



NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES
Institute for Youth, Education, and Families

“The Need for Municipal Leadership in High School Reform”
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Moderator: **John E. Kyle**, Program Director,
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Speakers:

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Adria Steinberg- Program Director, Jobs of the Future, Boston, Mass.

KYLE: Good morning and good afternoon, depending on where you are in the country. This is John Kyle with the National League of Cities’ Institute for Youth, Education, and Families. This call inaugurates our third season of audioconferences. We’ve done 20 calls over the past two and a half years. Many of you have been with us on those calls in the past, and we’re glad to welcome you back and hope we have an ever-increasing audience during our series this year. We will have another call on December 18 about vulnerable and out-of-school youth, and another call in late January on early childhood education. We will also in December announce five or six more calls to be held in 2004.

Today, the topic of our call is the need for municipal leadership in high school reform. We’re very pleased to have two speakers with us. First of all, we have Ron Gonzales, the Mayor of San Jose, California. Good morning, Mayor.

GONZALES: Good morning.

KYLE: And Adria Steinberg, who is the program director with Jobs of the Future, based in Boston, Massachusetts. Adria?

STEINBERG: Good morning.

KYLE: I’d like to start with you, Adria, first. Why do you think high school should be a priority for cities, and especially for city governments?

STEINBERG: You’re starting me right off with something I’m most passionate about. I really feel like the health of our communities are very affected by the status of our 15 to 24 year-olds. If we’ve learned anything in the last number of years of reform, it’s that you can’t inoculate kids early on and have that carry through into their teenage years. We’re seeing drop-offs in a lot of city high schools between ninth and twelfth grade of as many as 40 to 50% of the young people. While they’re not all dropouts, it creates lots of short-run negative impacts and can create those in the city, and also can impact

negatively on the long-run community and economic development of an area.

KYLE: In a sentence or two or three, can you describe how Jobs of the Future is playing into these needs as you see them?

STEINBERG: Sure. We're a national non-profit in Boston. We're in our 20th year of partnering with states and communities in education and economic advancement of both youth and adults who are being left behind in this economy. My own work really centers on this 15 to 24 year-old group and the kinds of institutional arrangements it's going to take to help young people make the transitions they need so that by 25, they are connected and productive members of society.

KYLE: Mayor, talk to us about some of the challenges you see in this topic of high schools, especially in San Jose. What are you facing right there today?

GONZALES: Well, John, we're facing, I think, an improving picture. I think that's due primarily to the partnerships and collaborative processes we've set up between City Hall and our various school districts that serve high school students here in San Jose. In San Jose, we generally focus on about ten areas to help improve public education. They include things like afterschool programs, school safety, and early childhood education.

High school is very, very important. You know, we invest in early childhood development to prepare our toddlers to succeed in school. We must also prepare our high school students to be able to succeed in college and in life in general. So the challenges we face are due in large part, primarily to the fact that the city really doesn't have jurisdiction, a reporting authority, over the school districts in our community. However, we've learned to work around that in a collaborative way with our school districts -- the 18 -- yes, we have 18 school districts -- that serve the children of San Jose and finding ways to work together. The result, I think, is we're seeing test scores throughout our community improving.

KYLE: Can you follow through a little bit about --? You found ways to indeed work with those school districts, even though they don't have a specific authority responsible to you. Can you give some of the techniques or tools that you've used to make that work?

GONZALES: Sure. In 1998 when I first ran for mayor, I ran on a campaign of helping improve public education. Quite frankly, I was grilled quite a bit by the press on that because they said what most people say. "How can you do that? There is no direct reporting relationship. School superintendents, school boards don't report to City Hall." I said that like many other public policy areas where you don't have direct responsibility or authority, as a mayor of a large urban city like San Jose, now the 11th largest city in the country, you have to take on those responsibilities in many different ways.

One of the ways we did was when I became mayor, we sat down with schools and we said, "What are the unique things that City Hall has, the unique skills, unique resources that you don't have?" So rather than telling them what to teach in their classrooms and how to test our students, we went to them and said, "How can we be

helpful? How can we be a partner?" So we've developed programs in areas such as our Safe Schools Campus initiative, where our police and fire departments and emergency departments have worked with every high school, middle school, and elementary school in San Jose in teaching them how to respond to a crisis situation on their campus or nearby community.

