

What can public education learn from Black-led pods and microschools?

School closures at the height of the pandemic propelled several families into parent- and community-led solutions like [pandemic pods and microschools](#). Now, even though many of these efforts have disbanded, some led by and for Black families are still going strong and shed light on how to meet the needs of all students, especially those most marginalized by the current public education system.

What can education leaders learn from solutions Black families and communities created for themselves? And given the current climate surrounding public education - including culture wars and opting out on either side of the political divide - what is at risk if they don't take heed?

On November 14, 2022, founders of Black-led pods and microschools and scholars who study Black self-determination in education gathered to make sense of these and other questions in CRPE's virtual event, "**What can public education learn from Black-led pods and microschools?**" The lively conversation between [panelists Robert Harvey, Maxine McKinney de Royston, Janelle Wood, and Lakisha Young](#) and moderator [Chris "Citizen" Stewart](#) explored why Black families form education solutions outside the public system, especially during the pandemic. The discussion also captured how they ultimately want school systems to change so that Black children, along with all children, can learn and thrive.

[Read highlights](#) from the conversation and [watch the video on YouTube](#).

What brings us here? (0:00:00)

Jenny Poon:

Hi everybody. Welcome to the Center on Reinventing Public Education or CRPE's Virtual Event on what can public education learn from Black led pods and micro schools? I'm Jenny Poon. I'm a partner at the Center for Innovation in Education, supporting CRPE's National Learning Agenda on Pandemic Pods. And I'm thrilled to be with you today. To get us started, let me say just a little bit about what brought us to this conversation today. So in 2020, when CRPEs started hearing about pandemic pods and how common and how widespread they were becoming, we saw a historic opportunity to study a mass movement of educational innovation that was entirely demand driven. We wanted to understand what these pods were like, who was forming them, who was teaching them, and how did they compare to people's experiences with schools before the pandemic?

We were somewhat surprised by what we found. For sure, families created pods as a crisis response. They needed to send their children somewhere that didn't want their kids to be alone. But one of the first and most striking findings of our

survey of families was that the majority of them, 58% ended up actually finding a solution that they liked better, not just better than Zoom School during the pandemic, but better than their experiences with schools before the pandemic. And we detailed this and many other findings in our report, Crisis breeds innovation, which you'll find the link to in the chat.

We also noticed particular benefits to podding cited by families of color, and with the caveat that families of color represented just a small proportion of our sample. Nevertheless, families of color were twice as likely as white families to report benefits like their pod improve their child's overall happiness and feelings about school. Some of the quotes from Black parents are illustrative, such as their child was happy, not suffering, feeling safer, seen, heard, and at peace compared to their pre pandemic schools.

And because families often have the ability to select their own pod instructors, it's not surprising that they reported greater levels of trust in those instructors compared to their children's teachers before the pandemic. This was again, especially true for families of color for whom 63% reported more trust. And I'd like to just read out loud this one quote from a Black parent who said, "All of the parents have been so excited at being able to choose who is teaching our children, having that level of control, knowing who this person is, picking somebody from the community and knowing that they're invested in our children as individuals and as people."

When we followed up in 2021, most of the pods that we had reached were already disbanded. But interestingly of the few that continue, were those created by and for families of color, Black families in particular. And again, we're talking about very small numbers here, but we began wondering if what we were seeing was connected to broader national trends, such as the stark rise in homeschooling among Black families during the pandemic and declining public school enrollments among all families, especially Black families, which still shows up today. Were these signs of a broader movement?

We also noticed a growing trend in state legislations supporting alternatives like pods and micro schools, which are largely being championed by politically conservative lawmakers. And we wondered, were they paving the way for an explosion in self-determined alternatives to public schools? And if so, what would that mean for the families in Black led pods and micro schools? And on the flip side, what would that mean for the majority of families who are still served by public schools? Finally, surrounded by a broader context of culture wars and clashes over issues of race and inclusion and belonging in public schools. We ask, what should leaders learn from the solutions that Black families created for themselves? And what's at risk if public education systems don't take heed of their lessons?

[Housekeeping comments]

With that, let me introduce and hand things over to our moderator Edu-Twitter celebrity and CEO of Brightbeam, Chris aka Citizen Stewart.

Citizen Stewart: I don't know what to do with that intro, but good morning everyone. This is very important discussion today and I'm proud and excited to be able to have it with people that know so much about Black families, Black communities, Black education, something that I always talk about, Black educational capital. How much of the means of education do we actually own for ourselves? How much do we get to determine, and to what extent are we in control of education? Black pods as one form of Black education, feels like it's ripe for those questions.

Questions around how much do we own, but opening it up to the panelists, and you are a fine group of folks to ask this question to.

What is important to know about the Black families who form pod-like environments for their children? (0:06:20)

CS: The majority of Black students are in traditional public schools and probably will be for the foreseeable future. But some parents have sought out other means of educating their children. And I think I would love to start with just the most basic question is, what do you think is important to talk about or to know about the group of Black families and Black community members that are striking out on their own, and forming pod like learning environments for their children? What can we say about them that makes people smarter about that portion of our community?

Janelle Wood: Well, my name is Janelle Wood, Black Mothers Forum and I'll take this question, because we have been very active in our public school system with our K Through 12th grade Black children. And what made us strike out and do the micro schools, is because of what we saw pre pandemic as far as how our children were being criminalized and demonized for behavior that was normal for their age group.

But yet, and still our children were expected to behave more mature than the others. We found that in our advocacy work, we found this level of disrespect and this level of exclusion of Black parents coming to the table saying, Hey, we want this to change. And yet, although we were at the table, they still weren't doing what we needed them to do. So prior to the pandemic, we decided that we needed to do something different, because we were crying out for safe and supportive learning environments for our Black children.

And we just started to realize that perhaps the individual sitting in the positions of administration didn't either want to do that to create those, or didn't know how to. So when the pandemic occurred, one of our executive director, she struck out, Deborah Cobert, she said, let me go find something. So we saw the

micro schools as an option, because many of our parents couldn't do homeschooling, they had to work.

So the micro schools, we decided to support those and to start those, now to model out what a safe and supportive learning environment looks like for our Black children. And then we added the challenging and innovative part of it, because we recognized that many of our children, especially our sons, were not being challenged. And that was leading to some of the behaviors that they were exhibiting as far as being bored. They were bored and now they have people that look like them, care for them, understand them, now leading in their educational efforts and that is what we have found to be most rewarding.

Parents are happy, because they're not being called during the day to come pick them up, because they've been expelled or suspended for minor, minor infractions. And why couldn't someone work with them to get them redirected to do what it is you were trying to get them to do, so that's what we've found has been very beneficial. We've had nothing but great reports, but above all our babies, K Through Eighth graders are so happy, they don't even want to go home at the end of the day. They want to stay, they've even asked for Saturday school, but of course our guides are like, "Please, let us have Saturday off." But it's been a wonderful rewarding experience for everyone involved.

