and it ends. I don't think anyone knows, now, these many years later what the residual impact may be today in those schools. It's probably negligible. But the investment of those monies in empowering a principal and faculty and their parents, particularly the community around the school to actually study and solve their own problems, worked. I inherited a state assessment system that fit very nicely with even what would come later with No Child Left Behind. We worked hard at actually using the data that we could disaggregate out of the assessment system to drive improvement. I did things like I literally called all of our curriculum people in one day and told them, "You're to stop doing today whatever it is you've been doing, because I think we can both presume that what you've been doing has not really changed, has not impacted student learning in our state. And instead, we're going to take our state assessment data, and we're going to identify the poorest performing districts in our state. And you're going to go out and, not with the presumption that you know the answer, but you're going to work with the local board, the superintendent, principals, faculty, and figure out with them, using data, as to what's happening right, what's happening wrong, and how do we build a strategy, a plan to bring improvement?" So just completely redeployed staff to work there. That backfired pretty heavily politically, because when I first announced this, then, to the public, the headline was, "State Superintendent Identifies the Worst Districts in the State." And so those districts got listed in everybody's mind as just failures, which did not play well with boards and superintendents and even the communities.

It's a shame. I mean, because the intent again is so positive.

Yeah. And there was truth. We actually did make a little bit of impact, but not like you would have hoped.

But what does, in your experience, impact student learning and school improvement the most? I mean, is it family economics? Is it teacher training? Is it the amount of resources that you put into a school district?

Well, resources are essential. But I think the greatest impact, actually if you want to really look at schools that figure out how to perform, Bob Bush was absolutely right. It's in the development. I sat on the board of the National Institute in Excellence in Teaching, and it's a creation of Lowell Milken, out of his own personal resources. He spent the time to come up with his own strategy about how to improve schools. They had done their national educator awards. Both Mike and Lowell believed that teachers were essential, and we ought to recognize great teachers. And they created that recognition program. But then Lowell crafted this set of ideas or principles that has really blossomed into – if you were to go visit one of the TAP [Teacher Advancement Program] schools today, and there are hundreds of them, most of them funded today by the federal government, by the way, and the Teacher Incentive Fund – TAP gets a high degree of funding out of the TIF [Teacher Incentive Fund] grants. And the effort is really highly supported by the current secretary of education and a lot of political leadership.

Hour 3/40:25

Success of TAP in Furthering Professional Teaching Model, Suggested Changes to Federal Policy, Feds Need to Set Broad Policy Expectations

At the heart of this is creating a differentiated staffing, where there are additional, professional roles for teachers in schools, where they get paid more, and where they actually perform roles other than just teaching, where people who are truly master teachers can work with and help other teachers develop. Teaching stops being a sole practitioner activity, and you've got the whole school faculty literally working as a professional team with a collective understanding of what is good professional practice. They draw upon the research, but they don't just automatically use research. They take every research idea, and before they use it in their classroom broadly, they do a field test. They actually try the idea themselves in their own classrooms. They gather empirical data to find out if it works. So they're doing this on a very small teacher interventions, and driving student learning or setting the conditions for student learning. If you look at the changes in the performance data and you talk to students in those schools, they are vibrant, effective, working places. And I think TAP has got – they've actually got it right. They've got the professional model for the future if now someone other than just the superintendents and the few people who are paying attention – it's time for that work to actually begin influencing practice generally because it has matured to the point where it is very sophisticated. And you see the same kind of practices over several hundreds of schools.

So this is, I think, leading us into your recommendations section of the interview. If you had your druthers, what would be happening now in terms of policy at the federal level, but also how states could influence it happening.

Well, I mean, there are a lot of things I would do if, you know, I was the czar and could rewrite federal policy right now. There are a lot of things that I certainly would not undo.

What would you change, and how?

I would rethink how we do the school assessment and accountability. And I think I would conclude, as I did back whenever I went to Illinois, and that is that holding teachers accountable is a local responsibility. We ought to lay the conditions where that can happen. That's what happened in reality. And student accountability is a local matter. I think we ought to have federal policy that would allow systems that worked like the one that I tried to create in Illinois. I think the time is to think about holding schools accountable, but also do it in ways that we can actually shine a spotlight on subgroups, just as we did in No Child Left Behind. Because I think the thing that I think hurts most to me – I mean, when I went to Illinois as state superintendent, and I'd now seen the differences in schools in the states where I had worked. In New Mexico I lamented constantly over the fact that in Albuquerque, which was representative of any large, urban district, the very beginning teachers started their experience in the barrios down on the Rio Grande. If they didn't learn to be fairly accomplished as teachers, they never progressed out. All the rules of both the union and the district worked to give the beginning and the very poorest teachers to the kids who needed it most.

