Navigating to Policy Success: The Findings, Outcomes, and Response to SP3: Pam Paulson (3 of 4)

Pam Paulsen: Good morning everybody. I’m Pam Paulsen. I’m actually from Minnesota; however, I went
to school here at the University of Colorado, and I did my student teaching here, in Denver, at North High
School, and I had the most wonderful cooperating teacher. Her name was Joan Brown and I, to this day,
remember almost every lesson she taught me and that was a very, very long time ago. I am from
Minnesota where we have a state agency called The Perpich Center for Arts Education. It’s pretty unique
in the country. We run a school for 11th and 12th graders that are highly motivated to work in the arts. It’s
residential, so they live on our campus, and we’re also responsible for statewide professional
development for arts teachers as well as other teachers that would like to use the arts in their classrooms.
And, finally, I have been the Director of the SP3 Program for Minnesota where we have focused on
teacher evaluation, but that is not what Jeff asked me to talk about today. He asked me to wear a
different hat, and that is the College Board where I have served as a trustee for the last five years, and
before that I chaired their Academic Council and their Arts Academic Committee, and also served on the
steering committee for the National Task Force for Arts Education. And, over the length of time that I’ve
been working with the college board, it’s been a little over 20 years, and it’s been a tremendous honor for
me to be able to do that. I don’t know how much you know about the College Board. I think a lot of people
know some parts about it, but it took me a very long time to figure out all the things that go on there, and I
have a colleague, a new colleague, who had heard that I was somehow on this board, and he said, which
College Board, meaning which college I was working with. And, so, I don’t know that everybody knows a
ton about it. So, I thought I would give you a little bit of an overview of what the College Board is. First of
all, it’s a membership organization, and they take, we take that highly seriou
sly. It’s not individuals, so,
you can’t join the College Board by yourself. Your institution has to join, and there are over 6000-member
institutions. It’s big, it’s really big because you count all those people from all of those institutions. About
75 percent of the institutions that are members of the College Board are secondary schools or school
systems, and that became a little bit of a worry since the College Board was started by institutions of
higher education in 1900. It didn’t become a 501c3 until 1950s, but it still was highly organized and the
intentions were these colleges to figure out what kind of testing would be most useful to get young people
into colleges. About 22 percent, today, are institutions of higher education, and then there’s this little
piece left of a few percent that are nonprofit organizations, and organizations that might have similar
missions or, at least believe in the College Board mission and everybody that becomes a member has to
agree to the Nondiscrimination Clause that the College Board has. So, there’s over 6000 members and
there are over 1500 staff members, and the College Board has regions around the states, six of them,
where they run programs out of that region and the regions are different. Its very interesting. I’ve been
able to hop around and get to many of those regions for different purposes. They each do a forum, a
regional forum every year, and I find that they’re quite different from each other. And, just to give you a
sense of size or scale, it’s about a billion-dollar budget per year. You may know the College Board as a
testing organization because it does that a lot, and one of those tests is the SAT, and I’m wondering how
many of you might have taken the SAT, raise your hand if you did. Do any of you even remember your
scores, for example. I’m not revealing mine, and they also have an enormous program called Advanced
Placement, and how many of you may have taken an advanced placement course? See, they were not
available when I went to high school, so, you are much younger than I am. You may not have heard of
these programs, but Springboard and CLEP are two very large programs, and there’re some new ones
like the AP Capstone Program, and I love that program. It's a program that's been launched just a few
years ago, I went to Alberta, Canada to visit a couple of those sites, and the idea of it is that students
learn how to research before they get to college, which we have learned has been a skill that a lot of
higher education institutions feel needs to be improved. And, so, I visited one very academic high
achieving high school and one very low-income school, and both of them were doing AP Capstone, and
kids were really thriving, so, I was very happy to see that. We've kind of, over the last few years, come up
with a way to describe the mission by saying that the purpose of the College Board is really to create a
path for students to own their future, to create a path, now sometimes I say we should be creating paths
because there probably isn't just one. But, the whole point is to get kids along the way to succeed, and
David Coleman became the President and CEO of the College Board about five years ago. Things have
