

**March 21, 2018**

**Samuel Halperin Lecture by Ronald Ferguson**

>> Good morning. Good morning, everyone: Good morning. I am IEL's sixth president, and IEL is a 54-year-old, diverse national nonprofit. We act as a catalyst and capacity builder at the intersection of education and workforce development, and our goal is to prepare leaders to eliminate systemic barriers and change conditions, policies, practices and cultures so that everyone can succeed.

The Educational Policy Fellowship Program that many of you are part of, is one important initiative and mechanism through which we work towards that goal.

But today this morning, it is my pleasure to welcome you to the Fourth Annual Samuel Halperin Lecture and Youth Public Service Award Ceremony.

It's an honor for me to welcome Sam's family and it is a true privilege to be in the role of president of IEL, which Sam held as well. Finally, it is with great gratitude and deep respect that I now invite our colleague and friend Betsy, to the stage, Betsy leads the American Youth Policy Forum, which was founded by Sam. Betsy, we appreciate your partnership around today's lecture and awards ceremony.

[APPLAUSE]

>> Good morning and thank you to those who trekked out in the middle of the snowstorm to be with us this morning. Really appreciate your commitment to the lecture and the youth award. As said I'm Betsy, Executive Director of AYPF and I want to thank our partners at IEL for cosponsoring this event with us. This is the fourth year and it's been a wonderful event. We're so appreciative that we can kind of loop our event into EPFP and allow the wonderful lecturers that we've had for several years, present to your audience, and hopefully it's been a great experience for those of you in the EPFP program.

For those of you who aren't familiar with AYPF, or the connection to Samuel Halperin let me just provide a few words of background. As he said very quickly Sam founded AYPF in 1993, to shine a spotlight on the policy needs of the forgotten half. Those are the vulnerable, at-risk, disconnected, and disadvantaged youth who are often unseen, and often unheard. Sam was concerned that without some type of concerted attention on this population that policy makers would pass them over as they have no political voice of their own. And his goal is to show policy makers, firsthand, the strategies and the programs that are effective at helping young people prepare for college careers, and civic engagement. And by doing so help inform their policy-making. So AYPF's mission has stayed true to Sam's vision these many years. And we continue to shine a light on effective approaches to help traditionally underserved youth, be successful to find equitable services and supports and opportunities. We base our work on four overarching policy pillars that we believe lead to success for all young people. The first is to promote policies that support personalized and student-centered learning. Recognizing that every student learns differently, and that educational settings need to respond to the academic social and emotional needs, interests, strengths, and career and life goals of all of our young people. Our second policy pillar, focuses on the need for clear and transparent pathways to college and career readiness and success. These pathways must connect middle school, high school, and post-secondary education, and training and ultimately lead to a family sustaining career. Elements of these pathways need to include mentoring, Counseling, guidance, career awareness, and strong partnerships that span these various systems.

Third, we promote comprehensive connected supports that surround youth with caring adults and make available to them a full range of education employment health mental health, transportation, food, housing, et cetera, that will support them in their advancement. And our fourth policy pillar, is because knowledge and skill development happen all around us at all times, we promote the recognition of expanded learning, and skill development in all settings, both in school

and out of school, and in finding ways to value that learning. So, with these elements in place we believe that all young people especially traditionally underserved young people, can grow up to be lifelong learners, to hold a family wage career and to be civically engaged. Before we turn to the lecture I want to recognize a few special people who are with us today. First, I want to recognize one of AYPF's longtime board members Cindy Brown.

[APPLAUSE]

>> Thank you so much for your commitment, Cindy. I also am wondering if Sam's daughter and son-in-law made it. I know they have a distance to travel, so I don't think they got here yet but I know they're trying to get here.

They have been very instrumental in this program and the youth awards.

I also want to recognize our previous Halperin public service youth award winners their faces and their names have been flashing up on the screens. I believe Yasmine was due, but I think with the snow she maybe didn't make it either but these young people, the three previous award winners, are all fabulous young people and continue to be committed to public service every day. I also want to thank our very generous funders who have made this lecture series and award possible they include the Ford Foundation, the Charles Stuart Mott Foundation, The William T Grant Foundation, Annie E. Casey Foundation, The Fordham Institute, and The Halperin Family along with many of you in the audience and many others who have made generous individual contributions. Thank you very much. Lastly, let me thank the staff of AYPF, and, also of IEL for helping to organize this event.

