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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. O'HANLON: Well, good morning, everyone, and welcome to this Brookings event. And we thank the Carnegie Endowment for hosting us. It's very good to see all of you this morning.

I am privileged to have the opportunity to introduce Eva Moskowitz, who is the CEO of the Success Academy, a charter school network in New York City, and Isabel Sawhill from our Economic Studies program will be joining and commenting as well.

I think the acoustics just went a little funny, right, so maybe I'll hold off. I think we have a little bit of an acoustics issue still; right? I'll just count in the hope that that gets resolved. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. It's still bad; right? There's still some kind of an echo?

SPEAKER: And people in the back here.

MR. O'HANLON: There's a strange echo.

SPEAKER: It is a bit of an echo. Yes. But I think it's okay. I think -- I can hear you fine. (Laughter)

MR. O'HANLON: That's a start. That's a start.

Well, we'll hope that this gets sorted out.

As I say, Eva Moskowitz has joined us today from the Success Academy in New York. It's a movement or a -- it is a movement but it's also a system of charter schools that's been around since about 2006, so nearing its first decade. Pre-K through 12th grade, and also now including 11,000 students who have just gone back to school and whose predecessors and also this student body have a remarkable record of achievement in a group of students that is drawn by lottery from the New York population and then uses a system of rigorous standards and making education fun and rewarding and stimulating in ways that I think you'll find fascinating and captivating like I did when I first heard Eva speak about Success Academies in the summer of 2014 when I had the opportunity to meet her.

Isabel Sawhill is, as I say, in our Economic Studies program. She's the author of Generation Unbound. She has been committed to the issue of children and families and run our center at Brookings for many years on that subject. Also worked in the Clinton administration dealing with issues of opportunity, education, and other matters affecting families in the United States and especially disadvantaged and challenged families. So it's an excellent pairing.

I'll very quickly summarize. First of all, compliment you on choosing the right event to attend today on this block of Massachusetts Avenue. I'll summarize in case you are curious. Hillary is for the Iran deal, and now we can move on to something that is perhaps even more interesting, as I say, and certainly, very eye-opening for me.

So I don't want to spend a lot of time with further introductions. What we're going to do this morning is ask Evan to speak for 10 or 15 minutes to basically introduce the concept of her schools, of how they've been doing, of how they succeed the way they have, and then I'll ask a couple of follow-up questions, and then Bel will add her commentary and thoughts, and then we'll go to you. And as you know, it's an action packed 60 minutes, so let's get on with it. But first, please join me in welcoming Eva Moskowitz to Carnegie and Brookings.

(Applause)

MS. MOSKOWITZ: Thank you, Mike, very much, and thank you to all of you for taking time out of your busy schedule to talk about public education and the crisis that we are facing.

I founded Success Academy. We opened our doors August 20, 2006, with 165 kids in Harlem, with a pretty simple mission, and that was to give poor kids the same opportunity that rich kids have, the same access to choices. I have three children of my own and my husband and I wouldn't even let my mother-in-law determine where our kids go to school. We choose for them what is the best option, and anyone who has kids knows that frankly you often, even as a family, need more than one option because your children are different. And so options is actually just very critical as a parent, and I have long believed in the power and importance of parent choice.

But I didn't create Success Academies for poor children or for black children or for Latino children. I wanted to create the most magical schooling environment possible for kids. And so we did things a little bit differently from the get-go. We asked ourselves, if children -- if parents didn't need childcare and there were no laws forcing children to go to school in kindergarten, could you make schooling so compelling, so interesting, so engaging that kids would want to come to school regardless of those laws? We even asked ourselves, if children had the freedom to walk out of the classroom at any moment, which by the way they don't, but if they did, would they choose to stay in the room? Was the instruction, were the activities of learning sufficiently engaging? And I put a real premium on that

because while there are lots of policy talks about the causes of the crisis in public education, I've rarely heard boredom as a central problem. And I actually believe that most kids in America are extremely bored by school. It's not terribly engaging and interesting.

And so we created a school design that really made that front and center. How do we make school unbelievably engaging and interesting? And part of that is the art, the music, and the dance. We also believe that children have a natural curiosity, and so we determined that science was not going to be a second-class subject. We were going to do science every day of the week starting in kindergarten. Our kindergarteners do 135 experiments by the end of kindergarten, and they do that every single year. And it is the easiest thing in the world to get kids interested in science. You're not swimming upstream. They are naturally curious. I know in my household, you know, after about an hour of questioning, I have to put a limit on how many questions -- how many more questions they are allowed to ask, because I could spend all my time on the Internet looking up the answers to their scientific questions. So kids are naturally curious, naturally engaged, and yet in most schools across the United States, science is only taught a couple of days a week starting in fourth grade. And so you lose that incredible period where children are wondering about the natural and manmade world.

Why do you think you have to put those safety sockets on the outlets, right? Because they want to stick their finger in and see what happens. Schools need to take advantage of that curiosity instead of building a culture where asking questions is not celebrated. And in our science five days a week, we celebrate questioning, as we do in all the other subjects.

