

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

AMERICANS' CONSUMPTION OF EDUCATION NEWS

Washington, D.C.
Tuesday, March 29, 2011

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PROCEEDINGS

MR. WEST: Good afternoon. I think we will get going. I am Darrell West, Vice President of Governance Studies and Director of the Center for Technology Innovation at the Brookings Institution and I would like to welcome you to this forum on Education News.

Like many aspects of the media in general, education journalism has experienced a gut-wrenching transformation in terms of business models, organizational structures and news delivery. The old business models have collapsed and new ones are still in the process of being formed. The result is a media ecosystem that is going through important changes.

For the past two years Russ Whitehurst, E.J. Dionne and I have been studying media coverage of education. We have put out two earlier papers. The one looked at what news outlets cover in content and in analysis undertaken with the Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism we found that there was little national coverage of education. During the first nine months of 2009, the content analysis revealed that only 1.4 percent of national news coverage from television, newspapers, internet websites and radio dealt with education. And of the education news that was reported, little related to school policies and ways to improve the curriculum or learning processes. There was very little coverage of

school reform, teacher quality or other matters thought to be crucial for educational attainment.

In a follow-up paper we reported on interviews we conducted with a number of education and media leaders about how major news organizations are reimagining their futures and reinventing themselves for the digital world. We examined the development of niche publications, new aggregators, social media and new content providers and the emergence of alternative business models for funding news organizations and we argued that education journalism is transforming itself into a new digital form that looks and behaves differently than the traditional news media.

Today we're releasing the third and final part of that series. It presents the results of a national public-opinion survey that we commissioned looking at where Americans get education news and where they would like to get it in the future. Our goal was to examine how changes in journalism have affected consumption patterns. The paper in the appendix presents the details on the survey methodology so I'll refer you to that for greater information, but the survey was undertaken in December 2010. We interviewed 1,211 adults aged 18 years or older. It included an oversample of parents so that we could compare the views of parents versus nonparents. We asked a series of questions about where people get education news, how they assess different sources and what they would like to see in the future in terms of education reporting and school communications. The survey had a margin of effort of about plus or minus 3-1/2 percentage points. We also looked a number of

demographic characteristics to study the impact of age, race, income, gender, region and parental status.

In this survey we found a number of interesting findings. One of our most important results is that Americans say they want more media coverage of their local schools. Thirty-nine percent said they received too little information about their elementary and secondary schools. When we asked them what topics they would like to receive greater coverage from reporters, they said they wanted information about teacher performance, student academic achievement, crime, violence, curriculum, finance and reform efforts. When we looked at these responses I thought they were very noteworthy in the sense that by and large people were telling us they wanted to hear more about the substance of what goes on in schools, the nitty-gritty of the education process. There is a kind of myth in some circles that people don't want to read policy stories, that people instead prefer to react to scandals, politics or personalities. In our survey results we found that people indicated they were very interested in the substance of education and wanted to see journalists devote more attention to various aspects of that.

We asked how they receive education information and while there is a great deal of interest in information received through new technologies, we found that Americans continue to rely on the traditional media particularly newspapers for information about schools. The survey asked respondents where they received information about education and the most common sources of education news were friends and family, daily newspapers, school publications

and local television so we thought that was interesting. Of course there are interesting age differentials in these patterns of new consumption in the expected direction. Young people were much more likely than older folks to rely on a range of internet and electronic sources such as blogs and social media.

In addition to asking where people get the news, we asked about source credibility. What are the most highly regarded sources of education news? Again we found family and friends were rated most positively by people and this was followed by school publications, daily newspapers and local television. But again the age differentials popped up. Young people were more likely to have positive assessments of various electronic outlets such as school Facebook sites, internet news sites and blogs among other things.

The last set of findings that we report in the paper ask about ways to improve news coverage of education. We gave them a list of various suggestions that have been made in various circles for ways to improve the information they receive about education and we found that the most popular suggestion was that schools should communicate more through printed newsletters, that people wanted to receive more school information through the internet and that people wanted more email communications from schools and more blogs and forums from newspapers. The paper goes into greater detail on these particular findings, but we thought they were interesting and provocative in different sorts of ways.

