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CENTER ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES BRIEFING

MEASURING CHILD WELL-BEING: THE EDUCATION FLATLINE?

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. HASKINS: Well, I would like to welcome you to Brookings this morning, along with my colleague Belle Sawhill, who is the Vice-President, here at Brookings, of Economic Studies and also the co-director of the Center for Children and Families. And we're very pleased to have what amounts to, Ken, I believe, our third edition of the Index of Child Well-being. This is something that we release here every year for the past three years.

We had two, I think, broad intentions in doing this. One is, and Ken has been a leader in this area, and that's to create a broad and high quality measure of child well-being that expresses not just one number that gives an index of child well-being, but also has a range of more specific measures in other areas and domains of well-being that the public and policy makers and people like you would be interested in. And Ken has done a magnificent job of that.

And then the second thing, of course, that we would like to do—and this is a goal that here in Washington everybody is trying to bring attention to their own constituency—our constituency is children, and we regard the child well-being index as a way to bring attention to children in at least two ways. First of all, an overall indication of the well-being of children, especially as trends. Is it going down or up? Is it high or low? But then, more particularly, because of the domains that Ken has developed, to give more specific information about several specific domains of child

development. And that turns out to be a very fortunate feature of the child well-being index because things go in different directions. And as is the case this year, we find many things are generally pretty good, but there are some dimensions on which there are very serious problems.

And, of course, this year, as we have done in past years, we have selected one domain that causes us concern. And this year it's education for reasons that Ken will show you.

So at this event today, we are really doing two things. We're publishing an index and trying to bring attention to children's issues. And then we're also looking into more detail in the area of education and what's wrong with education. And then we would like to do what is appropriate here in Washington, namely mention several specific solutions that we've invited well known experts to propose and to defend. And we'll have a discussion and each of you will get a chance to ask questions out of the audience.

So here's how we're going to proceed. After my overview, Ken will give a brief resume, a brief review of the results for this year and the trends and will focus on education. Then, Secretary Simon, whom I will talk more about in just a minute, will give an address on No Child Left Behind and its role in educational achievement and the kind of problems that Ken raised. And then we will have a moderated discussion led by Ray Suarez, whom I will talk about more in just a moment. And an opportunity for the audience to ask questions. And then we'll bring up a panel of our four

distinguished guests that Ray will introduce at the appropriate time. And they will each speak for a few minutes. And then Ray will ask them some questions and then we'll once again give the audience a time to ask some questions.

I'd like to draw your attention to two cautions, and I hope that Ray will remind you. One is, we urge you to ask brief questions and not make long statements because people are here primarily to hear the panelists and not the members of the audience. And also, between panels, when this panel finishes, please don't come up and talk to him because we're going to do it quickly. We're not going to have a break. We're going to get the second panel up here and start again right away.

So let me say just one word about Ken Land. I always relish this occasion because he's from Duke and I'm from the University of North Carolina and most years I take advantage of the situation and say rotten things about Duke. But this year I'm not going to do that because Duke already did it to yourself, just like UNC did, to George Mason, no less. So, ah, I'm going to be real nice and simply point out that Ken is the John Franklin Crowe Professor of Sociology at Duke and he's had a long and truly distinguished career. Ironically, I believe this is correct, that in the early days of his career working on developing social indicators, he was actually here at Brookings and worked with a group of people who really laid the foundations of this remarkable discipline here at Brookings.

And then, of course, we're very fortunate to have Secretary Raymond Simon, who is the Deputy Secretary of Education in the Bush Administration. He was formerly Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education. He's appointed by President Bush last year and confirmed by the Senate and plays an extremely important role in No Child Left Behind, which many people see as part of the solution to the flat line that Ken will now describe to you. So, Ken, I'd like to welcome all our guests and the audience, and Ken, it's yours.

[Applause.]

MR. LAND: Thanks, Ron.

I want to also thank the Foundation for Child Development and in the audience we have Fasaha Traylor and Harold Liebovitz, and my colleague at Duke University, Dr. Vicki Lamb, who works on the project as well. It would not be possible without the support and collaboration with Dr. Lamb.

Okay. Ron says, you know, I've got 34 slides here and ten minutes to get through them. So that's going to mean a light show. But let me get started.

What we're doing here is we're looking at the child and youth well-being index. This is a composite measure of trends in the quality of life or well-being of America's children and young people. It consists of several interrelated summary indices of annual time series of 28 key social indicators

of well-being. The objective of the child and youth well-being index is to give a sense of the overall direction of change in the well-being of children and youth in the United States as compared to a base year. We use 1975 as the base year for most of our analyses. The reason we choose 1975 is that's when a lot of the indicator series began, the mid 1970s.

The CWI is designed to address the following types of questions: first of all, give us a sense overall on average how did child and youth well-being change in the United States during the last quarter of the 20th Century and beyond into the 21st Century? Did it improve or deteriorate? And if we can give some indication of how much in which domains area areas of social life? We look at specific age groups. We look at race and ethnic group comparisons. We look at the sexes. And we ask do the race and ethnic group and sex disparities increase or decrease over time?

The methods of index construction for a brief review, we have annual time series data from vital statistics and sample surveys assembled on some 28 key national indicators and 7 quality of life domains. These are family economic well-being, health, safety behavioral area, educational attainment, community connectedness, connectedness to institutions of education and the economy, social relationships with family and peers, and emotional and spiritual well-being.

These 7 domains have been well established in over two decades of empirical studies of subjective well-being by social psychologists and

other social scientists. The studies have used a diverse array of methods, including in depth interviews, just getting people to talk about well-being and happiness and life satisfaction. They've used focus groups. They've used clinical, studies of clinical populations, samples of national—sample surveys of the national population. Some of the studies have included children and young people, as well as adults. And these themes occur over and over again in determining what makes folks happy and satisfied with life.

In this sense, the CWI is an evidenced-base measure of trends in the averages of social conditions encountered by children and youth in the United States. Each of the 28 key indicators is indexed by a percentage change from the base year, 1975, that is subsequent annual observations are computed as percentages of the base year. These three indicators began in the mid 1980s and use corresponding base years. The base year is assigned a value of 100. Directions of the indicator values are oriented such that a value greater than 100 means a social condition has improved and lesser than 100 means it's deteriorated.

The time series of the 28 indicators are grouped into the 7 domains described above. The domain specific composite well-being indices are constructed. Within the summary indices, each indicator is equally weighted. And then the 7 components are combined into an equally weighted summary index of child and youth well-being. Why equal weights? I have a separate statistical study with a statistician Michael Haggerty forthcoming in

a methodological journal which shows that in the absence of strong consensus, high consensus on a given set of weights for indicators of this sort, an equal weighting strategy commands the broadest consensus in a population. And that's a very interesting study in and of itself.

Significant findings. I'm going to show you some charts, change over time in the CWI in its various components. The overall index of child well-being, domain specific indices, we're going to focus on educational attainment this year. We're going to look at the trends in math scores, reading scores, and show you some effects of a demographic standardization.

Here is figure 1 which shows the chart for the CWI from 1975 to 2004 with our projections for 2005. Three indicators are already available for 2005, but we project the others using statistical time series models. And our projections have proven to be reasonably accurate.

You will see that the—in recent decades the overall index reached a bottoming out point in the early 1990s. And since then we've seen substantial increases. Interestingly here, 2002 shows a more substantial increase than most previous years. And what we've detected there is somewhat of an impact of 9-11 on some of the safety and behavioral indicators which boosted those indicators in 2002. They came down just a tad in 2003. And they're back up on trajectory in 2004.

So this is the overall child well-being index. Again, its purpose is to give us a sense of the overall direction of child well-being across the decades.

Here is the figure 2 which shows specific domain indices. And you see there a diversity of trends over time. Some domains have improved substantially over the years, in particular this chart is the safety behavioral composite scores. And you see since the early 1990s very substantial increases there. You see that there are also substantial increases in community connectedness. And this chart shows the impact of economic expansions and contractions on family economic well-being. Emotional and spiritual composite shows a decline and then an increase in recent years to we're projecting just above base year values in 2005.

And the focus this year is on essentially flat line here for the educational attainment composite index. We focused in previous years on the impact of obesity on the health domain. And the social relationships domain shows the deterioration of family structures in the early 1980s. It's been pretty stable at a relatively low point compared to 1975 since then.

Okay. So the focus this year is on the educational attainment measures. We're looking at the NAEP, National Assessment of Educational Progress, long-term trend test scores, and this, of course, is sometimes referred to as the nation's report card. It's supervised by the National Assessment Governing Board. Consists of periodic assessments of student

knowledge and abilities in a number of subjects. NAEP long-term trends assessments in math and reading use the same testing instruments and procedures systematic sampling design. It's the best measure we have of changes in student attainment across the decades. And it, in particular, focuses on children ages 9, 13, and 17.

Here is figure 3, which shows the overall trend by age group, in the math scores 1978 to 2004. And you see that there was some improvement at age 17 in the '80s. And it's been flat, pretty much flat since then. At age 13, some improvement more recently and also at age 9.

Figure 4 shows the reading scores 1975 to 2004. And there the story, we'll focus on this one in a few minutes, this is an interesting kind of u-turn at age 17. And at age 9 there's been a recent increase as well that we will focus on. At age 13, a slight up trend, pretty much flat.

