

**AmeriCorp State and National Symposium 2016**  
**September 21-23, 2016, Alexandria, VA**  
**Morning Plenary: New Opportunities for National Service in Education**  
**Thursday, 9/22, 9:00am – 10:30am**

**Transcription**

**BILL BASL:** Please come forward. It's great to see such a full house this morning on our second day of our AmeriCorps Symposium. Thank you for coming back. For those of you who perhaps this is your first day, yesterday we made announcement to help support close to 300 AmeriCorps members who are serving in Louisiana, so if you would like to drop a note or put a note together, or an affirmation or a thank-you, just take out a piece of paper and just put it in the middle of the table when we're done, and Beth Binkley, one of our program officers, is going to be in Baton Rouge in a week and she will hand-deliver every note that you provide or that you write today to these AmeriCorps members who are serving in very trying conditions. And so we thought that if they heard from 400 people, that some of whom probably have never met, this would mean a lot to them, so thank you for doing that.

This morning we have a very exciting panel, and we're going to be looking at and exploring two areas. One is the role of National Service in education, and then secondly a new piece of legislation, the Every Student Succeeds Act, and the role that commissions have not only in that act but also the roles commissions have in education. To help us in this process of becoming better organized, the Corporation for National and Community Service hired a Senior Advisor for Education. It is our very first Senior Advisor in Education, and that's Heather Rieman. Heather comes to us from the U.S. Department of Education where she served as Chief of Staff in the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, and she was also a Senior Policy Advisor at the Department. She served in a variety of nonprofit organizations, had a wonderful experience working on Senator Kennedy's Committee of Education, Labor, and Pensions, and Health on the Hill. And so we're really fortunate to have her serve as our Senior Advisor, and also who is going to moderate the panel this morning. So without further ado, please welcome Heather Rieman.

**HEATHER RIEMAN:** All right, thanks, Bill. I'm really honored to be here today for my first AmeriCorps Symposium. Over the last few months in my role as Senior Education Advisor, I've been talking to a lot of people and learning about our programs and grantees, and I have to say I've been incredibly impressed by all the work you do supporting kids. It's truly amazing. I've been in the education field a long time, and I really had no idea the depth and breadth of all the activities you do from the cradle to career continuum. From early childhood programs to reading by third grade, ensuring all students graduate from high school and then transition to college and careers, we do it all.

However I think many people don't fully realize the important role National Service plays in education. About half the budget for CNCS funds education-related programs, and we are in 1 of every 10 public schools around the country, and 1 of every 4 high-need schools. National Service

is playing a critical role in education, and with the new Federal education law, the Every Student Succeeds Act, I believe we are poised to play an even bigger role. And, as all of you know, it's much larger than education. Whether you are supporting students directly or helping ensure families to have access to food, healthcare, or safe neighborhoods, you are all playing a role in setting our kids up for success.

So first and most importantly, I want to say thank you for the work you do every day. You are truly providing critical supports to students and helping change the trajectory of their lives. I'm incredibly proud of the work CNCS does, and I'm excited that my role is to support you and your work. So I want to take this opportunity to talk a little bit about why this work is so important to me personally, and why I think National Service is uniquely positioned to help provide the support and relationships kids need to succeed in school and life.

As a daughter of a school librarian mom and a financial aid director dad who helps kids get to college, I knew from very early on that education was really important, but I also knew that not all kids were getting a good education. You see, I'm from Evanston, Illinois, which is a suburb that borders Chicago on the north side, and I grew up seeing really well-funded, fancy, suburban schools on one side of me, and just a few miles away were dilapidated schools with metal fences around them, few AP courses, and a high dropout rate. Even as a kid, I remember being confused and disturbed by the differences that I saw, and even within my own high school in Evanston I saw vastly different access to resources, with kids from north Evanston graduating and going on to prestigious colleges, and friends of mine from the less affluent part of town struggling to even graduate. – And that sparked an interest in education equity that has been a common thread throughout my career.

As Bill mentioned, I most recently came from the U.S. Department of Education where I spent 6 years in a number of roles. There I focused on education equity, school climate, student supports, and ensuring that all students had an excellent education. But prior to that, I cofounded and was the executive director of a small nonprofit called Critical Exposure, which teaches kids documentary photography and advocacy around education equity issues. We gave kids cameras to take photographs of the issues that concerned them most, and helped them tell their stories to policy-makers to create change. I founded the organization because I believed that all kids have a right to a high-quality education, and that young people have the power and the ability to be self-advocates for change. Students have a critical voice and deserve a seat at the table.

My experience at starting and running a nonprofit also helped me see firsthand the power of National Service. As a new startup organization, AmeriCorps VISTA members were absolutely critical in building our capacity. The members helped grow their organization from a tiny startup of 2 to running out of a living room to a much larger organization empowering hundreds of youth to make changes in their schools and communities, and luckily no longer run out of my living room. Through Critical Exposure, I got the chance to work directly with homeless kids, teen parents, youth who dropped out of school and were involved with the juvenile justice system – and when I think of those kids, when I think of Kayla and Amina and Byron, I see amazing kids struggling to beat the odds. What they all needed? What they all needed was a little extra support to reach their full potential, but far too frequently their overburdened school systems were not set up to provide it.

The thing that gets me up in the morning and drives my work every day is ensuring that all children, particularly our most vulnerable children to succeed in school and life, and that, I think, is one of the things that National Service is best at, and why your work is so critical. We can provide the people power to ensure that students have the relationships and supports they need to succeed. We can provide excellent teachers and cost-effective tutoring, mentoring, and wrap-around supports that students need to stay in school and achieve to the highest levels. We can provide the community and nonprofit partnerships that help create the conditions for learning, and tip the balance for kids who need it most.

We've a big job ahead of us. Currently estimates are that somewhere between 11 and 14 million kids are living in poverty, and we know that only 20% of low-income eighth graders were performing at or above their proficient levels in reading. – And 6.5 million kids are chronically absent from school every year. National Service is all about tackling our nation's most challenging problems, and I know we won't shy away from this task. I look forward to working with you all to be strategic, proactive, and bold in helping to fill the gaps, and ensure that every student has the opportunity to succeed in school and life.

We have a really great program for you today. I'm excited to have such great speakers, literally my first choice for everyone who is here, so this is sort of the dream team of education panels. Starting things off, we have John Gomperts, the CEO and Executive Director of America's Promise. When I was thinking about his session, I knew I wanted somebody who deeply understood both AmeriCorps and the education landscape, and of course John Gomperts came to mind so I was thrilled he was available to join us today. As the former Director of AmeriCorps, he needs little introduction to this crowd, and already has firsthand knowledge of your work. He is going to talk to us about the critical role of National Service in education, and about the work America's Promise is doing to increase graduation rates across the country. Please join me in welcoming the always-entertaining and though-provoking John Gomperts.

