FACING UP TO THE NATION’S FINANCES

America is Facing Up to its Fiscal Challenges

Public Agenda, in partnership with The Brookings Institution, The Concord Coalition, The Heritage Foundation and Viewpoint Learning, is working to get people talking about the nation’s fiscal challenges.

Across the nation, citizens from all walks of life have taken part in “Facing Up to the Nation’s Finances” dialogues, searching for common ground on issues like Social Security, Medicare/Medicaid, managing the national debt and government accountability.

The initiative’s most intensive phase of public engagement has already rolled out across targeted regions around the country. The Concord Coalition’s Fiscal Wake-Up Tour—featuring an unprecedented lineup crossing party and ideological perspectives including, Comptroller General of the United States David Walker, The Concord Coalition’s Robert Bixby, The Brookings Institution’s Alice Rivlin and Isabelle Sawhill, The Heritage Foundation’s Stuart Butler and Alison Fraser—has drawn large crowds across the nation.

ChoiceDialogues are a main component of the initiative’s work to engage communities. These community conversations are research sessions designed to engage citizens in working through their views on complex issues. They have already taken place in key cities such as San Diego, Philadelphia, Kansas City, Portland, Spokane, Seattle, Manchester, Concord, Nashville, Chattanooga and Memphis.

These structured sessions, organized by partner Viewpoint Learning, invite ordinary citizens to confront the challenges posed by the impending fiscal crisis, construct a vision of the future they would like to see and consider the necessary trade-offs they are willing to accept to achieve that vision. These conversations are followed by a “Stakeholder Dialogue,” which brings together citizens who participated in the ChoiceDialogues with political, civic leaders and experts to find common ground and identify actionable steps to move their agreed-upon vision forward.

On issue after issue—from taxes and debt to entitlements—citizens point to the need for consensus and principled action, and they agree that they are willing to consider making continued on page 3 continued on page 3
**FACING UP TO THE NATION’S FINANCES**

**Youth Taking on Federal Finances**

Young people have been important voices in ChoiceDialogues across America. Now Public Agenda has introduced a new strand of work to the initiative by getting young people talking about how these issues are going to affect their future in campus dialogues. This past fall, Public Agenda launched a pilot “Campus Conversation” at American University to gauge students’ views and ideas on the nation’s fiscal future.

Students took part in carefully constructed, moderated, problem-solving dialogues about critical issues related to the nation’s debt and finances, prefaced by a basic presentation on federal finances.

Given that Americans of college age will bear the brunt of rising debt and fiscal shortfalls, it’s not surprising that the Campus Conversations produced some sparks. Dialogues indicate that young people and their older counterparts seem to have fairly similar concerns about keeping promises to the elderly and similar priorities in terms of restructuring federal programs to make them more sustainable.

Public Agenda is also partnering with the National Academy for Public Administration (NAPA) to expand its college Campus Conversations on “Facing Up to the Nation’s Finances.” Building on the dialogues held at American University, curriculum materials and Choiceworks will be used by nine other professors at universities throughout the United States during the spring 2008 semester, and up to 20 more have committed to holding two-day dialogues in their classrooms in the summer and fall of 2008. Public Agenda and NAPA are working to leverage these dialogues into a much larger nationwide project to raise student awareness and engage students with issues relating to national debt, public finances, entitlement and other spending reform, tax reform and government accountability.

If you would like to implement similar dialogues among youth in your region or would like materials from the project, please contact us or visit FacingUp.org.

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**DOWNLOAD THIS! View Campus Conversation at FacingUp.org**

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**Federal Budget Crisis 101**

In a sign that straight talk and balanced discussion of solutions to the crisis facing the United States’ federal finances are what the American people are craving, “Where Does the Money Go?: Your Guided Tour to the Federal Budget Crisis” is selling extremely well in bookstores across the nation. The first book from the editors of PublicAgenda.org, “Where Does the Money Go?” was the #1 best selling public policy book on Amazon.com soon after its release in February. The book by Public Agenda’s Scott Bittle and Jean Johnson was officially released by HarperCollins February 12 and by March was already on its fourth printing due to unexpected demand.

