Jeremy Anderson: Thank you very much and it’s great to have all of you here in Denver with us. We’re actually located here in Denver. So, it’s great that I just had to take the train from my house to get here and I thank all of you for traveling from the fairest parts of the country. I want to run through a little bit about the Education Commissions of the States and our commitment to the arts education partnership and our support of the work that all of you have been doing in your ten states. And then I want to get into the nitty-gritty differences between policy and politics. The Education Commission on the States, we are an unbiased bipartisan organization that really looks at state education policy across the board, from early learning to K-12 to post-secondary, from civics to arts to STEM, we cover the policy side of things, really view ourselves as one of the indispensable essential members of any policy team. And when you think about what’s happening in education in a lot of states, I think a lot of us think, “Oh my gosh, the whole state’s involved.” I’d argue there may only be fifteen or twenty major players in most states who are actually-- have the levers to change education policy. And those fifteen to twenty are the people that we work with and we serve directly on issues like arts education partnership. At the Education Commission on the States we believe strongly in the power of learning from experience and we believe that it’s important to figure out what’s going on in other states, like you have been doing over the last three years to understand the policies you might be able to consider. Far too often I get calls from legislators or governor’s office saying, “We want to do this.” And what they haven’t thought about is: Are there other states that have already tried that, what’d they do right, what did they do wrong, how do we learn from their policies so we don’t have to re-create the wheel? I talk a lot about a House education share and a Senate education share how are no longer in office, but were just a few years ago. Almost two thirds of our legislators are citizen legislators. That means that people are doing really, really hard work and putting in eighty hours a week, but being a legislator is not their full-time job. In this case, one of those chairs of education actually worked at the beginning of the life cycle. He was a farmer. And the other chair worked at the end of the life cycle. He was a mortician. These two people probably were the most influential education policy makers in that state. And figuring out how we can share with them the information in other states is really important, because when I met with them they’d say, “Education is not my strong suite. I’m here to try to lead and make things better for the kids in our states. So, how can you at Education Commission on the States help us to find those policies?” We work across the country with three hundred and fifty different commissioners and we’re in statute in most states. So, normally, my commissioners are the governor, the chief state school officer, the chairs of the education committees, usually someone from higher ed and early learning. And, so, it’s a really interesting representation of who we’re hearing from. This is important to know, because when I go into a state-- I was in Oklahoma just last week-- and I get my commissioners together for a breakfast or a coffee to talk about where we can help them, they all know each other. But I hear the same common theme, which is “I haven’t seen you since the governor’s holiday party last year.” They’re busy people. So, post-secondary is not always thinking about K-12 and the governor’s office may be engaged in natural disasters and other things and not working with the chairs of the education committees as well as they could. And, so, finding ways to connect these players is really important and I think it gets to one of the parts that both Narric and Jeff [ph?] talked about, which is how to engage those stakeholders and not necessarily one-by-one, but collaboratively. A lot of the work that we do is around research, reports, convenings, and counseling. And, so, we do a lot of research for these police makers. We do a significant amount of looking at all of the
different bills on education policy and arts policy. We actually have small celebrations in our office when some states pass their state appropriations act. I know that sounds absurd, but our staff gets excited, because we're policy wonks. We embrace that and we actually read the first word in the bill to the last word in the bill, pull every single education policy out of that bill and put it in our database. Last year we had over twenty-five hundred education policies we put in our database. So, when a state calls us and says, "We want to do something on arts education," we can say, "great, let us check the database, 'cause there's probably seven or eight states that have already started down this road and it might be helpful for you to look at what they did before you try to recreate your own wheel." One of the things I want to talk to you about though is not just the policy, but the politics. And we don't take a side. I'm actually governed by a board that is very bipartisan. I have a Republican chair right now, a governor from Mississippi. I had the Democratic governor from Montana who was my former chair. But the changes that we're seeing in who is in these elected positions is turning over at a rate quicker than we are used to. And this is really important for you to think about, especially based on the five goals around policy that Jeff just highlighted. So, in 2016, there were actually twelve states that held governor’s races. This was just almost a year ago last November. Eight brand new governors were elected and started office in January of this year. That’s a pretty big turnover rate. But then we look at going forward, there are thirty-six governors’ races from today until just twelve months from now when the 2018 elections take place. And of those thirty-six governors’ races sixteen of those governors are term limited. It doesn’t matter if they want to run again; they can’t. So, New Jersey and Virginia have a race coming up here in about four days. We’ve for thirty-four governors’ races that are gonna take place in November of 2018 and this is a dramatic shift, because when we look at where the governors are, we had eight new ones in 2016, we have three that either resigned or went to the Trump administration. Governors of South Carolina and Iowa have been confirmed as members of President Trump’s cabinet. Governor of Alabama resigned on his own accord and you can google that and figure out what was up and what may not have been. That being said, there were three governors that have left office already this year not because of elections. We know there’s going to be sixteen governors who are going to be term-limited. We are guaranteed twenty-seven new governors in America in a twenty-four-month period. And there’s a lot of other governors who are going to be running for election, but there’s no guarantee that they will win. And in some of these states while the governor has the ability to run for a second or third term, they’ve already announced they’re not interested in that. In Idaho and in Minnesota, the governors could run again and have said they won’t. Why does this matter? Because if you look at your ten states that are represented here, nine of them are going to have an election that is coming up in the next twelve months. New Jersey in four days. So, of those nine, six of your states will not have the governor you currently have in office twelve months from now. And, so, figuring out how you can build that stakeholder engagement to be ready for that change is really important. We’re not just seeing this in the governor’s office, though; we’re seeing it in education policy writ large. There’s a large amount of turnover in state legislatures and especially if your state has term limits, the education chair of the education committee is not staying in that position for eight or ten years like they used to. Legislators in term-limited states are jumping onto the education committee to be chair, try to get to appropriations, try to get to minority or majority leader in some capacity. So, they’re moving quickly. And, so, it’s really important to figure out how you build those relationships longer term. Who do you think might be running for chair of the education committee in four years? Who do you think will be moving into leadership in that capacity, so that you can hopefully train them on the value of arts education.
