

Taking the Election to School: Making Education a Focus of the 2012 Election

Education advisers to Obama and Romney debated at Teachers College, Columbia University on October 15, 2012. Moderated by Susan H. Fuhrman, President, Teachers College.

Full transcript below:

Susan Fuhrman: Good evening everyone, I'm Susan Ferman, and it's my great pleasure to welcome you to Taking the Election to School, a debate between education advisors to the two major party presidential candidates. In addition to our live audience here tonight, I want to extend greetings to those of you who are watching the live webcast of this debate at home on the Education Week website and to thank Education Week and the International Reading Association for its sponsorship and those joining us from the National Press Club in Washington, D.C.. We're absolutely delighted to be hosting this event here at Teachers College and we have to thank our dear alumni and friend and member of my Presidential Advisory Committee, Phyllis Kossoff, who is sponsoring this lecture today. Phyllis, would you stand up. Education should be a central issue in national elections and for good reason. Everyone agrees it's among the most important if not the most important factor in ensuring our country's future in it's own right to produce educated citizens but also as education address economic challenges, national security, global relationships, the environment, and virtually every major issue that faces us. Few are more familiar with these concerns than our two speakers tonight.

Phil Handy is a former chairman of the Florida state Board of Education and the higher education co-chair of Governor Romney's education policy advisory group. He also co-chairs Governor Romney's Florida presidential campaign and is co-chairman of the National Policy Council on Education for the governor. Mr. Handy was a member of the Board of Overseers of the Hoover Institution at Stanford University and currently serves as an advisor to the program on educational policy and governance at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and as director of Standford Children. He was state-chairman of Jed Bush's gubernatorial campaigns in Florida in the 90's and co-chairman of the 2002 gubernatorial campaign.

Jon Schnur is participating in his capacity as advisor to the Obama presidential campaign. Jon is the co-founder and executive chairman of America Achieves, a nonprofit organization helping

communities and states leverage leadership, policy, and practice to build high quality educational systems. He also advises philanthropists seeking to improve education, including Bloomberg Philanthropies. In 2000, Jon co-founded New Leaders for New Schools, and served as its CEO until last year when he took a leave of absence from that post in 2008 and 2009 to join the Obama for America presidential campaign and he was a senior advisor to President Obama's transition team and to US Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan. In the 1990s he served as President Clinton's White House Associate Director for Educational Policy and was also special advisor and assistant in the department of education.

I am told that these two have debated each other before and are old hands at this sort of debate but we do have a format here. I'm going to begin asking each of our speakers a question individually, one that they chose that is intended to allow us all to become familiar with the basic ideas about education that are embraced by the respective campaigns. I will then ask several questions to both candidates then aim at providing a comprehensive and deeper perspective on their candidate's views on a range of educational issues. I may draw on questions pre-submitted by our Washington D.C. alumni from the National Press Club or faculty and the TC community here in the audience this evening, thank you for those suggestions. I will conclude with a question from the Education Week audience and an opportunity for each speaker to provide closing statements. Each speaker will have up to four minutes to respond to each question but we hope they will be succinct so we can cover more topics. I will ask follow-up questions as they occur and I will also see if each of you wants to respond to something the other said.

Following the debate, the audience members are invited to remain with us for a panel discussion moderated by Mark Bombster, a national editor for Education Week, and including our faculty member, Jeffrey Henig, Education Week reporter, Alyson Klein, and Liz Willard of our own Hechinger Institute. I'm also going to ask everyone to behave well, no interruptions or outbursts and please remember that this event is being webcast live, which means keeping relatively still and quiet.

So let me start alphabetically with Phil Handy, with the question you wanted to be posed first. The Federal Government's contribution to K12 funding in the United States is about 10 percent while state and local governments fund the remainder. Given this fact, what role would the federal government play in the Romney administration?

Phil Handy: What role would the federal government play in education in the Romney administration?

Susan Fuhrman: Right.

Handy: There is a long certainly history of the federal government's involvement in starting the land grant colleges 220 years ago and there is a role for the federal government so any discussion about eliminating the department of education or somehow eliminating the federal role is probably not well founded or at least as it relates to our candidacy. But I think there is basically two roles for the federal government. One is the role of transparency and telling the truth. I have found that when I was the state board of education chairman in Florida, that American public education is hindered significantly by the inability sometimes to tell the truth that goes with the political process, politicians generally last a short period of time and a child's education lasts a long period of time. So, the federal government is, I think, mandated with the responsibility for transparency and for the collection of data, honest data, and transparent data, that empowers the consumer, the parent, the child, the educator, the leaders in their decisions about public education. And secondly, I think its to create an environment that allows a freer ability for choice in public education so to do away with, if you will, the constraints of the issues that constrain parents' ability to choose to empower the monopoly. Its an attempt to try to level the playing field, if you will, to provide a greater empowerment for parents and kids and I think there is a hundred there are thousands of policy issues that go inside that but fundamentally it is to tell the truth to help states and districts and schools to tell the truth and it is to empower competition and give parents the choice, we believe that no child should be obligated to go to school just because they were born in a certain zip code and thats the essence of choice for us.

Handy: Okay, I'm going to ask Jon the opening question but maybe we'll follow up to that question after. Jon, you've advised President Obama since he was a US Senator, what have been his core beliefs and views about education over the years and how does the Obama administration's work reflect those?

Jon Schnur: Thank you, Susan, and its great to be with you and Phil. While we may have disagreements and our candidates have made some strong disagreements on issues like education, Phil is a wonderful person and leader, so it's great to be here with you, Phil. So, President Obama, sometimes as president, you get known for your policies, policies are

important but policies are grounded in core beliefs and experiences and I have over the years had a chance to witness him from early in his time as a US Senator, make decisions about education that are essentially grounded in certain core beliefs that continue today. Number one, every interaction I have ever seen with him, he is very very focused on how do we do much better by all our kids in the country in education, particularly those who are low income and underserved. He has always been very aware and dissatisfied with where we've been in education even while knowing, as he's said many times, that he and Michelle Obama became who they were because of education in this country. They know it is a core value that is made possible for an American to dream in a real way but we've shortchanged that, he's aware because of a dissatisfaction. The story I'll tell briefly, I think, highlights I think where he comes from on education across his policies, is in early January of 2009, Phil and I had debated a number of times in 2008, the President had won reelection, education hadn't been a big topic in the campaign although he continued to bring it up in many of the debates. As you know, in early January, we had just lost over a million-and-a-half jobs in two months, the economists had just declared we had gone into a recession that had started the year before and it appeared to many that we could be potentially be heading into a great depression. The President, in the transition, was working on an economic recovery plan to avert depression that was mostly focused, that needed to be focused, on how to avert the short-term economic crisis. I had a meeting with him in early January on education for an hour in his transition offices when he was very clear that there was no economic stimulus plan that could be passed without a fundamental investment in the long-term drivers of our success in the country and the economy including a massive focus on education. At that moment, in the stimulus, no one was talking about a large investment in education as part of the stimulus bill, no one was focused on reform in a serious way and coming out of that meeting, he articulated some core principles that essentially guided his team to put together a package for him that wound up investing a hundred billion dollars out of the eight hundred billion dollar economic recovery package, in education, including that averted layoffs for over four hundred thousand teachers. It expanded funding for Head Start, and it also coupled those investments in protection of job loss in education, just a time when our kids didn't need more teachers to be cut-off or students didn't need to be cut off from Apal or Headstart with reform agenda. And he insisted that as a part of that that the package include, what became, the Race to the Top, and reforms that eventually helped 46 states adopt higher standards and are now putting assessment in place to match that in an effort to make better use of existing funds. For me to watch him in that moment, when the responsibility of averting the depression was on his shoulders and he insisted that the package could only be passed with

that large of an investment in education and those investment in access to education and reforms, to me was a reflection of the man I'd gotten to know over the years and as I'll get into tonight, underlie all of his policies from early learning to K-12 education to postsecondary. He knows it is key to access the American Dream, he knows it's key to drive our economic competitiveness and we can't let arguments, whether budget policy or federalism or anything else, keep the national government play a supportive role in state and local government to insure kids get the education they need and deserve.

