[Auto-generated transcript. Edits may have been applied for clarity.]

Welcome, everybody.

It is a wonderful Friday afternoon, and we are here to do some very important work at the Center for Innovation in Applied Education Policy.

This is part of our Assessment for Deeper Learning series.

And today, we are honored to have a policy conversation with the longest-serving president of the California State Board of Education.

Dr. Michael Kirst is with us. And in a moment, we'll talk a little bit about his biography.

We won't have enough time to talk all about it, because if we did, that might take up half our webinar.

So instead, what we'll do is we'll give you some of the highlights so you have a bit of a better sense of really the

depth and breadth of Doctor Kirst's work not only for the state of California but across this nation.

Today, as usual, we will be moderated by myself and Dr. Carrie Holmberg,

and Carrie and I will be here to work with Michael through a set of questions that

we hope will be as engaging to you as they were to us as we thought about them.

I want to say a little bit more before we get started, as we always do, about the values that animate the work at the IAEP Center at San José State.

We start with the premise that any reform in education policy, particularly in the K-12 space,

has to have some kind of commitment to what we call Deeper Learning.

And that is it's important for us that young people in the state of California have the skills

and knowledge they're going to need to be able not only to participate in 21st century jobs,

but also what we call civic life. That is life beyond school.

Our students will need critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, communication,

and other forms of skills that will put them in a position to evaluate, to synthesize, to discover, to frame new kinds of knowledge in new contexts.

One of the things we know from workforce development, as well as from best practices and progressive teaching,

is that real world implementation of what we teach in schools has a big part in growing the youth of our state.

We also know that in order to get to Deeper Learning, one has to really be thinking hard about what we call Assessment for Deeper Learning.

So our center looks at prioritizing, assessing those critical thinking, problem solving,

collaboration and communication skills, as well as the core content of what we might call standards-based reform.

We think that assessment, when it's working well, will always be formative in nature,

and it will emphasize continuous improvement of students and the work that they bring to us in our state.

It's my pleasure to read some highlights of Dr. Michael Kirst's biography.

Michael W. Kirst is professor emeritus of education and business administration at Stanford University,

as well as co-founder and current advisor to Policy Analysis for California Education or PACE.

He's been the chief education advisor to former California Governor, Jerry Brown,

who four times appointed Dr. Kirst to the office of President of the California State Board of Education.

In this position, Dr. Kirst was instrumental in reshaping education policy and finance in California,

overseeing the new academic standards and assessments in math and English language arts,

the New Science Standards, and the Local Control Funding Formula, or LCFF.

Prior to joining Stanford University, Kirst held several key leadership positions within the federal government,

including staff director for the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Manpower,

Employment and Poverty and Director of Program Planning and Evaluation for the

Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education in the U.S. Department of Education.

He was vice president of the American Educational Research Association and a commissioner of the Education Committee of the States,

a fellow at the Stanford Center for Advanced Study in Behavioral Sciences, and has been a member of the National Academy of Education since 1979.

Kirst received his PhD in political economy and government from Harvard University.

Well, Carrie, why don't you tell us about today's guiding questions?

Here are today's guiding questions. Here they are. They will touch on the following themes.

Reflecting on California's standards based reforms: What worked and what didn't?

The role of teachers in policy implementation: How can we build capacity at scale?

The tension between standardized testing, formative assessment, and deeper learning.

Beyond K-12: What are ways to strengthen the link between high school post-secondary education and workforce readiness?

And finally, the future of educational policy in California.

What's next for California and the nation? Well, Dr Kirst, sometimes I hope you'll forgive me,

I'm going to go to Michael as well. I hope we have questions that are going to keep you working hard with us today.

And so, Michael, the first question is yours.

Tell us a little bit more about as you reflect on California's standards-based reform, what worked and what didn't in your estimation?

Well, to be brief, as an overview, what worked was we did align all the key state policies, except,

for early childhood in terms of making them fit together and making them reinforce them together.

So the model I had in my mind was of standards, Common Core standards.

And then the Next Generation Science Standards and the history-civics standards were at the center.

And all the other policies such as assessment, curriculum materials, teacher training, and going out into finance and into special education.

And so career and technical and all of that.

We wove a policy around the standards.

So we were sending coherent signals to the locals on what students should know and be able to do in specific subject matter.

And we really tried to work on in each in depth.

We had a major funding overhaul which gave the locals more flexibility to do this.

But we were providing very strong guidance.

So I'm pleased for the era that we did at state policy.

Now, here's what after I left I began reflecting on--where we failed.

And other states have failed, and mostly all is in the last mile of implementation.

We just never had a strategy, a vision to get the standards into everyday classrooms.

And let's say starting with 50% of the classrooms, 80% moving to 100.

We had what I would call islands and deserts.