CS: I'd love to open it up to anyone else, but I just have to say anything that makes children say they want to stay at school, you know you are doing something right in that building.

Robert S. Harvey: So I'd like to add that I think to the part of your question that says what do we need to know about this group of folks? Is this group of folks, they're participating in a very extended part of the Black educational history and the arc of Black education. So I think a lot about in my writing and in my research around the fact that the early pod school was the slave cabin, and if we think about the history of Black self-reliance, educational self-reliance, that what we are experiencing from 19 to 22 and onward, this kind of increase from 8% of Black students living at the margin of public ed in these kind of micro school and homeschool contexts, now being almost 16% to 17% is a re-imagination and an extension of what Black emancipatory folks have always had to do, which is think at the margin of the education system, think at the margin of the public education narrative.

And so I celebrate folks who in this particular economic context are also trying to reimagine how do we build systems, how do we build school context, how do we build the conditions of wellbeing and the conditions of identity, that allow Black students in particular to see here and feel themselves in ways that are indigenously authentic, that are indigenously core to their formation. And so I would be remiss if we don't put it in the lineage of the cottage school, the slave cabin, the freedom school, the micro movement of the '60s, that the Black

Panthers created pod schools, namely in Oakland and in Chicago and in East Harlem.

This is a part of a tradition that Black folks have known well, but it has been often overpowered and over discussed by the white conservative pod movement. And so there's an interesting play here that we have to expose. There's a much larger narrative to the pods that transcend what we are experiencing now.

Why innovate outside the public education system? (0:11:45)

CS: As a follow up to that, can I ask what is important about doing this outside of the system though? There's many different ways you could attempt to do this same thing. So what's important about the folks that felt they needed to do it outside of the system, at least during the pandemic?

Lakisha Young: I can jump in on that one too. We as the Oakland REACH – and Robert, yes, a lot of the hub was built out of the spirit of the Panthers, because our hub was about both academic and socioeconomic and it was multi-generational, working with the whole family, making the whole family sustain. But Chris, I love that question, because the idea of really doing or building our hub, we called it a hub, it was a virtual hub, so we were not in person at the time.

Our motivation for building outside of the system, is because we saw our system crumbling in the midst of the pandemic. We saw our system actually not responding to our families and our communities when stuff shut down. And we had already set up a mechanism from the moment that school shut down, we already had a way to get to families to at least at first understand the conditions that they were dealing with.

Many of our parents were the frontline workers. We had people who lost jobs at restaurants like that Friday, March 13th. So as we were listening to families figuring out how we were going to serve, because our first serving actually came from the socioeconomic side before we started to build the hub component, we just saw a district that was struggling to respond. And that was super scary, because our households also did not have the technology to support stepping into any kind of virtual learning. I remember soon after the pandemic hit, we had funders, we had people sending me Khan Academy stuff, "Here's resources for your families." And then we did a survey and found out that 50% of our families didn't have internet access and they didn't have computers. So it was like-

CS: I'm sorry, did you say 50%?

LY: It was 50%, yes.

CS: Wow.

LY: 50% did not have internet access and almost all of those families did not have computers. A lot of those kids were using iPads and other devices that are not conducive for all day virtual learning. So we actually responded to our communities like three months faster than the actual city themselves. But I think the point that I want to wrap up with on this is, so we started from the outside, because the inside was not prepared to serve our communities and we were about to... And we already have, I don't know how Janelle and Maxine and Robert fill about this, but there was so much tremendous pressure.

We're already working from a deficit trying to build an asset in the work that we do. This pandemic was threatening our ability to show an asset based community, because of the pandemic and all of the sort just issues that our families had with job loss and lack of internet access. But the last part I'll say is, and we'll get to this more is, we started outside of the system, but as you know, we've moved our work back into the system, because so many of our most vulnerable kids are there. But that would be my response to why we had to construct outside.

Will these innovations last after the pandemic? (0:15:21)

CS: A quick follow up and then we can move from this point. So necessity is the mother invention, that's the cliché. So there was a necessity. The practical needs of the community were not being met during a crisis time. So does that mean though, when the crisis is over, or the so called being over, that there's less of an interest in these type of pod like experiences once the mainline system opens its doors again? I see lots of heads shaking no.

LY: Chris, the only thing I'll add to that to finish off is that, two things. One, when we built the hub, we built it as a moment of innovation. So yes, it came out of a crisis, but we never built it as just a necessity to meet the needs. It was sort of how do we build a model of excellence that we've been advocating for. And the last part of that I'll add is we listened to our families and follow. So for us over time we needed to evolve, adapt, and integrate our hub into the system to actually be able to have that long term impact.

It did not work for us to keep our hub operating from the outside, because our hub operated different than Janelle's micro schools. Ours were all virtual. So although our kids saw reading gains and everything, but after 18 months, Chris, folks started getting weary and so we had to make sure that we took that innovation and had a plan to integrate it at scale in our school systems, which is what we wanted to do honestly, anyway.

Maxine McKinney de Royston: Chris, I really appreciate your follow up question, because it gets to what I wanted to talk about, which is that the pandemic just exacerbated the issues that were already present, the dissatisfaction that Black parents already had for schools and it really just forced their hands to make a choice, because they had already... If we look at the data around Black parents, they are shifting schools right and left between private schools, public schools, charter schools, independent schools, homeschooling, just drastically searching for a place where their children can be well and where the children can learn.

And so what happened with the pandemic is the choice that was then placed completely in their lap of what they were going to have to do. And so they found and created options for themselves, because nobody was looking out for them, nobody was looking out for Black families and we were looking out for Black children. Nobody was supporting Black parents except for folks like Oakland REACH, where we in the Black community created our own context. And like Robert said, this comes from a long history of Black parents having to search out for educational options for our children. And I think it's really important to say, because there's a narrative right now around Black parents not valuing education.

JW: Not true.

MMdR: And that couldn't be farther from the truth. We've always valued education, we've always looked for options. The options just have not been present that met the needs that we've had.

JW: That's it.

MMdR: As well as, and many of the options that currently exist still are rife with anti-Black racism. And so Black parents have sought looking out for places where they have to create for themselves, for their children. And what the data is showing now is that a lot of these homeschooling collectives, a lot of these hubs and pods are still going, because once people got a taste of that, there's another possibility, they want to stay with that.

We're also seeing unprecedented levels of involvement within the system of parents, Black parents in particular advocating for their children, advocating for police to be removed from schools, to instead have security officers that are trained in youth development, that are trained in community based methods that are culturally responsive. So we're seeing people say enough is enough, because with the pandemic also has come this refocus on the racial reckoning that needs to happen in the United States.