The book is generating spectacular media coverage of federal finance issues and the authors are all over the airwaves, including major TV appearances and numerous radio programs such as Bill Moyers Journal, C-SPAN’s Washington Journal, NPR’S Fresh Air with Terry Gross and many more. More information on the book can be found at publicagenda.org/wheredoesthemoneygo.

Andrew Yarrow’s forthcoming book, “Forgive Us Our Debts: The Intergenerational Dangers of Fiscal Irresponsibility” breaks down the discussion of national debt, explaining in accessible terms why federal debt is rising, what effects it may have on Americans if debt is not brought under control, why our government borrows, and what it will take to pay it all back. Published by Yale University Press, the book is to be released in May 2008.

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**Just the FACTS**

52% of Americans agree that colleges are like a business, “caring mostly about the bottom line,” while 48% believe that “colleges mainly care about education.”

Source: “Squeeze Play,” May 2007
FACING UP: America is Facing Up to its Fiscal Challenges | continued from Page 1

sacrifices, such as higher taxes or reduced benefits, to ensure long-term fiscal stability. Citizens want greater accountability and transparency to help restore the public’s trust in the government. Regional reports for cities where dialogues were conducted are available at FacingUp.org and a national report from a total of 12 research sessions across the country is due to be released in May 2008.

On the political front, Public Agenda is meeting with key legislators and policy experts on Capitol Hill to communicate the public’s concerns around Social Security, Medicare/Medicaid, taxes and the debt, and also to reinforce the notion that the public expects leaders to deal forthrightly with these issues. Public Agenda’s Washington Office Director, Andrew Yarrow, is meeting with political leaders who hold power in the federal budgeting process and providing them with information about public attitudes on specific proposed reforms. He has met with leaders of many ideological perspectives and has participated in Capitol Hill and Administration briefings with Republican and Democratic Senate Budget Committee staff, House Budget Committee Democratic staff, Assistant Treasury Secretary Philip Swagel, Joint Economic Committee Democratic staff, the Republican Senate staff and Comptroller General David Walker.

Regional Reports are available at FacingUp.org and a national report is due to be released in May 2008

CAPE: Off to a Flying start | continued from Page 1

among political players. The “framing for persuasion” model has generated much discussion about how to change language and reposition political ideology in more motivating ways. Friedman’s piece assesses the democratic implications of those differences for the media, political and civic leadership and civic engagement. The essay examines the shortcomings of the limited context in which framing is currently conceived and stresses the importance of reframing “framing” in terms of its democratic purpose rather than for advancing partisan agendas.

“Transforming Public Life: A Decade of Citizen Engagement in Bridgeport,” a case study by Will Friedman, Alison Kadlec and Lara Birnback, outlines how public engagement has become an integral part of Bridgeport, Connecticut’s civic life. Bridgeport struggles with high unemployment, violent crime and drugs and discordant community relations. But the city is witnessing real civic renewal resulting from roughly a decade of hard work by organizations, citizens and local leaders.

“Transforming Public Life” illustrates how public engagement on education issues was launched through a series of Public Agenda community conversations, conducted in cooperation with the Bridgeport Public Education Fund, the Institute for Educational Leadership, the Connecticut-based William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund and the Connecticut League of Women Voters. It shows how citizen engagement strategies and practices have extended beyond education, the issue around which this effort began, to other civic areas and how engagement has had an important impact on how decisions are generally made in that community. According to the study, “When it comes time to solve community problems or make and implement policy, the institutions, organizations and individuals of Bridgeport defy business as usual through a remarkably inclusive and deliberative citizen-centered approach to problem solving.”

CAPE is supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and the Kettering Foundation.

CAPE reports can be found online at publicagenda.org/pubengage/pe_home.cfm

53% of women say they worry “a lot” about a terrorist attack using weapons of mass destruction, compared with 44% of men.

Source: “Foreign Policy Index,” October 2007

83% of Americans give the government grades of "C" or worse on controlling immigration, an increase of nine points since 2005.

Source: “Foreign Policy Index,” October 2007
A growing number of national experts and leaders agree that far too few students are learning the necessary science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) they will need to take advantage of the opportunities offered by our high-tech economy and to maintain America’s competitiveness in the global marketplace. In stark contrast, American families seem quite content with the STEM education children receive today in most public schools, according to ongoing research from Public Agenda.

