As always, we've been keeping an eye on school reopening issues.

We also find time to note the passing of education luminary Sir Kenneth Robinson, RAND's plans to regularly ask for superintendent's opinions, and how English officials emphasize drill-and-kill instruction for public schools while expensive private schools encourage project-based inquiry.

Public schools will educate you no matter how well you read, how much money your family has, the language you speak, or what you believe in.

- - Randy Ziegenfuss, Superintendent
Salisbury Schools
Allentown, PA

Sir Kenneth Robinson passes away

The Roundtable joins the rest of the school world in mourning the passing of Sir Kenneth Robinson (70). Last week his family announced that he had passed away following a short battle with cancer.

He was a remarkable man, a global celebrity known as one of the world's leading thinkers on the importance of creativity in schools. A TED talk in 2006 launched his international celebrity and was viewed more than 60 million times.

The Roundtable met with Robinson in Santa Monica last October. Our members were charmed by his warm speaking style, ability to connect immediately with his audience, wry, self-
deprecatory wit, and willingness to chat with everyone.

Education has lost a real original and a true champion.

Caught between two worlds: reinvent education or recover from today's crises?

It's important to envision a new public school system, writes Michael J. Feuer, Dean of George Washington University's Graduate School of Education and Human Development, but don't lose sight of the current crisis.

Writing in Education Week on August 11, Feuer noted that reopening "has reopened another debate -- about unfulfilled promises and the great potential of the American public school system."

But, he warns that demands to abandon standardized testing, legislate equity in spending, improve teacher professional development, and attend to the needs of LGBTQ students and children of color will take "tenacity and will," against the centuries-long reality that reforms are generally "gradual and incremental."

"Taking the long view," he says, "should not distract us from the short-term emergency. . . . What can be done now to recover from the health and economic crisis?"

Kettering Foundation: People will cut you some slack if they think you share their values

"Accountability is not a matter of information. It's a matter of relationships . . . If people out there think the organization values what they value . . . they will cut you some slack."

That was the central message from David Mathews, president and CEO of the Kettering Foundation (and son and grandson of school superintendents) when he met virtually with the Roundtable.
Mathews argues that we need to consider adding "with the people" to Abraham Lincoln's aphorism "of the people, by the people, for the people".

"Here's the problem," Mathews told the Roundtable during a virtual meeting on August 18, "Our institutions are staffed by well-informed professionals, expert in their fields. They offer information. But . . . citizens ask,'Who wants me to know this?' People want to know, 'Who's telling me this? And why are they telling me this?'"

With regard to schools, Kettering noted that some citizens would comment on their good local schools and "Almost in the next breath these people would add, 'And we're involved with the schools.'" To make progress in school improvement, he noted, school leaders need to work "with" the public.

**PDK's 52nd Annual Poll on Public Perceptions**

Our favorite annual poll on schools has appeared, the 52nd in PDK's impressive decades-long documentation of what the public thinks about its public schools.

Entitled "Public School Priorities in a Political Year," it is based on a random sample of 1,030 adults and was conducted in March, before the COVID-19 crisis exploded. It reveals that as Americans prepare for the Fall elections, they are sharply divided along party lines on a number of hot-button school issues. Overall, a large majority of Americans say they want the federal government to take a more active role in supporting efforts to recruit and retain teachers, make college more affordable, and protect students from discrimination.

A majority of respondents disapprove of President Trump's performance on education, a finding reflecting sharp partisan disagreement. Eighty-six percent of Republicans approve of the president's performance, but just a mere 11% of Democrats.

- Public education is a priority for many. Six in 10 call it extremely or very important in their
vote for president this fall, including a quarter who call it extremely important.

- About 5 in 10 Republicans and conservatives want a greater focus on the expansion of charter schools, compared with just 29% of Democrats and 26% of liberals.

**US faces shortage of back-to-school laptops**

This is very troubling. While educators have been pressing for greater equity in connectivity, it turns out the hardware may be a problem too.

According to an AP report: "Schools across the United States are facing shortages and long delays of up to several months, in getting this year's most crucial back-to-school supplies: the laptops and other equipment needed for online learning.

Associated Press "The world's three biggest computer companies, Lenovo, HP and Dell, have told school districts they have a shortage of nearly 5 million laptops, in some cases exacerbated by Trump administration sanctions on Chinese suppliers . . . Educators nationwide worry that computer shortfalls will compound the inequities-and the headaches for students, families and teachers." Ouch!

**RAND seeks views of school superintendents**

The RAND Corporation is a federally funded research and development center with a significant portfolio of research projects in education. One of its efforts involves American Educator Panels, which have surveyed 25,000 teachers and 5,000 principals regularly on pressing national school issues.

RAND is adding a new American School District Panel (ASDP) made up of a nationally representative sample of school district leaders and staff. Over the next several years, ASDP member districts will be asked to participate in surveys and interviews on pressing issues such as how to support distance learning, promote equity, build an effective teacher workforce, and create systems to assure and assess quality of instruction. These are significant issues. If your district is invited to join the ASDP, the Roundtable encourages you to take advantage of this opportunity to share your insights and experience. For more information, you can visit www.rand.org/asdp
School recovery principles from Aspen Institute

The Aspen Institute has issued a useful new report on recovery and renewal for American schools. It offers principles for advancing public education post-crisis.