The interrelationships of trends in education and educational attainment, I want to focus on that. I want to ask the question, are pre-kindergarten enrollment rates leading indicators for the age 9 test scores? And this Figure 5 shows the correspondence.

One thing we do with our indicator series is we look for leads and lags in among our indicators. And here, you will notice, that the percent enrolled in pre-kindergarten ages 3 to 4 show substantial increases in the 1990s. And I think some of our presenters later on will focus on studies which have shown the effects of pre-kindergarten enrollments on student

attainments. And so following that established relationship, it's not surprising that we get this improvement in the age 9 test scores a few years later with a lag that corresponds to five or six years.

Next, I'm going to focus on some effects of demographic standardization. One of the tricks we demographers use is we ask the question, well, what would have happened to rates if the composition of the population had not changed over time? And in particular, this is a technique for examining how a trend might be affected if the characteristics of students had not changed. For example, what would the math trend be if the race ethnic composition of schools had remained the same as in 1978? So standardization controls for the effects of compositional changes on overall rates. The impacts of changes in student composition since the '70s on the NAEP test scores, we're going to focus on two significant changes here today. The first is changes in the race and ethnic composition of the U.S. students.

Here, is figure 6, which shows the changing race and ethnic distribution. And you'll see the decline over time and the percent of the age 17 student population that's white, an increase over time especially more recently in the percent that is Hispanic. That, of course, corresponds with what we know about the general changes in the composition of the U.S. population. What can we say about the effects of that on the test scores? We'll get to that in a moment.

The second thing we're going to focus on is the changes in parents' level of educational attainment. Here is a chart showing the composition of parents at the highest educational level achieved as reported by the age 17 students. And you'll see that the trend for parents being college graduates has increased substantially in the '90s. The percentage of high school graduates only has declined as had those with even lower educational attainment. Except there's some slight increase here in the most recent years, probably corresponding to low—immigrants with relatively low educations.

Okay. Here are some charts showing our standardization analyses. This is the age 17 math scores as reported and as standardized to the first year, 1978, and the last year, 2004, race and ethnic distributions. And what you see here is the reported NAEP scores, math scores in the darker chart. That's the real trend over time. And here is the standardized to the 1978 race ethnic distribution in the pink chart. And in the green chart standardized to 2004.

And you can see that if we had not, if we had the same race ethnic composition as 1978, the math scores would be slightly higher. But there's really not of action there I think is the key message.

Here is the NAEP math scores standardized to parent's highest level of education attained. And, again, the darker chart there shows the reported NAEP math scores at age 17. That's the real trend, observed trend.

And here in the pink, standardized to 1978, parental educational levels in 2004. And what you see here is there is more action with respect to standardizing on parent's highest level of education attained. What's going on there? What's the dynamics? Probably all sorts of socialization things are happening in families with parents with higher levels of education, including encouragement of their children to take the more demanding math scores in high school.

Here is figure 10, which shows the NAEP reading scores at age 17. And, again, the trend over time. And then standardized to the 1980 race, ethnic distribution 2004 distribution. Again, some slight change here. But the significant question here is what's happening to this U-turn in the NAEP age 17 reading scores. And the chart shows that the changing race and ethnic mix probably is, indeed, part of the explanatory picture of those trends.

Here is the figure 11, which shows the reading scores at age 17, as reported and as standardized to parents' highest level of educational attained. And, again, you see a good deal of action out here in the differences. And in particular, an important point to note, is that if we had the 1978 parents educational attainment distribution, the fall that we've seen over recent years in age 17 test scores probably would have been even more dramatic than the observed trend shows.

So there are several conclusions here. The first one is that the overall well-being of children and youth in the United States showed

substantial improvements for the ten years 1994-2003. Improvements continued at a slow pace in 2004 and likely continued at a slow pace in 2005. Historically, however, the CWI showed a decline in the well-being for a number of years in the '80s and reached a low point in 1993/'94. These declines mirrored economic restructuring, recessions, and demographic changes. And only since the year 2000, has the CWI, the overall CWI improved to above the 1975 base year levels.

The key indicators in the educational attainment domain have shown only slight changes since the mid 1970s. Math scores show slight improvements at all ages. Reading scores, some improvements for age 9, little change for age 13, a decline for age 17.

Pre-kindergarten enrollment rates and test scores, we see a positive relationship between increases in pre-kindergarten enrollment rates, widening the exposure of the larger population of kids ages 3 and 4 exposed to some level of formal schooling in pre-kindergarten situations plausibly relates to increases in test scores at age 9. And certainly the lag shows up in our indicator series.

This suggests that increases in pre-K enrollments at ages 3 to 4 were, indeed, at least for this period leading indicators of increases in the test scores for age 9 year-olds a few years later.

Effects of the changing mix of students, our demographic standardization analyses show improvements in parents' education have had

positive effects on students' math scores. Changing race and ethnic distributions of students had a smaller effect on the test scores. There's been a general down turn at age 17 reading test scores since 1992. The down turn would have been larger without increases in parental educational levels over the past three decades.

Implications of all of this: If the positive association of pre-kindergarten enrollments and age 19 NAEP test scores continues to hold, it can be anticipated that further increases in pre-K enrollments will result, with a suitable lag of course, in improvements in the age 9 test scores.

Improvements in parental educational attainments are partially transferred to the abilities of their children in math and reading. This is consistent with over four decades of research in inter generational socioeconomic status transfers.

The increases in rates of college graduation of young adults in the 1990s, those percentages went up from the low 20 percentile range to the high twenties. Those young people are now in family formation stages and have young children who will be age 17 and be in the NAEP test frame a decade from now. And if that relationship of parent's education to reading and math ability continues to hold up, this improvements in college graduation rates in the 1990s should show up in NAEP test scores at age 17 in the next decade.

Increases in educational levels for minority parents should reduce race and ethnic disparities in future test scores. And further research on the downturn in reading test scores for the age 17 year olds is required to explain the declines over the past decade. For instance, we simply don't know, or at least nothing that I've seen tells me the extent to which the decline is related to the widespread use of new media for entertainment, such as video games and the internet, and corresponding declines in time devoted to reading and the extent to which such changes are reversible.

Thank you very much.

[Applause.]

SECRETARY SIMON: My first real job was when I was in junior high school and I worked part-time on a bread truck. I would get up at 5:00 o'clock in the morning and at 5:30 the regular bread man would come to my home in Conway, Arkansas and pick me up. And we'd deliver bread during the day. My job was to basically take the orders, get the bread out of the truck, and go inside and find the area that our bread was to be displayed on and put it in the allotted space. Depending on the particular company, the store, whether it was a chain store or a family corner grocery store, we might have a lot of space for our bread and we might have a small space for the bread.

I worked particularly for Wonder Bread; helps build strong bodies 12 ways. I was a 97 pound weakling then and not as powerfully built

as I am today, but we weren't exactly the best, you know, advertisers for Wonder Bread.

But at any rate, one day my boss, the regular driver, gave me a tray of bread. Had about 20 loaves of bread on it. I went into the store. I looked at the display area that we had, and I began to put the bread up as I had done a number of other times. And when the space was full, I looked down and I still had a half a tray of bread. I couldn't get it all in there. He had already written the ticket up, taken the money, and gone back out to the truck. So I sheepishly go back out to the truck with a half a tray of bread. I said, "Mr. Whitwell, the bread won't fit into the area we've got." He shook his head, he said, "Come on back with me." He goes back in and he takes out the bread that I had put up and he commences repositioning the bread. He puts some of them parallel to the front of the case, he puts some perpendicular, he puts some one the end. And when he finished the entire tray of bread was in this area that I said you couldn't fit it in. He said, "Raymond, a bread man makes room where there is no room."

I thought about that. I've taken that advice and I've applied it to my life. It's amazing what a simple little action can do for you. I use that phrase a lot. I used it when my daughter was growing up and she would say, Dad, I can't do this, I can't do that. I said, "Sandy, a bread man makes room where there is no room." She had no clue what I was talking about. After I explained the story, she still uses that phrase today, and she's 30 plus years

old. I'm working on my grandson now. To me that means do things that people say can't be done. Or if you say something can't be done, make room where there is no room. It's simply confidence and high expectations.

That's what I think No Child Left Behind brings to this whole system of education in our country. Its basic philosophy is to make room where there is no room. Its basic philosophy is to get children at grade level in math and reading, children that some say couldn't get there, and some say still can't get there. Its goal is every child by 2014. It's beginning to work.

If you look at the later years of the trends that were shown in this report, you'll see that our youngest children are making the greatest gains. That's where not only No Child Left Behind has been focused; it's where state reform efforts prior to No Child Left Behind were primarily focused. No Child didn't invent school reform. No Child Left Behind came in at a time and partnered with states. The Federal Government leveraged its 9 percent contribution financially—and by the way that percentage continues to rise as record amounts of federal money are put into education in this country. But, still, education is still a state and local issue, a state and local responsibility. The Federal Government is not trying to take that away. But it is leveraging its 9 percent contribution in funds to say, we, as a Nation, expect every one of our children to be able to read and write. And if a state wants that 9 percent money, then they have to have that same goal. It doesn't

change the school reform efforts that were already underway. It partners with them and steps it up a little bit to another level.

