

SENG-DAO YANG KEO

ABOUT ME

- I am a first-generation middle school graduate and among the first Hmong Americans to graduate from Harvard. Roughly 27 percent of Hmong Americans live in poverty, and 40 percent of adults ages 25 and over do not have a high school degree or equivalent. The high school drop-out rate is estimated to be 47 percent.
- My family has lived in Nevada for 34 years, and my five siblings and I are products of the Nevada public K-12 education system.

EDUCATION

Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE), Cambridge, MA May 2016

Doctor of Education Leadership (Ed.L.D.)

- Managed graduate students and their learning as a Teaching Fellow for the following graduate school courses: 1) *The 21st-Century Demographic Transformation: Opportunities and Implications for U.S. Schools* with Dr. Susan Eaton; 2) *Debating Education Policy* with Dr. Rick Hess; and 3) *Introduction to Education Finance and Budgeting* with Dr. Jon Fullerton.
- Co-managed 45 graduate students and our collective learning in a group independent studies course, Ethnic Studies. Co-created and taught this course with two other Ed.L.D. colleagues so future school leaders, teachers, teacher leaders, policy makers, and researchers understand the American histories of different groups of people in the nation and the connection to educational inequities and opportunity gaps.
- Along with five other Ed.L.D. colleagues, co-managed projects to bring attention to issues of equity and diversity within HGSE, the Ed.L.D. program, and the larger education sector. I co-led advocacy efforts that successfully resulted in the creation of a course at HGSE to develop equity and diversity competencies for future system level education leaders, in collaboration with Ed.L.D. leadership and faculty members. Other initiatives our team led included writing a case study on Ferguson focused on race and school leadership. This case is now being taught in a popular course at HGSE and to education leaders across the nation.

Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE), Cambridge, MA June 2007
Master of Education (Ed.M.) in Education Policy and Management

Pace University Graduate School of Education, New York, NY June 2005
Master of Science for Teachers (M.S.T.)

Harvard College, Cambridge, MA June 2001
Bachelor of Arts (A.B.) in Economics, cum laude
Women's Leadership Project (Board); Asian American Association (Officer); Phillips Brooks House Association (Mission Hill Afterschool Program Volunteer); and Mather House Council (Officer)

Chaparral High School, Las Vegas, NV June 1997
Valedictorian; Student Council (Student Body Vice President); National Honor Society (President); Mu Alpha Theta (President); Key Club (Member)

C.W. Woodbury Middle School, Las Vegas, NV 1992-1993
Quannah McCall Sixth Grade Center, Las Vegas, NV 1991
Harley E. Harmon Elementary School, Las Vegas, NV 1989-1990

Round Mountain Elementary School, Round Mountain, NV

1985-1988

WORK EXPERIENCE IN EDUCATION

Nevada Department of Education (NDE)

Nov. 2016

Director, Office of Student and School Supports (OSSS); State Fellow for Results for America

- Lead the Department's school improvement strategies to significantly and rapidly improve student outcomes across the state; strengthen system coherence and alignment; build an evidence-based and outcomes-driven education system; leverage strategic braided funding; build local capacity; and ensure all students have access to educational equity and excellence. This includes planning and implementing strategies in the Nevada ESSA Plan and 5-year State Strategic Plan.
- Manage the Department's largest team (~31) to administer, provide support and technical assistance for, and progress monitor several federal and state programs to drive continuous improvement and ensure compliance. These programs represent approximately \$325 million per year in academic and social-emotional programs and services to Nevada students.