Public Agenda highlights the considerable ‘urgency gap’ between leaders/experts and parents and students in its study, “Important, But Not for Me: Parents and Students in Kansas and Missouri Talk About Math, Science and Technology.” The findings are consistent with prior results from a “Reality Check 2006” report “Are American Parents and Students Ready for More Math and Science?” The 2006 study led several funders to seek out Public Agenda to examine more deeply how parents and students in their communities are thinking about STEM education.

According to “Important But Not for Me,” just 25 percent of parents in Kansas and Missouri think their children should be studying more math and science, while 70 percent think things “are fine as they are now.” The study, which made news in Kansas City and nationwide, reveals that most parents are complacent about the need for improvements in higher-level math, science and technology education, in large part because they believe that their children’s schools are doing a good job already.

In fact, nationwide concern has actually decreased since the mid-1990’s. Most students, meanwhile, find higher level math and science irrelevant to their futures and seem to lack a real awareness of the concrete opportunities available to those with strong backgrounds in these subjects. The research points to the need for leaders to make the case that more advanced study in math, science and technology is now essential for all students.

From Research to Engagement

But here’s what’s right with Kansas and Missouri. The study was conducted to inform the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation’s 10-year initiative to improve math, science and technology education in the Kansas City region. The survey research serves as a launching pad for a three-year community and leadership engagement project in the Kansas City region aimed at improving outcomes for students in these vital subjects. This major project aims at getting communities in that region talking about math, science and technology to help students and parents understand the enormous opportunities these subjects can open up for students and to develop ways in which communities and schools can work together to deepen student learning. To date, Public Agenda has created a public engagement “toolkit” with a video discussion starter and guides for organizers, facilitators and participants at community forums and has begun working with a newly formed regional leadership coalition to set the work in motion.

Taking the work to new regions

With the support of the GE Foundation, Public Agenda is replicating the research of “Important but Not for Me” in Erie, Pennsylvania and Atlanta, Georgia. To guide local and national leaders in designing more effective communication and building a consensus for action, the surveys asked parents in each city about their perceptions on the local economy and job prospects for their children. The surveys also sought their views on local schools and specifically how they rate the quality of math and science education their children currently receive.

Similar to the views of parents from Missouri and Kansas, Erie and Atlanta families acknowledge the growing importance of STEM education generally but do not make a clear connection between that trend and what local schools offer and what their children study. The report suggests that leaders need to speak out more forcefully to help the country understand the challenge and inspire parents and students with a compelling vision of a future built on STEM opportunities.

What’s Right with Kansas (and Missouri)?

To read the report visit publicagenda.org/importantbutnotforme

71% of the teachers from alternate-route programs give “being able to help underprivileged children” as their top reason for becoming teachers, compared with 44% of the traditionally trained teachers.

Walking a Mile

In one of the most in-depth explorations ever conducted of contemporary attitudes about Native Americans, Public Agenda’s report, “Walking a Mile: A First Step Toward Mutual Understanding” explores the gaps in knowledge and perceptions, as well as areas of common interest, between Native Americans and non-Native Americans.

The report examines American Indian’s perceptions of their place in contemporary American society and how non-Indians view Indians, what they know (or think they know), the generalizations they make and stereotypes they hold, how their perceptions were formed and their interest in learning more.

The research details the thinking of both groups regarding Indian history, the present and how better understanding can develop in the future. “Walking a Mile” shows how little most Americans know about the diversity of contemporary Indian experience and points to the need for greater understanding of daily Indian life outside of casinos and poverty-stricken reservations.

While the Indians interviewed for the research described their sadness about the past and their feelings of widespread prejudice and discrimination against Indians today, they also talked about their hopes and feelings of success—their pride in the great strides Indians have made economically and their sense that their lives are improving.

The research also points to a number of revelations and contradictions that call for additional research. For instance, why non-Indians acknowledge that Indians have been badly mistreated in the past, and at the same time resent what they see as “preferential treatment” by the government. The report also notes generally more favorable attitudes toward Indians among Americans living far from concentrations of Indian populations and a somewhat higher prevalence of more negative views among those living closer to Indian reservations.