Many states didn't have, although they might have had very strong school reform efforts, many of them didn't look at individual subgroups of students. Many of them didn't test annually. Many of them didn't report to parents and to the public on what was going on in the schools. No Child Left Behind brings some additional responsibility to bear.

That partnership of the Federal Government with local and state teaching and learning is making a big difference in our country. In the last two years the number of fourth graders who learned their fundamental math skills increased by 235,000 kids, enough to fill 500 elementary schools. The long-term NAEP results released last summer show that over the last five years, more reading progress was made among our nine year-olds than in the previous 30 years combined. Thirteen year-olds, as the charts indicate, the news is not that terrific. But significant gains in math were made across all major ethnic groups, from whites, Hispanics, and African-Americans, with African-Americans showing the greatest increase.

What happened? America, again, partnering under No Child Left Behind made a commitment, made a commitment to get a highly qualified teacher who knew the subject he or she is teaching in each classroom. Every student is provided with tutoring. If that student is not at grade level or not on target to be at grade level, there are tutoring opportunities. Those haven't

been taken advantage of nearly to the extent they should have, but the opportunities are there.

High school students, the flattest of all as the study indicates. We have some significant problems in getting high school reform to scale. The President has pushed in the last budget cycle, as well as he did last year, for high school reform, couched under the broad category of American competitiveness. We're losing our edge particularly in math and science in the international community. We've got to reverse that trend. High school is one of the frontiers we must cross and conquer in order to make this work.

And we have some great high schools in our country. I've spent, this is my 40, 4-0, years in public education. I've seen a lot of things come and go and come again. We've got some great schools in our country. We have some outstanding graduates that go on and are very successful and contribute back to this country. But we don't have enough and it's not to scale. And there are too many young people that don't have the opportunity of attending a high school and a junior high school or a middle school in some cases where the teachers are all or mainly highly qualified. They don't all have access to a rigorous curriculum. 80 percent of our fastest growing jobs are going to require some post secondary education. High school reform is a big step toward making that happen. When you have only 3 or 10 ninth graders graduating on time, when you have only 5 of minority children in the ninth grade graduating on time, when you know that Hispanic children are

four times as likely to drop out of high school as white children, African-Americans twice as likely to drop out as white children, when you know that for the million students that drop out of school, high school every year, looking at the cost to this country over their life time exceeds $260 billion in lost earnings in lost taxes paid. Education and economics are intertwined here. Forty percent of our high schools don't offer AP classes. College Board indicated last year that half a million kids were ready for AP Calculus and would have taken it but didn't have access to the course.

We must train more teachers. Part of the President's initiative is to train 70,000 teachers to come in and help boost our advanced placement and international baccalaureate teaching in high school. We want to do for math what we've done for reading. The reading first initiative, tremendously successful to getting our young people to be able to read. If you can't read by the third grade, you've got problems for the rest of your schooling. We must attack it. That's why we have a striving readers program that we began this year and targeted the middle school students that aren't reading at grade level. If you're not caught up by middle school, high school is going to be a loss in a number of cases for them. So striving readers to get them caught up.

We're going to do the same thing for math, calling it math now, with a major emphasis on math in both the early grades and at middle school. We want to increase, as I mentioned, our advanced placement opportunities for children. Additional funds, $90 million of new money just put in the

advanced placement and international baccalaureate program. Adjunct teacher corps to encourage non traditional teachers to enter the teaching profession, particularly in math, science, and foreign languages where our shortages are the greatest. These can be part-time or full time teachers to come in and teach. Our teaching force is graying, just like Old Ray, what little bit I have left is turning gray. That's true all over our Nation. And we don't have the numbers coming up to take their place unless we get creative and learn how to entice teachers to come into the profession.

I have two grandchildren, one four years old and one one. When they begin school, I want them every year to have the teacher of the year. I want them to have a principal of the year. And I want them to attend a blue ribbon school. I don't want either one of them to have three or more lousy teachers in a row, because if they do, they probably won't graduate from high school or they will be one of the statistics that causes that index, but more importantly, causes their personal life to go downhill. I don't want that for them. That's why I've made my work in Washington personal. I carry a picture of my grandchildren next to my heart. And I pull it out every day to remind me why I go to work. And we have to make it personal. If we don't make it personal, if we get lost in statistics then the statistics don't do any better.

No Child Left Behind is trying to put a face on education reform in this country. It won't let a single child go beneath the radar. It won't let a

school that traditionally has been labeled a great school, and rightfully so, if there are children not being served there, it shines a light on that. It talks about schools needing improvement.

No Child Left Behind doesn't talk about failing schools. You won't see the word "failing school" anywhere in the law, but that's what you read in the press. When a school is in improvement, they're labeled as failing. That's an unfortunate label. It's an incorrect label. Everybody can improve. It's about getting better, telling the truth, using data.

There's another report that's being released today across town that talks about some of the improvements and things that are happening under No Child Left Behind. I encourage you to find that report and read it. There's some challenges, obviously. We want to bring again the successes of No Child Left Behind that have been working at the elementary level; we must bring that to middle school and high school. We must look at high school reform. We cannot afford and it is not fair to slam the door in the face of children and teachers that have worked hard through elementary school to get to high school and say, the luck of the draw as to whether or not you're going to have a good rigorous experience here, the luck of the draw as to whether or not you're going to graduate and be able to do something with your life and contribute back to your country.

I look forward to answering questions, to visiting with you further. Thank you for letting me be here.

[Applause.]

MR. HASKINS: And now for the moderated part of our discussion, we're extremely fortunate to have Ray Suarez who is a Senior Correspondent for the NewsHour with Jim Lehrer. Probably everybody in this room knows Mr. Suarez. Before that, he was on National Public Radio and ran the Talk of the Nation Show for many years. And we're very fortunate to have Mr. Suarez here who, himself, is something of an expert in education. So we're very fortunate that he's here and we'd like to welcome you, Ray.

MR. SUAREZ: Thanks a lot, Mr. Haskins.

As much of an expert you can be, I guess, having three children in the D.C. Public Schools, first grade, ninth grade, and eleventh, and learning firsthand what that means in all its joy and sorrow.

I was interested in the stats you unrolled for us, Ken Land, because they got me thinking about how some of these different indices relate to each other. And I know you explained the methodology and why you weighted some of them equally. But looking at the flat lining in a lot of broad educational measurements and then the decline in two, I think, very pertinent measurements, the health attainment and the family state, could the flat lining in education, could the lack of progress in some areas be pulled down by the decline in absolute terms of health and family state?

MR. LAND: It's possible. We focused on the health domain a couple of years ago here. And, of course, the driving factor there in the decline is the trend towards increasing obesity of our children and youth. And to broaden on that just a moment, one thing we've noticed about the day-to-day activities of children for the past 25 years is quite remarkable. Today's children and youth are perhaps the most observed, the most watched children and youth in American society ever. I've seen reports, for example, and news stories of parents who talk to their children who are away at colleges and universities as many as 15 to 20 times a day because cell phone technology allows that kind of communication. So these kids are watched even beyond age 18.

But what we've noticed for younger children, children and adolescents is that a tremendous change in the way that time is spent in the after school hours. I was at the American Statistical Association meetings last summer in Minneapolis and chatting with a friend on the faculty of the University of Minnesota about this. And he said, you know, you're right. He said, I drive home to my home in a suburb of Minneapolis at the end of the day around 4:00 or 5:00 o'clock, and I know the neighborhood is full of children, but I never see them. And the whole point is that parents today are intensively programming their children's after school hours for soccer practice, band practice, religious instruction, language instruction, whatever it might be.

Or if the kids are not in programmed activities, they're inside the house. And this relates to a trend we highlighted last year. This increases their safety. Tremendous declines over the last decade in violent crime victimization of adolescents and teenagers. Tremendous declines in teen pregnancy. Tremendous, even declines in drug and alcohol use to some extent. And so it increases their safety, but what are they doing inside the house? They're by in large, especially the boys, are playing video games. And they're probably drinking soda pop and munching on cookies or chips. And so that explains what's happening to the obesity trend.

MR. SUAREZ: One disaggregation that I didn't see in all these stats is gender differences. A lot of the reporting that's coming out goes to the splitting in attainment between young boys and young girls, how that's starting to show up in entering freshman classmen at the post secondary level, how it's already showing up in the number of bachelor's degrees being conferred by four-year institutions. If we mine your data a little more, what do gender differences tell us about whether we're succeeding?

MR. LAND: Across our 28 key indicators, we did publish a report last year, and it got caught up in the media frenzy after President Larry Summers' comments at Harvard last year. And our conclusion was that across our 28 indicator series, there are some series that show relatively greater improvements for females and some that show relatively greater

improvements for males. And the composite picture is that they tend to trend together.

However, the ones that you're focusing on certainly merit some attention. We now see across the board and in college and in university enrollments, much greater percentage of females enroll than males. And for those particular areas of well being, we definitely need to focus on what's happening.

MR. SUAREZ: Secretary Simon, you just heard Ken Land refer to today's students as the most watched, most measured, most monitored of all. And yet we're seeing some of those downturns, we're seeing failures to advance. No Child Left Behind may be five years old, but the kinds of things that it has put in place have been going on in a lot of places for a much longer time than five years. How should we understand the very stubborn resistance of some of those numbers to change? Today's 17 year old has been tested and probed and prodded and looked at since the day they entered school.