We have Smart Start centers now in ten communities where young pre-school students can begin their public education at age three. So we run from toddlers to high school graduates. We find that when we come up with the innovative programs, the public education community responds in a very positive way.

STEINBERG: We're finding around the country that a mayor can play a very creative set of roles, much like what Mayor Gonzales was talking about--by including the kind of coalition building role, particularly on behalf of the young people who are really hanging by a thread and dropping out of school. I think the school districts have their hands really full with the kids that they have. Often, there is not necessarily enough focus on the youth who are slipping away. I think that's the whole "second chance" system and what a mayor can do to help with that is I think a really important piece.

GONZALES: I would agree there, John. We invested a good deal of resources in what we call our San Jose Best program. This is a program that focuses on youth that have the potential for joining gangs. We have a very active anti-gang program and youth gang program in San Jose. As a result of working with schools and neighborhood non-profit organizations, we've reduced gang violence in San Jose by 54% over the last ten years. It's one of the many factors that has helped us become the safest big city in America.

KYLE: One of the things that people have been talking about around the country is alternative education and trying to do high schools differently. It ranges from high schools that are smaller than the traditional large high schools that I attended, for instance, as well as totally different kinds of programs. Adria, can you give us some ideas of what alternative high school might mean at this point?

STEINBERG: I think there is increasing recognition that one size does not fit all and that this means among other things the need for a portfolio of publicly funded schools within a district. So you're now finding a number of districts around the country in which you don't just have the large, traditional high schools, but you are also finding a lot of small schools within the large high schools. There are these new things called education complexes that are literally taking a large school campus and turning it into three smaller schools. There are also some stand-alones. There are also small learning communities within the large schools. All of those in a sense, represent alternatives, although not necessarily second-chance alternatives. Those would be the portfolio of maybe first-chance places.

In addition, I think alternative ed often means those second-chance kinds of programs for young people who have been in trouble in various ways, or just cannot and will not do well in the large school settings. I think we're hoping that will prevent a lot of the need for second-chance programming by doing these new kinds of smaller choice schools. But every kid always needs the opportunity to have a second chance. So

there always will have to be some of those kinds of institutions as well. Some of those are on college campuses now, which is a really interesting new development -- kind of an early college opportunity for kids who have dropped out of school. It's a way back in. There are some very interesting experiments going on around that.

KYLE: I know that San Jose is one of the 15 largest cities in the country. There must be unique challenges at the high school level in such a large urban environment -- multi-languages, multi-ethnicities, multiple school districts that you've mentioned, multiple high schools. What do you see as alternatives that are being tried out that you are encouraged about as you see things turning around in San Jose?

GONZALES: Well, I would respond by saying that Adria is right. I think that one size doesn't fit all. I think that one of the similarities that I see between education and local government is that we spend a lot of time talking about process and organization and not enough time talking about results and outcomes. I think what we're learning, either as education leaders or as mayors or, more importantly, as parents is that it takes a different model or a different process to educate children of all different types. I think if we focus on the outcomes and results rather than "Is the school big enough or small enough? Or how is it divided?"

Just to give an example, here in San Jose, the first high school that has been built in 25 years in our community -- it's called Evergreen Valley High School -- is a school that employs the small school model. How it does this is it's actually a single campus with four separate small schools. It's also the first high school in our city -- maybe the State of California -- where every single student is provided their own personal laptop. That of course helps us try to begin the process of spanning the digital divide.

So there are a lot of ways that we can address this issue. I'm sure during the course of our conversation, we'll talk about charter schools and some of the other exploratory schools. But I think that variety is important. Just as a city has a responsibility to provide a variety of housing types for people of all income levels, I think we have the same responsibility to work with our education partners to provide quality choices for parents and their children.

KYLE: You talked about an interest in what the outcomes are, not just the alternatives for the format or the building and so forth. What are the outcomes that you are striving for, encouraging the school districts in San Jose to strive for? Then Adria, chime in with what you're seeing as outcomes in districts that you're working with across the country are looking for. What are the optimum outcomes that we should be pushing to have more municipal involvement and support for?

GONZALES: I think the more we look at our economy here in San Jose and Silicon Valley and try to emerge from this very deep recession that both we've been in and the nation has been in, I really think that we ought to take this opportunity, as we are here in San Jose, to make a better connection between the curriculum of all of our schools and the job skills and life skills that our young people are going need to survive, both here in Silicon Valley, and more importantly, in a new global world economy. I really think that the more we talk with business leaders here in San Jose, the Capital of Silicon Valley, we

find that they don't think that connection exists.