while they’re in the education committee. There are three of your states—Arizona, Arkansas, and Massachusetts—that won’t be having an election— or I’m sorry: Your governor could run for re-election and North Carolina will not be having an election because they just had one last year. But this is really important when you think about the stakeholder engagement aspects of what you’re doing with SP3. A lot of times when I’ve worked with organizations on policies like this, they think about how they can get their report finished, they think about how they can share it at one hearing or in one meeting with somebody from the governor’s office and they consider it completed. The changing nature of who’s in these offices means you’re going to have to prepare yourself to give the same message potentially twenty times in one year to twenty different people, because they’re going to be changing on who’s in those roles. It’s actually a great opportunity for you. It’s a great opportunity for you to start thinking about the success that you’ve had, sharing the data from those successes with those incoming people, and getting down to what Narric talked about on stakeholder engagement and convenings. How many meetings can you have in your state or area where you can get those incoming new leaders to be a keynote speaker or to be an MC or to be engaged at your meeting. That is one of the best ways to get some of these elected officials to feel like they own a piece of what your success is and probably to become an ambassador for what you’re doing moving forward. I also want to highlight a little bit in ESSA and what we’re seeing. I’ve got some great staff in our K-12 team and they’ve read all seventeen of the ESSA plans that have already been submitted. We’re in the middle of reading all thirty-four of those that are being reviewed right now and one of the things we continue to hear back from a lot of different communities is, “There’s nothing about arts in the ESSA plans,” or “there’s nothing about STEM in the ESSA plans,” and there’s some frustration there. I would urge to not necessarily look at that as a negative. Many states that we’ve seen filled out their ESSA plan in some capacity with the goal of making sure that they can obtain federal funds, but they didn’t want to put their entire plan of action in the ESSA plan and be held accountable by the federal government when the “Every Student Succeeds Act” is really set on giving states empowerment. So, I would urge you to work with your chief state school officer and with many of the deputies in your state education agencies to not focus on what’s not in or what is in your ESSA plan, but instead to look at what is the goal of that state education agency and what are the goals that they have longer term. The arts scan that we’ve done and that we continue to do, which shows major areas on arts education policies, is a tool for you to use in comparison. Most elected officials look at five states. The four that geographically surround them, and the one state they aspire to be. So, figure out how you can go into your state and compare where your neighboring states and the one state you think your chief or your governor aspires to be are on education policies in the arts and it can help you to be [sic] some comparisons. The other is to look at a paper that we released and we’ve gotten a lot of good traction, which is really called “ESSA and What Is a Well-Rounded Education?” Our website is easy to get to at ECS.org and it’s a giant search engine. Just type in “well-rounded” in the search engine title there and it will pull up that paper. But that paper is really helpful, especially with the turnover in elected officials to say, “What does ESSA mean for you and how does ‘well-rounded’ play into this? How does arts, how does STEM, how does civics, how do extracurricular activities play into the education policies that you’re going to be pushing?” Lastly, I just want to highlight a little bit about the real value of sharing knowledge and figuring out how you can do some of these convenings. Americans for the Arts has been a tremendous partner with us, but finding ways in your state that you can get the right people in to do these kind of convenings, whether it’s seeing if Narric or Jeff— it’s easy for me to offer them to travel— if Narric or Jeff can come into your state and help
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to do a national presentation on what’s happening so that then you can delve into some brainstorming session with some of your policymakers on what you’re going to do or whether it’s working with Jane Best, who’s our director of the Arts Education Partnership, or some of our team with the arts education partnership to help, that’s what we’re here for and that’s really why we’ve been so supportive of this SP3 project that you’ve all invested your time in. There’s a lot of successes out there and the more you can find ways to share those successes, both individually and collectively across the policy makers in your state I think the more we’re going to have an opportunity to truly see education transform from an assessment based on English and science and math to really how are we providing our children with the best well-rounded education possible? So, it’s an honor to be here with all of you and I know we’re going to have some Q and A going back and forth, but welcome to Denver and look forward to working with all of you today and into the future. Thank you.

<applause>

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