And so people are bringing all these things together and they're thinking about we pay for schools, public education, we are one of the biggest proponents. Black parents are one of the biggest proponents and Black educators have one of been the biggest proponents of Black education. So we pay for them, we staff

them, we send our children to them and at some point they actually need to serve us.

What is the impact on Black educators? (0:19:55)

JW: I'm going to piggyback on that, Maxine. So one of the things that we have found when we were out there advocating, many of our Black educators within the system have been advocating for our children within the system and they've been silenced. Their voice has been diminished, they've been retaliated against when they say, "Well, wait a minute, something is not right. What about what we're doing over here for the Black children?" And every time our Black educators have advocated on behalf of our children, they too have faced some sort of barriers.

Sometimes it has hindered their progress in their own career. And so they've come to us as Black mothers form, here we are fighting for the kids, for our children. And Black teachers have approached us and said, "Can you help us too?" So what the micro schools have done for our Black educators as well has liberated some of them, where they now can actually do what they got into the public education system to do, which was to educate, empower our children and allow them to grow into their true authentic calling that they're supposed to do, and that is what we've seen.

The Black educators that have come on board to our micro schools... Our micro schools started off with just Black mamas doing this work. We've had Black educators now leave the system, because as Lakisha said, we have to do this outside of the system to show people what it should look like and give the Black educators the freedom to do their job and now grow. They have been in heaven. I was in a session where they were in tears this past week when we brought them together for inservice.

Many of them cried tears of joy and relief that they could finally be what they went to school to be for our children and all children. But they recognized our children were the ones that were not getting what they needed in the system, which was validation, which was the ability to be humanized and the ability to be educated and challenged, and respected for the level of intelligence they bring to the table. And to be excellent.

CS: I want to go to Robert real quick, but I just want to say, Janelle, based on what you just said, so now I've heard two very powerful things in this discussion. We have learning environments that are so loving that children don't want to go home on Saturdays. That's a big deal. And when you tell me that anywhere in America that educators cry, because the PD is so good, I'm telling you right now, that is a Disneyland of experiences right there, because there is nothing I've

heard educators hate more than PD . So you said two powerful things today that have my wheels turning. Robert, I want to jump to you and see what you were going to add there. I didn't mean to cut you off.

Are liberation and joy incompatible with the current education system? (0:22:42)

RSH: No, you're totally fine. I've been thinking a lot about this question of, is it necessary and why live outside and operate outside of a system? So before the job I currently hold, I was a charter superintendent and I hold a lot that the reality is, the reason that the micro schools and the pod schools had to have a moment of living beyond a system, is schools systems at scale hold three things in truth. One of which is identity suppression, one of which is economic and grade stratification, and the other which is the resource reallocation. And if we think about why a model that is libratory hassled outside of a system, think about what it is combating, that when we think about US public education, which is based on mass industrialization, we have not changed the ultimate driving end goal of US public education since John Dewey wrote his infamous text.

And so if we think about that, micro schools and pod schools have had to transcend that model in order to be able to achieve what Janelle named. It is very difficult to achieve teacher-centered joy to reject the spirit murder that Bettina Love talks about when the driving goal, the funding connection, the grading structure, the teacher development is all connected to ideas of suppression and subjugation and resource allocation and mass reproduction and grade stratification.

You can't do liberation work when you need to stratify kids in the name of having an effective bail curve. So some of this has to live outside of the system in order to just be able to experience the glimmers of liberation that we have seen for years when you've lived at the margin and I want to keep stamping that. We have the evidences that any system, namely system that serve Black folks, I want to be really clear, that has lived at the margin of public ed, has always yielded more interesting, more phenomenal, more sustainable results for Black children.

And they have had legacy results in terms of economic growth, economic impacting a lot about what Lakisha named with Oakland REACH. There's like an economic connection to living at the margin of the system, and so I just want to name... Those are some of the things that prevent micro schools from being able to thrive at their peak. When you put them in the container of a US mass industrial complex, it ultimately just, it smashes liberation.

CS: So Robert, can I ask you to say those three things again?

RSH: Yeah, I think a lot about... So it's economic stratification, it's mass reproduction and it's identity suppression.

CS: Okay, now you blowing my mind here, see. So those of you listening or watching this, you getting a lesson today. You all need to just take notes, because I'm going to be on fire when I lead this discussion. The questions are going to get a little bit harder from this point forward.

How can we ensure these environments are accessible to everyone regardless of socioeconomic status? (0:25:35)

CS: I want to put one thing on the table that should always be put on the table in these discussions. And I'll start it by saying one story that I glammed onto that I really loved. I saw a story of 11 Black families that came together to start a collaborative of some sort. They couldn't homeschool because they had jobs and they had professions that they were in, but yet they wanted to put their kids in safe harbor and get them out of the system. So 11 of them hired a Black PhD student, a doctoral student to be a teacher, a full-time daytime teacher.

And they just, all 11 families pitched in together and their kids were all 11 families. Kids knew each other, they were in safe harbor, they had a system of schooling that was created just for them and it was exciting. But now listen to what I just said to you, because I'm going to put something on the table. There were 11 Black families that had professions that allowed them to be able to hire a Black PhD student full-time to teach their kids, which I think is brilliant.

But it introduces the class question here. So I'm going to act as a person who doesn't know anything about anything and ask you as a panel, how do you address the class question of who is able to access things like pods, or non-traditional education environments, or micro schools? I'm asking this as a person ignorant to how this works, but how do we make sure that this isn't something that middle class or nearly middle class families can engage in, but it leaves out a whole bunch of other people that might not find it so easy to participate in this alternative learning system?

LY: Well, I go after you Janelle. You know you got to go first.

JW: So what's really been helpful in Arizona, we have had legislation and policies that have been in place that support empowerment scholarships. So the empowerment scholarships, governor Ducey just signed into law that they've now been expanded. So we get a chance to see what this is going to look like for now, our lower income families now to access these empowerment scholarships. They don't have to jump through all the hoops to get it now, and now they can send their children where they want. Now they're only for private entities and we know that.

And so for the micro schools, they can actually be public or private. Now we are attached to a public charter, the online portion of it, so allows that to be a free. Our micro schools are open to the public and they're free. So that means that our parents who are in different income structures, it doesn't matter. If you want your child there, they can go.

So that's, been the blessing that we've had in Arizona. Now I know that's not for every place, and so when I look at the other states who are addressing this with those families and those power structures, it's really going to be on the work of the community, the philanthropic community to assist with making sure that those opportunities are available for those families. But it is going to be a struggle in those communities where we don't have that philanthropic activity.

The Black Mothers Forum has been asked to come into various states now to form the organization, in order to provide that support to parents, so that we can offer them those opportunities to gain access to these types of models that will create that safe harbor for their children. As well as for, like I said, our Black educators who need this same type of safe harbor.