So, today's lecture could not be better suited to address the topic of providing greater opportunity for our children and youth. As he has focused on this issue for his entire career. Ron Ferguson is an MIT trained economist who focuses social science research on economic social and educational challenges.

He's been on the faculty at Harvard's John F Kennedy School of Government since 1983,

and has held full-time appointments both at Brandeis and Brown universities. He is also the faculty director of the university-wide Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard. In the late 1980s, Ron began to study education and youth development, because academic disparities were contributing to growing wage disparity. During the 1990s and early 2000s, his writings on the topics appeared in publications, of the National Research Council, The Brookings institution, The U.S. Department of Education, and various books and journals. In December 2007, Harvard's education press published one of his books entitled *Toward Excellency with Equity: An Emerging Vision for Closing the Achievement Gap*. Ron is nationally renowned for his work in closing the achievement gap, in changing the culture of schools to be more youth-focused, and in including youth voice in our policies. Ron is also a poet, who conveys emotion, turmoil, and feelings of many adolescents today and I hope we will hear some of his poems this morning. Ron will speak from about 20 to 25 minutes and we'll have a little bit of time for Q & A following his presentation. Please join me in welcoming Ron Ferguson.

[APPLAUSE]

>> I thought I had a little more than 20, 25 minutes but – okay, 30. All right.

Thank you.

Thank you, Betsy, for introducing me, and a former student who was always organizing things even as a graduate student so it's good to see she's still busy doing those things.

Great to be here with you this morning. I tweaked what I'm talking about just a little bit to respond to something an article that came out in the Sunday New York Times.

How many of you saw the argument in the Sunday New York Times that was about the fact that children who grow up “rich” so to speak, by which they mean in the top quintile of the distribution if they're black males, are much less likely than white males to stay in the top of the income distribution? How many of you saw that article?

Okay. A lot of people; so, I want to talk a little bit about that.

The first half of my talk, I'm going to talk just about the predicament a lot of these kids find themselves in. And then I want to talk about some early childhood stuff we're doing.

The gaps and disparities we care about start by the age of two. And we are trying to do some things in early childhood to stop those gaps from basically continuing to be what they are.

The big why for me, always – I just start with why. I was thinking, thinking of Sam Halperin and the things that he cared about, and particularly the out of school time, work and realizing that I am the product of the Phyllis Wheatley Settlement House in the early 1900s. My grandmother, was mentored at the Phyllis Wheatley Settlement House and then she shaped who I am.

She is my inspiration. She really shaped me and the other siblings in the family. And this is her on her 100th birthday. And that poem. I don't remember when I wrote it but I wrote it with her in mind.

*My flesh is weak,*

*My soul is tired,*

*I pass this torch to you.*

*Inside this flame*

*Live many dreams*

*Now you must see them through.*

She was a master teacher, special education teacher, in Cleveland.

And so, a lot of what we're doing is seeing through the dreams of Sam's dream, other people's dreams, who came before us. And a lot of us are who we are, because of things that folks did both in schools and out of schools, to shape us.

And so it's our turn now to be the folks that carry on the work of our generations, and so that

others can carry the same work on in the future generations.

The article that was in the newspaper was based on a study, the title of it is “Race and Economic Opportunity in the United States: An Intergenerational Perspective” featured in the New York Times. The Times titles at the bottom of the screen extensive data show punishing reach of racism for black boys. And I want to suggest it's more than just racism. There's a whole system that I think of as a predicament that each of us is kind of trapped in, and the kids, in particular, are trapped in, because it's got all kinds of cumulative circular causation, and when we work together there are a number of different places we need to cut into this cumulative causation.

But first, the graphics are so cool in that article I couldn't help but take some screen shots. They got up on the upper side over here talking about kids who grow up in rich households by rich they mean top quintile of the income distribution. Top, second, 3rd. And show how kids who feed out of the fifth quintile when they grew up, flow into all the other quintiles and they show the distribution for black and white males at the end of it so this is probably the beginning and then it goes out and you see it sort into the final quintiles at the end over there if we look at the numbers in the final cell over there, let me put my glasses on so I can actually see those numbers.

(Pause.) Actually, might be easier to see them from down here.

[LAUGHTER]

>> They go all the way over here. At the bottom of this is the bottom quintile. Of the very bottom here, you got 10% of white males but 21% of black males. Who started off growing up in households in the top quintile up here you've got 39% who end up in the top quintile among whites and 17% among blacks.

If you watch the way that those little green – it's interesting to see the the blue dots are the black kids, the yellow dots are the white kids and the blue dots are disproportionately falling low as you go across that screen.

But if you go look it up, it's really cool. They've got some other graphics in there and quote in

the article, but the question is why is it... that black males are so likely not to end up near the top of the income distribution? Because they show some other evidence here that compares girls and boys. And I see the scale on the bottom but you can't see across there is where the quintile is – it's a part of the income distribution where they were on the grew up on the horizontal axis and on the right side – are black women and white women, the blue bar, the blue line is black women, the yellow line is white women so we see there's virtually no disparity among the women when you adjust for the households in fact, the black women are slightly higher, the blue line is slightly higher than the yellow but the disparity is great for the guys so there's something distinctive that's happening for black males. That is leading them not to harvest the advantages of their youth as they get older.

And I want to talk a little bit about what that might be. What those things might be. I call it the predicament here. If you think about, it looks like the bottom is going to be cut off the slide over there but we'll deal with it.

We've got the blue box, this is what happens inside schools. The things that are coming in to schools from outside schools. And so, we have the societal and racial stereotypes and statements. And we know the black males are the most feared, most marginalized group in society. We do have the audit studies of discrimination that find these differences in how people are treated and perceived.

Then, those racial stereotypes and statements, and gender and racial stereotype statements lead to racialized identity scripts. Both for who the kids think they are, and who other people think they are. Now, we have power and resource inequities that affect the girls and the boys which lead to concentrated disadvantage. And that's kind of from outside of the school a lot of kids have nobody to advocate for them when things don't go well, and that leads to inequity and provision of high quality teaching and learning.

At the bottom of the screen, we have racial ethnic social class and gender differences in

how kids are treated at home and the parenting and neighborhood dynamics. And so on the bottom you've got different things in what happens outside a school that prepares them for, as I mentioned a minute ago, the gaps there by the age of 2. The gender gaps are also there by the age of two and people want to argue that the gender gaps are biologically predetermined but there are gender differences in how we treat kids by the age of one. You can just look at socialization as gender-based reinforcement of behaviors as early as the age of 1.

When fathers play with two and three-year-old boys, it's rough and tumble play when they play with their daughters it's often around literacy. And so very early, see these differences in how we're parenting kids. We've got those differences and the differences in parenting leading to skill and behavior gaps and destructive peer dynamics beginning in kindergarten.

Kids show up, differences are already there. The behavior differences are already there. There's teasing, negative social dynamics in kindergarten a lot of you know I do a lot of surveying in schools if you take the kindergarten kids who agree that learning is hard for them, the same kids also agree that their peers tease them and hurt their feelings. 40%. 40% of the kids who say learning is hard in kindergarten also say my classmates tease me and hurt my feelings so you've got negative peer dynamics beginning in kindergarten that carry all the way through K-12. Schools have two curriculum. They have the curricula the teachers teach and the adults teach and the curricula the kids teach. And in kindergarten the kids begin to be taught their identity by the other kids.

Okay. And so we have these things coming into the schools from the outside world. And the power and inequities and concentrated disadvantage arrow that goes from that down to the family dynamics and the parenting and the community dynamics and then inside schools, we have this race and gender disproportionality in discipline practices and privilege and those are also little arrows coming in from the other side of the same of these two boxes so the stereotypes and resource inequities are also affecting sort of the disciplinary practices and privileges and the racialized identity scripts are also affecting how kids are treated differently for discipline, the actual

behavior differences are affecting the discipline practices. Then the behavior differences are also feeding back into the racial identity scripts and so we have a cycle there.

We also have a cycle that goes from identity scripts down to the way kids are taught over the way to behave and in there we cycle back and forth between the behavior gaps and the discipline practices, and so there are all kinds of predicaments in here. And these are connections that the children can't do, can't fix for themselves.

The adults need to intervene. We've done some other survey work and found that if you ask kids please list the things other kids at your school do so that people will like them there's a lot of mischievous stuff they list. Most of it's not things that are in their best interest to be doing. Then if you ask them please list some things that if you were in charge and you could set the rules for what's cool, what would you have be cool? It's the same list that their parents and teachers would have produced. Okay. If kids could set the rules for what's cool, going to class, doing your work, being nice to people, helping your friends, all the stuff that the parents would have produced, but the kids think that – that the other kids think that it's cool to do some of the more mischievous stuff. There's a phenomenon called pluralistic ignorance which is when people misread one another's value and preferences and conform to what they think the other people think is cool. You can have a community of people that are doing something nobody wants to do but everybody thinks everybody else thinks it's cool.

And so, we need to intervene to help kids communicate their true values and preferences because they already have the right values. But they don't have the social students to live out those values. Because even when they disagree with the dominant values they still enforce them on the other kids. Because they all want to kind of fit in.

The evidence of that, I think the screen is cut off at the top a little bit, but sometimes I pretend I'm not trying hard in school even when I really am is the survey item on the right. On the left here 80,000 males this is all 6 to 12th grade males about 80,000 of them in lots of different

schools, again, sometimes, I pretend I'm not trying, even when I really am. The top bar over there, I believe might be Native Americans. But then you get blacks and Hispanics and down at the bottom are whites. But you see up – 50, 60% of the students of color particularly among blacks, whites, and Hispanics are hiding effort. And when they hide effort it's not only that their teachers don't see that they're trying hard. Their peers don't see they're trying hard either. And that feeds the stereotype. And felt need to hide the effort, comes off of what they expect a response is going to be if they look like they're trying too hard. Okay. And so when we start to think about what we need to address in order to deal with those issues in the Sunday New York Times, is not just to deal in the racism we have to help kids deal with their own predicament, their own social predicament. Some of you heard the acting white phenomenon and people think that's part of what the problem is. Our data found acting white phenomenon is not mainly about achievement. It's basically a – I mean, the strongest predictor of being accused of acting white is liking rock music. The second strongest predictor is trusting strangers. But there are some corners of the data where it does link to achievement. The kids who are by far the most likely to be accused of acting white are black male high-achievers, and racially integrated schools, where the student body in general resents high achievers. We have a survey item that the kids who get the highest grades at our school, think they're too special.

So, you have schools that really privileged and celebrate the high achievers and high achievers are a little arrogant. If you're a school where the high achievers are arrogant it's a majority white school and you're a high achieving black male, you're going to get accused of acting white to a high degree. That's the kind of kid who is raising that high achieving family often. Racially integrated school, really high achiever and the other kids are accusing them of being a sellout because you're hanging with those arrogant kids. And what's resented is not the high achievement. What's resented is the arrogance. From the perspective of black folks, white folks are arrogant. You know, the white superiority kind of thing. So acting white is not trying to get high grades, it's acting

like you're better than I am. Acting like you think you're better than I am is what the dynamic is, and it correlates sometimes in some corners of the data, to grades but those are some of the kinds of things we need to slice into if we're going to work on this and there, trying to get high achievers to be more respectful of regular kids, is one of the ways to undercut any link between that acquisition, and high achievement.

On the other side of the chart over there, is you can't see the top of it but what it says sometimes I hold back from doing my best in class, because of what other people might say or think. So, this isn't just hiding effort, this is actually holding back effort. And there you see the – the percentages are lower but they're still not trivial. So, we have kids hiding effort and holding back from doing their best for fear of how their peers might respond. And, again, definitely go back to look in these links over here it's all kind of tied up in that predicament.

This chart here and I won't belabor it but the height of the bars is the percentage of kids who said “I do things I don't want to do because of pressure from other students doing things they don't want to do because of pressure from other students” and you can't see the bottom, of the chart, but over the first five – bars are schools that are zero to 25% white, or zero to 25% students of color, 25 to 50, then 50 to 75 and then finally at the far right is 75 to 90 – to 100% students of color.

The tall bar you see, the kids races are at the bottom you see black is the racial group that's the fifth of the five groups. And here even when schools are vast majority white between zero and 25%, students of color over 35% of the black males say “at least sometimes” they do things they don't want to do because of pressure from other kids. And so you have kids violating their own values to fit in with their peers and black males are the ones that are most vulnerable to feel like they have to do that. Even when they're in schools where there aren't that many other black kids. Black males are also the ones who find it most difficult to assimilate with the other kids. One guy said if you're a girl you can kind of get in with the other high achievers or high achieving black girls but if you're a boy you have to hang by yourself. They have to hang out with the other black boys and

sometimes that's difficult. All right. So, all the misbehavior that we see is just kids trying to fit in. And there's nobody right now in a lot of places helping to convene the conversation among kids to talk about what kind of peer cultures should we have? How can we relate to one other and support one another in the way we want to and have these conversations with kids? Often, it's hard to get the conversation started until an opinion leader speaks up. And then they'll endorse what I'm saying and recognize the difference between how they usually live socially and the way they would like to live. And we can work on these issues in school, out of school, and at home but it's more than just saying we've got to stop being racist and stop discriminating. Hundreds of years of racism, discrimination, have led to an adaptation in our youth culture. And that adaptation now has a dynamic of its own. And we need to help kids slice into it.

Some agencies trying to cultivate agency won't spend too much time on that right now so we need to work on every part of that predicament. Position differently to help slice into it. But I also want to talk about the importance of starting at birth. The achieving gaps skill gaps are big by the time kindergarten rolls around. Schools don't create achievement gaps, they might add to them but the gaps are there, very apparent by the age of two. And we know a fair amount of what we need to do. The science is clear about the kinds of early childhood experiences that lead to the early brain development. And science is getting to the place now where they can actually chart, measure, and document, the differences in brain structure of kids from different backgrounds by the time they get to kindergarten so a lot of us – sort of didn't want to get into that conversation about brains and brain development. But it's hot and heavy now.

The fact that by the time kids get to kindergarten, there are often differences in their brains that are affecting some of these gaps we worry about. Fortunately, there's no reason to think that those differences are anchored by group membership; that kids are born probably fairly similar distributions, and we also know now that even if there were or are differences early for those first years of life, the brain is very flexible. There's a period called developmental plasticity, where the

brain development depends upon the kid's experiences, and brain is not locked down in a heredity way. We can change how kids develop by the richness and the consistency of the kinds of experiences we give to them. This chart shows an early childhood longitudinal survey, that has a test called a Bailey test that's designed for little kids - it tests differences as of ages 1 and two. You'll see we've got males and females and then within each group there are whites, blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans. The short green lines are measuring the difference of each group from white girls. White girls are the comparison group here so you see there's no bar for white girls. And this is how far the other groups are behind white girls in percentage terms as of the ages of 1 and the ages of 2. We see the kids who are furthest behind are Native American boys, whose scores are more than 20% point behind white girls by the age of two. You'll see for each racial group the girl – the boys are behind the girls. And, again, why are the boys are behind the girls? Some people think it's more social. Some people think it's actually genetics. I think there's enough social difference in the way we treat kids that it's plausible that genetics aren't that big part of it but there are people who swear it's genetics. In any case, this is the chart that caught my attention that we need to work on early childhood for measures differences like this by the age of two. We can't wait. This is an image of neural networks of different ages. You'll see that there are – some – newborns, some evidence and then at age – one month, nine months, two years, and adult, you'll see the brain structure of a two-year-old looked more like the brain structure of an adult than it does like a newborn. And every interaction we're having with these children affecting building more connections thickening connections and networks in the brain. And you can imagine some people who don't interact with their kids “why should I talk to that baby he doesn't know what I'm talking about”. Where other people narrate life just talking to the babies constantly and all those interactions are building that brain structure.

That is where the most famous study, the Hart and Risley 30 Million Word Gap you hear about comes from. But if you break the 30 million word gap, the advantaged kids have heard 30

million more words breaks down to about 616 words an hour for the low income families, 2100 plus words for the higher income family, but the tone of the words, low income families half as much – encouragement positive reinforcement as reprimands and scoldings. For the advantaged families, there is six times as much positive encouragement as reprimands and scoldings. And so, one group of kids is learning that the world is a place where people like you and they talk to you and it's happy and friendly and interesting and the other kids it's learning – I've got to be careful not to do anything that's going to get me yelled at.

And so it's a different – not just a different amount of brain structure, it's a different understanding of what life is about. Six- months difference in language processing speed by the time kids are two years old. If you put a bunch of objects in front of a child, ask it to name one of the objects and look to see how long it takes for them to look at the object you've named. That process measures processing speed six month gap between the most advantaged and least advantaged kids by the time they're two years old reflecting substantially just how much do people talk to the kid. The idea is to make life the program. We talk about programs kids go to for a few hours a week. And they go back home to their regular family. What if the message is they get in the program, are surrounding them in everyday life at home. Because right now mom goes to the program and goes back home, and grandma says, no, that's not the way we do that don't pick that baby up. So, we need grandma to know about it. We need big brother and big sister to know about it we need the whole family to know about the whole approach we take to early childhood and nurturance.

The Boston Basics Campaign. It's a campaign spread to – I think about 17 or 18 other cities and now rebranded our material Boston basics instead. It's Chattanooga. Yonkers or put the name of the city in front of it trying to saturate cities with this – with this idea.

And this is a 3 and a half minute video that just introduces it.

[ON VIDEO] now I know my abcs next time won't you sing with me [singing]. Muse.