We had islands where we had very deep implementation.

Teachers were helped to teach to the standards.

They were able to use our coherent state policies, and they were at full capacity to do this.

But most of the state was not an island, but a desert.

And it was superficially implemented and didn't get anywhere near the standard.

Now, I looked around the world and began to think, well, how did that, you know, how could we overcome that?

I spent a lot of time looking at the operational documents in Ontario, Canada, which reached maybe 80% in a very large geographic,

province in Canada and of course, Korea, Japan, Singapore, others.

And began to think about how to connect the capital of the classroom.

So that was a focus of the Learning Policy Institute

long paper I just did on standards-base reform: looking back and looking forward.

So I'll start off with four metaphors here. Two of which I got from the late Richard Elmore, who I worked very intensively with,

and David K Cohen of the University of Michigan, Elmore at Harvard.

First is Elore's Law: When you ratchet up accountability, which was what we were doing.

And starting in the 1980s and the NCLB and then in the 2000s, you need to ratchet up capacity building to balance it.

Instead, what we do as policymakers is we take accountability up fast and have a have a very,

weak response of capacity building, and that will lead to implementation failure.

The second thing is that, one of Elmore's metaphors I really like is in education policy is like the shell of the turtle.

It's important, a turtle needs a shell, but underneath are the moving parts.

And so I built a really good shell.

But we never really got to the moving parts in that, in that sense.

A third is the Interstate Highway system when I grew up in

in the 1950s, Eisenhower was building the interstate highway system,

and he laid out all the clover leafs and all the connections and all the roads.

And it would be like the interstate highway system if you only poured about 25% of the concrete to make the roads,

and the rest is sitting there nowhere. So, and that's the other problem.

And the fourth then is the islands and deserts, which I already mentioned.

So we need to figure out how to get implementation.

And we need to step back and say, you know, I'm talking about virtually every state,

you know, well, how can we reach all of our teachers in all grades?

And when you look at rolling out a new math framework, which California is doing,

which is the most challenging area and our weakest area of performance academically,

you begin to think, you know, this is going to

not happen unless we really sit with the strategic plan, the tactics, and the ways to get from here to there.

And so we need to move from tinkering to transformation, and we don't really know how to do that.

We have some examples around of pieces, the materials reform and in Louisiana,

which is focused and really integrated the standards into the instructional materials, the Mississippi,

follow through with teachers and coaches and very strong specified professional development,

all but using collaborative mechanisms among teachers to get there.

So we've got pieces of this, but it's a problem of scale.

And I think we need to figure this out quickly.

And that's what I've been working on.

And with my colleagues we're trying to begin this process in

in California, we're looking at other states and other nations.

You know, Michael, I want to stick with this wonderful metaphor. All four were wonderful.

But let's go to the one of deserts and islands.

So if we imagine desserts and islands, we like to think of water in between.

And we certainly like to think about water providing the nourishment that's required to let anything grow in any space.

And if we think about water also in terms of how it's directed and how it's gathered and how it's collected and how it's distributed,

we have not only a perfect metaphor for the challenge,

but we have actually a visualization of what's going on in California economic politics today around Central Valley.

We have this discussion going on between North and South.

We know right now that even that metaphor has a problem, which is the essential ingredient for many people is water.

What is the water that's been missing from these places?

And if you think about it, is it money? Is money the water or something else the water?

Well, the water, to use a water analogy, which I think is a good one,

the water needs to be distributed to 349,000 teachers and 9700 principals.

Now California has a water flow that reaches all its citizens.

There's probably 5% or less that aren't reached by the system and don't have good water in the state.

But as you know, we transfer it through huge aqueducts and we don't just transfer to Ventura and Orange County.

We get it in LA. So, you have to,

So I think this is a very good analogy. I hadn't thought of it in these exact terms, but that's what we... that's our target.

And so how would you do this? You know, I often...I was born in Rhode Island.

It's only 45 miles wide. Instead, we got this thing which goes for about an east coast goes from Maine to South Carolina.

And so it's really a challenge.

If we can do it, anybody can do it. And I think implicit in that problem of water and even of distribution is the forgetting of what the farmer does.

That is the farmer decides on which crops are value added. If we look at our own state, we know that, you know, pomegranates.

And it appears almonds dominate what we would call what's worth growing, because there's some market for that thing.

And I often wonder in our policies, do we have the ability to say, well,

we want a thousand flowers to bloom, but frankly, we'd like to see a lot more of this than that.

And I'll give you the example. We want a lot more STEM than we want to worry about the arts.

We want a lot more math than we want to worry about physical education.

So it's not just where the water is flowing, but it's even the control over what we think is the target and the best use of the water.

What do you think has succeeded or failed in terms of, let's say, STEM-based reform?

