

# **The States' Impact on Federal Education Policy Project: New Perspectives on Research and the Historical Record**

## *Transcript of closing remarks*

**Gordon Ambach:** While you're filling out your evaluation form just hear a few closing comments. I said early on this morning that in this conference we were really extending the scope of what the advisors for this project have been trying to do for some three years. At least we were hoping that that's what would happen today by way of exciting, stimulating your thoughts about these issues of federalism, and archiving, and research.

From my perspective you have been just absolutely terrific by way of digging right in, in the table discussions and in the conversations in between the sessions, at lunch and so on, on these very issues. So the most important thing for me to say is a great big thank you on behalf of the advisors and all of those who have been participating in this program for the way in which you have helped us so much.

A lot of the day can be captured in a recording, a disc which is being made of our plenary sessions and in the table recordings that have been made. All of us know that our best thoughts about a conference usually occur on the way home. They may occur as we've digested what has happened in the conference, and it certainly has been a rich array of presentations. Think a lot about what's the most significant thing that may have happened to us, or we may have thought about, may have been presented to us, while we are on the way home. I am asking that in particular, if you've got those thoughts, send them back along to our web site, which you have in your materials, so that we have the advantage of those notes. We will do our best by way of trying to record overall what's happened here.

As I said earlier, it is not our purpose to try to present a series of recommendations on a particular piece of legislation. We've been trying to stimulate the conversation that would lead to key questions to be dealt with, and I hope that we've actually done that.

The implications of this conference for our project are manifold and they're pretty obvious, so I don't need to elaborate on them. They have to do with continuing to think about what kinds of topical areas would we take from this session that can be most helpfully used in guiding archival activities or perhaps research activities? They also have to do with the identification of sources. I'll be asking Kathleen to close this out in just a minute and she will speak to this.

There's a personal takeaway that we hope may have occurred and that is for each one of us, and I am including all of us who have been involved with this project up to this point, of thinking about those one or two or three key points that we may have heard today or talked about today, which gives us a sense of something that we might individually do, or something that our organizations might do by way of advancing the overall agenda. That's something that doesn't need to be pooled. It doesn't need to be put into one single record. That needs to be done by way of where your individual responsibilities and your organizational responsibilities can carry the ideas. There is no way in this overall project that we have been working on that we have

pretended that there is a central organizing force to get at these kinds of issues. There are just multiple places where any kind of follow through action would occur.

We hope this has been a catalyst to think about these ideas and to help propel their advancement into other forums which could use them. But on that point itself, any ideas that you may have going away would be of interest. What forums are there? This question has just been asked. Where do you go? Who do you put together to try to get to the next steps? Any ideas along those lines would be of considerable help as well.

Before I turn the microphone over for closing words from Kathleen, may I come back to the thank yous? I named some groups earlier today and, again, I am not going to do this by individuals but by groups. A very special thank you to our advisors who have been so much a part of helping to construct the design of this particular session and then to carry it through as panelists and as moderators. A very special thank you to our presenters and discussants who have so richly endowed us with their thoughts about the topics, to our table discussion leaders. Thanks specially to our Spencer Fellows and other students, doctoral students, who have joined us. You are the future of the research agenda here and perhaps even the policy agenda, and we're so pleased that you could be here to take the time, and we hope that it's been of benefit to you.

A special thanks now to our colleagues at West Wind Education Policy, Inc. Circe Stumbo is sitting right here. She is the president, and her colleagues who have been with her have done a marvelous job for us in these two respects. First and foremost, in helping with the construct of the ideas and the way in which we should be discussing them here, the substantive agenda that we've been working here with. Secondly, with the general design and all of the logistics that go into a conference which is, incidentally, the first time that anybody that we know has really tried to do something like this, drawing in this broad array of interests and groups in order to get this discussion going. We thought at the outset perhaps fifty people would be interested in this. We had no idea about whether we really, on a first time, were going to draw considerable interest or not. We are delighted that it has drawn and that is in large part because of what Westwind and Circe and her colleagues have been doing for us in terms of the design of how we would discuss the issues and also link that with the logistics and the arrangements that enable so much to be done within the course of the day. So a very special thanks to you, Circe, and to your colleagues for the work that you've done.

Finally as I ask Kathleen to step forward, thanks to the State Archives in New York State and our colleagues here from that organization, and Rick Mills and the Board of Regents who have given us very significant support in being able to carry on this work. And couple that thanks with the thanks to the National Archives. Dr. Allen Weinstein, the National Archivist of the United States, has personally sat with us as advisors on three occasions as they have made their facilities generously available to us when we've met here in Washington, and personally advised us and suggested ideas as to what might be done, and also helped to try to see how we can link state archival activity with the national archival activity. So many thanks to them and now Kathleen you get the last word.

