

An Interview with Kellie Kowal-Paul

Perspectives from the COVID-19 Pandemic: Leadership and Learning in Nevada

Produced by:

The University of Nevada Las Vegas
The Lincy Institute
2024

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The following interview was a part of the “Perspectives from the COVID-19 Pandemic: Leadership and Learning in Nevada” research project. The recorded interview and transcript were made possible through the generosity of The Lincy Institute at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. The goal of the project was to understand and document how Nevada organizations and leaders responded to the myriad challenges that the pandemic engendered. The interviewees thank The Lincy Institute and their supporters for the opportunity to reflect on their roles throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The researchers also acknowledge the following individuals who contributed to the conceptualization, data collection, and analysis of the project: Dr. John Hudak, Dr. Makada Henry-Nickie, Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio, Taylor Cummings, Peter Grema, Kristian Thymianos, Saha Salahi, Madison Frazee, and Katie Lim.

Each interviewee had the opportunity to review their transcript. All measures have been taken to preserve the style and language of the interviewee. This interview features Kellie Kowal-Paul, Chief Strategy Officer for Clark County School District, and was conducted on 10/13/22 by Magdalena Martinez and Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio. This interview covers topics including reflections on leadership, organizational challenges, and opportunities for collaboration.

Interview with K. Kowal-Paul (CCSD)

Date: 10-13-2022

SPEAKERS: Magdalena Martinez, Kellie Kowal-Paul, Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio

Magdalena Martinez [00:02]

So we are here today with Kellie Paul from the Clark County School District. And I just wanted to confirm with you that it's okay that we record this conversation.

Kellie Kowal-Paul [00:14]

Yes, it is.

Magdalena Martinez [00:15]

And that any quotes that we use can be attributed back to you.

Kellie Kowal-Paul [00:17]

Absolutely.

Magdalena Martinez [00:19]

Thank you so much. Carmen, do you have the questions up?

Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio [00:21]

Yes, ready to go. Thank you, Kellie, for talking to us today. I love saying your name, Kellie Kowal-Paul. (laughter)

Kellie Kowal-Paul [00:31]

It's funny because it changed recently, and people don't get it right. So it's "Kowal-Paul."

Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio [00:36]

Oh, Kowal-Paul. Okay, that changes things.

Kellie Kowal-Paul [00:39]

I know. It has become the permanent topic of conversation around here.

Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio [00:42]

Oh, okay. (laughs) Well, I'll digress and ask you the first question.

Kellie Kowal-Paul [00:47]

Okay, great.

Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio [00:48]

Kellie, can you describe your role throughout the pandemic and the role of the school district as a whole?

Kellie Kowal-Paul [00:54]

Sure. When this all started, I was in a different position. I was working under the Deputy Superintendent, Dr. Brenda Larsen-Mitchell in the teaching and learning unit here in the district. And under her leadership, and under the leadership of Superintendent Jara, my role at that time was to receive, and interpret, and synthesize guidance from the federal government, state government, local – wherever it was coming from – anytime it had anything to do with education. With a direct connection to the governor, where some of those states of emergency specifics were coming from. We relied heavily on guidance from the Nevada Department of Education. They became a frequent source of requirements and implementation guidance. And I served as the district's liaison to the department for anything related to the pandemic.

Once we received the information and kind of worked it out with our team, we distributed out to the right team members across the district. And then it was my role to synthesize their response of work operating changes, or guidance, or communications, or whatever into some sort of output, and that output took a variety of forms. Regular updates to the Board of School Trustees, recommendations to the Board of School Trustees. Communication to principals, schools, and families. A full-scale reopening of our schools' plan. Our Safe Return to Instruction Plan, all those types of things.

And then I – most of the day, for those first months and years was spent just really ramping up problem-solving with leaders across the district to, of course, an unprecedented level (laughs) that was required during the beginning of the peak of the pandemic there.