**JOHN GOMPERTS:** Ugh, Heather has me totally boxed in, in fact I feel boxed in to start with. First of all, she said everything that I might have said but better, and she said I was going to be entertaining, but on the way in I ran into our friend Jennifer Bastress Tahmasebi, J-Bas, who told me all the things I couldn't say which is going to make me less entertaining. It's awesome, of course, to be here with all of you, friends from different walks of life and different parts of my life and the work that we've all done together. To see friends from AmeriCorps, from the field, from programs, and from politics, it's just – it's great.

I want to do three things – I fear they're not that entertaining but we'll see how that unfurls – today. I want to do a little bit of context, I want to talk a little bit about what I think is going on for the young people about whom we all are most concerned, and I want to talk – although Heather already did a damn good job – about why I think National Service, and especially AmeriCorps, are so important in this thing. And I'll try to go short because you have a terrific set of people talking, and I know you all want to be involved in the conversation as well.

So context – there are a lot of good things happening with young people in America today, and there are a lot of not good things happening, and it's important I think always to look at both

aspects of this. So there is progress, it's just unquestioned. America's Promise has been leading this campaign called the Grad Nation Campaign for nearly a decade now, and over the past two administrations there's been enormous effort to focus on graduation rates, to devote resources, financial resources, intellectual resources, data resources and human resources to help raise graduation rates, to help more young people walk across the stage with their classmates. That has been a big success. The graduation rates over the last decade have increased by nearly 11%, from just over 71% to just over 82%. 82.3% is the most recent number we have from the Department of Education. It's a huge increase over the past decade, and because of that increase an additional 2 million young people graduated on time. That's big. And this happened in the context of rising standards. These two things went up at the same time. The easiest narrative – and I'm sure all of you who follow this see it in the press now and again – is, "Oh, this is simple. You can raise standards and graduation rates will go down, or you can lower standards and graduation rates will go up." It's the easiest possible narrative that it's this teeter-totter, right, but that's wrong, and that diminishes the effort that so many people have made from kitchen tables to policy tables to work on what's going on with kids. It's wrong, teeter-totter. Standards up, graduation rates up. And to think that's not possible is to me fundamentally offensive because it says, "I don't believe those kids can learn at high levels." We believe that's wrong. So that's some good news, graduation rates up, standards up, more kids graduating on time, more prepared.

Bad news – 82.3% graduation rate means 16.7% not graduating with their class. Then dig into that and you see huge disparities that should make it hard to sleep at night. You see disparities based on income. You see disparities with race and ethnicity. Kids of color had actually had the greatest increase but still lag. You see disparities with English language learners. You see disparities with kids with disabilities and special needs. That, we need to work on as a nation.

We also see too many kids who aren't prepared for whatever happens next, whether that's work, service, or some form of post-secondary education. Lots of concern about that. We also know that there are something like 5 million, 5.5 million, 6 million kids who folks call "opportunity youth," meaning 16 to 24, not in work or in school. Hard to imagine anything good is happening with those young people if they're not in work or school between the ages of 16 and 24, particularly if that's true for a long period of time. So there is lots and lots of concern.

So let's talk about what's going on with these young people for a second because if we don't get the problem right, we're almost certain to not get the solution right. There's a lot of thinking among adults about why kids struggle, some of which is right but some of which is wrong. Adults don't really necessarily understand the minds and circumstances of young people, particularly young people who are growing up in very challenging circumstances, but one of the things that America's Promise has done – and others have done as well but we've done with a lot of intensity over the few years – is to ask young people, those young people who don't graduate on time, like "What happened? What went wrong?"

And the answers to those questions are a great mix of affirming and disturbing, I would say. The affirming is that those young people who happened not to graduate actually have exactly the same aspirations as themselves that we had for them, that we have for our own kids. They wanted more education, they wanted a stable job, they wanted a good place to live, they wanted a family, they wanted to be a member of the community. So if that's the case, like what happened?

What went wrong? And so often the answer had to do with life not school. In fact, school hardly came up in the conversations with young people about what went wrong. Life means housing insecurity, couch surfing. Life means hunger. Life means poverty. Life means all flavors of abuse. So what we encountered with these young people were people who wanted the right thing and the best thing, and were in enormously challenging circumstances, and suffered from trauma, stress, and all of those things. So that set us to thinking anew about what does it take to help those young people be on a path to success, the path to success that they would like to be on.

We're just completing some research that we'll release this fall, and I can't talk about it not because it's super secret but because I'm not yet really great at talking about it, but here's the bottom line is that by looking at census data, actually, one can map the adult capacity in lots of communities, and in every community, and if you look at the adult capacity in some of the most challenged neighborhoods in our country, the adult capacity is extremely low. The ratio of young people to adults is way off, and you can actually see this, by the way, internationally as well, and it leads to all kinds of unrest.

So this adult capacity thing is enormous, and it syncs up with what we think is going on for so many young people which is – and Heather mentioned this – quite simply they don't have enough positive relationships. They are not surrounded by the kind of web of support that all of us probably have and that we seek to provide to those who are around us, immediately around us. That is absolutely critical. So if relationships are the heart of growing up, and part of growing up successfully is moving through school on to more school and on to work, relationships play a crucial, crucial role in that.

The research will tell you that three things happen with relationships, because you know, we like to talk about mentoring and caring adults and relationships, but again, it's important to dig down like why, what happens, and then to understand the role that National Service members can play in this and the role that National Service can play broadly in providing people to do this kind of work. So three things – one, the research is extremely strong that relationships buffer adversity. Everybody, everybody has bad things happen in their life. Some people have more and some people have worse, we have to recognize that, how one moves through difficult periods of life is very much informed by how many people you have around you to support you when those bad things happen, to help you navigate those moments.

Second, relationships is how we actually begin to develop our own identity and explore the world, so relationships help young people develop their own potential, explore and identify their own potential. And finally, relationships, well, they might be the way you picked your college or the way you got your job. The kind of social capital that people need to move through life successfully comes from relationships, from those networks. And actually, going back, part of what relationships do is show you and give you practice in development more relationships, in developing the network that you need to move forward in life. So that's why we think relationships lie right at the heart of young people succeeding in school and more broadly in life.

For National Service, last thing – you see, I told you this wasn't going to be that amusing. I apologize for that. I hope it's useful but it's less amusing than Heather promised. Why National Service? So if relationships are key to young people who are growing up in challenging

circumstances, having the kind of support that they need to succeed, then where are those relationships going to come from? It's actually a human capital challenge, right? Those kids need more human beings around them who are paying attention to their success, who they're depending on for their success, and the success of those human beings depends on those young people's success, right? So where are we going to get a lot of people who really want to do that work, and get them at a price that we can afford? National Service, right? AmeriCorps. Heather gave stats about how many schools AmeriCorps is in, and how many high-need schools AmeriCorps is in – it's insane that AmeriCorps members aren't in every high-need school in the country. It's insane.