Federal Title Programs

- Title I, Part A (\$130 million per year) – this program provides assistance to local educational agencies and schools with high numbers or percentages of children from low-income families.
- Title I, 1003(a) (\$9 million per year) – this program provides support for the lowest performing federally designated schools in the state: Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) schools, Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) schools, and ATSI (Additional Targeted Support) schools.
- Title I, Part D, Neglected and Delinquent program – this program provides support for youth in state-run institutions for juveniles and in adult correctional institutions to help them successfully transition to school or employment.
- Title III, Language Instruction for English Learner and Immigrant Students (\$8 million per year) – this program supports English learner students to attain language proficiency and meet rigorous academic standards.
- Title IV, Part A, Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants (\$9 million) – this program provides students with a well-rounded education, supports safe and healthy schools, and supports effective use of technology.
- Title IV, Part B, 21st Century Community Learning Centers (\$9 million per year) – this program provides opportunities for communities to establish or expand before school, after school, and extended learning opportunities for students.
- McKinney-Vento – this program provides services to homeless children.
- Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP, \$6 million per year) – this 7-year grant program supports activities aimed to increase the number of low-income students who enter and succeed in higher education.
- Equitable Service Ombudsman – the Department monitors and enforces equitable service requirements for eligible private school children.

State Programs

- College and Career Readiness Grant Program (SB 544, \$3.6 million per year) – this grant program helps to create competitive Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) programs; increase participation in Advanced Placement (AP) courses; increase and expand dual enrollment programs; and develop and implement work-based learning programs.
- Indian Education Program (AB 266) – this program works in collaboration with tribes and school districts to support student achievement for American Indian students.

- Nevada Choice Scholarship Program (AB 165, \$26 million through 2019) – this program gives businesses a tax credit for contributions made to organizations that give scholarships to low-income families to use for tuition at private schools.
- Read by Grade 3 Program (SB 391, \$22 million per year) – this program supports districts and schools to ensure students read proficiently by the end of third grade.
- SB178 (\$36 million per year) – this program supports the student achievement of low-income students and English learners who score in the bottom quartile of performance.
- Turnaround Program (SB 544, Section 20, \$2 million per year) – this program provides funding to select underperforming schools to support school improvement.
- Victory Program (SB 447, \$25 million per year) – this program provides academic and social emotional services and support to underperforming schools in the highest poverty zip codes.
- Zoom Program (SB 390, \$50 million per year) – this program provides targeted services in the lowest performing elementary schools with the highest percentage of English learners.
- Launch a competitive multi-grant application to support and incentivize districts and schools to: 1) identify, select, and implement evidence-based interventions; and 2) monitor and rigorously evaluate for continuous improvement. The goals are to ensure that federal and state education funds are used effectively and efficiently; streamline the work for education leaders and strengthen system alignment; and lead for equity. As a result of this initiative, the federal government and leading national organizations have identified the NDE as a leader amongst state education agencies in ESSA evidence-based implementation.
- Responsible for developing a statewide continuous improvement platform that strategically aligns the school improvement process with data systems, fiscal operations, and the grants management system. This includes the strategic redesign of key state school improvement tools, including a comprehensive needs assessment, school performance plans, district performance plans, and consolidated monitoring tools.

Harvard GSE Programs in Professional Education, Cambridge, MA

2016

Online Facilitator, Certificate in Advanced Education Leadership: Leading Learning

- Facilitated the learning of current leaders in the preK-12 education school systems for an online professional training program. Provide constructive feedback to learners and pods.

National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE), Washington, DC

2015-2016

Harvard Graduate School of Education Ed.L.D. Resident and Teacher Career Ladder Project Manager

- Led the initial planning stage to build the foundation for a national teacher career ladder system through advanced teacher certifications. Built and managed a key strategic partnership with the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards to move this initiative forward. Researched comprehensive career ladder, lattices, and pathway systems in the top performing international education systems and in the United States to inform the design process. Wrote a funding proposal and development plan.
- Served on a senior leadership team planning the design of an advanced principal certification system. The U.S. Department of Education Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) grant program is providing \$10.9 million for this initiative to Criterion, a company of NCEE.

Harvard Graduate School of Education Ed.L.D. Paul and Mary Finnegan Fellow

2013-2016

- Contributed to a report for Clark County School District focused on English language learners (ELL) and other struggling student groups to examine the growing disparity in learning outcomes.
- Co-managed a consulting team to develop policy recommendations for San Diego Unified School District to help strengthen strategy and practices for long-term English language learners.

- Developed policy recommendations with a consulting team for the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to support state strategies.
- Developed recommendations with a consulting team for the Native American Community Academy (NACA) to scale into a network of charter schools.