The other thing about our schools is that there are some "nonacademic" subjects that for us really are part and parcel of what we think of as great education. So all of our kids take chess starting in kindergarten. And I think there's been sort of a -- schools can be what I call "Cromwellian places" where children and pleasure is something we're against. We don't have that philosophy. We think games, intellectually stimulating games, are really, really good for kids, and I would argue that chess is one of the most powerful games for children. And one of the reasons I like it -- and I like other games. We also play bridge, and Settlers of Catan, and Monopoly. We're big on games. But one of the reasons I like chess is it's actually one of the few nonverbal games. And schools tend to valorize, particularly in elementary school, verbal agility. And that is important, and it's certainly true that a kid who has great

verbal agility is most likely going to do well, but scientific intuition is also important. There are various forms of intelligence, and what you get when you take the verbal skill off the table is you get this pure, strategic thinking. How can you think five, six, seven moves ahead?

And so we have an incredible chess culture at our schools. Not only does everyone play chess starting in kindergarten, but we compete starting in third grade. And every year we have sent between 10 and 15 teams, both to the state nationals and the -- sorry, state championships and the nationals. And at the nationals by the way, kids are playing those games. If you're good, you use the full clock. So those games can last up to four hours. And kids are playing -- on Saturday they play three games a day, so kids are playing chess for 12 hours. Their level of concentration and focus is just really, really high. And they're building intellectual stamina while having a ball, and that is incredibly important.

So we have a very rigorous and deliberate school design. In the old days, people thought school design was a longer school day and a longer school year. We think school design is much more nuanced than that. It's not only the subjects that you teach, it's how you approach engagement. It's your vision of parental investment. And we have a very strong vision of parental investment. We were talking about this earlier. Schools can't do everything. They can't do it without parents. But you also have to inspire parents to have high levels of parental investment. And creating schools as fortresses where parents can't get in the building is not going to lead to particularly high levels of parental investment. At our schools, any parent can come into the school and sit in the back of the classroom at any time without an appointment and see what's going on in the school. And we go to great lengths to encourage very high levels of parental investment, not only academically, but at chess tournaments, and at sporting events, and at debate, and when we do codeathons.

We also encourage a high level of parental investment when it comes to advocacy. You've probably seen that we had 17,000 parents marching across the Brooklyn Bridge a few years ago. We bring a tremendous number of parents to Albany to really fight for their right to a great, free public education. So parental investment is incredibly important.

I also think that the level of rigor in schools is a real problem in American public and private education. If you compare the math problems that we do in this country to the math problems that are done around the world, you might think that Americans are dumb because they're incredibly low level.

I call it the 12-step approach to mathematics. It's very procedural. It's mathematics by card trick where we don't really let the children think. We say step one is this. Step two is this. Step three is that. That is not what is done in countries around the world. Kids as young as third grade are having to engage in proofs and prove their ideas.

And so part of the reason Success Academy kids are so successful is the level of rigor that we afford the kids. And it relates to the boredom. If you ask a question they already know the answer to, it's going to be kind of boring. We try and ask questions that they don't know the answer to. How's that for radical? And then we try and support them in discovering the answer. So our pedagogical method is inquiry based. It's student-centered. People sometimes confuse us because we have uniforms and we urge kids to say please and thank you. That does not mean that we have a traditional model of education. I don't know when please and thank you became traditional. I thought that was sort of just the normal, civil discourse, but we do believe that children should learn to say please and thank you. We're a last name school. Teachers are not called by their first name. But other than those kind of external, not superficial, because we think it's important, our method of pedagogy is unbelievably student-centered and inquiry-based. We think, along with John Dewey, that kids learn best by doing. And so there's very limited direct instruction. It's 10 minutes a day per subject, and the rest of that is student-led discussion, guided practice, and independent practice.

But going back to the issue of rigor, if you look at our mathematics, it's just way more rigorous. So for us, by the time the kids get to these common core or high stakes tests, which by the way we're the only people seemingly in the entire country who think common core is too easy. You don't hear any politicians saying, "My goodness. The common core is too easy. It's got to be harder." We think it's too easy and that it doesn't set kids up for the level of success that they're going to need. We're thinking about calculus in college. What do kids need to be successful at calculus in college? And if you want kids to be successful at calculus in college, the mathematics has to be much more open-ended, much harder, and we think rigor is part of our success.

I'll just conclude by saying that there is one other factor that I think is critical to our success, and that is our training of educators. The training of educators in this country needs a fundamental revamping. Fundamental. People tend to think on the district schools and what needs

revamping there, but the schools of education are not producing graduates who can do the job. And we have found as a network that we've had to go into teacher training and principal training in order to scale and be successful. And our teachers get 13 weeks of training every single year.