We've reached out to our local universities and colleges and are bringing them in to help us look at our long-term economic strategy, to look to help us better understand what their curriculum plans are and how they match up with the job skill needs of our local employers out here in Silicon Valley. One example -- we've just launched yesterday a new bioscience incubator here in San Jose -- probably the first one on the West Coast. That's going to be done in conjunction with San Jose State University, who has just established a new Biosciences Department.

I think, as mayors and government officials, we need to do a better job of connecting the curriculum with the needs of the workforce, and also, of course, with the needs of the students in terms of their own dreams in terms of careers and lifestyles.

KYLE: You would recommend, Mayor, that any mayor could do that? It doesn't have to just be in a Silicon Valley biotech/technology environment. But that any mayor could do the schools in his or her community a service by trying to connect what school leaders are able to provide and what business leaders are wanting to see provided in terms of job skills and job readiness?

GONZALES: I think that's absolutely true. I think that if you talk to the customers of public education, the parents, and their students, the point of education in my opinion is to develop a whole individual that has all the opportunities to be successful in life, however they determine success. Certainly we're finding that the job skills that were needed ten, fifteen, twenty years ago -- maybe even ten, fifteen months ago -- are changing. What we're learning in government, and local government particularly at City Hall, is to respond to the economy. We have to be more nimble. I think that that's going to be one of the challenges of public education. How do we make that infrastructure, that process much more nimble, much more willing and able to make some mid-course corrections a lot faster than they're capable now?

KYLE: Adria, this notion of looking at outcomes is important. I think the second point that the Mayor is making about being nimble is equally important. All of us on the call could come up with examples of where nimble has not been the hallmark of changes in school curriculum. Can you give some insights across a broader spectrum of cities of what kinds of outcomes and how those outcomes are derived and any ideas you have about being more nimble?

STEINBERG: I think that people tend to be very focused right now, as you know, on the statewide assessments and on getting kids over that hurdle. I think clearly it's important -- those assessments represent one measure, at least, of the level of one set of skills. It doesn't include the broader set of skills that Ron is talking about. But what worries me is that it leads to a very internal focus in a high school. I do think high schools really do need to be looking to the ultimate outcome, which is we want young people to be able to get into real career track employment -- obviously not just any employment, but employment with real advancement potential. Increasingly, that takes more than a high school diploma. It really does. It's just not a terminal degree any more, and it shouldn't be seen that way.

I think a lot of the outcomes that we're now looking for and what we're seeing -- more high school people and high school reform folks around the country recognize that we really need to get young people to some form of a post-secondary credential that bumps them up. It's increasingly the kind of dividing line between the haves and have-nots -- those who have some form of credential after high school and those who don't. I think that's new in some ways to the high school discussion, to be thinking in terms of how do we get all our young people prepared enough for both career-track employment and the kinds of credentialing that they're going to need to get and maintain and advance in that employment.

KYLE: In response to the nimble part of the issue, do you think that places are making those changes rapidly? The Mayor was talking about changes that 21 months ago -- but also 21 weeks ago. Things change very rapidly. Are school districts and their partners in communities able to meet that quick kind of change?

STEINBERG: Obviously it's very hard for any kind of large institution or large bureaucracy to be that nimble. I think that is one of the things that's promising right now about some of the small schools movement. That even within the districts, some of those smaller schools -- like we have a number of these kind of complexes in the Boston area right now where I'm located -- some of the smaller schools are, say, technology-focused or environmental career-focused. They are able to be more nimble because they have more autonomy at the school level to make the kinds of deep partnerships happen with employment, with leaders in the community, with employers, with post-secondary institutions. It's hard to do in a central office kind of way.

KYLE: Have any of the 18 districts that you're working with, Mayor, been able to show some quick changes in terms of responding to these pressures you're talking about? What techniques do you think have made them successful in making those changes more quickly, if you've seen them?

GONZALES: I think the jury is still out, John. I think it's still early in this process. We're going to work very closely with our local universities and colleges and community colleges and kind of drill down from there. But what we find is that every time that we've gone out to our high school districts, and even our elementary school districts, with a clear cut initiative that they can look at and say, "You know, this is going to be helpful to our students. This is going to help them achieve life skills and achieve a great career of their choosing," they've always been very responsive. When you get at the administrative level, they've always been responsive.