Are we at the level of curriculum? Are we still sitting very high above that?

Well, we have, of course, the Next Generation Science Standards.

That one was led in California by the teachers' organization that

teaches science and STEM-oriented things.

So we had immediate teacher buy in, and we have had some really heartening implementation.

But if you... I'm going to use the best way to hone in on this...

Let's take the fourth or fifth grade teacher.

How equipped are they to teach math? And how are they equipped to teach the next generation science in fourth and fifth grade?

You know, not well. And and really, you know, we're doing better in the secondary schools than we are in the

and now we have age four through sixth grade.

So, I think that's the way to think about it.

And it has to be holistic. And we've just been settling for outstanding examples.

And then they're published and, you know, somehow you throw it in the air and it's gonna spread like a pollen or something.

Or a fertilizer.

Fertilizer, yeah. Okay. Let's move on. I think we've explored that really well.

And this, I think is actually a natural segue, right, which is the role of teachers in policy implementation.

This is exactly what you're saying. How can we build capacity at scale for that fourth grade teacher or whoever?

Yeah. I don't know. I'm not able to answer that question.

My experience has been more in the capitals than it's been in the classrooms.

So I think you and Carrie are a lot better to do that.

So I think that we really, we certainly have to look at technology, and AI is only part of it.

But we can't do this with 349,000 teachers, face to face entirely.

You know, with people from the outside. We need to build in

and I think we've got some examples of this, time for the teachers to do it,

to be able to grasp the standards in terms of how to teach them.

Let's take California's new math framework, a more conceptual approach.

So what is the time that they can do it? We need a collaborative.

I went through a session last night with a Stanford professor

and all she's doing is working with the facilitators of teacher collaboration to work on these standards,

you know and the integration of the coaches.

So this is really deep and into the innards of schooling.

And all I can do with my expertise is to try and lead us in a way, to attack this on a big scale.

Yeah, I think that and Carrie and I have been in this field of teacher education in the public sector for quite a time now,

and we have watched only an n of one that is San José State University's approach,

both in its pre-service training for single subject and multi-subject teachers.

In other words, the spectrum. And now we have added the TK space.

I think at the end of the day, we're still stuck with capacity building around, even knowing where the islands and deserts are in the public system.

That is to say, if we're talking about working with teachers to grow them into new ways of working with standards,

then we would want to know something about the ecosystems of teacher education.

And increasingly they're I think, being taken less out of the hands of public universities like the CSU system, there are 23 campuses.

That's a lot.

And they're being placed into County Offices of Education, where now the center of gravity on how you prepare a teacher or get them ready

for Mike,

Kirst's new world is kind of up for grabs because you're no longer just dealing with can you reach the CSU preparer or the private college?

But now, can you work with the counties which have taken ahold of the problem of teacher-capacity building

for the very simple reason they need teachers to show up on Monday to put in their time card.

So like they actually need to go at this problem. So how do we look at it from that perspective?

A labor force issue. Well, we we're big in size and scope and everything.

And, we have to look, we have to do it, obviously on some kind of regional basis.

And Ontario, Canada, which goes from Ohio to the end of Minnesota, you know, they used a regional thing.

They had to create it. They had some, but they had to really intensify it.

So obviously we will need to use the counties which are already regions that we have.

But in many ways I think they need to be re-thought.

But we need a role that's not as informal as it is now.

And somebody needs to be in charge of this.

And my next op-ed will be on state...states should assume the responsibility for a continuum of learning for teachers.

We have the responsibility for the initial certification of teachers and getting a clear credential and teacher preparation institutions.

That's what they provide. If we're talking about a continuum of your learning across your service as a teacher

then the state should say."That's our role as well."

Why in the world are we stopping at initial certification? And a clear credential and say, oh, that's the end?

And say, "In California, we have a separate agency for that."

So for the credentialing, the California Teacher Commission.

So that's one of the changes we need to make in scope of what the state role is.

And then it has to construct the regions to do this.

This is very complex work. You know, it's interesting when we talk about Singapore, we talk about Finland,

or even I'm not as familiar with Canada and its particular reforms.

I've certainly heard Michael Fulton's work and read it.

The thing in California that always strikes me, in addition to being, I think, are we the fifth or sixth largest economy now in the world?

We're pretty close to one of those. We're fifth.

And at the same time, we're also, in some ways the most dynamic in terms of labor force, labor movement.

It's even going to become more dynamic now with federal policy for, for better or worse.

We have lots of various inputs that I believe the examples outside the United States that I visited Finland,

by the way, and I had a chance to hear that miracle told to me over a three week period.

I just didn't get the same sense of diversity of inputs--and Singapore is another great example.

Yes, there's some ethnic diversity and yes, there's some linguistic diversity.

But at the end of the day, they're just apples and oranges.

