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SCHOOL READINESS:
CLOSING RACIAL AND ETHNIC GAPS

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C O N T E N T S**Panel 1: Policymakers**

Moderator and Overview: ISABEL SAWHILL

Panelists: GROVER WHITEHURST
U.S. Department of Education

CLIFFORD JOHNSON
National League of Cities

MAYOR STEVE BURKHOLDER (R)
City of Lakewood, Colorado

Panel 2: Parent and Preschool Programs

Moderator: RON HASKINS

Panelists: DONNA DESROCHERS
Committee for Economic Development

CYNTHIA JONES
National Head Start Assn.

HELEN BLANK
National Women's Law Center

DOUGLAS BESHAROV, AEI

P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. SAWHILL: Good morning. I'm Isabel Sawhill, and I'm a vice president and director of economic studies here at Brookings. But more importantly for this event, I am one of five senior editors of a new journal that we call "The Future of Children." Actually, it is not a brand-new journal; it's an old journal that's under new management. It used to be published by the Packard Foundation, and might be familiar to some of you. But starting with the issue that we're releasing today, it is now under the auspices of Brookings and Princeton University.

This first issue is on racial and ethnic gaps in school readiness. The lead editor for the issue was Ceci Rouse, who is a professor of economics at Princeton University and an expert on education. Unfortunately, she could not come today because she has young children--which is a theme in this issue, obviously. But I will do the best I can to reflect what I think this first issue is all about.

Let's start with several important facts. First of all, the gaps in school readiness between minority and non-minority children are substantial, somewhere between a half and 1 standard deviation when children are age 5 or 6. For those of you who are not statisticians and are

wondering what does 1 standard deviation or half a standard deviation mean--is that large, is that significant--the answer is yes, it is. One way to think about it is that 84 percent of white children perform better than the average black child at school entry.

Second important fact: These gaps in test scores at school entry predict or explain a large portion, perhaps as much as one-half, of later test score gaps in the high school years. Which in turn, of course, predict a large part of the differences in socioeconomic status by race and ethnicity when people become adults.

So if we could explain these early test score gaps and could do something about them, we might have a very significant impact on racial and ethnic disparities in American life. In fact, doing something about these early gaps in school readiness is probably one of the most effective, if not the most effective, things one could do to end or narrow current disparities.

This journal issue that we're releasing today includes eight essays on the possible sources of this gap, all written by leading experts in the field. These experts looked at the role of socioeconomic status, of genetics, of parenting styles and practices, of health factors, and of access to childcare in early childhood education. And

while we have to admit that the research on this issue is far from definitive, the major conclusion seems to be that home environments in the early years are critical and that a change in parenting styles or greater access to high-quality out-of-home care are the best bets for narrowing the gaps between minority and non-minority children.

We looked, by the way, both at Hispanic children and at African American children, but the data on the latter are better than the data on the former.

Obviously, both black and Hispanic children tend to be concentrated in lower-income families, and that takes its toll. More income, higher socioeconomic status for these families would clearly help. But the editors of this journal conclude that money alone is not likely to solve the problem or is not the best approach. They argue that children need to be read to and talked to when they are very young and they need to learn a variety of social or behavioral skills as well, such as taking turns or exercising self-control.

So in the end, the editors say, we need to do two things in particular. First, we need to help parents to understand the importance of these very early years and help them to become better parents. Secondly, we also need

to provide high-quality childcare, early childhood education for more of these children.

In a policy brief co-authored by my colleague Ron Haskins and Ceci Rouse, the lead editor of this journal, they develop a specific proposal along these lines and describe it in some detail. Their proposal would involve taking all funds now spent on childcare and early childhood education programs like Head Start and using them, along with some additional money, to provide a high-quality program--at least as high-quality as Head Start--for all lower-income 4-year-olds. The income cutoff here would be 200 percent of the poverty line, or roughly \$35,000 for a typical family. With such a policy in place, the authors estimate that the gap between minority and non-minority children would be reduced by a quarter to a third.

But since there are a number of uncertainties about how this would work, Ron and Ceci argue for allowing a few states to experiment with such a system and carefully evaluating the results.

I'm sure you're going to hear more about this proposal from Ron, and I hope we will also have a lively debate about its merits from today's panelists.

So with that, I want to now turn to our first panel. We're going to start with Steve Burkholder. He is

the mayor of Lakewood, Colorado. I have just gotten back from Colorado myself and have told him what a fan I am of his state. We're very fortunate to have him with us today. He's been very active in municipal affairs both locally and nationally.

Second, we will hear from Russ Whitehurst. Russ was appointed by President Bush as director of the Institute of Educational Sciences in 2002, I think. He holds a Ph.D. in child psychology.

Finally, but not least, we will hear from Cliff Johnson, who is director of the Institute for Youth, Education and Families at the National League of Cities and has had a distinguished career as a legislative aide and analyst and a child's advocate.

So, with that, let me turn this over to Steve.

MR. BURKHOLDER: Thank you, Bel.

I'm going to start from the common ground where we're at. We all agree that we want to achieve high standards for young people as they enter the education system. This has been a passion for the National League of Cities for many years, and we have numerous reports that have been done on that. I think that we certainly are up here on the dais talking about an issue that is important to all of us. We all agree that what we're trying to

achieve is the result of providing that better, if you would, preschool education.

I will tell you right now that the National League of Cities and my city, of course, is opposed to any type of block grant that would go to the states because we think that the program is working now--and I'm going to give you some figures here that I think will work out on this. Let me set the stage, though, so you understand. Lakewood, Colorado, is the fourth-largest city in the State of Colorado. We're a first-tier suburb. We have changing demographics. We have a growing Hispanic population, we have a growing Asian population; our black population is remaining about the same.

But it is an issue that I'm very, very concerned about. I guess that the two core issues here today are the need to give the money to the state, if you would, for state block grants and then state administration provides continuity. And again, I would challenge each of those particular statements.

Head Start was designed across the country to really work with local governments and to really provide funds for direct services. And I think that that is really the key word that we're looking at at this particular point. That is so, so important. We know what's going on

at the local level. I'm sorry, Washington, D.C. is great, we work in partnership with them on many issues, but we know the unique issues to Lakewood, Colorado.

We conduct comprehensive survey needs to determine what is important for each of those youth that are involved with our program. I will say right now that one of the key words that we look at is "partnerships." It's not only the child, but it's also the families that we are working with. We feel it is critical to present those lifestyle issues and life skills that really are important after the fact, not only during the fact. And I think that that is extremely important.

The other thing that I think that we look at, too, is how do you involve the community on this issue. My Rotary Club every week, we throw money into the jar that goes to the kids in Head Start so that we can buy things like pencils or we can help them out on a book or whatever the case might be. But we don't tell them what to do with the money--here's the money, you work with it. And I think that that's important. Also, our partnership with our public school system is important, because if you can create that level playing field as the child enters the system, then they're going to be much better off.

Let me compare some of the issues of what we do in the state program versus what we do as far as the City of Lakewood is concerned. The preschool day: We provide more days and we provide longer hours. Let's talk about the meals. We provide two meals a day, not just a snack. What do we do as far as health, dental, and medical care? We actually have that ability to partner with the health community to provide those services. Family support. That's so key, is working with those parents, working with the families that are responsible for those kids, to work with them on that. We do that. There's no program at the state level on that. Parent groups. We meet monthly with the parents so that they're part of the process, so that they're not just there saying, here, take my kids, do miracles. They're a part of the process. They're required to be part of the process.

Let's talk about the age of the children. We talk about birth-5. We don't talk just about 4 years old in the program that we run in my city. We talk about parent literacy activities. We know for a fact that if that parent is involved with their child and can speak the language, then things happen in a very positive manner. Staff training. We require that our people be constantly training. In fact, I will tell you that as far as our city

is concerned, we have quite a few people that have got degrees. In many cases, the state does not really require a certain amount of people as part of your program to be certified.

Outcomes. This is critical to me, as a fiscal conservative. What are we doing as far as where we're at? We're constantly reassessing what we're doing, how we are leveraging our dollars and how we can provide additional services. The other issue that I think is important, too, is that we look at how do you take those dollars that we receive in federal dollars and leverage those to provide more dollars.

The other thing is, too, is program governance. We actively involve the members of the community, if you would, in being part of our governance panel. Parents are part of the governance panel. Who are to say what needs to be done? These are people that are out there living it day-to-day-to-day that say to us, you know, Mayor, we think that this would be good, or when they're talking to our staff, we think that this would be good. So we do a lot of listening in addition to saying here's what we need to do.

I will tell you this, that research shows that this program is working. Ironically, we're right in the middle of a review right now, so I'm very pleased. I

talked to the director yesterday. Things are going well. Of course, we'll find out at the end of the week.

Let me talk about one thing that I think is important here and share with you a letter from a parent. This is a parent that took over her niece and has also adopted her daughter. But it says, "My niece was totally lost. Having never been around other children her own age, she did not know what to do. The first year she learned so much from Head Start. Her teachers were like godsend. They taught her to write (almost) her name, how to share, how could she serve herself, and they taught her to recognize her colors. They also taught her to play, smile, and socialize. Today she says, you know, I really appreciate what I learned in Head Start." And of course, I paraphrased that, but the Head Start mom concludes by saying, "I can't thank Head Start enough for helping my little girl."

Folks, this is what it's all about: helping people help themselves.

Let me get back to the evening of the playing field and why I'm so passionate about this. Surveys have come out that for every dollar that you invest in a child at this age yields the society about \$4 back as we move into later years. Because that child becomes competent,

that child becomes believing in what they're doing. So I think that this is a good investment, as a fiscal conservative.

We're constantly challenging our staff to look at what they're doing, and we are constantly being asked by people at the national level to justify what we are doing. I will just say here, I will conclude my comments by saying we have an effective measure of what we do in our city that is available, it's public, obviously people can look at it. But we just don't go out and say, Go do good things; we say, What are you doing? Give us the proof. So I think that that's very important.

