



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

Municipal Leaders' Roles in Working with Schools to Close Student Achievement Gaps
February 21, 2002

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Speakers:

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Board member for the Durham Public Education Network.

Linda L. Croushore, Executive Director, Mon Valley
Education Consortium, McKeesport, Pennsylvania.

Sharon Lewis, Director of Research, Council of Great City Schools, Washington, D.C.,
and a former assistant superintendent for Detroit Public Schools

KYLE: Good afternoon or good morning, depending on from where in the country you're listening. My name is John Kyle from the National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education, and Families. We're talking today with several speakers about:

- How to address the achievement gap that many people are seeing in terms of how children perform in schools;
- That White children tend to perform better than Latino and African-American children; and
- Why this happens, and what municipal officials and other community leaders can do to address this gap and make all children perform successfully.

We have two speakers with us right now. We have Sharon Lewis, who is the Director of Research at the Council of the Great City Schools, and Linda Croushore, who is the Executive Director of the Mon Valley Education Consortium, which is a local education fund in southwestern Pennsylvania outside of Pittsburgh. Later in the call, City Councilmember Howard Clement of Durham, North Carolina will join us.

Sharon, let me start with you. When you hear the term "achievement gap" or hear me trying to define it, what do you think an achievement gap is? Can you give a couple sentences of what it is and how you see it?

LEWIS: That's a real good question, John, because unless you define the term, people can think different things. I know we've asked our members questions about achievement gap, and some of them first think about the difference between a school district's score and a state score on various assessments.

Typically what people mean though is the achievement gap between students of different racial or ethnic groups as well as of different socio-economic classes. In most urban schools that would be between Whites and non-Whites and between those who are advantaged

and those who are less advantaged. I don't think we should forget about the socio-economic differences because that's really what we're talking about. They just manifest themselves in different ways.

KYLE: Linda, how do you define achievement gap and what can you add or take issue with in terms of what I've said or Sharon said so far?

CROUSHORE: Well, I think Sharon is absolutely on target, and we need to remember both of those issues. I would add to it that the achievement gap is probably grounded in an "opportunity to learn" concept that we have to be extremely aware of. Some of our kids need different resources to be successful in school, whether it is in regard to the kind of classroom, the kind of support system, the kind of materials that are used. We are not always sensitive to the opportunities we create for all of our kids to ensure them a high quality education and the ability to be successful. So I totally agree with Sharon in terms of both the ethnicity issue as well as the socio-economic issue being considered and how do our schools and our communities come forward to present the highest opportunity for all children.

LEWIS: The "opportunity to learn" issue is critical. Our organization is located in D.C. where politicians don't like for us to use the term. It's not a term they like for us to use. The issue is opportunity to learn. It's opportunity to learn both inside and outside the classroom. We've done research that shows -- and again, I speak about urban kids -- that urban kids start school behind. We know that. You can look at the GAO reports, and they clearly say to you that the amount of money that suburban families spend on education-like activities for their children exceeds that of urban kids. So our urban kids are starting off behind. That's why what Linda said is so important. We need to make sure that we put things in place in the school day for them to catch up. But I didn't say remediation. I said acceleration of the program, not remediation. And that's the wrong thing that we did in the past.

CROUSHORE: I think also, John, something important to pay attention to is that you often hear the word "equity" tossed around. If all of our students had the same resources behind them, we would be fine. But I would suggest to you that for many of our children, it is not even an issue of equity as much as it is of adequacy. What we really need to do is look at the standards we want to achieve. By obligating ourselves to achieving those standards for all kids, we have to figure out what resources are necessary and assure that they're in place for our children.

LEWIS: We like to say that equity and equality are not the same. Equity does not mean equal.

CROUSHORE: You got it.

LEWIS: Many people want to say that, but it does not mean equal.

KYLE: At this point, I'd like to also welcome Howard Clement, member of the City Council in Durham, North Carolina.