Giving them to the districts and schools that –

And allow the migration of the very best teachers up to students who you could argue needed them the very least.

Right. It should have been flipped.

It should have. I don't know how you do that in federal policy, but we've some way got to change the character of the quality of teachers that the most disenfranchised and disadvantaged of us experience. I don't want to argue against not – every child ought to have a caring, competent teacher. But we've got to figure out the way to get those teachers there.

How to place the best teachers in the most difficult situations.

That's right. And on top of that, we have places where education is as good as it is anywhere in the world and with results that are commensurate. If you could just figure out how to set those same conditions for the most needy of our communities and students, you'd solve all of our problems. That's been how I've viewed the world since – as I began to get the more broad experiences of New Mexico. Yet I still, at the end of my time, don't see the magic bullet to do that. But I do know, because you can see it in those kinds of schools, that actually TAP can do that.

So the appropriate role, if I'm reading between the lines well, for the federal government, is to help set up the conditions.

And I think they've got to set the broad policy expectations, too. I don't think we ought to – there's been some days in my career I thought we maybe should federalize the education system, but we'll never do that. But the federal government ought to be able to express our national aspiration and set broad policy directions that the states and communities will follow and to put the resources that would actually help to leverage – because the federal government puts only a

small amount of the funding in the system, but actually with that small amount, leverages a lot of what happens today.

In terms of No Child Left Behind and what's still in place, are there things you would wipe off the [slate]?

No. I probably would – in every case, I'd take it – I think that you do the next level of learning and refinement, which is pretty difficult to do right now from a political standpoint because –

Hour 3/50:05

Impact of Negative Politics on Education System, Influence of Special Interest Groups on Local Level, Suggestions for Improved Assessment and Accountability System

Our federal government is so dysfunctional, and our elected leadership is so concerned about the next election and how they harm the other party's chances and extend their control and reach.

There used to be, most of my experience, the politics of getting elected were rough and tumble and up close and oftentimes personal and sometimes nasty. But when people won their seat and they knew how to shift gears and actually govern and to compromise and, you know, towards the greater national or common good. It just kind of seems like we've lost that, and it doesn't bode well for education policy or policy in any other area of our life, it seems to me.

So maybe now what we can hope for and work for is that the states and the localities take into their own hands what the federal government doesn't seem to be [doing]?

At least there's a better chance of that happening, although, depending on the state, you have mirror images in many cases of the same. And it's happening at the local level, too. There've always been special interests that try to control the outcome of elections on local boards.

Teachers have organized to do that. Parents of handicapped kids have organized to do that. Many times those organized efforts to put one or two – or to influence board outcomes – actually contribute to the greater good, because the political process works. But now we've got more and more candidates are running to not just improve, but to fundamentally dismantle the system. It just brings greater impasse, conflict and impasse, at the local level. I think the role, if you're in a leadership position at the federal or state or local level right now, I think that job is just incredibly more difficult than it was in the years that I occupied those positions.

Is it in part, do you think, a cultural shift of priority? You just said some people are actually trying to dismantle the system or would like to see it fail, in order to further however they think it should work.

Yeah. I mean, it's not just that they're advocating for that, it's the conflict that it brings in not trying to find compromise positions. And I don't know that – always finding the golden mean in compromise is not necessarily always best, but it has served us pretty well across our history. And at least things get done that actually often does bring improved conditions and greater sensitivities to specific needs and so forth.

Do you want to comment at all on what you would change about the federal policy right now in terms of testing? You hear a lot of critiques of teachers teaching to the test or that the

accountability measures are too punitive. I wonder if there's anything in that, or on Common Core and where the state of the standards right now are.

I can comment on all of those. Yes, I personally would believe that we would be far better served if we had an assessment and accountability system that yes, gave us clear, good, and comparable and useful data across states so that you can make comparisons. I think that's absolutely essential. I think our assessment accountability system has to shine the light on district and school performance. To give the kind of insight that I think communities need, you can't build a national system that holds teachers and students accountable. The accountability ought to be focused on states, districts or communities, and schools. And yes, I believe that you ought to use very robust data, including assessment, in holding teachers and students accountable, okay? It's not that I don't believe in that, but I think it best takes place when those systems are actually built at the community and at the school level. And there are lots of ways to do that. We've got enough experiences.