“Public Agenda’s report is a critical step in furthering Indian-Non Indian relations,” said Ruth Yellowhawk of the Indigenous Issues Forums. “Until we examine those places where we are struggling and the key knowledge gaps that exist, we cannot understand ways to move forward with dignity and grace. Let’s hope that this small step of revealing ways people are thinking allows for the kind of self-reflection that can engender positive action for such disparate nations.”

The findings were discussed in an editorial piece by Andrew Yarrow in the Baltimore Sun and by John Doble, Senior Research Fellow, on the Brian Lehrer Show on WNYC radio and on Midday Utah’s KPCW radio station.

The research was made possible by a grant from The Christian A. Johnson Endeavor Foundation.

Public Agenda’s Global Warming Choicework Guide

A mounting body of evidence indicates that human activities have a significant effect on the environment. Now scientists are warning that the way people have lived since the Industrial Revolution is catching up with us. How do we meet the challenges of climate change? Where do we start? These questions are at the heart of today’s public debate about global warming. There are conflicting opinions on how to even have productive conversations on this issue. Public Agenda’s newly released “Climate Change Choicework” guide cuts through the noise and presents three contrasting approaches to the problem of climate change, each with its own set of tradeoffs to consider. The guide also includes a section of action items for ordinary citizens to make a difference.

Public Agenda recently partnered with several science cafes, such as the Café Scientifique in Denver and the Secret Science Club in New York, to host climate change dialogues. If you would like to use this Choicework guide in your community, please contact Public Agenda.
New Washington Office Strengthens Public Voice

Public Agenda opened an office in Washington, DC in June 2007 to more strongly connect the voice of the American people to the policies developed by legislators on Capitol Hill.

Andrew Yarrow was named Vice President and Director of the new office. Whether it’s meeting with legislators to talk about what we’re hearing from the public on the “Facing Up to the Nation’s Finances” initiative or convening conferences with policy makers and academics on education reform issues, Public Agenda’s new Washington office provides the organization with a more direct link to the people who make things happen in our nation’s Capitol.

“Andrew brings outstanding knowledge, personal contacts and finesse to our work and we are very lucky to have him heading up the new Washington office,” according to Public Agenda president Ruth A. Wooden. “His wide ranging experience is an extraordinary asset, and I am confident that it will help Public Agenda’s work grow even more respected and valued in Washington, across the nation and, increasingly, around the world.”

Yarrow has most recently been a visiting assistant professor of U.S. history at American University, where he continues to teach as an adjunct professor. He was previously the Director of Outreach for Special Projects in the Economic Studies Program at The Brookings Institution and has continued as a consultant to the organization.

In his new role, he continues to oversee the online division as Executive Editor (with the hiring of a new Online Managing Editor expected in the coming months) and is leading the research department. He is being greatly assisted in that effort by Scott Bittle, who had been Executive Editor of PublicAgenda.org, to Executive Vice President for Public Issues Analysis overseeing research, we are making our focus on analysis clearer than ever. We are also drawing a straight line from our research functions to the dialogue and dissemination function of PublicAgenda.org.

In his new role, he continues to oversee the online division as Executive Editor (with the hiring of a new Online Managing Editor expected in the coming months) and is leading the research department. He is being greatly assisted in that effort by Vice President and Director of Research for Education Insights Jonathan Rochkind.

Scott came to Public Agenda in 1997 as an award-winning journalist to head up the editorial aspects of PublicAgenda.org. Since then, he has not only overseen two redesigns of the award winning site and created innovative content like the nonpartisan election guides, he has also taken on responsibility for overseeing the execution of the Confidence in U.S. Foreign Policy Index (see page 8).

The significance of this organizational change is not the staffing developments but the refocusing of resources on the area where we have traditionally added the greatest value to public policy at the national level. We will continue to produce primary research when there is an absence of knowledge on a particular topic—and there are many lines of inquiry we are excited about following. But we have rightfully become well-known for our analysis of the public opinion research conducted by numerous highly-regarded opinion research organizations, and this organizational realignment will help us provide that service much better.

