

Educators

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“And people we are the system. So we get to change the system.”

Education has been set up based on a bell-curve model that says 50 percent of students succeed while 50 percent fail. That doesn't serve students or our society, he said. He also talked about disparities in special education, saying he simply doesn't believe that children of color need to be in special education more than other children.

“We have a system right now that produces Yale to jail outcomes,” Crew said. “And that bell curve is designed to do that.

It's designed to say 50 percent of you are not going to be able to do it and 50 percent of you will. We built a system that essentially puts people through a spin rinse and wash cycle to figure out who's who. That tells you it's a badly flawed and inequitable system.”

Following Crew, a panel discussion featured education leaders from school districts around the state. Talking about ways to improve education, they touched on everything from building stronger partnerships with community organizations, listening to parents, and building bridges between teachers of different age groups.

For example, Matt Coleman of the Springfield School district, said his district

had looked at a group of students from the moment they entered elementary through high school.

“Our class of 2000 had a graduation rate of 62 percent,” he said. “Often when that happens we ask what's going wrong in high school.

“The reality is we need to look at the whole system.”

Springfield found that as early as the first 3rd Grade testing, some students were 7 points behind the others. And that gap remained throughout their school careers.

So in 9th grade, 30 percent didn't earn six credits. And they spent 20 fewer days in school. Once students fell behind, they began failing and many eventually did not graduate with their group. Elementary and middle school teachers began to see their own role in school dropout, he said. Now everyone is thinking differently.

“In Springfield 62 percent was our return on \$1 billion spent on education,” he said. “Shame on us if our return on investment continues to be 62 percent.”

Rob Saxton, Oregon's Deputy Superintendent, said being a parent made him think about all the things we do to advantage our own children. Teachers understand what

Teachers read to their own children every day because they know it matters

was a big issue under the Bush Administration and that basic core concept – that Americans have a right to privacy, that any investigations that collect information on Americans should go through a warrant process is at the heart of this.

This is about an appropriate and correct balance between security on the one hand and privacy on the other. These two are not in competition. If there's a security issue, the government just has to demonstrate that before it rummages around in our personal information.

TSN: Senator please talk about the other major hot button issues you've been pushing this year and start with HUD.

JM: This issue regarding HUD is really one of those things that happen in the field with things that go awry with the red tape of government and it's important to step in and fix it. In this case a number of Oregon's housing authorities utilized a government database that was in error, and because they used the government data they were penalized in their grant applications — and denied funds for critical housing programs in five regions across Oregon. I took the case to HUD and said, that is outrageous, that you're penalizing them for using the wrong information that you put in your database. They have now agreed with that and the way in translates in that these regions should get more funding for critical housing programs. That's the bottom line.

effort.

Obama also wants to close “the so-called gun show loophole which allows people to buy weapons without going through the background checks that are standard when you purchase “ them retail, Carney said.

U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder echoed those remarks Wednesday. “There's a range of things we need to do,” he said, adding that any one measure would not be adequate.

The proposals necessary will involve people who “aren't always thought of in the law enforcement sphere,” including the departments of Education and Health and Human

Student Stories



PHOTO BY SUSAN FRIED

Rosa Parks Elementary students and their families had the chance to see their original writing adapted for stage and performed by professional actors.. Teacher Julie Sparling's third graders worked with Curious Comedy Theate to write their own true stories. Parents joined the children to watch the work performed at the school last week.

gives children a leg up when they get to school, he said. So most teachers read to their children every day from the time they are babies, teach them letter sounds and numbers, make sure they are ready to listen and take turns. Teachers do that because they know it will help their children get ahead in school, he said.

“We need to teach every parent that that's

what you do for your kid,” Saxton said. “So when they arrive at the kindergarten door they are ready to learn.

“The bottom line is we all work to advantage our own children and we need to work to advantage every child.”

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Merkley

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plain language of statute, but what does that really mean? Just to give you an example, there is plain language that says information can be collected relevant to an investigation. Well depending on what the rulings on the language have been, that could be license to do almost anything. And that's why this matters.

TSN: Senator did you get calls or pressure from your constituents to take this on or was it something you personally took it on yourself to do? Where did the impetus to do this come from.

JM: In my Town Halls, which I hold in every county every year, this comes up periodically. Concern about the overreach of the federal government in spying on Americans. And I think the concern is accentuated by the modern world in which personal information is compiled in vast databases, information through your cellphone calls, your billing records, so on and so forth. And so it's very tempting for any law agency to say let's just sweep up all that information to see what's going on and not have the traditional protections of warrants.

This is essentially a conversation closely related to the issues of warrantless searches that the administration has had in the past. It

TSN: And you've done so much this year around foreclosure. What do you think are the three most crucial issues that you're going to be working on in 2013 and that your constituents should know that you



have at the top of your list of things to get done?

JM: Foreclosure is a huge continuing battle. Related to that, enabling families that are underwater to be able to refinance out of high-interest predatory loans and into appropriate, fair-interest loans. So I'm still immersed in that. I met with the President's team and they put it into the State of the Union a year ago. I spent this last year designing a program to make it happen,

Services, he said.

Newtown United, a newly formed group in the stricken town, scheduled an open meeting for Wednesday evening to discuss what it calls “sensible gun legislation.”

Meanwhile, heartbreaking funerals continue. Those being buried Wednesday include several more students and a beloved teacher.

They are among those killed when gunman Adam Lanza shot his mother four times in the head before shooting his way into into Sandy Hook Elementary, opening fire on staff and students no older than 7. Lanza then killed himself.

Authorities are working to determine a motive.

we're now working with the administration to get that program approved and implemented. So it's both fighting unfairness in the foreclosure process but also working to enable families to refinance, who are trapped in high interest loans.

I mean that is a powerful, powerful force in the financial stability of our families and communities. It's part of getting out of this recession.

A second major issue is addressing job creation in America. That is tied into the fiscal cliff, but it's going to be tied into major legislation we consider all year in 2013. We must, as we look at the sequestration proposal, the fiscal cliff issues, we have to be very careful to defend programs for working Americans, that the budget is not balanced on the backs of working Americans, and that we create living wage jobs, not destroy them as we wrestle with our budget decisions.

A third piece that I'm deeply immersed in – this is a battle that will play out in January of next year – is reforming the Senate and ending the abuses of the filibuster that are paralyzing the Senate. So that has an impact on every other substantive issue in terms of what the Senate is able to consider and get done. If we don't fix the broken Senate we won't be able to fulfill our responsibility to the American people to take on the major issues we face as a nation.

So far, they have been unable to retrieve data from a computer in Lanza's home, a law enforcement official said Tuesday.

The gunman apparently smashed the computer and extensively damaged the hard drive, the official said, adding that the FBI is assisting Connecticut State Police.

Authorities have said the shooter took three of his mother's weapons — two handguns and a Bushmaster AR-15 rifle — to the elementary school.

There are no records of any police incident calls to the Lanza home in the past, state police said Wednesday.

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Gun Violence

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The country also needs to tackle a “culture that all too often glorifies guns and violence,” he said.

“And any actions that we must take must begin inside the home and inside our hearts.”

Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-California, has said she will introduce legislation to reinstate the assault weapons ban that expired in 2004.

White House spokesman Jay Carney said Tuesday that the president supports that