

SeamlessEd.com Commentary - Podcast 7-1  
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Moore: Welcome to the world of Seamless Education, brought to you by Seamless Education Consultants in Newnan, Georgia. My name is Russ Moore, and my task is to help community stakeholders at any level – local, state, regional or national – understand, design, implement and evaluate educational solutions that make economic sense and ultimately serve all stakeholders better, whether those stakeholders are students, employers or policymakers. These podcasts will define and refine the conversation about education reform and help make the vital connection between education design, school performance, and what should be the clearly-understood purpose of education – to prepare accomplished citizens.

For more information, please visit our website at [www.seamlessed.com](http://www.seamlessed.com), and sign up for our monthly Seamless Education newsletter.

This is our first podcast, so we don't expect listeners to know what to expect yet. In every future podcast, Seamless Education will bring you a featured essay, interview or story about recent news in the nationwide trend toward creating a seamless blend between academics and career, technical and agricultural education (CTE or CTAE); between high school and college; and between the workplace and public education. Then we'll finish each podcast with a discussion centered around your questions or comments. If you leave us voicemail at 678.481.7816, we'll pick the best two or three and wax eloquent. You can also email us at [info@seamlessed.com](mailto:info@seamlessed.com). In every case, please leave us your name and basic contact information and tell us if we can use your name in our podcasts and newsletters.

Don't be afraid to "let us have it," either. Other than the fact that our show is G-rated (we want students to listen, too, naturally), we do want to know what you really think and to tackle every side of all issues. But don't be surprised if we think you're crazy and we say so. We are great believers in free speech, and we plan to speak freely, albeit cleanly.

Housekeeping done – on to the show!

Seamless Education is based in Georgia (for reasons we'll describe in future podcasts), and this week our state was honored to host the Secretary of Education of our nation – Margaret Spellings – at a Georgia Public Policy Foundation luncheon at The Commerce Club in downtown Atlanta. Secretary Spellings had a number of interesting things to say, but we are going to focus on her comments that made the connection between education and the economic well-being of any community and of our nation. I'll apologize for the quality of this recording, which is not up to the technical standards we hope to set in future podcasts; still it's not everyday you get to hear the nation's top educator – so the value of the recording is more important than its quality. So here goes...

Spellings: "In Atlanta, I very much appreciate the fact that you've made education a priority with your companies like IBM and Lockheed Martin. You know better than anyone that our schools have not really kept pace with the needs of this global marketplace and of your businesses. Across America ... I hear this message from business leaders, from policy makers, and most especially from Moms and Dads.

I just recently had the chance to meet in Washington with another one of your great thinkers, our mutual friend Newt Gingrich, who has been speaking out for years about the role that education must play if we are to confront issues like poverty, crime, unemployment – in fact, Governor Bush used to say the same thing: the best criminal justice program was a sound educational system, the best juvenile justice program was a quality education system, and especially in our cities, we know that education is the way forward, absolutely. We agree that Keeping America competitive is the most important thing our nation has before it.

Today, 90% of the fastest-growing jobs require post-secondary education. This is in a day and time when we nationally get about half of our African American students out of high school on time. So our workforce is very challenging. As you all know, this is not just an education issue; it is an economic development issue, a civic issue, a social issue, a national security issue, and it's everybody's issue. And that's why I was so pleased when the President spoke of education in the State of the Union...

You all are already doing the things that are so important to improve our schools, like inventing and chartering new schools like Tech High – a charter school based on a proven model that works, whose motto is "No Excuses." I love that. I think we all have to adopt the attitude that every child is worthy and can get a high quality education – not only can they, but they must. In building that charter school there, you thought about the needs of those students, and you thought about the needs of your community, and that's why you all focus on those critical skills like math, science, technology, and leadership. Your students there take courses at the college level as well as high school work, and they will be well-served, having had that kind of background. Tech High's principal, Elisa Falco is here with us today. Where are you? There you are - so young! When she first became a teacher, Elisa noticed that a lot of good ideas were stifled within the education bureaucracy. She says, "You'd be voting and voting and voting, and totally losing sight of students." But now as the charter school principal, she has the freedom to devote time, to devote personnel and resources to meet the students' needs there at the Tech High charter.

The approach absolutely is working. At her school, nine out of ten are African-American, three out of four are from low income families. At the start of the school year only ten percent of ninth graders met minimum math standards, less than a third met minimum reading standards - but today, the school ranks first in the Atlanta school system, so let's give Elisa a well-deserved hand."

Moore: Allow me to emphasize a few key points from Secretary Spellings' comments and explain them in the context of Seamless Education.

I hope you heard America's Secretary of Education say, "Keeping America competitive is the most important thing our nation has before it." That statement alone should trump any and all objections to education reform by administrators, parents, lobbyists, policymakers and pundits. Plainly put, if we as a nation cannot compete with *or participate with* the economies of other nations - developed or developing nations – then we as Americans are at a disadvantage globally. And as the *free-est* nation in the world, we must admit that we have placed ourselves at that disadvantage by our own inflexibility, fear or inability to innovate, and adherence to traditions that no longer make sense ... and our inaction or wrong actions are hurting us and our children.

We alone have the responsibility to govern our own actions and to fix our own problems, and it is up to us to face these facts and get on with the good work of producing accomplished citizens.

You also heard the secretary of education connect education as a way to reverse social ills, such as crime and delinquency – roles that some traditionalists vigorously resist. It is true that teachers are not babysitters and schools are not social work centers; however, a truly effective educational system must have a positive impact identifying and reversing societal problems. That won't happen with just books and tests, but it will happen when communities have a say in what is taught in their schools and how it is taught. Businesses and parents must have a role in school governance, personnel matters, and curriculum development. Schools must be run as partnerships, not bureaucracies. When there is true local accountability, not to state or federal test score standards, but to true, achievable accomplishment-based community standards, then schools will have their natural, positive impact on academic achievement and societal improvement.

You heard Secretary Spellings praise an Atlanta charter school, Tech High, that was started with assistance from the Georgia Public Policy Foundation, Georgia Tech alumni, the Woodruff Foundation and the founders of Central Educational Center ... CEC is a national model high school and charter school in Newnan, Georgia.

The Secretary said that Tech High was "based on a proven model that works." She was referring to the practice of blending high school with college to raise the rigor and relevance of instruction and the engagement of students. Tech High, like so many other charters nationwide, is taking students from whom the least is expected and helping them to achieve more than anyone else is achieving. You heard the Secretary say that Tech High "ranks first in the Atlanta school system." What she didn't say is that Tech High – again like most charter schools nationwide – has achieved excellence despite unequal funding and political adversaries in the education establishment who care more about power than performance, and more about money than students.

When we in America have a system in which the money follows the student, and that money demands true performance –from students, yes, but also true performance from their teachers and those who run schools and school systems – then we’ll be able to compete and succeed against any global standard of achievement. In other words, we have to start measuring performance using standards like employability and the transfer of skills, knowledge, information and attitudes, instead of just disconnected academic test scores.

In future podcasts, you’ll hear more about Central Educational Center and the business process used by its founders to reform education. You’ll hear from Tech High’s principal Elisa Falco. You’ll hear from policymakers and reformers all over our nation - and most interesting of all – you’ll hear questions and comments from our listeners. If you want to sound off about today’s feature or any issues related to seamless education, charters, and education reform, just call us at 678.481.7816 or send your email to [info@seamlessed.com](mailto:info@seamlessed.com).

I’m Russ Moore, and thank you for listening!

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