SECRETARY SIMON: A couple of things come to mind. Number one, how to use data and holding schools accountable. No Child Left Behind in 2002 was the latest reauthorization of a Federal Law that goes back to 1965. The latest prior to No Child Left Behind that that law was authorized was 1994. It had some accountability provisions in it. Trying to

leverage the Federal Government's role. In 2002, only 11 states were meeting that law. The rest had all received waivers.

When No Child Left Behind comes along now, it says no waivers. It says accountability. We want results. It focuses on the individual child. And if you ask schools and principals that are making a difference where now—where 2014 is today, where all the children are proficient or at grade level or are about to be, you ask them what do you do? What's different here? Because you have challenging populations. You have children that come from single parent homes. You have children that people said room can't be made for and you're teaching them. What's the difference?

And it's because they know how to watch them and they know what to do with the data. Every day that when a teacher comes to school, that teacher knows what the child knows or doesn't know based on instruction as late as the previous day. It's using data in a smart way. We've had data forever. And we know what works and what doesn't work in teaching.

What we haven't been willing to do as a country is look at the individual child to the degree that No Child Left Behind requires. Look at the data on that child and make sure the teacher and principal understand that. Once that's done, achievement goes up. And you're going to find that that's happening more and more now. People are paying attention. They are watching, but they're doing something with what they're seeing.

MR. SUAREZ: Well, you said we've got the data and we know what to do in teaching. But there are any number of examples where kids just get handed on from institution to institution. We realize through assessment that they have been badly prepared for the level of school that they're now attending. What do we do? We measured it. We know they're not ready. Is their curriculum immediately redesigned? Do we start teaching them in seventh grade as they should have been taught in third grade about how to decode a sentence or understand a paragraph? Do we immediately put on some—ring the alarm bell and put on some kind of full court press? Is that actually what happens at the middle school level when someone is handed on from a poorly performing elementary school?

SECRETARY SIMON: But it is happening more now and the fact that schools are being held accountable and that adequate yearly progress has to be made. That's why I mentioned earlier in my remarks, if schools get put in improvement, they take it as a slap in the face, and they take it as a sign of failure. It doesn't say you're a failing school, but it says the things that you're talking about are happening. Children are not at grade level. And the longer they're passed through school through social promotion without anybody knowing where they are in terms of their learning, then you're going to have that.

School reform, and school reform is relatively new with a lot of our states. It's got to start early. When you start school reform at middle

school, you're not going to make the gains. It's a whole lot harder to do it over than to do it right the first time. Intervention is always more difficult than getting it right to begin with. But what's happening is these children now, at least if they're moved from grade to grade and still not at grade level, teachers know more than they have ever known about that child. If it doesn't read, we now know where they do read. And there are targeted interventions to help. No child requires tutoring or change of school. If a school continues not to make adequate yearly progress for six years, the law says that school will be reconstituted. So there are teeth in the law now. States are looking at that. If that's what drives them, then that's one of the drivers. But it's working.

MR. SUAREZ: Forgive me, but you're going to have to help me a little bit more with that connection between knowing and doing. When I walk out the door every morning, there's two papers sitting at the curb. And they happen to have pretty good education reporters. And I pick up the paper and I read that by third grade, black and Latin students in the Nation's biggest systems are three years behind in reading, behind their white counterparts. Being three years behind by third grade is a sort of amazing concept. But if you and I get in a cab now and go to those schools where kids are largely on grade level and where almost all of them aren't, are we really going to see a different method of instruction, a different approach to a class

flow of 25 children? Is that connection between knowing and doing being made immediately on the ground? Do we know it's happening?

SECRETARY SIMON: It is being made immediately on the ground. The fact that we know those children are that far behind is something we didn't pay attention to ten years ago. It is working for schools that are determined to make it work. The biggest problem we still have, or a big problem we still have is recognizing the truth and not being afraid of the truth and doing something about it. Schools that choose to do that, the gaps are narrowing. That's an absolute fact. The gaps are narrowing.

But in schools and states that say we don't have a problem, it's not. So part of the pressure, part of the light of No Child Left Behind, that's why it has such bipartisan support, despite some of the criticisms you will hear in the press, there is still strong bipartisan support for what No Child Left Behind is all about. It says do what the law says. Don't do what we did in 1994. Pass a law that's said to do a lot of the things No Child Left Behind says to do, but nobody ever enforced it. A school would come, a state would come to the U.S. Department and say, we don't think we can do this. Okay. You don't have to do it. No Child Left Behind changed that.

Now, that's going to take some time for that philosophy to get out there. People think wait till this President is gone. Wait till this Congress is gone. All this will go away. You know, I've seen, again 40

years, I don't think this is going away. If it does, shame on us for letting it go away.

MR. SUAREZ: Mr. Land, you heard the Secretary's presentation about results. Are those results that he was talking about showing up in the measurements that you've used to show trending over the last couple of years?

MR. LAND: Well, we do see some improvements as we show at certain age groups, but we do have to address what's happening to the oldest age group tested, the age 17 year olds and try to figure out what's going on there. And it's not clear to me that we know.

MR. SUAREZ: When you're using such big sets of people, millions of 17—

[Technical interruption.]

MR. SUAREZ: —of nine year olds. Does the American at 35,000 feet nature of those statistics obscure an unmiddling where kids in the most privileged houses in the best school districts are achieving at even higher levels where kids who are at the opposite end of the continuum are really just falling out the bottom as we're getting in residential stock, in the assets of families, an unmiddling of the American continuum.

MR. LAND: Certainly, there are some data that suggest those disparities have grown. And I think some of our specific presentations later on will address some of those topics.

MR. SUAREZ: Let me take a couple from the audience. Yes. Professor Ravitch?

MS. RAVITCH: Professor Land, in your presentation you presented the educational flat line and increases and decreases in relationship to demographic factors, which is interesting, but it left out any role for instructional factors. And I was wondering if you might add to your data team someone who might look at some of the changes in instruction which might have had some causal relationship that there may have been some very large direction either in math instruction or reading instruction that might account for the changes. Because as I listen to you, it sounds like what happens inside the school house is irrelevant to scores going up or down. And I don't think that Secretary Simon would agree with that.

MR. LAND: We certainly are continuing our efforts on this research and those are some of the topics that we will be studying. What we wanted to emphasize today was the broad societal trends. And that's what you saw.

MR. SUAREZ: Yes?

MR. LEVY: Hi! David Levy, Children's Rights Council.

I wonder if you've done any correlation between family structure and childhood outcomes? The reason I ask is that research shows that the most vulnerable kids in education, I'm sure you know, are kids from separated, divorced, and never married families. But where both parents are

involved through joint custody and other means, the attainment goes up. There's less risk. There are better outcomes. So don't we need to examine the family structure correlation to get to the core of the problem and also as a way of predicting, assessing ways to improve outcomes?

MR. LAND: Yes. As you pointed out, there are a number of studies that show children from families where both parents are not present or involved in the children's lives do not do as well on many measures as children from intact families. And, again, what we're trying to do with the CWI is chart the large trends over time. And some of our analyses that we will continue to do on standardization will look at the impact of family structures as well.

MR. SUAREZ: Who's next? Yes, on the aisle.

MR. O'HARE: Good morning. I'm Bill O'Hare. I run the Kids Count Program at the Annie E. Casey Foundation. This is a question for Mr. Simon.

I was in this room less than a month ago when there was a discussion about the epidemic of obesity among American children and a bunch of experts said the solution had to do with what schools need to do and do more of or do differently. And it seems like almost any social issue involving children involves the schools doing more, from childcare to sexuality to all these things.

So my question is kind of like, given your analogy of a bread man can always make room on the shelf for more bread, it sounds like you would say that, yes, the school can do all those things and teach math and reading and science. On the other hand, it seems like there's got to be some point when the school taking up all those other things is going to detract from the ability to teach those core subjects. So I'd like to ask your opinion on that.

SECRETARY SIMON: Yeah. I have a strong opinion on it. This is Ray's opinion, not necessarily that of the United States Department of Education.

There's been some, a lot of talk about narrowing the curriculum. No Child Left Behind has been accused of narrowing the curriculum. Now, I could stay an hour with you and talk about why that's not true and why it doesn't have to be. Our official position is if a school wants to spend more time on math and reading, we're not going to criticize that. But No Child Left Behind does not require a narrowing of the curriculum. When you throw courses out, if you say we're going to improve our math and science or math and reading scores by not having PE, by not having art, by not having social studies, by not having science, whatever, when you do that, I mean, that's a decision somebody needs to study that. But if you do that, it doesn't have to be that way. When you do that, what you're taking away from those children

is an opportunity to see math and reading practiced in a way that they understand and can relate to.

If I have an interest in art, my gosh, where is there more mathematics than in art? I can learn a lot about mathematics by taking art. I can learn a lot about mathematics in watching a plant grow. I mean, science opens up the whole possibility of understanding mathematics in a concrete way that a lot of kids have to have. So it's, when you look at subjects as discrete items in a school day, you have problems deciding what are we going to throw away and what are we going to keep? Don't look at it that way. Every course, every experience of a child has an opportunity to reinforce reading and math. And the schools that are making the best gains, I'll bet you in every one of them I've talked to, they haven't had to cut out a single thing. They have just taught smarter and they made sure that every teacher understood a child has to read and write and do math in your classroom. Now, you're going to make that interesting. And it works.