One of the things that I think is so important for us to remember in this whole process is let's not have block grants which actually can bloat the bureaucracy of the system. It can also create less accountability. We are accountable in the City of Lakewood, Colorado. We get it. And I think that the thing that we're very impressed with is the fact that we have the opportunity to provide this service as a city that is constantly changing. I will also say that we are comprehensive in what we do, we're effective in what we do, and Head Start should remain at the local level.

[Applause.]

MS. SAWHILL: Thank you, Steve. Ross?

MR. WHITEHURST: Good morning. I'm pleased to be here.

I come at this from both an emotional point of view and a point of view of looking hard at the numbers. About 15 years ago, when I was doing research in Head Start, I headed out late August to a local Head Start center to make my pitch to parents who were coming to the first meeting for parents of that year. My pitch was about the need to contribute to and be a part of the research project I was running. And I saw one younger parent there who sat there through the meeting, and as I was packing things up in my car to head home, I noticed her walking along the road with her Head Start-aged child in tow and a younger child on her hip. So I asked her if she needed a ride somewhere. She thanked me and accepted the offer. Got in my car. I thought I was riding her around the block. I let her out about two miles later. I said, So, did you walk all the way to the Head Start center? She said yes. And I said, Golly, it's a long way to go with a young child in tow. And she said, Yes, but I care about my babies.

Parent care about their kids. It still makes me tear up a little bit to think about that. And those of us

in positions of responsibility, I think, have a moral responsibility to see that those parents get the best services we could possibly provide. Part of doing that is looking hard at what research tells us with regard to what works and what doesn't. So let me go over a few things that I think are well supported by facts, that few people would quarrel with, and talk to you about a couple of new pieces of research that I don't believe were covered directly in "The Future of Children" issue that is released today.

First, I think it's without doubt that measures school readiness and individual differences in school readiness among children strongly predict academic achievement in elementary school. There's just no question that what kids know about a variety of things, including such mundane learnable facts as letters of the alphabet, on entry to kindergarten have strong predictive effects on their ability to read and learn other important things in elementary school. And then performance in elementary school, of course, has a strong predictive relationship with later development.

We know that some preschool programs clearly increase school readiness. And we know that it's important to increase school readiness because, as this issue of "The

Future of Children" indicates, there are strong achievement gaps that exist prior to entry into school that have important relationships with later development. A team of researchers that we at the Institute of Education Sciences support, Starkey and Klein, have done cross-cultural studies in which they find comparing Japan, China, and the United States, and in all three countries there are significant gaps in achievement, gaps in knowledge, gaps in readiness that can be documented as early as 3 years of age. What happens in China and Japan is that the preschool programs in those countries progressively narrow those gaps and so they are essentially gone by the age of entry into first grade. Those gaps do not narrow in the United States.

We know that the quality and content of the programs mediate the effects of preschool education. At IES we are sponsoring something called the Preschool Curriculum Evaluation Research Program that has 13 different curricula out in the field. It will be probably sometime this summer before we release the first report. But we have found that some curricula work better than others in terms of preparing kids for school.

We know across a variety of research studies that the effects of quality preschool programs are greatest for

children most at risk. So that spreading the money across all children is not, in the case of scarce resources, going to generate as strong an effect as focusing on the children for whom the gaps are greatest, who are most at risk of not doing well in elementary school.

Now, let me get to an area of research that is newer and, I think, is relevant, certainly, to the policy proposals of Haskins and Rouse in this issue of the journal.

I believe that emerging research suggests that state pre-K programs may be--and I stress "may be"--doing a better job than Head Start. One study that I draw your attention to was just reported at the most recent meeting of the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, October. This is a very careful quasi-experimental analysis of the Georgia state pre-K program compared to Head Start. It finds in each county of Georgia a Head Start program and a state pre-K program, does a propensity score matching to link up comparable children in those two programs, finds equivalence at the beginning of the pre-K year, and substantially higher gains for the kids in the state pre-K program at the end of the year. I think we have to look carefully at that research because it's the

strongest research currently out there that compares a state-managed program with Head Start.

There is also, I think, a very interesting study that has been conducted by a team at Georgetown University on the effects of Oklahoma's universal pre-K program. Here, they use an interesting design called a regression discontinuity design that takes advantage of the fact that there's a strict calendar cutoff date for entry into the pre-K program. So there are some kids who are a little too young to get in and some kids who just made it. And you can compare those kids, families of both having applied for the program, in terms of their abilities at the beginning of kindergarten. And there's a substantial positive effect of enrollment in the state pre-K program, something that I think represents roughly half a standard deviation of gain on most of the measures that are included in this research. Some people would think a half a standard deviation is almost a year's worth of progress at this point in time.

We've done analyses of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study data set. This is 22,000 kids. We focused on the kids who are at the poverty level who either are exposed to parental care, Head Start, or other pre-K experiences during the pre-K year, and find in general that the children who attend non-Head Start pre-K programs are

doing better than kids--comparable kids in terms of poverty attending Head Start.

And finally, I would point out to you something I think that is supportive of the potential value of state-run programs, and that is that those programs tend to have teachers who have more education, more likely to be [inaudible], have the qualities in terms of training, background, and education that are likely to promote more positive interactions.

So I believe a demonstration program in which states have the option of producing a coordinated system is worth trying. I don't know if it will work better than the current system, but I think if we do that in the context of a careful evaluation of the effects of such demonstrations, we'll be in a better position to make recommendations with respect to public policy going forward.

So I come back to my original theme, which is that we have an obligation to do the best we can for the parents of all children, and certainly parents of children in greatest need. I think the best way we're going to do that is to carefully collect evidence, look at it dispassionately, and try to go in the direction that the evidence leads.

Thank you.

[Applause.]

MS. SAWHILL: Cliff.

MR. JOHNSON: Thanks, Bel.

I'd like to begin by both thanking and applauding Brookings and Princeton for bringing us together around this topic and having such a clear focus on the gaps in school readiness. From our work at the National League of Cities, this strikes us as exactly right framing of a question, a very important question both for early childhood development and for our goals around academic achievement and school improvement throughout the K-12 years.

NLC's involvement in the early childhood issues was really catapulted by New Haven mayor, John DeStefano, when he was president of the National League of Cities in 2003. He came to this issue precisely because his wife is a kindergarten teacher, and they would talk year after year about the enormous gaps in school readiness that she would see in her incoming kindergarten classes and how easily she could tell who had had some sort of quality preschool Head Start experience and who had not. And so that issue has a real legacy for us at the National League of Cities and has driven a lot of our work.

I think as the mayor has reflected in his comments, city leaders across the country care a lot about these issues. They care about it in terms of early childhood development, they care about it because of the school improvement in academic goals they're trying to pursue; they care about it for economic development reasons as well. Most cities, as you probably know, don't run Head Start programs. Most of the Head Start grantees around the country are not municipalities, so the City of Lakewood is a little unusual in that respect, but a great example of strong municipal commitment.

The fact that most cities don't run Head Start is important in the context of NLC's policy positions around Head Start reauthorization and the block grant proposals that have surfaced in the last couple of years, because this is not primarily NLC members protecting their turf, it is a statement from municipal leaders across the country about the importance of a program that is working and the great reservations, a serious reluctance to dismantle a program structure when we're having a lot of success through Head Start.

The many concerns about the administration's original Head Start proposal and the compromise state demos that it has spawned start with the community control and

community engagement issues that Mayor Burkholder discussed. They also include concerns that block grants would invariably, inevitably undermine performance standards; arguably, also increase administrative costs in the system as 50 states started to sort out their own structures.

A big concern for us is that the politics of block grants are well known. And quite honestly, if you care about sustained investments in children and young children, the politics of block grants strike us as terrible. The trail typically starts with arguments around flexibility and coordination. But a couple of years down the road, you end up in a place where suddenly you have more diffuse goals and certainly weakened constituencies around those programs. And then the end game, almost inexorably, it seems, is eventual proposals for major cuts in the investments in those programs, arguing that we don't know what we're funding and we don't know what we're getting for our returns on our investments.

Cities and towns and municipal leaders across the country are in town this weekend and on Capitol Hill today fighting a proposal for a huge cut in a block grant program called the Community Development Block Grant Program. It's a challenge for the cities to articulate why that program

is so important, and that's because there is enormous variation in how cities use those funds and it's hard to tell one coherent story. I think it's clear that Head Start could end up easily in the same position, where it would be very difficult to defend a program which now has a very strong brand name, has a clear identity, and as a result, I would argue, has been largely beyond the reach of budget cutters at the federal level because everyone at least thinks they know what it is, thinks they can picture the program. You can give a coherent description of what you're supporting and, as a result, you generate broad public support.

I think in this context, again, if your concern is about closing these gaps in school readiness in the early childhood years and you believe that greater investments are necessary to determine how to do that, I think the arguments for state coordination and consolidation via block grants have to be very compelling in order to want to convince you to go down that road. So the question in my mind is how compelling are those arguments for state consolidation and state administration.

I suggest that the track record of states in running programs of this sort is hardly impressive. I think there is no question that you can find individual

states who are doing interesting things in their state-funded pre-K programs. Many states have only small or no pre-K programs at all; others, as Mayor Burkholder described in Colorado, have state program structures that fall far short of what Head Start assures and provides. In the early childhood area, I think you can raise lots of questions about how states have dealt with quality issues through their state-administered childcare programs. And arguably, if you're looking at K-12 education as an extension of this, states have failed to close the achievement gaps in the K-12 stretch or to address the kinds of problems in quality to the point that the federal government has intervened, controversially, perhaps, through No Child Left Behind to try and push states to do a better job.

Now, in fairness to Haskins and Rouse, in their policy paper they attempt to address at least some of these concerns by searching for a middle ground and arguing that states should be required to maintain Head Start performance standards under a set of carefully designed demonstrations. I think in so doing, though, they raise other key questions, both political questions and substantive questions. On the politics side, it's unclear whether the administration would have any interest in

demonstrations that require a broad approach to school readiness--appropriately so--that looks at the full range of needs and skills rather than a narrower emphasis on pre-literacy skills. On the state level, it's unclear that states would have any interest, and how many states would take up an offer for a demonstration that precluded them from either watering down Head Start standards or attempting to serve more children with less intensive and arguably lower-quality interventions.