changed since David got there, but one of the things David's very clear about is assessment is dead
unless, and I know it sounds funny coming from the College Board, but unless it is accompanied with
opportunity. So, when there's opportunity kids find taking those assessments more valuable. And, I want
to give you one example in the last five years the College Board did produce materials to help students
prepare for the SAT, but they never had what were called test prep kinds of courses, and there were a lot
of places that do still do that. But, the College Board decided to partner with the Khan Acad
emy. How
many of you have ever been on the Khan Academy site? Again, those of you that are--- that's great
because what we've done through the College Board is actually get practice tests and materials up on the
Khan Academy so that they are free. They're available to every single student anywhere in the world and
they're free. That changes the playing field so that kids that don't have the resources, the income to pay
for those test prep courses can now go online anywhere, anyplace, including their phone and get help,
and it's customized for them based on their PSAT score. So, if you take that and you get a score that
shows where you've done well, and were you need to work, that can get plugged into the Khan Academy
electronically. It generates a way for you to figure out what you need to work on, and the kids now that
are putting in about 20 hours of study on Khan Academy have shown to improve their SAT scores by 115
points on average, and it's across all demographics, rural, urban, suburban, male, female, race,
everything, it's showing that that is an advantage for the students that take part. And, up to this point, it's
pretty new, I'm going to say maybe four years that we've been working on this over five million students
have accessed the Khan Academy. And, I say this to you because I want you to know how important that
idea of access and equity is to the College Board, and it isn't brand new. We just had the annual forum in
New York last week, and we gave an award to Lois, she's no longer with us, but her children were there,
Lois Dickson Rice, and I discovered that she along with Clayborn Pell launched the Pell Grants, in 1972,
and that has been an advantage for millions of students in or country that have needed that kind of
financial assistance, and I'm going to bet some of you in this room have probably gotten a Pell Grant, and
if not you personally, you have probably helped some of your students get a Pell Grant. And, what I found
interesting about that was that Lois Dickson Rice in her comments had said something along the lines of
the College Board was the only organization at that time that came forward to support this legislation, and
in part, it was because it was legislation that was directed at individual students, not a big massive thing
like a testing system, but actually for individual students to receive the aid that they needed. So, the other
thing that's new in the last five years is that we've been able to use those PSAT scores to send them to
organizations that give scholarship so that they know who is on the cusp of needing some help to be able
to make a launch and really succeed. And, so, at this point, there are $180 million dollars available each
year to students that comes out of the system of the PSAT. The College Board is very interested in trying to help level the playing field so that students who might not ordinarily go to college get a chance to do that, and there are tons of barriers that are in the way of students to try to do that. And, one of the things that we have discovered is the low-income kids just can’t come up with the fees to take the SAT, to take the AP courses, and so the College Board has been spending $100 million dollars a year on fee waivers and discounts to give to kids that need that kind of assistance to take those exams. And, the latest issue that the College Board’s been talking about is giving unlimited scores sent to students that are in the low-income situation so that they can apply to as many colleges as they want to, and have their scores sent for free. So, that just give you a sense of the kinds of things that the College Board’s been working on, and we know that while the College Board is thriving and doing well, there are a lot of problems in education for kids and there isn’t equal access. So, there has been an effort to work more with rural areas, give students in the rural areas more opportunities. Young women have not been accessing STEM like the men have, so, an effort there as well as in areas students of color and most especially Native American students. So, there are lots of areas of growth including international. The College Board has, I think I’m right on this number, programs in about 160 different countries. And, I’ve been able to visit China three times in the last year to see what it looks like where AP courses are being offered in China. SAT is not really available to many Chinese students because they have the Gaokao, and they’re not allowed to take the SAT, but it is the world is shrinking. There’s so much going on that’s so interesting across the world, and I’m just so happy to have been involved in this organization that’s taking the social issues as well as the academic issues into account.