I'm living in a state now where we have that freedom. It's not for everyone. And so I can't speak to the other states, but what I can speak to is the philanthropic dollars that have been such an amazing blessing for all of us when they come to the table and your community, the businesses in the community, they can also be a support when we bring businesses to the table to help with education, they're very open to that and they can also help with that. But yeah, that's a great question and it is one that we definitely need to solve for and I love to solve for answers, so I'm open to having that dialogue and solving for that solution.

LY: Hey Chris, can I jump in here?

CS: Jump in. Yes.

LY: So I think, and this is why I love being on this panel, because all of us have taken different approaches with the same sort of north star and love for our Black kids and families in mind. I think our approach... Well, first of all, our families are low income, Black and Brown families. So when we built the hub, we built from a deficit to an asset and we used to call it given our families supporter house stake. So in terms of making sure each household had internet access, every kid and every adult in the house had computers. So we took the approach, because the pandemic pods actually in our world didn't pop up or we didn't hear about them until the fall of 2020. So it was August and 2020. We had already ran a whole summer of the hub starting in May of 2020.

So by the time we got to August, we had already ran five weeks of a hub. We already had internet access, our kids had gone up multiple reading levels, especially our K Through Two students, parents got stipends. So we had built

this sort of model or universe, but our demographic, our low income Black and Brown families in Oakland. I will say, Chris, that... So when we first heard of pods it was sort of coming from white families in the hills that were not ready to go back to school.

And it was actually folks like Robin Lake from CRPE that was like, "Wait a minute, you need to holler at Oakland. They've already built this hub, because everybody was like, well, if you have a pod here, that's not equitable. So you got to create pods for..." They saw this sort of dual kind of trade-off, but our families didn't want to go in person at the time.

COVID was hitting our communities pretty hard. So I just also want to note that there was an interesting narrative that once white families were choosing pods that the natural, and not to your point Robert, which is true about how long we've activated alternative systems, because we alternated one. But there was this thing where if white folks can have 10 kids and a teacher, then how do we replicate the exact same thing? And it was like, well wait a minute, it's not about replicating the exact same thing, because our communities need something different in this moment, given health conditions giving those kind of pieces.

The last part I'll add is because Oakland REACH is so deeply entrenched around changing adult behavior and changing the way adults participate to actually have power, which are in the systems that Robert is talking about. And to be honest with you, there are kids who don't have adults choosing for them. And I think about John King who used to be Obama's Secretary of Education, it was through schools that he was able to move ahead.

So our work was really around how do we shape shift and involve the privilege, the "porterhouse steak" of the hub, so that it could have a more scaled impact, which ultimately led us to where we are now, which is the liberator model. And that is up-scaling parents and caregivers to be literacy and math tutors. And the reason why it's game changing, is because whether you are parent who felt powerless, your whole educational career, even when you were going to school, you now are able to build the skills and teach those skills to other people's kids. If you're a kid who's in foster youth or doesn't have a parent at home and advocate, you get to walk into a school and know you about to see a Black mama who just got trained.

And so not just love and hug on you, but going to make sure you got that math and reading together. And then so Robert, you picked up on this point the economic components. If we don't take care of the economic components of what's keeping our families away from full engagement with education, our families are trying to play the light deal and get their kids to college at the same time. We have got to deal with both, so when they become literacy liberators or math liberators, they get full-time employment and they get benefits.

Sometimes we don't like the system, but the system got the best benefits out there, when it comes to having healthcare opportunities that many of them never had access to. So we did it a little different. I've had a chance to sit down with Janelle on the micro schools. I think it's amazing.

I think our liberators, Janelle, are very similar to some of your guides in that model. We just chose to take our model from the outside and move it back into the inside, because I'll say this last part, if we don't... Nobody respects parents and parent voice, so that's why y'all had all those issues, Janelle. This is why we had certain... Only through strategy, only through strategy and through them seeing it work, will they start to look at our Black and Brown faces in a different kind of way. The only reason why the district is paying attention to us, is because... Well, they paid attention to us because of some advocacy and policies and stuff, but we are bringing a workforce to them in the middle of a talent desert where we don't have teachers and teacher shortages.

We now have created a pipeline to educate our kids and what that does is, it not only meets a critical need, because it's our communities that get the subs, it's our communities that don't have the teachers. So not only are we putting caring and committed people back into our communities, the system now has to reengage with us in a different kind of power dynamic. And if we don't change adult behavior, we'll never change outcomes for-

JW: That's right.

CS: That's right. And I love this part, because you just mentioned a couple words there that we don't get specific about sometimes, but everything in life is about power when you are talking about marginalization of peoples. So if the word power is not showing up in any of your plans for education and for community based education or whatnot, there was a problem with your plan. So I love the idea that these autonomous schools create a pathway towards power, not just in education, but also in the economics of education. When I said earlier the means of education, there's kind of an economic part of that, not just kind of.

I want to bring Maxine in and then Robert will come to you. But I have another tough question that I want to add to this, because I don't want see you all getting softball and I'm letting you all go away with softballs. But so we just dealt with the class thing. I want to deal with this other thing around self segregation.

What about the claim that pods increase racial segregation? (0:36:45)

CS: On the one hand our families do need to create culturally affirming spaces for our children and to put our children into safe harbor, so that they're not like teabag being dipped in white supremacy constantly. So we want to take our kids out of that and put them into safe harbor, in places where the school is culturally

affirming, where they have educators who are loving PD, so much that they're creating schools that kids want to stay in every day and come on Saturdays, whatever.

And at the same time there will be the accusation that we are exacerbating [racial segregation]. Segregation has been a long term academic pursuit of study. People study segregation. How do you talk about the claim that self-segregating into these Black pods is not a form of segregation, that in the long run will not produce kids who can understand others across lines of difference?

MMdR:

Yeah. Thank you for that question and I know Robert probably want to jump in here too. I think we first need to historize that integration was primarily a project that was pushed forward by and requested by and peopled by Black parents. So if we think about the history of schooling, Black parents were looking for places to educate their children. They created Black schools. There's things that Robert talked about all around the country. We created our own educational institutions, because nobody would educate our children but ourselves.

And then we sought to be in part of the public education system, force the public education system to basically recognize us. They didn't. Vanessa Siddle Walker's beautiful work talks about how we move from segregation to a second class desegregation, but never moved to actually integration. But that was Black parents at the fore of those movements. So now when people have these questions around are we resegregation ourselves? First of all, you have to look at this not just historically, but you also have to look at it socio-politically.

We have redlining happening, we have gentrification happening, which is re-segregating our schools against orders to desegregate schools that have happened now for decades. We had the most integrated, though they were really desegregated schools in the '90s, beginning in the '80s and the '90s and into the early 2000s. And then cities and a bunch of other players started pushing to resegregate schools.