So I think a lot of political questions there, but substantive concerns as well. The experiences of cities such as--it's not clear what the basis is for pinning so many hopes on coordinated funding and using this as a basis for going from a federal-local partnership to state control. So, for example, the experiences of cities, such as San Antonio, demonstrate that it is possible to blend funding streams at the local level and to have a single portal of entry for all early childhood programs under current law and regulation.

Even if the results of a small number of state demonstrations in carefully selected states were promising, it's also unclear what that would tell us about a shift to state administration. Again, I'd argue that the variation across states, in terms of levels of interest and

commitment as well as in terms of their capacity, is very large and at least rivals the variations in quality across current Head Start sites and grantees. I, frankly, wouldn't be surprised if you could find a small handful of states that could meet the challenge that's laid out in the Haskins and Rouse policy paper. But I would still argue that state administration of Head Start would be a historic error both on policy grounds and on political grounds, and thinking about going from a couple of carefully selected state demonstrations to a shift in national program structure.

In closing, I'd suggest NLC's view of this is that Head Start is not broken or fundamentally flawed, that we know what's required to continue to raise the quality of Head Start and other early childhood and pre-K offerings, that we certainly need to continue to work in a Head Start context to chip away at the quality problems, to help continue with efforts to identify, strengthen, and, when necessary, de-fund poorly performing Head Start grantees. That challenge would remain even if we had a state-administered program. We would still have the challenge of states having to intervene with local programs that weren't performing well and to deal with them.

The policy paper frames as a goal for the demonstrations to find out whether it is possible to create and implement a statewide program that effectively increases access and improves quality while efficiently coordinating all sources of funding. I think, as a friendly counter-proposal for the demonstrations that are offered here, I think it's very important to figure out how we can pull program streams together and increase the quality of things. I think most of that coordination work happens on the ground. It has to happen in local communities.

I'd be very interested in thinking about a demonstration structure in which you had selected communities trying to mount community-wide systems of early childhood to demonstrate that you could get more effective results, have states and federal government showing the flexibility to make that possible, and using that as a basis for moving forward without opening and creating the slippery slope about what happens for Head Start with a state-administered block grant structure.

Thanks again for this opportunity.

MS. SAWHILL: Thank you, Cliff.

[Applause.]

MS. SAWHILL: Well, that was a really terrific and very thoughtful set of comments, I think. I want to bring all of you into this conversation very quickly, but let me just start out here by asking a rather global question of all three of the panelists. Which is, let's suppose and imagine that you had an extra \$5 billion a year from the federal government to spend on school readiness. My question is, what would you do with it? Would you use it to enroll more children in Head Start? Would you go to younger-age children? I think that Steve talked about the emphasis on birth to age 5, not just 4-year-olds or 5-year-olds. Would you improve the quality of what we have but keep the program very targeted on just poor children? Or would you extend up the income scale to, say, 200 percent of poverty, as suggested in the Haskins-Rouse brief? Would you seek out more qualified certified teachers? Would you simply, as Russ suggested, use the money in conjunction with the other \$25 billion that's out there for all of the childcare and Head Start and state-level programs right now?

What would you do? Cliff is nodding his head, so let's start with you, Cliff.

MR. JOHNSON: The nod was indicating I understood the question.

[Laughter.]

MR. JOHNSON: I think if you had an extra \$5 billion you'd have to take a big chunk of that, at least half of that, I think, and put it into expansion of the Head Start program. I think for all the warts and the shortcomings of Head Start programs and knowing that it could and should be a better program, I think the fact that we continue to fail to reach many children who we know need Head Start's help is an indictment on the country and that we need to continue to move that agenda towards a full funding strategy for Head Start.

MS. SAWHILL: Could I interrupt just for a second to clarify for the audience and for us up here. Right now, the program is open to primarily poor children, below the poverty line with some few exceptions. And I think the latest data is, what, about 60 percent of those eligible are enrolled?

Steve, do you have any evidence on whether or not there are queues, children who want to get in who aren't being served in your community?

MR. BURKHOLDER: Very definitely. I mean, we have a waiting list. Probably for every child that we have in there, there's another child waiting at the doorway to come in.

And I go back to that point again. I mean, we invest a dollar at this age and the return is \$4. It just makes no sense to me that we don't continue to reach out to our youth.

And I will tell you this. Again, I get back to the measurable part of it. We just know that it works. And, you know, you just can't throw money at something and hope that it works. I think that the thing that is important to us is that we constantly are checking and asking how are we doing. We have a child assessment. We do three reviews a year to make sure we're on target. But far above, we need to, certainly, bring this forward to more and more people.

MS. SAWHILL: So you would agree with what Cliff just said?

MR. BURKHOLDER: Actually, I would say "all of the above" -- very, very frankly. But I realize--

MS. SAWHILL: That's a cop-out.

MR. BURKHOLDER: --that's really not the issue. The issue really is, is that we're not reaching this--and very frankly, our nation is becoming a nation of inequities right now. And I hate to say this, even in my city we have a growing segment of our population that has a need for where we're at on this particular thing. I feel very

comfortable with our people doing what we're doing, doing it very effectively in the city of Lakewood, Colorado. But there are more people out there we're not touching right now.

MS. SAWHILL: Russ, let me bring you in on this. And Cliff, feel free to say more, if you'd like.

MR. WHITEHURST: Well, first, there are people in the room who have more knowledge about this than I do. But I'm not convinced that there is in general a huge unmet demand for Head Start. There are certainly some communities in which there is a queue. There are other communities where Head Start centers are spending a substantial portion of their budget in recruiting. Nationally, I may be off a few percentage points, but I believe 86 percent of African American kids are [inaudible] in the year before kindergarten. That suggests that there are other providers that are attractive. Certainly in states in which there is a universal pre-K program, we've seen a movement from Head Start into those pre-K programs. So I think we need to address empirically the question of unmet demand rather than simply assuming that it is there.

On the question of how you'd spend \$5 billion, my preference would be to spend it to improve the quality of what's currently offered both in terms of curriculum and

program and also in the professional development and pre-service training of the teachers who provide those programs. We know from research in elementary and middle school that quality teachers are one of the most powerful influences on children's development. Why would that not be the case in the pre-K arena? In general, levels of training and professional development are low there and the curriculum and other materials and experiences that children face are simply, in my experience both empirical and anecdotal, a long way from optimal. So that's how I would spend the money.

MR. BURKHOLDER: Let me jump on that, as far as education. You know, creating an environment for your staff is so, so important. And, you know, I can sit here and give you figures all day, but I think this is quite interesting as far as qualification: Fifty percent of all the teachers in our program have at least an A.A. degree. And the city's exceeded this requirement, and all teachers at least have that. But most have their BA. I mean, we've got some very qualified people in the City of Lakewood in this program. And I have to tell you, they're doing it for a pittance. They really are. It's a passion that they're doing it for, because they realize this need here. And I

get back to the point: We still have people at the door wanting to get in.

MR. JOHNSON: I think the only other thing I'd say is that, you know, the question about what the extent of the demand is for Head Start hinges a lot on what the Head Start package is. With so many Head Start programs continuing to only offer part-day services, I think there's a big question there about having the available funding that would be necessary to go towards full-day services. I think it makes sense to look at the income range a bit and see whether some of the near-poor and working-poor folks who don't meet the strict poverty threshold also should be accommodated there.

And then I would absolutely concur, I think some of that funding needs to be invested in the kind of continuing professional development and quality improvement drive within the program, because we all care about that.

MS. SAWHILL: You know, we haven't really addressed the younger children and the Early Head Start program. Russ, do you have any comments about that--where that stands and what we know about it?

MR. WHITEHURST: There was a very nice randomized trial of Early Head Start that indicated some positive effects.

MS. SAWHILL: Do you want to describe for people first what Early Head Start is?

MR. WHITEHURST: Sure. Early Head Start is an extension of the Head Start program, from 4-year-olds down to 2-, 3-, and sometimes 1-year-olds, with the notion that an extended preschool experience connected with parental training is going to give you a bigger dose and therefore a larger effect on entry into school. And the evaluation indicated some positive effects of Early Head Start. I think if you look at the size of those effects, it would indicate there's a ways to go in getting the maximum impact from that investment. So I think there's an empirical question yet unanswered with respect to, if you had the \$5 billion, if you invested it in a more extended period of early preschool experience like Early Head Start or if you invested it in the 3- and 4-year-olds, whether you would get the largest return on the investment. I don't know the answer.

MS. SAWHILL: Okay, let's open this up to the audience.

QUESTION: Inesi [ph] Fuentes, Casa of Maryland. This question is for Mayor Burkholder.

I'm curious, since you said it's a first-tier suburb, I'm thinking it's like Montgomery County here. So

what is the percentage of residents who are in poverty? And then, how does the city pay for the readiness program, not just the schooling but, as you said, the health care and all the other needs that poor families have? And then, how do you convince the taxpayers to pay for it? I mean, one of the problems in Montgomery County is that most of the money comes from the tax on property. So the high-property folks don't need these programs for their children. So yes, you have a growing poor population, primarily Latino and African American also in Montgomery County. How do you do that politically?

MR. BURKHOLDER: Ours is a very interesting city. As I said, it's about 145,000 people, first-tier suburb, changing demographics. With that said, we have approximately a little over 10-12 thousand people that are below the poverty line in this particular area, and it's growing. One of my challenges as mayor, the eastern edge of our city is approximately 50 percent Hispanic, Asian; the western edge of my city is probably 95 percent Anglo. So bringing this together is an interesting dynamic. We don't have time. But I will say this, that we have the lowest sales tax. In the West, we rely on sales taxes; it's not property tax. And we have the lowest sales tax of any city in the metro Denver area. But we--I get back to

our staff. They leverage their dollars -- about \$3 million a year, we leverage that to over \$17 million a year in our Housing and Family Services Department.