MR. SUAREZ: That's all the time we have for now. We'll hear from you in the audience again later.

Professor Land, Mr. Secretary, thank you both.

I'd like to bring to the podium now—

[Applause.]

MR. SUAREZ: Gene Maeroff, Senior Fellow at the Hechinger Institute from Columbia University Teachers College, Marty West, Research

Fellow for the Brookings Institution, Kate Walsh, President of the National Council on Teacher Quality, and Diane Ravitch, from the Brookings Institution and Research Professor of Education at my alma mater, New York University. Go Violet. We don't have much in the way of basketball to brag about, but we have Diane Ravitch to brag about.

And opening up our series of presentations will be Gene Maeroff from Columbia.

MR. MAEROFF: Thank you, Ray, and good morning everybody.

When students don't succeed, maybe it's best to go back to the beginning. And the child well-being index that we've been hearing about this morning indicates that something that ought to be happening in schools and in homes, in keeping with the question that was asked, is probably not happening. I submit that doing a better job when children are younger holds promise of improved outcomes throughout their education and even into higher education. And, again, when Dr. Land showed the chart of reading for 17 year olds, it is very clear that some of those students will never be able to succeed in higher education.

This unprecedented attention to the primary grades, the time when foundations are built, ought to occur from pre-kindergarten through third grade. What I, and some other people, increasingly refer to as PK3. This means getting children into schools sooner, certainly by age four and

even more desirable by age 3. Voluntary pre-kindergarten should be universally available.

The research is abundantly clear about the advantages that accrue to the neediest kids when they get this early start. And again, the statistics we saw attest to that. The fact that most youngsters begin school at five years old is a purely arbitrary decision. Once they are five, though, there's no reason every child should not have a full school day as they do in the grades above kindergarten.

Almost any kindergarten teacher you talk to will tell you that a half day of kindergarten is inadequate. Then first, second, and third grade should build on the experiences that children have had in kindergarten. There's no doubt that many of the gains made during programs before first grade, Head Start, pre-school, kindergarten, half day kindergarten, are lost. And again, there's a very strong research base showing this, a PK3 approach should be pursued with the idea of sustaining these early gains and with attention not only to the cognitive, but social, emotional, and physical development of children.

This will best be done when there is alignment in a program carried out with an eye toward what students need at each successive step, the kind of alignment that I have in mind involves standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment, each interlocked with the other. And this is all driven by the needs that children have to reach a certain threshold to be able

to thrive in the fourth grade when reading—learning to read switches over to reading to learn. The clock and the calendar should not be obstacles in this pursuit. Schools that are open from early in the morning until late in the afternoon, as well as summers, have more hours to reinforce learning goals and provide settings that, frankly, many working parents need.

Given its focus on the early years, PK3 should build connections with the home. No one should doubt today, after all that we've learned, that what happens before children ever reach the classroom, has a great deal to do with what happens in those classrooms. To the extent that homes could be encouraged and helped to enrich conversation, which, of course, means enlarging vocabulary, is very, very important in the pursuit of language and literacy.

PK3 is about helping every child construct an academic work ethic. They must learn that effort is the pathway to achievement. Families and schools working together should strive to make sure that children learn about the need to buckle down.

I'd like to just give you five ways in which PK3 can be helpful. First emphasis, designation of pre-K through grade 3 as a unit unto itself with specific goals, especially in language development is a first step toward assuring that the youngest children do not get shoved to the side as precedence goes to the older children. Team work, second, in a PK3 school or unit of their own, staff can more readily plan across grade levels and

across classrooms. Viewing students as one unified learning community, they can form horizontal teams on the grade level and vertical teams where there's one teacher from each grade pre-K through third. Third, flexible small group instruction that reaches beyond a single classroom and crosses grade levels, acknowledges the uneven progress at these ages. Fourth, staff development. Educators at this level share common professional interests best addressed through continuing education that recognizes the interlocking nature of their work. And finally, fifth, culmination, which I'm about to do with this talk—I'm getting a time about how much time I have left—third grade as a concluding point takes on significance as a juncture at which to gather the fruits of early learning to make success more likely in the grades that follow.

Now, that's not an easy task because I just wrote a book about this. And to put it into five minutes is not easy. Thank you.

[Applause.]

MR. SUAREZ: Well, hopefully, this sends people toward the book rather than thinking they have just saved themselves several hours by listening to your five minute—I think that's the idea, anyway.

Marty West?

MR. WEST: Well, Professor Land's presentation this morning focused on the performance of American students over time, noting that achievement has been stagnant despite dramatically increased—actually he didn't say this—but increased spending on K-12 education.

Now, this type of analysis is often—it's quickly criticized, and it already has been this morning, on the grounds that the student population has changed, that the burdens placed on schools have increased, or that we're not using just the right achievement measure. While I don't find most of those criticisms persuasive, I thin it's useful to point out that other perspectives on American education tell much the same story as the over time analysis.

International comparisons of student achievement, for example, consistently place us near the top in terms of pure people spending but right at the bottom in terms of student achievement. Meanwhile, comparisons of performance within the United States reveal stark achievement gaps along lines of income and ethnicity, as we've already heard. Nationwide black eighth graders continue to perform at roughly the same level as white fourth graders. And the graduation rate for minority students in some areas is as low as 50 percent.

So while no single perspective provides a complete picture about the performance of our schools, I do think these competing perspectives actually send a consistent message that we need to improve student achievement dramatically. And that increasing spending alone is unlikely to get us very far.

With No Child Left Behind the Federal Government has raised expectations, as Secretary Simon said. But achieving the goal of educating all students to proficiency will require a big increase in the supply of high

quality schools, especially in traditionally under served communities. And Bruno Mano and I, in the paper that we have prepared for this event, make the case that charter schools can help in accomplishing this task.

So what are charter schools? Well, the heart of the charter idea is that it's the voluntary creation of public schools of choice that will be exempt from many of the regulations placed on traditional public schools, but held accountable for results both by parental choices and by a public entity that has been designated as a charter authorizer. Providers are typically granted charters to operate a school for five years at which point the authorizer can decide whether the charter should be renewed. In addition to providing new effective schools, the hope is that charters will provide a source of innovation and of direct competition that will help all public schools to improve.

Now, this isn't a new idea. The Nation's first charter school law was passed in Minnesota in 1991, and there are now over 3,600 charter schools educating more than a million students in 40 states and the District. This is still only 3 percent of the Nation's schools, but there are some urban districts where charters are now a significant market presence, including right here in D.C. where 30 percent of students attend charter schools.

So how are they doing? Well, there's only one experimental evaluation of charter schools available to date. And that's a study of just three charter schools in Chicago done by Caroline Hoxby and Jonah Rockoff.

Their results show two things that I think are worth noting. The first is they show that students in charter schools outperforming students who applied to attend the charter but lost the entrance lottery and had to remain in a traditional public school. But the second thing that they show is that the students who do best in charters are students who entered in an early grade. Which means that studies that look mainly at students who transfer into charter schools at higher grades, which is going to be the bulk of charter students in newly established charters, are likely to provide misleading information about the quality of charters or how effective they're going to be once they're established.

Of course, these results come from only three schools. And that's a real problem, especially given the diversity of schools with a charter label. National data actually showed students in charter schools lagging in performance behind students in regular public schools. These differences tend to disappear when you take into account the backgrounds of the students attending the charter schools. They tend to come from more disadvantaged backgrounds. But the overall effectiveness of charter schools is likely to remain a debate controversial for years to come.

So in the mean time, what can we know? What we do know for sure is that some of the most impressive and innovative new models for urban education, including schools that open early and stay late and that establish relationships with pre-K providers have emerged within the charter sector.

The charters have brought new blood into the teaching profession, something that's really important that Kate's going to talk about later. And that demand for seats in charter schools remains high.

There's also some evidence that competition from charters has helped public schools to improve, and no evidence that they've had an adverse effect.

So what can we expect of charter schools under No Child Left Behind, which is really the elephant in the ed reform room at the moment? Well, the law has actually caused some consternation among the charter community with many charter proponents complaining that its testing requirements will stifle innovation. And there is some measure of inconsistency at the theoretical level between accountability to parents and accountability to a top down regulatory approach. But I would argue that accountability for getting students to proficiency in core academic subjects is a reasonable requirement, provided it's administered in a sensible way. And to turn this concern on its head, it may be that oversight from charter authorizers and accountability to parents can compliment NCLB by keeping schools from narrowing curricula excessively or in the wrong ways.

There's also some ambivalence in the charter community about provisions in No Child Left Behind that could increase the number of charter schools. And that is, as Secretary Simon pointed out, NCLB requires schools—states to restructure schools that do not make adequately yearly

progress for five consecutive years. And one of the options available to them is to convert the school to charter status.

The reason for the hesitation within the charter community is that this really strikes at the heart of the chartering idea, which is this notion of volunteerism and choice, the voluntary creation of schools. And there's a danger that reluctant districts will slap the charter label on a school without really changing how it's run. So these concerns are worth taking seriously, but I would still argue, and this is the case that we lay out in the paper that you have in your packet, that it would be useful for states to encourage districts to use chartering as a way to deal with persistently failing schools.