And then in October of last year, 2021, I accepted this position as Chief Strategy Officer. I retained responsibility for some of the pandemic recovery work. In our Safe Return to Instruction Plan, I gained responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of our \$777,000,000 ARP investment and service of pandemic recovery, and along with the district's broader strategy and whatnot not necessarily related to the pandemic.

The district's role – although I hesitate to speak on the behalf of everybody – but in my opinion, the district's role was, and continues to be, providing the best possible scenario for instruction while prioritizing and caring for the safety and welfare of our students and staff. This sounds rhetorical but that's really it. Our goal is to teach them, but we have to keep them safe first. That's what we had to keep in mind throughout that whole shutdown particularly, and then even still to today. We're not quite out of it yet.

Our responsibilities as an education system have grown well beyond providing instruction, as you and everybody else now know. It's where we've become responsible for managing employee health, which is crazy. We've become responsible for contact tracing of infectious diseases. We've become responsible for making sure families are fed. We've become responsible for building large-scale technology systems. These are educators doing these things that have nothing to do, we would have thought, with education. Although of course, now we see these are all precursor requirements to students being able to receive an education.

So we determined early on though, under the leadership of our superintendent, that we would not lose sight of the instructional outcomes that we set for the district. So we tried really hard to keep

instruction and student achievement as our "north star" through all of that. It was challenging. There was a lot of kind of nitty-gritty, not-instruction-related work that was going on during all that time; but we tried to keep that at the forefront, and recognized we had some long-term work to do while we were dealing with all those short-term emergencies. What that meant in terms of specific activities across the district changed over time, of course, and continues to change.

Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio [05:22]

I love that answer, "continues to change." You mentioned, a few moments there, from your transition from your earlier job to the one you have now, in October of 2021.

Kellie Kowal-Paul [05:34]

Mm-hmm.

Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio [05:35]

Can you tell me about any other pivotal moments that you feel shaped your response, as an individual, and in leadership?

Kellie Kowal-Paul [05:46]

Yes, there are two that come to mind. And I may repeat them because I prepared these as responses to some other questions. But number one was when we started seeing the mental health data come in – I'm going to get emotional because, you know, we're in this for kids. It was the first time in my career where I had one goal, one single goal, and that was to get our schools open. Because we knew we had to get these kids back in school, back to their positive relationships with their peers and adults, and back to where we could keep an eye on them, back to where we could wrap our arms around them.

And for the first time in my career, I was brave enough to refuse to do work that did not further that goal of schools open. And that was when the governor had set the authority to open schools back to districts. Our board was highly concerned, and rightly, with the physical safety and health of employees and students. But we were determined to get schools open, and that was a pivotal role for me, in terms of just my leadership in general, and how I prioritized my day.

The other thing is, we recognized, really through that really hard part when we were trying to get schools open, and we were working a ridiculous amount of hours. My kids didn't even know what I looked like; you know. They weren't doing really great in distance ed either because I wasn't there to help them – I was here. But we realized how quickly you can turn from what we do every day to making huge, monumental changes, and that we already had the capacity to do things like this. And I think that that will serve us well – like I said, we are still in the thick of this. We're not done. I haven't even stepped back to look at it yet. Preparing for this interview is the first time I've gone back and tried to timeline it all out. And I was going, "Oh, my gosh. I don't even remember half of this stuff."

But when we get through it, I hope that we can capitalize on these new muscles we've built, in terms of moving a giant organization to do big, big things differently, and to test our assumptions and to push them aside. And I think that lesson, if this organization has, and keeps the

opportunity to learn from that, will serve us really, really well in the future. Hopefully, not too far off in the future.

Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio [08:27]

I really appreciate that answer, Kellie. Thank you. I can tell that you've thought through it. And I'm glad to hear that because we have been hearing from interviewees that this is an opportunity to reflect. So we hope that that's something you can take away for yourself, even outside of all of this.

Kellie Kowal-Paul [08:42]

Sure.

Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio [08:44]

So the next question is, how did you work with or observe groups who were hardest hit by the pandemic? In your opinion, who were those groups?