So we have very little money. This is why I've said throughout my little talk here is the fact that I believe in accountability and I believe that you're constantly having to challenge people to make sure you're utilizing those dollars. We're not rich, I guarantee you. But at the same time, we manage to really do our programs in a very meaningful and effective way. And we're constantly challenging every program that we do in our city. So it's a challenge that we keep looking at. As I said, that \$5 billion--I smiled because, you know, you can throw money at everything. But I'm just amazed that we do what we do in the City of Lakewood.

QUESTION: But the people who are teaching those children, are they able to live in Lakewood?

MR. BURKHOLDER: Some do, some don't. It is--you know, I can't tell you exactly on every person, but I do know that some of the people do live there. But some say, hey, I can't afford to live in Lakewood. I mean, it's amazing, the \$35,000 figure. You know, when you stop a-- this affordable housing thing always gets me because, I mean, it's, okay, so you got \$35,000. That's a starting

school teacher, that's a firefighter, that's a starting policeman. It's a huge issue. I think affordable housing is one of the biggest issues we're facing in this country today, particularly here in Washington, D.C.

[Laughter.]

MR. BURKHOLDER: I don't see how you live here. I have to go home where it's cheaper.

QUESTION: I'm Rosanna Ender from the Joyce Foundation. I had two questions.

One is for the mayor, and that is I'm curious what impact, if any, the tax expenditure limits that Colorado passed about a decade ago have had on your ability. It sounds like you're doing a good job of leveraging resources, but I'm curious if you could say that that had an impact on your ability to serve kids or not.

And then secondly, I was just curious about Dr. Whitehurst's comments about targeting scarce resources to the most vulnerable children. I know I'm paraphrasing a little bit. But you mentioned two programs as examples that state preschool have of better impact than Head Start, but both the programs you highlight were universal programs. So I just wanted to get a better understanding of that contradiction.

MR. BURKHOLDER: Let me be brief on TABR because we have just a few minutes left. TABR is destroying the State of Colorado. Okay? Now I've drawn the line there, folks, okay? But really, our infrastructure's falling apart and our higher education system is in a shambles right now. We do have Amendment 23, which provides K-12, but outside that K-12, we're in trouble in education in the State of Colorado right now. Don't do TABR.

MR. WHITEHURST: Let me respond to the second part. Normally analysis of the Oklahoma program disaggregated effects for minority low-income, non-minority middle-income. And they found that the large effects, as it existed for the kids at risk and the minority kids, very difficult to demonstrate any effects at all for the middle-class kids. So that's an empirical basis for arguing that the resources would be better invested on the most vulnerable children. There's a political dimension to this, I understand, and it may be easier to provide a universal pre-K program for political reasons than it is to provide a targeted program.

QUESTION: Doug Besharov.

Very enjoyable. I have a question for Russ Whitehurst which kind of builds on the last question. I think it's the case that there's never been an evaluation

of an ongoing Head Start program that's shown the same impact as those two evaluations of state pre-K programs. Let's assume that's the case. Explain. Why do you suppose, if that is true, why do you suppose that at least some state pre-K programs seem to be more successful in narrowing the gap than an ongoing Head Start program?

MR. WHITEHURST: Well, there is currently a national study of the impact of Head Start. We all eagerly await the release of those findings. The best piece of research on Head Start just in terms of quality of the design is the sibling comparison study, where you look at brothers and sisters some of whom have gotten into Head Start and some have not, which shows effects.

My hypothesis about why a state pre-K might be better focuses largely on oversight, connection with the regular schools, and the quality of staffing. Roughly 85 percent of teachers in state pre-K programs have an undergraduate degree. I believe the target on the reauthorization of Head Start is 30 percent of staff having a CDA. So there are big differences here in terms of the quality of the adults in the kids' lives that I think, at the first glance, that's likely to be carrying a lot of the weight.

MS. SAWHILL: Okay, I think we should change panels. We're not going to take a break. We're simply going to have a little changing of the guard up here at the front.

I want to thank all three of these panelists for a terrific discussion.

[Applause.]

MR. HASKINS: Okay, we're going to start. Thank you for not leaving the room. We always appreciate that. We like to make a nice, efficient transition to the second panel.

I am Ron Haskins, a senior fellow here at Brookings. I'd like to thank you all for coming today. I think we had a wonderful first panel, and maybe in this panel we can explore the issues in a little bit more depth.

We have an excellent panel. I'd like to mention first that Steve Barnett, unfortunately, is ill. He called yesterday at about 5 o'clock. He's been in bed for several days and he has to go out of the country on Friday, so he didn't want to take a chance on coming to Washington and catching all the bacteria and germs that proliferate in this city. Even when you're this close to the Congress, you can still catch it. So he did not come, and we regret that.

But we still have a wonderful panel. Let me just introduce them briefly. Many of you who have come here before know we give very brief introductions and don't waste time with lots of background information.

Donna Desrochers is the vice president and director of education studies for Committee on Economic Development. Many of you know that CED has a long history of involvement in preschool programs, and I believe is about to announce another study to look especially at the benefit cost and internal rate of return figures, which will be a great contribution.

Cynthia Jones is the special projects director for the National Head Start Association. We're pleased that she could come here today. She has a lot of experience in local Head Start programs, so she can represent local Head Start programs.

Helen Blank, whom probably everybody in this room knows, is a senior fellow, now at the National Women's Law Center and long-time student of Head Start and other preschool programs in childcare. Helen and I have had many, many interesting interactions over the years--all quite pleasant in nature, except the ones that occurred after midnight in one of the House office buildings.

[Laughter.]

MR. HASKINS: And then finally, Doug Besharov, who also has a long and distinguished career in this area. He has published often and organized numerous conferences on this issue. And Doug always has something controversial to say, so we're very pleased to have him. He's a scholar in social welfare studies at the American Enterprise Institute.

We'll begin with Donna.

MS. DESROCHERS: Thank you. Thank you very much for gathering us together here today to talk about these issues, about school achievement gaps and school readiness and how we can close those gaps.

As someone with a 5-month-old at home, this has taken on more of just a research interest. It's a personal interest. And even though I'm relatively low educated in working in the field of education, I have realized there's really a sharp learning curve in how to improve the readiness of children, even as early as 5 months old.

I think the editors and authors of "The Future of Children" did an excellent job presenting us with a volume that allows us to sort through all the different alternatives that might help improve school readiness, particularly for different race, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups. Most would acknowledge that there are many

different interventions that can help children. Clearly, promoting child health, better parenting, and environments that enhance brain development are all critically important. But the research presented suggests that investing in preschool will likely have the greatest impact, providing direct intervention on academic and social preparation.

As Ron mentioned, CED has a very long history of involvement in preschool. And CED, for those of you who do not know, is led by business and education leaders. Corporate CEOs sit on our board. I actually had an opportunity last week to sort of dig back into the archives of CED and, going back 60 years, looked at our work on research and policy issues, and found that CED first acknowledged the need for more and better early education in 1965, knowing that early education was critical to student preparation; and then a few years later, in 1968, first called for the establishment of public and private preschools, acknowledging that preschool is desirable for all children and probably a necessity for disadvantaged children. Two more reports followed where preschool was mentioned prior to our landmark report in 2002, which focused on solely on preschool, called "Preschool for All,"

where it called for a universal preschool for all 3- and 4-year-olds.

If you think about the fact that we've been calling for a universal pre-K and investments in preschool for the past 40 years, it can be a little bit discouraging. But actually, we've made quite a bit of progress over the last four decades. We now have state preschool programs in more than 40 states, and the share of students that have enrolled in preschool has tripled from 20 percent in 1965 to more than 65 percent today, and that's for 4-year-olds. And among 3-year-olds, it has also almost quadrupled from less than 10 percent to 40 percent over the same period.

However, we still have much ground to make up. Access is both uneven within states and across states as well as among race, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups. In "The Future of Children" volume, Katherine Magnusson and Jane Waldfogel will show that African American children are more likely to be enrolled in preschool than white children, but are probably in lower-quality care. And Hispanic children are significantly less likely to be enrolled in preschool. Furthermore, they show that state spending on pre-K varies widely. Of the 39 states that had pre-K programs in 2000, only seven made substantial per-capita investments in them. Quality is also uneven. Those

who need the greatest assistance often have an access to programs that are not high-quality.

Efforts to alleviate the gaps in academic achievement before children enter into K-12 education are critically important. These gaps persist and often widen as students progress through K-12. For instance, 17-year-old black and Hispanic students have average math and reading skills that are similar to white 13-year-old students. Only 8 percent of lower-income students take a rigorous courseload, compared with 28 percent of affluent students. And just over one-half of black and Hispanic students graduate from high school, and only one in five are really academically prepared for college.

Because education is cumulative, skills learned early on are increasingly important and increasingly difficult to make up for. The few longitudinal studies of pre-K programs that follow students into their adulthood, namely, the Perry Preschool, the Abecedarian, and the Chicago Child-Parent program, show that high-quality preschool can increase academic achievement in the early years and also lead to higher graduation rates, less remediation, and less special education. These students also tend to have better employment and earnings outcomes when they reach adulthood. But they also show that the

biggest effect may be on their criminal activity and its associated costs. These programs have favorable benefit-cost ratios, ranging from 4:1 to the most recent 40-year-old Perry Preschool follow-up, the cost-benefit was estimated at 17:1. They also have significant internal rates of return, the private benefits for Perry Preschool estimated at 4 percent, and actually the public benefit, or social benefit, being even larger at 12 percent, for a total return of 16 percent.

Trying to convince states to invest money in pre-K programs is, as we know, challenging. They face competing demands both from other education programs along the pipeline, namely, K-12 with its NCLB requirements, as well as higher education. Other interests, including Medicare, Social Security, national security, and of course, primarily in the D.C. area as well as other areas, transportation.