AmeriCorps members, in whatever form, whatever form – near peer, teachers, experienced corps members, the whole spectrum should be in those schools surrounding those kids with love and with accountability and with encouragement and with challenge and with a vision for a brighter future, and help navigating those kids' ways toward that brighter future. I can't think of a single resource that could be better or more valuable than AmeriCorps members in every one of those high-need schools surrounding every one of those young people about whom we're most concerned.

The second reason that AmeriCorps members can be so valuable, and we've already seen a hint of this, a whiff of this, is imagine the power of tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, and ultimately millions of people in America who have worked on the frontlines and who understand in a completely different way what's going on for young people who are growing up in challenging circumstances, and what we need to do as individuals, as communities, as institutions, and as a nation to help those young people, to provide that support. So we've seen it. We've seen people from Teach for America leading school systems, running for office – we just need way, way more of that.

You know my buddy, Harris, who you guys have all encountered one time or another, or more than one time, always talks about Kennedy and the Peace Corps. You know, the Peace Corps was itty-bitty, to Kennedy's frustration, and it's still itty-bitty to everybody's frustration. Kennedy said, "It'll be real when there are a 100,000 Peace Corps a year, so that in a decade we will have a million people who've had an experience overseas which will create constituency for a san foreign policy." Well, you can say the same thing about AmeriCorps members working in some of the most challenging communities with some of the most challenged kids in America. Imagine the constituency, imagine the power, imagine what it means about not having those kind of kids, not having those kind of challenges, not having those kind of communities in the future if the leaders of the nation are people who have had experiences in the frontlines. So I think that, both for the human capital to deal with these challenges right now and for the leadership potential to eliminate these challenges in the future, AmeriCorps sits in a central role.

Last note – have I gone on way too long, Heather? Okay. So last note, yesterday we had an all-staff lunch, and Joy Moore came – she's Wes Moore's mom – and Wes and Joy are the Executive Producers of a new movie, just came on PBS, that POV show, last week, but they're also traveling the country doing showing of it. If you haven't had folks see it at the Department yet, you should. It's called *All the Difference*, tracks two young people, two young black boys who go to an all-male charter school in Chicago, and then go on to college, and the drama really

is can they make it through college. It's such a powerful, wonderful story. There were plenty of tears at a staff lunch, I will tell you. I'm not going to tell you what happened except to say that one of those kids does make it through college, and then you see that kid, the very first thing he does after he graduates from college is he joins AmeriCorps and he serve in a school. It's a powerful circle. You all are right at the key spot to lead this effort, and I compliment for all that you are doing and have done to get us where we are, and I implore you that all of us need to dig deeper, think harder, reach higher to create the conditions in which every kid in America has the support, the love, the challenge, the accountability, and the opportunity to succeed. Thanks so much.

**HEATHER RIEMAN:** Thanks so much, John. I don't know about you guys but I'm definitely feeling inspired and challenged. I love the vision of an AmeriCorps member in every high-need school across the country. It's something to think about, goal to ascribe towards. Next I'd like to invite up a panel of people who are going to better help us understand the new Every Student Succeeds Acts, the federal education law that replaces the No Child Left Behind Act which you may be more familiar with. As the panelists join us on stage, I want to tell you about our goals for this panel. Our intention is that you learn about the major changes in the education law, and how the Every Student Succeeds Act will shift the education landscape; second, understand the key areas of opportunities for commissions, nonprofits, and tribal grantees; and third, come away with some ideas for next steps and concrete actions on things you can do to take advantage of those opportunities. That's a lot to accomplish but luckily we have a really terrific panel with a lot of expertise.

So to start things off, we could have no better person joining us today than a real superstar in education, Emma Vadehra. Emma is the Chief of Staff to the Secretary of Education, John King, and not only is she one of the leading experts in ESSA but she is also a big supporter of National Service. I first met Emma about 15 years ago, which seems like a long time now. We were both working for Senator Kennedy on the Help Committee at the time, and the thing that struck me both about her was both her razor-sharp intelligence and her courage and commitment to always doing what's best for kids, which she continues to do throughout her life. She is a true advocate in the best sense of the word, and not only was she educational advisor for Senator Kennedy but she was also instrumental in drafting and passing the Serve America Act. So she has a good understanding of our work and is a great person to help us think about the opportunities under the new Every Student Succeeds Act, so please join me in welcoming Emma Vadehra.

**EMMA VADEHRA:** Hello. First of all, thank you all so much for having me here today. I know you guys have a packed schedule. I'm really excited that you are all getting to spend some time listening to all of us talk about the intersection of National Service and Education. I think it's a really critical piece of the work for National Service. As someone in the Education space, I think we're incredibly lucky to have you and your members on our team, and the work you guys have done in phenomenal, and will continue to be phenomenal.

I'm currently Chief of Staff at the Department of Education, as Heather mentioned. Previously, have had the pleasure – I've worked in the education space mostly but I've had the pleasure of working two of the biggest National Service supporters there are, I think. I'm sure they have a lot of competition in this room. I worked for Senator Kennedy for about 5 years, including on

National Service issues. He and his family, as we all know, felt National Service, public service of all forms deep in their bones, and motivated them every day. He proudly talked about the work he and his family had done to expand domestic and international service opportunities. John's quote about creating a constituency for a sane foreign policy was a big piece of why he thought service, and AmeriCorps in particular, were so important. The more young people we have seeing the problems we need to solve, the better solvers of those problems they're going to be as they grow up, and the better contributions they will make, and in the education field we are seeing that time and again. The number of AmeriCorps members we have at the Department of Education who after their service time have chosen to go into the education field fulltime, and have spoken about their service experience as a big piece of that, has been really critical in our human capital pipeline, and I think that can be said of organizations around the country. The last bill that Senator Kennedy has the pleasure of drafting and working on with his friend, Senator Hatch, when bipartisan things still happened in Washington, was the Serve America Act, and it was a real pleasure to work with many of you on that.

I also worked for Senator Arne Duncan, who based on the experience he had as CEO of Chicago Public Schools, felt incredibly strongly about what both John and Heather walked through, which is the value of the boots-on-the-ground, the value of the individual relationships that AmeriCorps members can bring to our highest-need schools in particular. It was something he saw firsthand and it's something he's continuing to work on in his work back in Chicago.

I'm going to spend a few minutes talking about work at the Department and our priorities. One of our biggest priority is implementation of the new Every Student Succeeds Act, and what I see as some opportunities for you all to be involved, and then I know my esteemed colleagues are going to dive further into what some of those opportunities look like from their particular vantage points. I want to add a little bit to what John said about where we are as a country in terms of education. We have had a lot of change over the past 5, 10, 15, 20 years in education. That change is not stopping, it is continuing, and the Every Student Succeeds Act is going to continue to support that change playing out at the state and local level.