And I'm running out of time, so I'll just talk very briefly about four conditions that need to be—that need to happen if this is going to be successful. The first and most obvious one is that state caps on charter schools need to be raised or removed. Currently 25 states have caps on the number of charter schools. And these are already binding in at least 10 states, which really could limit districts options.

Second, charter schools have to have access to funding and facilities on equal terms with traditional public schools. The authorizing process also needs to be improved by increasing transparency and creating alternative authorizers who are willing to make tough decisions like closing down schools. Letting charter schools that are unsuccessful continue to operate is a real challenge and a real threat to the charter school movement.

Finally, the local community needs to be involved in the creation of new charter schools from the outset to minimize political opposition.

So creating and running a large number of charter schools under No Child Left Behind will not be easy, but I think it's something that's worth trying to get right.

[Applause.]

MR. SUAREZ: Now, Kate Walsh, from the National Council of Teacher Quality.

MS. WALSH: I was a little bit uncomfortable delivering the paper that I wrote today, given the context of the—given the assignment that we received, which was to come up with a strategy for improving NAEP gains and improving educational gains, which have stayed so flat. So I felt a little bit like a wet blanket, but nevertheless, I think I'm going to end with a note of optimism. So you'll have to bear with me.

You can't go to an education conference anywhere in the United States these days without the opening line being how much teachers matter and that teachers swamp the—whereas, we used to think that the home environment was far more important than school, we now have evidence that, in fact, schools can overcome home environment and with good teachers. So teacher quality is extremely important. And those findings are relatively sound. They're very robust and produced by some good economists.

But they have led to sort of a feeding frenzy in education circles, depending on your political motivation. For one side, it's to argue that pay ought to be improved across the board because we know that finally we have evidence that teachers are so important. And at the other end, there's a big push to do much more merit pay and getting rid of teachers who we know we can measure who are bad. So our capacity for measuring what an individual teacher can do or not do with children has been remarkably improved in the last 10 or 15 years. So we have this wealth of knowledge and there's a lot of groups, whatever political motivations, that want to do something with that knowledge.

But I think it's really important to put this knowledge into the context of reality. And for people to understand that, yes, good teachers are important. Teachers really do matter, but there's a lot more to it than those simple statements. And there are a lot of problems with the methodologies that we're using to decide who is effective and who is not effective.

One economist, Rick Hanishef [ph.], who is probably the premiere economist in this field in the Nation, has come out with a proposition that if you could assign children to an effective teacher five years in a row, you could eliminate the deficits that they bring with them into school that are caused by poverty and race. So that's a fairly bold statement, especially for somebody like Rick Hanushek to make. But it's theoretically true. But you have to understand it's only theoretically true.

And here are the problems with it. The odds of a poor child getting assigned a good teacher five years in a row are probably about 1 in 17,000. We know who—we know which teachers are effective, and there aren't that many of them. It's about 1 in 7 teachers that are capable of producing the kinds of gains we're talking about. So a child getting assigned an effective teacher one year is, you know, one seventh, and then to the fifth power for five years in a row. So you're talking about in a random assignment it being very unlikely that a child, especially a child who is poor, getting assigned to effective teachers five years in a row, let's say three years in a row, even, is pretty slim. So when we talk about what's possible, we need to understand the reality of how many teachers are actually effective.

The second difficulty, and this is a little bit complicated. I hope I can do justice to the problems here. So, excuse me, I'm not an economist. But we don't—these economists are looking at data sets. When they're looking at how effective teachers are, they're not saying, Mrs. Jones, I'm going to study for the next five years and see how well you do with your kids. They're looking in retrospect. They're looking at data sets of classrooms that have already happened. They didn't decide who is effective or ineffective and then make an assignment. That's very important to understand here.

So when you look at an effective teacher, it's really hard to decide ahead of time if they're going to be effective. Now, we all think we know who is effective, but using the instruments that are available to us at

the moment, these value- added technologies, it's almost impossible to predict with any consistency who is going to be effective from one year to the next. So we think Mrs. Jones is quite effective, but then we look at test score results and she was in the highest percentile one year and the lowest percentile the next. Now, she may be actually much more effective than that suggests. But that's what the capacity of these value-added measures have. There's a lot of noise. There's a lot of—a lot of noise in the classroom, peers matter. They're not actually measuring the impact of that individual teacher. They're also measuring the impact of what's happening in that classroom. So it's very hard to predict and make assignments that will overcome those problems.

The last point I want to make is that some of the things we're learning from these measures is that we can predict who is pretty effective in mathematics about 1 in 7 teachers. But for reading, it's even worse. It's even less likely we can predict what happens in reading. And that's for a lot of reasons, but no one knows exactly why it is. Everyone is just speculating. But we do know that children learn most of their mathematics in school. There isn't much influence from home, other than learning how to count money and things like that. You don't learn a lot of mathematics at home. So the impact of schools on children with mathematics is very, very strong.

In reading it's much more complicated. And I don't have time to go into it a great deal here, but let's suffice it to say that the language that

you acquire at home is probably going to have more power, more impact than what any teacher can do. Also, the way you acquire language, and this is really important for some of the studies that have come out recently looking at teacher America's impact in a year or teachers impact of a year, it takes a long time for us to absorb language. So a reading teacher may be phenomenal, but the test doesn't pick up what that teacher accomplished in that year. So it's just much—what I'm trying to convey in the brief time that I have, and I've already exceeded it, is that some of the hyperbole surrounding these teacher quality findings are much more complex. They are not cause for us to be pessimistic because we do have to work harder to increase the chances of a child being assigned a great teacher, but it's important for us to understand that it's not a simple matter of saying all teachers have a great impact on schools. Let's, you know, take the consequences from there or the impact of that statement and go with it. It requires hard work to increase the numbers of high quality teachers.

MR. SUAREZ: And Diane Ravitch from New York University.

MS. RAVITCH: Good morning, and thanks for having me here, Belle Sawhill, Ron Haskins.

I think we've made a lot of progress, at least in the area that I want to talk about, because when I first came to Brookings 12 years ago, it was virtually forbidden, at least during the time I worked in the U.S. Department of Education, to even mention the word national curriculum. In

some quarters it's still forbidden. And I love speaking the forbidden. So I'm going to talk today about the case for national curriculum, national standards, and national test. And the progress that we've made is that when I first discussed this 12 years ago at Brookings, the response was frequently, we don't need any changes of that kind because we're doing better than ever or at least as well as we've ever done, but probably better than ever. I think the big change is that people realize now we're not doing better than ever. We're not doing better than the rest of the world. And we have got to make more progress than we have.

I would like to think that No Child Left Behind rather than being in opposition to what I'm proposing is a step in that direction. You may hear some gasps coming from across town, but I believe that.

The current regime that we have of 50 states, 50 standards, 50 tests, coupled with sanctions for low performance is bringing us increasingly lower and lower standards on the part of the states. We're seeing, in fact, a race to the bottom as states rush to say that if you reach this level, you're proficient. Whereas, in NAEP you had to be up here to be proficient. And so we see these odd results when you align the NAEP proficiency results with the state's claims of proficiency you'll find that there are many states where they're saying that 80 percent of the kids are proficient in reading or math when on NAEP it's only 22 percent or 30 percent, huge gaps, 30 points, 50 points.

And so there are people now saying, well, NAEP standards are too high. Well, the reason they're too high is because they're aligned with international standards while the states are going down and inflating their grades. Missouri, in fact, which is one of only five states whose scores are similar to their NAEP scores, has already announced publicly that they are going to lower their state standards in order to get the great results that all these other states are getting, part of the race to the bottom.

And I want to mention, by the way, that the common belief that we do great in the fourth grade, eighth grade internationally we're about average, twelfth grade we're really doing very poorly, it's repeated in Tom Friedman's book, "The World is Flat," repeated by Bill Gates, wrong, wrong, wrong. AIR released a study just a couple of months ago showing that if you only compare all the nations that participated in TIMS [ph.] for TIMS aid and the PISA test, these being the three big international assessments, what you find is our fourth graders come in eighth out of twelve, our eighth graders come in ninth out of twelve, and our twelfth graders come in ninth out of twelve. And they say this is pretty consistent mediocrity. American kids have the same amount of instructional time. They have more relevance in the teaching than in other nations. They have more use of calculators than in other nations and poorer results. One of the reasons is because most of the other nations have a national curriculum and we don't.

Improvement requires good information. We don't have it. What we do need is a strong and coherent K through 12 curriculum in every subject, not only in math and reading, but in math, science, history, literature, the arts, foreign languages, even physical education. That's what we tried to do when I was in the first Bush Administration.

A national curriculum should define what to teach, not how to teach. It would provide coherence. There would be a clear sequence of topics. This coherence would shape teacher education, professional development, textbooks and tests. It would be similar, in fact, to what we now have with the AP and the IB, which is that you define the syllabus the children are to learn, teachers know what they're expected to teach, and they know what they're expected to test.