As a result, I think it's equally important, though, when we're trying to go out and convince the president, Congress, legislatures to invest in universal pre-K, that in addition to sort of social equity arguments and closing gaps, it's important to make economic arguments about why this is beneficial and why you should invest in these areas. Certainly there are individual benefits, but

there are also national economic benefits that can be used to support these arguments, and state economic benefits as well. Future demographic changes show that most of the population and labor force growth in the future will be coming from minority groups. And without efforts to increase the skill levels of these workers, we're in danger of lowering the quality of our workforce. At the same time, changes in the structure of work favor skilled workers and people without these skills increasingly have fewer economic opportunities.

So reducing [inaudible] is a good measure by which to gauge progress. Not reducing these gaps either in early childhood or during the school year can have real economic effects on the well-being of both individuals and the U.S. as a whole, influence both our productivity and our economic growth in the future.

[Applause.]

MR. HASKINS: Thank you very much. Cynthia?

MS. JONES: First, Ron, I'd like to thank you for inviting Sarah Green, our CEO from the National Head Start Association, to participate on this panel. But she had a previous engagement and asked me to come in her place.

For 40 years, Head Start has served as the nation's laboratory for many childhood initiatives. We

supported these initiatives because they were generally based on solid research and logic. Proposals today to block-grant Head Start to the states would take us in an opposite direction. We believe that changing Head Start from a federal-to-local program to a federal-to-state-to-local program is unnecessary and would be a disaster for Head Start. Coordination of existing early childhood and care programs can be increased within Head Start's existing funding structure, solid framework, and research community. Research partners such as High/Scope, Vanderbilt University, the University of Virginia, and high-quality Head Start programs together can increase this coordination.

The historical record shows that shifting the administration of a federal program to the states means reduced funding, as previously mentioned, and oversight, in that federal programs funds are likely to target poor children. Studies from the Government Accountability Office, formerly the General Accounting Office, and the Urban Institute found the real value of federal block grants to states gradually declines over time. Federal spending for various federal programs decreased by 12 percent when these programs were no longer categorical programs and became block grant programs. Federal

oversight of Medicaid home and community-based waivers has become lax as states have administered these Medicaid services. As a remedy, a June 2003 Government Accountability Office report called upon federal lawmakers to strengthen federal oversight over these Medicaid services. And lastly, federal education funds were 8 times more likely than state education funds to target poor children.

There are a number studies that have evaluated Head Start and state-funded pre-kindergarten programs, and studies that show that Head Start programs are generally of higher quality and more effective than state-funded pre-kindergarten programs generally are. Several of these other research programs have been mentioned this morning.

Head Start programs have had stable funding throughout Head Start's history, while state-funded pre-kindergarten programs frequently have experienced what's called the yo-yo effect. Ohio and Florida are examples of states whose funding of their pre-kindergarten programs has increased and decreased, depending on which state lawmakers were in office. And reliable and valid research has found that state-funded pre-kindergarten programs do not monitor and evaluate their programs as rigorously as the federal government evaluates Head Start.

During my 24-year tenure and McIntosh [inaudible] Early Childhood as a CEO and Head Start director, many community partnerships were formed, such as colleges and universities brought their classes to our employees on campus, so that eventually 75 out of our 130 employees advanced their education from high school diplomas to B.S. degrees. We also had inclusion Head Start classrooms that were established within two school systems to include the disability children in the classroom with the other children, and two other counties are now establishing these inclusion classrooms within their school systems. And we also had a new Head Start center that was built with Community Development Block Grant funds, as you heard this morning, that are now trying to go away. We also have national collaboratives with Johnson & Johnson, Sara Lee, WGBH Boston Public Television, Dell Computers, and Habitat for Community. And yesterday we launched a new initiative with the National Head Start Association and Nike, which will bring physical education activities into the Head Start child's daily schedule. This will be launched into eight states.

These are just a few community-based partnerships that have been created because of the community-based model that was originally started with Head Start. NHSA feels

that block granting Head Start to the states would automatically jeopardize these relationships and downgrade the program. Head Start has a great 40-year-old historical neighborhood of 900,000 children and families that is unique, culturally diverse, fascinating, vibrant, charming, and offers multiple opportunities to its neighbors globally. NHSA is not opposed to enhancing the landscape in our historical neighborhood, but paradigm shifting always poses risk. But block-granting is even a more risky policy change that can cause a downhill spiral for the value of our Head Start neighborhood and the future of our nation's most at-risk children and families. So why do we need to take that risk?

In conclusion, I would like to leave you with the mission statement of Bank Street College of Education in Manhattan, New York, that embraces the great philosophy of Head Start: To build emotional quotients and intelligence quotients together. The mission of Bank Street College is to improve the education of children and their teachers by applying to the educational process all available knowledge about learning and growth and by connecting teaching and learning meaningfully to the outside world. In so doing, we seek to strengthen not only individuals, but the community as well, including families, school, and a larger

society in which adults and children in all their diversity interact and learn. We see in education the opportunity to build a better society.

[Applause.]

MR. HASKINS: Helen Blank.

MS. BLANK: Thank you, Ron, for inviting me here.

I think the issues raised in the journal give us serious challenges. I just don't believe that the solution proposed is going to address these challenges. In the current policy environment, the wrong-headed priorities are leading us to a discussion to debate not how to best increase investments in early childhood, but how to take three slices of a pie, cut them up, and come up with a whole pie.

The two-state pilot doesn't increase the pie. It assumes somehow a state can serve all its 4-year-olds by putting together already sorely inadequate early childhood resources that now leave many of the families without the help they need and do not guarantee quality early care to children who are served. This plan moves the deck chairs in an arena that is not, as some would like us to believe, chock-full of money. Adding up funds and declaring that we spend over \$20 billion denies the reality of the early childhood world faced by parents, children, and providers.

There are not enough funds from Head Start, pre-K, childcare, block grant, and Title 1 to significantly expand the number of 4-year-olds who can attend quality pre-kindergarten without seriously cutting back on groups of children who currently receive help and on the nature of supports they receive.

There's nothing magical about state-level control. As Cliff talked about, there is extraordinary collaboration now going on at the local level. This collaboration does not necessarily result in additional dollars or more children receiving pre-K. They do help meet families' needs and they bolster the quality of supports that children are receiving. Many programs around the country are actually putting Head Start and pre-kindergarten together to create a longer day for working parents, and some of them, on top of that, put childcare dollars in a 3 o'clock. If they didn't do this, working parents wouldn't have access to quality early education. Other programs are putting B.A.-degree teachers into Head Start programs, again improving the quality of Head Start. This may free up some funds, but it still has additional costs of supporting B.A.-degree teachers.

Every one of the proposed funding streams that would be melded together in the pilot has significant gaps

in coverage and quality. Currently only one in seven eligible children receives CCDBG. These scarce resources are used for children from birth to 13; only 13 percent are used for 4-year-olds. Both CCDBG and TANF funds have been effectively frozen for years. TANF dollars funding childcare have been frozen at \$3.5 billion in each of the last three years. States are currently spending TANF funds at a level above their block grants and drawing down reserve funds to pay for current service levels. The administration's budget flat-funds the childcare block grant through 2009, and it estimates that 300,000 children will lose childcare services. On top of this, the administration proposes increased work requirements for low-income parents.

States have already made deep cuts in their childcare programs. Between 2001 and 2004, many states have made fewer families eligible for childcare, raised parents' share of the costs, and lowered reimbursement to already poorly paid providers. Some states have particularly steep cutoffs. Ohio and Oregon reduced their cutoff for eligibility from 185 to 150 percent of poverty. West Virginia is now at 135 percent of poverty. Parents earning 100 percent of poverty have had steep increases in their co-payments. Over half the states now have waiting

lists for childcare system, some very long--46,000 in Florida, 26,000 in Texas and in North Carolina. In nearly three-quarters of the states in 2004, rates for childcare providers were set below the 75th percentile or based on outdated market rate surveys. This was considerably than the 29 states that have outdated rates in 2001. Some of these are particularly outdated. Missouri bases its rates for preschool children on 1991 levels.

What do parents do when they're trying to work and support their families? A mother on the waiting list in Georgia had her mother, who was in a wheelchair, caring for her baby and school-age child. The baby couldn't be changed till the 8-year-old came home from school. A prep cook who lost childcare assistance in South Carolina brings her 3-year-old to work and is afraid that she will soon lose her job.

Providers are struggling. In Iowa, a rate for a preschool child in Des Moines is \$39 a week less than the private pay rate. In Oregon, a provider charged \$1,616 a month for a preschool child, but the state only reimbursed her \$435 a month. Childcare providers are making enormous sacrifices. They not only accept lower wages, they take money out of their own pockets now to purchase supplies. They fix leaky roofs. And they use their own savings to

cover their program's debt. Some programs can't even afford construction paper with these cuts.

Childcare licensing laws, huge gaps. In 36 states, a provider can work in a childcare center without any training in early childhood development. While there has been a growth in state-funded pre-K programs, the majority are part-day, part-year. According to NEAR, only one state meets all the minimum basic quality expectations for high-quality pre-K. Only about half the states that have pre-K now require teachers to have B.A. degrees in early childhood. A recent six-state study found that the quality of pre-K programs was lower than the quality of childcare and Head Start classrooms.

Only nine states provide more than \$4,000 per child for pre-K, and four of these follow the comprehensive Head Start model. Average state spending for pre-K is \$3,450 a year, compared to over \$9,000 spent per child in K-12 classrooms. In one state, Florida, that just recently enacted universal pre-K, teachers are only required to have CDA degrees, and the average per-child reimbursement is expected to be no more than \$3,000 a year. Some programs have said they cannot afford to do pre-K. Head Start, we know, has gaps. Only a quarter of the teachers have pre-K degrees. We are now serving only about half the eligible

children, and only about 3 percent of infants. Title 1 also has new responsibilities and is unlikely to have additional funds for pre-K.