But I think the honest reality is you have state guidelines and requirements on curriculum and testing, those types of things. I'm just concerned that as we focus so much on testing -- I guess this is the flip side of results and outcomes -- that you focus so much on testing that we're training people and students to pass tests rather than to become whole individuals and have those life skills and specific education skills that are going to be needed in the workforce.

So I think the more experience we have with testing, the more experience that we have with grading our schools, I'm hoping that that will be built upon so that

we're not just training kids to pass tests so that we can get higher marks than the previous year. But those test results truly are reflecting a stronger academic student.

STEINBERG: Yes, I think it's going to take more than tests. I think some other forms of assessment, whether those are exhibitions of various kinds or portfolios, etc. I mean, some of the schools -- especially, again, the smaller schools -- are using some of those to get at things that the tests alone aren't going to get at.

KYLE: Some of the most vivid discussions about education in recent years have been about the No Child Left Behind Act. I'm wondering how this is either helpful or a hindrance to the changes that you all are talking about in terms of reforming high schools. Is this act something that is helping to focus attention, or is it draining dollars and attention? Is it a good thing or a bad thing? How has it stood with your look at high schools? Adria, could you start us off with that?

STEINBERG: I just want to say, yes, it is a good thing, and it is a bad thing. It's definitely good in the sense of driving attention to some of the groups of young people who have really been slipping through the cracks because of the whole way that data has to get disaggregated. On the other hand, it's really largely an unfunded mandate right now. I think it's very hard -- and I'm sure you'll hear about this from the Mayor -- very hard at this level of the city and the district to try to comply with all the provisions of No Child Left Behind with the budgets being where they are right now. I think it's creating a sense of kind of volatility and some futility at the local level.

KYLE: What about in San Jose, Mayor? Is the No Child Left Behind Act something that you're able to use in a positive way? Or does it seem to be something that's more difficult for you?

GONZALES: Well, I think that No Child Left Behind right now is kind of an unfunded mandate. While I think that the results that the act is trying to strive for are certainly ones that we should all be working towards -- and I think we are here in San Jose -- what I'm concerned about is the long-range impact on those students that are left behind in those schools that aren't performing. My concern is top-notch students who are motivated will always seek the schools at the top. If allowed to do that, I think we're going to be left with a lot of high schools throughout our nation where you have the lowest performing students that is going to have a student population that is not going to attract the best teachers. It's not going to attract the best administrators.

So I'm very concerned about the long-range impact. I don't see in this effort a guarantee against that. I am very concerned because of the students that are in that middle, that aren't the 4.0 students, the students in the 2 - 3 GPA level that have all the potential if we invest in them. Of course, the students who are below that who may be able with greater assistance to be brought up to higher levels. So I think both school administrators and I are concerned that the No Child Left Behind is siphoning off the best students from the weaker high schools.

KYLE: I think a lot of folks that are listening representing municipal governments

are interested in how city governments, town governments can get involved collaboratively. What are the particular steps that they can take to be supportive? I think in San Jose, you've got some examples perhaps -- the Downtown College Prep -- and your role in helping that get started. Can you give us some examples of where you think your leadership, your involvement has made a difference and how that happened?

GONZALES: I'd be glad to, John. I think the first thing is to not go out to the schools with a preconceived notion of what they need. That's the same approach we have taken with all of our city services, particularly in a program we call our Strong Neighborhoods initiative. We really have had to retrain our City Hall workers to activate their active listening skills and to really go out and understand truly what schools need and what they don't need. We learned very quickly they don't need any more people telling them what to teach in the classroom, as I said before, what to test on, or how student discipline should be handled. What they need are the unique resources that the city has. At least when we first started this effort, we had funding to provide for a variety of services.

So for example, the first thing they said was it's hard to recruit and retain teachers in a place like San Jose because of the high housing costs. So we created a teacher housing program that has now helped nearly 400 teachers buy their first home in the City of San Jose. We've only lost one teacher from that program. So obviously that's a program that in terms of outcome and results has met the test in terms of recruiting and retaining teachers.

The Downtown College Preparatory Academy that you mentioned -- this is the first charter high school in all of Silicon Valley. It opened about four years ago. In fact, this year they'll have their first graduating class. This particular charter school is one that I support because they are very focused on the students that Adria was mentioning before, the kids that have a chance at slipping through the holes of the system. We know that for every 100 Latino students that enter kindergarten in the San Francisco Bay area, 39 fail to complete high school and less than 10 of them will graduate from college. Well, Downtown College Prep targets low achieving students. You cannot get in this school unless your GPA is 2.0 and lower.