>> Learning begins the moment your child is born. Every child is filled with vast potential for success in life.

[MUSIC]

[LAUGHTER]

>> At those first three years, can have the greatest impact on your child's learning.

[MUSIC]

>> Apple! Look, kiwi.

>> Wow! Awesome job.

>> It's all about giving a child a proper start. That's what being a parent is all about.

>> Yay!

[APPLAUSE]

We like that song!

>> I wanted to make sure that I was here every day. Such a joy.

>> Every parent of every background can make a positive difference in their child's life.

>> Peel it.

>> A few simple everyday activities can make a big difference.

>> Those are flowers.

>> That's why Boston basics is working with research and community leaders to promote an important new initiative. The Boston basics are five simple principles that we want everyone to know.

[MUSIC]

>> The first of the Boston basics maximize love and manage stress. The second is to talk, sing, and point.

>> The third is to count group and compare.

>> One, two, three!

>> The 4th is to encourage and enable movement in space and play.

>> And the fifth is to read but not just to read, we want to read and discuss stories.

>> Whoa! What is that?

>> These are the five fun and simple things that every parent can do, beginning from birth.

[MUSIC]

let's all work together to make sure our children become the best, most well-prepared they can possibly be.

>> Maximize love.

>> Manage stress.

>> Talk, sing, and point.

>> Count, group.

>> Explore through movement and play.

>> Read and discuss stories.

>> [MUSIC]

>> Please join us and help spread the word!

[VIDEO CONCLUDED.]

[APPLAUSE]

>> Dr. Ferguson: So when we rebrand that we take all the references to Boston out. And just do it that way. So the campaign is broad, you know, billboards, a lot of face to face stuff

sector-based approach where we're looking at particular sectors and trying to adapt the messaging to the way the health sectors are important. Every parent of a new born should be introduced to the basics before they leave the hospital, with a new babies place based approaches couple of neighborhoods, really focusing most heavily on this year, and then put those together you have the combination of sector based and place based. These are examples of a couple of billboards around town. All these sectors here, are places where we've started to build connections, so you have not just the health but the libraries, library Boston got a special book list for each of the basics. Government agencies have, like, home visiting programs, churches, sermons ministers giving sermons on the basics from the pulpit. Homeless shelters, I think there may be day care centers at the bottom, even barbers one of the most interesting equip barbers to engage young men so every place where people already interacting with folks they know and trust, so trusted messengers. And then we have the care circle around the infant so the parents and the day care providers and extended family members and older siblings all know the basics and are interacting with the children and that care circle is embedded in the middle of that larger community for, what we call, socio ecological saturation we want to saturate the social ecology with these kinds of things. 30 sites around the country where people already rebrand or in process got about seven or eight districts in the Hudson River Valley where schools system brought in but no matter which organization brings it in they convene the rest of the community, health centers, ministers so I'm going to wrap this up with a poem called the caregiver promise. But this is from the perspective of a parent or a caregiver, speaking to a newborn.

*With my heart, I will love you*

*And shield you from stress.*

*With my mouth I will speak what I feel.*

*With soft words and sweet songs, every time I behold you*

*I'll show you that my love is real.*

*With my fingers I'll point at the objects I name.*

*And I'll count them in groups to compare.*

*With my feet I will take you outdoors to explore*

*While we play and enjoy the fresh air.*

*With my eyes I will read as I show you the world*

*Through bright pictures and stories and books.*

*These are ways to make sure that your brain is prepared*

*For successes wherever you look.*

*This my promise I make from the day of your birth*

*That these basics are fatefully do.*

*For my job is to help you grow happy and smart*

*Starting now when your life is brand-new.*

*You will learn that your life is an artwork.*

*And that you are the artist in charge.*

*But before you decide what to do with your life*

*Listen now*

*To the beat*

*Of my heart.*

[APPLAUSE]

>> Okay. Yes, so I think it's – comments, questions....

Q. Hi, my name is James. I'm from the Georgia delegation for EPFP a few questions I have. One in particular is do you think that this needs to be legislated? Or is this just social impact work? Should this just be a conversation with businesses and community members and just roll that way or should the early childhood Ed in particular be legislated nationally and universal?