When Congress is making decisions about priorities, it should be providing Head Start programs with more flexibility, so if they don't have a waiting list, they can serve younger children. If they do have a waiting list, they should be able to have more money to serve these children. We should also be strengthening the quality of Head Start and requiring teachers to have B.A. degrees. The 1998 reauthorization demonstrated that if we tie an increase in funding to Head Start to new requirements, Head Start teachers would then be required to have an A.A. degree. Head Start can accomplish its goals and improve its quality.

There are policy changes that would improve collaboration. States could be required as a condition of increased childcare block grant money to improve their childcare rules to make it easier to have childcare programs and Head Start and pre-K programs collaborate. This would involve more generous and probably more expensive childcare policies. CCDBG funds could be targeted to state pre-K programs and Head Start to help extend their day.

There are different choices to be made and priorities to be set. I think, in closing, I'd like everyone to take 30 seconds and contemplate the choices that the House and Senate are making, as we sit here, on their FY 2006 budget. One choice in the House is to make an estimated \$30-\$35 billion in cuts over the next five years in mandatory low-income programs, including Medicaid, Food Stamps, and childcare TANF and EITC. The president's budget would cut Head Start by 118,000 children over the next five years. The House budget resolution also calls for \$106 billion in additional tax cuts over the next five years, many of them targeted to high-income families who have already received tax cuts.

We should not be debating two pilots that consolidate already inadequate resources in early childhood, but instead be discussing how to ensure that Head Start is funded and structured in a way that supports high-quality early education for children and working parents and how state pre-kindergarten and childcare programs can be strengthened and expanded.

[Applause.]

MR. HASKINS: Thank you, Helen.

Doug Besharov.

MR. BESHAROV: Ron, Bel, thank you very much.

I'd like to start by echoing something that Bel said. We have to talk about other stuff, but we should remember that in study after study it's the parents who have the greatest impact on their children's development. And it's just a shame that the political and social debate is about what I think is the second-best solution, which is a remedial program that does not involve heavy intervention with the parents, and especially young single mothers.

But putting that aside, we have to move forward. I'd like to present, first, some data from a project that I'm conducting with the help of Jeff Morrow, who's in the room, and Caley Higney, who's also in the room. You all have these things which are labeled Figure 1? We found a mistake in them late yesterday. We redid them. I don't think the mistake is there, but my name is not on them. Whatever.

MR. HASKINS: If there are some mistakes there, that works out well.

MR. BESHAROV: Exactly. Exactly. We'll put Ron's name on it. Actually, he found the mistake and I'm quite thankful to him.

Figure 1 represents the amount of spending since 1981 to around 2003. You could spend a minute looking at this. This is not a speech about there's plenty of money

sloshing around the system. I just want you to see the money and the relationships between the different programs. As late as around 1990, Head Start was the predominant form of federal aid to childcare preschool programs, and you can see that mix changed. Between 1990 and 1995, we had an explosion of categorical programs--at-risk childcare, jobs, transitional childcare, the CCDBG was created. Many of those programs were combined into the new CCDF. You can see here also TANF spending, which is the money that the states have spent on childcare from their welfare block grants has also increased. By way of a complaint, we stuck in the billion dollars a year spent on 21st Century Schools, although there's no evidence that that gets to children who need it.

Figure 2 is the same graph with the unspent TANF and CCDF funds indicated. Now, these are not funds that are available each year; this is the total amount available. But there is in this regard some additional "sloshing around" in the state system that is not being spent on childcare or, for that matter, on anything else. It suggests, while we talk about what should be done at the federal level, that the states are making a decision not spend all the money they have available on either childcare or early intervention services.

And the question is why could that be. Let me turn to Figure 3. This is a representation of where poor 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds--we call the income-eligible because they're income-eligible for Head Start. Let me draw your attention first to the 4-year-olds in the middle. This is based on funded enrollment, the number of children who are signed up for Head Start at the beginning of the school year. About 63 percent of children in families below the poverty line are signed up for Head Start by September of every year. Our research, however, says that that's only the beginning of the inquiry of where Head Start-eligible children are. These are all official government figures, and all we did was take them, determine as best we could the income of the families involved, and the age, and combine them.

So in 2000-2001, while 63 percent of Head Start-eligible children were in Head Start, 27 percent of Head Start-eligible children were in pre-K and kindergarten; another 8 percent were in full-time, fully subsidized CCDF, TANF, or SSBG programs. I'll get back to the implications of these numbers in a minute. About 9 percent were in full-time relative care. We assume that about a third or a quarter of those children in full-time relative care are in full-time relative care because their mothers are working

full-time. And so we identified them here. You can make a judgment of how we should think about those moms. I'll get back in a moment to the point that Helen made about Head Start needing to be full-time, full-year.

The story is one that we all, I think, understand for five-year-olds. There, the kindergarten and school experience dominates all other placements for five-year-olds. You can see one reason why we shouldn't think about five-year-olds who are not in Head Start as being denied Head Start services is that they're already in school. And so the statistics that use the five-year-olds who are not in school as not being served by Head Start I think need an adjustment for that.

Lastly is the 3-year-old group. And there, you can see only 40 percent of eligible 3-year-olds are in Head Start, but 9 percent in CCDF, et cetera, about 6 percent in pre-K. And we have this wonderful name for the 44 percent in the white area of the circle. It's called "?" And that is the question of, you know, where are they and what are they doing. I could spin a story there about what I think is happening, but I promised you these would only be the statistics that are easily obtainable from the government.

What's the story here in one minute? The story here is that, at least for income-eligible 4-year-olds,

Head Start or "reasonable substitutes" for Head Start are already serving all eligible 4-year-olds. And in fact, over the last few years, additional funds available for Head Start have gone to serving additional 3-year-olds, not more 4-year-olds. Head Start is facing a competition for 4-year-olds--from pre-K programs because parents perceive the pre-K programs are better than Head Start; from full-time, full-year childcare because some mothers are working full-time and they don't want to move their children from one place to another; and from SSBG funding.

What's the lesson here? The world is changing. The place of Head Start in early education has to change as well. Does that mean a block grant? Well, you've heard the arguments about the fact that many block grants end up having a long-term negative impact on the amount of money spent on the program. That is undoubtedly true. The other side of the argument, however, is does the program need a deep rethinking and does that involve some kind of re-coordination, reorientation to all these other programs serving 4-year-olds, many of which--not all--many of which are serving 4-year-olds better than Head Start? I think the answer to that is yes.

I don't know how we get there, but I'm a little surprised that the political argument is we can't even

experiment in a couple of places. What are we afraid of? Either these experiments will be proven to be as bad as their opponents say, in which case, case closed; or they will show the way to a new way of serving low-income kids. It seems to me it's appropriate to say don't block-grant the whole thing today. But I don't understand the argument that says we're not doing a good enough job for our 3-, 4-, and five-year-olds, we ought to do a better, job, let's try in a few places, let's evaluate the heck out of it, and then we'll have a political argument. But first let's see whether the people on the ground can do a better job serving low-income kids.

Thank you.

[Applause.]

MR. HASKINS: Okay, let me ask the panelists to make a brief answer to this question, because I want it to lead to a second question.

There have been a number of claims made here this morning about benefit-cost figures. Indeed, they just took a rise with the pending--or I don't know if it's recently out, from Perry Preschool, a new study, Age 40 follow-up. We're now up to 17:1, I believe--for every dollar invested, you get a \$17 return. I want to ask each member of the panel, without a long answer, do you believe that if you

went out to the typical state preschool or Head Start and you surveyed these kids and followed them into the future, that you would really get those kind of returns from just a typical program that's out there in the countryside? Helen Blank?

MS. BLANK: I'm not sure. You could argue that Head Start has a different kind of parent involvement than Perry Preschool. I'm not sure that that's what we should be focusing on. I think that the research shows--

MR. HASKINS: But I'm the moderator. I get to tell you what you're going to focus on.

MS. BLANK: Yes, sir.

MR. HASKINS: So, you're not sure. Cindy?

MS. BLANK: I'm not sure, but no one has argued that a typical Head Start or pre-K program would get the results of Perry Preschool or Abecedarian because of the kind of investment that they've made--

MR. HASKINS: Okay, wait. I want to correct that. I can't tell you the number of times on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives and heard members say for every dollar we invest--the mayor said it this morning--we get these huge returns, and they name some big number. It seems to go up every couple of years. So they are really-- I know you're much more cautious, but they do make this

claim. So you're--at least, you didn't say yes. You think maybe. You're not sure. Cindy?

MS. JONES: I'm in concert with Helen. I think some yes and maybe some no. We just absolutely cannot be sure, sitting here today, to say an absolute yes.

MR. HASKINS: Doug?

MR. BESHAROV: The best evidence from those programs like Perry Preschool, Abecedarian, and almost all the others you look at echoes what Russ Whitehurst about the pre-K evaluations in Georgia and Oklahoma. Which is the most disadvantaged kids--and we're not talking here just about the poverty line, we are talking about parents with the deepest dysfunction, with low tested IQ, whatever that means--those children benefit greatly from early intervention whether it's called Head Start, whether it's called Family Visitors, or whatever. You can see those children driving the numbers in the Perry Preschool evaluations and in the Abecedarian.

That suggests that it's a mistake to consider those programs as a model for Head Start. As far as I can see, I [inaudible] surprised by the new evaluation coming out of Head Start. I wouldn't bet a dime on big impacts across the Head Start population.

MR. HASKINS: So you're a no.

MR. BESHAROV: I thought I was 80/20. If she can be 50/50, I was 80/20.

MR. HASKINS: Okay, we'll have you down for 80/20. Donna?

MS. DESROCHERS: I [inaudible] these are very high-quality, very intensive preschool services. And clearly, going out and broadening these, you're probably not going to find the same intensive effects unless you raise the quality of Head Start and other programs that are equal to these programs. Again, as was just said, the more disadvantaged you go down into the programs, probably the more likely the benefit. That's not to say that even going up you're not going to get some benefits in increasing the levels if not reducing gaps.

