THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

CHILDREN'S LITERACY: RAISING THE BAR

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. SAWHILL: Very rainy day. I suspect there are still a few people out there drowning in the rain. I know I had a hard time getting in this morning and I suspect that's affecting our attendance here. Hopefully there will be a few more people who will straggle in through the rain storm.

The focus of today's event is the literacy of America's children, a really important topic I think. We are releasing a new volume of *The Future of Children* today on this topic and a related policy brief on what we might do to improve the literacy of America's children.

The Future of Children is a partnership between Brookings and Princeton University. And Ron Haskins, who co-directs the Center on Children and Families with me here at Brookings, he and I both serve as senior editors, overall editors of the journal along with three colleagues at Princeton.

And we are very pleased today to have the two primary co-editors of this particular volume here with us today, Dick Murnane and Catherine Snow, both from the Graduate School of Education at Harvard. I had the good fortune of recruiting the two of them to work on this volume, and we couldn't have had two better people. I always tell people that Catherine, Catherine, where are you? Maybe she's just coming in. Catherine, I'm talking about you. I always tell people that Catherine is the nation's leading guru on the reading of young children and maybe not so young children. And I've learned a lot from her and from Dick. Dick is someone I've known for a long time. And he has two new books coming out. One is already out and the second one, they're both on a similar topic, will be out, he tells me, in about nine months or so, an appropriate gestation time. And these books are on the whole question of growing inequality in the United States and how that's affecting children's reading and educational attainment.

You're going to hear from Dick in just a moment. He is going to

summarize the volume. And then Ron Haskins, who took the lead on writing the policy brief along with the other editors, is going to talk about the policy brief. We'll then have a panel to discuss the issues being raised. I think with that, I'll turn this over to Dick. Dick, thank you for being here.

MR. MURNANE: Thank you, Belle. I'm very pleased to be here. And my job, as I understand it, is to make the case for why you should read eight articles in this issue of *The Future of Children*, encourage your colleagues to read them, and to reflect on the implications for policies and practices for improving the literacy of American children.

Now, I'm not going to try and summarize what's in this volume -- that is too much to do. But I will describe six lessons from the volume that I took away and that have influenced my thinking about this issue, and I hope they will yours, as well. At the bottom of each slide are sources or a source and the names there all are the authors of articles in the volume.

Okay. So the first is: the nation faces two literacy problems. The first is that the average literacy skills of America's children, I have not kept up with the increase in literacy demands. Demands have increased for basically two sets of reasons. First of all, quite dramatic changes in the American economy that have eliminated large numbers of jobs in which people earn a living wage basically by following directions, by reading and doing what they are told.

Those jobs increasingly are either run by computer driven machines or are being conducted by people in low wage countries. And the jobs that are increasingly important in the American economy and that pay well are jobs that require more advanced literacy skills than simply being able to read and follow directions.

Now, it's important in my mind to keep in mind that this first problem is not that the literacy skills of American children are worse than they were 40 years ago. In

fact, we know that's not the case from the National Assessment of Educational Progress. The problem is that the skills of American children if not kept up with the increasing demands. Now, the second literacy problem is this gap in the reading skills between children from high income families and children from more disadvantaged families has increased markedly. And some of you may have seen this graph before, for example, on the front page of the *New York Times* a number of months ago, an article written by Sean Reardon that's reproduced in the chapter Sean wrote with two of his Stanford colleagues in this issue of *The Future of Children*.

And what it shows is that, first of all, the gap, the black/white gap in reading skills has declined over the last several decades. And strikingly contrast to that, the gap between the reading skills of children from the bottom of the income distribution and children whose families are at the top of the income distribution has increased absolutely enormously in the last several decades.

Now, why does that matter? It matters for two reasons. Really it's a threat to the economic growth and the prosperity of the nation's future. It also is an enormous threat to inner generational mobility. And that's a value that Americans across the spectrum hold dear.

The idea that while a child may grow up poor, if he or she works hard, has every reason to believe his or her children will not grow up poor. And the pathway to upward mobility has always been in the United States educational attainment, and that growing gap in literacy skills between children born into rich and poor families is a really dire threat to inner generational mobility. So that's the first of the six lessons.

The second is the mastery of phonics, while absolutely essential, being able to decode words, make sense of paragraphs, they're clearly important, no question about that, but they're not sufficient, and they're particularly not sufficient in meeting the demands of literacy in today's world.

So I won't read that to you. But basically the ability to – what might be called this paragraph, which is from the article by Nonie Lesaux in the issue, basically describes what we call deep comprehension and elements of deep comprehension, which are the aspects of literacy that are increasingly important, include synthesizing information from different sources, evaluating arguments, understanding different perspectives, and assessing the credibility of different sources of information. Those are increasingly what are parts of what the definition of literacy needs to be today. So that's the second lesson.

So the third is that literacy skills are subject specific. This is the theme of Susan Goldman's article in the volume, basically that the skills that are needed to acquire knowledge in history are somewhat different than the skills that are needed to acquire knowledge in chemistry. And that's particularly important because, as many of you have heard this expression, the nature of reading changes in grades two and three from learning to read to reading to learn, and Susan Goldman's paper argues that the skills that are needed to learn these different subject matter specialties do vary across the specialties.

And so basically the consequences that are teaching generic reading strategies does not prepare students to learn subject matter in the disciplines. An implication of that is instruction in the disciplines should include instruction in literacy skills specific to that subject area. So that's the third of these lessons.

The fourth is about technology, advances in digital technology. How many of you have iPads? And if we said other devices on which one reads electronically, you all would probably have your hands up. So why are advances in digital technology part of the problem of creating supplies of sufficient literacy skills?

Well, on the one hand, the internet and the increasingly availability of information on any topic means that, again, these issues of sorting information and evaluating it just

have grown exponentially because there's just so much information available on any topic. For example, if you're typing global warming, there's going to be tens of thousands of things to read. How do you evaluate which of those hold up under close scrutiny? A second aspect of part of the problem is that while most American schools have a number of computers nowadays, the quality of the computer hardware and software varies among the schools. And more importantly, how the computers are used varies among schools.

Schools surveying high income children are much more likely to be using computers, for example, as tools to expand knowledge than is the case in schools serving poor kids where the computers are tending to be used to give kids electronic versions of worksheets. So those are parts of the problem.

Now, they also offer potential for solving these problems. Clearly, there's enormous potential to learn vocabulary and background knowledge using the World Wide Web with computers through smart boards and lots of other things. That potential that is differentially used depending on the SES of children.

And, of course, it also creates lots of opportunities for children with special needs to acquire a literacy skill, whether it be blind children or deaf children, through designs that are called designs for universal learning. So there is potential there. I think that potential is not nearly as realized as it might be.

So the fifth lesson will look at literacy instruction. This is an article by Nell Duke and her colleague and with others articles in the volume, as well. So what does instruction look like in American schools? And how does it match up with what was recommended in the National Church Council document, in 1998 I believe, preventing reading difficulties in young children?

Well, on the one hand, it's good news. There's much greater emphasis on teaching children phonics and basic word reading skills, that's good news. But there

really has been insufficient attention to building vocabulary conceptual knowledge, that's the bad news. And those skills are absolutely becoming increasingly critical when the nature of reading changes to using reading to acquire knowledge in subject specific fields. So there really is insufficient attention to building literacy skills in the middle grades, as well.

So basically it's a good news/bad news, but I think the bad news is increasingly problematic given the changes in the nation's economy and the complexity of the problems the nation faces. And the ability to deal with those problems effectively may depend on the ability of the populous and citizens to understand them.

The last one, obstacles to improving literacy instruction. And the key paper here is by David Cohen and Monica Bhatt. The U.S. has a very fragmented system of educational government. One consequence of that is that the United States does not have what David calls educational infrastructure, a common national curricula framework and assessments tied to that curricula framework that other countries have and particularly other countries that have done a more effective job of providing advanced literacy skills to their children than the United States has done.

Now, why does it matter that we don't have this educational infrastructure, this common body of agreed upon understanding of what children should learn and assessments that assess well the extent to which American children have mastered those?

Well, one reason is the lack of these common curricula framework and assessments reduces the ability of teacher education to prepare teachers. If it's not clear what teachers are going to be teaching, it's very, very hard to prepare them to do that well, and that's a situation commonly in the United States.

And second, we're a very mobile population. Our children change schools very frequently. A consequence of that is that having a lack of agreement on

what children are supposed to learn and what the curriculum ought to look like really means that children are handicapped even more moving from one school to another than they would be if we had this common framework. So another obstacle, and this, again, follows in part from the first, is that teacher education focuses on content rather than on teaching literacy practices. When you learn to be, in other words, a math teacher, a history teacher, very little attention is paid to teaching children the reading skills they will need to effectively get content in that area.

And the third -- and this is not from this volume, but rather it's from Greg Duncan's and my volume, increasing segregation of schools by socio economic status. Poor kids are more likely to be in schools with poor kids, with other poor kids today than was the case 30 years ago, and that has negative consequences on their instruction through several different mechanisms.

So those are the six lessons. This just repeats the same lists that are on the previous slides. And a question that this may lead you to ask is: will the common core state standards help to solve these two literacy problems that the nation faces? And I'm going to leave that question for Ron to answer.