Pannasastra University of Cambodia (PUC), Phnom Penh, Cambodia 2012-2013

Education Adviser to the President (and former Minister of Education) and Adjunct Faculty

- Led a pilot study to train faculty and students on using an open-source learning management system to facilitate teaching and learning within a leading university with over 22,000 students.
- Developed recommendations on policies and strategies to improve teaching and learning practices.
- Taught “Introduction to Cultural Anthropology” to Academic Foundation Year students.
- Pro bono work with the Cambodian Education Law: Co-drafted education legislation proposal under the guidance of Dr. Kol Pheng, a former Minister of Education, Youth, and Sports (MoEYS) and Vice Chairman of the Supreme National Council for Education, a think tank for the Office of the Prime Minister. Met with senior education leaders to push forward issues of education excellence and equity in the country.

University of Cambodia (UC), Phnom Penh, Cambodia 2010-2012

Director, Office of the President

Director, UC Foundation

International Coordinator, 7th Asia Economic Forum (AEF)

- Developed and implemented strategic initiatives, policies, and tools to strengthen instructional practices, student performance, and operations as a member of the Senior Executive Team.
- Supervised managers and administrative staff of the two offices.
- Managed the Deans of all colleges and departments and their annual planning process (i.e., College of Arts, Humanities, and Languages; College of Education; College of Law; College of Management; College of Media and Communications; College of Science and Technology; College of Social Sciences; and institutes and centers).
- Managed and led a team of administrators, deans, librarians, and IT staff to create the UC Toshu Fukami e-Library; strengthen the research capacity of the university deans, faculty, and students; and improve library management and resource utilization. Through our team’s efforts, UC faculty, undergraduates, and graduate students have *free* access to over 10 million research articles in various fields, over 4,000 academic journals, and millions of e-books and scholarly resources.
- Secured funding to increase access to information technology and make higher education more accessible to disadvantaged students, which resulted in 200 full-ride scholarships for the most marginalized students in the country and 200 computers for the library.

KIPP Houston High School (KHHS), Houston, TX 2008-2010

Pre-calculus and Statistics Teacher and Student Leadership Coordinator

- Taught pre-calculus and statistics, and prepared students to enroll in college-level math courses. In both teaching years, 100% of students in my classes passed the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) mathematics exit exam.
- Founded a Student Leadership program and developed curriculum for classes to nurture students’ leadership and critical thinking skills. Trained student leaders to plan and manage school-wide events.

Frank Whalen Middle School 135 (through Teach For America), Bronx, NY 2004-2006

Math Teacher Leader and Student Leadership Advisor

- Led math students, including 27 inclusion students, to an average increase of 1.5 grade levels on a math state standardized exam in an underserved public middle school in one of the poorest districts in the country.

- Mentored and trained four new math teachers. Collaborated with math coach to align math curriculum and deliver professional development to new teachers.
- Created and directed a leadership development program, resulting in leadership training to over 150 urban school students and parents from three local middle schools.

Henry Hudson Intermediate School 125 (through Teach For America), Bronx, NY 2003-2004
Math Teacher

- Led 66% of students to improve their math performance by 1.5-2 grade levels from the previous year on a citywide math standardized exam in an underserved public middle school.
- Co-facilitated collaborative meetings on curriculum development between math teachers, after serving as the school representative at monthly regional math staff developer trainings.

WORK EXPERIENCE IN BUSINESS AND FINANCE

JPMorgan Chase Securities, Asia Pacific, Hong Kong 2001-2003
Investment Banking Analyst in Mergers & Acquisitions (M&A)

- Performed M&A valuation analyses, including trading and transaction comparables, discounted cash flow, and merger scenarios. Researched and analyzed company and industry data for deal teams to inform multi-million dollar deals.
- Developed a historical analysis of the M&A market in Asia Pacific that was implemented as a team-wide resource to seek clients and showcase the company's M&A regional achievements.

EDUCATION PRESENTATIONS

Building a Research Office that Supports Continuous Improvement under ESSA. American Youth Policy Forum. Washington, D.C. on October 29-30, 2018.