Fuhrman: Thanks for those openings and now we're going to get into some details. Lets start with the common core standards. Forty-five states have adopted common core standards, President Obama has supported the federal government's role in implementing this standards but Governor Romney says that he opposes using federal funds to support the common core. Could you elaborate a bit more about each candidate's position on the common core standards and this time we will start with you, Jon.

Schnur: Oh yes, on the Common Core, as many people in the audience know, there has been an effort from states across the country, governors and state superintendents of education, to essentially replace a lot of the watered down current academic standards in the country and a lot of the pretty mediocre fill in the bubble multiple choice tests with a much more rigorous set of standards that reflect true readiness for success in college and careers and that efforts come along with support, bipartisan support, now 46 states have adopted the standards. While the standards alone don't drive improvement in education you also need the investments and support for kids and teachers to reach those. They really are key, when we have really set our bar low in education and in a way and Phil talked about the importance about speaking about truth in American education or in anything, in education to this day, in a way, the low standards that we've set for our kids and the fill in the bubble multiple-choice test that reflect this low level of standard and our deciding how our kids and schools are doing based on that kind of standard and test has led us to be lying to our kids, that kids are told around the country that they're proficient on a mediocre test and that that's success but in fact they aren't ready for success, and we know it from the data, in college and careers. And the question is how do we have a much more rigorous standard. So the President was clear that, this is a perfect example of his philosophy about the federal role in education, at least one of them, that when there are state efforts to move an important innovation, in this case, higher standards, the President really wanted to see that he could support that and so incensed the adoption of those standards and

raised the top and actually provided knowing that standards would not be meaningful without much better assessments to replace the current assessments, set aside over four-hundred million dollars of the stimulus funding in order to support willing states to design the new common core of assessment that will be written in the next couple of years to ensure that we really have assessments that measure what we care about our kids knowing, rigorous reading, rigorous math, critical thinking skills, problem solving skills, and he thinks the states should determine those standards but the federal government can play a supportive role in helping to finance making that happen.

Fuhrman: What is the support beyond the initial support that is projected for the common core?

Schnur: So, again out of the first stimulus funding there is no one on either side who would have thought, “hey, maybe we can use some this funding to improve our long-term economy by funding the creation of the assessment” so we put aside the four-hundred million dollars for the assessments and then once the assessments are in place and there are two consortium states, as many people know, who are going to set the standards in deciding the assessments, it really leads to then and what your philosophy on the federal role is and I must say on this front, transparency and choice, I think are in fact representative of a lot of the philosophy the Romney campaign has and the President views that you need deep investments and the supports for kids and teachers to support those, you need more funding in education in a way to finance especially the low-income kids in schools who without federal funding wouldn’t have a shot at this, 10 cents of every education dollar comes from the federal government. But in high poverty schools, title one schools, I’ve been in schools where 40 cents of a dollar comes. The philosophy of: lets invest in those, lets invest in equity, lets invest in teacher-professional development, lets invest in preparing kids to be successful through early learning and be ready to do well on those standards, and that provides a cornerstone of a second-term agenda.

Fuhrman: Okay, Phil, the common core, no federal funds to support the common core, do you want to pick up on that?

Handy: The common core started in the National Governors Association and 46 governors willingly opted into adopting the new standards which are a very good idea. Standards make a lot of sense when put together with assessments, and we’ll talk a little about assessments, very simply put from our standpoint it’s an opting program, its a governor-led program, and it should

be opted in. I hope we'll have a chance to talk about these waivers that have been given in response to No Child Left Behind, the incentives used to try to drive common core and drive assessment packages, I think we'll have some disagreement about that but the common core should be opted in by governors, enacted by the states if they want to, so far 46 have, it's part of the law, 46 different states, it feels like it has plenty of momentum to move forward. The assessment packages both of them are, should ultimately be sponsored by the states, they are equally divided now, I think there are 23 states who have adopted each one, I think at the end of the day we'll end up with one assessment package that makes sense but it will be opted in by the governors and state boards and state legislators who will adopt them.

Fuhrman: So let's pick up then on your statement about talking more about testing and assessments and could you state the position on that but also wrap it into the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act or No Child Left Behind?

Handy: I'd say initially, Jon and I, I'm glad to be back on the stage with Jon, I've always enjoyed being with Jon and thank you for tonight's debate by the way, thank you very much for Teacher's College. I would say that using federal funds for assessment and curriculum is a state responsibility not a federal responsibility. Federal responsibility is to make sure the data is right, that the data is correct but I don't think the federal government should be involved in that. We, as the Romney administration, or the Romney campaign, would not be able to create the kind of funding that the Obama administration has done for Race to the Top for stimulus, for all kinds of activities which have added to the deficit. We're not proposing more money for public education, we're not proposing any cuts either but we're not proposing more money for education, so, we're always going to lose on the subject of creating economic incentives, which we don't think are the purview frankly of the federal government.

Fuhrman: So I just have to, before I ask you on testing, I have to follow up on "we're not proposing to cut", I think that came as a little bit of a surprise? In the first debate given that the Ryan budget would cut discretionary spending by billions, billions and billions, enough so that you wonder how you could not cut education in that scenario.

Handy: The attack on the deficits is all wrapped up in entitlements, it's certainly not on their periphery with public education, roads or prisons, it's a very very very small part of the budget so 52 or 53 percent of the budget going to 75 are all wrapped up in entitlements, you can easily

hold public education harmless without impacting the creation of more deficits which we're imposed to.

Fuhrman: Can you agree, Jon?