78% of Americans agree that students have to borrow too much money to pay for college.
Source: “Squeeze Play,” May 2007

62% of teachers say kids are slipping through the system without learning while only 27% of superintendents think so.
Source: “Reality Check 2006: The Insiders”
What Do New Teachers Need to Succeed?

New teachers face myriad challenges in their early years in the profession. But just exactly how prepared are these new teachers and are they being provided with the support they need during their early careers?

“Lessons Learned: New Teachers Talk About Their Jobs, Challenges and Long-Term Plans,” a joint project of the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality and Public Agenda, is a series of reports based on a survey of first-year teachers that aims to help leaders in education and government understand more about the quality of current teacher education and on-the-job support and mentoring. The findings are being released as a three-part series.

The first edition, “The Special Challenges of New Teachers in High Schools and Middle Schools,” found that new high school and middle school teachers:

- more concerned about lack of administrative support,
- frustrated by student motivation and behavior,
- less likely to see teaching as a lifelong career choice and
- less likely to believe that all students can achieve in school than new teachers in elementary schools.

Moreover, new high school and middle school teachers were more likely to question the preparation they received, stating that there was more stress on theoretical instruction in their training rather than on practical classroom experience. For strong majorities of the new teachers, regardless of their grade level, two items topped their list of recommendations for improving the profession overall: reducing class sizes and giving teachers better preparation to individualize teaching in a diverse classroom.

“Working Without a Net,” the second in the series of “Lessons Learned” reports, delves into the support provided to teachers who come to the profession through Alternative Certification Programs and other routes. These new teachers are often placed in the most troubled schools. The report focuses on new teachers in these high-needs schools, comparing the perspectives of those from traditional teacher education versus those from three alternate-route programs: Teach for America, Troops to Teachers and The New Teacher Project.

The findings explore the preparation and lack of administrative support that these alternative route recruits receive. The study also reveals how the alternate route teachers are especially motivated by the desire to help disadvantaged children but at the same time are more disheartened by the conditions they find in their classrooms.

“Based on this survey, our question is: Are we willing to create a system that gives new teachers the support that will help them succeed regardless of the route they take to teaching? These are three well-established, well-respected programs, so the results here points up an important challenge for the field,” said Public Agenda Executive Vice President and Director of Education Insights Jean Johnson.

“The plight of new teachers wrestling with difficult assignments in very difficult schools with limited guidance and mentorship is more pronounced among the ‘alt-routes,’ but significant numbers of traditionally-trained teachers find themselves in the same boat—especially those in the highest-needs schools.”

Lessons Learned is a project of Education Insights, Public Agenda’s multi-year initiative to expand community and parent engagement in public education to improve student performance.

How much preparation time did you spend working with a public school teacher in a classroom?

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<th>Alternative route programs and in a high-needs school</th>
<th>Traditionally trained and in a high-needs school</th>
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<td>29% Enough time</td>
<td>71% Enough time</td>
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<td>2% Too much time</td>
<td>4% Too much time</td>
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<td>16% No time</td>
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“Are we willing to create a system that gives new teachers the support that will help them succeed regardless of the route they take to teaching?” PUBLIC AGENDA EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT AND DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION INSIGHTS JEAN JOHNSON.
Doing the Math on College Costs

While a growing proportion of Americans believe that higher education is critical for both individual success and the economic health of our country, there is evidence of increasing anxiety among them on rising tuition costs, burdensome long-term school loans and the very real possibility that not all qualified students will have the opportunity to attend college.

Public Agenda and the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education (NCPPHE), who have tracked public attitudes toward higher education since 1993, explore the narrowing gap between the percentages who say that college is essential and the percentage who say that many students lack access in its latest report, “Squeeze Play: How Parents and Public Look at Higher Education Today.”