I'd like you to talk about who the "we" is when we talk about who's going to address this and "what we ought to do." So in the Mon Valley area in southwestern

Pennsylvania, who is the “we?” Automatically, we’re going to assume school districts. Tell me about that, but also tell me who else is in the “we.”

CROUSHORE: I think that’s a very, very critical question, and a question that has truly had new language to describe it these days, John. Historically, there was a good assumption that people would live, grow up, work, pray, learn, and die in their own town. So the “we” was a certain group of people. Today, that is very different because of the demographics and the expectations that our economy brings on our citizenry.

At the Mon Valley Education Consortium, we have struggled with just who is community, who is the “we?” We’ve tried to say that everybody who lives, learns, works, worships, or plays in a place is part of the “we.” I say that because the “we” is far beyond the walls of the school. If we are really going to build a public will that demands high expectations, we have to determine all of the players that can build that will. It is not just for schools. It is not just the mayor. And if there is a true expectation for an improved economy, it means that all of our citizens must be ready to take on that charge and to do their part in assuring that those young people that are growing up in that system and growing up in that place have those skills in place. So our “we” is very broad-based. We think that everyone has both an obligation to that community to improve it and also a right to expect excellence from it. It is that interesting balance of how one gets from here to there that we struggle with.

KYLE: Can you identify one of your “we’s,” other than a school system? We’ll come back and talk about it more later.

CROUSHORE: For instance, the police in a community are critical players in providing the safety, both inside schools, and in the community at large. The common language and the common expectations and the common inspirations that we can bring between the police department and the home and the schools and the municipality is a critical “we.”

KYLE: And you’re going to tell me more about this later. But in a yes or no fashion, do you believe the police can have an effect on reducing the achievement gap?

CROUSHORE: Absolutely.

CLEMENT: I want to expand on the “we” portion. Here in Durham, North Carolina, where I’ve been a member of the City Council for some time, we found that the public housing community is a part of that “we” because where the achievement gap is most noticeable is in public housing. We have been able to work out arrangements with our local public housing officials, North Carolina Central University, as well as the Durham Public Education Network for a triumvirate arrangement working with the residents in public housing -- the mothers, the guardians, as well as the children. It’s highly important for all of us to become involved in raising achievement. I also want to hasten to add that we’re not talking about lowering expectations. We’re talking about raising expectations so that the whole system prospers, and no one is settling for the least common denominator, but raising the denominator for all students. This is a community-wide effort. It’s not an education effort. It’s a community-wide effort.

KYLE: Sharon, in your organization, you’re representing larger cities -- school systems in

particular, both the superintendents and the school board members. Can you give some reflection on the “we” that they’re trying to use in terms of addressing achievement gap issues?

LEWIS: Sure, John. I first want to comment on something that the councilman just said about not lowering standards. When I talked about the definition of achievement gap, I should say that the research that we do on urban school districts and closing the gap uses a twofold definition. The school district must first demonstrate it is improving student achievement for all children while also closing the gap, as I talked about, between socio-economic class and racial and ethnic groups. So they have to do both. It is not good enough just to close the gap if student achievement is not going up for all kids. Which really means that they have to put a lot of additional things in place to ensure that this happens.

I guess when Linda said that the police are a part of the “we,” I think the “we” that we have has components of it that are necessary like the police. They’re necessary, but they’re not sufficient. For instance, if you clean up the gangs and the crime in communities, I think that is necessary, but it’s not sufficient. By sufficient, I mean you have to change the way you teach. You have to change curriculum and instruction. Historically, some of the Head Start programs are wonderful programs, John, for teaching kids how to brush their teeth and about dental hygiene and cleanliness. But unless they have some attention to teaching young kids how to read, they’re not going to learn how to read. So the dental hygiene piece and the cleanliness are necessary, but they are not sufficient.