Schnur: So, I think we've a disagreement here that there needs to be agreement I think in the country and there should be that we need to be responsible for bringing down the debt and deficit and that's very important. Within that I think the question is what do you see as a need for a cut or increase and what do you see as an investment. I think a difference of philosophy and my view on this is that the President sees education as an investment in our future and it is seen in the way it's described as education is an expense that's got to be capped in Romney and Republican circles and the President believes that we have to have modest increases and his track record has demonstrated, increases in education, by the way have led now to 10 million young people are benefitting from Pell grants, we've had, we're up 6 million before we started, millions of kids are benefitting from Head Start, so the question about the budget is a question of priorities and values and I think that the Romney campaign on education is imprisoned by the Romney's Budget Policy. There's been estimates shown that in order for Governor Romney to increase funding for defense in the way he's described and protect social security and protect the various areas that he said needs to be protected, when you look at the amount of discretionary funding other than defense that over several years that over 50 percent of those funds will need to be cut from somewhere. Now until last week it had been assumed that there will be, in some cases he's used the description of across the board cuts to take effect the first year, I was pleased the Governor said there will be no cuts to education but there's no way the math holds up that you can protect education without a cut to nondefense discretionary funds by more than 50 percent. If you did, you'd have to have even larger cuts to things like school breakfast and school lunch programs and to veterans health care programs and so for me the math does not hold up in the Romney Budget, which means when we get to real presidency, the question is where are the candidates priorities and that's what they are going to fight for and basically I've seen again and again and again the President has stood up for both reform but also funding in education, I think the Governor, good man, has said that there ought to be a smaller department of education, ought to be consolidated with other departments or shrunk a lot, he said that money doesn't matter a lot in education, and so, I think Phil described this, there is not a priority to grow and create incentives, so I think you'll see a dramatically

different investment in education if you see a President Obama compared to if you see a President Romney

Handy: Can I just comment?

Fuhrman: Yes, I was going to ask you to

Handy: Jon's characterization of investments is probably not exactly right. The stimulus package is two years of funding that wouldn't call that a long term investment in education. We've saved between 160 and Jon would say, 400,000 jobs, but we're about to go off the cliff, the 100 billion dollars is done and we're back to where we began. Race to the Top is the same way, it's short term money basically and then of the states who got Race to the Top Money have complied with all the criteria that went with the money, it's not long-term investment. And so, I would say, you can't have it both ways. You can't put a lot more money into it on a short-term basis and call it an investment. It's just not.

Schnur: But the budgets have continued to reflect a modest increase as possible but large increases over the years and I'd just say that investment, even the stimulus which was the first part of his presidency has produced enduring changes, you have people who are Democratic and Republican governors across the country who say this has been more a period of greater change and focus on improving education than the last few years than they've seen for decades and that's important because strategic use of funding that, by the way, was a reflection of an idea of incentives for people to do the right thing on things like reform, which does progress NCLB reauthorization, it does reflect a move away from under No Child Left Behind, there was a some good ideas including shining a spotlight on achievement gaps for low income kids and kids of color and I think there was some good that was done by it by parts of No Child Left Behind. The fundamental flaw I think, has proved to be that it's a one-size fits all mandate on the country, I think we have to be careful about what we mandate. I think the President's moved through his incentive programs and Race To The Top and through the waiver process to incentivize states to do things and give them flexibility from one-size fits all mandates and I think the approach of modest investments over the long-term with the burst of investments, there was a small portion of the overall stimulus on education combined with more flexibility moving away from more than one-size-fits-all mandates, I think is the right blend for the national education.

Fuhrman: Just to nail this down, so if the ESCA got reauthorized, the President's proposal would look a lot like the waivers that he's giving now? But any significant differences?

Schnur: So the President is basically prioritized that the most important thing that the President and Obama administration have said need to be constant, which have not been constant over the last decade or beyond is that every state ought to have standards and expectations and assessments that reflect those, that reflect real rigor and true readiness for college and careers. And so there have been in the administration's ESCA proposal, there have been proposals, not to incent the common core specifically, this is an important difference, there has not been a proposal to incent the adoption of the common core standards but there is a requirement that states have standards that reflect readiness for college and careers and the common core is one way to get there. But the philosophy is if you have a much higher standard and are honest with kids and communities and parents about where kids are against this higher standard than there should be a few areas of very important focus and prioritization but a lot more flexibility on how you get there.

Fuhrman: Phil, you wanted to talk about the waivers and No Child Left Behind

Handy: I want to talk about something else first that Jon brought up, the Pell Grants, which again use that as an example of investment. But I would say honestly that there is 56 billion dollars of deficit, we haven't figured out how to fund Pell Grants yet so we're giving more money to more kids but are accumulating at least over the next several years tens of billions of dollars of unpaid liability. We absolutely adhere to the Pell Grants, we like the Pell Grants, we think they belong in American education but they need to be radically fixed. I might add that in the Pell Grant, which can be used for many different educational choices, it would be interesting to note that in K12 we don't use Title One or IBA money for choice and we think we should. I'll talk about waivers in just a minute.

Fuhrman: [Jon] you want to respond to higher ed. little later but that's okay, go ahead

Schnur: A quick response on Phil's critique of the increase in Pell funding and that's money that in the end increase the deficit. So again here's what I would say, when people in this audience, in Washington D.C., and people watching this online and people in the country look at the two candidates on education, there are genuinely major differences in the philosophy about what should happen on education, major, decent people, major differences on what should happen,

and to me this is a great one and an important one. So the critique that increasing Pell Grants will increase the deficit, I think, education is very small part of the overall deficit and the overall budget of the country, the President has said that it has to be an area we increase modestly in order to invest and produce better outcomes so increasing Pell Grants to help go from 6 million to 10 million students benefit from Pell Grants, which is huge, today, 10 million student right now are benefitting from Pell Grants, low income students. That's not just an investment in the students. We know from the data that 40 years ago a high school degree was the minimal ticket to a middle class job, today, a college degree of some kind is and the wage gap and unemployment rates are huge gaps between those in post-secondary education and those not, our investment in those Pell Grants and low income students go into college fuels our long term economy and that's not adding to our economic problem its actually adding to our economic solutions.

Fuhrman: So I'm going to get back to higher ed. affordability but I'm still curious about No Child Left Behind. What would happen in a Romney administration?

Handy: We've laid out in our white paper the criteria for our thoughts about reauthorization. We put forward a reasonably provocative recommendation about Title One, basically in K12 two kinds of money that come from the federal government for the K12 education, that's the 10 percent we refer to several times here tonight and that's Title One money and IDA money for special needs children and we've recommended that that money, like Pell Grants should be given directly to the children again under the philosophy that no child who's been born into a zip code should be obligated to necessarily go to a specific school. And we've also said in Title Two money which is also part of the No Child Left Behind that Title Two money which is about 2.5 billion dollars should be block granted to the states to be used the way states want to use for professional development, it's primarily for teacher training and professional development. And we've said that along with the federal government's first philosophy that I articulated earlier that we should have a database and we should have data that empowers parents and gives them a real choice. Charter schools should be empowered, should be funded and so there is a, we think that these waivers are being given in woe of reauthorization. If anybody hasn't seen a waiver, it's not about flexibility, there are 33 of them, 11 other states have applied so there are arguably 44 states are going to have waivers, they are very prescriptive and we think that they have led to a very unfortunate result, which is just starting to play out right now where we've given states the ability to set their own accountability standards, the law today prescribes

proficiency for all students in year 2012 and these waivers have given the states the right to set their own accountability standards. It's been evidenced that in the last several weeks actually, it a very topical subject so many of these states are setting different accountability standards for different constituencies of children. So we're actually racially defining proficiency over the next seven years as a result of waivers that are being given by the federal government. I think it is wrong, its right back to where we began in terms of the soft bigotry of the expectations

Schnur: What would Governor Romney do about that?

Handy: We would reauthorize No Child Left Behind and by the way, as it relates to the waivers, the presidential orders or executive orders essentially, I think in a Romney administration we'd review all executive orders and determine whether they made sense or not.

Fuhrman: So to clarify, states would be responsible for a common high standard but the money would go to individuals to choose either charters or private schools

Handy: Public schools. Where the law applied. So there are certain states, seven or eight states, where private schools are a part of the Choice Program, the Title One money will be allowed to be used for that or for charters or for online education or for schools outside the district, inside the district depending on availability. It's giving the parent the choice with their own money to decide where to send their child to school. Most of us in this room have that choice today, why shouldn't everybody have that choice.

Fuhrman: Do you want to respond, Jon?

Schnur: One question if I can. The problem your describing of states setting their own goals, and different goals with different goals for different subgroups on education, what in the Romney plan would address that? What would the Romney administration do to address that which you're describing as a problem?

Handy: We'd have to see what No Child will look like but if it looked like the No Child Left Behind that is still the law, that the Obama administration is averting with waivers, we'd go back to some semblance of the law and set the same standard for all children and that's, by the way, in Florida, which arguably has been since 1998 the most significant increase in the decrease,

has decreased the achievement gap the most significantly of any state in America and I would contend that a large part of that is that we had one standard for all children, English learners, special needs kids, didn't matter, and as a consequence we've seen the achievement gap narrow to almost nothing and our African American kids today score in the, if they were a state they'd be the 30th state, beating California and many other states. So, one standard for all kids, which was No Child Left Behind initially and we hope it would return to that.

Schnur: So we've answered some issues that we addressed in terms of the President deeply focused on equity and moving all kids from all backgrounds towards high standards, I must say though, Phil what you're saying I think falls into the trap of some of the worst parts of No Child Left Behind. I think that what happened under No Child Left Behind, which again has some real good done by it by No Child Left Behind, there was some real damage too. I think one damage was that there were very prescriptive requirements for how states had to carry out their accountability systems and carry out the implementation of No Child Left Behind through very prescriptive regulations that in the end in order to comply with all those and for states to look like they were doing well on all those and not have schools that were declared low-performing, the states were then incentive to lower the standard and they set lower standard with the kind of fill in the bubble multiple choice test reflecting that lower standard in order to meet that prescriptive kind of approach. I think the President's approach has been and Arne Duncan's approach has been, flip that, let's be tight on the goals and have really high vigorous goals where standards will reflect readiness for college and careers and actually require that in some way, the common core states can set their own as long as they are certified to reflect real readiness for college and careers and give more flexibility. Now there's got to be a focus on accountability too but I think what you're describing could get us back to the prescription and then states lowering their standards instead requiring high standards and giving more flexibility to get there.

Fuhrman: Let me just follow up on the choice part of Phil's answer previously. Using Title One and IDEA as essentially vouchers, right, to students to choose their school?

Schnur: So President Obama has championed parental choice in public education

Handy: Except in the DC Scholarship Program

Schnur: Has championed parental choice in public education as part of a broader package. I think he sees the evidence shows that parental choice is important if it's done along with actual investing funding and ensuring accountability to give kids opportunities for better choices in their neighborhood and better choices in their community so as part of a package it's good. My concerns with the Romney proposal, three concerns, one is that if you really focus mostly, Phil began this debate saying, the real focus of the federal government is transparency and choice, if you focus just on those things and you're willing to walk away from some of the funding that needed to actually help schools improve, I think choices are not meaningful, I think if you walk away from the accountability requirements, one of the pieces the Romney Proposal again, with all due respect to Phil but it would eliminate the requirement as I understand it for schools that are low performing to take action in pursuit of more flexibility. I think that if you have choice without the accountability and the funding it's not real. The second concern I've got about the Choice Proposal is that I think it's not very, I think it's an interesting idea that doesn't seem workable in a significant way or scale, I think if you say to a low income kid in a Title One school in the Bronx that you can yet take \$700 in Title One funding and have that go towards a school in the suburbs but you don't have transportation to get there, I think \$700 in Title One funding without transportation to suburban schools that often don't have spaces anyway, I just don't think, I think there are ways of trying to do it in a small way but to try to mandate that on the country where you would say 50 states would need to, in order to get Title One funds, have to do that and use their state funds to do that, I think is taking an interesting idea and going too far and not providing the local choice that families need in their own communities

Fuhrman: Once again to clarify, does the proposal for the vouchers include state and local funds coming along with the Title One or IDEA funds?

Handy: Let me just start by, I think it's sort of at the deepest philosophical level, it's this ultimate hypocrisy to send your kids to private school and then veto DC Scholarship Program, that's not right. I mean, those poor kids should have the same right that we have to send our kids to whatever they want and so the DC Scholarship Program has been opposed by this administration for the three years it's been in office and it's a travesty, those kids should be allowed to go wherever they want. That's the ultimate choice. So what we've said is that Title One money goes with states can match, there are seven or eight states today that would probably do that and probably more if Title One money, which could be as Jon says, \$700 but in

some places closer to \$2,000 per student and so it would actually have a real impact, we think, on states either matching it or putting state funding with it and really driving choice. Parents, student, should have the choice of where they go to school and we think if you look at all these low performing schools 10 years ago, five years ago, four years ago, unfortunately, sadly, they're still the same schools, we haven't done anything about it, we think there needs to be some disruption in the system and we believe that choice and giving parents the ability to send their children where they want is part of that disruption.

Schnur: One last quick comment?

Fuhrman: Yes

Schnur: So I think the question is: what is an effective disruption, as you put it, to give families the choice of better schools in their community and to me \$700 or the average eight/nine hundred dollars, maybe in a few places its \$2000 but its generally under \$1000, you deprive that amount and suggest that that's going to give families the meaningful choice to go to school elsewhere, I just think isn't real. Again, I think there are interesting ways to take control and try some things out but I don't think it designed well enough to mandate the 50 states to do it. Whereas I think the disruption the President has talked about and proposed and already Arne Duncan, the secretary, have been executing on, has to require that low achieving schools take really dramatic steps to turn around and improve and many people are familiar with the title on schools improvement grants that have really helped lots of low performing schools around the country begin to make very significant change in terms of the teaching quality, and the curricula and the support just out of the local level with funding and accountability requirements to support that, I think ultimately reforming existing schools and expanding acts to public charter schools give better chance of getting real choices to a child in terms of community than a \$700 or \$100,000 to support going to a suburban school.

Fuhrman: One last title...

Handy: The federal government has a limited role in public education, it's primarily Title One and IDEA money it may not be, we think it will be the significant catalyst to get this choice effort started, it may not have all the characteristics that we would need in terms of total student funding but the federal government's role should be to get this choice started.

Fuhrman: One more Title One or No Child Left Behind question that has to do with the prevalence of testing, I know you've talked about new kinds of tests but in this city we have a growing parental backlash against testing. We read everyday some new scandal involved in testing. What are your proposals about standardized tests?

Handy: About starting scandal?

Fuhrman: Standardized test, not scandal.

Handy: Well certainly, testing is taken on a bad brand name for sure and its happened in Florida and its happened not only here in New York but around the country but unfortunately that's what we have to do to assess properly assess students and its going to be an interesting political dilemma whether politicians, these 46 governors who have signed up for common core in, who have signed up for no assessments are going to have the political courage to actually implement them, the next couple years will be a very very interesting time to see whether that happens or not.

Fuhrman: Jon?

Schnur: So look, mediocre tests are a problem and need to be replaced and by the President's leadership can be replaced by much better assessments that measure the kind of things that we really care about our kids learning, it's not just filling in a bubble on a multiple choice test. One of the problems of No Child Left Behind Act is it required this kind of testing but then didn't provide the funding to actually even implement or design better tests so you often had to dumb down the kind of tests that were available, I think that's a problem and its created real backlash. So that's got to be addressed with much better assessment that are useful in giving information to students, and families and teachers to help figure out how to improve how kids are doing. In every schools we've seen that's made progress and dramatic progress, has had good assessments with useful information that helped people make improvements and I think the design and use of assessment in a good way is important but at the same time the bigger problem is not tests and I think there are the backlash which is understandable but has to be addressed through better assessments but the real backlack should not be against tests even though they should be addressed and replaced with better assessments, the real backlash

should be against the fact that this country we are nowhere where we need to be in education in terms of actual performance. We once were number one in the world in education performance 40 years ago, the U.S. has slipped to number 14, 16, 22, it's not because we've gotten worse, we've not gotten better or a little bit better and the demands of our kids have gone way up in order to get good jobs and participate successfully in an information driven society. So the real question is how do we actually stop the stagnation or slight incremental improvements we've had and make much bigger progress and that's the big fight even to address the assessment issue in an effective way along the way.

Fuhrman: Did you want to say anything in response?

Handy: No I think states need to take a much more offensive marketing role in this and stop playing defense. I think there is, I agree with Jon, we need to enhance our assessments and under common core assessments are going to get more prevalent than less prevalent and hopefully more meaningful. For example we're going to have to find secure online devices to be able to start taking tests in a more realistic way than sitting down at a desk and the funding for that from the state point of view would be significant but needs to be made.

Fuhrman: Let me move on to teachers and teaching. Recent research shows that the teaching force has become younger and younger, the term being used is the "greening" of the teaching force and that more teachers are leaving within their first five years than ever before. Right now the modal year of experience in the teaching force is one. What do you think your candidate do to support teaching and the teaching profession so we can stop this leaky bucket?

Handy: To discuss this at Teachers College obviously is a very relevant. In Florida we, because our teacher population has grown older and people have retired and gone out of the system, we hire approximately 20,000 teachers a year. Schools of education turn out 6,000 of which 3,000 end up teaching in our public schools in Florida and yet we call everybody other than the 3,000 alternatively certified. So the first thing we need to do is, I think, take a whole new approach to the constraints of how people, very capable people, can come into the teaching workforce and we think that there is a much different approach. For example, I mentioned Title Two money and IDEA should be given in a block grant to the states and let them begin to open the pathways for people from all kinds of walks of life to be teachers, well qualified teachers, who are recommended by the way in terms of the IDEA, reauthorization we would take our highly

qualified as a prerequisite, we think it develops some constraints to getting like TFA into the classroom.

Fuhrman: Jon?

Schnur: So the evidence is pretty clear about the number one in school factor as you note, Susan, driving improves student success is the quality of teaching in school. Sometimes that get misinterpreted to mean that if a teacher works harder and tries harder, and does better than somehow that's going to solve everything when in fact, and the President's approach has been, we actually need a systematic focus on how do you attract, retain, develop so we can have teachers of all levels really excel tapping the research base that has been developed across the country including here to understand how kids learn and how to succeed. So with the President it's a three part plan on teaching quality, we would build on that in a second term in a significant way. Number one is to give in an opt in basis the opportunity for schools systems across the country to really truly professionalize teaching, to create career ladders, it would give opportunities for people to who are successful, advance into having roles where they can be lead teachers, support other teachers success, become instructional coaches, really redesign the whole way that a teacher goes through a career. Today, most people in most jobs and sectors don't spend 30 years in one position, people should be able to do that and part of the reformed Teacher Incentive Fund Program just given grants across the program, which used to be more about performance pay, the President has broadened that, how do you make teaching and school leadership a performance based career where you can grow and develop in lots of roles and teacher evaluations system is a component of that. The second thing the President is doing is trying to support the reform of preparation of teachers in the first place and support for programs including Teacher Residency Programs where teachers get year-long residency to prepare to become teachers based in part on what the President knew very well in Chicago when he visited a number of times before he was President, the Academy for Urban School Leadership in Chicago where teachers are very carefully recruited and selected, spend a year in residency working with masters teachers selected for that purpose, have really rigorous training in a partnership with the local university and then go in cohorts of teachers into schools to improve low achieving schools, and that model has created a lot of great teachers and has great results in actually being disruptive and improving low performing schools, so expanding that kind of model in teacher preparation and the third thing the President has been focused on and secretary Duncan has been focused on and will be is how do you provide more incentives for

people to go into teaching and reduce the student loan debt and financial obligation that people take to go into teaching. There have been significant strides in making it easier to get loan forgiveness paying off loans for people who go into and stay teaching for several years.

Fuhrman: So one hypothesis about why many more teachers are leaving than before is the accountability system, something that you referenced specifically with respect to teachers, the use of standardized tests scores and teacher evaluation, for example. What do you think is your candidate's position on that, the use of those tests to evaluate teachers and to attach consequences to them?

Schnur: So the President and Arne Duncan the secretary have been clear that we have to help develop teachers and give them the capacity to succeed. In order to develop teachers as good as kind of one shot occasional professional development can be designed, the way you really help teachers succeed is through on-going, significant feedback from skilled leaders, principals and instructional leaders to help them improve and in most careers you have as a basis for that, teacher evaluation or performance evaluation systems that gives data to managers and employees on saying 'here's how we're doing and here's the information we need to give feedback' so the President and secretary of the administration have seen teacher evaluations as a part of a way to give feedback that is needed to help teachers improve and also to see which teachers are doing well and give them a chance to take on other roles and yes we're in a fairly designed system if there are teachers that are not doing well and have support after they've been identified as low-performing there actually are mechanisms for ensuring those teachers are not in front of kids when they are counseled out or dismissed and that's nowhere near the majority of teachers, it's a small subset but tackling that problem in some ways along with supporting the development of the vast majority of teachers who can succeed, the President thinks is a better way to operate for better choices for kids and many other strategies. In terms of the test score question, the President and secretary have been clear that the improved achievement of kids should be one of multiple measures in a teacher evaluation system and an evaluation that doesn't include a look at whether kids are improving isn't really serious about helping people understand what kids are learning. A system that only looks at that is missing very important feedback around how teachers are doing around rubrics on professional practice, around improvement, so it's really got to be a blend of multiple measures, that's been the President and secretary's policy and I think it will continue to be.

Fuhrman: Phil?

Handy: We agree obviously on the importance of the teacher as the most significant characteristic in the classroom. We don't think it's the role of the federal government to be mandating these kind of evaluations of teachers we happen to agree with them but we don't think they should be mandated either by waivers or by federal prescription.

Fuhrman: Okay let's move on to the higher education issue that I said I would return to. So we started a conversation on affordability talking about Pell but that also has to do with student loans and indebtedness and I'd like your sense on how your candidates would address the growing issue of student debt and making college more affordable for more students. Jon would you like to start?

Schnur: Sure. So on all of these issues....there are examples of success across this country whether its pre-k programs that are preparing kids for success in kindergarten, k thru 12 public schools are succeeding or post secondary institutions that have been doing really well with improving how the kids are doing, the students are doing, completing college, managing costs. And so I think that the successes in some ways have informed the president's policies as well as the urgent need for investing in post secondary education and college affordability for students. So specifically the president has, in addition to the Pell grant, we go 10 million students on Pell grants and that's a big focus. But the reform of the student loan program, that the president championed successfully. He didn't get everything he wanted but got a lot, was very significant in essentially moving the student loan program to a direct loan program fully and the benefits of that there were about \$70 or \$80 billion approximately that were saved in the shift from having the subsidies from the banks to those loan programs to being available to be able to help students. And there were 3 way s in which to say that \$70 or \$80 billion were used. One is it increased Pell grants, helped us get to the 10 million students receiving Pell grants today. Number two is it enabled a big investment in community colleges which is a very important part of training workers for high skilled jobs in this economy. Third is it enabled, and I think this hasn't gotten enough attention, but a really significant enabling of an income based repayment plan that has still moving fully into effect soon. A student will be able to pay only 10% of their discretionary income and won't have to pay more than that. And that can be forgiven after 20 years to make the student loan debt more manageable and that investment in student loans is kind of representative post secondary education now. Interestingly, for the last four

years, for students overall, the net cost has not gone up because of the president's policies. Investments and loans and Pell grants have actually been more than the increase in tuition costs ... moving forward the president has proposed a really significant Race to the Top for post secondary education that would incent post secondary institutions in states to both measure and improve their ability to complete students in college, to get students all the way to complete college because we got a big college dropout problem that doesn't get talked about enough. And to help incent those places that would actually manage their costs better in order to make sure we don't have the continually rising costs that we have. So this will continue to be a major focus for the president in a second term.

Handy: Well student debt as most of you know has become a trillion dollar portfolio, more than all consumer debt put together so it's a very large issue. And I would say that starting to forgive student debt is sort of like a creeping entitlement we're about to begin giving people the ability not to pay back their debts in the student area. There's a lot of things that can be done that haven't been done by this administration. For example, their attitude toward for-profit education has been very negative ... and I think again, if you read our way paper, that would recommend that we'd would do away with what's called the 90/10 rule and the gainful employment rule, both of which are driving up tuition as is higher Pell grants actually driving up tuition as opposed to what I said before, we're creating huge debts at the federal level and huge debts at the student level. John has suggested that the student loan program has been monopolized ... at the federal government level and private lenders have been taken out of the industry. We would recommend that, again, given our attitude toward our competition that private lenders be allowed back into the industry, we'd think we'd see more competition, we'd see more efficiency, we'd see more choice for students in the process.

I think there's several other areas of higher education which need to be talked about. Workplace development, our recommendation is, again, not surprisingly, we would recommend that over \$20 billion dollars a year in 47 programs that don't really produce a product, don't really produce jobs, should be given directly to the recipients, and let them use that the way they want and for to get job training as opposed to give it to the federal government and let them administrate it. So, generally, there's much more, I would say, choice that should be given to kids and their parents, the same transparency, truth, data collection, needs to be evident in higher education ... as we suggested, it should be in K-12 as well. So, the hope is that we would have

data sets and not have to rely on US News & World Report, but obviously you'd have a much more effective information technique for giving kids a choice, a proper choice.

Schnur: I think choice among unaffordable loans is not a real choice. I mean, I wonder, what would Gov. Romney do in order is it really an issue of college debt in order to promote college affordability?

Handy: The one thing we do with Pell grants, for example, is have a completion requirement. For example, in Florida we have Florida virtual schools. A Florida virtual school offers a course and gets paid at the end of the course when the student is proficient in that course, and that should be the same with federal programs which allow kids to go to school, not complete school, but still get the money, not complete the course, but still get the money. There's a much more rigorous criteria that should be, I think, administered as it relates to giving out federal money for going to school and not completing a course or completing a program...

Schnur: You mentioned the, the one policy mentioned was returning the loan program to ... not being a direct loan but to the banks and, you know, that was ... done for a while and the switch of course has now been made to the direct loan program. And there are still private companies and banks participating in that. But now they're contractors to the federal government as opposed to giving subsidies to the banks in order to be the originators of the loans. There is a market role for that. The question though, I have is, if you did that, what would you do to replace the funding that's actually made possible the Pell grants? The investment in community colleges, the income-based repayment, to me, if you have a responsible income-based repayment plan — it's been paid for by the ... subsidies to the banks as middle-men ... that's not contributing to the student debt problem, it's helping it by making the debt more manageable. But Pell grants, increasing them is a priority. And I have to say, my wife's here, Lisa, is sitting in the front row. I'm so glad she's here. She went to college with help from a Pell grant ... and I think there are millions of people in the country who wouldn't have the chance to go without Pell. I think we're finding ways to reform Pell but also improve access to it for millions of kids is just crucial.

Handy: I guess what we would say is that reform is essential, so building a \$56 billion deficit from Pell grants is not acceptable.

Schnur: Well the Romney/Ryan budgets would double or triple the shortfall to \$100-150 billion dollars and just the question, 'Where does the funding come from to pay for it?' and my concern about the Romney budget overall is when you have to cut discretionary and domestic funding by over 50 percent, you don't have funding to be able to address shortfalls like that. Whereas the president has laid out some of the clear steps, because of his investment strategy to address the shortfall.

Handy: I look forward to the macroeconomic discussion later. (laughs)

Fuhrman: College completion is ... certainly affordability is important, but so is preparation. We all realize that there are many important non-school factors that affect a student's readiness for college and for the workplace. It's not just how good schools are as much as we want to improve schools, but certainly poverty, living in violence, health conditions, safe neighborhoods, they're all critical to success throughout students' lives. What would your candidate say about the non-school factors and the role of federal policy in addressing them?

Handy: It's a much broader issue. As it relates to the school systems, is what we're focused on in terms of our policy. There's a great many social params that go into that. But what we've learned over the years, whether it be in Harlem, Bronx, Miami, or Jacksonville, that all children can learn regardless of their ... it would be fantastic to improve home life and to improve social environments. But we have learned that kids can learn ... we should assume that they can learn, and behave accordingly.