And if you look at the work of Gary Orfield and other folks, they talk about how we actually have re-segregated schools. So the claim that Black parents are the ones engaging the resegregation is actually quite ludicrous. It's actually ignoring history. It's actually ignoring the sociopolitical dimensions that are very clearly laid out, that schools have been reed for at least 10 years now. And we're not even talking about resegregation within schools, in terms of the kinds of segregated tracking that happens in schools that keep Black children out of AP classes, that keep Black children out of honors classes, that track Black children into lower class educationally. And those tracks continue even from the third and fourth grade, on into who gets to go to college, on into who gets to be successful in education. So they claim that Black parents are re-segregating is ridiculous.

But even if there were a grain of truth there, the question would be why. Why are Black parents choosing to create micro schools, choosing to engage in homeschooling, because Black homeschooling is like two and 300% more than it was ever before, and the question is why? And it's because public education systems as well as private education systems, charter systems, are not serving the needs of Black children, Black families and Black parents. And so if people are actually choosing to find places where their children can intellectually thrive and be well and find safe harbor, then there's a problem with the system and not with the parents whose job is literally to protect their children.

JW: There you go.

CS: I think this has born itself out, I should say in research. And when you look at why white families choose homeschooling, the reasons are very different than why Black families choose homeschooling. Black families choose it largely as harm reduction, as like to avoid white supremacy teaching. Janelle, I heard you earlier talk about being called down every third day for your child sneezing in class or getting disciplined for every little thing or whatnot.

So harm reduction drives a lot of Black families to do it. Now Robert, I do want to pitch this to you, but Maxine said something, she said Gary Orfield, which who I'm very aware of is one of the national leading scholars on integration and segregation. And if you bump into a white paper anywhere, and I mean by white paper like a white progressive paper anywhere on integration, they are not fans of things like pods, or Black schools, or our long tradition that you mentioned, our tradition of educating our own.

As a matter of fact, Maxine also mentions Dr. Walker, Dr. Siddle Walker, whose work largely says that before 1954, Black folks were running schools that were closing the gaps that we talk about. So just because something is all Black doesn't make it inferior and doesn't mean that you should have a problem with this integration question. But I'll throw it to you, because this question is going to persist I think with people that are in powerful positions when it comes to policy. When we think about getting policies Arizona's that allow people this freedom, the policy makers are going to raise this segregation question.

RSH: Listen, I want to double click and triple click everything Maxine said and if we follow the data, the data tells the story. The greatest cause of segregation right now in the United States are white communities succeeding from their public school district, making these micro districts where they have one elementary school, one combined middle high school. And because of how the way the lines are drawn around housing, now we have a district of all white folks.

That's the greatest leader of segregation right now. It is not pod schools and it is not homeschooling, it is not micro schools. These are often and here it is and I want to say this very intentionally, these are often well-meaning white progressives publicly, who are creating seceding lines in their communities in

order to maintain power and resources for their young people. That actually transcends the more conservative red voting places that are succeeding.

So this is a kind of universal white reality of what is really driving segregation. It is that truth. And Maxine lifted a perfect point. Let's go back to what you just named, Chris, about Brown V Board and the history of the segregation argument. Brown V Board and the Oliver case was actually never about integration unilaterally anyway, that was the strategy of the NAACP, and that was Thurgood Marshall's strategy.

The initial case was literally around somebody wanting to go to a school that was seven blocks from their house and not be blessed across the way. It was again around the idea of I want choice. The initial Brown V Board case was, I want to choose where my young person goes. Janelle has named this, Lakisha has named this, Maxine has named this. The common thread of the Black reality, whether it be pod schools, micro schools, or now the integration conversation we're having has been around Black folks choosing.

We want to have the capacity to be able to choose the option that is right for our young person. And if it is in system, or out of system, at the margin of system with a little bit of system and a little bit of [inaudible], whatever it is, I want to choose it. I want to choose the one that works for me, my family, my community, my child, my context.

And so when you just look at data, segregation is being led through succeeding. And when you want to look at where segregation is rampant right now in this country, you look to two states that are always deemed progressive. Look at New Jersey, most segregated state in this country in terms of public education, followed only by New York. And this is not because of pod schools, because they have the lowest rates of pod schools, but they have the highest rate of succeeding. So you just got to follow the data to know that this is not being caused by Black families who want an option for their young person.

MMdR: And I just have to jump in and say by option we mean and by choice I think we mean, is towards the right for a quality education.

JW: There you go.

MMdR: It's toward the quality education. It's not that people just want choose schools, they actually want to find a place, wherever, however that place might come about that actually offers a quality education where their children won't be spirit murdered. I also think we need to dig in on the point that Robert was raising around opportunity hoarding. So [inaudible] made the point that Black parents are choosing micro schools, or home-schools, or other options in order for harm reduction. White parents are choosing them for opportunity hoarding reasons, that and religious reasons often.

It's usually those two things. And so there's a huge pattern of opportunity hoarding that's happening, that actually are what are underfunding schools that are what are causing the declining enrollment within school district, and that are actually eroding public education. So it's a particular form of gas-lighting, to say Black parents are the ones that are segregating schools, when it's white parents who are actively defunding and re-segregating schools and have economic capacity to do so on a national scale.

How can we support self-determined solutions like pods while also supporting public institutions as a common good? (0:46:42)

CS: Now you're leading to another tough question though I think, because it's embedded in your last statement there Maxine. How can we both support self-determined solutions, Black solutions, Black pods, autonomous schools, alternative learning environments, which... I just want people [inaudible] you are listening to this. When Robert says that we have a long history of this, I think the one thing we don't teach young people while they're in the K-12 system is about the history of the K-12 system.

It's a very ironic thing. It's the one thing we don't teach you about. The thing we put you in to teach you everything, we don't teach you about where it comes from and what contributions we have made to that particular system. But we were calling for autonomous schools years and years and years ago, Robert I think started way back. Right after Emancipation, a school was in a basement, a school was in a room, a school was underneath a tree, a school was in a lot of places and it was intergenerational.

And you go all the way to 1968, you get to Dr. Clark, Kenneth Clark who writes a paper called Alternative Public Schools for Harvard Press Review, where he calls for exactly many different ways to educate our Black kids. So this isn't new for us to want to push these type of things, but we also did create the public education system, the mainline system too. So this idea that the system is not ours in some way, shape, or form too, that is our system too. That's a Democratic system. And America should thank us for its existence, because we had a lot to do during reconstruction with that system becoming a thing. So how do you do both? How do you have these self-determined solutions like pods, while also having public institutions as a common good, as a public good? How do you do both?

JW: Can I jump in on that?