Kellie Kowal-Paul [08:53]

Yeah, it's a little hard to answer. Because I don't take lightly our responsibility for every single child. And I also know that every child, every family, every employee was hit hard by the pandemic in different ways. As a parent, I saw – in my own kids – and I still see the impact in my own home. So I acknowledge that everybody's experience was valid, and everybody's experience may have long-term impacts on their lives.

But in our responsibility to meet the needs of every single kid, that challenge became more difficult when we were less able to predict and respond to their needs in this kind of weird environment that we were in. So what really came to the surface was those groups of kids and employees in our charge who were hit hardest by the pandemic, from our perspective, were those who needed – who relied on school for more than school. Those who relied on schools for regular meals. Those who relied on schools for mental health services, emotional well-being. I talked about their positive peer and adult relationships. All those kids who needed us for more than teaching them how to do multiplication, those were the kids that we needed to focus on the most. Those were the kids whose lives were being more greatly impacted by the loss of the structures that we had built around them.

Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio [10:21]

Is there anything you wish the government, at any level, had done differently or could do differently now? In response to not just the health concerns but the economic downturn that ensued?

Kellie Kowal-Paul [10:35]

Yeah. This question I struggled with the most; because A: I would hate to have been in their shoes. B: I'm not sure anybody has had any experience that would adequately have prepared them for what we've just gone through. The only thing that became frustrating in the end for someone who was responsible for operationalizing some of these policies was obviously the change, but it's understandable. Changing restrictions, changing lessons, changing guidance. You never know who to believe. Things like that.

But then the most frustrating was when decision-making became a little bit looser, and it became harder for school districts to have the specific guidance necessary for us to act. And we were having to make decisions not based on education, which is what we are all here trained to make decisions based on. But based on public health, and based on economics, and based on all these other things.

So I really just think that was most frustrating for me in all of this was, where the lines of responsibility got kind of blurred. Where the people who are experts in one thing would say, "Well, this is what we kind of think you should do but do whatever you want." And then we're just going like ugh...now we're at the mercy of public – whoever's loudest at public comment, it feels like, sometimes, you know. And we're just fighting against trying to figure out who's loudest, but who's right? And of course, we are not – we don't have the background or training to make some of those decisions. So I think some of those kinds of lack of authoritative guidance (laughs) requirements became a little bit more challenging for us.

Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio [12:34]

Before I turn it over to Dr. Martinez, Kellie, I just want to kind of pick up the nuances in that question. And because you mentioned a space where people have public comment, where there's decision-making power. And I went to an education summit where we saw a lot of nonprofit community organizations that support the district. Can you tell me a little bit about what it's like to work with them? Were there strengths? I'm just – what we can do together in the future to perhaps be prepared or – something along those lines.

Kellie Kowal-Paul [13:19]

What – do you mean with other community organizations? Community partners?

Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio [13:21]

Yes.

Kellie Kowal-Paul [13:24]

I actually find those relationships to have been one of the things that we relied on. But I think – and in all things, the stronger the relationships are anyways, the easier it is to rely on each other in times of crisis, right? So if we already have a regular or an understood kind of means to rely on each other, or an understanding of each other's strengths, or things like that, those engagements become easier.

I'm also more and more convinced that we need to do a better job of communicating the nuances of our decision-making to combat the kind of "we don't trust the Big, Bad, District" feeling that's out there in some parts of our community, depending on the day and depending on the topic. We get different groups of people in public comments, sometimes speaking about things that we have no authority over, which is interesting. But it's hard to say how much should change. I just feel like we should find the things that we all agree on together. Find the ways that we can build a vision, like a joint vision for how this should all look in the future. Focus on the things we can agree on. Try to deal with the things we can't. And that will set us up for any situation that comes close to this in the future – which I hope never happens.

Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio [15:09]

Right. Thank you, Kellie. I'm going to go ahead and turn it over to Dr. Martinez.