And so I again, I wonder when we talk about teachers, we forget that we're not just talking about subject matter competency.

We're not just talking about 21st century skills that they're going to need to be

nimble as things come to the fore in their own learning about their own careers.

But we're also going to have to go back to the fact that we live in a multilingual state.

We live in a state that is absolutely committed to having newcomers that we have.

We just look different. So what do we think about that, Michael?

And how do we deal with a teacher is not just the teacher of subject matters, nor they teacher of assessment.

They're really also a person who interacts with families, newcomers, cultures that are from all over the planet.

And that's a part of their work, is it not? It is and it makes it even more challenging.

And what I keep hearing and thinking about what we've talked about today is how do teachers teach...?

It's very hard for teachers that have students that are all over the map in terms of how well they're doing.

And even, you know, their language capacities in some cases to vary or teaching content for this array within your single room.

And so the standards are there, and you just can't teach to the standards without making a lot of adjustments,

as a lot of kids are really far from the standards, and some are really far off our head.

I mean, my own children went to a high school where roughly half of the school,

when they came there in ninth grade, tested above 10th grade and the other half was below eighth grade.

So I think that is really something.

And it goes beyond just sort of pounding down the standards, you know

the professional talent you need and capacities you need are really multiple variant.

Well, we won't say too much more right now because we want to move on to other questions,

but I'll leave a placeholder for everybody and what our center is very much interested in.

And that is a lot of the so-called claims of Silicon Valley right now.

And many of our friends who are working in the AI spaces with schools is that this is the moment for machines to support that differentiation.

This is the moment to stop relying simply on human labor and human labor capacity, and the old models of economics, of upskilling laborers.

It really has to be an awareness now that for the teachers to be effective in these multidimensional environments, they're going to need support.

And it's not just going to be from the state, it's going to be from technology and industry.

And so I just wonder as we go forward into this world, whether that's another panacea, as Larry Cuban would say,

or whether it in fact isn't a way forward to handle some of the complexity of what you're talking about.

But having said that, I will leave that as a tantalizing thought for the future.

And I'd like to get us, Michael, to talk a little bit about the tension between standardized testing, formative assessment, and deeper learning.

Can these movements exist? Can we have people calling for a bottom up assessment, and at the same time, people calling for more top down assessment?

And I say top down. I'm thinking about smarter balance, which was supposed to meet somewhere in the middle.

The idea was that it would link these two things, you know, where are we with Smarter Balanced?

Is it is it still here or is it still a policy hope?

Is it still a policy promise, or is it just a fact? You just got to take those exams.

Yeah. And to convert this into a national discussion,

where is it with the National Assessment of Educational Progress?

That is the gold standard. Uh, right.

The states are all over the map. And I think NAEP needs a deep rethink in this regard.

So there's sort of a I think a deep force that will maintain some element of these big systems like NAEP.

And then California's choice as a state testing the Smarter Balanced assessments.

The states are all over the map. We don't even know what assessments a lot of them are using in terms of that.

Now, Smarter Balanced was really, I thought, the state of the art.

We thought it was so cool. It was on the computer.

S.A.T. is converting now from paper and pencil!

I mean, uh... And they might be going back pretty soon when they figure out how to stop that cheating.

Okay. Yeah. And then it was computer adaptive.

You know, we gave you a harder questions if you could answer

A way to...have you defend your answer and it had a performance exam.

So we were state of the art and we soon found that we were reporting in some very interesting and fundamental ways.

But there was no way that teachers could move from whatever we were reporting to how they would teach anything.

So the second thing we tried, of course, was, well, "We'll give you a lot of interim assessments."

Well, that's still 40 feet off the ground.

You know, that tells them something about the cluster of things that the students know or don't know, but it it's not fine grained enough.

And we really haven't moved beyond that. And I'm talking about state policy.

Yeah. And I don't think state leaders know where to go.

They're still fighting the battle to keep the testing they have, or oppose the testing they have.

So think the formative assessment

which you were working with and are still working with now,

that's still out there.

And as a state policy maker, it hasn't emerged in any form that we can grab a hold of.

So there's this world of micro and it doesn't connect to the macro.

Mhm-hmm. Maybe AI will do it.

But of course I've lived in my long life--I'm in my sixth decade of my profession--

when I started, radio was going to change things.

And when I went to Washington, you sent out tons of television sets under Title I, and they got promptly put in closets.

And then it was the desktop computer was going to change things.

And then I was told, well, once we get handheld computers, that'll make all the difference.

Well, they're stored as you come into the school. So, you know, this is something, I'll believe it when I see it.

But...I don't know, you know, we don't have again, we don't have a vision...

We have somewhat of a vision, but we don't have a strategy, and we don't...

And AI is still in an embryonic phase. Point well-taken.