According to the findings, a record number of Americans, 50 percent—compared to 31 percent in 2000—agree that a college education is necessary for success in the workplace, but 58 percent say that college prices are rising faster than other expenses. Moreover, 62 percent of those surveyed believe they believed that many qualified and motivated students do not have the opportunity to obtain a higher education. The majority of those surveyed have a positive view of higher education but voice skepticism about colleges being run as businesses, stating that the system needs to be overhauled, including more efficient use of funds resulting in less waste and mismanagement. The report generated significant media interest, leading to an op-ed piece written by Public Agenda fellow John Immerwahr and NCPPHE President Pat Callan in the Chronicle of Higher Education and an editorial by Public Agenda’s Andrew Yarrow appearing in newspapers across the nation, including in The

FOREIGN POLICY INDEX
A Loss of Faith

In its fifth edition, the Confidence of Foreign Policy Index (CFPI) presented continuing evidence that the public increasingly doubts that U.S. foreign policy is effective and is highly skeptical about strategies to improve the United States’ position abroad. Public Agenda and its partner Foreign Affairs explored the public’s exceptionally low confidence in the nation’s foreign policy options. Public approval in almost every policy area has declined markedly since the CFPI began in 2005, with surveys fielded every six months.

The report finds that there are significant declines in public confidence in our government’s efforts to enhance U.S. security, including showing more respect for the views of other countries, improved effectiveness of intelligence operations and tighter controls on immigration. Since the CFPI’s inception, the public has considered better intelligence gathering and controlling illegal immigration as among the most promising strategies for improving U.S. security. However, since June 2005, the public’s confidence has fallen even for these strategies.

“The Petraeus report may have slowed the get-out-of-Iraq momentum but overall confidence in our foreign policy is eroding across a wide spectrum of issues. The administration and Congress seem isolated from the public” said Public Agenda Chairman Daniel Yankelovich.
Building Higher Education Expertise

Public Agenda recently partnered with the Kettering Foundation to conduct focus groups and interviews with members of the general public and college presidents and board members to explore the connections between higher education and civic participation. The resulting study, “Public and Leadership Views on Higher Education and Civic Engagement” revealed that most members of the public do not think that colleges and universities are the right places to emphasize civic participation, essentially relegating civic involvement to the bottom of a list of priorities for higher education.

To further explore the role of civic engagement and higher education, Public Agenda has partnered with the American Association of Community Colleges in a pilot training module titled “Leading Forward.” The training model is designed to equip community college leaders to undertake leadership roles in their institutions and the larger community to build and sustain best practices around civic engagement. The interactive workshop is designed to help community college leaders better understand the “whys and hows” of community and stakeholder engagement, helping participants to build a “community mindset.”

In other higher education developments, Public Agenda’s involvement in Achieving the Dream, a multiyear national project funded by the Lumina Foundation to help more community college students succeed, has completed a successful community engagement pilot program across selected colleges in Florida, Texas, Connecticut and Ohio. Over the next 16 months, Public Agenda will roll out two new pilot projects at selected colleges in New Mexico, Texas, Ohio and Connecticut. Working in partnership with MDC, the first pilot is designed to augment community dialogue and engagement work with the creation of campus/community leadership teams brought together to discuss challenges and take action on student success issues. The second pilot is focused on finding ways to engage students and faculty in the implementation of Achieving the Dream goals on campus.

Are you a Transformer or a Coper?

Communities across the country are looking to school principals and superintendents to transform schools. But what exactly does it take to change a troubled school into one where students thrive? What kinds of skills do school leaders need?

Public Agenda and The Wallace Foundation attempt to understand the best ways to recruit and sustain top leaders in high-needs schools in “A Mission of the Heart: Leaders in High-Needs Districts Talk about What It Takes to Transform a School,” which will be published this Spring.

Public Agenda talked with principals and superintendents across the country in focus groups and one-on-one in-depth interviews. The report offers a detailed look at their daily lives and challenges. It reveals that principals often fall into two distinct categories: “transformers” or “copers.” “Transformers” bring a “can do” attitude toward their work, with a vision of what they would like their schools to look like. They are intensely focused on creating a culture in which each child can learn. Alternatively, “copers” are characterized as focused on tending to the many day to day needs and are often overwhelmed, “trying to keep their heads above water.” Many of them simply do not have the time, freedom, or perhaps inclination, to do more than try to manage their current situation.

The report explores how leadership styles often influence how a top leader approaches challenges in their schools, such as working directly with teachers or dealing with bureaucratic red tape. For example, transformers are more likely to “walk the halls” to stay in touch with what is going on in classrooms, while “copers” did not see it as vital or just did not have the time to leave their office.

