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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wMbKCF92LOw&feature=youtu.be>

Forum Summary

The Reshaping of Georgia Through Shifting Demographics: Catastrophe or Opportunity?

Kevin Greiner

Board Chair, Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education

Timestamp 0:00 through 3:40

“Never before has demographic change shifted so profoundly for our nation and for our state.”

“Projections forecast a 46% increase in Georgia’s population from 2010 to 2030; we’re becoming increasingly diverse . . . We are also becoming increasingly poor. The number of public school children in Georgia eligible for free and reduced meals has increased from 59% to 62% in just three years. And many of these students are living below the poverty line. We also have the 4th highest poverty rate in the nation.”

“The fastest growing student populations in our school district systems are those living in poverty and the limited English proficient, and they are the least likely to graduate. The average graduation rate in 2014 in all Georgia public school students was 73%. That compares with 63% for low income students and only 44% for English language learners.”

“These demographic shifts in our schools, coupled with the workforce exodus of baby boomers and a growing mismatch between the skills that employers are looking for and the talent available is a conundrum for our future economic viability.”

Craig Lesser

Managing Partner, The Pendleton Group

Timestamp 15:06 through 25:54

“In order to grow our economy, we’ve got to demand that students stay in school and get their high school diplomas. We must demand that middle and high schoolers be given information about career choices in life, about learning to be leaders, about learning a skill or a trade.”

“What we teach local officials in our economic development work is that you as a mayor, as a county commissioner, you as a local elected official, have a responsibility to work with your school board. And you school board members have an opportunity and a responsibility to work with your elected officials.”

“Communities remain in default because they (board and officials) are not working together.”

“If a child comes to school hungry, he or she will not learn.”

“Let’s teach our kids how to think. How to learn a skill. Let’s teach them how to communicate . . .What will drive our community is ‘Smart’. Smart young people.”

Michael Carnathan

Researcher, Atlanta Regional Commission

Timestamp 26:40 through 59:30

“What I talk about is the context that kids bring with them into the classroom, because that has a very, very strong relationship with how the kids do inside the classroom.”

“Income is one of the strongest predictors of student success. Family stability, housing stability is one of the strongest predictors of attendance, which in turn is one of the strongest predictors of student success.”

Ten take-aways:

We are a fast growing state and fast growing metro area in Atlanta.

The population of baby boomers is growing older, but the population overall will stay young.

We are growing more diverse, especially in the younger populations.

The job market is recovering.

Incomes are not recovering.

The economy will reflect the changing demographics. For example, aging out of baby boomers will lead to more job openings in the work sector.

“New Economy” jobs are hot (requiring at least a Bachelor’s degree).

“Old Economy” jobs are hot too. If we can align a training track with these jobs, there’s lots of opportunities for those without a college degree.

The Education Gap is big (meaning the gap between the skills required for available jobs and the education of those looking for jobs).

Socioeconomics matters.

Presentation of demographic maps of Georgia and Atlanta showing population change and growth by age and race. This is followed by a discussion on how a younger and more diverse population will affect schools and the economy. A series of forecasts of job growth and job types as well as income. And finally a demonstration through data maps of how socioeconomics affects student success (income, health, home environment, etc.)

Resource for generating own mapped data: <http://www.neighborhoodnexus.org/>

Panel Discussion on Promoting Student Success

(quotes are mostly paraphrased)

Panel Members:

Dr. Philip Lanoue, Superintendent, Clarke County Schools

Laurie Murrah-Hanson, Coordinator, Great Promise Partnership

Dr. Art Dunning, Interim President, Albany State University

Timestamp 59:39 through 1:51:51

Q: Dr. Lanoue, what challenges are you seeing in Clarke County, and how are you thinking about addressing them?