Magdalena Martinez [15:13]

Thanks, Carmen. Kellie, along the same lines, were there any specific policies that the state or the federal government implemented, that you noticed impacted people, and if so, which ones? I think you started to talk about some of those funding sources, and I realize that there were quite a few. If there were any key ones that come to mind, that you thought, "Wow, these really made a difference."

Kellie Kowal-Paul [15:38]

Well, that question I found interesting too. Because all of these policy decisions made an impact on our lives more directly and more quickly than ever before. Never before did something going on in Carson City affect my day the next day, right? And this did. I don't pretend to be an expert on all of the policy work that was going on during that time. And I know people have a lot of different decisions. And really, my focus right now is on the American Rescue Plan funds, since I manage those.

Magdalena Martinez [16:15]

Okay.

Kellie Kowal-Paul [16:17]

I think, you know, we'll have opinions on both sides, we know it. Our task is to try and make sure that our investment of that decision to invest in recovery in schools will impact students in a measurable way. And I hope it does, and we're determined to make sure that happens. But I also anticipate some factions of our community – not anybody specific – but some groups of expectations not being met. There were systemic problems in public education in this country and in this state before the pandemic, and things will remain after this investment is gone. It feels like a lot of money, but it's not really, in the grand scheme of things. And it's one-time money. We're using it to plug holes that our system doesn't allow us to fill. Outside of the pandemic, those happen to be our primary strategies for dealing with the pandemic. Because the first thing we need for regular education is also the first thing we need when we need to ramp it up, right?

So I do worry about policy decisions being quick and short, and too vulnerable to politics, and election site goals, and things like that, to where we'll still be struggling with the same kind of challenges after the pandemic than we were before.

Magdalena Martinez [17:49]

Mm-hmm. And what were, from your view, some of those – the biggest holes – that these federal resources were able to plug up temporarily?

Kellie Kowal-Paul [18:03]

Right. So from our perspective, we are investing a lot of those dollars in Tier 1 curricular materials. There's a lot of research about a consistent, solid Tier 1 curriculum and Tier 1 instruction. So we're using – we've purchased Tier 1 mathematics materials. We just spent like \$900,000,000 or something – I'll have to check that number – on science materials. We're waiting

for the state adoption of ELA materials for our schools. Now, in the next round of state adoptions, we will not have the funds to purchase those materials for schools.

Magdalena Martinez [18:40]

Mm-hmm.

Kellie Kowal-Paul [18:42]

And those materials, when we purchase them district-wide, they also come with systemic structural professional learning, support, supervision, and evaluation. All those structures and expectations can be aligned with the same academic expectations.

Magdalena Martinez [19:00]

Mm-hmm.

Kellie Kowal-Paul [19:01]

And without that kind of investment, we can't sustain that.

There are also – the big bet on education is always staff, right? There's been a big bet in Nevada – or in Clark County, I guess, large districts, on principals being able to come up with some other stellar ideas when we are not able to staff. We haven't been seeing that happening. And so when we invest these one-time dollars, if the big bet on staffing is still the big bet, we can't support that big bet with temporary dollars, right?

Magdalena Martinez [19:40]

Yeah.

Kellie Kowal-Paul [19:42]

We can't make life experience changes. We can't do anything that's really, really sustainable without the risk of a huge, huge cliff.

Magdalena Martinez [19:52]

Right, the big cliff. That's a tough one.

Kellie Kowal-Paul [19:56]

Yep.

Magdalena Martinez [19:57]

And the funding formula, right, that we're all trying to wrap our minds around. (laughs)

Kellie Kowal-Paul [20:01]

Yes and is not fully funded.

Magdalena Martinez [20:04]

That's right. Not fully-funded. Although I think many people think it is, temporarily, because of the federal infusion of resources, right?

Kellie Kowal-Paul [20:16]

Yeah.

Magdalena Martinez [20:18]

But still, there'll be a big hole.

Kellie Kowal-Paul [20:20]

Yes, there will.