MR. HASKINS: So let the record show that there is some question even among child advocates and research experts about whether the typical program--I don't hear anybody say that they doubt that good programs could produce these kinds of impacts, but the typical program is not producing those impacts.

Now, second question. The FASA [?] survey shows that when children finish Head Start on four subtests of school readiness, three having to do with reading and one having to do with math, that the kids improve slightly on

two of the subtests after one or two years of Head Start, but that there's still just about that standard deviation that Bel talked about below the average child. So my next question is does the data suggest that Head Start is preparing kids to achieve at average level in the public schools? Let's start with Helen Blank again.

MS. BLANK: Well, FASA's data also show in several areas that Head Start children, by the time they finish kindergarten, are very close to national norms. And when you listen to Grover Whitehurst, he talked about children being close to national norms at first-grade level. So I think if we can see children at the end of kindergarten in key areas of readiness being close to national norms after being in Head Start, I think that's significant progress given that Head Start programs don't have all their teachers with B.A. degrees and given that we're dealing with children who come in who are so far behind.

MR. HASKINS: Cindy?

MS. JONES: I agree with Helen, because I have the statistics right here in front of me. But as an experienced Head Start director, I see these teachers working very hard, that have attained their degrees--that those that haven't attained their degrees, they're reaching

for that. They're trying their very best to make sure that these children are going to bridge that gap that we're speaking about today.

MR. HASKINS: Doug?

MR. BESHAROV: Well, I want to follow up on what Helen wasn't allowed to say before. We have this model that says knowing a couple of more letters and a couple of numbers when you're 4 is going to make a big difference when you're 5 and 6. Like evolution, that's a theory. I don't know any evidence that says it's really important to know more letters at age 3 or 4 than at 5 and 6. So I won't answer the question because I don't know whether I should trust the measure.

MS. DESROCHERS: Just adding on to that, I would say that if there are some achievement gaps, research in these other programs is showing that they do fade over time. But maybe some of the benefits are really not being measured by these tests, that it's really sort of social preparation and developing the other types of skills that allow them to persist and flourish as they enter K-12 education, and not necessarily just the academics.

MR. HASKINS: Okay, so combining--go ahead.

MS. JONES: I wanted to just add another point. Because if I were to be measured on that scale when I was

the age that these children are being measured, I definitely would have fallen into that wide gap that I wasn't measuring up. And I appreciate the point about flourishing, because I did not flourish until I was in college. So I think that point is very valid.

MR. BESHAROV: I personally am planning on flourishing when I retire.

[Laughter.]

MR. BESHAROV: My mother has made that observation to me on a number of occasions.

Let me just say that the literature is replete with very strong correlations. I realize correlation is not causation, but there are very strong correlations with performance on standardized tests beginning as early as age 3. They are predictive. IQ tests and school achievement tests are predictable, everything known to man or God, including marital happiness. So the doubt that you raise about these, it doesn't mean that any individual that doesn't know two letters is doomed to failure. They don't tell you what an individual does. But on average, which is the enterprise here, they do predict school performance. Readiness measures do predict school performance.

Do we have a moderator for this panel so that I can respond?

MR. HASKINS: Go ahead and respond.

MR. BESHAROV: You know, these are--

MR. HASKINS: It's the role of the moderator to recite data, Doug.

MR. BESHAROV: Oh, okay.

As I said, these are theories driven by No Child Left Behind, fear about the fact that low-income children seem to be falling behind. We don't know if the best way to get a young black kid from the inner city to college is a couple more letters at age 3 and 4. And no study you cite can do more than say, across the whole economic spectrum when we can't parse out the impact of parents and opportunity and so forth, those letters at age 4 make a difference. All I was saying here was let's be careful about what we measure and hold programs accountable for. Because with all due respect, right, if we tell Head Start programs that they're going to be measured by how many letters their kids know, you know exactly what's going to happen during the school day. So let's just be a little careful when we use that measure.

MR. HASKINS: Let's be careful about the conclusions we draw. And here's the main conclusion. Is it the case that kids that finish Head Start or state preschools, do you believe that they are performing at

average and ready to achieve during the public school years? In other words, do we have a problem or not?

MR. BESHAROV: Let me do it. A third of all kids who start Head Start don't finish it. Right? A third of all kids who start Head Start don't finish it. We need to know why they didn't finish it. One reason they didn't finish is their moms got a job and they have to work full-time. Number two, one reason they don't finish Head Start is because their moms stopped taking them to Head Start because they're so disorganized. It is a very complicated issue to make a judgment about the impact of a program--as you know; I learned this from you--when you don't have a randomized assignment. We don't know some of these things.

MR. HASKINS: Nonetheless, the policymakers are going to make votes in a couple of months. And the question is, do we have a problem or not? Helen.

MS. BLANK: I think we have a good program and I think we should improve it. I think the FASA data show that children, by the time they enter kindergarten, in some key areas are close to national norms. I don't think--we haven't looked at all state pre-K programs. If you look at the content of state pre-K programs, many don't equal the quality of Head Start. I wouldn't put my hands in the states after what Florida just did for pre-K.

So I think that what you have now is a federal-to-local program that has national standards that is doing a pretty good job with very difficult children who, as Doug said, lead very complex lives. We have the ability by having a federal program, unlike the ability of taking this to every state, of trying to look at what children need and trying to put in place what they need and making a difference. We have federal standards; they can be improved. We have teacher standards that have been improved and they can be further improved. I think we have to give that program more flexibility to meet children's needs and we've put it in a very tight vice because programs have no flexibility around eligibility, around who they serve. We know that many of these children need to start earlier, yet we only serve 3 percent of eligible children in Early Head Start. And if a Head Start program is in a state with a universal pre-K program, it now doesn't have the flexibility to serve younger children.

MR. HASKINS: So succinctly, we do have somewhat of a problem, but Head Start is doing a good job and it could be improved.

MS. BLANK: And I think that we have a better chance by poor children by improving Head Start than by beginning to dismantle it and give it to the states. Even

though some--a few--have strong pre-K programs, the states, if you look across their pre-K and their childcare programs, don't have the track record that would make me confident in dismantling this program that, if you look at what the journal says, also has many of the components that poor families need. It has a parent component, it has a health component, and we don't see pre-K programs with those components.

MR. HASKINS: Cindy?

MS. JONES: Head Start has a great track record, it's a great program. Yes, we can improve in areas that we know that we know that we need to improve in. Putting many more dollars into Early Head Start would be very beneficial, because we know the earlier that we start with children and families, the results are going to be better as they go into the kindergarten and the primary years. In the State of Georgia, I've worked directly with the pre-K program. I had pre-K, kindergarten classrooms in our centers. And there was never a competition between Georgia pre-K and Head Start in the State of Georgia. We were always striving to provide quality services to all the children that we served in Georgia. We met regularly with the Georgia pre-K council to improve quality services across the board, Head Start and pre-K.

So competitiveness should not be there to see who's better. We should be striving to increase quality services to the families that we serve in Head Start that are primarily low-income. Pre-K in the State of Georgia, from my experience, serves all different incomes, not just primarily low-income. So many of those families, those children have a leg up already when they come.

MR. HASKINS: Doug, do you want to add anything to this?

MR. BESHAROV: I think we're all hopeful that the evaluation of the basic Head Start program that Russ Whitehurst talked about will show good results. It's a short-term evaluation, there are a lot of questions about it, but I just have to confirm what Ron has said in writing many times: The program needs innovation and improvement, and we need randomized assignment experiments to find out what aspects of Head Start need the greatest improvement.

MR. HASKINS: Donna?

MS. DESROCHERS: If children are not up to the average level, that necessarily indicates that quality could be improved. That's not to say that if it is closing gaps that it's not having an effect. So, you know, you can have -- Magnusson and Waldfogel put it nicely at the end of their article, that pre-K is not an inoculation, that these

increases in test scores and achievements need to be continually upgraded through the K-12 system. So even, you know, if people are not getting the services maybe not where they are when they enter kindergarten, still K-12 should continue to work to close these gaps.

MR. HASKINS: Before opening up to audience comments, let me point out that I had a couple of phone calls and I just want to say that in the journal itself we did say that focusing on preschool in no sense takes the pressure off the public schools. A lot of people are extremely critical of public schools. We did not say that in the brief, but of course we agree with that, that this is also a public school problem, not just a preschool problem. And no one should assume that we can completely solve it no matter how good we are on preschool.

Questions from the audience?

QUESTION: I'm on the volunteer diversity committee of a local public charter school that is really an outstanding school. In fact, those of us who have computers and have been on dcurbanmoms.com have been raving about this and everyone's trying to get in. Our problem now is we are appearing that we will lose our diversity. When I tried to go to a local Head Start organization to hand out flyers for this school, I was told "you're the

competition." I'm a big proponent of Head Start, but I'm wondering whether we're not doing the families a disservice by not telling them that in D.C., at least, the scramble is at pre-K to get into a high-performing school whether you go out of boundary or to a local charter school. And at 5, the slots narrow from maybe 20 to just a few kids that have left that particular school.

So I just wonder whether there shouldn't be some better coordination and some better communicating to the families that, at least in D.C., if you're not there in pre-K, you're in the abyss when you're 5. You're in your local district and that's it. Then you go to school where you live.

MR. HASKINS: Comments from the panel? Go ahead, Cindy.

MS. JONES: I think coordination is always a problem when you have the different diversity of preschool programs. So that's something that constantly has to be massaged with the Head Start community and people at the local level like yourself, with the school that you're at. So I would just encourage you to continue to partner with them and continue to educate them to what you are doing.

MS. BLANK: That appears to be a very complex situation because you don't have high-quality charter

schools available for all children, and you want to keep a strong Head Start system. So this may not be a universal problem in the District, so you'd want to figure out whether, you know, with some particular Head Start programs if there really was such a choice for parents to make if that program might not serve more 3-year-olds than infants. But it seems like you can't characterize this as a universal D.C. problem and the quality of charter schools isn't universally better. So I don't think you should have a wholesale change in Head Start to address this situation, but I agree there should be more collaboration.