In other words, you have to be at risk of not graduating from high school. They focus their whole curriculum on getting those students to be qualified with the UC and California State University requirements before they graduate. Those are the kinds of efforts -- it's a small school. It's in our downtown area. It focuses on low-income students in our downtown area. It's had a tremendous success rate.

How I helped was we set them up with a loan to get them started to give them the seed money. You could say we're the venture capitalists for DCP. We helped them find a location in our downtown area, which is not an easy thing to do. So we've helped in a lot of ways.

KYLE: Adria, what are you seeing as examples of municipal involvement, or places where you would like to see municipal involvement, where you saw some of the changes that were necessary being not helped just by absence of municipal support?

STEINBERG: Well, I'll give one example of a good kind of support. In 1994, because the school district and the union and the Mayor worked together, Boston was able to get

the architecture set up for in-district charter schools, which we call pilot schools. That has really allowed for a lot of innovation to occur. These schools have autonomy for staffing and curriculum and scheduling and governance. They've been developing in a terrific way.

I just came from a meeting this morning that was reporting on a recent study that was just done in Massachusetts of the -- not necessarily high performing schools, but higher performing schools. Quite a few of them were either pilot schools or charter schools, interestingly enough. Two of the Boston pilot high schools were part of that. The Mayor really played a role in the architecture of that being able to happen.

I think mayors could play a role in supporting this whole notion of a portfolio of high schools in their communities. It takes some creativity, I think, and the kind of dedication that Mayor Gonzales seems to have, and the listening skills to do it. But I think it's possible.

GONZALES: You know, John, another role that a mayor can play -- and it doesn't necessarily mean you have to take money out of your city's general fund and give it to schools. But you can help increase the funding pie for public education in your community such as bond elections, where a school district desperately needs capital investment to bring their classrooms up to modern day standards. I've been a big supporter of bond elections in the City of San Jose and have been directly involved in helping a number of school districts pass those bond elections.

I don't want it to sound like you have to take your city's budget and hand it over to the school district. But a city mayor can use the bully pulpit of that office to speak for the community. Because whether school districts report to the mayor's office or not, I think the average voter thinks that they do, and they hold us responsible for these programs because the average voter is not sophisticated enough to understand the difference between these governing agencies. I think if you're going to be held responsible, you might as well be part of the solution.

STEINBERG: I think facilities is another piece. You mentioned that before, that you did some work on location. One thing that perhaps mayors can do -- I haven't seen this happen, but it may be happening around the country -- is work with developers so that when new developments are happening in the city, housing developments or whatever, that spaces for some of these new schools are part and parcel of that.

GONZALES: We do that here in San Jose. In fact, most of our communities are the result of what are called specific planning processes, where the public area needs such as parks, libraries, high schools, elementary schools are assessed. The developer is usually put in the situation where they dedicate the land or they pay for those types of facilities.

KYLE: I'm aware that in a few minutes, Mayor, you may need to step away. I just want to make sure that the audience understands that your voice may change as one of your chief aides responsible for the Department of Neighborhoods steps in to keep talking about San Jose. You will just do that seamlessly as you see fit when you need to go.

GONZALES: Thank you. Let me tell you, Avo Makdession probably knows more about this stuff than I do. So it'll be a good replacement.

KYLE: I want to keep talking for a couple minutes about this list that we were developing of things where municipal leadership fits. We talked about facilities. We talked about the bully pulpit. You talked about being an active listener. Are there other key roles? We talked about the collaboration and space issues. What other things? You talked about providing a loan. What other ways do you think you as a municipal leader have been active or plan to be active and encourage others to be active? Mayor, you can add a little more to your list.

GONZALES: Sure. I mentioned very quickly the Safe Schools Campus initiative earlier in this call. That's really important. I don't think kids can learn if they don't feel safe on their campus or on the way to their school and their way home from their school. We have a program where we've trained teachers, school staff, the administration, our public safety and fire departments and so forth to get into those schools and teach them how to do a lockdown. We've actually had real life experiences with this, and in both cases, they proceeded exactly as they were trained. Students felt very comfortable, very safe during both of those situations.