Magdalena Martinez [20:21]

Yeah. Carmen started to get a little bit at this. If you talk about the innovative ways that organizations and citizens came together and dealt with the challenges of the pandemic and the recession and within the context, of course, of CCSD. And we know that many social service organizations came to the table to try to provide these interventions, whether it was food security or technology. I mean I think it was a moment where "all hands on deck," right?

Kellie Kowal-Paul [20:54]

For sure.

Magdalena Martinez [20:55]

A lot of criticism – but at the same time, those social service organizations are like, "This is what we're built for," right?

Kellie Kowal-Paul [21:01]

Yep.

Magdalena Martinez [21:02]

Are there any that kind of rise to the top, that really stand out for you? Not necessarily because they were doing a better job, but maybe perhaps because they had previously not been at the table, and maybe, you know, school districts did not think about the connection to them if you will. I feel as if, though, there are some natural, organically-type organizations that fit into the work that school districts do. But was there one that maybe that was new to the table? And they were thinking around like, "Huh, okay. Moving forward, maybe this is a collaborative or a program that we should continue to work on."

Kellie Kowal-Paul [21:51]

I'm not sure I can speak to that level of specificity because of my distance from those kinds of agreements.

Magdalena Martinez [21:56]

Okay.

Kellie Kowal-Paul [21:59]

But more broadly, I really think that the mental health kind of conglomerate of resources and dedication on our part, and data collection, and connection with students. I really think that is the biggest – outside of distance learning, which I'll talk about in a second too – I really think the

mental health supports for students, and the recognition of the need for mental health supports in our community, not just society at-large – I'm going to think that is one of the biggest benefits of this whole mess.

Magdalena Martinez [22:36]

Wow.

Kellie Kowal-Paul [22:39]

My own children are benefitting from it. I am benefitting from it. I know that our kids in this district are benefitting from it.

Magdalena Martinez [22:46]

Yep.

Kellie Kowal-Paul [22:47]

And it was, like I said, the particular kind of catalyst for really pushing to get our schools open in the first place.

Magdalena Martinez [22:56]

Yeah.

Kellie Kowal-Paul [22:57]

So it makes sense that that feels like the biggest kind of impact long-term. And I think that is here to stay. There's no way we'll get rid of that. I also think that – I used to work in distance learning, ages ago, as a student worker when I was in college. And I was sticking labels on videotapes, and that's how we were doing distance learning, right? It was part of a side gig for the counseling department. And we had a lot of assumptions about kids being "right" for distance learning, and what kind of kid was a distance learning kid, and things like that. And then we started to have assumptions that every kid is a distance learning kid, and this is right for everybody.

Magdalena Martinez [23:38]

Right.

Kellie Kowal-Paul [23:41]

And at the very beginning of this, before it got hard – we thought it was hard, but it wasn't. Before it got real hard – and we were just trying to figure out how to connect with kids. We were trying to find them – we're trying to get a running computer – like all that logistical stuff. Which felt hard then but was not the hard part. We had no idea yet.

I think it allowed us to test some of those assumptions about what instruction could look like in the classroom and not. And that it is not just for these kids, but it's also not for all kids at that skill, right? So I think it gave us an opportunity for not just the people interested in technology to be testing some of this work, but just every single teacher now has the experience that we can draw on to kind of change the way we do things. To kind of get us out of Industrial Revolution education.

I wrote an essay when I was eight years old about what – I didn't use the words – but would be competency-based education. My eight-year-old daughter – she's 12 now – wrote the same essay when she was eight, and I went like (gestures) "Oh, my God! What are we doing? This is 40 years later."

So I think – I hope that we now have all these people with this experience, that some of those changes will start to bubble up. Will start to really make a change in what the experience is of being a teacher, day-to-day, week-to-week, year-to-year, whatever it is. Which will go hand-in-hand with the Carnegie Unit conversation, competency-based education conversation, and all that stuff. I have a feeling that, and hope, and a determination that all that work will kind of come out of this now that we have so many people with experience in this role.