Ironically, as I've argued in favor, we already have a national curriculum. It's a very low level, lowest common denominator curriculum. If you want to know what it is, I welcome you to open any textbook. They all look alike. They're like peas in a pod. Look at the tests that have no relationship to what was taught in the classroom. The national curriculum that we have is weak. It's incoherent. It's fragmented. It focuses on skills, not knowledge. The coverage in the textbooks is vast because of any lack of coherence in our curriculum. The tests emphasize reading skills. They even emphasize IQ and reasoning skills. But they don't emphasize knowledge, because that's not what we focus on. Because of the nature of the tests, they

reflect very much the socioeconomic status of the children. We should test what was taught. That would be much fairer than what we're testing now.

So then the question is who should define a national curriculum? How should it be defined? We already have the National Assessment Governing Board, which I was privileged to serve on for seven years. It's bipartisan. It's sworn to not impose any pedagogy. It occasionally would wander into that direction. I would always yell and scream and push them away from that precipice. I think that we need to learn from other nations. We need to learn from our own past experience. And I would point out that in England, a national curriculum and a national examination system was created by the Thatcher regime. So I don't consider this to be out of the realm of a bipartisan agreement.

I'm going to take just one extra minute because I want to comment on a paper for which the author is not here. It's an excellent paper by David Gordon. And he makes a point that I want to just diverge from my topic to reflect on. And that is his recommendation that research says we should have small high schools.

I want to dissent from that only because the research doesn't, in fact, say that. He does not reference the work of Valerie Lee at the University of Michigan. Valerie Lee points out that we must beware of having high schools that are smaller than 600 students. Her research, which was I think quite impressive, points to the direction that a high school should

be in the range of 600 to 900 students, because anything smaller than that is not able to offer a reasonable curriculum, no advanced classes in math or science, no AP, no IB. Even the Gates Foundation had its own evaluation of its small high school initiative conducted by AIR. And that evaluation shows that while everyone was warm and fuzzy and happy, the small schools were producing lower achievement in math than the large high schools that the children had left.

So I think that when we talk about rigor and small high schools in the same breath, we should make sure that we're not talking about schools below about 600 kids. Thank you very much.

[Applause.]

MR. SUAREZ: Well, if you've ever watched the NewsHour or passed it while channel surfing to somewhere else, you'll note that when I look up at the table and introduce everybody, they're talking about the same thing. So it's apparent where I should start because everybody just talked about the same thing. It's less apparent when four people talk about four different things. But plunge ahead, I shall, nonetheless.

All this measuring on the national level muddies the water a little bit, because that's now how parents assess school competence and it's not how they make school choices in their own family. And when they look around for where to live, it's unlikely they're going to pick up and move from Schenectady to San Antonio because they've read about good schools there.

But inside a metropolitan area, that kind of choice is more likely to be made. And they also understand where their kids are at based on where they know other kids are at.

So when I look at a place like Chicago and look at, you know, pick one, Lake Forest, Wilmette, Winnetka, where they're spending 15,000 per kid, and then on the other side of the same metropolitan area, Robins, Fort Heights, Blue Island, Harvey, where they're spending $5,000, $6,000, $7,000 a kid. And you wouldn't be surprised to find out that the grades in some of the poorest school districts in the Chicago metropolitan area are among the lowest. And you wouldn't be surprised to find out they are pretty darn high in high schools like Nutrier, where you can split the atom and launch rockets off the football field.

But the problem is we talk about these places as if we're talking about the same thing that eleventh grade is eleventh grade, whether you're in Wilmette or Harvey, whether you're in Lake Forest or Blue Island. We don't talk about all the variables. We talk about teacher quality as if that's a sui generous inside the school walls subject. And we don't talk about what it would mean to take the entire faculty of Nutrier High School and swamp it with the high school down in Blue Island. And what that would do to student achievement and what it would do to the way we measure teacher achievement. Would we suddenly think that these same teachers who are sending their kids to Harvard and Yale every year were now "bad teachers" if

after three years in Blue Island they were getting low assessments and low standardized test scores? I'm not sure.

If we swap the budgets, would we immediately see skyrocketing achievement down in the south suburbs of Chicago? If we swap school buildings, what would do beyond at least provide a nicer environment, a more decent and human environment for kids who currently go to shabby, collapsing buildings, and a less worthwhile environment for kids who go to gorgeous, fabulously well built and well endowed buildings. And every conversation I moderate about education choose one variable or another and tries to correct, for the rest of the universe, and look at this one thing because all we can do is think about one thing at a time.

Diane Ravitch in a country when it talks about education seemingly heading in the other direction, and we saw it in debates over state standards for science in Kentucky and Missouri and in Kansas and in the Dover Pennsylvania Intelligent Design Case, people are allergic to national anything. I know you like to speak the forbidden. But is anybody going to take up this banner and charge with you up the hill when we're allergic, as we are, to national anything?

MS. RAVITCH: Well, I guess that I've gotten a—I have to say I've gotten a very positive response. I wrote an article making this argument last November in the New York Times. And it's one of a few articles where I've just gotten an overwhelmingly positive response from teachers, from

administrators, from people in the business world, and even a few people in politics are saying, you know, maybe we can begin to talk about this.

My background is that I'm a historian. So I tend not to think of what's feasible—I don't think about what do we have to do in this term of Congress, but what's the emerging trend. I believe this is the emerging trend. And I think that there are all kinds of things in this country that we do nationally. I mean, every state doesn't define how many inches are in a foot or, you know, what size is a standard basketball court. We work by—whether it's science, the laws of—as Edward Rust, the other day, the CEO of State Farm said in one of the newspapers, the laws of physics are the same in Illinois as they are in New York. Well, they're also the same in Japan and Nigeria and Paris.

So it just seems to me that it's inevitable that we're going to have to align our standards with those of the rest of the world, or we'll find ourselves falling farther and farther behind.

MR. SUAREZ: It's interesting that you mention Paris, because that's long been held up as a model of national standards. Once to a visitor the Minister of Education famously bragged that he knew on this day in April what page in their textbook every child in the third grade in France was turning to. And what is the benefit of that? Why would it be important to have a national curriculum?

MS. RAVITCH: I think the biggest benefit would be an equity benefit, because it would assure that the children in every school in this country would have access to the same quality curriculum. I mean, first you have to establish what you want kids to learn before you do professional development for teachers, before you do teacher education. If you're going to do teacher education and nobody knows what they're going to be teaching, what's the curriculum for the fourth grade? It's useful to know that no matter what school you're going to be in. So I think there's a huge equity benefit. And then there's also the benefit that if you align your standards with the highest performing standards in the world, then you can make sure that they're up to date. And you also will not have narrow minded communities imposing narrow minded agendas. Because I find that as the policy agenda gets farther up and becomes a national agenda, it becomes one that has to be argued openly and debated openly and narrow minded agendas fall aside. This was my experience as a member of the National Assessment Governing Board. There were no personal or political agendas, but rather a passionate concern from a bipartisan group about improving achievement.

MR. SUAREZ: Kate Walsh, I find one of the most difficult conversations to have surrounding education has to do with teachers. And while you mentioned at the outset that people agree that good teachers matter, I guess where you stand depending on where you sit. Because monthly stories and studies cross my desk that talk about, for instance, one from the

Manhattan Institute, that said teachers aren't underpaid. Paying them more wouldn't make any difference. That's not even an important part of the conversation.

And then, if you're sitting at the same desk long enough, one will come the following week that says, no, no, if you pay more, you get more. When people make career choices and choose career paths, there's very powerful information that's sent back into the labor market by choices we make about how we pay teachers. It seems very hard to convene a real conversation on what we want, what we get, what we're willing to pay for, and what we're willing to hold up as a standard for the professionals who do this work.

MS. WALSH: I think the quick answer to that is that some teachers are underpaid and some teachers are overpaid. If you look at any of the arguments from where you sit, the economist, the far left will say teachers get paid several thousand dollars a year less than a comparable profession like journalism or the clergy or social worker. You look on the far right, they'll say, no, they're about average, they're about the same. So, I mean, there are some huge discrepancy over, we're not talking about thousands and thousands of dollars between the two ends of the spectrum. But what the real mandate is for is to stop treating a teacher like a teacher like a teacher. There are different kinds of teachers and there are different—there is supply and demand at play. And for the teacher profession to

continue to ignore market forces, it is burying its head in the sand. If it costs us more to pay to have a math teacher in a classroom, it does not mean that we should also pay the same amount to have a first grade teacher in that classroom mainly because there are 10 people that want that job as the first grade teacher, and there's almost no one available to take the job, the same pay, to be the math teacher. So there's a law of supply and demand of teachers who are more effective than other teachers and want to be compensated. You know, there is no reward in the teaching profession for doing a great job, other than to lead the classroom.

So teacher pay is a complex issue, but I would argue that much of the argument is intellectual over whether teachers are overpaid or underpaid. In fact, we're talking a matter of a few thousand dollars in terms of average pay.

MR. SUAREZ: If there isn't a high degree of elasticity in compensation based on the skills you bring to the job, wouldn't a rational actor in that kind of marketplace make personal choices that make their life easier and more fun? I observed, as I've covered schools, that a lot of teachers use their seniority to bid into better schools and bid out of low performing schools in part because you get a lot of feedback from those better schools where the kids are going to come prepared, fed, finish their homework, and all that stuff. And it becomes a self-perpetuating cycle because what we think of as good schools stay good schools because they can

also attract good staff. But the kids who need the best teachers the most might not get them.