One of the things that communities need to do for those who are cleaning up the communities and making them stronger, better places, as well as working on the academic piece, is to make sure that their afterschool and their preschool programs are aligned with the district’s and the state’s standards. Heretofore, we haven’t done this. The College Board has done some research around closing the achievement gap, and they worked with some California districts. They looked at the Asian community, and they found that when you look at an Asian community and you compare that with a traditional African-American or Latino community, that Asian community had more education- or academic-type of activities for children than the African-American and Latino. We had recreational activities for children. They had more libraries. They had more tutoring. They had more mentors. They had more things that were focused on education, where the other communities had things that were more focused on recreation.

KYLE: One of the things I would like to get into a little bit is to extend this “adequate or helpful, but not sufficient” notion. And I think it’s interesting that you talked about the importance of the schools amongst you. You talked about the public housing is an important partner. You talked about the police being an important partner in there. I want to come back to Howard. He’s an elected official from his community. And think about what roles municipal government in general can be playing to help to meet the challenge that Sharon is pointing out of “adequate, but not sufficient.” What can city government do to be part of this?

CLEMENT: We have an integral role to play in this educational process because we are training citizens -- young people -- to be future leaders. So there is no question that the cities must play a role in public education in order to assure that the process will produce the kinds of leaders of tomorrow that we need to set us on the path that we need to go as progressive cities. What we in Durham have done is to assume a leadership role in bringing communities together. Being elected officials that were somewhat ordained by the people to govern gives us at least the

bully pulpit that we think is necessary to talk about public education and how it impacts on the total community. For better or for worse, there is no question that public education impacts on the total community. In addition to bringing in the police as part of this process, there are also the recreational facilities. There are also the faith-based communities. All of these components we elected officials can touch upon by bringing them together in a forum. And that's what we did back in February 2001 here in Durham. The response was terrific. It's just getting us to decide this is the role that we want to play and go ahead and play it.

CROUSHORE: Howard, I think that's absolutely excellent. I'm sure as a board member of the local education fund in Durham, you've seen the value of the local education fund's role in helping that happen. As a local education fund director myself, I think you're absolutely right. What we're talking about here really is setting the tone for a lot more rigor on all fronts from all the participants. No one alone in a community or a school or a mayor or anyone by themselves can really bring about that energy and that high commitment to high standards for all of our kids. But, when we get everybody in the same room, we begin to understand each other's acronyms, we begin to break down the walls and barriers that separate us, and we begin to be able to come together and really push for the excellence that Sharon was talking about.

CLEMENT: Exactly.

LEWIS: Let me give you another example. Everyone is aware that the Chicago Public Schools had a lot of attention because they had the first major summer school program for trying to eliminate social promotion. What they found was that there was a group of kids -- a couple thousand -- that would not be successful in completing the grade. So, they would go to summer school and then they would be passed on. Then, the next year they would not be successful and they would have to go to summer school again. And so you saw these same kids needing the summer school experience.

What did they find out? They found out that many of these kids were from foster homes. They found that many of these kids needed glasses. So you got back to some of the social support that was needed to help the school. But until they continued to research and say, "okay, what's wrong? What's in common? What do these kids have in common?" Many of them were moving five and six times throughout the year and changing schools. So they needed conversation around that. So it was just amazing that when you really want to make a difference, John, you can make a difference. The community can make the difference.

KYLE: Once you get past the "I'm not sure if this is my business or not" -- and we talked about the partnerships and the reasons for some municipal officials to be involved, that we all depend on all of these kids. And once you get past the notion that there is a whole variety of things that can be used as part of the partnerships -- the glasses, the safety, the things that are important but aren't necessarily the ones that will get you all the way to your goal. What are you seeing, either in Durham or in southwestern Pennsylvania or in any of your 50 or so member cities, Sharon, what are you seeing as really top-notch examples of what you would like to see more cities do to address the achievement gap? What are some examples, either by name or generically, that you would like to see happen more and more? Linda, what's going on? You've got a dozen or so communities that you're working with in the Mon Valley area. What examples do you think really help you work on the achievement gap in southwestern Pennsylvania?