Magdalena Martinez [25:24]

You know, Kellie, something that I really am drawn to is the – it seems that this idea of testing assumptions is a really helpful framing, right, of how we reacted and behaved during the pandemic. And you know, testing of assumptions could bear out correctly or incorrectly, right? And just the ambiguity of it all, right, that we're walking into a situation where we have a set of assumptions, whether it was "We're going to reopen in two weeks," or- (laughter) "Oh, we're gonna die." (laughter) Or, you know – those are kind of two extremes.

Kellie Kowal-Paul [26:07]

Mm-hmm.

Magdalena Martinez [26:10]

That is interesting, this whole idea of testing assumptions. I'm wondering if you could – I don't know if – that *is* my next question. If you could talk a little bit more about lessons learned. And not necessarily like, "Oh, we should have "X" program instead of that.

Kellie Kowal-Paul [26:27]

Yeah.

Magdalena Martinez [26:29]

But maybe even in our way of thinking, right? Our way of framing. Our way of – it could be ontological, epistemological, or programming, right? What are the lessons learned from your perspective? Were there any lessons learned for you personally, and then, more broadly, as an organization?

Kellie Kowal-Paul [26:47]

Oh, yes. So many so far. And I expect so many to come.

Magdalena Martinez [26:51]

Okay.

Kellie Kowal-Paul [26:53]

I'll start at the organizational level. I think I talked about this before. We really kind of sharpened our skills for making big changes. Accepting the challenge of multi-unit, district-wide, big

change kind of ideas. And recognizing that we are capable of doing these things in a much quicker and much more effective way than I think we would have thought before.

We also sharpened our skills in collaborating with our community partners. We kind of know where some of the challenges are there that we can look out for in the future. We learned that – and Dr. Jara has spoken to this – we learned that we need to have a one-plan type of idea, and [27:33] plans for competing organizations that make things extra challenging.

At a practical level, we've been working on our emergency management plans for three years. So those are now – we're living them. And so, instead of this kind of theoretical activity on paper, we've been living these plans. And so, if there ever were to be like a really, really life-threatening, immediate danger, we are ready to go for that in terms of emergency management across the organization, not just the emergency management team, which is really neat.

Magdalena Martinez [28:06]
Mm-hmm.

Kellie Kowal-Paul [28:08]
But we've learned a lot more about – more than crisis management, which is kind of changing the way we do things already. So I mean, we talked about the assumptions about distance learning and all that. We're learning how resilient and dedicated our teachers are. But we're also learning about where some of their boundaries are and what they're not willing to accept. And I suspect that will also further the change and what it feels like to be a teacher in the future, and I hope – that's kind of one of my personal soapboxes for the rest of my time here.

We learned how much more students rely on us for wraparound-type services, which felt auxiliary before, but it's more involved than I ever thought it was. I think more of us – so I'm sure that some of our team already knew that, but I think more of us now know. And we've learned, as a team, who we can rely on in different situations. And we know who stepped up, we know who kind of didn't, and those types of things. And people are useful in all situations in different ways, and we learned some of those things about ourselves.

Magdalena Martinez [29:13]
Mm-hmm.

Kellie Kowal-Paul [29:16]
And then for me, I talked about the lesson I learned about having one goal and shoving everyone and everything else aside to get to that goal. But then personally, I had a really hard time with balancing the demands of the pandemic response work, during the shutdown and all that, with all of the other relationships in my life. And my family had no idea where I was. I was going through some changes personally anyway, so it was all kind of chaotic. But the lesson I have from that now is how important it is to lift up a boundary around my wife and kids in a way that sets them apart from anyone else, in terms of demand for my time and energy.

Magdalena Martinez [29:52]

Yeah.

Kellie Kowal-Paul [29:55]

And because that is so personal to me, I can also apply that in the office. So those kinds of one-goal, and a boundary around my family is kind of the same lesson – just discovered two separate ways simultaneously. (laughs)

Magdalena Martinez [30:08]

Yeah, that's really, really, I think important. And I think it ties back into your comments about mental health, right?