And our training, while complex, is pretty different than the teacher training that is offered across this country. The teacher training that exists tends to be abstract concepts of pedagogical theory. It tends to include many different subjects other than content mastery. If you are a kindergarten teacher, you actually need to understand mathematics at a pretty high level, and we tend to think, oh, well, it's kindergarten mathematics. But the big ideas in kindergarten mathematics, something like equality, what does that equal sign really, really mean? It's kind of a difficult concept, and you have to understand that not only in kindergarten, but you need to know where the child is headed. What does that look like in first grade? What does it look like in second grade? What do equations look like when you get to middle school? You have to have a pretty deep understanding of mathematics, and currently, that's almost completely absent from teacher training. And we have an enormous shortage in this country, not of teachers but of high quality, well trained teachers. And if we don't solve that problem, we're never going to solve the problem that kids are facing.

This shortage exists in everything other than the visual arts. We apparently produce an enormous number of visual arts teachers in this country, even though there are no jobs for those teachers. But in the math and the sciences, this problem is more than acute. It's a crisis. We should not wonder why our kids in the STEM fields are not doing as well when we don't have that content mastery in mathematics and science, particularly at the middle school level. It is a real, real crisis, and so we have found that we have had to become a school of education just in order, not really in the sense, but we have had to do the equivalent training. In fact, I would argue we do more training than a school of education does because we do it for 13 weeks every single year. And the vast majority of our focus is on content mastery.

There's a lot more to say about Success. As Mike mentioned, we are pre-K through high school. We are currently about the eighth largest school district in the State of New York with our 11,000 children. We are trying to get to 100 schools, not because that is some magical number, but the need is overwhelming. And we are trying to crack the code of scaling, while also deal with the arguments that it

can't be done. And there's, you know, tremendous politics in education. We were talking just on the walk over here that if there were no politics, we could solve this problem in a jiffy. But that is not obviously the case, and we are constantly both trying to create world-class education, but also fight the politics that is slowing us down. It takes an enormous amount of time and emotional energy, and it's really quite remarkable. You know, if someone came here from another country and said, okay, well, you've got, you know, in New York City, we have a quarter of the schools where more than 90 percent of the kids can't read, write, or do math, and there's an obvious solution, and yet we're constantly being tarred and feathered. It's sort of an odd thing. You would think someone would be rolling out the red carpet, not because we are "the" answer, but we are one of the answers to this profound crisis, and yet we have to fight on every front to get space, to get funding, to insert ourselves into the public narrative about charters. Whether they're the beginning of the end, et cetera. And we are determined to show that there's nothing wrong with the children and the families. There's a problem with the system and what it's delivering for children, particularly our poorest children in the city, state, and country.

Thank you for your interest.

(Applause)

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you very much, Eva.

Listening to you at the end I was thinking that there aren't that many people to Washington escape an intense political environment, but any of you who have followed Eva's career know that she's had a very engaged set of debates in New York, as well as her amazing educational accomplishments. You mentioned science and technology and math towards the end as well, and I just wanted to underscore, at Brookings, there are three different elements of the institution that have a role in this event today and very strong interest in this. And I should have mentioned from the outset, the Brown Center on Education is co-sponsoring this event, and Bel's interest in families and poverty and opportunity is, I think, much of what draws her here. And myself, in the Defense Center at Brookings, we're thinking about long-term American national power, not just near-term American military preparedness, but the underlying base for our future power, which includes, obviously, everything from manufacturing to science research, to the people who are going to do these things and their abilities within the realms of not only science and math, but of course, the entire range of subjects that they study

in school. So that's a little bit more background.

I just wanted to ask a couple of follow-up questions. And you were talking at the end about teachers as well. So let me begin with that, Eva. You were saying that we don't really have enough really well prepared and content-competent teachers in the United States, and you mentioned the number of weeks of training that you give your teachers.

I have two questions. How do you find those 13 weeks in a year to do this? And then secondly, with the broader population of teachers, are we just not attracting the right people? Do we need to increase the prestige of teaching so sort of a more talented group of people go into teaching on average, with no disrespect intended to any individual teacher, but I'm just trying to ask in sort of broad, statistical terms, or is it really the preparation that the system gives them that is miring them in a certain mediocrity that they otherwise would be able to exceed and go on to great things if we prepared them right?

MS. MOSKOWITZ: Well, I think it's both. You need preparation that is not theoretical, that is grounded in schooling. Teaching is a performance sport. You can't learn it without the children. And I know that sounds very obvious, but it's not. That's not how we operate in the United States. We assume that you can sit in a lecture hall and you can learn how to teach. Well, that's not the case. You need the children. And you need to make mistakes. And you need to see what the misconceptions are. And you need to learn how to study data and student work, and you need to, you know, someone's got to tell you to bend your knees more. Otherwise, you don't learn the art and science of teaching. You know, we do a lot of demos where we're hiring people and, you know, a typical dance demo, if the teacher is not very good she says "go," and all the kids end up on a pile on the floor and there's a brawl. You have to know systems and routines for moving children in a non-chaotic way. You have to learn how to have very explicit instructions. If you are teaching five-year-olds and you are unclear, you will see the result of your lack of clarity. You know, whereas in other professions you can be unclear and they don't end up on a pile on the floor. Right? If they don't follow your instructions. But in teaching, it's very obvious when you are making mistakes. So it's the intellectual preparation as well as learning a number of techniques that are going to make it possible for children to learn.