We've seen a lot of progress, as John mentioned. I want to hit on a couple of other things. We've seen dramatically expanded access to Pre-K. We can all have a lot of battles, and we do here in Washington, about the best use of the public dollar, but there is a ton of research showing that high-quality early learning opportunities are one of the best investments we can make as a society in the long-term success of our highest-need kids, and we are seeing both here in D.C. and states around the country expand access to Pre-K. We are seeing students around the country learning to college and career-ready standards, which is one of the big shifts in ESSA I'm going to talk a little bit more about.

We have the highest grad rate of all time, as John mentioned – you all know John, you know me less well. This is the first time ever that I'm going to be more optimistic than him on one point. This has never happened in history. We have the highest graduation rate of all time at 82.3%. We still have groups of students who are further behind, they're the students we're all here to serve. Those students are making faster progress than the nation as a whole. So we are seeing low-income students, students of color, students with disabilities, Native American students, and

English learners are making faster progress than the rest of the nation. That's not easy. There's still huge gaps, but that is really phenomenal news.

We are seeing a more diverse set of students go to college each year. Last spring we had our largest and most diverse college graduating class in this nation's history, and expect that trend to continue. We obviously have a ton more to do, and you guys and your members and your grantees all see that on the ground every day, and those are the problems we're very glad to have you helping us solve. Pre-K access is expanding. If you look at access to preschool and early learning opportunities for 3-year-olds in this country, out of 39 countries in the OECD, which is an international organization of a lot of Western and high-performing Asian nations, we're 32 out of 39 in terms of access to early learning opportunities. That's fairly embarrassing and not really setting our kids up for success.

We have a million students who enter college each year, start college, and don't complete college. So they're taking on debt, they're aiming for a degree, and they don't finish, and they end up with debt but they end up without the upside of a college degree, and they are the most likely to default on their loans and continue to struggle with that debt. And we obviously, as you all and your members are helping with, continue to see achievement gaps and opportunity gaps around the country. I hope in both that progress and the challenges, you guys see a lot of the work you all are doing – expanding access to early learning opportunities, investing in tutoring in high-need communities, and wrap-around services in our highest-need schools. One of the reasons our high school graduation rate has gone up is because the number of high school dropout factories in this country has gone down significantly over the past 8 to 10 years. Those are schools where 60% or fewer of the students are graduating. There are a ton of AmeriCorps members in those schools, helping turn them around, and that's a big part of the progress we're seeing and what we need to continue to see.

ESSA, the Every Student Succeeds Act, presents another real opportunity for service and for educators around the country to continue the progress we are seeing, and hopefully even further speed up the progress because we have a long way to go. So ESSA is the newest version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, or ESEA. It's a Civil Rights Era law. Its purpose was expanding supports and opportunity for low-income students in particular and high-need students in particular, that's still the goal of the law. ESSA is the rewrite of No Child Left Behind, which everyone is probably quite familiar with, and there are some really key changes in the law that were very responsive to what I think a lot of folks saw on the ground in implementing No Child Left Behind over the past 15 years that I want to draw your attention to.

One is around higher standards and expectations for all students. So in the 2000s, mid-2000s, we were starting to see states actually lower their expectations for students. Over the past 8 years, we've seen states work together to raise expectations for all students, to expect all students to graduate from high school ready for college and a career, and that sounds incredibly obvious but it's not what was happening before, and we know we have too many students around the country who finish high school, are told they're ready for college, go on to college and are told they need to take a year's worth of remedial course work, and that is a big predictor of whether you are going to succeed in college or not. So now ESSA says all states have to have college and career-

ready standards, state developed, worked on at the state level, but they have to be college and career-ready, and that's a real stretch on our educational system.

ESSA provides states with an opportunity to basically redefine what educational excellence looks like in their state context. So as many of you probably know, one of the big challenges people had with No Child Left Behind was it felt too test-based, that was the only thing that seemed to matter in a lot of schools, and ESSA basically says to states, “We know there’s more than tests to whether you’re providing a good education to your students. Think through what those other measures of school quality and student success are, think about what’s most important in your state and local context, and make that a part of the vision you’re painting for your state, make that a part of the vision you’re painting for your educators, and make that part of what you hold schools accountable for.” So in every state, states will have to select other measures of school quality and student success. It can be things like chronic absenteeism, it can be things like are students going to college, it can be things like access to advanced course work, but they have to be thinking beyond test scores in terms of defining what success looks like.

ESSA also says to states and local communities, “You have to work to identify your lowest-performing schools and schools where groups of students are falling behind, but then you have a lot more flexibility than No Child Left Behind gave you in figuring out how to best support those schools based on where they’re struggling, your local context, your local capacity, what organizations are around to support you in that work.” So you must be identifying your low-performing schools, your dropout factories. You actually have to identify – every state has to identify their bottom-performing 5% of public schools, but then you have more flexibility in how you’re going to support those schools and it’s led to a lot of states starting, and not yet finishing, their thinking about the best ways of what supporting those schools could look like, and I think it’s another real opportunity I’ll talk about.

And then the last thing I’d say is that ESSA basically institutionalizes a set of programs about local innovation and scaling local innovation that I think are really critical in terms of how the Federal Department of Education is engaging with communities, but I think for all of you is actually how you’ve been engaging with communities for years. So there’s a program in the law called Promise Neighborhoods which is basically about investing in a whole place. We’re not just going to do education, we’re not just going to do healthcare, we’re going to invest in a full continuum of services and supports in this community to help kids succeed. There’s programs that are investing in local innovation and evidence-building. We don’t know enough about what works in education and what scales well in education. It’s incredibly frustrating, given how much work we have to do, but it invests in that as well.

We at the Department are sort of busy at work implementing this law. It was passed in December of last year, 2015, so a core part of our work for this year is trying to implement the law. We are working very closely with states, with districts, with community organizations, with parent groups, etc. We’re basically putting out a set of regulatory packages. One is around accountability, and supporting states in building accountability systems that create a well-rounded education. One is about ensuring adequate resources and funding for low-income schools in particular that have been being short-changed, and then two are about new assessments and what assessments look like under the law.

We are also putting out a set of guidance packages that say to states and districts and nonprofit organizations and educators, “Here are some opportunities to use your dollars, federal, state, local, to use your partnerships to support key priorities – early learning, supporting a well-rounded education, supporting innovation, supporting your educators. With each of those, we basically have three key priorities in mind. One is just supporting a smooth transition and clarity for states. This is a really complicated law. There are a lot of decisions people have to make. We want to make sure it’s as clear as possible. One is about supporting equity in implementation. So as I mentioned ESEA, this a core Civil Rights Era law. That’s why the Federal government involved in education, right. From *Brown v. Board of Ed* to the laws we implement today, we’re involved because of the equity concerns, because of the kids who have been historically left behind, so that’s front and center.