A. I think the basics campaign is civics sector. Right? What we draw public resources, where that works and so, for example, in Boston, the Boston public health commission has a home visiting program. And the home visitors are using the basics as part of the curriculum they work on in the families, with folks. I know there are a couple of states that are interested in using the basics to build a little curriculum for their home day care providers that they subsidized. Right? So there are different -- particular ways that public policy can support this. But it's fundamentally civic sector, because you want the civic sector to own it and to hold politicians accountable for whatever support we need from the public sector. If it's just the mayor's agenda then it's gone when the mayor is gone. Right? But we want the -- the alliance of the ministerial alliance of the churches, to -- to embrace it and share ideas about -- about sermons, around the basics and how to weave the basics into Sunday school lessons. How to teach a seven-year-old how to read to a two-year-old. Okay? And the interesting thing about reading to infants and toddlers is that it's not about reading. It's about pointing at the pictures and speaking with expression, and being engaged with the colors and letting the kid handle the book. Because one and two-year-old doesn't know if you're reading or not there's just a story and some interaction so really -- bunch of things that everybody thinks they know about parenting early childhood but they don't really quite know them. I mean, I can go through each of the basics and talk about things that I did not know and I had a Ph. D. Before I had a child okay? And so anyway, you said you have other --

Q. Yeah, my second question is about the historical relationship of families and schools. So schools grew as a result of an attack on the family. The idea that the parent couldn't teach; that the parent wasn't able to have all the knowledge and the skill set, so when we look at this currently, how is

that ideology something that you think about when this is being taught about teaching, even schools and communities, that parents can teach their children and that they are vital teachers in that process?

A. I think we're going through a period now. We've had for a while are people are realizing more and more, that kids live in social ecologies and every part of that ecology needs to be strong. And you either trust parents, not – you either trust parents to be able to play their role and integrated and it's all collaborative if you think parent don't quite know how to play their role then help them learn how to play it okay? Where sometimes it's politically incorrect to suggest a parent might not know how to do what they're doing. Okay? But some parents don't know. Okay? And so we've got to find ways to help them learn, but also, to make them feel welcome. Obviously, you probably may know my colleague Karen who does a lot of work, with talking about we've got to develop both the schools and parents capacity to collaborate. The dual capacity framework I think she's calling it these days. So there are all kinds of things in the nation's historic ideology that we're in the process of working our way through. You know, and around race, around parent/child dynamics; around the relationship between teachers and students, I mean, spoiling children, is something people from a lot of different cultures worry about. And it's – and that worry is undermining infant development. There's a whole body of research on attachment theory that has to do with the importance of a strong relationship between the parent and child and the child needs to feel secure and safe, but if you leave – if people are afraid to pick their babies up for fear of spoiling them, and that's having these opposite effect of what they want to have. Babies are feeling insecure. And then when they get to be toddlers, people are denying affection to toddler boys for fear of undermining their masculinity. Let him be a man. Whimpering on the stairs. Sit up. Pull it together. Be a man. With a little girl you pick her up and hug her. Right? And so, there are lots of things that are built into the way we've always done things that we need to fix. And I think it's possible that we can.

Q. My last question is about parents that work extended hours, especially our low income, and so while this is idealistic if we can get everybody to do this even a little bit more, that would be great. What do you do with those parents and families that don't necessarily have –

A. Somebody's taking care of the baby they're just not by themselves. Okay?

So who -- this is about caregivers we talk about parents, parents are caregivers. Parent needs to be sure whoever is taking care of the baby knows the basics. Okay there's a four-minute video for each of the basics with a dozen ideas and you can watch it on your cell phone. Because if you take care of my baby -- watch the videos and then let's talk about what you're doing from the videos when you're taking care of my baby and when I pick my baby up I'll deal with him. Okay? In the time that people are already spending with their infant and toddler talk to them they code language prenatal they come out of the womb already starting it coded just keep building that real language high sing songy codes, parent-ease but really language from the very beginning for each of the basics there's things not hard to do you're going to be with the kid anyway just do it. Okay.

>> Thanks.

Q. I'm Liz Harris from Mississippi and we're actually in the process of developing something like this for Mississippi so I would love to talk about how we could maybe just bring what you've got?

A. Sure.

Q. But my one question as we develop this -- our plan and our program, for our campaign we have been wrestling -- I mean, we have a group coalition of people who are all really great at thinking about this and yet we cannot seem to solve the problem of measurement of impact measurement you can measure how much we, you know, I guess like the stats of who -- how many people do we give this to? How many have seen the videos, but are you measuring the impact and if so how? I mean, because it -- it works beautiful I'm just really excited about it, but that's just a question that we are wrestling with?

A. No, that's -- the ultimate impact is we want to move the trend line in school readiness. Okay? So a lot of places have been measuring school readiness and even preschool readiness diagnostically you can take your historic data, plot it over time.