But the intellectual preparation is something that is ignored. You have to really

understand what your purpose is with a particular lesson. What are you going for? Why are you teaching this? What does excellence look like from the kids' point of view? So we have to do a better job preparing.

I also think that we have a regulatory apparatus that is about everything other than teaching and learning. And so, you know, if you look at certification, and I'm most familiar with in New York, and all of the regulations associated, I sort of find it a little bit amusing that the test that the teachers take in math and science is far easier than the fourth grade science test that the kids have to take. It seems a little odd to me that that's the way we would structure it.

And if you look at private independent schools and their freedom to hire, they don't engage in any of this nonsense. They hire the best people and they don't find it necessary to have this complex regulatory framework to figure out who is the best teacher. We make teachers jump through an enormous number of hoops in order to become a teacher. And I think it is gatekeeping in a way that's not terribly productive.

MR. O'HANLON: A couple more questions and then I'll pass to Bel and then to all of you.

By the way, I should have mentioned, apologies that Eva's bio is so short in the handout you got and then my bio dominates the page. Not intentional, and we will fix this. We will fix this and get some materials on our website that give some of the statistics on Success Academy charter schools. But they rank in the top 1 percent of average student scores in New York State, the average score is top 3 percent for reading in New York State. Not that tests are everything, but these are some pretty powerful indications of excellence. And again, they're choosing students by lottery, so you may get a certain more motivated group of students but you don't get -- because they have to apply, right, but you don't necessarily cherry-pick. You're trying to take everybody who might be motivated and whatever their academic ability as I understand things.

MS. MOSKOWITZ: And just on the motivation piece, you know, we don't -- we think that's a myth because if you've registered for kindergarten in New York City, you have to be highly motivated because you have to find the lady and the day the school is open and you have to bring three forms and the three forms they say you're supposed to bring are not in fact the three forms that you're supposed to bring, and it's actually quite laborious. We knock on your door and you fill out a one-page

form which is, you know, your name, your address, your kids' age, and then you're in the lottery. So we don't find that we're going to parents and actually making it far easier than it is in the district school. And nobody says to the district school, you have to be highly motivated to find your three forms and find the lady and, you know, that language isn't used, and we don't find it particularly appropriate for the charter sector either.

MR. O'HANLON: I think I'm going to stop there and turn things over to Bel, first off, for her general thoughts or reflections on what we've been discussing this morning and hearing from Eva, and then any follow-up questions you may have before we go to all of you.

Bel?

MS. SAWHILL: Okay, thanks, Mike.

I think, like your kids, Eva, I have more questions than I have answers, so I like the spirit of inquiry here.

On the game front, I was so glad to have you talk about games because I'm a big game player myself and I've always felt like there was something a little bit wrong with me. You know, why does somebody who is a serious professional really like to spend my time playing games? And I wonder if you know Ruby Cube.

MS. MOSKOWITZ: I do. Oh, my goodness, we're big on that.

MS. SAWHILL: Okay. Oh, yeah. So those of you who don't know Ruby Cube, it's a great mind stretcher without being verbal. I mean, it's the math equivalent of Scrabble for people who are verbal.

By the way, I would like to get a little better sense of who's in the audience here. How many of you are either teachers or come from working directly in the school system? Okay. That's interesting. I mean, I have a feeling that a lot of you know more than certainly I do anyway, and so we look forward to hearing from you. But let me just make a few comments.

As Mike said at the beginning, I've done a lot of my work on opportunity in America, how much we have, how much we don't have. If you are born into a low income family in the U.S., what are your chances of moving up the ladder? And not surprisingly, if you're worried about that set of issues, you have to look at education and the role that education plays in the United States in helping kids,

especially those from less fortunate circumstances, climb that ladder. And after, you know, many years, more years than I care to admit or think about, of studying those kinds of issues, I've come to the conclusion -- I'm not the only one who has come to this conclusion -- that the education system in the United States, as it exists right now, is not helping to improve opportunity. To some extent, partly because of the way we finance education, partly because we have a residentially-based system, and for a variety of other reasons, including the fact that women, by the way, have so many more opportunities now so it's getting, I think, harder to recruit top talent into the teaching profession, the education system is really not doing the job that we think it should do to help with this process of mobility.

So reform is needed. Change is needed. I think that is just a sine qua nom. And I think charter schools, myself, are part of the solution. I think they are a source of innovation, and I think the Success Academies and what Eva has done shows what you can accomplish when you're freed from some of the usual not only regulations but mindsets that have taken over education and do things in a different way.

And her statistics, which she didn't talk about, Mike mentioned very briefly, on how the kids in Success Academies are doing, are mind-blowing. I don't know how many of you know them, but, I mean, even when they compare their kids to kids in suburban schools in the New York area, their kids are doing much better in math and reading. And they're doing better than New York State as a whole and so forth and so on, despite the fact that the group they're serving is quite a disadvantaged group. It's overwhelmingly minority. I think over 90 percent.