CS: Please do.

JW: Because, this has been a topic of discussion with the Black mothers in our group. One of the things that we are recognizing is that, because we've done the micro

schools and now we're modeling out what it should look like for our children of color, now we got to turn and we're still advocating as we speak. I'm still in the public school system advocating for changed adult behaviors. So we haven't abandoned the public school system, because we know we need that. Majority of our children are sitting there in their families, so we recognize that. But it is like, I always liken this to a fish tank. You have fish in a tank and you walk by the room and say, "Man, that tank is dirty," and the fish in that tank, they are breathing in toxic waste every day.

So the only way I can clean this tank, because I can't clean the tank with the fish in the tank, because they'll continue to be contaminated. I must move them out of this tank, put them in some clean fresh water so they can breathe and live, which is what we've done with the microscopes. Then I'm going to go back over here to this contaminated tank, clean it out. That means we're going to have to do some cleaning out of old behaviors, antiquated mindsets that believe that we should align with white supremacist ideology and that white supremacy is best.

And we got to put in people in place that are sitting in those high positions, because that's the group. They've been sitting in there too long and I have sat down with them and talked to them. They don't understand what it looks like to be culturally responsive. They don't understand what it looks like... They throw in a implicit bias class. They throw in a diversity, equity and inclusion director. What does that really mean? They're still going to make that person succumb and align with their white supremacist ideology, that they are always right and that the Black parent, the Black teacher doesn't know what they're talking about. Just get in line, and we've recognized that.

I've had superintendents tell me, "I can't wait till you evolve Ms. Wood from being Black mothers to just being mothers," in the world, are you talking about?" We're always going to be a Black mother? I am evolved. I'm more educated than you know, just because I don't have an education title behind my name does not mean I am not educated and understand what the needs are of our children and what we want to see. But that's that mentality of the people that are sitting in this position that continue to stand in front of a system that is not working for our children.

Segregation happens every day in the public school, because our kids are the ones sitting in the offices waiting on their parents to come pick them up, because they've been suspended or expelled for responding to bullying every day. And when they have gone to the teacher and said, "Hey, could you help me out? This person keeps calling me names and they keep thumping me in the head and kicking me in the butt." Then when the child responds, which our children will, they don't start the fight, but our children will end it. We shut it all down and then we are the ones our children are being criminalized, being taken to the police station, because they went ahead and fought back. And so these are the things that we are saying, this is content. Something is wrong here in this particular bowl, the system.

Let's clear that out. We're going to put our babies over here in the meantime. This is in the meantime. I got to put them over here, get them safe so they can thrive, while we work over here in this system and can clean out all this contaminated mindset about what our children should be. The ideal student doesn't look like the student that I see every day. My ideal student is the students I see every day, which is my babies. They're the ideal student, because they're hungry, they're curious, they just want to know that I think that they are awesome and great, and they have something to bring to the table, and they're just there to get taught.

But we have got to change what's going on inside of [inaudible], I'm up for it, but I'm not up for it if it continues to cause trauma to our children, we need to move them out. So if they're talking about segregation, well, they get segregated every day. What I'm trying to do is pull them out for now, could clear... Let this group actually have an opportunity to get a good quality education, while we deal with this other stuff over here.

CS: I love the fish out of the tank analogy. Number one-

LY: Chris, can you mention that? Can you say that question again, because I did want to respond, but I wanted to make sure I responded correctly. You said how do we make sure we do both, right?

CS: So really, we are taking some of our children out and putting them in safe harbor. So there are these self-determined where we get to have self-determination and education by doing that. And at the same time, how do we support a strong public institution like public education, as a public good, as a common good, a public option? How do we do both? How do we do both-

LY: Yes. So I think that's a great question, because I think... So one, as you know, the work of the REACH is different than Janelle's model. And I think it's important for Janelle's model to grow and scale and succeed, because I think a lot of what you were talking about and Robert is talking about, Maxine is, it's really at the place of parent and community oftentimes. You're going to have most families choose the public school system. At the end of the day we have data over data, over data. This is why when people ask us why do we choose to continue to center our work around the public school system? My simple response is, because that's where all the kids are, that's where all our Black kids are. And that's not about to change, this sort of somewhat [inaudible] opened up the doors and everybody has sort of run through the underground railroad.

That's a myth. So to the point that Robert was making about who succeeds, who feels the agency to leave? Our families oftentimes don't feel the agency to leave. Don't leave for multiple reasons. You live in a neighborhood with the public school, you got four or five kids, we go into the neighborhood school, that's what we're doing. So I think we have to continue to start at the place of the

family as much as possible and the parent. So there were micro schools in Oakland.

I'm sitting in a room on the other side. I've got literally 20 Black and Brown models on our team. And if you come and talk to them, it is about the choice to get to quality. They want to be able to have options. And I don't think that we should be pitting, and I'm not saying that's what we're doing, but I think we should be allowing all of these [inaudible] things to thrive and be models of schooling.

Because guess what? Some of our folks missed the generations where the micro schools and the pods were the thing. A lot of our folks missed the generations with Panthers had the community schools. So we have not been able to see what it's like to thrive in multiple avenues. And the charter movement has been the movement that has pushed forth the biggest in the past 20 years, giving our families less options around that. So I would say at the end of the day, Chris, for better or for worse, most of our families are going to be these public school systems. This is why we evolved and adapt our model the way we did. But we need models like Janelle's to thrive, succeed, and scale, because it's always going to be at the place of the family to be able to choose what they want for their child.

CS: And there's never been a time in history where Black folks have put all their eggs in one basket. There's just never been a time. And especially when it comes to education and how we educate our kids regionally. There are differences. City-wise there are differences. There have been, we can't always talk in terms of history either. Cities have changed, half of our kids are in suburbs now, I keep making this point to folks and they're not having a glorious time in those suburbs either.

And suburbs don't look like they used to look anymore either, whatnot. So we have to be a fluid people with a fluid set of a portfolio of strategies. And I love on this particular webinar, I love the fact that geographically and ideologically and in practical natures for what the people you're serving where you're at, that we have a fluid set of different ways and strategies, because there's never going to be a one way for Black folks in the United States to do anything.

LY: And Chris, can I just tell you, if we had Janelle's micro school in Oakland, they'd be giving everybody a run for the money. That's just real talk when you talk about what Black people would be choosing, they would be losing their absolute minds.

CS: So California legislators, if you are watching California legislators, we're going to need you to go ahead and pass some laws to make it easier for us to have these type of options in whatever state we're in. Robert, jump in.

RSH:

I want to jump in again. To part of your opening in your question that I think it's critical for folks who are going to take this and run with it, is self-determination versus self separatism. Like self-determination is not you removing one's self from common good. So there is no binary that needs to be drawn. Self-determination is literally a kind of consciousness of power, a consciousness of choice... Goes that word again. A consciousness of quality. It is not a consciousness of removal.