And I always think of the revenge of Dr. Cuban.

Larry has been the one saying this in his sixth decade, I suspect.

And he's a good friend. And we know that he says a lot of times that we imagine somehow that personalized learning or that personalized

assessment or that personalized feedback is all going to change as a result of a technology or tool.

And we notice again and again that it gets adopted by early adopters.

We would expect that. And it gets hyped by those who have an economic interest in hyping it, but that pretty soon it sort of peters out.

And before we know, we're back to more traditional methods.

I will say this though, Michael and I followed your work back in 2014.

I have given your articles to my doctoral students at the time.

We talked a lot about what the dashboard was,

how it was a different sort of approach than the traditional mechanisms for policymakers to

communicate what is considered to be baseline or non-baseline standards-based achievement.

How do you feel about that, looking back on it or looking forward with it?

Where are we with the dashboard and what is it really telling us and how is it helping?

And maybe how is it also taking us off of our game?

Well, of course, the idea of the dashboard was that

there's a lot more to judge a school by than testing in a standardized test.

And so we began to look at college and career readiness, chronic absenteeism, suspension...

And I think all those things are important and it had an impact.

No question. We began to see more dual enrollment, partly because that got you college and career readiness

Better score on that. So it's got the advantage of lots of information.

I could never figure out how to summarize it because I could never figure out what the weights ought to be.

So I went to Jeb Bush's conference, the former governor of Florida,

and he really railed on about dashboards and said everything should be grade A-F

Well, how much do I weight college readiness?

One positive thing we had is an enormous increase in the what?

University of California, Cal State call the subject matter requirements.

It was growing up at a 45 degree angle. I think that was very important.

Should I weight that 10% of the A-F 20%?

You know, what should I do? So

I think the dashboard

probably we ought to try and work out some summative things, but I still support it.

And I still think that it is worthwhile as information.

The weakness is we go back to the classroom. The system of support behind the dashboard, and is undeveloped, under-developed.

And therefore it isn't up to the job.

And, you know, you can get students, you know, if you're in red on chronic absenteeism,

you can spend all your time working on that and nothing more about math.

So that needs to be re-conceptualized as well.

You know, the thing about the dashboard that I always thought was interesting is it's

was an attempt to capture the notion of multiple measures and,

as you said, to weight them and to think more deeply about how we might send similar signals to everybody, but also let them work at the local level

on the challenge that they thought their LCAPs could solve or that they could build resources around.

And your work with LCFF gave them opportunities to restore some of their visions, to do these local-based fixes, these local-based challenges.

But you just said like they could get also taken away on emphasizing

one thing.

It might just be chronic absenteeism. Or maybe they're going to work on a challenge of getting kids to be more engaged

in after school activities that lead towards college and career pathways. What's your sense of those moving parts?

Because I think a lot of people know that you or may not know you're part of the architectural team that built this idea of the dashboard,

this idea of the LCAP, this idea of the LCFF, this idea that we would find intermediate signals to not just punish people,

but to give them opportunities to grow through a continuous improvement frame.

Those are some moving parts. Is there anything that I'm missing that are other parts that you found? But you just described a shell of the turtle.

That's one favorite metaphor.

You know, the shell is your need some work.

But we're going back to the beginning of our conversation.

You know, rather than just fiddling with that, I'm trying to attack the moving parts.

So I think we that can we can get better in policy out of that, but it's a connection between

the information systems which have these, you know, red is bad, and, you know, blue is good...

So it's an information system, and the LCAP is a way to, uh, you know,

the hope was to it would target more resources to where you were weak on the dashboard.

Mhm.

So that was, so as I say, the thinking is somewhat coherent, but the state policy it of course needs

some overhauls and updates, but it still won't get you as far as we need to go.

I love that tortoise metaphor. You know, the tortoise moves very

slowly from my understanding.

So maybe you just haven't given the tortoise enough time to to settle in.

Having said that, the tortoise doesn't live by him or herself or theirselves, do they?

The tortoise lives in an ecosystem where there are hammers coming down on that shell as well.

And I was thinking about right now with having you here with six decades of experience, this is a time when a lot of us are confused.

I'll speak for myself about what it would mean to talk about standards-based reform in the era of the current presidency.

That is, only told us that not only the federal bureaucracies have no more role in mediating or moderating state policy,

but that, more importantly, everything is going to be shoved back as quickly as possible to every state.

Now, even if we don't like that in the sense that we'd like a more coherent national strategy.

What does it mean for California in six months, a year, or two years from now?

If, are we given more freedom by essentially by the federal government,

are we given more opportunities to innovate or are we also being left anchorless?

I guess I don't quite understand what you would think is the proper relationship between, let's say,

the federal Department of Education and our own state Department of Education in your policy story.