Another area where we spend a great deal of funds and effort are in afterschool programs. We now have in San Jose an afterschool homework center in every elementary, middle, and high school in City of San Jose. That's over 250 campuses throughout our community. They have very specific outcomes and measurements that they are graded against. I mentioned our early care and education services -- our Smart Start program.

So all these things are done. But I think one of the first steps a mayor can do and a city can do is to go out in the community and make sure that community members and parents are involved in all of this. I've often believed that the best way to help a student achieve is to have a great teacher and an involved parent. I think those two things can really help lead to greater student achievement. So we even have programs that help parents understand how they can be involved in their child's education and how they can support their child's teacher. That may sound kind of strange -- teaching parents how to be -- basically how to be parents in the education process.

But you have to understand, in San Jose, we have immigrants from all over the world. They come to us from countries that the parents' role in education may be very different than here. So we are learning that we've got to reach out beyond the classroom into the community and make sure that parents understand what's going on in the classroom on a daily basis with their child and how they can be supportive of the teacher so that you have students that do a better job in the classroom.

STEINBERG: I would like to pick up a little bit on the comment about afterschool because I think intuitively a lot of people think about afterschool as being for younger children. It really is very important I think from the mayor's office to leverage opportunities to extend learning beyond the school day, beyond the school year, even beyond the school building for the older students. Some of the best ways that I know of that being done are actually through internships and partnerships with employers where

there is both a kind of learning agenda and a work agenda that goes on in the afterschool hours for the older youth.

KYLE: One of the things I was struck by -- and I just wanted to come back and ask about -- was that many of these roles and ideas really go across the stream of education. They don't just focus on the high school part of education. Am I hearing that correctly from the both of you? Or are there some differentiations or subtleties that should be kept in mind if you're really trying to focus on the older kids in the high school?

STEINBERG: I think there are some differences. Primarily they have to do with developmental differences obviously. But also the whole issue of motivation I think becomes more and more central the older they are-- I mean, any of us who have either raised teenagers, and we've all been teenagers. I think we know that it's really that piece of engaging teenagers and motivating them to really do the work is a critical piece. It creates a different set of issues in trying to tackle those.

KYLE: Do you see it differently in San Jose? Is working toward outcomes for the kids in your elementary schools versus middle schools versus high schools different? Or is there a pattern? Where are the differences and where are the similarities?

GONZALES: John, I think there are differences. But I think that certainly as our students mature and begin to look forward, I think one of the challenges we face in the classroom -- and I think every one of us can remember some class we took in high school or even in elementary school where we were sitting there going, "What the heck does this have to do with what I want to do in life?" The challenge always in curriculum is how do you connect it with something that student wants to do. What is their dream? Where do they see themselves in five, ten, fifteen, twenty years? I think when you can do a better job as an educator in connecting and answering, "What does this math exercise or algebra or writing exercise have to do with what I want to do ten, fifteen years from now?" When you start to make that connection, I think that the student becomes self-motivated. When they become self-motivated, I think you've increased their learning power by 100%.

The comment that Adria made earlier about expanding internship programs, these kinds of things where our young people have the opportunity to work side-by-side with computer engineers, doctors, nurses, teachers, whatever their dream is and get a real life experience as to the job skills that those people have to have to get those jobs, then I think we're going to be in a better situation for student success.

KYLE: Do you think that we should be preparing all students in high schools as if they're going to college, even though they may not be? Is this something that should be part of what's going on in today's schools?

GONZALES: Absolutely.

STEINBERG: Absolutely. No question on that one.

GONZALES: And with that, John, I'm going to leave it to Avo Makdession answer the rest of the questions. Thank you for having me.

KYLE: Thanks a lot, Mayor. I think one of the things I wanted to get at is whether there are any local or state or federal policies that either specifically help [and that people may not be tapping into], or hinder in addressing this challenge of one-size-doesn't-fit-all. Are there particular policies that you're aware of at any level of government that we really should tap into more and if you don't know about it, you really ought to look into it because it will help you do this? Or ones that we ought to be working on to change that have been difficult to get by and that they kind of get in the way? Any examples of things like that we can share, Adria, and then Avo?

STEINBERG: Yes. Certainly charter policies deserve more of a look. They really vary from state to state in how many charters are allowed, who can authorize them, what the accountability system is for them. I think there's a lot of work that could be done and should be done around what the better forms and worse forms for charter legislation are. As I said, at the local level some cities have ways that local and district charters can be formed as well.