Kellie Kowal-Paul [30:16]

Mm-hmm.

Magdalena Martinez [30:17]

And I can recall attending a panel at UNLV, and a student saying, "No one's okay right now." (laughs)

Kellie Kowal-Paul [30:24]

Yeah.

Magdalena Martinez [30:26]

And I think we're really seeing it now, the culmination of this collective trauma, with the CDC saying, "Everyone under 65 needs to be screened for anxiety and depression."

Kellie Kowal-Paul [30:39]

Yes, right.

Magdalena Martinez [30:40]

No one is okay. And we're seeing just the metrics around the country with our youth. And it's really hard to be living through this, right, without being touched in some way.

Kellie Kowal-Paul [30:53]

Yeah. And I kind of use my TikTok feed as a level of data analysis on myself. (laughs) It started out with show tunes, and the dude painting stripes on the street, to now, it's full of teachers, and therapists, and parenting experts, and things like that. So I can see, "Oh, this is – my life has changed." (laughs) So if I am a – microcosmic kind of look at the rest of the world, then yeah, things have changed a lot.

Magdalena Martinez [31:28]

You and me, right? Yes. Self-care, and yes, absolutely. (laughs) And that in itself is interesting, right, in terms of the role of social media and how it's evolving.

Kellie Kowal-Paul [31:39]

Indeed.

Magdalena Martinez [31:42]

So I really appreciate your thoughtfulness around that. So, the last question. Hopefully, this will leave you feeling differently or, you know. But are you hopeful? And, if so, what are you hopeful for?

Kellie Kowal-Paul [31:58]

Yeah, I'm hopeful, absolutely. I'm naturally hopeful. That's my norm. But more than that, I'm determined. We've got kids at stake and a lot of them. A lot of them who need us to be batting for them. We don't have anyone else batting for them, so I'm determined to keep up that fight.

Specifically, I'm determined to use this experience to fuel some flexibility in what we think about public education. I've talked about the experience of being a teacher. I've talked about the experience of being a student. And even individualizing how we engage with individual teachers and students, which is really big weird hard work, but I think we're in a good spot for it. Big economy-type thinking, how that all kind of interplays with the education that we've been sheltering ourselves from this whole time. Like we're going to have to catch up.

I'm hopeful that we are less adverse as an organization to big challenges and the big unknowns that come with them. And now that we've exercised our muscles and we've strengthened that area like I said. And I'm determined, though I haven't figured out how to build it into the calendar yet because like I said, we're still in it. I still feel in it. I don't feel through it yet.

Magdalena Martinez [33:20]

Mm-hmm.

Kellie Kowal-Paul [33:24]

I'm determined that we will dedicate the time to really studying all of this; what we did in our decisions and what happened. And I hope that the recession, that I know very little about, doesn't take away our opportunity to capitalize on what we learn from that.

Generally, I have big, fuzzy ideas about education. And I know I'm not the only one. I know everybody does. So I really just hope we can get in there and try some of these things out to see if we can start making an impact. A bigger impact on kids than we have been in the last 25 years that I've been here.

Magdalena Martinez [34:03]

Mm-hmm. Carmen, did you have any concluding questions or thoughts?

Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio [34:12]

Just thoughts. I'm grateful. Thank you. I have a sister in high school. She's about 315 [??34:19] program. And it's been hard. It's been really, really hard for her. But she is bright right now, and that's all. That's all I can ask for. Thank you so much.

Kellie Kowal-Paul [34:32]

I'm glad to hear it.

Magdalena Martinez [34:33]

Thank you so much, Kellie. We will take this interview, transcribe it, and send it your way when it's ready.

Kellie Kowal-Paul [34:38]

Okay.

Magdalena Martinez [34:40]

We appreciate your time.

Kellie Kowal-Paul [34:41]

Thank you, my pleasure. Have a wonderful day. Nice to meet you both.

Magdalena Martinez [34:43]

Take good care. Bye-bye.

End of audio: 35:00