Well, I think that we have it pretty much right with the Every Student Succeeds Act, ESSA

I think Obama overreached. The teacher evaluation systems they brought in were a disaster.

And they in many ways tried to micromanage through waivers of No Child Left Behind.

And so the Congress revolted. It was a bipartisan act, and they really clipped the power of the federal government.

What they're trying to hang on to now at the Washington's, is the adherence of ESSA to preserve the testing.

Otherwise a lot of states would drop the testing.

So, that's now, to answer your question directly, there's a tremendous contradiction in the Trump policies.

On the other hand, he wants to leave it to the states and abolish the department.

And the other hand, he's trying to purge DEI, bring back patriotic education, and change various parts of Title IX.

So he's got a detailed intervention into curriculum that is explicitly denied him by law and ESSA.

But he can go ahead and, you know, as long as the Congress is spineless, then he's going to get there.

So you know, prediction is hazardous.

Federal aid is down 8% in our, in our money, our total spending. They have not talked about yet

deep cuts or eliminating--when they eliminate the department, they're going to eliminate title one and

money for students with disability and so on.

So I think that we can ride out the money.

The biggest threat to us is the elephant of finance and California's 81%-82% state.

If we have to pick up medicaid at the state level and the federal cuts offloads that, then we're really going in the soup.

So there's almost more riding on Medicaid than there is on, on in the department.

So the department...

One idea floating around and I think Trump would be smart to do is to combine education with labor and have a continuum of education

as we talked about earlier, that we're in not just

a separate Department of Labor for adults, and then you're for the students.

So the younger people, so it's difficult to predict, but I, I'm more afraid of,

the cuts in Medicaid than I am anything they're doing with the department of ed.

You know, I think the reason I raised that question is that every single story we tell is always embedded in the story we didn't tell.

And so, you know, I think part of the problem that you always pointed out to Carrie and I,

with our work on formative assessment, is, and you've said this metaphor, "You guys got the door open..."

What is it? I'm losing my metaphor! "You've got the hood of the car up, and you're down there tinkering with some particular part of that."

And I've said to you, "Exactly. Because that's where the actual power of the engine is."

And then you said, "Yeah, but, you know, as policymakers, we gotta look at all the cars and we gotta see how they're moving."

And now you're giving me this tortoise metaphor where, you know, we're down there somewhere in the bowels of the tortoise.

I'm not quite sure I want to go there, but I do think, Mike, in all seriousness, that we have this ecosystem that is broader, like you just said,

we cannot think about education without thinking about labor, nor can we forget about Medicare and Medicaid and other parts of our health care system.

Everything is connected. You lose money one place, you start to lose opportunity in another.

So we'll keep that as an open thought as it evolves. But for now, let's go to what you just said.

You know, this idea of if we didn't link the two departments, labor and education, at least we should be linking in California,

the linkage between or strengthening the linkage between high school,

post-secondary and workforce readiness.

Talk a little bit more about that because I know that's really important to you.

Yeah. I started in roughly 1990 and focused a lot on high school to college transition and the whole separation.

When I was State Board President, I met twice with the leaders in higher education in eight years.

And when I came back in 2011 to 2019, I met once.

There we are just two separate governance entities.

There's really no systematic attempt.

We're now in a big dispute. For example, the state board wants to focus in high school much more on data science, computer science,

and data analysis, things of this sort.

The UC still wants calculus, have calculus drive evething.

Those others are nice if you have the room to get to them...

but, you know, calculus is the gold standard. And we have no way to deliver this.

We appear as supplicants before the board of regents committee to plead our case.

So I think it's really not just a state problem,

it's a local and regional problem as well.

So I think that those connections need to be better made.

We've made some progress.

The California State University used these Smarter Balanced K-12 tests for measuring whether you needed remediation or not.

So we were on, you know, we got on the same page; UC would not go that way.

So we were still we were split.

But the article I have with Andrea Venezia called "Disconnect by Design" (2017).

We just never designed the systems to fit together.

In a way, the legislative committees are split.

The accountability is divided. You know, we ought to have a continuous accountability.

You know, but it it ends at one. And then there is not much in higher ed at all.

The financing. We don't do joint financing. And then our assessments are, not the same although we did abolish SAT.

But that, yeah, it was just noise in our system.

When before because it was so different from Smarter Balanced.

You know, Mike, you could speak to this more than anybody I could imagine.

I heard there's something called...it's a magical document. It's a document that it is hard to find as, I think, the sword and King Arthur's rock.

It's called the California Master Plan. And as I understood it, it was written

is that right? In the 60s? early 60s? 1960.

And I would ask you today. Oh my God, let me do the math...

65 years later. Do we need to re-write and re-think and re-establish a new covenant that's different than that covenant?

Because that covenant talked about a three-tiered system. It talked about community colleges.

It talked about CSU's and it talked about UCS.

And we are watching right now the collapse, the consolidation, the deconstruction of CSU campuses all throughout the system.

I know you're aware of that. Yeah.

We're also talking about the continued support and rise for community colleges, which are running over 200, 240.

I don't know how many they have now. And then, of course, our UC campuses. There seems like there's a bit of a squeeze play going on

here,

and I don't quite know if it's by design or if it's more like we just don't want to sit down and put everybody around the same table and say,

"The master plan that we wrote in the 60s is not the master plan of today."

Where are we with the master plan? You're a policy thinker.

Yeah, well, I've spent a lot of time on that. And then Brown administration worked on it as well.

So the master plan is for higher education and was done in 1960.

And where we got off track. And what I'm convinced of is, "Don't tempt to amend the master plan."

The master plan is a treaty among three systems. Uh, "You got that action."

And, you know, the community colleges can't give BAs, and you can't give doctorates except doctorates of Ed., and

it splits up the action in that regard.

So you need an entirely new approach.

You could leave the master plan because it's, you know, under doing that treaty is really,

you know, just to get started into who's turf should not be intruded on.

And we tried to quote, "amend" the master plan. It always failed.

So the advice Brown got was, "Forget it."

You know, leave it, you know, now do a policy that is not called a master plan, but called something else and straighten this out.

And at least have a way for the systems can coordinate and talk to each other and make some policy together.

We had a post-secondary education commission, and all that did was collect statistics and approve doctoral programs.

And it was called in Sacramento a mercy killing when it was ended.

I should not be laughing because somebody was on the line, but just as you said it,

I mean, I think this is where we go back to those of us who are students,

of our mentors, of our experts, who have done policy work for decades, there's a bit of a sense of disconnect.

We're talking about getting beyond K through 12 and understanding how the pipeline works for these kids that we care so much about in our work,

and yet we're not even sure where they're going or where they should go.

I mean, I thought a lot about this from a counselor, a California counselor perspective.

You know, we tend to not think of counselors as people who play a role.

We tend to think of the social capital of the family who tells you where to go to college or not,

and maybe a teacher who was kind to you and told you about where she went to school.

But really, frankly, there are these systems of support, and we do have people who are giving college and career readiness advice,

and we are supporting our students who need extra support for that advice.

And how do you tell them where to go into the system if the system itself doesn't know where it's going?

I mean, of course, it's not quite that extreme,

but there might be good reasons for us not to be sending kids to UCs and not doing what we thought was, you know,

the policy panacea, which was elevating children by getting 10% or less of a particular group into the system,

maybe we should be thinking more about career technical.

I mean, Michael, you've been around long enough to know that story,

the academic versus the vocational wars and when a when is it not

appropriate to tell kids of any background,

maybe vocational is the future rather than just academic, but it sounds like you're still kind of on the academic pathway.

Like I we got to get to college. All right. You're still thinking that way?

No, and I wasn't before. Now, you know, we still know college does pay off, and we're well aware of those studies.

And so I would not give up on trying to do what we've been doing in terms of more college readiness.

But colleges in California, of course, include community colleges, as they do in most states,

and we've, so here's a real success and the kind of thing policy can do:

We've had really a strong movement started off called Link Learning and now is called Career Pathways.

Where we have these careers that start in secondary schools and then are linked to community colleges or Cal State U pathways in a later way.

So there's just a myriad of health professions, as we know.

And, at my age, I see these doctors and I see three technicians before the doctor comes in very quickly and then leaves.

And these technicians are operating off of licenses and manipulating machines and

so we have really made the career tech pathways spread widely across the state.

We're putting another 500 million into it as we speak,

the community colleges are doing a much better job on career pathways within their

that link to, uh domains of, like, health care and they're

also getting more people through these certificate programs.

So a lot of what I see in the future are certificates and licenses, which are already here.

A third of Americans work with a license or a certificate, and so you know, the barber has a license, you know.

I walk down a commercial street. Here's a restaurant.

And he's got a license in there and a sous chef. Here's a nail salon.

They have a license. So there's a whole world of this, and so micro-credentials, I think, are a thing of the future.

And you're going to see more of them.

Going back to our earlier discussion, one thing I'm working on is micro-credentials for professional development,

that if you did certain things in mathematics as a teacher, you get a micro credential even though you're 38 years old.

So I think this is something we really need to take a look at.

I think it's a really fascinating question, because I think a lot of us were a little bit

probably rightly concerned talking about turf wars, that we would lose our, you know,

quality control status as those who teach in universities,

who know something about research-based practice and hopefully, if we're doing our jobs well, can mentor others into it.

And we thought of ourselves kind of as perhaps, facilitators.

I hate to say some of us even thought of ourselves, perhaps as gatekeepers.