To help us understand the significance of these findings as well as other observations that people have about the news and education, we have

brought together a distinguished set of speakers, some from inside Brookings and some from outside Brookings. My two collaborators on the project are here. E.J. Dionne is a Senior Fellow a Brookings, a "Washington Post" syndicated columnist and a University Professor in the Foundations of Democracy and Culture at Georgetown University. Russ Whitehurst is the Herman and George R. Brown Chair and Director of the Brown Center on Education Policy at Brookings.

To keep us honest we invited two other people who can give whatever reactions they would like to our subject matter. Caroline Hendrie is Executive Director of the Education Writers Association so she and her colleagues are on the frontlines of this industry and have been experiencing the changes directly. Then we're also pleased to have Amy Mitchell with us. Amy is the Deputy Director of the Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism. I should point out that the Pew project has put out a very interesting report, an annual report that they do on the state of the news media and a highly recommend it to you because it talks about many of the more general changes taking place in the news industry.

Before we start our discussion, we would like to thank the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for providing financial support for this project. Their help has been crucial in funding a series of papers and forums on education journalism and we are grateful for their assistance.

Let me start with E.J. You have a number of reactions to various aspects of our survey findings, so what jumped out at you?

MR. DIONNE: First I want to thank Amy and Caroline for being here. The Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism did a lot of work with us on our first report and their findings were fascinating. In our second report we assigned the Education Writers Association all kinds of tasks and possibilities. We think you guys can do a great deal in this area.

Because we're talking about polls and surveys, I cannot resist sharing a joke I heard yesterday from my colleague Bill Galston. It's a story of two statisticians who are drafted into the army and one day they are going after a sniper and the first statistician climbs into a tree, carefully aims and he misses 1 foot to the right. So the second goes up and says I can take care of this. He goes up, carefully aims, misses 1 foot to the left. He comes down from the tree. They shake hands and one of them says to the other, "We got him." It takes a moment.

We don't have to worry about that kind of statistical difficulty because the findings in our survey are robust, and I have to say as someone who has been involved with newspapers for more years than I want to count up here, it won't surprise you that I really do want to focus first on the fact that while we are in an era of new media, our study really does show the importance of good old-fashioned newspapers and how central newspapers are to the information people receive. Again I confess to a bias here, but I was very happy with this finding. After family and friends, daily newspapers were the most important sources of education for Americans along with school publications and local TV. This suggests as we argued in our earlier reports that the most traditional forms

of media still have important obligations to focus on the issues and problems surrounding education, but also there's great opportunity here.

I don't think this should surprise us. Newspapers and their associated blog sites are the most established sources of local information in the country. We talk in all our reports about some wonderful education blogs, but if you want to local education blogs they are often linked to daily newspapers and of course newspapers visit the schools, go to school board meetings and do the kinds of things you need to do to cover this subject properly. It's also the case that local education reporting tends to be much more about what actually happens in the schools. I think that Americans are among, even young Americans and this a really striking finding, even young Americans who are among the largest consumers of the new media particularly social media, they too depended on newspapers. Yes, 69 percent of those over 65 said they received information from a daily newspaper, 53 percent of those 30 to 49, but 60 percent of those aged 18 to 29 relied on newspapers. The fact that they were even more likely than the middle-aged to rely on papers for their education news suggests that expanding education coverage might be a useful strategy for newspapers that are famously trying to shore up their readership among the young. Education writes of the world unite. You might increase your publication's profit margins.

It was also true that younger people were significantly more likely than older respondents to rely on a range of internet and electronic sources for their news. I was particularly struck that young people were much more likely

than older people to rely on school Facebook or MySpace sites. Twenty-six percent of younger respondents said they relied on those compared to only 5 percent of older respondents. An interesting split and I'll get back to this on cell phone text, 13 percent for the young, 14 percent for the older. Yes, there is a digital revolution but it has not made older sources of information obsolete.

In all our reports we did praise the blogs and in this world of instantaneous communication, I'd like to respond to some blog from this morning. Amanda Fairbanks, the wonderful new education writer for Huffington Post pointed out to me a blog today in Dropout Nation which noted that the report we're releasing today did not contain suggestions to improve education coverage, and actually Dropout Nation put forward several useful ones of its own. Its criticism is true because those suggestions were the subject of our second report which is called "Reimagining Education Journalism." I went to Dropout Nation to post a link to that earlier report. I still think I posted wrong and I'm going to take care of it after. Somehow I think the link to our first report went on too long to fit neatly, but you can find that earlier report on the Brookings site.

A couple other things I want to underscore, the fact that middle- and higher-income rely significantly more on family and friends for education news. That I think suggests that the informal networks around education issues may be stronger among middle- and upper-income Americans than among the less well off. It's also worth noting that our survey found that a higher percentage of nonwhites, 47 percent, said they felt they received too little information about their schools, for whites it was 36 percent. Poor people were even more likely to

say they feel they receive too little information, 52 percent of them compared to in the high 30s for better-off people. I think this suggests that the schools need to engage in greater outreach to parents of less-well-off children since our other findings suggest they have fewer informal networks.

Although Americans feel reasonably well informed about schools and do not sense a decline in the amount of information available to them, they do want more of it especially in the most basic educational areas, teacher performance, student academic achievement, curriculum, finances and reform efforts and they are it's worth noting also very concerned about violence in the schools. There is a great debate among parents for how the schools should communicate. The schools need to communicate not only on day-to-day issues as they do now, but on those thornier questions related to curriculum, teacher performance and student academic achievement. And they need to take into account the different levels of access to the new technologies between the affluent and the less well off. People may be surprised by this finding in our report, the extent to which poorer Americans and nonwhites rely on cell phones for basic information. Lower-income respondents were most likely to be interested in improving access through cell phone texts from schools, 42 percent versus 30 percent for the more affluent, and even more striking, and I'm not sure what this says about newspapers but it says a lot about cell phones, 40 percent of poorer respondents wanted more cell phone messages from newspapers compared to 18 percent for the more affluent. Schools need to pay attention to this and they need to pay attention to the informal networks. I think they need to consider

working with community organizations and religious congregations to strengthen those informal networks of information among parents of their poorer students especially since such networks are such vital and tested sources of news.

So there's a big opportunity here for constructive engagement among citizens, our education system and the media. Education responds to our thirst for knowledge, the news media responds to our thirst for information, greater interaction between the two spheres is natural and it's also essential.

Thank you.

MR. WEST: Our next speaker will be Russ Whitehurst, Director of the Brown Center on Education at Brookings.

MR. WHITEHURST: Thanks. I want to try to connect two themes. The first theme is our report and the findings in it and I want to stress three of the findings. One is that the topics that our respondents want more information on. They want to know about teachers, they want to know about academic performance and they want to know about crime and safety in the schools. The second finding is that parents are much more eager for more information in all categories than are nonparents. The third finding is that family and friends remain the most reliable and consistent source for information about performance of the schools. And the fourth finding is that that young are more interested in using newer technologies to find out about education than are older people. Those are for me interesting findings from our report.

The second theme, the one to which I want to connect these findings, is the theme of education choice. Choice of education represents a

powerful pull on parents and consumers of education services. Depending on how you count, roughly 50 percent of the parents of elementary- and secondary-age children have chosen the school in which their child is enrolled. They've chosen the school by choosing their place of residence because of the school it provides, by participating in school-choice plans within public school districts where they don't have to send their child to the neighborhood school, by sending their child to charter schools or home schooling their children, or sending their children to private schools and 11 percent of parents do that. That accounts for about 50 percent of the parents of school-age children and I would propose to you that the majority of the remaining 50 percent either would like to have chosen or are carrying out other forms of choice constantly. They have the choice of whether they should intervene with the school or their child to correct a circumstance with which they are unhappy. Many consider moving in order to have access to a school that is different from the one in which their child is enrolled and many avail themselves of the option for a charter school when that is present for them.