And then actually stakeholder engagement is the third thing we think is incredibly important at the federal, state, and local level, so we think the law’s implementation will work better if educators, parents, community organizations are at the table from the start in thinking through what it should look like, and we’ve been doing that at the federal level. We’ve had hundreds of meetings, tens of thousands of comments on how to implement the law, and we are requiring states and districts to do the same thing as they work to implement the law.

The timeline is that this is all moving very quickly. We are doing most of all the work I laid out over the course of this calendar year. Every state is basically already doing their planning for their transition now, and states will have to submit plans to us that lay out their vision for accountability, their vision for developing a more well-rounded education, their vision for supporting wrap-around services and safer school climates. They will have to do that by next year, either the spring or the summer of next year, and then from there communities will take over and districts will start working more on their implementation plans. So that’s sort of the big picture of the timeline for implementation for us, and then at the state and local level.

I think there’s a ton of places National Service organizations can plug into this work, and we need them to plug into this work. We need you guys to plug in. These folks will talk in more detail but I’m going to touch on a few that are very close to our administrations part and are some key priorities for us. The one thing I would say throughout this conversation is a key thing about ESSA is that states have really big responsibilities here, and a lot of the decisions here are at the state level, happening in our state education departments, with your legislature, with your governor, and hopefully with a lot of you as well, so that’s sort of the locus of where a lot of where that decision-making is happening.

First thing I’m going to highlight is turning around our lowest-performing schools. So as I said, states and districts will have a lot of flexibility for how to support their very lowest-performing schools. AmeriCorps members have been huge in the successful work that has been done in this area so far. We’ve partnered with the Corporation to do School Turnaround AmeriCorps, which has put hundreds of AmeriCorps members in our very lowest-performing schools. We’re excited to continue that work. The more members are in these schools that have struggled for decades, that need so much more than small tweaks to improve, the better we’ll be serving the neediest kids in this country who tend to be concentrated in those schools. Those schools are on Indian

reservations, they are in cities, they are rural, they are everywhere, but they need the most help and it is a great place to be investing.

Second thing I would say is helping states and districts actually live out what a more well-rounded supportive education looks like. The opportunity is there, it's provided in the law, but it takes a lot more than an accountability system to give a student a well-rounded education, to make a dangerous school a safe and supportive environment. It takes a ton, but one of the things it takes is people power to provide those opportunities, people power to provide after-school or extended learning time programs, people power to provide tutoring in subjects where it's needed, people power to provide wrap-around services, to provide new art education opportunities that the school couldn't otherwise provide, and that is another huge opportunity to help states and districts and schools live out this more well-rounded vision that I think the law creates room for but certainly can't single-handedly support.

Last thing I would flag is around – actually, two more things – early learning opportunities. So as I said, it is a poor investment for us as a country, we need to do better at. We're making a lot of progress. Early learning is a funny and frustrating issue in that it's incredibly partisan here in Washington, unfortunately, but it is incredibly bipartisan in states. Red and blue states, Democrat and Republican governors, 38 states have expanded access to Pre-K and are working together to do that. That's fantastic. We need that progress to continue. We're making progress at the federal level too, we will work as well, but states are doing a huge part of this work, and one of the things they continue to need is support in how to actually make those opportunities real.

And the last thing I'd say is around place-based investing. This is not at all unique to us. It's actually something I think National Service has been doing for far longer than the Federal government has been doing it across the board, which is you know in the education world, we have a lot of this false dichotomy of “fix education, that'll fix poverty” or “fix poverty, that'll fix education,” and never the two shall meet, and that's obviously absurd, right? We need to be fixing both. There's more than enough work to go around, way more than enough work to go around.

So our placed-based investments is basically try and say, “We can't just fix schools. We can't just fix poverty. What we need to do is pick our highest-need communities in this country, our highest-need communities in each state, and actually invest in a full continuum of services for the kids growing up in those communities, the young adults they turn into, the adults they turn into.” – From home visits, to better early learning opportunities and stronger schools, to after-school, to improved access to healthcare, to better housing policies and transportation policies. We're trying to work across the administration. That is a piece of the law, to think about these Promised Neighborhood type grants, and thinking about how National Service can be a part of plugging into those opportunities I think is also incredibly helpful, both in the education space and in the non-education space. With that I will stop and turn it over to the people actually doing the work!

**HEATHER RIEMAN:** All right. Thanks, Emma, for that helpful overview in helping us get a better understanding of ESSA. We're going to turn it over to Mary Kingston Roche, who is the Director of Public Policy for the Institute for Education Leadership's Coalition for Community

Schools. In her position, she works on state and federal policy, and also manages the Coalition of over a hundred national partners that promote the communities in schools approach. She has been paying a lot of attention to the new Every Student Succeeds Act, and can help us understand the opportunities for nonprofit organizations and partnerships.

**MARY KINGSTON ROCHE:** Great. Good morning, everyone. It's great to be here, and as everyone else has said, thank you so much for the work you're doing across the country. It's such important work. I'm actually an AmeriCorps Alum, a Teach for America Alum. Thank you, warm community. I taught in Oakland, California, for three years, and that changed my whole life and career trajectory, and that's why I'm here today, so I can speak to the power of the AmeriCorps programs.

Emma did a great job kind of teeing up the opportunities in ESSA. I'm going to drill down a little bit more into two titles, Titles 1 and 4 that have lots of opportunities, or the most opportunities I think for you all, but first just wanted to kind of describe the Community School's approach and how this connects to your work.

So first where I work, the Coalition for Community Schools, we're based in D.C. We're an alliance of over 200 national, state, and local partners. We partner with the local teacher unions, with a lot of specialized instructional support personnel groups, with civil rights groups, with youth development, like Boys and Girls Clubs and YMCA, United Way Worldwide, all around this vision for community schools.

And what is a community school? So many of you may have heard of communities in schools, it does get confusing. That is a national model of community schools. Community schools, think of it as a strategy, not a program, to organize school and community resources around student success. So it's recognizing, as Emma said, that place is so important, and that when we look outside, the school has doors. There are so many people in the community, whether it's institutions of higher ed, Boys and Girls Clubs, local churches, local businesses who want to help out in schools, but as we know schools are tough places to penetrate.

And so what the community school strategy does is it welcomes people into the school, and it works closely with the principal to look at what are the needs of their school community, and what do students and families actually want as well for enrichment, and brings in the right community partners to do that. The real linchpin to the strategy is the role of a Community Schools Coordinator, whose job it is to really recruit and manage those community partnerships.

We have a lot of AmeriCorps members in community schools across the country. We estimate there's about 5,000 community schools across the country in almost 40 states. We had a national forum in April that brought over 1,700 people to Albuquerque, and our goal is to bring many of you to Baltimore in 2018 so we can form more of a partnership, and the AmeriCorps members in community schools are doing amazing things, whether it's City Year, Teachers of America, or others. So I'll work with Heather to try to strengthen that partnership because I think there's a lot of potential there.

And I'm so glad that John earlier mentioned the importance of relationships, and he mentioned that phrase "web of supports" that students need, and we look at that a lot in community schools as well that it's not just the teachers in front of the kids every day that are important role models, that's certainly true, but it's the other adults that are in the school, including you all, that contribute to this web of support. And I would encourage you to check out a story that's been running in the *Washington Post* the last couple months. It's about a young man named Kahlil Bridges out of Baltimore who was attending a really high-poverty high school and faced really challenging circumstances. His best friend was killed, he went through a lot of challenging times, but he was in a community school where the Community School Coordinator, who looked out for him, connected him to mentoring programs, I imagine there might be AmeriCorps people in that school as well, and the coordinator ended up starting a Go-Fund-Me account for him to attend community college because he got in but didn't have the money. And so he's now in community college, doing well, but he asked a question that kind of echoes which is, "This was all great for me but what about the rest of my peers?" And I think we need to keep that in mind as we think about our work. There's always more students we can reach, and I'd love to see AmeriCorps members in every high-need school, and I think through partnership with our folks across the country in community schools, we can reach more of those schools.

So I'll dive in now to some opportunities in Titles 1 and 4. So Title 1, if you are familiar with it, it's the real spirit and soul of ESEA. It's the money that goes to states and school districts by formula to help the highest-need students. It's about \$15 billion dollars, which is a lot of money, and there are some really key opportunities in there for you all. So as Emma said, the major shift in this law is that it gives much more power to states to really think about – rethink how to support students to succeed. One of the things it does is require states to add at least one non-academic indicator, which Emma mentioned, things like student engagement, chronic absenteeism, access to advanced course work. So if you think about that non-academic indicator, you all are contributing to that every day, or your members are, whether it's through tutoring, mentoring, and making sure kids are getting to school for attendance. So you are in a position to go to your superintendent or your state and say, "We're already contributing to this, and this is how we'd like to expand this under this new law."

On the reporting side of things – and this continues from No Child Left Behind – states and districts have to come out with annual report cards. Under No Child Left Behind, it was just about tests scores, and the accountability side was just test scores. So I think we all saw the effect of that, that educators didn't want to necessarily just narrow their focus to test scores but a lot of times accountability does that to you. So now under new reporting requirements, states and districts need to also report on chronic absenteeism, school climate and school discipline, including rates of expulsion and suspension and also bullying. Again, these are all things that your members contribute to address in schools, that you are poised to go to your local superintendent and go to your state and say, "We want to be partners under this new law to expand the services we do."

Also in Title 1, Emma mentioned the phrase "well-rounded education" – we're really excited about that phrase, too, because under No Child Left Behind they were really just talking about academic proficiency, and that's not very exciting. It's just, you know, getting to a certain cut score which may not even mean that the student is college and career-ready. But now it's looking

at how can we look at the aspects of a whole child, and not only cognitive but their social and emotional development, and how a well-rounded education can develop all of those. And again, your members do these things, so volunteerism and community development, civic and environmental education, the integration of multiple disciplines including the Arts and Humanities – you’re doing this, and so you should feel really confident under this new law that these are things you know how to do.

In School Improvement, as Emma mentioned, this is a real opportunity for you all. Schools cannot do it alone, especially in our highest-need schools, our lowest-performing schools. They cannot turn around schools and make it sustainable without the help of community partners. This is where you are already working and where you come in more. Under ESSA, there is a new requirement for a school turnaround that the school must first do a comprehensive needs assessment, and that's huge because it's recognizing that okay, before we put in place a strategy, let's look at really what's been going on, the root causes, and your members, again, can really contribute to that and may already be doing this. It actually says that states can give money to nonprofits with expertise, and using evidence-based strategies to improve student achievement and instruction for a school improvement. So your nonprofit, if it's AmeriCorps nonprofit, may be eligible for that School Improvement money.

Family Engagement, it's a smaller amount of funds in Title 1. Districts must spend at least 3% on Family Engagement, 3% of their Title 1 funds, and again they can pay nonprofits to provide professional development on effective family engagement. So if you have nonprofits that know how to work well with families and increase family engagement, you can receive that money, too.

And then there is some language in Title 1 around that in both state and local plans, when they write these, they need to describe how they will address school conditions for learning, and in ESSA, that's not defined, and we're thinking that the Department of Ed will help us, help clarify that a little bit in their regulations or guidance, but again, your members are looking at students' conditions for learning every day. Are they hungry? Are they engaged? What do they need? So you're poised to contribute to that.

So switching to Title 4, Title 4, the title of the section is called 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools, so it's really trying to think about how to set up our students to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There is a new block grant in the law that's a great opportunity for you all, again. What it did – and this was one of those political compromises in Congress to actually get the law passed – was it consolidated many competitive grant programs that were separate from each other. So there were things like school counseling, physical education, AP course work that districts had to apply separately for, and then they had to manage separately, and that's a lot of paperwork, and they didn't always get all the grants. The compromise between Democrats and Republicans was to consolidate those programs into a big block grant that gives the district flexibility to decide how to spend that money.

It's authorized in the law at \$1.65 billion, which is really a big amount. We're hoping that this next fiscal year it will get at least 1 billion to really make a difference. But essentially this money will come to districts by formulas, so all districts should receive this money, and basically

there are three buckets that districts have to spend around this block grant. The first is around supporting safe and healthy students, so it's things like counseling, mentoring, mental health. The second is a well-rounded education, we've talked about that already. And the third is around effective use of technology, and a lot of that goes to personalized learning.

All three of these buckets, you could argue, need the support of community partners and nonprofits to really reach the potential of what Congress was thinking around well-rounded education and supporting safe and healthy students, and there's language in the law that says that these activities may be conducted in partnership with nonprofits. And so you would want to go to your district and say, "Hey, we know there's this new block grant that talks about supporting safe and healthy students and well-rounded education. We'd like to partner with you because we know how to do this work and implement some of those activities."

A few other things in Title 4, this stays from No Child Left Behind, many of you may use funds from the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers Program. That stays. That's around out-of-school time and extended learning opportunities, and that is a natural program working with community partners. And then Emma mentioned Promised Neighborhoods, and that's a competitive grant that you as a nonprofit could apply to. There's also another competitive program called Full Service Community Schools which gives money to implement community schools, which is very similar, again, that nonprofits can apply to.

So just closing out, these are great opportunities, and I'm sure you're thinking, "Why can't you just give us like a three-step process what to do?" Well, it's more about telling your story and talking about the great work you're doing in your state and districts with your schools, whether they're high-need or not, and talking about some of these highlights that we mentioned. You can certainly go on our website at [communityschools.org](http://communityschools.org), and under Our Policy tab, we have this kind of summarized for you, but really just spelling out to them that you want to be a partner in implementing this new law because community partners and nonprofits really do have a big role to play here, and I don't think personally we can reach the vision of ESSA without the strong partnerships with the nonprofits and CDOs. And so while it's not stated in ESSA, "AmeriCorps members, we need you," it's basically said as much through a lot of these provisions.

And so as Emma said, things are moving fast. At the state level, the first deadline for state plans is early March. So what I would encourage you to do is just go on your State Department of Ed website, look for the ESSA webpage – hopefully it's there. Find out what's going on, and then I would also encourage you to find out the contact and just reach out to them and say, "Hey, we're a state commission of AmeriCorps" or "I work with a number of schools. We'd like to have a conversation with you about opportunities in the new law and how we can support." That will trigger their thinking about what they could put in the state plans.

And then after that, and you can start now, to contact your local superintendent and school board and make the same case and say, you know, "This is the great work we're already doing in your district or your state, this is how the provisions in the law could expand our work and we can partner with you more. What do you think about expanding our partnership to reach more kids with the great work that you do?" So it's really up to you guys but all of the signals in the law

really support your work, and I think your work is crucial to reaching that vision that we're striving for.

**HEATHER RIEMAN:** Thanks, Mary, and that's a perfect segue to Debbie, who is going to talk a little bit more about the context in her state and how they've already actually started engaging in this. Many of you are probably very familiar with her but Debbie Schuffenhauer is the Executive Director of Serve Washington, When I was asking around, "Who has really already started thinking about the ESSA, who's already been engaged," her name came up, so I was thrilled she agreed to join us today and talk a little bit about that.

**DEBBIE SCHUFFENHAUER:** Thank you. Good morning, everyone. So back in April, I was invited by our state Education Agency, which we call OSPI, which is the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, to participate in one of the work groups that they are starting to develop our state's consolidated plan for ESSA, and I'll talk a little bit about the structure so you'll get a feel for what that looks like at the state level, and then I'll also talk about opportunities for National Service.

So in Washington State, spearheading this effort will be our Superintendent. Think of your typical org chart. He's up here, below him is the consolidated planning team, and the purpose of this team is to advise the superintendent and to be actively involved in the development of our state plan. Some of the organizations that are part of this team are required under ESSA, and then other individuals and organizations are invited to the table because of the role they play in the state's education system. A few examples include our governor's office, a few state representatives, legislator members, State Board of Education, Higher Ed, Tribes, teachers, school districts, community organizations, and parents.

And then below them is the ESSA leadership team, and this is an internal team to our state Education Agency who plays the connector between the state's consolidated plan team and then the 12 workgroups, and I have been participating in one of those workgroups related to parent and community engagement. I'll just give you a quick rundown of the 12 groups to give you an idea of what Washington is using. So we have accountability system, early childhood education, effective educators, English learners, federal programs, fiscal, learning and teaching, parent and community engagement, report card, school and district improvement, student assessment system, and students with disabilities.

So each of these 12 workgroups has about 20 members, and as Emma alluded to, broad-based community support on each of these groups representing various sectors, and representation from districts large and small, and communities large and small, and from all across our state. Our group, we had really interesting and deep conversation, and so it was really great to be part of that process and to be able to voice a role that National Service can play in supporting parents and bringing the community into the schools and into classrooms.

In particular, I pulled out a few of the tasks that our group discussed that I feel connect perfectly with the work of National Service, and when I say National Service I'm not necessarily just referring to AmeriCorps. There are great opportunities for Senior Corps and even Volunteer Generation Fund Grants, so think broadly when you heard this. But one is about identifying and

sharing best practices for parent and family engagement. I'm sure commissions, programs, some of you are doing that very work. Also they want examples of family engagement and parent engagement activities that have evaluations that show their effectiveness, so this is another, a great reason why it's important that we in National Service have evidence of the effectiveness of the programs that we're operating. Providing technical assistance to districts on leveraging local community organizations and businesses to increase the number of volunteers and individuals coming into the schools to support student success, and then providing technical assistance on effective volunteer management strategies.

I know we're getting short on time so I'll jump ahead a little bit to three steps that I feel that anyone here might consider taking to become involved in the ESSA process in your own state. For state commissions, you know, we're required by statute to have the state Education Agency representation on our commissions. If you haven't already, tap into that person and find out how you can be connected, and what are the entry points for you to become involved in your state's ESSA process. It's probably not too late.

Second, Mary hit on this, too, visit your state Education Agency website. Very soon they will all likely be having a public comment period on the plan that's been developed in your state, so if you are too late to become involved in the process, you still can participate by providing comments and voicing your support for AmeriCorps and National Service and how it can be an effective strategy.

I just share one quick story on my group. Obviously, I was always talking about AmeriCorps and volunteering, and one of the committee members was from the Federal A Public School District, which is one of the largest districts in our state. They have 50 members serving in 39 different schools, and they serve 22,000 students, with 68% of them are of an ethnicity than White. So she was a great validator for the work that we do, and could share her own experiences of what's happening in her district, and many of you likely have similar validators. And then last but not least, as Mary also said, ESSA funding must supplement and not supplant existing activities, so there may be new opportunities to develop new initiative, enhance or expand services that you're already doing to support our nation's highest-need student. All right.

**HEATHER RIEMAN:** Thanks, Debbie. It's really exciting, you're a part of the process, and I think there's a great opportunity for all of you to be a part of that process going forward, so I really urge you to get in touch with your state commission and your local school districts to find out sort of ways that you can partner and take advantage of these new opportunities. We're going to open it up for questions briefly, I'm hoping there's going to be some microphones for some questions, but just wanted to ask a few quick things to start us out. I know we have a lot of Tribal grantees in the audience as well, and I was wondering if, Emma, are there any specific opportunities for Tribes under the Every Student Succeeds Act?

**EMMA VADEHRA:** Yes, of course. So there's two types of opportunities I would flag. One is particularly around consultation and development of what state and local plans look like, so as I mentioned and as I'm really to hear is actually happening well in Washington State, there are requirements for engaging stakeholders – parents, educators in the community – in developing plans to implement the law, and then in actually implementing the law and supporting schools.

There are very specific provisions that relate to Tribal consultation in particular that are different and more significant than some of the broader provisions. They apply at the federal level, so we basically conducted a separate set of Tribal consultations for ourselves as we have been developing our work, but they also exist at the state and local level. So that is one thing I would flag, and I'm happy to send info so folks can follow up and make sure they can plug into it because it does need to be happening.

The other thing I would flag is actually around particular grant opportunities which are in ESSA but started a little pre-ESSA – we're in the second round of them – which is the Native Youth Community Partnership program, so this goes to some of the place-based work we've been talking about. It's basically a grant program our administration developed that now will continue to exist, thanks to the law, that makes place-based investments in Native communities in particular, need the idea is a community needs to come together, needs to think through what the greatest challenges are in that community. So there can be a wide range of far more in-school challenges, far more post-school, out-of-school opportunities, challenges and opportunities to take on, but it's specifically for Native communities to come together around those, set some concrete goals to try and meet, and then work together to meet together, and there's grant funds available for that. It's called the Native Youth Community Partnership. Those are the two things I would flag.