And we conflate those ideas to suppress the Newton tradition of the world. But let's be clear, self-determination has been critical to the way that Black folks, Latina folks, indigenous folks, have had to navigate a very white informed system. And so I want to be really clear on that part, which is why looping back to, so then how do we create self-determination for Black folks who are on the economic underclass potentially, as a result of the system in this country?

This is where intersectional policy work becomes critical. Think about one of the things that we did not extend in this country just months ago, the child tax credit. A potential economic and policy pathway that could have created an economic option for midler's. Those Black folks who live one check away from suffering and one check away from thriving, to be able to think about a pod school, or a micro option, or living at the margin, or even just pushing their own capacity to do well. Lakisha said become a liberator or a guide or a teacher.

But because we didn't pass a credit that was fundamental to changing the poverty conversation, we've also removed pathways from Black folks being able to even think beyond next prescription, potential rent, utility bill, transportation. So I can't think about education, innovation, choice, like what the hell? I got to figure out what are we going to eat after 3:30 when they get back home, because the waiver wasn't passed, the food waiver wasn't passed, which is my work now, the child tax credit wasn't passed.

So we removed two social structures that would've given a pathway for people to be able to think about, how do I explore what my options are for high quality, to double click Maxine's point, in order for me to be, here we goes, self-determined? I can't be self-determined and be poor. I got to figure out how to be able to think about a part of my ability to do self-determination, to have a consciousness of power is to have a consciousness of resource. And we want people to be self-determined and be self-determined while also living in the deep anal of poverty.

But we got to be able to have a dual conversation to say, "I want you to be self-determined and resourced. I want you to be self-determined and not have to wear a badge of resilience." So we want people to be proud to say that they're resilient. I'm like, bullshit.

CS:

That's right.

RSH: We should not live in a space where that is a badge of honor-

CS: That's right.

RSH: ... when we have policy pathways and economic pathways for you to not have to be resilient, and have high quality options, and have your bills paid, and have a food infrastructure, and have high quality housing, and have access to healthcare, and then you can be self-determined. But we have not pulled the levers of policy that are within our reach. And we particularly [inaudible] now in this most recent midterm. And we can-

CS: No, we go shy away from that one now.

RSH: We'll shy away, but the key though is that it is all intersectional policy.

CS: That's right.

RSH: And that we cannot talk about education, innovation, micro innovation, pod innovation, and not talk about the other life issues and the other issues on the ballot, that do impact people's capacity to even think about innovation for the young person.

CS: You can give me several t-shirts in there, like the self-determination and poverty. They don't mix. It's not like peanut butter and jelly. You can't do the two things together. We're going to switch to questions, because we had a couple of people come up with questions. But on this last point, I do not want to gloss by it real quickly. So I do want to stop. Let's take a breath for a second and just say this, because it's come up a couple of times. Black families, you're not going to host a webinar about why Black families and Black communities are choosing a specific thing and not expect some truth in that dialogue.

And here's a truth. Black pods and white pods are two different concepts. The reasons driving Black communities to choose these options are different concepts. And don't ask the question if you don't want to know, if you don't want to know what's actually driving those differences of why we choose home schools versus why some others choose home schools and why we choose pods for what? Don't ask the question.

So here's something I want to put on the table, which is, I heard something in this last comment around the comments around Ed reforming this and whatnot. One thing Ed reformers do is go by everything that Robert just said, which is they want us to glam onto the shiny penny of very specific policy proposals in a vacuum, without all the other things that affect a family's economic position, family economic security, ability to actually participate fully in a democracy. So you can't tell a person here's a school choice coupon with one part of your mouth and tell them that they don't have the right to vote, or not be poor with another part of your mouth.

So I just want to be very real and say, don't ask the question if you don't want to know. This is about Black pods and Black self-determination and education, and you cannot bait and switch us. You cannot have us pick up on one discrete policy proposal, while you're actively attempting to abridge our freedom in other areas. I'm just going to put it out there and just say it.

How are pods and micro schools pushing boundaries around educator roles and qualifications? (1:02:57)

CS: Let's switch to a couple of questions here. So one of the first questions is about teaching certification and how do you surpass the red tape of teacher certifications, if you are outside of the system more broadly? And then Lakeisha, I think you could do a job with this. More broadly, how are pods and micro schools pushing boundaries around educator qualifications and roles?

LY: Yeah, I can speak to that and I know Janelle probably has something to add too.

CS: And Janelle too. Yeah, Janelle can too also.

LY: No, I think, and it's funny because a lot of folks as we've been building this liberator model has said, "Oh, is this going to be a pathway to teaching? Are they going to become full-time teachers?" And I'm going to be honest with you, I've rejected that notion, because the demographics of the folks who are liberators, these folks are running full on households. They are taking care of family members, they have a lot on their plate. So we need to have micro credentials and alternative pathways for them. Because in most states, I'm assuming, you need a bachelor's degree before you can even go and get your certification.

So we are going to be pushing for everything that does not create undue burden. And especially because we have data. Remember, we have data dating back since [inaudible], when we launched the hub. That paraprofessionals with the right leadership development and all of that can get kids to read.

They are the heroes. Our hub evolved out of the paraprofessional being the center. And so I want to put that out there too, for folks here, folks on the panel that we need to reimagine the way paraprofessionals build power in our schools, because we have experienced them changing the game when it comes to student outcomes. But in our current construct, they are not given the same type of respect and responsibility. And there's sort of a blind sense of go get your BA, go get your teacher credential, but I don't know what the data says, Chris or Robert.

I don't know if you guys have this, but it is hard to go be in a school all day, then go get your degree and go get your credential. We've got to meet these folks where they're at and where they're showing power and change for our kids, because all we're doing is perpetuating barriers and lack of access for people

who actually are committed and are highly trained. So I'm going to have a shirt that's like, it's paraprofessional that's going be, that's the next one. I'm letting you know para

JW: I Love it. I love it.

CS: Janelle, what do you think?

JW: So how are micro schools are run and how they are certified? We have a teacher of record. And so we have a certified educator, one of our Black educators who is our teacher of record. That individual is responsible for assisting with making sure everyone is developed. They've received the instructional coaching. We just hired an instructional coach, that instructional coaches come in and they are helping our parents who want to be educators, who want to follow their children through school.

Some of our parents have masters in education, some of our parents do not. And the ones who do not, they are paired up. Oh, I forgot to tell you, our micro schools have two learning guides per class. And so we don't just have one person in a class, we have two. The reason why we have two is to provide the wraparound support for our children and our families, especially when we're dealing with traumas, social emotional issues, economic issues, parenting skills issues.