State Education Fellowship Meetings. Results for America. Washington, D.C.

- Congressional Staff Meetings on May 1, 2018.
- State Spotlight on November 16, 2018.
- Roundtable: Building Impactful and Trusted Relationships with Evidence-based Partners on November 16, 2018.

Evidence, Equity, and Continuous Improvement under ESSA (panel). Association for Education Finance and Policy (AEFP) Conference. Kansas City, KS on March 21, 2019 (upcoming).

EDUCATION PUBLICATIONS

Keo, P. T., & Keo, S. (2019). The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and Equity: A Practical Guide for States and Districts to Build Local Capacity Using Evidence. Manuscript submitted for publication.

Keo, P. T., & Keo, S. (2018). Education and Youth Development in Contemporary Cambodia. In M. Nakkula & A. Schneider-Munoz (Eds.), *Global Perspectives on Risks, Relationships, and Development*. (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO).

March 1, 2019

To the Nevada State Board of Education Superintendent Search Committee:

Do you want more of the same, or are you truly investing in transforming the education system into one that is high-performing and equitable? If you are seeking the latter, then I will explain how we, the state of Nevada, can get there.

My name is Dr. Seng-Dao Yang Keo, and I am applying for the position of the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) Superintendent of Public Instruction.

About me

I am a first-generation middle school graduate and the daughter of low-income immigrants. My father was an electrician in the mining corporations and casinos across Nevada. My mother was a blackjack dealer at Station Casinos.

I am the product of an urban and rural Nevada public K-12 education system. I started elementary school in Round Mountain (Nye County) and graduated as the Valedictorian of Chaparral High School in Las Vegas (Clark County) before entering Harvard College. I have multiple siblings, extended family members, and friends who dropped out of college.

After college and before entering public education, I was an investment banker on Wall Street working for JPMorgan Chase. I felt called to public service in education because, after witnessing intergenerational inequities caused by discrimination and a lack of rigorous educational opportunities, I wanted to ensure that every young person has a real opportunity to reach their fullest potential and to make positive contributions to their families and communities.

I invest in public education because I am living proof that education can transform lives.

A Different Kind of Transformative Leadership

At the Nevada Department of Education, I am the Director of the Office of Student and School Supports (OSSS). This team leads and administers over \$300 million of federal and state programs each year. The OSSS is the school improvement arm of NDE and serves the most marginalized and under-served students in the state. These students include low-income students, English Learners, homeless youth, neglected and delinquent youth, Native students, and first-generation students trying to get into college.

With limited resources and capacity, I have helped elevate Nevada's state education system to the national level. Under my leadership, and with the support of my team, the state is receiving national recognition for the work that is coming out of the Office of Student and School Supports. I have implemented a strong culture of "funding what works." What that means is that we are ensuring on a wide scale that tax payers receive the highest return on their investments in

the public education system. Under my leadership, the state of Nevada went from funding an estimated 15% of school improvement dollars on interventions that work to now 100% of funds being used on interventions and activities that have an evidence base. National leading education partners (researchers, policymakers, and other state education leaders) are looking to Nevada for ideas and leadership on how to use evidence, data, research, and evaluation to continuously improve their systems. For the first time in Nevada's recent history, we are at the table leading national conversations with the likes of Massachusetts, the highest performing state in the nation.

I have been trained by leading national experts, who continue to be a part of my network and influence my work here in Nevada. Those national experts include Former Massachusetts Secretary of Education and Professor of Practice of Educational Policy and Administration at Harvard University Paul Reville, Former CEO and President of the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE) Marc Tucker, Former Faculty Director of the Doctor of Education Leadership (Ed.L.D.) Program at Harvard University Dr. Elizabeth City, Professor of Practice in Educational Leadership and Former Superintendent of Richmond (VA) Public Schools Dr. Deborah Jewell-Sherman, Associate Professor at Harvard University and national expert on deeper learning, Dr. Jal Mehta, and Executive Director of the Center for Education Policy Research at Harvard University Dr. Jon Fullerton. As I have consistently demonstrated throughout my lifetime, and certainly within the past two years at NDE, I leverage my training and my professional relationships and network to produce strong results. As an education leader, I bring credibility and expertise around federal and state programs, federal and state grants, school improvement, teacher career ladders, and state-district-school partnerships.