Amidst near-constant debate about when and how to reopen the economy, the report points out, that plans for reopening schools and who makes the decisions remain unclear. The report calls for a shared set of principles for developing and evaluating education policy in response to the COVID-19 crisis that:

- is centered on equity and engagement in both content and process,
- takes a holistic and coherent approach,
- is aligned with science,
- is oriented toward a long-term vision for student success, and
- embeds an Innovation and Learning Agenda.

"How we choose to respond," warns the Institute, "will determine whether young people and families rebound or fall further behind."

Students have own demands for reopening

This is a particularly interesting story in The Hechinger Report. After the adults have had their say, perhaps its time to listen to the very practical voices of students.

How is one nurse "going to be responsible for 2,000 kids coming through these doors every single day," worries Chloe Pressley, 17, at C.D. Hylton High School in Woodbridge, Virginia. What about the mental health toll each different reopening scheme takes on students, she wondered?

Many students, like Pressley, think their voices have been left out of discussions about on-line learning, in-person learning, face masks, and social distancing. From "Virginia, Kentucky and Arizona to Washington and California, [students] are making their voices heard by arming
Students at Harrow School: Cradle of Prime Ministers.

Stay tuned. This could be the silver lining in the pandemic cloud.

**U.S. News & World Report: Reopening too quickly runs risk of sabotaging school year**

Writing in the August 25 issue of U.S. News & World Report, senior education correspondent Lauren Camera reports that experts say that if schools focus only on speed of reopening, they won't be able to stay open. It could be remote learning all day, every day, all year long.

Writes Camera: "The politics of reopening schools - specifically reopening them in-person as quickly as possible - will all but ensure that 50 million children enrolled in the country's public school system will be back to remote learning for the 2020-21 academic year, public health experts and educators are now warning.

" 'The bottom line is not whether you're pro open school or against it, it's do you have a sustainable plan for keeping schools open,' according to Ashish Jha, director of the Harvard Global Health Institute."

**England: Drill-and-kill for public school students, project-based learning for those in private schools**

Independent schools in England used to be known for the traditional liberal arts curriculum emphasizing classical languages and memorization that they offered their wealthy young charges. But no longer, writes Melissa Benn in The Guardian. These days, "An independent schools conference is as likely to discuss futurology as Latin," she writes, because, as educators tell her: "Employers want new and different skills, such as team working, not just the ability to retain facts."

But rote learning dominates public schools for the less well-to-do, says Benn, a dominance encouraged by the current government. Diane Reay, emeritus professor of education at
Cambridge University, argues that although progressive approaches in independent schools are encouraged, the term "progressive education has wrongly been . . . seen as getting in the way of powerful knowledge and high achievement."

"More generally," writes Benn, "there's a rising discontent within state education at a 'drill and kill' approach that feels particularly inappropriate during the Covid crisis." One government minister, she reports, actually wanted children to be required to sit in rows facing their teacher as a response to the pandemic.

Meet the remarkable male bird of paradise

Now here's a man who knows how to go a' courting!

Roundtable's 2020 Agenda

Everyone's plans for 2020 have been knocked into a cocked hat by the coronavirus pandemic. The Roundtable's ambitious hopes to examine schools in Australia and hold meetings at the George H.W. Bush Library in Texas and the Jimmy Carter Library in Georgia have had to be put on hold.

In place of these meetings, we are organizing an agenda of powerful speakers to address the topic of Education for Democracy remotely between July and October. Among the prominent experts who have, to date, agreed to meet with us are:
Kathleen Hall Jamieson, Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania, election and polling expert and frequent guest on national television and cable public affairs programs. **July 30**

Gloria Ladson-Billings, President of the National Academy of Education and former Kellner Family Distinguished Professor of Urban Education at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. **August 13**

David Mathews, President and CEO, Kettering Foundation, is a distinguished historian who previously served as president of the University of Alabama and Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. **August 18**

Norman J. Ornstein, Resident Scholar, American Enterprise Institute, leading authority on U.S. Congress and frequent guest on national television and cable public affairs programs. **October 6**

Frank Sullivan, Jr., Indiana University Robert H. McKinney School of Law who served for 19 years as a Justice on the Indiana Supreme Court, where he authored nearly 500 majority opinions. **October 8**

Joel Westheimer, University Research Chair in Democracy and Education, University of Ottawa. His work is dedicated to the critical exploration of democratic ideals in education and society and his publications include: *Pledging Allegiance: The Politics of Patriotism in America's Schools*. **July 28**

**New Members**

We are pleased to welcome several new members to the Roundtable in 2020! They include:

* James Baker, Roselle, New Jersey
* Christi Barrett, Hemet, California
* Hilaria Bauer, Alum Rock, California
Welcome!

Partners

We want to acknowledge the ongoing support of our work by Artemis Connection, Guide K12, Hanover Research, the National Institute for School Leadership, Right at School, and School Innovations & Achievement. Artemis provides strategic consulting services to profit and non-profit entities. Guidek12 provides geovisual analytics to help guide district decision-making. Hanover Research partners with school organizations to drive student success. The National Institute for School Leadership strengthens the leadership capacities of principals and aspiring leaders. Right at School provides before and after school enrichment. And School Innovations & Achievement focuses on improving achievement by improving attendance.
We are deeply grateful for this support. Thank you!
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