MR. HASKINS: No, thank you. Well, I'm really pleased to see this audience here. We've taken a picture and we're going to call these the really truly dedicated audience members at Brookings, because what an ugly day it is today. This always happens, when we have bad weather like this, people either don't show up, like Scott, or they walk in late. But at least they got their coffee. Whenever we publish a volume in *The Future of Children*, we always do a policy brief. Some of you may have been here recently when Ralph Smith stood right at this very podium and talked about all of the theory and all of the abstractions and the numbers and so forth that Brookings generates, but where are the specific recommendations and where's the feeling for how the people involved in these policies actually manage to survive in life and so forth?

So our policy brief that accompanies every volume is an attempt to do that, to draw a practical conclusion especially having to do with public policy. So that is what I'm going to talk to you about.

Let me begin with where Dick was, and that is the problem. Children from low income families have always been behind in reading achievement. Ever since the Coleman Report in 1966, it's been well known that kids from low income families do not do well in school.

And the recent article by Sean Reardon, which is really just a spectacular article, and it's in – the full article, at least I think the fullest version of it, there have been several other versions, including in the *New York Times*, is in Dick's book with Greg Duncan, *Whither Opportunity* 2011, and that is the best edited book on social science and policy I've ever seen. It is really a spectacular volume and fortunately only costs about $300 to get one. So you need some kind of subsidy program to be able to afford to buy this thing. But the Reardon chapter in there is really scary. Kids born in 2001 are 30 to 40 percent – low income kids are 30 to 40 percent further behind than low income kids were born 25 years earlier.

So this is really an enormous expansion of poor performance on reading related skills over the last quarter century or so and this is based on a 90/10 gap comparing the kids in the 90th income whose families are at the 90th income percent with kids who are at the 10 percentile in 19 national studies. So this is the best data you could possibly have to address this issue.

So I just think we cannot have any question that this is an enormous problem. And it's even worse than Reardon lets on; at least we think it is, because when we actually start with a common core curriculum and then we assess it, as I'll talk about in just a minute, we're going to find even bigger differences. Why? Because the things that are assessed by the typical reading test are really not very high level literacy skills of

the type that we are discussing here and that are gone in great detail in the volume.

And once we start assessing those, these gaps will be even bigger. So this is a really serious problem, as Dick made very clear. And if we really want to do something about the education of low income kids and about their opportunity in American society, we have to address this issue. And I want to say one more word about what this volume is about, and that is advanced literacy, there's a very succinct, wonderful definition. It took me a while to figure out what they're talking about, advanced literacy, but here it is: ability to use reading to gain access to the world of knowledge, to synthesize information from different sources, to evaluate arguments, and to learn totally new subjects.

So it's a lot more than just grammar, what it was in the old days. We're talking about really advanced skills. And these skills are the ones that the low income kids really will not do well on and we're going to find that out when we develop these new tests.

So to address this problem, we recommend an overall strategy that has five features, and I'm going to talk to you about a part of this, about what we would like to actually do about it. So the first is the adoption of common core standards. So the answer to Dick's question is, one-fifth, yes. It will be an important achievement to adopt the common core, and I'm going to tell you more about that in just a minute.

Forty-five states have already adopted it, plus the District of Columbia. There are big states like Texas that have not adopted it yet. But it's really a crucial thing that we know in detail, and I'll show you in a minute how much detail, what these kids need to learn, and it's a lot more than grammar. Then second, we need to figure out if they actually are learning it. So we need a method for assessing the achievement.

And fortunately there are two groups now supported by the Department of Education, a major federal grant, and by the Gates Foundation, that are developing these assessments. They are due in 2014. I personally think, and we'll discuss this on the panel, that it's an issue whether the states who do not have a very terrific record of

revealing the true nature of their performance, they elevate it whenever they can to trick people into thinking they're really doing better than they are.

So this is a political issue really that is going to have to be addressed. But at least we'll probably have very high quality assessments that will be accurate in assessing these higher level skills having to do with literacy.

And then third, the states and local school systems will need a system for reporting the results. The parents need to know, of course, but the public needs to know, and educators themselves need to know how their schools are doing and how they compare to other schools. These results need to come right down to the building level. And this really is what's going to raise the political issue about how accurately states report these and how thoroughly and what happens when certain schools or school systems are not performing well relative to other schools and school systems in that state or in the country. And all these things raise all kinds of issues which educators do not particularly like to deal with.

The fourth thing is that we'll need curriculum. I have a lot of questions in this area. I hope we get into this in some detail on the panel. We need to match curriculum with the common core standards. And as I'll show you in just a minute, they're really very specific.

So we'll have to go through something of a revolution here I think to make sure that our curriculum and teachers have good curriculum to use when they're trying to get teachers, when they're trying to get the kids to master the skills that are – advanced literacy skills.

And then finally, we need better teachers. Everybody has said that. We actually had a whole volume in *The Future of Children* previous that was devoted and we presented a plan for improving teachers. And we're talking about hundreds of thousands of teachers who have improved skills here. So it's really going to be a major issue if we

can produce the kind of teachers that will be needed to do these new curriculum effectively and the kids can learn the common core skills that they need.

So let me just say a few words to you about the common core. I have a feeling that not everybody is going to rush to their computer and look up common core standards. So I just wanted to give you a fairly concrete idea. The standards are based on the best state standards. Many of you probably know that in No Child Left Behind, every state had to have standards. And one of the reasons for the common core is that there was, you know, it was kind of confusing for every state to have different standards. So the hope was that we could develop one set of national standards.

And the National Governor's Association and the Chief Council of School Officers did it. So it was not done by government. They had some government assessment. But it's not a government project. It's a private project and done by the people who are going to be the most effected. And I think everybody agrees that it's a very good job.

In fact, there are studies that show that the average of standards in the common core are higher than almost all of the other states or a few exceptions. But they're high standards, they're well done, they're nicely organized, and you would be really impressed if you went and looked. It would take about two hours to figure out. I mean they're so complex, as I'll show you in just a minute.

Then they got feedback from the general public. They had over 10,000 comments. And they issued the final set of standards, which are still very controversial. I don't think we're going to get to that too much today. But they are still controversial. A lot of people are opposed to the common core standards. And a lot of people are concerned that it's going to lead to a national curriculum which has been a bugaboo in American education forever. So I don't want to give you the idea that these things are not controversial, they are.

So let me just give you a little idea here. So English language arts standards at grade three, okay. First of all, there are nine standards in literature. There are 10 standards in reading informational text. There are two standards in what are called foundational skills of reading. And then there are nine standards for writing, six standards for speaking and listening, and six standards for language, all of this just at grade three.

And if you'd look at – I'll show you some actual standards so you can get a flavor of how specific they are. Here are common core standards for reading literature, grade 3, and 11, and 12. So, for example, distinguish the student's own point of view from that of the narrator and characters. This is a major achievement.

Now, you might not think about this, but that is a very difficult thing to be able to do, to develop the differences between, and understand the differences between perspectives that are taken by characters and authors and friends and teachers and so forth. And if you look at grades 11 and 12, demonstrate knowledge of 18th, 19th, and 20th century foundational works of American literature -- Belle, you'll be glad to know that our book is on there -- adopted by one-half of school in the United States is terrific.

So these are very specific, very carefully thought through, revised carefully. These are I think potentially a very important one-fifth of the answer to how we're going to address the problem of the SES differences in literacy skills.

So I want to say just one thing about school culture of learning. This is an attempt to reflect, to give you an idea of the flavor of the volume. There are actual chapters in the volume that go in detail into what should happen in a classroom and what the school should look like and what kind of teachers they need and so forth. And these are just some ideas that I pulled from the volume that would supplement the overall plan that we had and especially what would have to happen at the building level.

So I want to talk about how would we actually get any of these reforms to

take place? And here is our answer that we lay out in the brief. I'm calling it tongue in cheek, Race to Literacy, the plain off Race to the Top. So it's going to be a federal competitive grant program. It's a very important thing. It's not just going to go to the states. That was one of the real achievements of Race to the Top is, it was a competitive grant program, you weren't guaranteed of anything. You had to submit a quality application and have a good plan. That is essential to this. The schools need to be in competition for who's going to have the best plan.

The second thing, the funds are going to go to schools and coalitions of schools or other non-profit organizations. They could team up with universities or curriculum developers or whoever they want to, as long as it's done through the public schools and affects what actually happens in the classroom in the public schools.

And then there will be some kind of requirement that wouldn't necessarily have to address every element of our plan, but would have to address several on the plan, and would have to lay out in detail how they would do that.

And going to the next point about evidence-based initiatives, the federal government is now conducting at least six evidence-based initiatives. And what I mean by that is two things. First, the intervention that they're going to use, the program that they're going to use, has to have evidence that it works. And in order to leave room for innovation, there has to be at least evidence that some parts of the program work.

It doesn't necessarily have to be a specific curriculum like you find in teen pregnancy prevention programs or in home visiting, but it has to be something that can be tested and that there's at least some evidence. And the second meaning of evidence-base is that it's carefully evaluated from beginning to end. Continuous evaluations has just simply got to become a part of the standard operating procedure in American schools so we can know if it's really working.

And then finally we even have an idea for financing it, and I think this is

the wave of the future. If any of you have been coming in on our sessions on the debt, the country is in red a little bit, you might have noticed, and we're not going to have a lot of new money for social programs. We're now spending a trillion dollars on programs for assessing people. I doubt we're going to spend much more in the years ahead. In fact, we're going to cut.

So we would like to redirect funds from Title 1, especially the grants to the local educational authorities, to finance this program, and we would like to see it be a major program, at least a billion dollars over a period of years to get the states to really compete to develop these programs.

And here is the last thing to say about this, and that is, our country forever has emphasized equality of education and equality of opportunity. If we do not solve this problem with literacy, it's going to get worse, and we will not be able to have anything even close to approaching education equality, especially outcomes for education equality, which, in turn, means, as Dick made very clear, that we will not have equal opportunity in the United States, and people from low income families will continue to be relegated to low income and to unemployment and to a life of great difficulty.

So this is among the most important things that our country needs to do in say the decade or the two decades ahead. So with that, we're going to have our panel now. So, panel, please come up. So now we're at the panel plus phase of our event, where we hope to have a little controversy and people yelling at each other and disagreeing and so forth.

We had a huge debate up here about three weeks ago about random assignment, if you can believe that. Only at Brookings. It was fun. So this is a terrific panel. I'm really pleased to be able to participate in this panel. Let me just say one word, you have lots of biographical information in your materials about all the panelists, so I'm just going to say a few things about each one.

Mike Petrilli, who's executive vice president of the Fordham Institute, also a research fellow at Stanford's Hoover Institution, and having read his blogs and a lot of his shorter pieces, I would have to say he's one of the most astute observers of public education in the United States. He really says very, very interesting things. Catherine Snow, who is the Patricia Graham professor, there's a middle name in that thing, but I couldn't pronounce it, so I just skipped it. I was going to pretend it didn't exist, but --

MS. SNOW: Reading skills, you know, very hard.

MR. HASKINS: Yeah. I'm one of the ones that needed this help. I was in the Control Group, you know, it's a big problem. So at the Graduate School of Education in Harvard, and I think there's no question, it's a widely agreed on, I think we all have to say this, that she's one of the leading reading gurus in the country.

For example, she chaired the National Research Council panel that made a report on preventing reading disabilities in young children which has been very, very influential for many years.

Matt Chingos from Brookings, our Brown Center here at Brookings, he was author of a book called *Crossing the Finish Line* when he must have been about 18 or 19 years old. And get this, he writes the book with William Bowen and Michael McPherson, two really stellar, two of the most famous educators in the country. So what a way to start. I want to go back and start the same way. I guess it's too late.

He also recently did a very interesting study on the use of vouchers in private school systems that had a huge impact on normally black kids in college, with a very important outcome. And then my colleague, Belle Sawhill, you already have experienced Belle Sawhill, but nobody experiences Belle Sawhill like I do because I get to be on the receiving end of all her thoughts and orders and so forth almost on a daily basis, a wonderful colleague. And Belle knows just about everything, including about

reading, but not more than Catherine, that's for sure.

And then finally, again, referring back to Ralph Smith and his criticism of us for not having practical people and feature all these scholars and ideas and numbers and so forth. We're very fortunate to have Cara Cassell here, who actually lives in D.C., but she works in Baltimore, and she is a great reading teacher. She's got a world of experience both in D.C. and now in a special program called Strategic Education Research Partnership, SERP. I was thinking of a lot of things I could do with SERP, but I decided most of them were off color so I decided I won't do that.

Anyway, she's a word generation coach. And what we're hoping to hear from her is some practical information about what happens at the actual classroom level, especially with poor kids, that get in the way of them acquiring these skills?

As is our custom, we're going to start out with brief opening statements by each of the panelists. Then I'm going to ask some questions, then we're going to turn it over to the audience and the audience is going to ask questions. So let's begin with Mike.

MR. PETRILLI: Okay. Thank you, Ron. Hello everybody. So my comments really come down to six words, Reading First, and Don Hirsch was right. Now, I've got seven minutes so I'll flush that out if that's okay. All right. So let me start with the Don Hirsch was right piece first.

E.D. Hirsch, if that name rings a bell, was the author of *Cultural Literacy* way back in the late 1980's, helped to found the Core Knowledge network of schools. You may recall that Don Hirsch, you know, a bona fide liberal, English professor for the University of Virginia, got blasted, still gets blasted for years being considered – being called a conservative. Some people think that that's horrible.

But what he has been arguing for years is that background knowledge is essential, and that a lot of these gaps come down to gaps in background knowledge, and

that the reason that low income children in particular do so poorly in reading is because they simply don't have the vocabulary and the background knowledge that their more affluent peers do.

And it seems like some of the research that's in this journal is finding that again and again, that the coding pieces are critically important when the kids are little. Once they've learned to do that piece, then they need to have that background knowledge, and yet that's an issue that's so far not been given a whole lot of attention. There's been a lot of focus instead of developing these discreet skills, these reading skills, devoid and divorced from actually learning history or science or literature. The great thing about the common core standards, one of the great things, is that they really do move us in the direction that Don Hirsch has been calling for for years, which is to get more specific about the content that kids need to learn, and I think that's one reason to be optimistic.

And so I do hope that with Don Hirsch, after being a lonely voice in the wilderness for so many years, you know, gets some respect for what he's been saying all along. And the research is showing that a lot of his insights were, in fact, right on target.

The second point, Reading First. When I read the policy brief, and especially about the proposal in here, to have a Race to Literacy, a billion dollars a year competitive grant program to focus on boosting literacy skills of low income children, I said by golly, we had that, it was called reading first. It hasn't been that long since this program was in place.

But a brief history lesson, this was part of No Child Left Behind. This was a billion dollar program that President George W. Bush put forward and Congress enacted. And it was a billion dollars a year over about five or six years. It was a formula program in that all the states were eligible for it and the money went out by formula, but the states had to put forward an application that was approved by the Department of Ed,

and they did not just rubberstamp these things. In fact, some states had to apply seven times before they got the money.

Now, people that know about Reading First or remember this may say, oh, well, the lesson of Reading First was a couple of things. First of all, there was some kind of vague scandal that they remember happening, and then there were studies that showed that it didn't work.

And let me offer a different history that I think is closer to the truth. The truth was, the federal officials who were involved in this program, and I'll admit they were my friends, were very much committed to evidence-base, and there was an evidence-base at that time that was clear about what high quality reading instruction looked like. And so they were committed to making sure that only states in school districts that were committed to that evidence-base were going to get the money.

And if they found out that states and districts were using curricular programs that were not aligned with that evidence-base, were basically just doing the same old thing that they're doing for years and years and years, they were going to go out and pull the money. And for that, there was a huge political push-back. There was first, you know, a very tough report from the Inspector General saying that they had overstepped their bounds, they had overstepped federal law, saying that the federal government can't prescribe curriculum, and that they had used methods that were, you know, bullying, that were, you know, overreached at the federal level.

Now, the question was, if you care about an evidence-base and you find out, as in most federal programs, that people are going to take the money and then kind of do what they want to do with it, are you going to let that happen or are you going to stand and say, hey, we care about fidelity to the evidence?

And so I think if you were to have another race to literature, you would face the same challenge, even in a competitive grant program, how prescriptive you get

around the curricula in the programs the districts and states will choose. If you don't get prescriptive, they will do what they're already doing and you will see no impact. That would be my suggestion.

The second thing people remember is that there was a Reading First evaluation that showed no impacts. Now, be careful to take the name in vane here. Russ Whitehurst, who directs the Education Program here who was a director of the Institute for Education Sciences when that report came out, but that report, in my view and many other people I respect, was fatally flawed. It got started late. It did not look at the early adapter states which were the ones most likely to be aggressive about implementing this program well. And it had this challenge, which was that a lot of schools out there that didn't get Reading First money were doing things that looked a lot like Reading First, which was that they were implementing scientifically based reading instruction, as well.

I think that there's some pretty good evidence out there that this program did have a big impact. We see, particularly in the NAEP data, at the fourth grade level, a big up tick in performance, particularly for low income kids. I think that is likely to be related at least to the push for scientifically based reading, which Reading First was part of.

If you look at the state level, some very impressive results about what happened at the state level, and probably some of the best professional development for teachers and curricular reforms that we've ever seen certainly from a federal level, at least going back maybe to the 1950's with the professional development for science teachers and math teachers back then, but very significant. And unfortunately, I think we misread the history on that program.

So, in short, if you want to improve reading instruction, I do think something like Reading First or your new Race to Literacy has promise. But you have to

understand that for it to be successful, it means the federal officials in charge would have to get prescriptive, and getting prescriptive from the federal level leads to huge political push-back. It may in some respects be against federal law that says the federal government, the Department of Education may not prescribe curriculum.

So you have to deal with that challenge. I think in the current environment, with the Tea Party, et cetera, that is not likely to happen, which creates a challenge, again, for trying to do Reading First part two.

MR. HASKINS: Matt?

MR. CHINGOS: Well I thank you for including me and for bringing to public attention what's clearly a tremendously important set of issues. So I just have a couple comments I'd like to touch on. The first one is about curriculum, which is also something Mike talked about. And the key point I want to make about curriculum is that alignment which Ron addressed, is clearly critical, right? If you want to teach the common course standards you need to have a curriculum that's aligned to the Common Core Standards. But I don't think it's nearly enough because the way the vendors of a lot of curricula out there deal with alignment is they have a checklist and they just make sure that everything in their curriculum is in the Common Core or everything in the Common Core Standards rather, is included in their curriculum.

And this sort of checklist type approach to alignment really doesn't tell you anything about the quality of the curriculum. So the problem is, and this is true now and if nothing changes it'll be true going forward, that we have very little evidence about effectiveness of curricula across subject areas. For example a couple of years ago, the What Works Clearinghouse did a review of elementary school math curricula and found that of the I think about 90 curricula identified, the vast majority had no evidence of any rigor about the quality of those instructional products. So A, we really don't have any idea of what works in term of curriculum.

But we really need to know what works, both overall and for particular subgroups of students. As Mike discussed, it seems reasonable to believe that students from different backgrounds in terms of the quality of instruction and the amount of learning that goes on in the home are going to likely respond differently to different methods of instruction. So we need to know what works and we need to know what works for whom, and what contexts. But not only don't we know what works, we don't even really know what's in use. I think only one state in the country currently collects data on a statewide basis about what instructional products are being used in their classrooms.

So in most states now we have very rich information about, you know, every kid, every teacher, where the teacher got their degree, the test scores of the students, their demographic information, but we don't know something as simple as, you know, what reading curriculum has been adopted by a given elementary school in the third grade in some school and you know, have that information in a consistent way. So we don't even know what's in use, but there's very little hope for knowing what works. And this is a subject that -- if I can engage in self promotion just for a moment, that Russ Whitehurst and I wrote about in a *Brown Center Report* in May and I think it links up very nicely to this conversation that we're having today.

So curriculum is important. So the second piece I wanted to talk about is the policy proposal. I think this competitive grant program is a really interesting idea. So I'd like to just sort of, talk about a couple of details that I would be interested in hearing the authors talk about in terms of how they think about this proposal. So first of all, how do we think about going forward with something like this when the evidence base on things like curriculum is so limited? You know, I think that the solution that they talk about in the proposal is nice of saying, well, you know, research base is important but we're going to allow some room for proposals that sort of, seem like they might work.

They don't have a really strong evidence base yet, but then as part of the program they're going to be evaluated. And that evaluation piece is something I'd like to hear some more detail about. Because if you say, the people getting the money have to evaluate what they're doing, I think that has a lot of problems because A, most school districts have a very limited capacity for doing high quality evaluation and B, the incentives are all wrong. So if you give someone money and then ask them to tell you whether it was well went and whether it worked, in most cases they're going to say, you know, oh yeah, it was great. Right? I mean, at Brookings here if a funder gives us a grant and asks us to evaluate, you know, how well the money was spent, of course we're going to say, oh, it was very well spent.

You know, we had this panel -- we did all these great things. So I think having an independent third party evaluation is important, but it's also more expensive. So like I said, I'd be interested to hear the author's reactions a little bit more about how that would work. So that's on the policy proposal. And the final thing I'd like to bring up is just the general topic of incentives. You know, I think the nice thing about a competitive grant program in terms of moving away from a formula where everyone gets a piece of the pie to something where you have to compete for it, I think we saw in the race to the top competition. You know, a relatively small federal investment having a big effect just in terms of getting people to do things the federal government wanted them to do.

So in a competitive grant program, schools and districts compete for a relatively small amount of money. So one other policy proposal I'd put on the table are sort of, the general set of policies that push towards more choice and competition in terms of getting schools and districts to compete for more, if not all of their money. Right? So the way a proposal like this works is, you know, someone in the government says, you know, submit applications and we're going to give it to the people we think are

going to spend the money the best. So sort of, a natural extension of that would be to say, you know, schools are no longer guaranteed a base of students but you know, students and families can choose what schools to go to.

So now instead of an incentive around a small pot of money, you have an incentive around a much larger pot of money. So that's just something else. Sort of a bigger topic, but something else that I would put on the table. So I think I have a minute and a half left, but I'll yield the balance of my time.

MR. HASKINS: Nope, didn't work here. Seven minutes, that's it. Cara, thank you for coming.

MS. CASSELL: Thank you. Thank you for having me. I've been living the journey of the Common Core Standards for about almost -- going on two school years. And I just wanted to reflect on my experiences in working in two urban school districts as I have been working with the Common Core. Now I do have some notes, and I just want to follow them so that I am able to articulate everything as I only have seven minutes. Okay. They may be classified by their lunch line status as farms free and reduced meal students. Based on the percentages of these students in a particular school, they may be classified as Title One. But no matter the classification, when they enter our school buildings we call them our babies. They are my babies when they enter the building.

It doesn't matter where they came from, it doesn't matter the income level of their parents or their families. The bottom line is that the only way that our babies will get out of poverty is through education. It's imperative that we equip all students with the advanced literacy skills necessary to be able to independently and proficiently read and comprehend written text. But it is urgent that we equip our students from disadvantaged households with the literacy skills that are needed to make the dream of college and or career an obtainable reality. So we're here today to discuss can these

standards boost literacy achievement in literacy.

So I thought deeply about this topic for over the past two years, where my work with the Common Core started; I'd say about the spring of 2011. At that time, I worked in an urban school district as an instructional coach. So what the coaching model is that we are basically professional developers who teach educators how to use the proven methods. So the district was one of the 46 to adopt these Common Core Standards and implement them the following year. So my teachers had lots of questions. They were excited about the standards, but they had lots of questions. They had concerns like -- oh, I'm so sorry, I'm getting ahead of myself. As I prepared for the Common Core Standards, I read over the appendices; Appendix A and Appendix B. I attended workshops by David Coleman who talked about the instructional shifts of the Common Core.

I really felt like I had prepared myself for a college course, but then I looked on the internet and found an app for my iPhone. Ron, there is an app for that. The teachers were excited about these new standards but they were questioning lots of things. How would we incorporate these standards into our instructional practices? They wanted to know what types of curriculum, what types of resources we would use. How the school district will provide professional development for us. We wondered lots of things and I'm sure that my colleagues and I were not alone in our questions. I'm sure that there were teachers all over the nation that had questions just as we did.

So I've come to realize that the Common Core Standards are an important part of solving this literacy problem, but the standards alone can't do it. So what is it that we need? What can we help teachers? How can we help students to encounter the literacy skills they need to be prepared for the 21st century? The Common Core provides a great destination. It provides a great framework for what we need to do with students and what they need in order to become literate in the 21st century. The

documents are a great destination. But if we're serious about boosting these student's literacy skills in high poverty schools, it's going to take more than identifying a destination. In the classroom we need reading intervention programs like the ones that you spoke of, to help us with our struggling readers. That's what we need.

We also need to equip our teachers with the skills to handle schools that are in high poverty. Some of our teachers are really struggling with classroom management, but that is something that we need to work with our pre-service programs so that teachers are prepared to work with students in high poverty and also to teach the standards. Our classrooms should model print-rich and literacy-rich environments that contain an abundance of books that students can access on their own reading levels. And finally, our teachers and students need challenging and innovative instructional programs which provide adequate training, instructional materials, and program support.

So what I'd like to do is share with you an example of the types of programs that are being developed. And I work with a program called Word Generation and we are implementing this program in Baltimore Public Schools as well as Boston Public Schools. So in short, what this program does is basically, we address many of the issues of reading comprehension with daily lessons used across the curriculum in classrooms in grades four through eight. The curriculum kind of has a thread that runs through math, science, social studies, and ELA and it has a heavy emphasis on the skill sets targeted by the Common Core Standards.

So you might ask, well, what's working with your program in the classroom? Well, lots of things are working for students and lots of things are working for teachers. The Standards call for a balance of literary text and informational text. My struggling readers can't wait to come in in sixth and seventh grade and talk about things like, does rap music have a negative effect on youth or should movies have ratings? We align our programs through informational text and a lot of what the Common Core is

calling for. What else is working for my teachers? Well, what's working for the teachers is that the teachers are able to use proven strategies and methods to bring students to gather the literacy skills that they need to handle the 21st century literature.

So those are a few examples of the things that we're doing in schools. As we work with students with the Word Generation program which is not the only program. The program that we're using, some of the kids say, well this program is giving us the power that we need. We're building what we call, academic language; the kids call it, powerful language. They say that, this is how Barack Obama talks, this is how he speaks, and this is how he is able to, and they say this, articulate what he's read, what he's learned in his experiences. So I just want to leave you with a closing from one of my teachers as I sat in the classroom yesterday. This was in a Title One school with farm students.

The teacher explained it best. She said, you may not come from neighborhoods high on the hill and have parents at home that have taught you to read at age one, but what we will learn this year in Word Generation is how to become powerful. And powerful people use powerful language to articulate their thoughts about what they've read and learned. No matter where you come from, I want you to be able to stand out academically. She closed the lesson by telling the students, academic language gives you academic promise and that's what we want for our babies.

MR. HASKINS: Thank you. Belle?

MS. SAWHILL: It's really interesting thought that learning these academic skills and these higher, more advanced literacy skills can make you a powerful person. I love the image of it, so thank you for that. I also want to go back and refer to something that Dick emphasized in his opening presentation which is these tremendous gaps that are growing and the literacy achievement of -- and test scores of more less advantaged children. And the fact that if that continues -- if we can't stop and reverse

that, we are going to have less mobility in American society and that's something that I and others here at Brookings have done a lot of work on. And so we have also looked at these test score gaps and how they're widening.

And we have shown in a new study that we released about a week ago, that if you don't have those test score abilities at a young age that that has big effects on your later achievement. There's a handout in your packets that I think you all -- I hope you all got today. Does everybody have the packet with the handout in it? My handout that's in there was really prepared by my colleague Carrie Grannis, who's sitting out here in the third row, and very indebted to her for doing that. And it's primarily based on a paper that she did with John Barron at the Coalition for Evidence Based Policy on reading achievement and ways to improve on it.

And so I just want to reference that because I'm not in my brief seven minutes going to be able to cover everything. So you know, I think that literacy clearly is more than just decoding words. And one of the things I've really learned from working with Catherine and Dick on this volume is that it's about extracting meaning from those words and that it does depend your background information, your vocabulary, and the experiences of your life. But Catherine's example of this that brings it home to me in an amusing way is she says: if you've never experienced a real dog and then you read a story about a talking dog, you don't know how amusing that is and how charming it is.

So we do need to do more to expose children I think, to the world around them; to oral language, to meaningful and age appropriate text, and other activities that help them with the comprehension tests. And as Catherine and Dick and the volume have emphasized and as we have emphasized in all of our work, this means amongst other things more preschool experiences and preschool programs that can help kids before they even get to kindergarten or first grade with those tests. Now the handout shows the standard NAEP scores and I look at the graph that's in your handout on the

reading proficiency of fourth graders and the fact that almost half of low income children, almost half are not reading at even a basic level, much less at a proficient level.

So I would like to hear more from those of you who know this spiel much more intimately than I do, why it is that half of these children by fourth grade are missing even the basic reading level and what's the best way to correct that. And Carrie, you may have thoughts about that. I'm sure you're program is to some extent, addressed at that. Our own work shows that if you can't read well by the time you're sort of, age 10 or 11, the end of elementary school when these NAEP scores relate to, that you're twice as likely to drop out of high school, that you're more than four times less likely to complete college, and that you're a third less likely to be what we call middle class by middle age meaning having an income of say, $68,000 a year by age 40 if you're a family of four.

Now the good news which we try to reflect on the back of the handout that's in your packet, is that there are some programs. They're small; they tend to be demonstration programs that do work. The handout describes five programs that have been subject to a relatively rigorous evaluation, most of them randomized controlled trials, and found to improve reading comprehension. Not just reading skills, but comprehension. Now comprehension as Catherine can tell us, is hard to define and I think is measured very differently in different programs. In some of these programs the kids were evaluated at still a relatively young age and may go on to have problems later on.

But I find it interesting that despite -- as Matt has said: we don't know as much as we need to know about what works. We do have a few programs that seem to work. There will always be the issue of can you take them to scale, but I think that if we were to agree and I'm not sure we do, that they have achieved certain benchmarks that are important, we could take more of them to scale because through our simulation modeling we can show that they're going to have longer term impacts that are quite

significant. So let me stop there and cede the balance of my time to our reading guru here, Catherine. So thank you.

MR. HASKINS: So Catherine, I think we agreed before we came into the -- you were going to clean things up and correct all the errors and everything. So whatever else you do, please do that. Thank you.

MS. SNOW: Absolutely. Well, I'm actually slightly regretting the fact that I'm in the final position here because it seems like there is so many issues that have been brought up that I'd like to talk about and I also only have seven minutes. But I will try to touch on them and hope that you all will raise them again in the discussion. I want to go back to Dick Murnane's opening point that we have two literacy problems here, not just one. And Belle has focused on the many kids who are below basic. But even the kids who are scoring pretty well on the NAEP in secondary school are I'm afraid, not going to score very well on the new Common Core State Standards aligned assessments.

And people teaching in vocational training programs and in introductory courses in non-selected tertiary education institutions all say, these kids don't really read very well and they don't really write very well. So it is more of a universal problem and as well as the problem of increasing in equity. And I think the big challenge is to understand the nature of reading. Reading is one of those words -- reading with comprehension, one of those words that has many, many different definitions. And we have to confront the full range of possible interpretations of the word.

We have an illusion of success by virtue of the fact that what we test when we test reading comprehension is actually a fairly limited set of skills and we have an illusion of success of the kind that Mike Petrilli talked about because reading first worked precisely because it was focused on a very selective and small domain of reading. You can move kids in reading words, you can improve fluency, you can get kids

to use strategies to extract simple ideas from simple texts. That isn't going to get us anywhere. That is not going to solve the literacy crisis that we have. So let me just sort of tell you what I see when I go into schools. I see partly as a result of reading first, on average a pretty good amount of attention to teaching students how to read words accurately and fluently.

I see the consequences of that excellently coherent professional development, that variation in reading instruction that used to exist that you know, in this classroom it was whole language approach and in this classroom it was let them figure it out on their own approach and in that classroom it was a phonics based approach. That has been reduced and that is all to the good. We probably see the effect of that in the slight bump in fourth grade NAEP. But we still see a very limited array of literacy skills being taught. And interestingly in many districts, the interpretation of the demands of No Child Left Behind excluded the possibility of doing the kinds of things that Don Hirsch was focusing on in core knowledge.

Oh no, we don't have time to teach kids stuff, we've got to teach them how to read words. We can't talk about things. They haven't read all these words yet. They're not reading fluently enough. So we have to figure out how to use time in classrooms much more effectively. So that's K through three. Fourth and fifth grade -- in lots of schools, kids actually never get taught to read very much in fourth and fifth grade. It's assumed they already know, they're given stuff to read but they're not taught anymore. And in good schools there's continued reading instruction through fifth grade, but once kids get to sixth grade there is nobody a school who knows anything about how to teach reading.

So the kids that Cara was talking about who have somehow missed out, they're done for. Their math teacher doesn't know how to help them, the history teacher doesn't know how to help them, the science teacher doesn't know how to help them.

They have very serious needs and there's no resource within the school to respond to those needs. On average in the schools I work with at least. So the gap in reading skills is a knowledge gap but it's unfortunately a knowledge gap which continues to grow as kids get more and more different from one another in reading skills. Keith Stanovich, one of the great reading researchers, referred to this as the Matthew Effect; the rich get richer, the poor get poorer.

You know a lot when you go into first grade, you learn to read well, you read a lot; you don't need a teacher anymore after third grade. Still struggling? You read less and less, it's harder and harder, it's more and more demotivating, and so you don't use reading as a source of access to the continued growth of knowledge. And reading gets harder. As Dick Munane pointed out, it gets more varied in the different disciplines. And just as an example of that, consider what we mean by the word interpret and I picked this word because it's one of the words we teach Word Generation. And it's one of the words that sixth graders typically don't know the meaning of. They've seen it a million times but they don't know what it means.

And it means something very, very different. If you say, interpret the author's intent in this poem versus interpret the data in this graph. Those are different forms of interpret and they are different mental challenges, different reading challenges, and kids don't know what the word means in either sense. The only thing they know the word interpret to mean is what you do for your mom when you go to the doctor because she doesn't speak English. So where is disciplinary reading, where is high level reading, where is analytic reading, where is synthetic reading actually taught? Ironically it is taught in AP History.

High school seniors finally get a chance to learn how to do this, but only the top five percent of high school seniors academically speaking. The average kid who might want to read the opinion page of *The New York Times* and actually understand

which of these guys is right wing and which of these guys is left wing, never gets a chance to learn how to do that. So what do you do if you don't know where they're coming from when you read them? You don't understand what they're saying, and you stop reading it. So clearly one of the answers to this is better teachers, but then I think we do have to stop and think, what does better teachers mean?

Does it mean different teachers or does it mean the teachers we have with more support? Does it mean the teachers we have working with better curricula, does it mean different organization of the work of teachers so that the skills the teachers have can be made accessible to the students who need support, who need those skills, and the skills that the teachers don't have are supplemented by the organization of work in schools. That's a suggestion of a very different organization of the way work is done in the education system. And I'm not optimistic we'll be able to do that, but I think it's the only solution we're going to be able to implement that will get us where we want to be.

MR. HASKINS: Thank you. Let me ask the panel three questions having to do with what I think are three biggest issues here. They have all been mentioned several times around the panel, they were mentioned in Dick's summary. And it has to do with the curriculum, with the testing, and with teachers. So let's start with the curriculum. And I would like to try and incorporate -- and I'm not exactly sure how, but some of the problems that Catherine was mentioning strike me as a curriculum issue. If you look at the Core Standards and sit there for a half an hour and read through them, there are so many specific things that you're supposed to learn and -- you know, spelled out in each grade. Are we going to be able to have curriculum?

Do we have curriculum now that are going to be able to -- how do we insure that the kids actually get instruction? You know, the implication -- a lot of what Catherine is saying is, it's not so much that they didn't learn it, they were never taught it. So how can we get curriculum that will do that? Do we have it now? And what's your

answer to the curriculum issue?

MR. PETRILLI: Sure. I'll start. There's a lot of people all over the country working on this question to develop curriculum and other materials. I think that we have to be first of all, skeptical. I mean, every publisher is already saying their stuff's aligned to the Common Core. They said that, you know, the day after the Common Core we're adopted, so we need to be skeptical. And the real need is to have somebody out there to review some of these curricular materials.

MR. HASKINS: That is called anticipatory alignment.

MR. PETRILLI: Yes. Very nice, I like that. That's very easy to come out with at Brookings. So the folks who wrote the Common Core Standards have come out with publisher's criteria that try to be very explicit about it. Here's what it would mean to be aligned, now we need somebody to go out there and actually apply them to those curriculum materials. You know, we have helped to start a group that's also ironically enough called, Common Core led by Lynne Munson, and they have developed curriculum maps in English language arts; they're working on math. And we tend to think they're very good and well aligned. And I think there's going to be some good curriculum materials out there; some are better than others.

One thing that I think that is important to say is that this doesn't have to wait until Kindergarten. You know, we all know the importance of early childhood and preschool. And there's been a lot of focus on getting kids to do pre-literacy skills. You know, read to them so they are familiar with the letters and numbers and they know that you read from left to right. But I think even more important, and this is -- here's my evidence from my anecdote of one, my son who's four and a half. They can learn so much before they can read and that's I think, the real power in reading to little kids is that they soak up all this content knowledge.

And I mean, I am amazed by how much my son Nicco already knows

before he can read a word. And frankly, he's learned from me reading to him and he's also learned it from watching some really good PBS shows like Wild Kratts and some other great shows out there that are very good at teaching content. And so I think there are -- you know, I think if we could just keep -- I'm going to stress over and over again, teach content, teach content, teach content. The kids love it, they are curious about it, and they can learn a lot of it before they can learn to decode.

MS. SNOW: Well can I just add to that, that that kind of wonderful learning that middle class kids have access to on their father's laps and at the dinner table can continue in Kindergarten, first grade, and second grade. And unfortunately, particularly in schools serving poor kids, it stops then because we have a 120 minute literacy block which is assumed to be required for teaching letters and sounds and the spelling rules of English as opposed to thinking of literacy as encompassing knowledge, vocabulary, talking about text, discussing text. So I mean, how many people in this room are members of book clubs, of book discussion groups? Right? Even as adults we don't want to sit alone and read the words. Reading is a social act where talking about it is very important and talking about it is what supports access to text for less able readers, as well.

So I think -- but I do want to say about curriculum. Every single assessment of comparing curricula, you know, every careful rigorous study comparing curriculum A to curriculum B to curriculum C, it always turns out that variation within curriculum is larger than variation across curriculum. Curriculum is enacted and it's the quality of the enactment that determines whether it works or not. Not the quality of -- not whether you can check off all the standards, not whether it's pre-aligned. Is it good? That helps. Is it done well? That's the key thing.

MR. HASKINS: So the teacher's more important than the curriculum?

MS. SNOW: Yes.

MR. PETRILLI: Catherine, I'd be interested to hear your comment on -- being the expert on reading curriculum. I mean, but are there -- I mean, so of course there's always more variation within than across in pretty much anything you can come up with. But is there a significant variation across reading curricula? For the report that Russ and I did, we looked at some studies of math curricula which actually found some pretty big effects; effects that rival differences in teacher quality.

MS. SNOW: Right.

MR. PETRILLI: So I'd be interested to hear a little bit more about that. And then I just wanted to make a more general comment that I think it is useful given that there's going to be a bunch -- different products, different curricula floating around out there, to have a way to evaluate them. So if you have a test that's actually testing the things you care about -- that's really important and hopefully these Common Core assessments will at least get us close to that. And knowing who's using what and have a way of doing more of these kinds of studies and seeing if you know, year after year, schools that use curriculum A are -- you know, the kids are learning more in reading than schools that use curriculum B to be able to tell schools, well now you're making a choice. There's evidence that A works better than B.

MS. SAWHILL: If I could just add to that, I would like any reactions to the five programs that I've listed on my handout. Success For All which is at the top of the list is in many schools around the country now. I forget exactly how many, but it's not any longer just a pilot program. I believe when we talked about this before that Catherine you said, well that's fine but that's not the more advanced literacy skills and the most rigorous evaluation anyway ended at too young an age to pick that up. And we should bring Dick back into this conversation because he knows a lot about this, as well. But I don't know, you know, how this jives with the What Works Clearinghouse, so you know, any thoughts about that would be welcome.

MR. CHINGOS: I mean, they seem like pretty big effects but I'm not going to pretend to be an expert in reading instruction especially when we have one sitting on the stage. So -- I might fake it if you weren't here, but --

MS. SAWHILL: I think these effect sizes are real. It may be that -- and they're all measuring comprehension -- reading comprehension. And so the criticism has to be, well they haven't gone sufficiently to scale. Although as I pointed out, Success For All has. Or that when they say they've measured reading comprehension, it's something different than what you mean.

MS. SNOW: Well this is a very complex set of issues. I clearly -- let me start with the math. Math is just easier, right? Math is easier to influence educationally.

MR. PETRILLI: You always get bigger impacts on math scores.

MS. SNOW: You'll always get bigger impacts on math scores than you do on reading scores because reading builds on everything that kids have learned up to the point that they enter school, whereas math is much more school determined. I mean, there are differences among kids and how much they understand numeracy. But they're not nearly as huge the differences between the Kindergarten entry kids with vocabularies of a 1,000 words and those with vocabularies of 15,000 words. And those differences are really important. So you would always expect larger effects. And in math it's clear that there were really bad curricula. All right. They were curricula you really would not want to let into the schools; confusing, too hard for the teachers, unproductive for students.

Literacy curricula all get tested in high needs schools. So that's one thing to be said in their favor or against them. And as Belle says, they tend to get evaluated in second or third grade. Where reading comprehension can be evaluated, but what reading comprehension means in second or third grade is something pretty close to reading the words and understanding the sentence. It's not a test that the Common Core

would value, it's not a test like read three articles about global warming, one by the Sierra Club and one by SO and one by a commentator in *The New York Times* and decide taking into account the perspectives of the authors, which one you think is most credible and what your views now are about the reality of human contribution to global warming. All right. That would be a Common Core style piece of curriculum and a Common Core style assessment. There's nothing that we have right now in the schools to test that kind of thing.

MR. HASKINS: By the way Catherine, you're trying to make the Common Core more controversial now, I see. This is -- any conservatives out there, they're not actually proposing to talk to you much about global warming.

MS. SAWHILL: Well, they're proposing to ask kids about questions of importance --

MR. HASKINS: Yes. Yes.

MS. SAWHILL: -- of which some people believe global warming is one.

MR. HASKINS: I think the main question though -- before us -- well curriculum is, can you have good curriculum that will help regular teachers and we're talking hundreds of thousands of them do this sort of thing, develop these kind of literacy skills, these advanced literacy skills you're referring to here. Do we have those kind of curriculum now or can we develop them? I think that's part of Matt's question, too.

MR. PETRILLI: But again, I mean, content, content, content, right? I mean, what one of the great tragedies is we said of No Child Left Behind was that it created this impression for many high poverty schools was if you want to get those reading scores up, use this big literacy block to just teach quote skills and drive out the social studies --

SPEAKER: Right.

MR. PETRILLI: -- and the science and that was a huge mistake. You

know, and so how to get the word out that says, actually, if you want to boost your reading scores especially long-term, what you need to be doing is making sure there's a lot of that time spent on teaching content.

MR. HASKINS: Content. Yeah. Yeah. Well that --

MS. SAWHILL: And may I say, giving kids a reason to read; giving kids something interesting to read about. Engagement is the first crucial piece of any effective curriculum. Kids have to want to do it.

MR. HASKINS: All right. So we're all aware here that we're talking about a general strategy that involves clear goals which people seem to be pretty satisfied with those, some people still argue against it. But the Common Core seems pretty good. And we're -- didn't really answer the question about curriculum, but assuming we do something, we still have to have testing. We have to know if the kids are learning it. We have to know if certain schools are effective in doing it. We need to know what states and school systems and so forth, right? Well, the flaw here to me is, why do we think that the -- even if we develop great tests, these two groups that are working on them now, why do we think the schools are going to develop them?

I mean use them. Because they're going to show where the problems are and they've already shown it. They're willing to basically cheat in order to not let the public know that they're not doing a good job. Let me say, they use deception. They use tests that produce the outcomes they wanted. So now that we've got good tests, why are they going to adopt them?

SPEAKER: The states?

MR. HASKINS: Yeah, or local school -- however they do it.

MR. PETRILLI: Right. I mean, the way that -- so we've got 46 states that have signed on to the standards and most of those states, almost all of them, are now in one of the testing phases. I mean, they've made a commitment that they're going

to use these tests. Now as Andy Rotherham has said before, this is kind of like signing up for a health club. You know, all you've really done is sign up for the health club; you haven't shown up for the exercises yet.

SPEAKER: Or someone else is paying for it, right?

MR. PETRILLI: That too. Yes. You're not even paying for the dues. That's right. So we will for sure see states peel off. And I think the big question -- it is the question, are they going set the cut scores high enough at a true college readiness level? I think there's enough public visibility that it's going to be hard for those consortia not to do that. I think they are going to set it high, I think the failure rates are going to be huge, and you're going to have states finding one excuse or another to peel off. I'm hopeful that maybe we'll get 25 states that'll hang tough, but it's going to be a huge political challenge.

MR. CHINGOS: The long-term I think financing and how it's paid for is going to matter because right now all the upfront costs have been paid by, you know, government grants. So if the --

MR. HASKINS: Oh, and Gates. Gates made a big grant for developing assessments. That's what you're referring to, right?

MR. PETRILLI: More for the standards. It's really been the federal money on the assessments.

MR. HASKINS: Oh, okay.

MR. CHINGOS: But so the way -- and I think it's still unclear exactly what states are going to have to pay to maintain these tests and continue to participate down the road. So if there's a big wedge between sort of teaming up in this way and then going on their own, perhaps there'll be a strong financial incentive to continue to participate if dropping out means having to buy their own tests. But I don't think we -- we've got to have the numbers that will enable us to figure that out.

MR. SNOW: Can I offer one correction, Ron? You keep talking about the standards as being really complicated and really long. And in fact, one of the goals of those who created the Common Core Standards was to make them clearer, fewer, and higher. Right. So this is actually a big improvement over the old literacy standards that most states had in place because there are only 9 of them for literature and only 11 for informational text. The other challenge though, is that states still have content standards. And the content standards are sprawling and disorganized and incoherent and in direct conflict with the kinds of curricular efforts that would serve to meet the Common Core State Standards.

So if you have to -- as in Massachusetts, if in sixth grade you are meant to study ancient civilizations from, you know, all the way up through the roman empire which gives you a week on Egypt and you know, 2 days on Greece and you know, 10 days on Mesopotamia and the notion that you can do that and you can go in some depth and read a variety of informational texts about each of those topics and think about them and write about them and talk about them, it's absurd. Obviously, you can't do that. So there is another parallel standards effort that would need to be undertaken so is not to undermine the Common Core with the content.

MR. HASKINS: Okay, last question. Having beautifully solved those first two issues --

MS. SNOW: Right.

MR. HASKINS: -- is really schools of education, we need a lot of good teachers to do this. I think Cara made that pretty clear and I think anybody can realize that. Are the schools of education capable of producing thousands upon thousands of teachers that are going to know the core curriculum that know the core standards and whatever curriculum their school system uses? They're going to learn that and they're going to really be able to achieve these standards. Can we do that?

MS. SNOW: We can do that but the -- we're doing it but then the qualities and capacities of those teachers are undermined by the schools they enter. Schools are incoherent places of work. Dick, you should talk about this. You know more about this than I do. The conditions under which teachers work are ill designed.

MR. PETRILLI: Yes, but --

MR. HASKINS: But wait. So the first big point here that you've made is the schools of education to quote you, were doing that. So the schools of education are producing a good product but it's the schools that mess them up. Do we agree with that?

MR. PETRILLI: No. Now Harvard is doing great work but if you look across the country 1,400 schools of education, you know, the National Council on Teacher Quality has come out with it's big review with U.S. News of ed schools in the spring; hugely controversial. One of the things that they're looking at which shouldn't be controversial is simply, to what degree are these ed schools teaching elementary teachers these fundamental evidence and skills around reading. And still today, you know, 15 years after the National Reading Panel I mean, some minuscule number of ed schools are actually requiring their elementary school teachers to take lessons, courses in this kind of stuff. I mean, that is -- it is unconscionable.

I mean, we have -- we've got the cure for cancer and we're not sharing it with our core. So I think, you know, you've got ed schools that continue to be completely irresponsible on this. On the content point, you know, they have not open their arms to ED Hurst and said, you were right. Content is king. We need to be focused on that. You know, there is still very much an ideology that says that content is just, you know, those facts and figures and they don't matter. So no, I mean, I think that we would need a C-change in order to do the kind of word that we need coming out of ed schools. I don't know that there are the incentives for that to happen, that's why routes around traditional ed schools are so important.

Because they've just been unwilling. I think they could be capable and I think there are certainly great examples of ed schools out there doing good work, but unfortunately they are the minority, the vast minority. And it's one of these problems that could be so easily solved but it would take some political will and it would take telling tenure professors that they have to change the way they do their work.

MS. SNOW: But this is precisely the issue that the Coen and Bott chapter in the *Folks and Children Volume* addresses, right? American education was designed to be incoherent and ungovernable and it is.

MR. HASKINS: That's not helpful, Catherine.

MS. CASSELL: I have a question about teachers who have already earned their degrees and they've already been to school, so how do we build their capacity? How do teachers plan with standards, evaluate curriculum materials, evaluate the materials that are already in their buildings that can be used, how do they prepare students for assessments? There's so much that still has to be learned and there's only 8 hours in a day and 120 minutes the literacy block and 120 minutes in the math block and all these things that teachers have to do. How is it that we prepare the teachers that we have and to build their capacity. So I think that's one of the key points of the Common Core that we really need to address.

MR. PETRILLI: You know, one idea that's floating out there and I'd be curious of what people think is that we should have more departmentalization at the elementary school level. So in other words, even starting in Kindergarten have a reading teacher that teaches half the day and a math teacher that teaches half the day so every teacher only has to specialize in one of those areas. And so if you're the reading teacher you do go deep in your professional development on all those skills and if you're the math teacher which is really where we would struggle to find enough of these kind of math teachers, but to go deep on those skills. And that therefore, each teacher only has to

know half as much. But that might be something we should be looking at.

MS. CASSELL: So on pre-service programs, do we prepare teachers as I'm reading certified in elementary school or I am math certified in elementary school so if do look at something like that, how does that translate into our practices as far as pre-service teachers?

SPEAKER: Right.

MR. HASKINS: Yeah? I was wondering whether you would be willing to share the story you told me about the action that the Boston teacher participated in in the summer workshop about her reaction after 25 years of teaching kids?

MS. SNOW: Yeah, this was a summer workshop for teachers who were entering the program that Cara has talked about, actually -- teaching the Word Generation program. Teachers who did it last year and their students came and talked about the program and one panel of students was particularly impressive in declaring what they had learned. And somebody asked their teacher who had been a very reluctant inductee into this program, well what do you think about it? What have you learned from participating in this program, which is a discussion based literacy program, over the course of the last year with your sixth graders?

And she said, I've been teaching for 25 years and what I learned this year was that I've been seriously underestimating my students for 24 of them. So this is a case where curriculum and support and coaching -- you take the teachers you have. We're not going to replace thousands of teachers in the next -- you know? It's not a matter of producing a whole new core of new teachers. It's a matter of supporting teachers to do what they can do with new and better coaches and curriculum and higher expectations for their students. And they learn that from seeing the students do more and do better. So we have to somehow -- one of the characteristics of the curricula is: are they aligned? But another one of the characteristics is: do they give students the

opportunity to display how well they can do, how deeply they can think.

MS. WORTH: This has been a very interesting morning and thank you very much. I'm Mitzi Worth. I'm with the Naval Postgraduate School which is in Monterey, California. I'm John Dewey educated, my mother was his mentee, and he was my godfather, so that's kind of where I come from. I've been with the Defense Department for the last 35 years and what I'm struck by among all of these adults is their learning process never included process, players, personalities, systems, context, and consequences. So I started thinking about, how do we start writing the narratives for Pre K kids, stories that make it a discovery of how things happen? And what are the things that alter the direction in which things go?

So you can build your curriculum with vocabulary, with your mathematics, and whatever, but you can build it into something that turns out to be real. And the real question is: how did that happen? How did this occur? It's building learning into a journey which is a lifetime travel. And I don't know how many of you saw the Alan Alda video on the flame. Have any of you seen that? Do you know about it?

MR. HASKINS: We need to get to --

MS. WORTH: Now let me just --

MR. HASKINS: Okay, do it quickly, please.

MS. WORTH: When he was 11 years old he asked what a flame was. None of his teachers could do it, he linked up with Stony Brook University in '08, they set a worldwide contest, had 6,000 11 year olds evaluate the suggestions that came in on explaining a flame to 11 year olds. It's very hard to explain complex stuff, but I think there are ways to go about this and explain stuff so all of a sudden it becomes relevant and interesting. Too much of what you hear from kids is school is boring.

MR. HASKINS: Panel?

MR. PETRILLI: I just think we have to be careful about if some false

dichotomies for example, you know, teaching kids -- as you say, how stuff works, content, history, science, does not have to be boring and it doesn't have to be done separate from teaching them to be excited about learning over the long-term. And so I just worry that there's been this debate since John Dewey about sort of, progressive versus traditional and I think it's causes a lot of problems because it's pushed people away from some things that work for kids.

MR. HASKINS: Anybody else on the panel want to -- Okay. Let's have more questions, please.

SPEAKER: Thank you. I'm glad I weathered the storm and made because this has been very helpful. I would like to suggest that even before content we talk about experience. Lucy Sprague Mitchell who founded the Bank Street College of Education still exists in my upper west side of New York, talked about children experiencing things and she counseled people to take children of all ages out into the community and to look and to record and to come back and express about that. And she had them learning not with words and reading yet, but with blocks and art and music and games and the kinds of things that preschools used to feature quite a bit. But now the fear is that less and less of that is happening.

A lot of people are concerned about the absence of play and the opportunity to play outside and play with other children of different ages. So I would like to ask you what to do -- what is missing from all this literacy stuff. If we can't get children enthused and excited about learning, because if you watch children, most of the time they are very eager to learn. What's preventing? What is missing from the process?

MS. SNOW: I'd have to say, I think kids remain eager to learn. I don't see -- until fifth grade. I mean, you walk into fifth grade classrooms there starts to grow a certain fog of boredom and then in sixth grade it has become impenetrable. So it's really in the middle grades that -- first graders all expect to learn how to read and they're pretty

motivated to do it. I don't think it's a problem of early childhood education; I really don't.

MR. HASKINS: Yes, in the back on your left as you're going back, the gentleman second in.

MR. LONG: Thank you. My name's Rich Long. I work with the International Reading Association and I have two questions. It's been really interesting today. First off on your policy point, I advise you to take a look at the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy because that covers from age 0 to grade 12 and gets away from this notion that early reading inoculates you from the effects of poverty. Second, on the Reading First, the assessment looked at comprehension; Reading First spend most of it's resources. In only 70 schools per state, so even at a billion dollars, it didn't go to scale. Now these are my questions. In the assessment side of things you seem to emphasizing a paradigm that emphasizes summative assessments.

It tells us what we've done wrong, not leading indicators of how we can change things so the kids in school now -- why have you gone that way? Question one. Question two is the federal government's been talking about professional development since Sputnik and I think the gentleman from Fordham alluded to that as a happy time for professional development. Given where we are, what we've known, we seem to always shortchange that, how much PD is needed. We have 15 percent of our teachers leave every year, almost all the teachers or the vast majority of teachers in low income schools right now weren't in teacher ed programs in the '90s so they don't know how to teach writing to go with reading and upper grade issues. How much and who's going to speak to that enormous bill we need to pay in order to get to where we want to go with the standards?

MR. HASKINS: Let me just say one thing about assessments and that is -- I don't know about the distinction you're making but I assume that you have Common Core Standards that specify what kids need to know. They're now developing

assessments that are matched to the Common Core Standards and so that is the kind of thing that you're interested in. And that's presumably what teachers are interested in, what parents are interested in, what the public's interested in, so if you have an accurate measure that's what you need.

MR. PETRILLI: But these come at the end of the year, and so what I think he's saying is and it's a valid point is, can we build in some assessments say every six weeks to give you data. So it's not just to slap the teachers on the wrist at the end of the year, you didn't do well enough, but to give you information that you can act upon. You know, the original assessment for the Park Consortium was going to have those kinds of interim assessments and they were going to count. It was an interesting design where they were going to be a part of the actual score. But I think both cost issues and then also some political issues there, they decide to drop that in part because it started to feel too prescriptive.

Suddenly if you're now saying what has to be taught every six weeks, that starts to feel much more like a national curriculum than just a test at the end. So I think the question is I think there's a lot of publishers out there who are going to be very happy to sell school districts interim assessments aligned to the Common Core. And like everything else, the question is where the money is going to come from? And to this last point on professional development, you know, there is still the $13, 14 billon a year going out in Title One. That money can certainly be spent on professional development, but it's usually not.

And it's not because -- most of it continues to be spent on hiring teacher aides who are high school educated and for whom there is virtually no evidence that they are adding value. If anything they are probably a big part of the problem. So today, schools could decide to not hire teacher aides and instead spend a lot of that money on professional development. And the question is, what policies, incentives, training,

whatever is it going to take to get schools to use their resources better including the resources they already have.

MR. HASKINS: Anybody want to add to this?

MS. SNOW: Well, the state of Florida invested a huge amount of money in professional development. They hired literacy coaches for all the schools. The problem is you can't do that suddenly. There weren't enough well prepared literacy coaches to go around. All right. So it's sort of pushing the problem up one level to say, well let's just provide professional development without control over the quality and effectiveness of professional development most of which is no better than teaching.

MR. HASKINS: Yeah, I think there's quite a substantial research literature on professional development and it shows it's mostly a failure. So we need to improve there too. Another question right here in the middle.

SPEAKER: Thank you. My name is Joanna (inaudible) and my background is in Education of English Language Learners. One comment first of all on the programs that were on the list, they do the easy stuff which is the elementary -- the literacy and I really think that if you look at the performance data, middle school is where things start getting really, really bad and that's because they don't think literacy instruction is important. So I really think that's a big message that needs to go out. I also want to piggyback on the conversation about curriculum and professional development. The biggest barrier here is the adults in this whole thing, starting from parents to teachers to coaches to higher ed.

You showed in your statistics the disparity between the low income and the high income. Well the first five years is children spend with parents that may not have the skills needed to teach them all you are teaching your child. So the question is, how can we prioritize, incentivize federal and private funding to address the adults in the literacy question; both parents, teachers, higher ed. How can we do that?

MS. SNOW: I mean I would just say, you're right and the message needs to go out to parents from people who are in a position to influence them that you need to read to your child, you need to interact with your child about all kinds of things, you need to turn off the TV. And you know, you hear President Obama making those kinds of comments and I think that makes a difference. And then I do think that preschool programs can help, especially preschool programs where often the mother is involved in you know, coming to the preschool program or the preschool staff is involved in going to the home so there's more of a connection. I agree, that's very important.

MR. HASKINS: Anybody else want to -- last question. Oh, go ahead.

MR. PETRILLI: Well, I just think that we should be honest that this issue around parents is hugely challenging and I don't think anybody has a good solution. Great book by Nat Laroux to check out about unequal childhoods, just the vast differences in the way that upper middle class parents and working class and low income parents parent. There's some initiatives out there -- I know great schools (inaudible) is doing one of them. There's others that are trying to figure out how to do parent training that might change that paradigm. But it is hugely challenging and it's not just little things like reading. It's really the way that parents interact with their kids on a daily basis.

MR. HASKINS: For example, there is a huge literature in developmental psychology on use of corporal punishment and low income parents are -- it's off the scale more likely to use corporal punishment with the kids, so this is an example of some broad starts early in life and it has impacts on children's involvement. There's literature that shows that. So there are these huge defenses in parenting that if we -- depending on solving those and changing parents of all these families, I think our prospects of being successful are pretty dim. We've been trying it for a long time. Next question? Yeah, on the aisle there. Right there. Right behind you.

SPEAKER: Hello, my name is (inaudible). I'm from Germany and a

psychology major and currently interning with (inaudible) Health Network. And according to the issue with families, you were talking a lot about teachers, their involvement, what they can do, and I was wondering regarding to parents especially fathers -- the father's involvement which is unfortunately very low. If there are any programs, efforts going on or if there -- anything is being done to improve and increase fathers' involvement because there have been studies that have clearly shown that fathers' involvement has a crucial effect on students or children. They enjoy school more, they are more likely to receive mostly "A" grades, are less likely to be expelled or suspended from school. So if there's anything going on --

MR. HASKINS: So the fathers' involvement.

MS. SNOW: Has it been a targetive social policy initiative? I don't think so.

MS. SAWHILL: It is in this White House. No, seriously.

MS. SNOW: Good point.

MS. SAWHILL: I mean, you know a lot about this, Ron.

MR. HASKINS: I couldn't hear what Catherine said, so I don't know anything.

MS. SNOW: I just asked what initiatives around father involvement had been undertaken. I don't know that field.

MR. HASKINS: Yeah, I think there is some work but I think it's minor by comparison with other -- the main father involvement is child support enforcement; that's our main public policy and it's quite a punitive policy. But you know, there are little programs here and there, there are organizations that are forming and have been for some time, father's rights organizations and so forth, but I don't think it's anything like a powerful public movement and most of the public programs don't --

MS. SNOW: There hasn't been a lot of evidence that any of it has

worked particularly well. There have been people that have been very interested in it. But getting fathers to be -- there have been several efforts and several programs, but the evidence on them hasn't been terribly encouraging.

MR. PETRILLI: But I would think if you look at that chart that we looked at earlier and you're looking at the 90th percentile of income and the 10 percent, almost all of those 90 percent are two parent families and almost all of those 10 percent are one parent families.

MS. SNOW: Right.

MR. PETRILLI: And that is the elephant in the room. And again, the initiatives to try to you know, promote marriage have been complete failures as our out of child wedlock rates keep going up particularly for low income kids.

MR. HASKINS: We'll do an event on it and invite you back.

MR. PETRILLI: Great.

MR. HASKINS: Not complete failures I don't think. They haven't been overly successful, that's for sure.

MS. SNOW: Okay.

MR. HASKINS: Some of the projects have produced results, especially working with parents who are already married.

MS. SNOW: I like the way you put it.

MR. HASKINS: All right. One last question. Right here.

SPEAKER: Thank you. I was just wondering if you would talk a little bit about out of school time. Kids spend, you know, anywhere from 15 on up to 20 hours sometimes more, in out of school time programs, some of which are largely focused on literacy and can be a resource to teachers but are not always productive and kids are just kind of doing everything from either running around the school building or -- you know, or any number of things. So --

MR. HASKINS: This is not unrelated to the previous point. So out of school time. What's the --

MS. SNOW: Well, I think you absolutely put your finger on it. It's not whether there's out of school programs, it's what's happening in the programs. Are they good quality, are they a proper mix after a six hour school day of recreation and guided enrichment rather than just being a repetition of what you've been doing for the last six hours. It's quite clear that I think those programs don't work. I mean, a lengthened school day, okay, but not 10 hours of it. And there's pretty good accumulating evidence about summer activities as well to combat the very consistently larger summer learning loss among low income kids than occurs among middle income or higher income kids; summer reading programs and so forth that protect the accomplishments of the school year. But I don't think there's a coherent body of guidance about exactly what to do.

MR. HASKINS: Anybody want to add to this? Okay, please join me in thanking the panel. And thank you so much for braving the weather and coming to Brookings and we'll see you the next time.

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