There is also a lot to think about in terms of school construction, to get back to the facilities issue. A lot of the ways that money flows to school construction tends to privilege bigger schools over smaller. Of course, right now there's not much money period for construction for anything. But it would be nice to have funds available for retrofitting some of these big, old schools and making them campuses for several smaller schools within them and/or for building smaller buildings to begin with. The other thing that makes a big difference I think on the state level is when the state has dual enrollment dollars that allow young people when they're in high school to access college courses. I think that that's something that all states should have and has made a big difference where it does exist. Those are just a few off the top of my head.

KYLE: What do you mean by dual enrollment dollars?

STEINBERG: It means that young people can go while they're in high school and take college courses that count for both high school and college credit without having to pay a fee.

KYLE: So just the fact that they're being provided a high school education, that they're enrolled in high school, means that they can also enroll in certain of these courses. There is no additional dollars to be paid by them.

STEINBERG: Correct. We are finding around the country that when young people do that while they're still in high school, it makes a big difference in their more successful transition into college.

KYLE: Avo, do you have any examples of policies, either local or state or federal, that seem to be ones that other people ought to look into as being either helpful or ones

that we all ought to look into as being hindering of these attempts to reform schools and education?

MAKDESSION: Yes, sure. One of the more recent things we're looking at is trying to provide incentives for new schools being built if they're a small school or a charter school. The problem is that a lot of our planning regulations for schools in California are governed by the state and not by the local government. In other words, we have a lot of jurisdiction and planning in building codes when it comes to other developments, but once a school is built, all that jurisdiction of planning and issuing building permits and so forth falls on the state. So we're looking at any jurisdiction that we have over building or finding locations for schools, and then providing incentives to build more small schools, especially on the high school level.

KYLE: One of the questions I specifically waited until Avo was talking was in connection with what communities and neighborhoods think about the facilities that they have or don't have, of their interest in smaller schools or different kinds of campuses. In general what community leaders, neighborhood associations, etc. think about attempts to change education. I know you carry the portfolio for neighborhoods for the Mayor. I'm just wondering if you have some comments about that in terms of what citizens and residents are saying and thinking.

MAKDESSION: Well, as we all know, the schools are the hubs of all our communities. At least in our city, there is a school in almost every neighborhood or community here. A lot of our community residents use the schools for community meetings, barbecues, gatherings on the weekends or what have you.

The main thing that we've tried to do in San Jose is start up a lot of public engagement before we talk to some of our school administrators. In other words, we go out to the community and we ask them what are some of the things you'd like to see done with your schools? Is it more access to their fields? Is it more access to the cafeteria for your community meetings, or whatever that might be? Once that public engagement and that dialogue begins, we kind of set the agenda. Then we go to the school administrators and say, "On behalf of our community residents, this is what our neighborhoods would like to see." It's been, as the Mayor mentioned, rather fruitful because we went to the school administrators and gave them a set of things that different residents around the city want to see. They're simple things. They are things like, as I said, allow more access during after school for community meetings to take place. So on that front, the Mayor has played a big role in brokering deals, so to speak, with use of school facilities.

STEINBERG: One new development we've been seeing in a few places is that some community organizing groups are actually starting to take on this whole small schools agenda. There are examples now. Oakland, California, is a good example of places where parents have really organized and pushed the city and the school system to provide them with more high schools where their kids will be known well and that will be much more personalized for their young people.

KYLE: Is this something that mayors can do more about? Is it something that the

schools should do more about? How do they work together? You think about the schools having some relationship to their communities. But are they less apt to -- is there something where there is a more effective partnership when the municipal government is involved?

MAKDESSION: Again, I think when the mayor steps in and tries to broker deals, so to speak, where the school administrators see just how important it is to have the parents and the surrounding community involved in that particular school, I think it benefits everyone. When they see that, they are a lot more apt to work with City Hall.

Another example is -- the Mayor mentioned helping out with bond measures or other voter measures. Recently we had a countywide measure to help improve education and put some more money back in our schools. A specific portion of that we'd like to look at spending on opening up smaller schools and alternative schools within our county. Now that particular idea was brought up by parents who attended meetings to kind of craft this ballot measure. So it's a matter of just listening to the community members, what they want to hear. As Adria mentioned, there is a need for this-- like in Oakland, parents want to have their kids be more recognized and not be just another number on the roll sheet.