A: Clarke County is the 3rd most impoverished county per capita in the country. We have great kids and great families, they just come to us with some pretty great challenges. We are 82% minority. We are 84% free and reduced hot lunch. Out of 13,000 students, we have about 500 homeless families. We doubled the state number in DFACs referrals and children taken from homes. Graduation rate in Clarke County in 2004 was about 40%. We are seeing an increase in poverty: children in poverty, families in poverty, and this is working poor. We are also seeing a really large transient rate.

What are we doing about it? It's always a work in progress. It pushes schools and communities to work together and to be nimble. You have to stop blaming and start building. We have to take the kids to a place where they never thought they could be (show them the possibilities in their future). We've moved our focus toward creativity and innovation and digital learning.

Q: Ms. Murrah-Hanson, what is Great Promise Partnership doing to engage kids and close the gap between the national graduation rate and local graduation rates that are lagging behind?

A: Promise Partnership is a public/private partnership within local communities across the state that brings together schools and employers to help increase graduation rates. We look for local employers that are willing to hire students that are not on track to graduate. They hire them part-time and provide a mentor in life skills to help them to graduate. Students have to be economically disadvantaged (on free and reduced lunch). We partner with schools to identify these students who need extra support to get their diploma.

The bottom line is these companies are supporting these students. They are getting a paycheck, they have a mentor, and they are getting life skills.

A key is the business said they would be a part of the solution rather than saying they're not getting the right people. The businesses are willing to invest because building a workforce in the community is a priority.

Q: Dr. Dunning, what has been a recent strategy undertaken by your community leaders (in Albany, Dougherty County) to address these issues?

A: I am intrigued by the polarization of postsecondary institutions in our community. I did not notice enough conversation happening. Unless there is collaboration and leveraging of resources, this problem can't be solved. This collaborative had brought 400 people in the community together. We want a top down/bottom up converging discussion. The other thing we did was study communities who are addressing their changing demographics. We have a list of recommendations from community meetings and we are going to work on it. Last, the biggest issue facing us is intergenerational poverty and how to teach kids and raise aspirations and expectations.

Q: Ms. Murrah-Hanson, what can rural Georgia do to grow their own labor force?

Whether an employer can hire 20 kids or one child, they can still contribute to their schools and to their community.

We have partnered with organizations that are already working hard in their communities to develop student skills, even if they aren't working.

A lot of times we start thinking about getting kids work-ready when they're 16, when they're old enough to work, but we have to start much earlier.

It's really about looking at the assets that a community has rather than the deficits.

Q: Dr. Dunning, how have Georgia's demographic shifts affected higher education?

A: One has been creating a structure of transfer relationships. The second thing is reaching down with dual-enrollment and career academy.

We have a rich resource of faculty and we're looking at incentives to get teachers involved in the community, to use that social capital, to do some things other than teach their classes. We are looking at a Saturday academy. There are successes where we raise expectations and take away what many people feel when they go into schools with economic stratification.

We have to address the normalization of high expectations.

Dr. Lanoue additional comment:

Our goal was to bring 13,000 students every year to the University of Georgia for an educational field trip sponsored by one of their departments. Students were bussed in and spend half a day with one of the departments talking about what they do.

Q: What are some of the issues that we as a state-wide audience need to bring into the discussion?

A:

Dr. Lanoue: There's lots of conversations about testing. Our kids are not a test number. They are much more. We have to take a comprehensive view. As policy makers, we have to build the comprehensive view together through policies that overlap, get people out of their silos, and force people to work together to have the right conversations about change.

Ms. Murrah-Hansen: In rural Georgia there's a lack of transportation. There's not any way to get around unless you have your own vehicle. When you think about getting students work experience, we have to get them there somehow.

Our students are dealing with a lot of challenges and we have to have vibrant, healthy communities that can support them. We need to think about how to help students navigate those challenges.

Dr. Dunning: We need space to talk about these issues, and we need to take time and move from discussion to action. We have to normalize different units working together and put the processes in place and sustain it because this is inter-generational work. And you have to have both the urgency about it but also have patience for results. This is not going to be solved overnight, so how can you put these processes in place?