MS. MOSKOWITZ: Ninety-six.

MS. SAWHILL: Ninety-six percent either African American or Latino. And 70 percent free and reduced-price lunch. And I'm sure you could tell us all kinds of other statistics about that. But I find them very, very impressive.

So, you know, looking at Success Academies in a slightly larger frame, they are part of the whole debate about charter schools. And I think, as I've just said, that charter schools are needed because they are showing how we can do things differently, not always better, but sometimes much better.

My colleague, Russ Whitehurst, who is with the -- used to be with the Brown Center at

Brookings and has now moved over to our center, has written a very nice article about education in New York City in which the theme that he stressed was "Choice in Competition." And you talked about options. And I think really what Success Academies are about is about giving kids and their families, especially low-income families, more choices, more options. And why shouldn't they have those options?

And I think the other thing though is there's a larger story about New York. In addition to the charter schools there are what are sometimes called the small schools of choice, which are former public schools that have been reformed and turned into schools that have a lot more personal attention, and more innovation again, and more connection with the community, and they are doing very well also.

You may want to comment on this comparison. You may also want to comment on the comparison between your schools and other charter schools because this is not the only set of charter schools in New York City, and certainly not in the country as a whole. And here, in the District of Columbia, we have a lot of charters as well, and various cities around the country are increasingly going the charter route. So I think, you know, we could have a larger debate and discussion about what that means.

Obviously, one of the concerns about charters is that they are diverting resources from the regular public schools and leaving those families whose kids are still in the regular public schools with fewer resources. So I think, you know, I want to just put that issue on the table for you to possibly comment on.

Now, there is a huge amount of politics around this issue as has already been alluded to, and some of the great success in New York -- and by the way, Whitehurst says, in this article I just alluded to, that New York is the top city in the country in terms of the improvements they've made in education, both because of efforts like Eva's and because of some of the other efforts that started under Mayor Bloomberg and Joel Klein in New York.

Now, the Bloomberg-Klein administration has moved on, as most of you know, and we have a new administration in New York that is less friendly to charters and to the kind of thing that Eva is trying to do. And I have just started reading a book that some of you may have heard about or even read yourself called The Prize. It's by Dale Russakoff, and it's the story of the attempt to reform the education system in Newark, and it was a partnership between Governor Christie and Cory Booker, who at that time

-- now a senator, of course, but at that time was mayor of Newark. And they tried very hard to do many things similar to what I think Eva has tried to do, and in the end, they ran into all kinds of political and community pushback, which made it very difficult for them to sustain the reforms.

By the way, just to remind you what happened here, Mark Zuckerberg, who at that time was very wealthy and decided to go along with his wife, who had been a teacher and was very interested in education -- decided to go into philanthropy. They invested $100 million in this effort in Newark. I'm sure you would love to have that, $100 million, to expand your own efforts. But despite those resources, they ran into all kinds of political problems. So I think that's a huge issue here.

Now, there have been criticisms of the Success Academies. All you need to do is read a few articles in the New York Times, which I did in preparation for this event today, about Eva's schools. And Eva, I want to give you a chance to respond to them. One criticism you've already alluded to a bit, which is -- and Mike has as well -- which is that this is a very selective program, and that you don't have to take the most difficult cases. And when you do get difficult cases in your schools, you can suspend them and you're left with a more motivated, as you said earlier, group of people. That's been one criticism.

Another has been that the teaching style and methods are very, very tough, and sometimes very upsetting to the children, and that's been another concern.

And then finally, we have all of this data that you've shared with us, but I'm wondering, and this is -- now I'm putting on my hat as a researcher and as a colleague of Russ Whitehurst, because Russ, having been head of the Institute for Educational Sciences and being a very data-driven person, the question is, is there an independent evaluation of the schools or is there one planned?

I think, by the way, just to end on all of this, even if we discounted the data that I've seen for all of these kinds of factors that I've just mentioned that some of the critics have brought out, your success would still be incredibly over the top, and so I commend you for that and look forward to hearing more from you on some of these issues.

MR. O'HANLON: So would you like to respond to any of those about the financing of your schools? And I'm curious, do you operate essentially with the same operating budget as a normal school?

MS. MOSKOWITZ: Significantly less.

MR. O'HANLON: Les.

MS. MOSKOWITZ: Yeah. It's about $3,000 to $4,000 less per child.

MR. O'HANLON: Wow.

MS. MOSKOWITZ: So the notion -- I don't like to advertise this, but we save the system money. It's not the other way around. It's not that we're draining resources; we're actually saving the system tens of thousands of dollars because we don't have equal funding. Now, I would like equal funding. I think a second grader in a public charter school should get the same amount as a second grader in a district school. I don't want more, I just want the same.

MS. SAWHILL: Why is it they don't give you as much?