Our report focused on elementary and secondary education, but there are important parallels in higher education where everybody chooses. There are six-thousand-plus institutions, you're not assigned to any particular one of those, you have to choose, and you have to choose whether to attend or not. The reason I raise higher education is to show or to think about the presence of media forms there that aren't really found frequently in elementary and second education. You have a huge information industry, let's take "U.S. News & World

Report" as an example, that has built up to sell into the market for information for consumers of higher education and we don't find much in the way of parallel forms in elementary and secondary education. My point here is that there are large swaths of the public who are consumers of education services. We see in the higher-education market that they're eager for information to support their choices as consumers and that there's a market there for providing that information.

I think much of that hunger for information to support choice is reflected in the findings from our survey. People want more information about the things that matter in the schools in which they are in the role of consumers. These are the topics that economists would say suffer from information asymmetries which is just a fancy way of saying that the schools know a lot they're not letting on to parents. So what do you do? You talk to other parents. You generate informal networks that will let you know things that are possibly affecting your child's performance at school that you're not getting directly from any other source.

Our respondents mentioned that they wanted more information on teacher performance. The importance of that was illustrated last summer when "The Los Angeles Times" released to the public performance data on every teacher in the public-school system in Los Angeles for whom the district had performance data. It generated as much interest in that newspapers as it had had for the last year as people tried to consumer that information and decide what to do with it. I will share with you an anecdote about my two children both

of whom are now grown. But when they were in elementary school, the big task of responsible parents in our school district was to see that your child was not assigned to a bad teacher the next year. You spend a lot of time trying to figure out from other parents who those teachers were. Then you had to play a dance with the school district to effect your child's assignment since the rule was if you wrote a letter expressing a desire and antipathy toward any particular named teacher, that letter would be thrown away. So you had to find out the characteristic of the teacher you wanted, the characteristic of the teacher you did not want and describe how your child needed those characteristics to thrive. Our son particularly was interested in expressing himself through the arts in third grade because the best teacher was known to be interested in the arts. We always had children who did not thrive well.

MR. DIONNE: Did it work?

MR. WHITEHURST: It did work. And we always had children who did not thrive well among adults who expressed their points of view in high vocal volume there were some shouters among the teachers in the school. Getting that information assuming that it was reliable and acting on it was extremely important and difficult. What I think we see here is that there is a tremendous opportunity for the provision of information to consumers of education services when that information is either not there now or has to be obtained through the laborious and unreliable means I just described my wife and I employing to these many years ago.

It is remarkable that while digital media, Facebook, social digital exchanges have flourished and even though in our survey they were more likely to be used by younger people than older people, it is still a very small fraction of the sources of information that people access. My thought experiment is would we not if we were parents or consumers of education services really want to access a site that gave us accurate consumer-satisfaction information on the things that we care about and might connect us socially with other parents who could flesh out that information, tell us how they dealt with difficult situations, provide the kind of information that is increasingly difficult to get through ordinary neighborhood social networks because they are so dispersed? I think that there are economic opportunities there. I think there is a hunger for information that isn't provide. I think blogs are part of the answer but not entirely the answer since we're not likely to see a blog talking about Mrs. Smith the yeller in third grade and yet that is the kind of information people want.

I think our report is promising with regard to the hunger for information about education. It is potentially misleading in suggesting that family and friends and traditional newspapers are the way it is to be provided. I think it's being provided that way because there is no other source of the information that parents want and once they have something more reliable then the rumors from the neighbor next door they will seek it out and use it. I think the federal government and governments in general have a responsibility they have not met in this area. If you want to go purchase a used car from a dealer over in Virginia, that dealer will be forced by government regulation to provide you much more

information on what you're buying than a local school has to provide you with regard to the service you are either directly or indirectly buying from them. We don't have enough information on the performance of schools. We need more, and giving parents access to that information will do them good and will improve our schools. Thanks.