Schnur: I think the evidence shows that kids including kids in poverty, when they have access to high-quality expectations and support instruction can make dramatic progress in a way that many people don't believe. But the evidence is clear. We have way too low expectations for our kids, especially kids from low-income backgrounds, kids of color, kids who've been underserved. And we have too low expectations of all kids ... so part of the overall arching ... part of the president's how do you support community's efforts to raise expectations and support kids' and teachers' ability to achieve those expectations. The evidence also shows is that schools are not everything. I think some people would suggest that you shouldn't tackle school reform until you fix poverty. I think we'll never get to that unless we support schools. Other people would suggest you only focus on schools without focusing on other issues including nutrition, counseling, and social services, and healthcare. And for kids who live...and kids who live in

poverty, they can succeed, but there are a lot of barriers that need to be addressed academically and non-academically in order to support that. Some of the most successful models we've seen support that, I see [PM Cantor] from [unintelligible], is a great example of how you combine the work in schools. I think that the president has supported that with funding to support efforts like the Harlem Children Zone across the country, that's been very important. And I think the president's budget priorities, he has proposed \$4 trillion in cuts to be fiscally responsible. But to cut discretionary domestic spending by over 50 percent over time, including things like social welfare programs, and health programs, nutritional programs, educational programs, I think just doesn't allow you to make that progress. Which is why I'm saying we've got to be responsible and invest both in schools and out of school issues to help kids in poverty succeed.

Fuhrman: So I'm going to ask you the most popular question: It was suggested by every segment, faculty, and community here, and our friends in Washington ... and that is: What are the candidate's stances on Early Childhood Education?

Handy: We have the primary federal role in ... early childhood education as Head Start. And we think, again, as part of our proposal that Head Start should have different criteria and elements of success. It's allowed ... it has been allowed to go on for decades, not as an academic experience unfortunately but much more as a social experience, not as a ... not preparing children for school, which is what we think child education... We have started in Florida, pre-school education funded by the state and though we think that's very legitimate, there's a lot of states that have started what they call pre-kindergarten. We think that's an important part. But not an important part for federal participation unless there's real criteria associated with it.

Schnur: At the federal level? ... Having seen the President when he was a senator, I say there's nothing that he is more passionate about in education. And maybe beyond in domestic policy in terms of investment and quality of early learning for young kids. In the 2008 debates, I remember he was asked ... no one asked questions about education, but he responded with answers about education. He was asked about what was something he would do to invest in our long-term economic growth and he said we've got to invest in early learning. So when the stimulus came along, he insisted on making sure that in fact there were investments in expanded Head Start programs. But the key is not only investing more funding he's also, like other parts of his education [plan], we've got to make much better use of existing funding. And

so the administration has implemented regulations ... a law that was passed with bi-partisan support a couple years before, but in a very aggressive way, to reform Head Start by actually ending contracts with low-performing Head Start programs. And actually giving more contracts to those Head Start programs that are really demonstrating results serving young kids. And to me this is a great example of this philosophy which is you need more funding, but when things aren't working you just keep more funding going. Some people would say "yeah you kind of ignore that and maybe reform things, but you don't add funding..." that doesn't really expand access. And the President's approach has been how do you both invest and make dramatic changes in the way the programs are working, I think you'll see in the ... also in his first term, he had a very large early learning proposal that was ... part of this [Saffer] Act, that was basically trying to apply the savings from the student loan program, at the last moment in Congress, the investment in early learning was taken out. But he's had an Early Learning Race to the Top challenge which states across the country, Democratic and Republican states, have come together and applied for funding for how they design the early learning systems and I just think you'll continue to see in a second Obama term a major focus on how do we really expand not just the quantity but the quality of access.

Fuhrman: So this goes beyond Head Start and beyond 3- and 4-year-olds. It's beyond disadvantaged kids?

Schnur: Yeah, so it's ... he's very focused on the needs from kids 0 to 5. And how do you support creation of systems that include Head Start, that include quality child care, that includes state programs and the early learning Race to the Top was a competition that gave funding to states to actually help them ... how do you stitch together in a way building on Governor Hunt in N.C., created the Smart Start program, which is one model on how you stitch the programs for kids really from birth to five. And he's focused both on Head Start in 3- and 4-year-olds but has really in-state community efforts to help kids all the way to get ready for success in kindergarten. If we don't do that you can catch up with kids for sure but it's much harder and it's much more expensive, so he thinks not only of the outcome gains you'll get, but actually the cost savings you'll get by doing a good job on the front-end are huge.

Fuhrman: So and Phil, just to be clear, you pretty much confined your marks to Head Start?

Handy: I know it won't be popular in this audience but you can't just keep adding to the deficit. And you can create all these programs but we don't think it's appropriate role for the federal government to keep adding to these programs.

Schnur: I think the question is: As a president you get to make a few priorities about what are the things you focus on? What are the things you lead on? When push comes to shove, when all the political squabbling ends, what are the things you're really going to make sure get done? And I think the choice that the country has in between Barack Obama and Mitt Romney includes that Barack Obama at the end of the day, year after year, is going to make a major focus on supporting kids from a young age, to K through 12, through college affordability and doesn't regard those as just a "set of those programs." There are a lot of cuts that are needed, there are differences over taxation for the wealthy, but I do think you see a legitimate difference in philosophy about whether you prioritize education as president in investments and reform. And I think, in my view, if we make the right choice to do that the consequences will not only be so huge for kids' access to opportunity in this country but it'll drive good jobs or economic competitiveness, not by itself, but it'll help. I think if we don't make that one of the few priorities and if it's just a set of these programs that the ... that may get cut or may not get cut, or may get increased a little bit, but aren't a huge focus — I think it's not the right choice for the country.

Handy: I would say that Governor Romney, having been the governor of Massachusetts, as we learned that in the last debate with the 87 percent Democratic legislature made education a very high priority in his administration in Massachusetts. They finished with the highest standards with the highest NAEP scores under his tutelage as governor. He believes in education, proved he did, but couldn't get bipartisan support for doing that, but that doesn't mean increasing the federal deficit in the process.

Schnur: I mean there was a lot of progress over time in Massachusetts that made it very successful and the governor maintained that. And he did a couple things to try and build on that. Some didn't pass and some got passed. That leads me to say, I might vote for Mitt Romney for governor, but I don't think that's the basis for electing him to be president on education.

Fuhrman: I have a question from the *Education Week* audience. The arts and humanities were always such an important part of our education and of our lives as productive citizens. And as

citizens who enjoy life, so how can we preserve them in a time when they tend to be the first things cut?

Handy: So part of the introduction which was not included was my ... I served as the vice-chairman of the Institute of Educational Sciences which is the research arm of the Department of Education which focuses on education research and I will say that over the last 10 years we've significantly enhanced the quality of educational research ... it's far from where it should be but we've brought it to a level of credibility that heretofore did not exist. But to your question: There has been a myth about courses and in the last 10 years that we've actually decreased math, I mean music, arts, and other social sciences. The actual data would indicate that we haven't done that. We've actually maintained a continuing level of education in the arts and other social studies in history at a time, at a time when we tried to focus on reading and math. But I don't believe that it's a crisis that needs to be cured. I think it's actually, in terms of arts education, we probably have a status quo versus 10 or 5 years ago.