So when we have someone who's leading the academic side, we have another person who's leading the nurture side, the other side of that. But that person is also a part of learning how to do lesson plans, learning how to teach literacy, how do you teach someone to read, how do you teach math? We are taking them through that process. And so we're very dedicated to making sure that all of our parent teachers, whoever's on board actually gets that continual professional development that I was telling you about. But we do have teachers of record on staff that actually are certified with the state.

Now what we have done is our learning guys have something called a certification process, and we have continued to tweak that process to give them more validity. But I agree with Lakisha, this paraprofessional, this answers the question of the teacher shortage when we can bring the parents on, because who's more committed to making sure someone gets educated is mama and daddy, whoever's in the house, grandma, grandpa. We even had grandmothers who have been our learning guides who have been a part of that space.

But opening that up for them and opening up a pathway for them if they want to. We have encouraged continuing education. We are supportive of parents going back to get their degree, but if they don't have the time, I'm with Lakisha, let's not put that burden on them. Let's give them what they need to help them throughout the day. And that's getting those professionals in place, certified teachers in place that help provide that support.

What should policymakers and philanthropists do to support this work? (1:07:54)

CS: So we have a question here about what should philanthropy do to support this work? Love the question. I just about to say, but give money to people to do the work.

JW: No. And the other thing is nutrition. One of the things that we have found that philanthropic groups could definitely help with is nutrition. Many of our children are malnutrition. Many of them, they don't eat well, because they can't afford it. Their parents can't afford to feed them a good healthy meal. They have to get meals other ways. So we are looking at nutrition. We have to pay for the meals. Every day, we're paying for meals, every day for all those children. And that adds up. That's like six to \$7,000 a month in just paying, because micro schools do not qualify for the National Lunch Program... Oh no, we don't get qualified for that. So we've had to have restaurants who have been willing to help us with that, cater the meals in for the children for nutritional purposes. So philanthropic groups could help with that.

Help with the training and the credentialing and the things that we need to do for our parents, providing them with the resources to be able to go to the schools or go [inaudible] for classes. Those are things that I believe philanthropic groups can help. We've been honored and blessed, because we've had a lot of philanthropic groups help us seed our micro schools and put them in venues that are safe, because most of our parents in the inner city do not have a home like our suburban brothers and sisters who have a home to put the micro schools. So we have to put our micro schools in either charter schools, we're on a charter school campus, or we are actually in churches, or in retail facilities.

CS: I feel like there's a legislative answer as part of what you just said though. First of all, let's just stop as adults and say there's enough food to feed the world. It's in a Tracy Chapman song. It's ridiculous that we even have to talk about feeding children in the United States or anywhere on planet Earth, but definitely in the United States. If we have policy that allows meals to go some places for children and not other places, that feels like there's some sort of policy prescription that needs to happen to support micro schools and to support people who are doing non-traditional education. I think I saw you about to jump in, Maxine, so I didn't want to cut you off there.

MMdR: I was. And I want to fully underscore this thing around nutrition, because even in public schools there's a big movement now to better fund as Robert, this is your work. So you could speak to this text, but better fund education relative to school meals. And there's a lot of places that are working towards actually having more scratch cooking happening on site to improve not just the amount of food to make food free, but also the quality of food quality. But I actually wanted to speak to the teacher part, which is I'm all on board with what Janelle,

Lakisha are talking about in terms of paraprofessionals being the heartbeats of our schools and need to be supported.

But I also think at the same time that teacher education is very important. And I think one thing that philanthropists could do is to fund aspiring Black and Brown educators, be they prepare professionals, be they people in the community, be they young people who want to go into education.

Because one of the big issues with teacher education and why it's so white, is because people cannot come out of an undergraduate program, or out of a teacher education program with debt and they make 30 to \$40,000 as a teacher, especially for Black and Brown families, first generation families. If you send somebody to college, you want them to come back and make money, not owe money. You want them to be a net gain. And so we have de-professionalized teaching. We have devalued teaching to the point that it's not something that most people want to do, because it's not economically sound decision.

It's not always a respected profession in the United States, though it's been allotted profession in the Black community, since we were able to educate ourselves and even before then. And so I think philanthropists can really step up and fund Black and Brown folks to become teachers who really want to do that, but don't have the economic resources to do so.

Parting thoughts (1:12:20)

CS: Well, I love all of these answers, barring any main point. I know that we're coming to an end. So I would wrap on a couple of points unless we have anybody, any of the panelists you want to offer. One last shot of anything that you think didn't get said today, or that is a main point that we should get across.

MMdR: I want to say one quick thing, because this goes back to the conversation that I think that Janelle was leading up. Everybody spoke to this, which is, how do we think about changing the narrative around education for Black youth? And what do we do to balance this public good and self-determination? And I think we've made some policy recommendations, but I also think we need to just make some basic level change in narrative kind of recommendations, which is changing from thinking about the Black child as a stereotype to the Black child as a prototype.

And that is something that Gloria Ladson-Billings has said. And I think it's a beautiful way to think about moving from stereotyping Black children as a problem, to thinking about what can we learn from Black children and create a system that allows them to thrive. Because if we allow Black children to thrive, then the data shows this is not even a philosophical idea or speculative. The data shows that if we allow Black children to thrive, just as if we fund Black

educators and let them be in the classroom and do what they know how to do, then all children actually do better.

CS: Do better.

JW: Do much better. Absolutely.

CS: Well, at the end here, what I would say is, first of all, I think all revolutions start with discussion, especially discussion among small groups of committed people. So this panel, first of all, this is the revolution. This is the face of the revolution right now. I put a lot of hope into the work that you all are doing. CRPE, I definitely want to thank them for starting what I think is the first step to all these things, which is creating conversations that create understanding, that actually improve people's understanding in the public and get them motivated towards change.

Some of that change that I heard come up in this discussion, we do need enabling legislation and states that create the pathway for more liberators, for more people to actually be able to do the work. I heard some questions around funding and around philanthropy, and I think you're always going to need the resources to be able to do libratory work like pods.

And I heard something from Lakisha in Oakland, the paras, the pathway from para to full-time educator, liberator educator is a costly one. I heard Maxine say this also, again, resources. We need resources and we need enabling legislation. We need policy and practice change, and we also need funds in philanthropy to be able to fund this real thing. You can't just give 25 to \$5,000 grants to small groups of people, to do small little pods and expect a movement to grow out of that.

That's actually like planting one watermelon seed and expecting to have a watermelon salad in five minutes. That's not going to happen. So we will need you all to actually put you back into supporting folks that are really doing the work and have the scholarship behind their work. So thank you all as panelists for taking your time today to educate in the way that you did. I appreciate you. But just thank you for everything you do every day, to liberate our 8 million Black children that are walking into schools every day, that are not prepared for them and won't help them reach their highest potential. Thank you.