MS. MOSKOWITZ: Well, it was built into the 1998 law. It was -- we get 75 cents on the dollar if you're a non-Title 1 school. If you're a Title 1 school, it's about 65 cents on the dollar. And that's just built in to the law. In addition, the formula has been frozen since 2007. So the district schools have gone up and up and up, and the charter funding is frozen. And that accounts for this incredible inequality of funding.

MR. O'HANLON: So I think what we'll do now with Bel's other question still in the background, I'm guessing some of them may come up in your questions, and I want to get to you with only about 20 minutes left. So we'll make sure we come to Bel's remaining questions if you don't raise them, but why don't I take two at a time from the audience. And I think there was a hand here just a couple of minutes ago.

Yes, sir. In the green shirt. So please wait for a microphone and identify yourself. And then if I can ask you to limit your questions to just one per person. And then I think over here we'll take yours as well.

MR. CIBELLIS: Matthew Cibellis, with Education Week.

I was just wondering if you could answer her question regarding when you -- what's the word you used? Suspended and/or gotten rid of the students who can't keep up with the program, you've got the cream of the crop. You've got the best of the kids who really want to succeed and whose parents want them to succeed theoretically, who are there helping, pushing, because you had mentioned earlier

that parents play an integral role. Do you see a place for those kids --

MS. MOSKOWITZ: You're stating as facts things that are actually not facts, so just to be really, really clear, our scholar attrition rates are extraordinarily low. Far lower than the district schools. And suspension, which we do, and we believe that you cannot throw a wooden block at a teacher, and if you do, we are going to suspend you. But if you look at our suspension rates and you look at the kids who leave, they're not the same. So we are not using suspension in any way to push out children. We are using suspension, I believe appropriately, to send a message, that you may not throw a block at a teacher's head. You may not throw a block at a teacher's leg.

MR. CIBELLIS: I don't think I got that from Dr. Sawhill's question. Is that what you got? I didn't hear that.

MS. MOSKOWITZ: Well, I got it from yours that there's a relationship between suspension and counseling out or leaving the school, and I just want to make sure that we're really, really clear that the data doesn't support that. It's not a "he said, she said."

MR. CIBELLIS: Let me circle back to her question then. Her question was, and correct me if I'm wrong, Dr. Sawhill, you were saying that talking about how the Success Academy defines some of this success as there is attrition within the population, so that by the time I assume assessment comes along, your group is a much more committed group of kids who understand the program and are heading out the door. Can you ask the question again, Dr. Sawhill? Perhaps I got that wrong.

MS. SAWHILL: Well, I think there are two issues here. One is the entry and the second is the exit. The entry question is are the families that apply in the first place a selective group because they're more motivated in some way? And I think you argued earlier that that was not true as well. I'm just trying to clarify what the issues are here.

And the second question is the one I think you're trying to get at, which is who leaves. I mean, attrition can be voluntary -- people leaving, for example, because they move. Or it could be because they were pushed out through suspension or for some other reason. And so I think we're just trying to get clearer about the comparison that you're alluding to. You know, is there --

MS. MOSKOWITZ: No, I get it. This is a much more gentile audience than New York, so I've been through -- this is not my first rodeo. You know, the criticism comes up all the time, and what I'm

trying to respond is that you're making assumptions, and the assumptions turn out not to be true. There isn't a relationship between the suspension data and the departure data.

And just so you understand where we're coming from, once the student passes the threshold, we do everything in our power to keep that family and those kids. We do it for two reasons. First, emotionally, we love our kids. And by the way, love is underestimated as a reform strategy. That's another thing I don't hear people talking about, but when you're in the schooling business, each one of these kids is unbelievably precious. And so we develop incredible commitment and affection to our kids. So we don't want anyone to leave.

We also have a financial reason. Unlike the district school, anytime a kid walks out the door, that's our per-pupil, and we're building our financial model on a certain number of children. And so it's very challenging for us. If we were to lose a lot of kids, that would undermine our ability to provide the service. And because we're getting thousands of dollars less per pupil, there's not a lot of margin. We build our model on 32 kids in kindergarten. And if that number goes down, that makes it very, very challenging to provide the science five days a week, to provide the dedicated chess teacher, to provide the art and the music and the longer school day because we have to pay our teachers significantly more than the district in order to, you know, run these schools.

So there are just a lot of myths. And if you're really interested in student attrition, where you want to be looking is at the district schools, because we're co-located with schools that are losing 20, 30, 40 percent of their kids every year. Why is that? And yet that question is not asked. But I'm really proud of our student retention data. It's extraordinary given the transience of our families that we are keeping the vast majority of our kids. And that's something that I think district schools do not always accomplish. And it's quite hard. And you may wonder, well, why would a family leave when it's such a great education? And the primary reason is frankly the parents split up and it's no longer convenient. If the mother lives in one place and the father lives in another place, that makes it often very difficult for the family to continue to send the child. That is the most common reason in kindergarten why a child will leave us.

MR. O'HANLON: So let's take two more. We've got a gentleman here and then the woman in the blue. Let's take both of these together and then Eva can respond.