That is, we were people who could say, you're ready to go, you're good to go.

You're a safe beginner in a California classroom, and, you know, get out there and do your business.

And on the other hand, we left it at that, didn't we? We had a little bit of induction.

We imagine that there was some other people who could support, coach, facilitate until we got to our clear credential.

But as we pointed out, that's what, 0 to 3 years. That's nothing.

That's not what we hope for, which is, decades or many decades of teaching.

So what you're saying is, if we're going to back into the idea of credentialing,

let's stop cutting ourselves off at the feet, which is the first couple of years.

Let's think about that whole continuum of lifelong learning right now.

I would say to you, Michael, I can buy into that idea completely.

If I've got a state policy maker who knows the difference between water and wine, who knows the difference between sand

and, you know, what I might call bread?

I mean, there are plenty of people who can provide micro-credentials right now through our software technology companies.

There are plenty of people who are ready to say, I can give you a badge, but what's the meaning of those thousand badges

if it turns out they're not all based on the same underlying pedagogical principles or the same kind of assessment knowledge?

So here again, policy: if policy is going to get in the business of micro-credentials,

doesn't it have to own that there can be bad actors in a system who are not providing valid and reliable and meaningful credentials?

Yeah, there are. And that's the problem with a lot of the credentials going on now.

You have really no quality control and quality control system, as we know,

a lot of these online colleges and and, and tech programs: who knows what they know?

So...here we are in 2025

and we're just beginning to think about these kinds of problems of issues of the continuum of education and how you would build quality into it.

The the other thing I would mention is cost effectiveness.

The most alluring thing of technology to me in many ways is it's so cost effective.

You know, having, doing things with people is very expensive.

The more we can offload this to machines and so on, the better.

So even using video disks and stuff would be cheaper than, you know, having everybody just do it with experts.

Well, one thing we do know, Michael, is our center continues to drive towards this question of responsible AI, not only for ethical reasons,

but for pedagogical reasons, for research-based reasons, we know that we're going to have to watch carefully on really what's going on.

Having said that, I'm ready for my next Elon Musk credential for my job, if that's who's going to provide them, who knows?

But I think, again, it is always a question of whose credential for whom.

And and that's what we have to tackle. But having said that, let's take it out with... this is an easy question Michael. Carrie?

You want to...I know this was your question.

What's next for California and the nation? Policy-wise.

Yes. Well I'm going to lead from my list. I have a stump speech, that I give and here are the list.

We've mentioned AI, so I won't go into that any further.

So here's what's happening in California and well, in many parts.

First is the whole child, you know, we need to expand the school scope of intervention through

looking at the health of the child and, home life of the child and the neighborhood of the child and so on.

So, you know, moving from schooling to whole child as a conception of intervention.

Second is social and emotional learning.

I see that this is getting controversial, and

merging now with the DEI in some groups,

the mothers for... Moms for Liberty declared war within the last week on social emotional learning and said it's bad,

but California and other places have looked at it that that kids really need t

have more personal support in terms of dealing with various

emotional issues and their whole psychological and engagement and development.

Then all of this comes into the community schools and including partnerships with health,

social work and other agencies, girls' and boys' clubs, things of that sort.

So California has just spent $4.5 billion on community schools.

And we're getting hundreds and hundreds of them.

They would encompass whole child and social emotional.

And then finally for the pandemic-- extended learning time

before and after school for catch up and high dosage tutoring and more school days.

So those are some of the directions that I see, some of it coming out of the pandemic and some of it coming out of other things.

We talked a whole lot here about, "Let's get back to the the content standards

and what students need to know and be able to do in the subject matters."

That seems to be coming back.

I think people are saying, "Yeah, we've recovered from some of the social and emotional issues that the pandemic spawned."

I think we're going to get back to standards as more of a linchpin in the future.

And then we'll keep some kind of testing in the picture.

Well, I think that's the really open and wonderful question that only we can ask with you.

And that is, for someone who knows a lot about the past and who has seen a lot of patterns and a lot of things come and go,

I think you've also always kept up your head on

just because we've seen things going in cycles doesn't mean we should start thinking cyclically.

In fact, if anything, we should probably push harder towards what we would call progress.

And I'm hoping that if we have you back again in a few months, maybe six, you'll come back to us.

We can see if any of those things are still on your mind and what you think really, we need to be focused on.

But I would say this, Michael, I think California is very much at a point, a pivot point, in a lot of things that you mentioned

and it is up to us to figure out what we stand for and what we believe in as educators and researchers and policymakers.

And you've given us a lot to chew on today. We thank you so much for your time and your gracious play with us.

Okay, I enjoyed it and thoroughly. We had a lot of fun.

Good. We did. All right. Bye, Michael. Bye, everybody.

Bye bye.