**HEATHER RIEMAN:** Thanks. We're getting a little short on time, and I want to make sure that we have a chance for you all to ask some questions. I have a few more along the way if we have time for those. So if people have questions, if you could just remember to state your name, your affiliation, and keep the questions brief. I'm not totally sure if there's microphones, but if not, I will try and repeat the question out loud for everyone. Any questions from the audience? One way in the back I see.

**FEMALE:** [INDISCERNIBLE]

**HEATHER RIEMAN:** We'll definitely have to look at sort of the inner section of changes in the ESSA but reading and math scores will continue to play an important role and be something we're thinking about. I know there are some measures around attendance and social and emotional learning, which are already captured in the performance measures, and I think will become even more critical under ESSA. So in some ways I think we actually have a match, but I'm sure that's something we'll always be thinking about and evaluating, especially in the new education landscape we'll find ourselves in.

**EMMA VADEHRA:** And I just want to add one thing to that, because I do think it's probably got lost among all of us talking so much, around the non-assessment-based measures, but the basic reading and math and science assessment requirements in the law do continue from No Child Left Behind in ESSA. How those results are used can change but those requirements do continue, and I think that frankly reflects of you that there is more than that when we look at what a well-rounded education should be, but those are also really critical measures, and it's something Congress debated a lot and ended up deciding have annual measures of student progress in reading and math, broken down by groups of students – low-income students, students of color, students with disabilities, English learners – was basically the one part of No

Child Left Behind that they wanted to keep because of the equity gaps and the focus on the highest-need students that they felt it was driving. So I do think that probably none of us actually mentioned that, and that is actually still a piece of the law. It's just you can do more as well.

**HEATHER RIEMAN:** All right, other questions? Right here in the front.

**MALE:** [INDISCERNIBLE]

**HEATHER RIEMAN:** I hear your frustration about how meaningful Tribal consultation processes can be, and I do think it is something Congress tried to tackle and something we are also trying to tackle as we move forward in implementation of the law. I would be happy to follow up with you on the specifics of what programs you are most worried about. I would say most programs in the law, how they flow down to the local level is fairly set in statute, set in the law based requirements around the size of schools, the poverty levels, the community demographic general. So for the biggest bunches of programs like Title 1, they need to flow the way they need to flow. That doesn't mean state are doing the best job in implementing that and they are always being fair and clear about where those funds need to go, but there's not usually for the big bunches a ton of flexibility about where the dollars go. So it might make sense for you and me to follow up and figure out what's going wrong and how we can help there in particular.

**EMMA VADEHRA:** And to your point about consultation, I want to give a shout-out to the Department of Ed because I think they recognize the danger and what they are already seeing with states checking the box and saying that that was okay, so in the proposed regulations on accountability that came out, and the final ones will come out soon, they do say, instruct states that this can't be a one-time check-the-box thing. It has to be sustained. You have to meet with these required stakeholders during the state planning, during the implementation ongoing. So hopefully that's a part of the final regulations, and if so use that requirement to go to your state and say, "You can't just check the box with us once. You have to meet with us again," and that can be one way you can weigh in on how the funds can flow or the needs of your community.

**HEATHER RIEMAN:** All right, additional questions? Is there one hand back there? Yeah!

**MALE:** [INDISCERNIBLE]

**EMMA VADEHRA:** I love that question. So one of the things that we have tried to promote in our own regulations around what stakeholder engagement looks like is actually around thinking through including students in the process. It's something we thought about a bit. It's something we got some good feedback on. I think we got mixed feedback about whether the best place for that to happen is at the state or local or school level, so that's something we are still thinking through and we'll put out in the final regs. But the idea of student voice in determining the best way to support their schools, the best way to spend funds, is definitely something on our radar as we move towards implementation.

I do think it is somewhere – just speaking from the experience we've had thus far – that what is always wrong with adults is that we don't always recognize the full value of students until they're put in front of us and start advocating. It's actually one of the things Critical Exposure, the organization Heather started, does fantastically well, and I would just say the more examples

adults in your communities see of the student voice who is a student voice – and I think you guys are well equipped to find those students, to support them in being a vocal voice for educational equity and for their schools – the more examples of those we see, the more systematically that's going to be something that happens, in addition to what our regulations end up saying. And I've seen that happen many, many times where a community will decide to put a student on the local school board and suddenly it's not something that can ever be taken away because the adults are seeing the value that students bring into every conversation many times, but not even nearly as many times as one would want to see.

**HEATHER RIEMAN:** We're getting close on time so to wrap things up, I would just like each of our panelists, if you could share one sentence describing what you're most hopeful about under ESSA.

**MARY KINGSTON ROCHE:** Hmm, one sentence?

**HEATHER RIEMAN:** Or maybe two, but short.

**MARY KINGSTON ROCHE:** Okay. What I'm most hopeful for is that we will just seize this opportunity to really rethink how to support all of our student to succeed, use our creativity, and really deeply collaborate with our school and community stakeholders around that.

**DEBBY SCHUFFENHAUER:** Piggy-backing on what John said this morning, I am most hopeful that we will have a huge increase in the adult capacity in our schools, whether that be through National Service or community volunteers. I hope schools have more than they know what to do with.

**EMMA VADEHRA:** I'm going to piggy-back on that and just add in our highest-needs schools in particular, so more adult capacity in our lowest-performing 5% of schools and dropout factories that absolutely need far more for the kids than they've been getting.

**HEATHER RIEMAN:** Right, thanks, guys. Please join me in giving a hand to our terrific panel. And I'm here as a resource for you, so please be in touch with suggestions, ideas, stories, ways I can help support you. That's what I'm here to do, and Bill's going to just quickly wrap things up for us.

**BILL BASL:** Thank you, Heather, and could you give the panel one more round of applause? They did an outstanding job. As I was thinking, there's a long history of National Service being connected to school, and I want to say a term that we haven't used very often – service learning. I think there is something there to be said that's from our former history, hopefully it's the current history, hopefully we're using the best service learning practices, but it seems to me that that is something that could be incorporated especially in the chronic low-performing schools.

And to sum it up, I think in this room, my takeaway is that we not just see students as students, but we see students as resources. In other words, how do we engage students to help address some of these major issues that we see playing out, sadly, every day? So if we saw students in leadership positions doing positive things, making positive change in communities, what would

that do to the psyche of the community, the psyche of states and our country to see students not only performing well on the athletic field or on the court but doing well on the street, doing well in society, doing well lifting others up? It will be something that National Service can do. And so I would throw that charge out to all of you that now is the time to act, now is the time to be involved. And again, thank you for what you do each day in this important area of priority, and again, thanks to our panel for participating. Thank you, Heather, for organizing this wonderful opportunity.