CROUSHORE: Well, I think there are several. And some of those include the following. By doing some of the things John and Sharon have already identified, what can emerge are groups that perhaps heretofore haven't been in this process. Let's take churches, for instance. Our schools are never going to be able to find all of the dollars to assure all of the afterschool programming and summer programming that's probably necessary. But if there is a relationship built with other institutions in the community, some of the human service organizations -- the YMCAs and the YWCAs, and as Sharon suggested, the Head Starts.

If they understand that there is a seamless opportunity to all recognize the standards that we are trying to achieve. If programming is created that allows opportunity for all children, all of which is clearly tied to the same standards that we are trying to achieve. Then, we can have many community partners working at producing outstanding afterschool opportunities in neighborhoods where kids don't need to be bussed or moved around. Schools may not be the right host for some of those activities. But these activities can still have the rigor and high quality of closing the achievement gap as their true commitment, rather than just a social opportunity. We can see that happen. I would suggest that just looking at how to give kids a chance to have the tutoring they need, have the support systems they need, have the rigor of their educational programming enhanced by partners in the community is an excellent outcome of the relationship building that Howard has suggested cities and municipalities can do.

KYLE: You mentioned, Sharon, in Chicago the summer school program aimed at reducing social promotions. Can you enumerate any other cities that you're aware of, the particular practices that they have put in place that you think have the potential or have already achieved reductions in achievement gap?

LEWIS: We are in the process of conducting some research that's been going on for the past year and a half. And we hope to be finalizing it for early May. We've identified three urban school districts that are improving student achievement at a faster rate than the state average as well as closing the achievement gap. That was our criteria -- you had to move faster than the state, because if we start off behind and we don't move faster than, then we'll always stay behind. You have to go faster than the state, and you have to close the gaps. [To read the Council of Great City Schools' report, "Foundations for Success: Case Studies of How Urban School Systems Improve Student Achievement," released in September 2002, go to: <http://www.cgcs.org/reports/Foundations.html>]

We found a small handful of school districts that met those criteria. We've been conducting case studies in three of those districts -- Charlotte-Mecklenburg, North Carolina; Sacramento, California; and Houston, Texas. We wanted to see if they were doing some of the same things, and we did find some commonalities.

The one that I want to point out is the high standards. They all had high standards, and they all were driven by data. When you go to Charlotte-Mecklenburg, the Superintendent talks about the number of kids in free and reduced-price lunch who take Geometry -- not Algebra, but Geometry -- and how that number has increased over the years. It is one of the goals of his school district, which means that he has to change the way you teach Mathematics in elementary school in order to get them to take Geometry. He talks about how he tried to increase the number of African-American kids taking AP [Advanced Placement] courses and how he was getting resistance for it from his teachers. Over time, that number wasn't rising

the way he wanted it to. And he realized that the teachers -- I'm a former high school math teacher, so I can say this -- were never going to change. They were too rigid. They only wanted to teach the best. And so eventually he said, "Put those kids in the classes. Don't go by teacher judgment. Just put them in the classes. Change it." And then, of course, he supported that with massive professional development, etc.

Gradually, the numbers have been increasing, not only the number enrolled, but the number successfully completing the courses, because it's not good enough just to measure how many are enrolled. You have to look at how many are successfully completing, because teachers will be real pleased with failing a bunch of kids and blaming the kids. So you have to do both -- both high standards, driven by data, and making sure that all kids can learn.

CROUSHORE: We've also had our school districts reaching down into our Head Starts and early childhood centers to share information about the curriculum and about standards with preschool initiatives so that the work can begin much earlier. Where schools can't have their own preschool programs or whatever, they can take advantage of their community partners to make sure that the whole process starts two or three years younger.

Our own organization has a huge community literacy initiative that is putting parent literacy guides in the hands of every mother who leaves the hospital with clearly defined, real activities that can be done with babies from the moment of birth until age eight. So this accumulation of repeated activities will prepare kids to start school on a much more level playing field. For example, getting books and building home libraries for the many kids who don't have them. We have a partnership with the food banks -- all of our food banks have accepted literacy as the fifth food group. Every month when every pantry supplies its families with food, they are putting books into the homes of kids. Where we find families in which parents have literacy challenges themselves, we are connecting them to literacy programming so that their own skills can be strengthened, and they can feel more comfortable about their relationship to formal education.