MS. RAVITCH: Well, we certainly send our least prepared teachers into the worst schools in the country. And that's a phenomena that's routinely observed. There's no incentive to be a great teacher with any seniority to stay and serve in under privileged schools.

And I think part of the solution is money, absolutely, that teachers who do work in a more challenging environments need to be compensated. But we also need to respect the expertise that they bring to the job in terms of promoting them to positions of honors and respect in those buildings and creating a core of senior masters and experts who can effectively deal with children who bring a lot more problems to the school than the children who go to Nutrier or Walt Whitman.

MR. SUAREZ: When I went to the 2000 political conventions, both eventual nominees of the major political parties mentioned teachers. And when the democratic candidate mentioned teachers, he called them heroes. He was called a panderer in the next day's column, a toadie to the NEA, a slave of important democratic constituency, and soon. And in the other major party's convention, the problem was identified as not the teachers themselves, who were great, but their union, which obviously would be consigned to the fourth circle of hell if only we could get them there. It was a bizarre juxtaposition.

But I'm wondering how much unions help, hurt, hinder, aid the efforts that you're trying to make to put these new systems, new approaches in place?

MS. RAVITCH: Welcome to my world in terms of, you know, it's difficult to speak to an audience of educators unless you pander to them. And if you don't pander—

MR. SUAREZ: We haven't been doing that this morning.

MS. RAVITCH: Well, I'm not speaking to an audience of teachers. But I can tell you that any time I do speak to an audience of teachers, I'm not well received because I'm not sitting there and saying that you are uniformly the best and doing the hardest job in the world. It's not that I disagree with that, but I think there are issues the profession needs to face and that the unions need to face about reform to the profession that are really important. And that message is not a popular one when you go out and speak to groups of teachers.

But too often when you do, though, speak in public, you're not listening to the teacher who is doing a great job and is just too tired and exhausted at the end of the day to ever go to a conference like that. So I think I hear a select group of teachers. But, you know, the message of reform is not being heard by some unions. There are local unions that don't agree at their national union. The AFT is much more progressive than the NEA. So

it's kind of a mistake to put them all in one box and say they resist reform. But by and large, unions are there to protect their members.

The real battle is convincing state departments of education and local school districts that they must serve as a counter weight to unions. Unions are just doing their jobs. It's up to school boards and state school board members to start standing up to unions and saying, you want this, we want this, what's good for children, and do it. That kind of negotiation doesn't happen.

MR. SUAREZ: Marty West, there are a lot of different ways that kids end up in charter schools. One is to go to George Washington Elementary in the third grade. During the summer there is a coup of community meetings, or whatever, and it's now the something else charter the following year, but you just troop through the doors to fourth grade. Another is to have your parents affirmatively make a market choice and move you so that you go to a newly formulated institution.

Do we know whether there are differences in the performance in schools that are made up of those different kinds of kids? Because it would seem to me that the process by which you get there is very different. And the story it tells about your own family is different enough it may in scale in the aggregate affect performance of different schools.

MR. WEST: The short answer is that there is not a large body of research or evidence on that question. There is one of the big obstacles that

charter schools face is start up difficulty. So we know that charter schools that are starting brand new often face difficulties in terms of finding facilities. Oftentimes their charter is not approved until the late spring. And then they have to open in the fall, and then they have to hire a teaching staff, things like that.

So one of the things that we do know about charter performance is that it tends to improve over time. So that gets, that sort of muddies the water in comparing conversion schools to other types of charter schools which where you're focusing more on the types of students that end up in them. So it's difficult to sort out all of those variables.

MR. SUAREZ: Well, the reason I'm concentrating on the kind of students is because I wonder a lot, when I look at charter schools, whether there's a selection bias. Whether the same parents who are perhaps in a socio economically uniform neighborhood, whether there are differences in aspirational families, differences in families that are willing to test the marketplace in different ways that reflect their own children's better expectancies.

MR. WEST: Sure. Actually, there's more evidence on that question, who is selecting into charter schools. And actually, a new study out from Rand suggests that it's actually not the highest performing students in traditional public schools who are selecting into charter schools, but actually students who are not doing as well in traditional public schools. And they

looked at schools both in Texas and California, student level data so they were able to sort that out.

Now, these students often they may not be doing well, but still have more advantage, more involved parents. But it's certainly not skimming the top. Charters certainly aren't skimming the top off the public school crop just in terms of the measured achievement of their students before they move into charters.

MR. SUAREZ: But it sounds like—I come from a world where we deal in nothing but anecdotal evidence. So it's a lot easier for me.

What do you need as far as a breath and longitude of studies before you can really get a handle on how these schools are doing? What do you need to still see that you don't have yet?

MR. WEST: Well, we need to see more—exactly to sort out the very issue you've identified, we need to see more experimental evaluations. So evaluations of charter schools that use the gold standard of research design, which is to take students who—and randomly assign them between charters and traditional public schools.

Now, normally that would be very difficult to do and we can't just do experiments on students. But one unique thing about charter schools actually makes that possible. And that's that when charter schools are over subscribed, they need to randomly select who they admit into the school. So what you can do is take all families who have expressed an interest in

applying, in attending the charter school by applying for the charter school lottery and compare those who get lotteried into the charter school to those who are lotteried out.

Now, as I said, there's only one study that's taken this approach and that's the one that I mentioned in my comments. But the Department of Education has commissioned a large study to be done, I believe, by Mathematic, A Policy Research over the next few years. And that's the type of evidence that we'll need over the long run to try and get a sense of whether this reform is really working overall.

MR. SUAREZ: Gene Maeroff, I think one of the most universally celebrated ideas is pre-K. And early last year I monitored an all-day conference of the National Governor's Association. Every governor that was there, when you talked to them about universal pre-K, they said hosanna. And when you talked to them about the data results, they said alleluia. And the school superintendents, state school superintendents who were at their conferences all said, yeah, absolutely, let's move toward funding mechanisms to make it universally available. Not a discouraging word at a NGA conference, yet a stubbornly slow march to that universal access that you championed earlier. What's going on?

MR. MAEROFF: Well, it takes classrooms and it takes teachers. And both of those cost money and that's probably what slows it down more than anything else I think.

As you know, there's great support for it now. There's been a wonderful campaign on behalf of it. And so the support is there. And there are some states that have made a great commitment, like Oklahoma and Georgia and more recently Florida with certain reservations about the way they're doing it. But there has been a lot of progress. And money is the main issue. To probably have a full universal program would cost about $70 billion according to the National Institute for Early Education Research at Rutgers.

MR. SUAREZ: One of the governors, it's funny you mention Florida, who got up there and talked was Jeb Bush. He dismissed calls for universally teacher trained staff at these schools. He said that keeps the doors closed while we get the money together. Might as well open the doors with a less qualified staff, because we'll still derive some of the benefits. Children will be better school prepared for the first day of kindergarten, first grade by that experience than if we wait till we're ready to do it with all qualified staff. Where do you come down?

MR. MAEROFF: Well, I think that that could, people could see the results of it and it could discredit pre-K because if it's not much more than custodial, you could have kids sitting in there. And it's great for them to have good custodial care at that age, but if they're not getting the more important components, then they may not make that progress at all.

The classic studies that have looked at the impact of pre-K on the neediest children coming out of the study in Epsilandi [ph.], Michigan, and the abecedarian study were based on fairly heavily funded programs that included home visits. And a lot of money was spent on that. So the Florida program really doesn't do much to uphold the qualifications of the teachers, except in a very strange way. The public school systems have to offer summer programs before these kids go into kindergarten. And those are taught in the public schools. And that's by regular certified teachers. But if the kids go the other time of the year, they will probably be in a non public school setting and probably won't have as qualified a teacher. You know, enrollment is mostly in the public schools.

MR. SUAREZ: We're at a point in our national life where a smaller fraction of all households have kids who are either about to enter school or in school than we've had in generations. Does that make it harder to amass the kind of political will you're talking about moving toward earlier universal access?

MR. MAEROFF: Well, that's definitely—the figure is lower than it's probably ever been. But on the other hand, one of the reasons why advocates of pre-kindergarten have worked for a universal approach is because that way, if it's engaging people of all income levels, and affluent people being eligible for it as well, then a greater community has a stake in it. And when Zell Miller started it in Georgia, he said that was the reason

why he wanted to make it universally available, so he'd get that kind of support. Jim Hunt did the same thing with the Smart Start in North Carolina. They both said right out, well, if we make it universal, it means it's just not ghettoized for poor kids and more affluent people have an interest in it and will be supporting it as well.

MR. SUAREZ: The clock was my enemy this morning a little bit. We got a late start, different break points in the program. Got started later. So unfortunately, you are going to have to ask your questions one on one during lunch. I've got to go to work. See you. But please thank your panelists.

[Applause.]

MR. HASKINS: Let me make, Diane, let me make a comment before we sit down here.

First of all, I want to thank all the panelists and Ray Suarez. Ray, we really appreciate your generosity with your time. I'd like to thank the Foundation of Child Development for supporting the research behind the index, and also the event this morning, Widmeyer Communications for handling all the communications for the event, and for my people, the papers are available in the back. Thank you for coming. Good morning.

[END OF TAPED RECORDING.]

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