The longer you've been doing this kind of activity the more that line ought to start to bend up it's called interrupted time series and you can also do comparison group interrupted time series if you have

some communities who have not been doing it but you've been using a similar school readiness measure you look at the trend over there and then you look to see whether the trend moves differently in the places where you've intervened so that's the ultimate way to do it.

Also, if you have – like I mentioned we have a sectoral approach. Some organizations are getting started more quickly than others are. You can take parent self-report metrics of child development, and look to see whether the needle is moving on those. I mean – and even if you've got places where the self-report metric has already been used for a while you know what the average tends to be for the kinds of 8 month old this organization serves after you've had this in place for a while for the kids whose parents have known since prenatal and been using it for the first eight months when those kids get to be eight months look on average for them and how much do their metrics differ from the ones who were being measured before they ever had exposure to this kind of thing. Right? So you can build little studies and little experiments into existing niches and you can look for the whole community. We're starting to put together this kind of thing, too, early.

Q. Hello thank you for your presentation. I'm Jenny from Georgia and I wanted to ask a little bit more about the breakdown of these studies that were done, especially with our Latinos and Native Americans and if language was something that was considered. Will these children in these studies reflect that same kind of practice, when they're not speaking English as these studies will probably –

A. Are you talking about the first half of the talk or second half of the talk.

Q. The second half of the talk where you were talking about the Native Americans being compared to the white girls. And Latinos being compared to the white girls and just seeing if language played an integral part in that discussion, because of all of these things being in English, would that change some of the studies that were done with that? And if this Boston basics or basics will be reflective of that with these languages that are shared in these urban communities, will that also be reflected in those different languages?

A. Yeah, the – the Bailey test is – a lot of it is stimulation response kinds of things not that

language basically because the kids are infants and toddlers and the – you see for the girls, there's very little – among the people of color, there are pretty much the same. So it's very little difference between blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans among the girls so if language differences were a big difference over there you should be seeing a difference between, like, black and – and Native American. For the boys we see the difference over there. Which to me, is probably more cultural. And the differences in the way we treat our boys versus the way we treat our girls over there. For the basics in general we're trying to replicate – everything we have in English, we have in Spanish. So we totally reshot the videos to Spanish speaking families with a Spanish speaking narrator. For Haitian Creole we have voiceover narration so it's image videos but the speaker's voice is in Haitian Creole and it's written in Haitian Creole across the bottom of the screen, too. As we have more resources to do other translations there are about five or six other languages that we want to either do brand-new videos for, or just voiceover narration. It's interesting, Brazil initially they were going to do just voiceover narration but several organizations have gotten together and said they think it would be worth doing Brazilian Portuguese brand-new versions of the videos. But, yeah, we want to adapt and make it – to minimize the cultural stretch for any particular community. The basics, themselves are just human nature. That's just – all humans need this stuff. Right?

Q. Thank you. My name is Brad Hall, I work for the Pennsylvania affiliate of the NEA. My question is since the last election, the dialogue and the nature of the dialogue has shifted and it's become fairly clear that there really are not nice people on both sides of the issues. So my question to you is as policy makers what advice would you have for us about dealing with people that have explicit bias and like it that way?

A. When you got somebody who is – who doesn't share your values and priorities, that's on the other side, you've got to do the politics. Right? And so the – obviously, if there were ways to be persuasive by persuading them that what you want to do actually serves the interest they're trying to serve then you do that. But if doing what you do does not serve the interest they want to serve, then it's standard politics.

You've got to mobilize, the power. And use it. Right?

You want to pull me off the stage now?

[LAUGHTER]

[APPLAUSE]

>> So I just want to thank Ron, again, for an extraordinary presentation. And I love how he is moving into early childhood work, in addition to the work that he's done focused on young people.

It's all a continuum. It's all youth development from zero up through whenever; and so it's really nice to see how you've kind of stretched your work to the earlier ages, but, obviously, has a huge impact on everybody. So thank you. Two things. One: I'm sure people will want to get access to the PowerPoint and hopefully, that's available. And we can put it up on the Web site for everybody; and secondly, I was just thinking for all the years I've heard you read poetry, I would love to have a compilation of all of your poems someday so maybe that's one more thing that you can do.

>> All in one file and I'll give it to you.

>> That would be lovely I always get choked up when I hear Ron read his poems and just – his youth poetry is so touching, too, please join me in welcoming Ron Ferguson again. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]