MR. BESHAROV: If you haven't noticed, I like to sharpen issues of debate. I think it is a national issue, Helen. Wherever I go, whatever Head Start program I go to, if I say what's the competition, people know exactly what I mean and they tell me who the competition is. If you remember my graphs, for the 4-year-olds, we are just about 100 percent saturation, the way we described where the kids. And there's a constant jockeying during the school year for those kids. It does happen. I think what you've described is a national problem. And I think what we have to do is figure out a way--the polite word is "coordination"; the other way is to kind of reconcile

ourselves to the fact that there are different needs being expressed and a great competition for these 4-year-olds.

QUESTION: Danielle Ewen from the Center for Law and Social Policy.

I have one thing to say and then a question for the panel. And I want to make sure that everybody understands that there is no such thing as "a" pre-K program. The pre-K varies from state to state and from community to community, and it's really important, when we hear about research, that we're talking about apples and apples, not apples and oranges and bananas.

Having said that, I want Doug and Helen to address his charts about how we're serving 4-year-olds. And the truth of the matter is that most families need a full-day opportunity and that what families really have to do and providers have to do is to stack programs, as Helen discussed. And I'm wondering if you can talk about what the real need is when you go out to communities for full-day, and how communities are addressing that.

MS. BLANK: Well, we in the 1990s -- welfare law required low-income parents to work, and many parents need full-day, full-year services. And that is why communities are putting programs together. Even though we've had a significant growth in childcare, we still have many places

where we have enormous gaps. In Maryland there are 19,000 children on the waiting list and childcare vouchers are frozen for low-income working parents who are not on welfare, and so Maryland communities have started to put Head Start and pre-K together to meet the needs of working families. In Oklahoma, sometimes they add childcare. Our goal is to help families work, and we somehow have to reconcile ourselves with the interest in quality early childhood and the need for families to work.

And it's even more complicated than that in terms of what the cost of doing this right are. Because we talk about families in informal care or families who work odd hours. We may have a lot of families who work weekends and nights who should be getting childcare subsidy, whose children should be in a pre-K or Head Start program during the day. That would require doubly funding these children, which is important, because you want their parents to work and you want them to have a high-quality early childhood system.

So I think this is obviously much more complex than policymakers would want to realize, and I don't think we're going to have a successful pre-K/early childhood/Head Start solution overall unless we recognize the needs of working parents. Otherwise, we're going to see many more

4-year-olds and 3-year-olds in questionable care for part of the day.

MR. BESHAROV: I'll see you up you one. Some parents need full-time care so they can work full-day--some mothers. Once you get to about 150 percent of the poverty line, you're getting two-parent households where the mothers often work only part-time. I'm just doing random numbers here--70 percent of all mothers who work from 2 times the poverty line and down, 70 percent work irregular hours. Many of them work full-time irregular hours. There are relatively few centers that are happy to be open from 3 in the afternoon to 10 at night. Many parents, most parents don't want their kids in a center during those hours.

Helen said the answer is, well, provide in effect 10 or 12 hours or 14 hours of childcare subsidy. We are very far away from that. Many parents don't want that-- don't want that, wouldn't want that. It's likely that the policy process will take us to a one-size-fits-all that mirrors on our own view of middle-class working mothers, and we'll continue not to serve the needs of low-income mothers who need different kinds of arrangements, often, who want not just flexibility but want neighborhood and warmth and so forth before they want their letters.

I think it's going to be a complicated process, and I promised Ron I would only mention this if it came up. I am not a public school choice fan, because I think that's complicated. But when you look at preschool programs it's hard not to come to the conclusion that parents need even more choice about the kinds of providers they use. And where we're going is to provide less choice for parents. And that would be a mistake, because it is as complicated as Helen described.

QUESTION: Amanda Lopez-Kline [sp] with the Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Association. I was wondering if the panel could talk a little bit about addressing the language minority issues and the access of early education programs to children who don't speak English as a first language. Because as you talked about the dropout rates for Hispanic children, a lot of it stems from the fact that--one of my bosses used to say they didn't drop out in eighth grade, they dropped out in first, because that was the grade that they were held back because they didn't know English. And so I'd like to see if someone could address that issue, since we were talking about the ethnic and racial gaps in early ed.

MR. HASKINS: Cindy, can you tell us about what Head Start is doing about non-English-speaking households? Are there programs and so forth?

MS. JONES: Well, what programs are doing that are facing that issue are trying to hire more bilingual teachers, staff, and really incorporating the language throughout the center--in the classrooms, you know, as far as English and language signs, labeling the equipment, exposing the other children to the Latino culture. It is an issue, but it is constantly being worked on.

I was visiting a program in Chicago just yesterday entitled Casa Central, which serves the Spanish community. It's the largest early childhood provider in serving the Hispanic community, and they provide a multiplicity of early childhood programs for the Hispanic community. And one that was so impressive to me is that when immigrants enter into the country, they have an agreement with the housing authority to provide temporary housing for the immigrants and make sure that these children are receiving the needed services in their own language until they can transition over into the Head Start center.

So there are many programs that are experimenting with other issues like this.

QUESTION: Hi! I'm Kathy Walsh and I'm with Rhode Island Kids Count. And we just finished a three-year initiative working with 17 states around school readiness issues. And I had the pleasure last week of moderating the panel at the Princeton, the Princeton, they did a workshop with speakers. And I'm curious to know if you could comment on the other components that are in the journal in terms of the parenting and health piece and how that might impact how a preschool program would be structured?

MS. JONES: I was actually struck by the journal, the article on health, because it talked about the fact that access to Medicaid and CHIP [ph.] was not enough for poor children. And you had to figure out how to connect children to services and supports. And that is really one of the hallmarks of Head Start. And we don't really see pre-K programs structured in the same way. But Head Start children have been known to find children with disabling conditions and get them treated, to drive 100 miles to get children to dentists when there aren't dentists in their own rural areas.

So I think on the health side, Head Start is very capable of going beyond the eligibility issue to helping families get access. And I think it's structured on the parent's side in a way that can better get to increasing

parent's role than most state pre-K programs. But I also think that's why Early Head Start is so important. And it's such a shame that we serve so few children. And we shouldn't be talking about what competition there might be for four-year olds. But we should let programs who have the capacity to be--moved down and be able to serve more of our children.

MR. HASKINS: You raised the issue of parents, in your opening comments, and said it was more important than preschool. Do you want to add anything? Because that's clearly the thrust of her question.

MR. : Well, if I had my druthers, and I were trying to address the problem, what has been described as the black/white test score gap, and so forth, but if I were trying to address the problem of the most severely disadvantaged in our nation and how to help them most, I would make distinctions between immigrant groups and what we, you know, the more dysfunctional parts of our own low income populations. I think immigrant groups have different needs. They look different in the tests. They look different in the centers. It's just a different group of people.

And for the most in need families, I think the evidence is, the correlation is pretty clear that you start

with an unwed, usually teen mother and work from there. And so to me the intervention that we're most worried about these kids is with the teen--I wish to develop that. They didn't have a baby to start with. But the intervention is with the unwed teen mothers who need a ton of guidance, support, and help. And the pivot of intervention is then and the intervention is around her and her care of her child.

To me, it's not the point of intervention at the preschool. That's second best. That doesn't mean that's not good, but it is really second best. And I wouldn't have a separate SCHIP [ph.] program, I wouldn't have a separate Medicaid program. See, I'd have a giant block grant. No. No. I wouldn't have a separate WIC program. Every one of the programs I just described serves predominantly the same unwed teen mother we're talking about, every one of them. But every one of them has to have its own project director. Every one of them has to pay its own rent. Every one of them has to do--it does--it is only something the USA would come up with. And it's because we are a fractious, political, politicized country. And it's just too bad.

MR. HASKINS: One more question.

Right in the third row, third row. Yeah?

QUESTION: I'm Edna Roque [ph.] with Westover Consultants in Silver Spring. And I want to thank Brookings and Princeton for addressing early childhood issues so frequently and so well. Because for those of us who have been in the field for many years, it's very gratifying to have that kind of attention paid and that kind of depth explored.

I want to mention that early childhood, in this country, goes back many, many years. And we've been really addressing it as an issue about saving families and children and the culture probably back into the 19th Century. I don't want us to think that Head Start, as great as it is, is the beginning of all this interest or even Perry preschool. It really goes back. And we stand on the shoulders of many people, including Bank Street. I was so glad that Cynthia mentioned that.

The issue I also would like the panel to address has to do with why we have so many extremely competent reports, including the most current one on school readiness, the ones that Helen's organization--one that Helen's organization have produced, and we still struggle with all these issues. We still, I mean, I know how I would answer it. But I want to know how you would answer

how we address this fact that we know so much. On the other hand we don't seem to--

MR. HASKINS: The real question is why our policy makers are not moved by reports Helen Blank?

MS. BLANK: Well, because we have the wrong priorities, because children still don't vote, and because people are more likely to want to write reports than to go to Capitol Hill and ask policy makers to say, don't do those tax cuts or don't put money here. Put money in early childhood. They look at it from their window, which is often a very small window. Their viewpoint can be very restrictive. And so we that are out there in the trenches, we are not considered most often times.

MR. : I remember what the New York City columnist famously said after Richard Nixon was elected President. She said, "I don't know how he was elected. None of my friends voted for him." Figure that one out.

MS. : I think the focus tends to be on the individual, the individual benefit. And we haven't fully acknowledged that there's a broader societal economic benefit. And that probably needs to be stressed more. I should say the same could be said for higher education and sort of taking a page from their book that they have recently acknowledged or, our chronicle of higher education

piece that their shift in focusing on the equal opportunity benefits of higher ed has sort of put them at a disadvantage with getting more funding. That they also need to sort of start shifting their, their focus on the broader benefits to secure more funding.

MR. HASKINS: In closing let me predict that five years from today we are going to have another event in this very room with the same topic. And we still have all the same problems. Thank you for coming.

[Applause.]

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