Schnur: So part of the President's administration's ESEA reauthorization is to provide support for a well-rounded education for arts and for music. And look, I see it on our own kids and kids in schools. I've visited other country's arts done right and play such a role in helping spark kids' curiosity and get kids to school. I think the data, I think Phil's right, I think it shows that there hasn't been significant pullback on those programs nationally that sometimes people suggest. At the same time, I think the question is how do we as a country invest deeply in kids, especially who are behind their ability to read well, to write well, to do math, and yet have arts and music programs as well? I think this is a classic example of both and which really is getting solved by places, especially for the highest poverty communities, in places that wind up having longer school days and school years. And say, 'Look, if kids are behind they may need more time in a school day and more time in a school year,' so that they do get focused. They need the focus on reading and literacy and math and science. They need the arts and the music. You can't do that in a shorter day. Again, that does require some cost. But if you do it right and in a responsible way, in a targeted way that's needed most, it can be done in a way that pays off and reduce our costs as a society over time.

Fuhrman: So let me ask about education research since you brought it up. So it's just the privilege of the chair. The investment in education research is less than the investment in any other sector and that includes private sources as well as the federal government. You cited the

federal role in data collection and research as one of its most important roles, so would you support and enhance funding for educational research?

Handy: Yes.

Schnur: And Phil's demonstrated that. Again, Phil's a great leader and great person and a committed ... advocate for education in many ways, including his role on educational research and his role in Florida. And so, on that "yes," is real.

Handy: Thank you for enhancing my answer, Jon. (laughs)

Schnur: I just can't stand short answers. (laughs) It's one of my developmental needs. The investment in research is so key, you can't really do that in a sustained way if you're cutting domestic, non-defense, discretionary funding by more than 50 percent a year. I think there's just so many things you can cut, it's just very hard to do. So I'm thrilled to hear Phil say that, but in that kind of budget policy, that and so many budget things are going to be at risk, even if there's an interest in supporting them.

Fuhrman: And one final question from the D.C. audience has to do with who's voice is heard in education. I would put in a plug for the researchers but other people want to know about teachers and students, and how do their voices get included in education policymaking? And if not at the federal level, how would you encourage states and localities to include their voices?

Handy: Well, we have 14,000 school districts and therefore 14,000 school boards. It is a phenomena that school board elections are ignored by parents and by many people in the community. I would urge folks to be much more involved in school board races where we really have a chance where the school boards have 5 or 7 people without much you could change the complexion of the outcome significantly by being involved in school board races. Most people don't pay any attention to it. I would say that's at the fundamental level that's where most policy is really made. That's where contracts are negotiated, that's where policy is made, that's where textbooks are done, that's where a lot of voices should be heard, and I'm afraid they're not.

Schnur: I'm going to speak for myself, but I'll tell you a little story of what I saw of the president before he was president that relates to your answer. And I was in New Orleans, he was in New

Orleans in 2007, and my wife Elisa, and our daughter had been born at a New Orleans hospital, we had been there post-Katrina, and my son and I who was 2, went over to a school where President Obama ... Senator Obama ... was visiting a New Orleans school as part of a day of service and gave a speech there. What he most wanted to do....and he sat in a classroom — I saw him do this — he sat with a set of students in the classroom in this New Orleans school...and some Citiyear core members who were helping to fix up the school. And he sat and he just asked them questions, asked them questions, and listened, overstayed the amount of time he needed to stay there because he so much wanted to hear from students and Citiyear core members in New Orleans, and I think what he heard from them significantly informed his policy overall including his views about New Orleans over time. I do think that students have the most profound insights about education and we need to do much more to leverage those. I think the President has demonstrated that personally.

I also think ... and there are efforts to try this out, I think that incorporating, you talk about teacher evaluations, for example, there's some research that some of you are familiar with that if you ask students the right questions, that is one measure, not the only measure, not the majority measure, but it is one measure ... to ask students questions like that relate to that teacher's sense of expectation for the student, if a student is not getting something right, does the teacher help them? They're asking the right questions so that students can actually be a very important part of giving teachers evaluation and feedback as part of their evaluation systems too.

Fuhrman: OK, now it's time for your closing statements. And since we started with a question for Phil first, we're going to let you go first this time. Jon?

Schnur: So, I think I'll start ... I'll run with what I started with, in a way. The ... debates about any policy issues can wind up getting into lots of important details. I think at the end of the day, when you're looking at any candidate on an issue, I think what's most crucial to look at is what are their demonstrated core beliefs and priorities over time? And when you get into the Oval Office and there are so many things competing for your time, I think no one can imagine before they get into that situation how demanding your schedule is, how little time there is for anything you might think, and what priorities you carry with you is a fundamental conviction that need to be addressed will ultimately and how will wind up driving your policies

What I saw in this brink of economic catastrophe, President-elect Obama in early 2009, millions of jobs were in the process of being lost, the economy in freefall, him addressing that. He's taken the time to make sure that the country was going to be investing in the long-term economic future by focusing and investing from young kids in the public schools, to access to college ... and insisted on that being part of an economic stimulus package that wouldn't work he thought without investing in the long-term, to me that shows the kind of priorities that he's got.

I think his policies have continued to reflect that on issue after issue tonight, I think you'll hear, that gets reflected in Head Start programs and programs 0 to 5 and investments in reform in public schools and promoting college affordability all in a fiscally responsible context and I do think that the contrast in education, I have respect for Mitt Romney, I have huge respect for Phil Handy ... but I think that the view of budget policy that the governor has and in view of the states not only to be the driver, which the President believes and is trying to give more flexibility on, but the belief that the federal government should be consolidated or shrunk a lot and these various issues are not for federal involvement, I do think does represent a significant contrast between the two, and I think sometimes people say 'Oh hey, are Romney and Obama similar on education because Romney said good things about Arne Duncan and Romney said good things about Race to the Top and they might if they were in a state legislature find some agreement on some issues.' I mean the question is not what they would do in the state, the question is what you campaign for President. I think you govern how you campaign and I think that the way they've campaigned and the way they've spoke about education reflects this dramatically different view, whether you focus on education in a significant way or you don't.

And the President will if he's re-elected. And that's why I'm such an admirer of his.

Handy: Thank you, Jon.

... Well, I'll end where we began, which is the role of the federal government. I think we all need to be mindful of the fact that there are a lot of things that we want in education and what role should the federal government play in that. And we do have some fundamental disagreements about that.

The attempt by this administration to go around No Child Left Behind law by giving out all these waivers I think is a ... we view it very, very differently than they view it. We think it proscribes

states, restricts their flexibility, as opposed to ... and we're seeing that played out over the last several weeks. We think the federal government should be involved in collecting data and being transparent with the data at the state level and we think that ultimately, choice should be given to parents to create competition in the public school system and that is fundamentally what we believe. This administration believes differently in terms of their mandate to make states do what they want to do. We believe that states have been the laboratory for change, the laboratory for reform, and will continue to be that.

And we have plenty of evidence, whether that be Indiana, New Orleans, or whether it be Florida, where change has come about because we have reform-minded governors, not because it's being pushed by the federal government and that's a very different policy which you would like to have many different programs, but they should come from the states and not the federal government.