So not at the federal level, though.

But the federal level ought to anticipate and support that, but not ought to build a national system to be holding teachers and students accountable. I think the move to the Common Core is generally right. In fact, the work on the Common Core comes out of the research at ACT [American College Testing] on the years that I was on the board at ACT and studies that were done specifically by ACT and oftentimes in conjunction with others, like the Ed [Education] Trust. That research drove more than any other body of research the national movement on

trying to set a new set of standards. Because it becomes very, very clear when you look at the data that we were able to collect at ACT about the future, is that even with the very best of standards that we have for learning today, we're not targeting learning at the level that's going to be required for all students in the world in which they're going to live. The move started out happening in the right sort of way. You didn't have a federal movement to imposing a new set of standards. You had the governors and the chief state school officers and other national groups coming together, coalescing around, and creating those standards. The federal government then competed and – but they did their part in helping President Obama and his secretary of education in funding these disparate groups to look at different approaches about how you would actually build a whole new generation of assessments against this new set of standards. Now all of that should have been almost non-controversial, but several things intervened. Readily apparent is the social conservatives, the Tea Party opposition that grows to, just as it has in the past, any imposition of national standards because of the fear of federalizing and dictating to everyone. But you also have another voice this time because – not the NEA [National Education Association] and AFT [American Federation of Teachers] national voices of their leadership – you've got rank-and-file. You've got ordinary teachers across the country who are literally fed up with all of this stuff being imposed upon them, and them having to implement without the resources to do so, and oftentimes things that they believe or know to be wrong-headed. And all you have to do is talk to them today and you see something I've not see before, and that is just grassroots, ordinary, and oftentimes extraordinary teachers who, in reality, don't understand what's going on with the Common Core.

Hour 3/1:00:40

Teachers' Frustrations with National Standards, Importance of Federal Government in Setting Broad Policy Direction

There's not been a good communication strategy. And they see it as yet another thing that's being imposed upon them that is as ridiculous as is the way the last accountability movement has played out, where the standards are actually low, but everything hinges on them. The way they're held accountable, they oftentimes do dumb things because there's so much at stake. And you see, then, the Atlanta kind of situation where otherwise really good people engage in fraud. And so, I mean, there is a backlash brewing right now, which is going to be a strange coalition. Teachers who are generally not political – although there's a sizeable portion of teachers who are Republican. When you take a look at – they're not – teachers are not uniformly Democrat. They represent the broad spectrum of politics. But you're going to see here grassroots teachers who are holding the very same position that members of the Tea Party are, for very different reasons.

Politics makes strange bedfellows, right?

It doesn't bode well for the final outcome of this movement towards what we ought to be doing – a new set of aspirations that are actually well informed about where we ought to be educating our children.

And it sounds to me like you very much believe in the federal role in terms of making resources available in public education.

Oh, I do. I think the federal government has a significant role to play in both setting broad policy direction and specifically guaranteeing the rights of sub populations and using the leverage that its funding can [have].

You're not a Tea Partier in that sense.

I'm not a Tea Partier in a lot of senses. *(laughter)*

Any sense! (laughter)

In fact, you begin to wonder if there's a place for. In fact, I see that as true in a lot of people who are really good people in Congress who concluded there may not be a place for them in their political party. *(chuckles)*

Well, is there anything else you'd like to add? We've covered so much ground, and you've had such a long and interesting and complex career. I know we can't do justice to all of that or include all of it.

Well, I think the only thing is you actually spend fifty plus years trying to do something, and you wish you maybe had several lifetimes to live, because you see so little – there's progress, yes.

And there are a lot of bright spots, but do you see the –

The vision.

Do you see the changes that you had hoped? No. I'm not depressed, but I just hope the next generation of leaders are able to accomplish a whole lot more than my generation did.

Well, I guess we'll end on that note. I hope so, too. You've identified the areas where you think that needs to happen. And one is you're clearly a mathematician in terms of believing in the data and using research and the knowledge that we gain from it.

Absolutely.

To implement better policies. And also it sounds to me like you've mentioned several times, really focus on teacher training and development and uplifting the profession.

The only real accomplishment of what I envision we have to do can only happen because a faculty and a principal set a deliberate course and work hard at their own improvement. The key is people and their development and the right policies to guide and to enable.

And hopefully we can do that through public education.

Yeah.

Yeah. Anything else?

No.

Okay. Thank you very much.

My pleasure.