



PRESIDENT COMMENTARY

Collaboration

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PRESIDENT, C.A.B.E.

First, it is necessary to state that, to a high degree of certainty, this piece is not “fake news”. What measure is used to determine this? For starters, it is not news, fake or otherwise. It is commentary.

“It was the most civilized of ceremonies, punctuated by smiles, the handclaps and embraces of ex-rivals. The new President spoke calmly and earnestly, as though, in his assumption of the office, the partisan within him had at last given way to the leader.”

So begins an article titled “Rhetoric Meets Reality”, published by *LIFE* magazine on January 31, 1969. This was a timely recent find in the old barn behind the old house out in the New England countryside. It had clearly been sitting there for awhile. The message it shared was, however, curiously relevant during the winter of 2017.

The new President in 1969, if we need to be reminded, was Richard Nixon. For many of us who remember that era, it may not seem so long ago. For those of you who were still a twinkle in the eyes of your parents, not yet born, it is historical. In any event, it is worth noting.

On a recent trip to Washington, D.C., for the Equity Symposium and Advocacy Institute offered by the National School Boards Association, our contingent from Connecticut met with members of the congressional team and shared great appreciation for their collective leadership.

Our Congressional delegation had several important messages for us, including the urgency of engaging in ongoing local advocacy. The timing of the second Equity Symposium was pivotal, for though we have been strong advocates for many years, we are still working together to make and establish the progress that is necessary. We may not always agree about how

to attain greater equity, but we are all committed to doing so.

Just weeks after the Presidential Inauguration in January, the “new normal” in D.C. appears to include ongoing demonstrations. The Women’s March was followed by others, including those related to the rights of immigrants and refugees.

It is interesting, indeed, that the month of March would be accompanied by ongoing Marches. We live in a democracy that has been exercising its collective right to certain freedoms. One especially poignant moment occurred while riding in a taxi driven by an exceptionally articulate man who acknowledged he was from Pakistan.

He readily shared his views on life in highly positive terms. (Life is good.) As we paused for an especially long red light just outside the Newseum, he shared his distress about some of the recent political issues. He exclaimed that those alienating actions were not indicative of the greatness of America.

He gestured with conviction to the wall on the Newseum on which an excerpt from the Constitution is carved in stone, stating “This is the greatness of America. It is right here. You just have to read it.”

As we continue to work together in teams with a strong, shared focus on what has been effective, based on solid evidence, we also continue to identify shared goals, to ensure the relevance of schools in the future.

This shared focus is our responsibility and our strength. It is clear that our primary roles as stewards for public education are needed now, more than ever.

We can work locally to support statewide plans regarding the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and we can continue to articulate how investing in public education is an investment in the future, as well at the present. Collaborative efforts are at the heart of effectiveness.

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