**Kathleen Roe:** Well my last word will be considerably shorter than Gordon's because I am considerably shorter. It's just being challenged height-wise. You may still be wondering, "What are those people doing here? I am just a little dubious. Why would archivists be sprinkled among this group?" Part of answers that I hear to some of the questions you're asking about, "Where do we go next?" are that if we save the records of policy research and all of you, particularly the Spencer Fellows, from whom I expect at least two books in the next three hours to be produced, that kind of research is really essential to underpinning our ability to inform future policy.

One of the things we as archivists want to do is not to create the policy ourselves, but to ensure that people pay attention to what happened in the past. One of the things we watch constantly is the perpetual spin cycling of behaviors and ideas and thoughts because nobody pays attention to the policy that came before. We are not all Columbus discovering a new land that isn't a new land. But it's really important that you pay attention, and we realize what happened in the past so we can inform the future. So we're here for that reason, to try and work with you as policy creators, policy analysts, and policy researchers to see that policy can be different in the future, again, perhaps make that leap forward because we're not going through that same cycle again and again.

We've heard a lot from many of you and I do want to remind you that in your packets – and I expect one-hundred and fifty of these and I keep count – there is a piece in your packet and if you did not fill it out please do so, where you can give us ideas of records or other information that you know is out there. Someone like Mike Smith who has forty boxes in his basement somewhere we hear, others have been turned in by their wives as having boxes in their basements. We won't name those people but there are records out there, or perhaps you found that there weren't records that you thought there should be. We'd like to hear about it. We'd like to know about it.

As I said earlier, we're not going to take these all in in New York State. As good colleagues and friends of our friends in other archives, we'd like to know what's not there or what is there, and we'll get that information to our colleagues. We will follow up on those tips, but at the same time we also encourage you to take that proactive action of getting out to know your local archivist. If you're in a university you've got one. You may not have seen them but they're there and you might want to seek them out. If you're in an organization that deals with the state, there is a state archivist in every state; we can get you that information if you let us know. We have some very good colleagues who can actually help you with a lot of things.

One of the things someone brought up in their questions – and I have to say whoever wrote this you can do seventeenth century Dutch documents with your handwriting – I can read it but only because of my training in archives – one of the people asked about what kind of framework we have for determining the worth of materials. Now I know all of you would like every single thing ever written kept and that isn't going to happen, I am here to tell you, much as you would like it to be. We do have a whole framework and rather than you trying to figure out, "What should I keep, what should I throw away?" That's what we do. That's our job. We can help people through the process of determining legal values, fiscal values and, particularly, not what might people research in the future, but what are the functions of the records that an organization or person has created [and] therefore, which things are most important to document.

One of the ways we learn that is exactly by what happened today, by hearing what you're talking about, what the issues are. Therefore, those are the issues that need to be documented, and all the perspectives on it, so we can help, and other colleagues of ours can help in determining which of those items you should keep. If you should be among those people with messy files at home, I know this is none you, but if you don't know how to handle email, electronic information, and the files you have in your organization, that is the kind of things that records managers and archivists regularly do, and have regular information available on. We can share that with you so that you can manage that information while it's current and really look at where it should go when it's done. There is a tremendous need and we very much want to encourage you to get involved with talking with an archivist. Generally it doesn't hurt – it does if it's me – but it doesn't hurt with most archivists. You really should make those connections and we'd be happy to help you with those.

There's a great deal of work for us in the future if we really want to see this issue documented. We're incredibly grateful to Gordon and the other advisors for the immense amount of information we have learned from them. After every meeting we have lists of names of people that we're going to look for, and for their records of organizations, of issues. It's an incredibly rich environment for us so we very much appreciate your participation here in helping us to understand education policy and education issues so that we can better document them for the future.

That being said, my gratitude to all of you for helping us to think more clearly about how we can address the archival component of this. Please keep in touch with us. Watch our web site for future developments, and certainly if you have any ideas or suggestions please feel free to contact any of us who are here. Contact us through our website. Contact our advisors. Get the information to us because this is, we believe, a really valid and worthwhile endeavor and we very much look forward to your participation and your collegial assistance in this effort. That being said, congratulations. Thank you for coming.

A few people said to me, "Kathleen," – it was in the ladies room obviously – said to me, "did you think we would ever get here?" I always believed we would get here. I knew it would happen. I have great faith in our advisors and it's a wonderful result and experience. So thank you very much.