The study also found that many of the leaders—“transformers” and “copers”—agreed that certain skills and character traits are required to be successful in their role in high-need schools. From their perspective, an effective high-needs principal must bring characteristics such as courage and a strong core belief set to the job. Many respondents questioned whether it is actually possible to teach all of the requisite abilities in a training program.
**POLICY BREAKFAST SERIES:**

**Morning Coffee with World Leaders**

Public Agenda and the **The Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University** continued their successful policy breakfast series with highly attended events in December and February. National Public Radio’s **Robert Siegel** interviewed Democratic Congressman **Charles Rangel** in February and **Bobby Inman**, Retired U.S. Navy Admiral, Former Director of the National Security Agency and Former Deputy Director of Central Intelligence in December.

A large group of New York area business, policy, academic leaders and media correspondents attended both policy breakfasts.

Rangel, Democratic Chairman of the influential House Ways & Means Committee, spoke about his controversial proposal to address the inequities in the current tax code, turning up the volume on the national debate about tax reform. The Congressman also shared his views on the economy, the federal budget, the election and the future of the United States.

Given the recent media attention surrounding the CIA and NSA, Admiral Inman provided some fascinating insider perspectives during the policy breakfast. The session included a dynamic audience Q&A session that ranged on topics including the current bureaucratic and talent recruitment/retention challenges facing the CIA; the current NIE intelligence report on weapons in Iran; the firestorm surrounding the destruction of CIA interrogation tapes; Middle Eastern geopolitics; the porous nature of digital technology and its effect on the United States’ security systems.

The Public Agenda-Maxwell School Policy Breakfast series continues to grow in popularity, filled to capacity. Past policy breakfast programs have included **Ken Mehlman**, Chairman of the Republican National Committee in April and Archbishop **Desmond Tutu** in September.

From top to bottom: Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Ken Mehlman, Admiral Bobby Inman and Congressman Charles Rangel

**More information about the ongoing Breakfast series, upcoming events and transcripts are available online at publicagenda.org/policybreakfastseries**

**Board Member News**

Public Agenda is pleased to welcome **David Coleman** and **Anne Kirschner** as the newest members of its Board of Directors.

**David Coleman**, who recently launched Student Achievement Partners, LLC formerly founded and headed the Grow Network, a McGraw-Hill Education subsidiary. A Rhodes Scholar, Coleman got involved in education as an undergraduate at Yale, founding the Branch program. In England, he was a lecturer at the University of London before going to work as the pro bono education director at McKinsey & Company.

**Ann Kirschner** is University Dean of the Macaulay Honors College at the City University of New York. Prior to taking on her role at the City University of New York, Ann worked as a digital entrepreneur and took part in strategic planning meetings for the redevelopment of PublicAgenda.org in 2006. Earlier in her career, she founded FATHOM at Columbia University, the first interactive knowledge network associated with leading educational and cultural institutions. She was also responsible for the introduction of new media at the National Football League, founding NFL.com among other Web sites. She began her career as a lecturer in Victorian literature at Princeton University.

Public Agenda is sad to report that longtime Board member and friend **Peter G. Peterson**, Chairman of the Blackstone Group, has stepped down from its Board of Directors. Public Agenda thanks Peter for playing an important role in advancing its mission. Peter will continue his association with Public Agenda as an honorary member of the board.
Coming Soon

Election Guides 2008: The Public’s Agenda

Scrutinizing the issues, claims, debates, and stances of the presidential candidates can leave voters feeling overwhelmed during the election. Little is being done to help voters cut through the political spin to really think through the policy alternatives facing the nation. Public Agenda’s 2008 election guides are aimed precisely at helping voters figure out what they want before they decide who they want. Its series of election guides strive to create a more engaged and informed population of voters by stimulating full and balanced discussion of the most pressing issues facing the nation. The six 2008 guides will cover issues including foreign policy/terrorism, immigration, the economy, health care, global warming and the federal budget. Each guide will present basic background information and at least three possible alternative paths for the country, with likely costs and consequences for each. The election guides are supported by the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Attracting More Hispanic Students to Math and Science

IBM has partnered with Public Agenda to conduct research on Hispanic achievement in math, science and technology education. As part of “America’s Competitiveness: Hispanics in Technology Careers,” a May 2008 conference hosted by IBM, Public Education is synthesizing its existing analysis on education among Hispanic parents and students and interviewing leading Hispanic scientists and corporate, government, media and community leaders to assist in the conference planning.