KYLE: Is there difficulty, do you think, in setting priorities or in determining who gets attention? There is a lot of attention being paid to afterschool programs. Do communities and neighborhoods and parents get equally interested and excited about the changes or needs of their high school students? Or, are they more apt to put their efforts toward the younger kids and different kinds of programs? How is this working its way through toward your views of reform for high schools?

STEINBERG: As the dropout crisis has become more visible in newspapers and everywhere else, I think it is drawing more attention to the problems at the high school level. I mean, it's not an either/or. Obviously, people are always going to be concerned about the settings where their little kids are. But I think that people are much more aware maybe than a few years ago about the importance of intervening at the high school level as well.

KYLE: We're beginning to draw the call to a close. I want to announce that to you all so that you can make sure that last points that we didn't quite get to that you were ready to say, that you have an opportunity to do so. Also to mention any references or websites that you might want to steer people to find out more information about something in your city or something about Jobs for the Future.

I just want to say to our audience that the next audioconference call will be on December 18 and will focus on vulnerable and out-of-school youth. After that, there will be a call in January about early childhood challenges and early childhood success.. Also for those planning your calendars way in advance, April 28 to May 1 will be the next Your City's Families Conference, which will be held in Portland, Oregon. There will be more information about that during the winter and spring.

Avo, on behalf of San Jose, are there last words of advice and particular recommendations for municipal officials wanting to plunge into this? Any last comments

you want to make? Specific recommendations that you would make to other mayors and council members and municipal officials? Are there any reference points that you want to leave people with?

MAKDESSION: Absolutely. As external partners, most cities throughout the country -- municipal leaders-- do play a huge role in shaping education and high school reform by creating an environment where all high schoolers can achieve. The ingredients to it that have worked for us are innovation, quality teachers, small schools, dedicated residents, and a dedicated business community. They all lead to high schools that have performed and produced the greatest kids here in San Jose.

As far as starting up anything in your own city to look at high school reform, the first thing we've done is talk to our community members and parents to hear what their concerns are. Remember to have a comprehensive approach written down. That way it's something that your government can actually look at, point to, and follow. Then just know that city leaders can affect change in education by focusing on a number of avenues including school safety, fund raising, afterschool, and general support for innovation. Like I said before, teachers -- recruiting and retaining them --and having a dedicated business and resident community out there all lead to having great students coming out of our high schools.

In terms of references, I'd reference Mayor Gonzales's website at www.sjmayor.org. You can click on the education link there to look at some of the things we're doing in our city. Then some other publications and institutes that have helped us shape some of our programs -- well, first of all, I like to give kudos to the National League of Cities. They have a lot of material available that everybody can take a look at. Also Fordham Institute [www.edexcellence.net] and Alliance for Excellent Education [www.all4ed.org]. I'm sure Adria will give some contact info for her organization as well.

KYLE: Adria? Concluding comments?

STEINBERG: Sure. I think that just keeping up support from the mayor's office for high school reform and particularly the kind of portfolio approach that we've been talking about in this phone call is very important. Whether that happens through bond measures such as we've talked about or facilities or whatever, but keeping that support going.

Then really building a coalition and a vision around a strong second chance system for the city really needs the leadership of the mayor's office very much.

Finally kind of a third prong is the afterschool one of leveraging those opportunities to extend learning beyond school -- are all things that we kind of rely on support from the mayor's office and the city to do.

In terms of resources, I totally agree with all the ones that were said. I would add that at our website, Jobs for the Future -- we have a lot of publications, all of which are free and downloadable, that relate to this conversation. It's www.jff.org. Another organization I would mention is the National Youth Employment Coalition [www.nyec.org]. They have put together some interesting benchmarks and standards for the self-assessments that alternative schools can use, and they also have other good material.

KYLE: I want to thank you all, thank Mayor Gonzales, thank Avo, thank Adria for your participation today. It's been real helpful, and I think that this has been a great re-launch of our series of audioconferences. We hope that you as listeners will join us in the future. I want to give special thanks to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for supporting this call. Also to let you all know as listeners that the National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education, and Families will be announcing in the next several weeks a program to provide technical assistance to a selected number of cities about high school reform, again with support from the Gates Foundation. Look at our website-- we'll show that announcement when it is made, which will be done before the end of December. Our website is www.nlc.org/iyef.

Thanks again for everyone joining us today. Enjoy the rest of your day and thanks again.