I'm astonished by how much we can get done just by getting in the same room and making decisions.

We need to pay attention to our policies and determine if they are giving us the outcome that they are intended to give. It's up to us to make this work if we want this state to thrive and prosper.

Q: How do you respond to those who say, “All these kids need to do is go to school. If they really wanted the education, they should just go to school.”

A:

Dr. Lanoue: We have to be transparent about the realities. They are not excuses, they're just the facts.

Ms. Murrah-Hanson: It's about continuing to educate supporters about the students and their situations and challenges.

Dr. Dunning: There is disengagement in families that struggle. Often it could be young mothers who are alone. There is a disintegration of the social system of support for our children. The social infrastructure has changed in the last several years. There's a complete turn-around where there is teen pregnancy, there is poverty, there is a disintegration of the family, the social support that is needed. All of these things have changed the nature of schooling.

Continue to educate. Don't make excuses, and don't say we can't make it work, but we need to talk about the nature of things and what it does to young people.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bJH_C8W9DJw&feature=youtu.be

Forum Summary

Closing the Higher Education Attainment Gap

Key Quotes and Ideas:

Kevin Greiner, Georgia Partnership Board Chair and President and CEO of Gas South

“By 2020, 60% of the jobs that we have in this state will require some form of advanced education (an Associate’s degree, a Bachelor’s degree, or a Master’s degree.) Today, only 42% of our young adults have a college education.”

Chancellor Hank Huckaby, University System of Georgia

“There are two imperatives that those involved in postsecondary education are charged with. One is the economic imperative, which relates to workforce training. The other imperative is the civic imperative. We are concerned about workforce, but we are also concerned about what they do in their families and communities.”

“We have an obligation to prepare our students for life. They are going to be in our communities, in organization, families, they’re going to vote or not vote. It’s a critical aspect of having a well-rounded, informed, educated citizenry.”

Panel Discussion Members:

Gretchen Corbin, Commissioner of the Technical College System of Georgia

Dr. Cheryl Dozier, President of Savannah State University

Dr. Kyle Marrero, President of the University System of West Georgia

Dr. Gail Thaxton, Interim President of Athens Technical College

Dr. Marrero: “We are having great success, but if we aren’t relevant, if we aren’t relevant to economic impact and future workforce readiness...we aren’t making a difference, we aren’t showing a return on investment.”

“We brought together superintendents of Carroll County and our chamber leaders and community leaders and we set the day to create a shared vision of what it would look like if we created a partnership, a collaborative, for K-16 success...We put goals together, we created action plans, we’ve hired a director, and we’ve done it all with philanthropic and foundation dollars...We’re putting that together with the ultimate goal of exchanging aspirational success for postsecondary (education) to expectational (success), and that every 18 year old that is in Carroll County and within our reach has opportunities...We’ve created a one-stop sheet that has our courses, their courses, what transfers. We’ve given them to their counselors, we’re working together, not in competition.”

Dr. Dozier:

“The majority of my students come from families that do not have a plan for their finances, but they do have a vision and a value that they want their sons and daughters to be educated.”

“How do we retain and attract students? We’ve rebranded and invested in some marketing. Also, recruitment is everyone’s responsibility, even the college President’s...It makes a difference when somebody knows that somebody wants you.”

Commissioner Corbin:

“We are working with industries, specific industries that have needs, whether it’s in film or nuclear engineering, cyber security, plumbing, or welding. And we are working with those companies to understand those needs and also asking them to partner with us.”

“We talk about GEDs a lot, but GED-qualified individuals are very slim within our adult literacy population. When individuals come to us for adult literacy, the majority are not ready to take a GED test. The majority are on a 3rd to 8th grade level. And so what these individuals do is they continue to stay with us and we continue teaching them and it’s remedial (training) until we can get them to the point where they’re ready for Adult Education courses and they’re ready to take the GED.”