“Putting the Pieces Together: How Do Citizens and Experts See the Energy Issue?”

The energy problem is of increasing importance on the public agenda. However, citizens and experts often have very different conceptions and starting points on energy issues. This report will describe findings gleaned from a series of focus groups across the country and interviews with experts on an array of energy issues that lays out the commonalities and differences in thinking between citizens and a cross-section of technical, industrial, and policy experts. The research was conducted by Public Agenda in cooperation with the Kettering Foundation, which recently hosted a forum in Washington, DC, focusing on the results of this research and another report on public attitudes on energy issues titled, “Public Thinking about the Energy Problem: Choices for an Uncertain Future, Public Deliberations in 2007 National Issues Forums.”

Metropolitan Concerns

More than 4 in 5 Americans live in the nation’s metropolitan areas, America’s cities and in the densely populated suburban and ex-urban rings surrounding them. Metro areas are considered the engines of the nation’s economic well-being. Working in consultation with The Brookings Institution, Public Agenda is exploring what people know about metropolitan areas and their beliefs regarding the connection of metro areas to the nation’s economic prosperity and innovation in the future. The project includes a national public opinion survey, and a final report is scheduled for publication in April 2008.

REL-Midwest

Public Agenda recently completed the second year of its four-year investigation for REL-Midwest at Learning Point Associates on how different populations in the Midwest rate the schools in their district and state. This report will cover the thoughts of superintendents, school board members, officials at State Educational Agencies and state legislators. In the coming year Public Agenda will talk to parents, teachers and principals.

Confidence of Foreign Policy Index 6

In April of this year Public Agenda will release its sixth edition of the Confidence of Foreign Policy Index (CFPI). The index will again include the “Anxiety Indicator,” as well as over 110 questions which allow us to understand the changing and complex views people have about the role the U.S. plays in the world.
A lot of well-intentioned folks try to make a go of engaging the public on issues near and dear to their hearts, but instead end up disappointed when few folks show up to public meetings, the issue never gets traction or the policy idea they want to advance collides head-on with community resistance. Why does this happen?

The secret ingredient in Public Agenda’s recipe for its public engagement efforts on science, technology, engineering and math education in is the Kansas City region (see page 4) is simply this: No shortcuts.

Our work with The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation is, to our minds, a perfectly comprehensive research and engagement project that is ideal to get the public engagement process right.

When the Foundation learned of our Reality Check 2006 research findings indicating that parents and students seemed to be disturbingly out of sync with leaders, business and policy experts on the need for a major retooling of America’s science, technology, engineering and math education programs, they asked some serious questions of themselves about their newly developed 10-year initiative to advance such programs in Kansas City area schools. What would it take to really engage the public on this topic if just putting out more information about the need wasn’t likely to work?

The Foundation asked Public Agenda to join them in their initiative. We started by conducting focus groups and individual interviews including students, parents, K-12 teachers, K-12 and post-secondary administrators and employers to begin to understand the peculiarities of thinking on the topic in the region. We then conducted a full-scale, in-depth public opinion survey of the parents and students across Missouri and Kansas that lead to important new findings about the disconnects between the parents and students and the educators, business people and leaders, but also major insights about what practical measures might actually affect student and parent priorities related to science and math.

At the same time Public Agenda was creating a public engagement “toolkit” with a video discussion starter and guides for organizers, facilitators and participants at community forums. We are now in the middle of a comprehensive three-year public engagement process that is bringing together business leaders, community leaders, media, educators, parents and students together to explore what priority science, technology, engineering and math should have in the Kansas City region and to come to agreement on how to best direct resources that keep the community strong and on-track for a prosperous future.

Three years may sound like a long time for a “conversation.” But we have learned in our research that science and math, like many issues, cannot be force-fed to the public. It takes time to gather all the parties around the table and begin the conversation, explore all the costs, consequences and possibilities and come to consensus about how to move forward.

But that is what it takes to create real public engagement.