KYLE: Howard, in your experience in Durham are there particular examples of practices that your school district or your community or your colleagues in other local education funds elsewhere in the country that you think are particularly useful or successful in addressing achievement gap issues?

CLEMENT: We know that the earlier you start addressing the achievement gap, almost beginning with the cradle, is very important. Because the achievement gap begins long before these kids go into schools. I'm just delighted to know that other communities are working this Operation Breakthrough -- Head Start as it may be labeled. Because you must begin at the very earliest ages.

The former Governor of North Carolina, Jim Hunt, has labeled himself "The Education Governor" and was a good governor in terms of addressing the concerns of youngsters, beginning at a very early age. That example has carried over into the local municipal governments as how to address the problems of education.

I'm interested in the concept of equity, because equity and equality are not necessarily the same. I like to address equity, because to be equal may not be what we want. We want equity. We want all students to be afforded the equitable opportunities to grow and to prosper. And what may be equal to one may not be good enough for someone else. But equity,

as someone has said, will level the playing field. It starts early on -- Operation Breakthrough, Head Start, and other childhood programs. If we can get into the public housing communities across this great country and through these many states and local governments, to inform parents -- usually single parent mothers -- as to the importance of getting their children a head start and a heads-up in the educational process. That should be a commitment for all cities, for all educational organizations to address this problem of balancing the achievement gap.

The achievement gap in Durham has been narrowed, but we still have a long way to go. The fact that we have superintendents and boards of education that are committed to narrowing the achievement gap is the head start. Once we get the total community committed to this process, then success will be the result.

KYLE: I'd like to also ask my guests to be ready to give your best advice to a mayor or a city councilmember or your best advice to a school board member or a superintendent on addressing the achievement gap. And also to let us know about your favorite website or other kind of resource that our audience might like to know about. My next question has to do with business and corporate collaborations with schools. Do you think that achievement gap issues, improvement in elementary reading and math and things like this have been helped by any kinds of particular partnerships or relationships with business or the corporate sector? Have you seen any of that in Pennsylvania?

CROUSHORE: Absolutely.

KYLE: Have they been successful? Has anybody proved they are successful? What's going on, do you think?

CROUSHORE: I think that businesses have sometimes totally underestimated the power that they have to affect their own employees' energy around these issues. I think businesses have begun to recognize that and know that their own future employee base is critical and dependent on the success of the children of their current employees. So, we have found that they have been more than interested to both talk to students, and to work with students. We have seen a growing increase and a better relationship between the kinds of jobs available and the willingness of students to think with employers about the opportunities in manufacturing and others. There is a growing and critical gap between the jobs out there and the kind of graduates that we are getting. We are trying to be really clear and really specific about helping direct kids to jobs that can offer them a nice quality of life and that can truly solve the supply and demand issue in the economy. We are finding that our business partners want to come forward. They want to support opportunities to enhance kids' literacy potential.

Just last week we had over 35 employers want to pay for buses to send kids to Border's Bookstore to participate in a wonderful partnership where kids were in touch with authors, etc. They wanted to put their money on the line to say, "I want all these kids to go home with a book for their own home library," and paid for those things. So businesses want to pay for good work that's being done. I think they're very willing. I think part of the sadness is that sometimes they have felt their money has gone into black holes. So I think our crispness about offering good opportunities makes our businesses step up to the table to say, "We want to be players."

KYLE: Howard, are you seeing effective relationships with businesses and corporations in Durham?

CLEMENT: No question.

KYLE: Can you give us an example of something you're proud of?