In other words, under my leadership, I am making sure that every dollar spent leads to strong, positive student outcomes. This culture of "funding what works" had previously not been taken seriously in Nevada, and I believe it is one of the main reasons why Nevada's education system is not making the progress its students need and deserve, especially the most vulnerable students among us. More of the same business as usual, I believe, will only lead to more of the same dismal results.

Policy Priorities

1. **Funding Formula:** I will prioritize successfully implementing an updated funding formula to ensure that resources are distributed equitably. Nevada needs to give more resources to students who need and deserve additional resources. I will work to make sure that our education funding formula is updated to meet national standards and there is a focus on equity and transparency. My skill sets are unique from other education program experts because I also possess highly skilled training in finance and budgeting. Not only do I understand how the dollars impact program work, but I also understand how education programs are interconnected with funding—a rare skill set in the field of education.
2. **Spend Money on Interventions, Activities, and Strategies that Work:** My team's work focuses on using data to inform decision-making and supporting districts and schools to spend our limited dollars on evidence-based interventions that yield strong and positive impact for students. This includes rigorously evaluating our implementation to

figure out if what we are doing actually works in Nevada. In other words, we need the biggest bang for our limited dollars. This is an opportunity to build local capacity, strengthen outcomes within schools, and build a strong local evidence- and research- base (which is lacking).

3. **Invest in Teachers and Leaders:** Instead of undermining our teachers and leaders, we need to invest in them and help to professionalize the field. Teachers and leaders are our strongest allies and are the key to sustaining a high-performing education system. Because Nevada has struggled with educator recruitment and retention, especially with regard to people of color, we need to prioritize building teacher career ladder systems and pathways. I am extremely knowledgeable about how educator career ladder systems and pathways have sustained the highest performing education systems in the world. Moreover, I have been a teacher, teacher leader, and administrator at the middle school, high school, and university levels in some of the poorest neighborhoods and communities. These experiences inform my work and leadership.
4. **Advance Equity:** We lack leaders of color in Nevada and this is apparent in the field of education. As a woman of color, who lives and represents the virtues of full diversity and inclusion in what I do and say, it is my moral responsibility to center issues of educational inequity and ensure that all students, regardless of their background, have access to safe and rigorous learning opportunities. More of the same is not good enough for our Nevada students. We need education leaders who can truly honor and respect the diversity of our great state—and these leaders need to include leaders of color. Nevada today represents America in 2060, and it is incumbent upon us to better serve students from different racial, socioeconomic, and cultural backgrounds. I have a demonstrated track record in leading for equity and will continue to advance this work in Nevada.
5. **Build Stronger State-District-School Partnerships:** Our tools and infrastructure across Nevada are outdated and ineffective, which contribute to the failure of the education system. It is critical that we learn to share resources and collaborate more effectively with each other across the state. More of the same leadership and more of the same divisiveness will lead us to more of the same dismal results. The kids of Nevada deserve so much better than what we have been giving them.

In closing, I ask you again: do you want more of the same, or are you interested in a transformative leader that will get our Nevada students, families, and communities the results we need and deserve? It would be my greatest honor to serve the state and people I have long loved.

I appreciate your time and consideration, and I would be happy to answer any further questions you may have about my application.

Respectfully yours,

Seng-Dao Yang Keo, Ed.L.D.

References for Dr. Seng-Dao Yang Keo

Paul Reville

Francis Keppel Professor of Practice of Educational Policy and Administration at the Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE); Founding Director of HGSE's Education Redesign Lab; and Former Secretary of Education for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Email address:

Maria Hyler

Deputy Director, Washington DC Office and Senior Researcher for the Learning Policy Institute

Email address:

Roger Rahming

Former Nevada Department of Education Deputy Superintendent – Business and Support Services

Email address:

Ethel Branch

Former Attorney General, Navajo Nation

Email address:

Christine Chen

Executive Director, APIAVote

Email address: