THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

THE STATE OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT:
RELEASE OF THE 2003 BROWN CENTER
REPORT ON AMERICAN EDUCATION

REPORT PRESENTATION:

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Wednesday, October 22, 2003

[TRANSCRIPT PREPARED FROM A TAPE RECORDING.]

THIS IS AN UNCORRECTED TRANSCRIPT.

P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. LOVELESS: [In progress.] --are in decline. This is the best way that we've come up with for aggregating 49 different states and their test scores to get a national snapshot.

Now, here are the results broken out by grade level. And let me go back just for a second, just to reiterate. The one thing we do see here is that, generally speaking, the math line stays above the reading line. So the state tests are showing something similar to the NAEP data, that kids are doing better in mathematics than they are in reading.

In terms of grade levels, here are the three grade levels that we looked at--Grades 4, 8 and 10 in high school. We don't look at 12 because not many states measure anything in 12. That's NAEP data. But the states do test, a lot of states test in Grade 10.

Here, the data aren't as clear, although in 2002, they did fall out with the fourth graders, making pretty substantial progress, .75 on this index--1.0 would be the highest you can get on this index, and negative 1.0 is the lowest you can get.

Again, all of the lines are staying above the zero line, which means that kids are making gains in their achievement. The younger kids are making greater gains than the older kids.

Now, we wanted to, every year we also like to try to focus in on a particular subgroup. We've done this with racial and ethnic composition in the past.

We've done this by looking at urban schools in the past. This year, we looked at rural schools and wanted to take a closer look at achievement in rural schools.

Let me start by just showing you some basic statistics comparing urban, rural and suburban schools. The percentage of students, you can see rural schools have 27 percent of the students. They have 42 percent of the nation's schools, however--42 percent of the nation's schools--so they are much smaller schools. Here's the mean enrollment of a rural school, 392. You can see urban and suburbans are quite larger.

Rural schools in terms of poverty, this is the percentage of students on free and reduced lunch. You can see that urban schools have more kids in poverty. Rural schools fall somewhere in between suburban and urban schools.

The ethnic mix of rural schools is quite different from both suburban and urban schools. Eighty percent of the kids in rural schools are white. You can see the nonwhite percentages are all in single digits, which is not true for suburban schools and certainly not true for urban schools. So their ethnic racial makeup is quite different.

For people expenditures, you can see the rural schools are the lowest-funded schools in the nation. Urban schools, contrary to conventional wisdom, are the most heavily funded schools in the country. Fifty-three percent of rural schools get their revenue from the State, and I think this is especially important to think about right now because of the state of state budgets.

State budgets are running deficits, and they're having to impose a lot of budget cuts. Rural schools are more dependent on state coffers for their revenue. Both urban and suburban districts are able to tap property wealth to raise their own funds, and so rural schools really are at the mercy of the states more than either urban or suburban schools.

Now, we computed the Z scores, as I mentioned earlier, in each state. So we took, we were able to get data from 14 states that have substantial rural populations, and these had to be states where we could get school-level data, so that we could take and get the test scores for every single school in the state. And, again, you probably won't be able to see this. So I hope you can find this table. It's Table 1-6 in the hard copy.

What we did is here are the number of rural schools in each of these 14 states and the percentage of rural schools overall. We use the Census Bureau categories for rural, urban and suburban. You can see Georgia has half of its schools are rural, Minnesota a little more than half, North Carolina more than half.

Here's the percentage of kids who qualify for free lunch, free and reduced lunch in the rural schools, and here's the respective state averages. So you can see if rural schools are particular pockets of poverty or not in each of the states.

Here's the percentage of nonwhite kids in the rural schools in these states. And, again, here's the state average right next to it so you can compare it. You can see that in some of the states, like in Michigan, the schools in the rural areas have a much lower percentage of nonwhite populations than the schools as a whole in the State of Michigan.

And then, finally, here are the last test scores that we could get. We just simply took the average of the Z scores for the rural schools in the state. So this is some idea of how the rural schools scored in the 2002 test data. You can see that three states--Arizona, Minnesota, and South Carolina--have negative signs. The score in Minnesota, this is indistinguishable from zero, the negative .07. The other two are statistically

significant, but if you recall, a Z score of negative .20 is not anything to make a great deal about, in terms of the real world.

But, generally speaking, if you look down this column, you see a lot of positive signs. Rural students, as a whole, score above average in their respective states. Now, some of it has to do with these poverty and race variables. We know that high-poverty schools and high nonwhite- percentage schools are more likely to have low test scores than schools with a different demographic profile.

And if you pull out those two states with significant negatives, Arizona and South Carolina, you'll see that in both cases they have either the poverty number, in the case of South Carolina, and the percentage of nonwhite are both greater than the state average. So, in South Carolina, the rural schools are pockets of poverty compared to other schools in the state, compared to the typical school, and in Arizona you have a larger preponderance of nonwhite children in rural settings.

Now, we also looked at NAEP data and broke out rural, suburban and urban schools and found basically the same thing, especially again in the younger grades. There was an interesting trend in there, and I talk more about it in the report. I won't be able to talk too much about it today, but rural schools in the earliest grades, like in fourth grade in NAEP, scored pretty well. By the time they get to 12th grade, the rural kids look about like urban kids in terms of their NAEP scores. So their relative scores, when you compare to the urban and suburban, the rural kids begin to tail off in high school. There appears to be something in rural high schools that might be a problem.

Here's another indication that there might be a problem. I took a look at some studies in the 1990s. There were some transcript studies done. Here are the

percentage of kids who graduate from high school in rural, suburban and urban districts. You can see rural schools lead the nation in producing high school graduates--about 95 percent.

But on the percent of kids who apply to college, rural schools lag. Here are the percentages of students who apply to college. Only 54 percent of rural students apply to college. One of the scholars, we have an advisory board who--this report is peer reviewed by a board of five scholars around the country.

One of them is Barbara Schneider at the University of Chicago. She just wrote a book on adolescents. And she and I had a long phone conversation, and she was saying, you know, we found the same thing, and it's very interesting that very often with rural students, they don't want to leave their, first of all, they don't want to leave their communities sometimes. The other thing is a lot of rural students may believe that community college is going to essentially give them whatever, you know, Yale and Harvard can give them.

So I think one thing that this study points out is that it looks to me like we're getting a loss of potential here. We're losing kids from rural schools in that very critical transition from 12th grade into college. Based on test data, you'd expect far more rural students to be applying to college than actually do.

That wraps up Section I of the report. Section II now I'll just give you two quick slides.

Here were the study conclusions. I don't know if you read the press coverage of the homework study or not, but basically what we found, we examined numerous surveys over the last 20 years, surveys of kids, surveys of parents. We found the following:

The typical student, even in high school, does not spend more than an hour per day on homework, and this was particularly surprising, given the popular press accounts. There have been a whole bunch of popular press accounts--Newsweek, Time, People magazine--a lot of coverage of typically a third or fourth grader coming home from school and having three or four hours of homework, being absolutely overburdened. And the suggestion in these popular press accounts was that it had something to do with standards, and testing, and that teachers were really loading up the homework on kids.

We could find no evidence of that, in terms of social science, to support that popular press story. The homework load, our second finding, we have data in NAEP back to 1980, the homework load has not changed much since the 1980s. What you find is the homework load is very stable, and that's true across all ages, the youngest children, middle-age children--middle-age children--

[Laughter.]

MR. LOVELESS: --middle grade children. Some of them might be middle aged, but--

[Laughter.]

MR. LOVELESS: --the middle grade children and high school kids. The homework loads look very stable since the 1980s.

Now, I had a co-presenter when I presented these findings, Brian Gill at RAND. Brian and I had been serving time on a commission studying school choice. And we were talking one day at a break, and Brian said, "What are you doing?"

And I said, "Oh, I'm doing this homework thing. It's just really kind of interesting."

And Brian said, "I'm doing a homework thing," you know. So we began talking.

Brian looked back to 1950, in terms of data on homework. He arrived at the same conclusion. Kids are not overworked, and they never have been overworked. He found one little blip in homework right after Sputnik, where the percentage of kids in high school who had more than two hours of homework a night went from like 10 percent up to maybe 20 percent, and that was it. It fell back by the late '60s, and it never recovered again. So the homework data looked very stable over time.

The third finding we found is that students whose homework has increased in the last decade, and there is a little movement at the bottom from zero homework to a few minutes of homework, are those who previously had no homework and now have a small amount. So there has been a movement at the bottom of a little bit of homework. There are fewer kids who have absolutely no homework, but it's nothing to speak about.

Most parents, we found one poll of parents conducted by the Public Agenda Foundation because the other part of this popular press account is that, you know, parents are on the warpath, they're ready to take down the school, their children are being overworked. We couldn't find that in the polling data. Most parents in the public agenda poll felt, two-thirds of the parents said the homework was just about right, 25 percent said my child doesn't have enough homework, and 10 percent said my child has too much homework. So only 1 out of 10 parents in that poll thought that there was too much homework. Those were the findings.

In terms of recommendations, and I had to draw on my own experiences here as a teacher somewhat. We don't have really good empirical data to recommend

various levels of homework, but my first recommendation was just take the anti-homework articles with the a grain of salt, especially if they're built on anecdote.

The second one is follow the PTA guidelines on homework. Just as a rough benchmark, this is based on the work of Harris Cooper, who is the nation's leading authority on homework, and he recommends, roughly speaking, 10 minutes per night per grade level.

If you have a third grader, 3 times 10 is 30, expect about 30 minutes per night; a sixth grader, 60 minutes a night; a ninth grader, 90 minutes a night; and a senior in high school, 120 minutes a night.

Now, one important thing to point out is that less than 10 percent of seniors in high school are getting 120 minutes per night. One of the pieces of data that we have in our report, 15 years' worth of surveys conducted by UCLA, great data source. What they do is they survey freshmen in college. So you already have a very select sample. You've removed high school dropouts in the sample, you've removed kids who go into work right out of high school, you've removed kids who go into the military, you've removed kids who go to community colleges. These are all kids in four-year, degree-granting colleges, and UCLA has been asking them for 15 years, how much homework did you have when you were a senior in high school? And over 60 percent of them say they had less than five hours a week--per week, five hours a week.

So I think one concern that this study raises is are those kids, if you ask a college professor if that's adequate preparation for the workload of college, I think you're going to get the answer that it is not.

And then, finally, our last recommendation, the last two, understand that homework varies. Some of the phone calls that I got from parents, even within the same

family, you may have kids who just approach homework completely differently, kids have different study skills. Some kids get down to work, some don't. Some know how to complete a task quickly, others don't, et cetera.

So homework varies by the individual, and because of that the fourth recommendation flows from that. If a homework problem exists, solutions should come from parents and teachers, not policy interventions. So the idea of banning homework is ridiculous. In the early 20th century, California--why is it always California?

[Laughter.]

MR. LOVELESS: I'm a Californian. But California banned homework. The state legislature banned homework up to age 15--said it was a form of child abuse. So I think that's unwise. Let's not go back to that.

All right. Let's turn to charter schools, final section of the report. The first question that we asked is just how are charter schools doing? And we've been asking this question now for two years. We began this study last year. Last year, we found that charter schools were performing below average. These are Z scores. We looked at schools where charters had scores for three years--2000, 2001, 2002. These are fairly well-established charters. We drew on a sample of 10 states. These are the 10 states that have had charters the longest, so they have substantial numbers.

And you can see they performed below average in 2000, 2001 and 2002. This Z score here of negative .31 is statistically significant, not a huge deficit, but it's something to look at. The gain, however, over this period, you can see that the charter schools are making progress.

Now, we did not find this last year. Our sample last year, our sample keeps growing every year. You'll notice our N is 569 charters because more and more

charters come on line where they have three years of test data, and they can get into our sample. Last year we found insignificant change from zero. This year we found a significant gain in terms of the charters. So these charters are making improvement.

Here are the 10 states. As you know, in No Child Left Behind, No Child Left Behind has various sanctions that are imposed on schools. And one of the things that happens under No Child Left Behind is that states have to compile what are called failing schools lists, although they give them more sanguine names than failing schools, but we're going to call them, just for sake of simplicity, failing schools lists.

Here are the number of failing charter schools in our study. Here are our 10 states. Here are the number of schools in our study total. Remember, the N was 569. Here's the number of those charters on the failing schools list, 140. About 25 percent, roughly, of the schools, of the charters are on the failing schools list.

Now, that's not too surprising if you think about it. Remember, those schools are scoring below average in terms of level. Think of two things about test scores: There's level. They're scoring below average. And there's also gain. They're making good gains. So one story is negative; the other one is positive, right?

And both of those things go into what No Child Left Behind calls making adequate yearly progress. You're going to start hearing a lot about AYP, adequate yearly progress. What that means is you take a baseline score of a school. Let's say a school scores--the goal that you want to get to by 2014 is 100 percent of the kids at every school meeting minimum levels of proficiency, being proficient in math and reading, okay? One hundred percent is your goal.

Now, if your current baseline level is 20 percent, you have 80 percent of the ground to make up, and then that 80 percent is divided by the number of years left,

11 years or whatever, and that's what your adequate yearly progress is. Now, the states are playing some games with this, and some of them are saying, well, you shouldn't have to make schools get 8 percent every year. Maybe they'll get 3 percent every year, and then the last two years they'll get 50 percent. So they're sort of deferring doomsday for those schools in those states.

But, nevertheless, each state has some latitude to define adequate yearly progress. But if you're a school that has 90 percent of your kids at proficiency already, you only have 10 percent to make over the next 13 years, so your adequate yearly progress number for every year is very small, but the school that has a very low level of performance today has a higher threshold to meet. Does that make sense?

So both level and gain go into computing adequate yearly progress. You can see the percentage of charters, 25 percent, is more than the percentage of regular public schools or, excuse me, all public schools in the state. So charters are overrepresented on failing schools lists.

We ran these numbers with the previous, this was as of July 2003, we ran these same numbers last summer, and we got about 18 percent of the charters were on failing schools lists and 12 percent of the public schools were on failing schools lists. Now, two things about that:

The percentage of schools overall on these failing schools lists are growing, and it's going to grow again this year because No Child Left Behind is just starting to get implemented, and the rubber is starting to hit the road.

The second thing is the gap between charter schools and regular public schools is narrowing, and you would expect that, too, given the gains that I just showed

you in the previous slide--that slide right there, which I didn't mean to show you again. Let's go ahead.

Now, as I mentioned, we wanted to look at two forms of expertise in charter schools. The first one involves conversion charters. A conversion charter is a school that was once a public school, then it petitions its school board, and it converts to a charter school. So we wanted to take a look.

This is a peculiar form of charter school. California has a bunch of them. It has enough of them where we can study them. So we wanted to take a look at their test scores, and we just focused this part of the study on the State of California because we had 66 conversion charters in our sample and 66 start-up charters, exactly equal groups. Here are the California regular public schools. Let's look at their characteristics.

You can see the conversion charters are much larger than start-ups. Start-ups are like mom and pop charters is another word for them. People get together, want to start a school, they get some money. Conversion charters are these regular neighborhood public schools that convert to charter school status. So they're bigger schools.

They also serve more children in poverty. Fifty-eight percent of the kids are in poverty compared to forty-nine percent you see in the regular public schools. They serve a larger proportion of African Americans. You can see 19 percent in the conversion versus 8 percent in the regular public schools, also more than the start-ups.

And you can see that they're more likely to be urban. Over half of the conversion charters are in urban areas, as opposed to 40 percent of the start-ups and 34 percent of the regular public schools. So they serve a demographic profile that is

normally correlated with lower test scores, in terms of being urban, more African American and more likely to serve poor children.

Here are their test score data. Now, we adjusted these data for race and poverty so that when we're talking about conversions, we're comparing them to other schools with similar demographic profiles to make it an even playing field. Here are the scores, basically. Now, by definition, the state average is zero so those are all zeroes, and there's nothing really to report here that stands out in terms of all charters in the State of California, slightly below average. They lag the state slightly.

And then when you break out the conversion charters and the start-ups, that's this group right here, be composed into two groups. You can see the conversion charters have a positive Z score, and it's pretty consistent all the way across. These are schools that are doing a decent job, given the fact that they serve, for instance, a proportion of students, a high proportion of students from poor families, and the start-up charters have a negative score. So there's quite a difference between the conversions. They're doing a better job, in terms of their overall clientele, than the start-up charters. In terms of gains, all of the groups look the same.

Now, let me simplify things and show me the unadjusted data. These are all adjusted for race and poverty. These are not. And these are expressed in just, this is the SAT-9, which is the test that California gives, these are just percentile rankings, and you can see what I'm talking about here a little better.

Here are the percentile rankings of all public schools in California, the forty-ninth percentile in 2000. We just averaged math and reading for each school. They got up over the 50th percentile in 2001, 52.7 in 2002. So California schools, as a

whole, have made very good gains--3.5 percentile points, which for a state like that is really a large gain.

The charters have kept pace too. In fact, there's no significant difference again of any of these groups, but now we get a better idea of how they're actually scoring. The two charter schools, conversions and start-ups, score about the same, at about the fiftieth percentile, and they've scored about the same all the way through, right around the fiftieth percentile.

Now, the reason why, when you adjust them for racial composition and poverty, the conversions suddenly look better is because they have more poor kids, and they also have more African-American kids. And so their scores, the fact that they're scoring at the fiftieth percentile, when you make those adjustments, it gives them a boost. The start-up charters, on the other hand, serve a more affluent clientele, and they have fewer nonwhite children.

So, when you make adjustments for racial composition and poverty, these start-up charters now are competing with schools in wealthier neighborhoods, and their schools look lower. I hope that makes sense. That's one of the problems with doing these adjustments.

There's a statistician in California, David Rogosa, who's been writing on this, and he has cautioned people, especially when they would look at charter schools, he said, you know, when you start adjusting these data for race and poverty, you have to be very careful because you can get misleading results.

One thing that we're doing now in our work is always running raw numbers and then seeing if it makes sense or if we can explain what's going on there. So that's why I'm showing you that.

The second part of our study involves EMOs. EMOs are Educational Management Organizations. They are such companies as Beacon Academies, Edison Schools. These are usually for-profit companies that come in and manage charter schools. They do all of the hiring and firing, they put together the curriculum they have to do with the instruction. They run the schools.

So what we did is we were able to find 90 EMOs in our sample. Our sample of 569 charters, 90 of those schools are managed by EMOs, Educational Management Organizations. That leaves the other 479 as non-EMO schools, and then we take a look at their Z scores and compare them. Oh, and one caveat. The State of Michigan dominates the EMO landscape. Of these 90 schools, 62 of them are in the State of Michigan. So the State of Michigan is very important in terms of EMOs.

In the analysis I'm going to show you, we ran it separately for the 28 and compared it to the 62 from Michigan to make sure that they looked the same. The results still look the same in both groups. So anything I'm telling you is not being unduly influenced by Michigan, but Michigan is very important, and you should note that.

Now, let's take a look at EMOs. They're more likely to serve kids in poverty. And you see over half the kids qualify for free lunch. Here are the same figures for non-EMOs and regular public schools. You can see we have 25,600 regular public schools in these 10 states. Here's the percentage of white kids. African Americans more likely to be in the EMO-managed schools, especially compared to non-EMO and especially compared to regular public schools. Not true of Hispanics, not true of Latinos, and that's partly because of the geography of EMOs.

You don't find very many EMO-managed schools in California, Texas or Florida, and those are our three big Latino states in our study. So that's why the Hispanic number is as low as it is.

They're more likely to be in urban schools when you compare them to regular public schools, but not so in comparison to the non-EMO-managed schools, and let's look at their achievement. And this, I have to say, surprised me because the news on EMOs is very good. These schools are making tremendous gains. You can see the gain here, .41 Z scores, forty-one hundredths of a Z score. The non-EMO charters are making gains as well, but these two statistics are quite statistically different in terms of significance.

The non-EMO charters, take a look at their numbers and what happens each year. They start a full standard deviation below zero, and, remember, that was like the seventh percentile, right, or sixteenth percentile. That's a very low test score. And what's happening there is these EMOs are coming in and managing schools that are in pretty tough situations. So these are charter schools that are being formed in neighborhoods to serve children who don't do very well in school, and these kids are coming in, and they're scoring very low. But in terms of 2000, 2001, and 2002 test data, we see steady progress from the EMOs from negative 1 to negative .69, to negative .58, in terms of gains overall.

Now, we took these data, and I told you we ran the raw numbers, so I'm not going to show that to you. We could only run them in Michigan because all of the states have their own tests, and we found basically the same thing. The EMOs are lagging--take a look--the EMOs lagged, they score below, right here, they score below average, negative .58, but they're making gains. That's the story on EMOs. They're

making significant gains, but they've really cut the deficit down significantly over the last three years.

Let me sum up now the entire report. I think these are the headlines. The reporters never listen to me. They make up their own. But anyway, here are my headlines.

The first one, national achievement is rising, but at a slower pace than recently; gains in math exceed those in reading; younger students are showing more improvement than older students.

The second point, test scores indicate that rural schools are doing better than the average school. Despite this fact, rural students are applying to college at a lower rate when compared to urban and suburban students.

The third point, students are not overburdened with homework, and the homework load has not changed much in the last 20 years. Most parents are satisfied with the current level of homework.

And then, finally, expertise may contribute to a charter school's academic achievement. In California, conversion charters perform as well as start-up charters, despite serving a greater proportion of urban poor and nonwhite students. Nationally, charters managed by EMOs have made significantly greater gains than non-EMO charter schools.

And I'll just say that I start out on the EMO study by saying I was surprised. I'm just very skeptical of management making a big difference in terms of achievement. These data are an eye-opener. I think we need to be looking into charter schools more. This is not, by any means, a conclusive study, but we need to take charter

schools as a whole and start studying them for what we can learn about what works generally overall.

And with that we can turn up the lights and take your questions and talk.

Yes?

QUESTION: I'm Michael Cardman with Education Daily, by the way.

Regarding your conclusions about EMOs and the fact that they're making larger gains despite lagging other charter schools, is it possible that the fact that they started lower could lead to the fact that they're making greater gains, rather than any difference in management? You see this in AYP, too, that when you're at the bottom, it's easier to raise those kids than the ones--the last laggers are a little bit harder to bring along.

MR. LOVELESS: That's a good point. That's called a floor effect, right? Because if you're so low, if you're at the first percentile, you can't go any lower. You're only going to go up. So that's a very good point, and you do tend to see this regression to the mean is another word for it.

However, I think this gain exceeds--I'm not a methodologist. There are ways of calculating how much floor effect is going on there. I don't know how to do it. I'm not skilled enough. But I do know that it never would take away that number, that gain. It's just too big. So, yes, some of it could be explained by floor effect. It'll take someone far more adept at statistics than I to explain it, but it won't be as large as that gain.

QUESTION: [Off microphone.] Do you have any theories about why EMOs [inaudible]?

MR. LOVELESS: I don't. I don't. I just think it requires more study. It also could be some sort of Hawthorne effect, where these EMOs are coming in, sort of declaring a "new day," and that that has an effect on test scores just alone, regardless of what you do. That's another possibility.

Now, one way we could sort of test this as to whether or not it's the EMO or some other thing is maybe we could look at regular public schools that have a similar kind of "new day" and see if we get a bounce in scores. That would be an interesting comparison.

Questions? Yes?

QUESTION: Hi. My name is Jennifer Reynolds with the Education Trust, and I'm wondering you talk about the achievement gains nationally and also that homework has remained steady for sort of all groups. And I'm wondering, when you begin to look at the subgroups, are you seeing achievement gains for all subgroups say among whites, black students, Latino students, Native American students, poor students?

And, similarly, homework, do you see a similar pattern for homework for all subgroups as well, too? That's sort of one thing that the study didn't touch on, both of those kind of race-class issues in both of those categories.

MR. LOVELESS: In terms of your first question, achievement gains over the last decade, when you break them out by race, and you can do that with NAEP data. It's not as easy to do with state data because not many states have been disaggregating their data. They're just getting started with that.

In terms of NAEP data, over the last three decades, there was a steady narrowing of the race gap between blacks and whites. I'll just address that particular gap because it's the one we know the most about. Until about 1988, there was a steady

narrowing. That gap was cut roughly in half. It was due primarily to rising scores of African-American students from the early '70s up until the late '80s. The scores of white students stayed relatively stable. Since then, that gap has begun expanding again.

And we've done a lot of different work on this and asked this question. Last year, we did a study of computation skills, for instance, in math, and we found that the race gap, in terms of computation skills, white scores are remaining flat or declining, and African-American--and this is just looking at the 1990s until now--African-American scores are declining significantly in terms of arithmetic and basic computation and mathematics. So I think there are a lot of things to look at there.

The second part of your question I forgot.

QUESTION: The homework.

MR. LOVELESS: The homework, yes. Right.

Stephan and Abigail Thernstrom have a book coming out called "No Excuses." I've read the galleys of that book. They have a chapter, "Looking at Homework and Racial Differences." I did not conduct a study, but it's interesting. The homework load reported by students among white students, Latino students and African-American students is basically the same. There are no major differences. The one racial group that has a major difference in homework are Asians. They do a lot more homework than either whites, African Americans or Latinos.

Now, generally, overall, the homework research is correlated with high test scores, with high achievement, that a higher homework load is associated with higher achievement. It's very tough to untangle and really make a causal claim there, but it is correlated with higher achievement, but that's only true at the middle school grades and the high school grades. At the elementary grade, it's a zero effect.

Other questions?

QUESTION: Barbara Fraumeni, Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Taking you into a little bit different area. People will often say, if we only have more money to spend on schools, then achievement will increase. How do you view, for example, if you increased expenditures by 10 percent, what do you think that might buy? However you measure it using a NAEP score or any other sort of measure of achievement.

MR. LOVELESS: I have no idea. In general, I think the effect would be zero. It depends on how you spend the money, and do we know a whole lot about how you should spend the money? No, we really don't know a whole lot about how you should spend the money. Probably if there is a way of crafting a strategy of luring very high-caliber people into teaching, and then if you could assign those teachers and attract them into low-achieving schools, that would be probably a good strategy, but to be frank, we don't have good empirical dates on which to argue that.

And since I'm speaking to an economist, I'm being very careful of my words.

[Laughter.]

MR. LOVELESS: Yes?

QUESTION: Hi. My name is Amy Hightower from the American Federation of Teachers.

I just wanted to ask you a couple of questions regarding the Table 3.2, the one with "failing schools." I found your statistic interesting in the difference between something like 25 percent of charter schools being characterized as not having met AYP

versus something like 21 percent of all public schools not having met that. Yet your data seemed to me to be premature.

The data are based on I think August 2003, and at that point, maybe roughly half of the states have come out with these lists, and even those that had come out with lists, the vast majority of those were preliminary. And if you look at, for example, Minnesota, which released a preliminary and then a final list, something like 250 schools came off of the list during that 30-day review period and so forth.

So I'm just curious, has there been any relook at those comparisons, statistics since some of the data have now come out across most of the states at this point? And I think a majority of those are final.

MR. LOVELESS: That's a very good point. First of all, let me just explain that we only looked at the 10 states in our sample. So what the other 40 states are doing is really kind of irrelevant to this chart, right? So these are the 10 states that we have in our charter school sample. The other 40 states we don't look at.

But your point about the failing schools list is a very good one. These failing schools lists are a moving target. Pennsylvania has done all kinds, they have an appeals process. So, when they released these numbers in July, and let me explain something, we have a production schedule, so July is about as late as we can get, right? So we have to use some kind of number. And if we waited for the states to come up with their final numbers, we would never issue a report because they're really never done. They're always moving. It's a moving target. So, yes, you should consider this a snapshot in time, July 2003.

But let me say something else. I doubt, your point is quite correct, but in order for that to disrupt these results, there'd have to be some systematic difference

between charters and noncharters and who's getting removed from the failing list. So, if there's a difference, and that's a good point--there could be. I don't know why there would be. But if, for some reason, charters would be more likely to be removed from the list than a regular public school or vice versa, then it would alter these findings. You're quite right. But, again, I don't have a theory why that would be so.

I do have a theory that what the states are doing is they release the lists, they get complaints. They never add schools to the failing schools list. They take them off. They're all declining since July 2003. And so my guess is they're shrinking probably equally, but we could look at that and see.

Other questions? Yes?

QUESTION: Bruce MacLaury, Brookings.

Tom, a question about the larger gains for the younger kids. Can you speculate as to why that should be the case and, depending upon why it's the case, whether this is an elephant moving through the snake and that we will see larger gains and higher grades in the future because something systematic has happened or whether this is going to continue to be the case year after year.

MR. LOVELESS: That's a great question.

Let's go back. I'm going to answer the second part first about the snake.

If you look at the--let's look at the math. The fourth graders here from 1990 to 1996, they had an 11 scale score point gain in six years. That's almost a year's worth of knowledge in six years if you converted that to a grade level equivalent.

Now, these fourth graders, in 1996, are in the 12th grade now today, and we're not seeing a year's worth of gains among those older kids. So it does suggest there's some dissipation of the gain going on. The gain is actually getting lost, a good

chunk of it. It's not an egg moving through a snake. It's an egg that's getting digested maybe as it goes through the snake, but it's pretty small by the end. So it suggests there's some dissipation of the gains, but we still are seeing some of that gain, but not as much as we see with the younger kids.

To speculate as to why it is, my own thoughts on this go to adolescent culture. I think there is something about culture, the culture of teenagers and adolescents in the United States that's making it very hard to impress achievement gains on that age group.

We've done other things in the Brown Center Report in the past. I think the most revealing study that we've done on this was surveying students from abroad who had attended--these are foreign exchange students who attended U.S. high schools for a year, and we asked them a series of questions to compare their friends in the U.S. to their friends back home and what they thought about school. One question was so revealing: How important is it to succeed in sports for your American friends? The results were sky high. Very important.

How about back in your home country? Pretty important, but not terribly important.

Then, we asked: How important is it for your friends to succeed in mathematics?

In the United States, it was absolutely abysmal. Unimportant, but back home, sky high, above sports.

So there are various things like that. By the way, we replicated that study by surveying American students who had spent a year abroad, too, asked them the same

sets of questions--think about your American peers, think about your peers in this new country you've spent a year in, got the exact same results.

So the valuing of academic achievement I think is the next tough nut to crack. It's not necessarily school reform. I disagree with those who think by making smaller high schools and by making smaller classes you're going to get a big effect. I don't see empirical evidence of that yet.

I think it's going to be harder than that. I think it's going to involve actually a cultural change. But you know something? We shouldn't be hopeless. That's not hopeless. There are two things I can think of, smoking and wearing seat belts, where 30 years ago attitudes have completely changed, completely changed, so it can be done, but it takes something more than just rearranging schools and rearranging personnel. It's going to be real hard.

Yes?

QUESTION: Susan Phillips from Connect for Kids.

I was wondering if you had any policy recommendations for getting more rural high school graduates interested in applying and going on to four-year colleges, especially in light of the news that the tuition hikes in the state schools have really been steep recently. What could be done?

MR. LOVELESS: I think some possibilities are we can look at things like web-based learning. Maybe somehow, with the Internet, we can get kids connected in rural areas to the reality of what a four-year college is all about and how it would be desirable for them to go there.

A second thing is to look at counseling in high schools in rural areas and make sure that kids are being informed as to their opportunities in other places.

Now, I told you I come from California. I come from Sacramento, and the University of California at Davis is like 17 miles away. But outside of Davis, kids in Sacramento really don't think about going like to the East Coast to go to college, not many of them. They really don't. You run into an awful lot of kids that go, "Look, it's warm here. We visited the schools back East. It was snowing. It's freezing. I can't surf, blah, blah, blah, and who wants to go there?"

Having lived on the East Coast now for 18 years, they have a point, but--

[Laughter.]

MR. LOVELESS: So you have to expand kids' worlds, I guess, is the bottom line here, and counseling I think has a role to play with that as well. Outside of that, I don't know. There are much better experts than I on rural education who probably have better ideas.

Other questions?

Yes, in the back.

QUESTION: My name is Mary Mullen. What countries, when you're talking about exchange with foreign schools, what part of the world are you talking about? Because there are different parts of the world that would have different, that would warrant different requirements, would respect different types of achievement and so forth.

And the second question I wanted to ask was I know a woman down here asked about the money and how much money a school had, how wealthy a school is. Is it in the schools with poverty, is it that they have less achievement because of money and the wealthier schools have higher achievement because of money? I don't think I heard your answer on that.

MR. LOVELESS: We didn't--in none of the studies that I presented today did we control for the amount of revenue going into the school. We controlled for the students' background in terms of poverty. So that's really quite different.

In Washington, D.C., for instance, a huge proportion of the children come from poor families, but Washington, D.C., schools, on a per pupil basis, receive above the national average in terms of revenue. But we did not conduct any kind of controls for revenue so I just have nothing to say about that.

The first part of your question, going back now to the world, most of the students in our sample--this, again, we're talking about a study we conducted three years ago or two years ago--they were from Asia and European countries. So that was the main comparison.

But one of the variables, by the way, too, and this has been demonstrated in some other research, is a critical variable, I think--and this is the high school question, so it gets back to Bruce MacLaury's questions--the United States is an outlier in terms of the number of kids who work part-time. We are absolutely unique in the world.

There is no other country in the world that has over half of its high school seniors--these are the kids in their final year of preparation for college--and over half of our seniors work part-time. Many of them work part-time during the school week, and they spend, on the homework study, we presented some data showing the kids who work, they're much more likely, half of them work over 15 hours a week. Only 6 percent of them do homework 15 hours a week.

So we are quite unique in the world in terms of kids working for a wage. If you go to a European or Asian country, again, this is a cultural thing and ask, "Does

your kid have a job," they'd say, "Yeah, they go to school. That's the kid's job." And in the United States, we have a different answer to that question.

So the Clinton administration appointed a commission on the senior year in high school, and they called it, it was like, remember, the Commissioner Minnow's comment about television in the early '60s, a "vast wasteland" was the way he described television. He was the chair of the SEC, and that's basically what the Clinton Commission on the Senior Year in High School found in terms of the senior year in high school.

Too many kids get out early, they have study halls during the day, they work part-time, and so the academic engagement of our teens is quite different than it is around the world.

Yes?

QUESTION: [Inaudible] public schools, private or public schools in these other countries?

MR. LOVELESS: The numbers are not as different as you might think between public and private schools in the United States. In the other countries, they were public schools.

QUESTION: Because I've taught in other countries, and there is a difference between public and private schools as to what their goals are, what they think is important and how they would achieve because of parental pressure and background.

MR. LOVELESS: Yes.

Other questions? Yes?

QUESTION: I wanted to come back to the EMO analysis and, like you, I think the results are really interesting there, but I'm wondering, since 62 of the 90

schools there are from Michigan, how-- should one take sort of like those results with a grain of salt?

MR. LOVELESS: I would take them with a grain of salt. Again, we did--I would take them with a grain of salt anyway because it's just a fly-over in looking at these schools. Much more needs to be known, but it's the first time anyone has done the fly-over, and you have to do that first. I mean, that's the way I approach these things.

We did pull out the 28, looked at them. They looked the same as the 62 in terms of their gains. There was no like, it wasn't like the 62 in Michigan were making huge gains, and the other 28 were lagging. They looked basically the same.

When we ran tests, the 62, the fact of being in Michigan was not skewing the data. But we'd need a bigger sample, and we'd need more--yeah, definitely.

Other questions?

[No response.]

MR. LOVELESS: Well, thank you all for coming, and I hope you come back next year.

One more thing, too, in--what is it, three weeks?--we are releasing, we have a National Commission on School Choice that's been studying charters, and vouchers and other forms of choice, and we're releasing our report, after three years of work, in a couple of weeks here at Brookings. So look for that, and I hope you all come back--

MR. : November 17th.

MR. LOVELESS: November 17th, and I'll come back next year for the Fifth Brown Center Report. So thanks.

[End of Recorded Segment.]