CLEMENT: The Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce, which covers the entire Durham County, has an active education initiative program to bring in the corporate communities throughout the Durham area to address the problems of education, and specifically the achievement gap. In fact, tomorrow afternoon, the Durham Chamber of Commerce's Education Committee will be meeting. I'm certain this conference call will be a part of the discussion as to how Durham is addressing the problem of education through its business community.

I would like to support what the previous speaker just said. When these businesses find that their environment, their culture will be predicated on what happens in public education, those businesses will become more and more involved in the educational process. That's what we in the leadership role just have to keep before them, that their future depends on a sound, educated constituency. And it's working here and there.

LEWIS: I want to add one thing very quickly to that about businesses -- I would encourage businesses to run for the Board of Education.

KYLE: Sharon, you've got lots of school board members and school superintendents with whom you have relationships through your organization. How do you think that your members will best be able to work with and invite municipal officials in to help affect change and curriculum and instruction? Where do you see good partnerships or what do you see as a good lead-in for a mayor or councilmember? How can they get a superintendent or a school board official who hasn't really been trying to work with their municipal officials? Can you give some examples of where some good partnerships are and what might be some hallmarks of why those were good, how those got started?

LEWIS: I probably couldn't tell you a lot about where good partnerships are. I just don't have that on my screen at this point. But that's not to say that I don't understand the importance of it.

KYLE: As I know, you are a former school administrator yourself.

LEWIS: Yes, I am.

KYLE: What would you have liked to see from a municipal official in terms of affecting change in curriculum and instruction?

LEWIS: Well, I was in Detroit Public Schools for 30 years. The Chamber of Commerce worked extremely closely with the school district. They had an education sub-committee and worked very closely. What I think they can bring to school districts is the friendly critic. They can constantly raise the right questions. I think as school people, we get a little inbred and we

get accustomed to talking to ourselves and making the same excuses. If you get a businessperson, a community person, a minister, or an active parent to come in and start asking us questions that we may not have thought of, it's on us to be open and receptive to that conversation and not always be defensive. We have a long way to go. We are not perfect. We need all the help that we can get.

CROUSHORE: Sharon, I think that's a really good point. I think that when John indicated that one of the things he was going to ask us is what are some of those key issues, I really believe that it is the inclusiveness that gives us the best chance. When we convene people to talk about these issues, we need to be as diverse as possible. We can't invite our best friends. We need to invite those who have different ideas because being able to come together to talk in a common language and develop that common agenda is what makes the community strong. It's when everybody is separated into their own little pigeonholes that we really get into trouble. We have to recognize that some of those conversations may not be easy, but they must get on the table, and we must perhaps raise difficult questions before we can move on. When we ignore the questions, we obviously don't get to the right answers.

LEWIS: Right. I think that you mentioned that some foundations or business leaders might have thought they were pouring money down black holes. And I think in many cases they were. You don't start new programs or new initiatives without research based on corroborating work someplace else. If it's something new and does not have the research base, that can be fine too, but have a strong evaluation component. Don't expect it to work miracles the first year. But if it hasn't worked in three to five years, it's time to get rid of it.

KYLE: We've talked about including the housing officials. We've talked about including police officials. In fact, one of the groups most concerned with children in municipal governments are parks and recreation officials. Have you seen any concrete examples of recreation programs carrying out practices that would promote achievement by all kids and help to reduce achievement gaps?

CLEMENT: Here in Durham we have launched several afterschool programs. Studies have shown that many of the antisocial activities perpetrated by young people occur after school and before the parents come home. We here in Durham have launched an afterschool program throughout our school system where various communities working in conjunction with the schools to keep children busy put all of the parks and other gym-toriums and other school facilities in use. Of course, keeping children busy can also mean helping them learn, helping them achieve. While there's no "one size fits all" category, the concept of keeping children busy, involved in productive, affirmative activities will certainly be a deterrent to antisocial behavior. In this we join with schools, with the communities in promoting this concept. And I find it is working.