MR. HALL: Okay. My name is -- is this working? Yes.

MR. O'HANLON: I think so.

MR. HALL: My name is Richard Hall. I'm former head of the Washington International School here in D.C.

I was very interested in your discussion about professional development given -- knowing how important that is for any success. Thirteen weeks is a long time, and I'd like to go back to your question about how do you find that time? And what does it look like? You have 13 weeks of professional development. What do the teachers study during that time or how -- is it hands-on kinds of work? What sorts of things do you do to get the kind of success that you obviously are achieving?

MR. O'HANLON: If you don't mind, I'll take one more before.

MS. MOSKOWITZ: Sure.

MS. STANLEY: My name is Roberta Stanley, and I've been with the Michigan Department of Education and the National School Boards Association.

My question piggybacks on the gentleman's. The 13-week sessions that you mentioned that are high quality, do you by any chance partner with or collaborate with teacher -- higher-ed teacher producing institutions, like Columbia, which is very highly regarded?

MS. MOSKOWITZ: Sure. So what does the professional development look like? How do we find the time? You know, time is the most precious commodity, and we're always cursing it because there's not enough of it, even with the 13 weeks. But, you know, essentially, while everybody else is making the school day longer and the school year longer, which may have its benefits, not if the adults are not well prepared. More time with an ill-prepared teacher doesn't really benefit the child. And so we have just made this commitment. We say the education is for the children but it's about the adults. And so -- and that's a nuanced concept that people have trouble with because you can imagine a school where the children are forgotten about. Everything we do is for the kids. But you can't give that resource to the children if the adults are ill prepared. And we have a really specific vision of what it means for adults to be prepared.

And there are, of course, the usual pedagogical techniques. What do great transitions look like? How do you have an effective set of systems and routines, and that's, you know, I think as hard

as it is, that's the easy part. The hard part is intellectual preparation. What does it really look like to be intellectually prepared at a high level? And even a book that is read to children in kindergarten, often the kindergarten teacher doesn't think that she or he has to do the kind of literary analysis you associate with a graduate lit course, English lit course. But the truth of the matter is, if the book is a really good book -- how many of you know My Father's Dragon, the trilogy? No? Anyone?

MR. O'HANLON: It's Washington. We don't read.

MS. MOSKOWITZ: That is a great, great children's book, and it's usually associated with third or fourth grade. We read it to our kids in kindergarten. And it's a magical tale about a little boy who has a series of discovery on island adventures. To understand all the themes of that book, you can't just whip out the book four minutes before your kindergarteners are going to read it. You have to deeply understand the themes of the book. And so we spend a lot of time reading children's literature. In math, we expect the teachers to do the math problems. I mean, this is this radical notion I don't really understand. It's so foreign to me, the notion that a teacher walks in not having done the math problem and is teaching the math problem. How is that possible? Not only do you have to do the math problem, but you have to be able to explain your thinking because you want the children to explain their thinking. And in our world, because we do conceptual math and constructivist math, you need to be able to predict what are the different strategies that the kids might use and how are you going to compare two different strategies. So we use student work a tremendous amount, where we have teachers solve the math problem, and then we give them four or five different solutions that actual kids have used to solve the problem. And then we talk about, well, what are the differences between these strategies? Which are more elegant and sophisticated? Which kids are still using, let's say, you know, who's using base 10 knowledge? That's an important question if you're in elementary school. If you're teaching elementary school math, you need to understand who has base 10 knowledge and who doesn't. And how do you get a kid who is really counting by ones to gain base 10 knowledge?

All of the training is around content mastery combined with student thinking. The most important thing in teaching, and the most difficult, is to learn how to be a phenomenal questioner, which is what teachers find the hardest. How do you ask the question? And by the way, teachers tend to be trial lawyers. What do I mean by that? Leading questions. They're leading the witness. That undermines

education. You don't want to lead the witness because that's not the point. The point is not just to get to the right answer. And if you give it to them all tied up in a nice bow, the student hasn't done the thinking work.

And so we are very, very focused on what does great questioning look like. How do you ask? And it's challenging in teaching because, you know, if you have 32 kids in a class, it's not that you have 32 levels of mathematical understanding, but you probably have eight kids at eight different points. And so you not only need questioning for your high flyers; you need good questions for your struggling students and everybody in between learning how to ask the productive question is the hardest thing in education and probably the thing we spend the most time on.

So I hope that gives you -- obviously, 13 weeks, it's a little hard for me to, in five minutes, describe, but that's really the concept.

And in answer to your question, while we have enormous respect for various educational institutions, they are frankly not doing this work at that level. And so --

SPEAKER: At Columbia?

MS. MOSKOWITZ: Yes. Even the revered Columbia University is not doing mathematical questioning at the level --

SPEAKER: So then who do you draw from?

MS. MOSKOWITZ: Well, we're sort of empiricists. We've had to make it up as we go along because nobody is doing it the way we need it done.