CROUSHORE: The one other thing I would add to that, Howard, that I think is really important is that somehow we have come to a decision, sadly enough, that learning can't be fun, and fun can't include learning. So we have seen this divide between recreation programs and education programs. One of the things that we have to get very clear is that learning can be very exciting and that recreational programs can be very educational. We have to begin to really develop that

marriage. I think that's what you're suggesting. I think we have to keep that clear.

KYLE: It sounds like one of the things you're saying, both here and very early in the call when Sharon was talking about "helpful, but not sufficient" -- how does this play into what are referred to as "developmental assets of youth?" Do any of the programs that you're familiar with consciously make an effort to use the assets model -- the Search Institute [<http://www.search-institute.org/assets>], or any of the other community youth development approaches? Do they make conscious efforts to do that? Or, are they kind of falling into it because of the kinds of conversations we've been having today, recognizing that it's not sufficient to work only on an educational piece or only on a safety piece?

CLEMENT: It is important to encourage growing physically as well as socially. I don't think we have a concrete program as such, but we are falling into it. It just happens. You get the right people involved -- when I say the right people, I mean people who are committed to young people and to their growth and to their development -- you fall into these kinds of patterns and concepts. And out of that comes a program.

KYLE: I think maybe one of the things that the listener is thinking about, and might be food for further thought, is the fact that a number of communities have undertaken studies of their communities using an assets model. Which of the assets developed by the Search Institute do we have plenty of? Which don't we have enough of? I think the interesting thing -- at least food for thoughts -- is has anybody taken those asset result studies and put that against school achievement studies? And looked at two different pools of data to try and say, "These are the things we need to do for our kids in our community" and run things differently because we've looked at assets that are lacking as well as gaps in achievement.

CROUSHORE: That's how many of the programs in the Mon Valley have been created, by comparing diverse data. Usually we find that communities look at their data, schools look at their data, and other people look at their data. What we really need is to pool that data and begin to recognize how it overlaps, how it fosters opportunity. That has been the critical feature of the work of our local education fund.

KYLE: I want to thank each of you for participating today. I'm going to ask you each to make some concluding remarks and offer your best piece of advice for a municipal official or for a school official. If you've got some resource that you think our listeners would like to know about, plug it at that point.

We have a lot of information available at NLCs' Institute of Youth, Education, and Families' website, which is <http://www.nlc.org/iyef>.

CROUSHORE: John, thank you for the opportunity to be part of this conference. Sharon and Howard, thank you. You were wonderful. My bit of advice to communities is to please be as broad as you can in your invitation to those who join you to think about these hard questions on behalf of the future of your economics in your community as it relates to the development of your young people. Don't be afraid to invite the people that you know are critics, because it is important to begin to understand why people feel negatively and begin to develop a common language and vision for all of you. I encourage you then to proceed from that vision that's

developed, to act on it and do what's most important for your community and your children.

LEWIS: I would like to echo Linda. Thank you for inviting me to participate in this conference call. The Council of the Great City Schools is an organization that works with large urban school districts. I would like to give our website: <http://www.cgcs.org/>. You'll find all sorts of reports there as well as a bunch of other information.

The one thing that's beginning to weigh heavy on me is elected school boards. So, the advice I would give to communities is to make sure you get a good elected school board. I am very afraid of the route that we seem to be going now. I think that's very critical. If I were talking to superintendents or school board members, I would say that one of the most important features to improving student achievement and closing the gap would be the professional development programs. Professional development programs are not events. They are ongoing activities, and they need to focus and be directed towards the district's standards.

CLEMENT: Thank you so much for this opportunity, John, and I certainly welcome the privilege to discuss matters of common concern with my fellow participants.

The whole education process is very important, and it's too important to just leave to educators. The whole community must become involved, and I would hope that as a result of this and related endeavors, we can bring about a community consensus as to how important public education is for the well being of the total community. So I salute the National League of Cities for this effort, and I certainly hope the opportunity will increase for more and more municipal officials to participate in these endeavors.

KYLE: We appreciate everything from all of you today. This is John Kyle at the National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education, and Families signing off.