And by the way, making it up and being entrepreneurial and innovative, this is as American as apple pie. Right? Ben Franklin made it up. Got him pretty far. I think we have to get beyond that there are these revered institutions that have all the knowledge and wisdom in the world. We need people to go out there and try things. It's not as if what we are doing in America is working profoundly well, so we're going to have to find new solutions and not be afraid to try different things. And that's what we are trying to do at Success Academies.

MR. O'HANLON: So let's wrap it up with two more questions. Let's see. How am I going to do this? We've got two sort of in the middle. The woman here and then the gentleman a row back. We'll have to make that the end I'm afraid, with apologies.

CAROLINE: My name is Caroline, and I'm a former teacher and a current Ph.D. student.

So my question is you talked earlier about replicating the schools and you want to sort of reach that 100 school mass. So how do you do it? And do you think it can be done sort of outside the charter school system? Can it be done in public schools?

MR. O'HANLON: And then one more question here.

MR. OTTLEY: Good morning. My name is Basil Ottley.

I was curious for you to answer how do you find the perfect teacher? What do you --

MS. MOSKOWITZ: Well, first of all, not looking. That would be to a very high standard.

MR. OTTLEY: But how do you select a teacher to come to your school? What are the attributes you are looking for, educational? I mean, how important is education as opposed to experience? Thank you.

MS. MOSKOWITZ: No, it's a great question. We're pretty unconventional. We look for love of children. You have to like children. More than like them. You kind of have to like them more than grownups. I find children way funnier than adults. Like just comedians compared to all of you. Right? They're just funny. And they've got -- they're uninhibited. They don't -- you know, they're just not worried about everything else. They are kind of naturally their own people. And I love that. I love interacting with children. Not that I don't like all of you and adults, but I would literally choose to spend my time more with children than with grownups. I like them. I like relating to them. I like their uninhibitedness. I like their questions. I just -- and to be a great teacher, that is a bare minimum. And there are people who apply to teaching who don't like children. And I know it sounds like I must be smoking something but I'm not. It's just there are people who don't really love children. They want a job. Other things. So that is just foundational. Do you really like to relate to children? Because teaching is about building relationships with children. And if you don't have that interest and commitment, you're not going to be very successful.

I think the second thing you need to have, which again is also not kind of in most people's selection criteria, is passion for learning. You have to love to learn. You have to really love, like more than the average person. You have to be enthusiastic about learning. And many people who apply to teaching jobs are not passionate learners. They don't really love it. And to get kids to be passionate, independent learners themselves, it's going to be really hard to do that if you don't love learning. If you're

not curious and a reader and trying to figure things out, that's what children are trying to do. And the rest of it, in my opinion, can be taught. You can train, but it's really hard to train someone to love children. You kind of start with that or not.

I think similarly, the passion for learning, that's hard to train, and so we are looking for people with those two conspicuous attributes.

Now, I'm sorry, your question, I've forgotten it.

CAROLINE: How do you replicate your success to within your own sort of network of schools, but also do you think it can be done in a district system or outside of the charter system?

MS. MOSKOWITZ: Well, I think a lot of things can be done. It's really a question of which things.

So take our reading culture and love of reading. Any district school can do that. We are -- we believe with all of our heart and soul that reading is the most important thing we do as a school no matter what. If we could only do one thing, we would instill a passion for reading because long before people went to school for long periods of time, people were self-taught. They read. That's how they learned. And that is a very good vehicle for learning. And so when you look at how much is spent on books throughout this country, it's actually far more than we do. There is no shortage of books. There are distribution center problems and supply chain problems and all of that, but you can have a strong reading culture in a district school if you get the adults committed to that. We read -- our kids read in school more than an hour a day. They're reading in school, and we don't think that's a waste of everyone's time. We think reading in school is an incredibly good use of kids' time.

We also feel strongly that the quality of the books matters and that, you know, often in district schools the quality of books are not that good. But they could be. They don't cost more. It's not as if the quality of the books cost more money. So there are many reforms that could be instituted. You know, there are also reforms -- there are also things we do that are very hard in a district school. And in a district school -- and I can't really speak across the country; I can only speak in New York, but you know, there are union contracts that prevent the kind of collaboration between labor and management that is necessary in order to organize the whole school around children. And, you know, we don't have that constraint. So that would be an area where you would have to see fundamental reform.

We also don't have the bureaucracies that most districts have. You know, to order a bulletin board in the New York City School System is a very intense, labor intensive process. We can go to sort of the equivalent of COSTCO or, you know, any number of places, and we can get the bulletin board in real-time. Many district schools are constrained by this terrible bureaucracy that has a life of its own and doesn't serve teaching and learning.

And so it's a complicated answer to your question. There are definitely things that are directly and immediately transferrable, and then there are things that would be hard to do unless we have the kind of political reform to allow for the adoption of what I would consider best practice.

MR. O'HANLON: Well, there are a lot of people in this room passionate about education, committed to it. I want to thank all of you for what you do and for being here today. And I know Bel and I would like to ask you to join me in thanking Eva for what she does.

(Applause)

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