MR. WEST: Caroline Hendrie, you're on the frontlines as Executive Director of the Education Writers Association. Could you give us a journalist's perspective on this?

MS. HENDRIE: Absolutely. I'm delighted to be here and of course as you know, this topic is really dear to my heart. For those of you who don't about EWA and aren't familiar with us, we're the national organization of members of the media who specialist in covering education so that this paper and this session goes absolutely to the core of what EWA is all about. EWA United. Maybe we should change our name. I don't know. Education United?

My reactions to this paper start with recalling that people are really busy and they have only so much time for the news, any kind of news. In fact, this weekend in "The New York Times" there was an article about the hard time people were having keeping up with all the international news going on and the news overload that they were experiencing. There was one anecdote from a University of Michigan student who said that he was relying on his roommates to keep him up on all the events because they had more time to watch Jon Stewart than he did.

That's sort of what we're up against. People don't have that much time for the news, but still some people are paying attention and I think the results of this poll really helps shed light on what those people who are paying attention think about the news they're getting on education and the news that they're not getting.

I was interested in the findings on the quantity of coverage. I was very struck by the fact that a majority of the respondents, 56 percent, felt that they had the right amount of information about K-12 schools. That surprised me, but given that it's not surprising that more than three-quarters of the respondents considered them well or moderately informed about schools. I was reminded of the fact that everyone went to school and everyone seems to think they're informed about schools, so I would caution to take that information with a grain of salt that people really are as well informed as they think they are.

I was also struck by the fact that the percentage of people who thought coverage of education was increasing and was more than twice the proportion who thought it was decreasing, 22 percent versus 10 percent. That 60 percent in the middle thought it was staying about the same. My reaction to that is I'm glad they noticed because I think they're actually on to something. Think about when this poll was done, in December at the end of the fall. I think we've been experiencing in the news media quite an upsurge in interest in education. I think news outlets even amid all the downsizing know people care about education. It often ranks really high in reader polls consistently so that news executives like to protect coverage of education to the extent that they can. I

think contributing that, politicians and policy makers have really drummed home the point that to get out of the economic doldrums we need to, number one, focus on what students are learning in school and number two, increase the amount of time that Americans spend in school. Meanwhile with jobs being scarce during the recession, adults were streaming back to school and that's still happening. That also tends to generate interest in education in the media with more coverage of it. I'd say that President Obama and Arne Duncan of course have led the way on this with warnings that if other countries outeducate us then they'll also outcompete us. That's message has been reinforced by a number of documentaries over the past year the most well known of which was "Waiting for Superman." There was a lot of buzz created by that in the media and that was no accident. The movie had a high marketing budget and word really got out about it and there was a lot of media coverage. Reinforcing that was NBC "Education Nation" in December, a whole week of programming focused on education. You had writers who don't normally write about education weighing in multiple times. There was Thomas Friedman, Jonathan Alter of "Newsweek" who said on multiple occasions that education reform is the first great social movement of the 21st century. So I'd say all of this added up to an education moment in the media and I think the respondents to this poll noticed that giving the timing of it. That's not to say that there's enough education coverage, but I think it has not fallen by the wayside and I think it's really notable.

On the topics that the public said they want more coverage of, I'd say the title of this paper says it all. People say they want more information

about teacher performance and student academic performance. As Darrell mentioned, what that seems to mean is that people want to know about the core of the educational process which is teaching and learning. They may want more than they're getting, but I would argue that doesn't mean they're not getting any. I have gotten through the National Awards for Education reporting that EWA runs. It's our annual contest, and a very healthy number of this year's entries focus on teacher performance or student achievement. Other well-represented topics in our contest were school-reform initiatives and school finance, two issues that people said they wanted to hear more about and also a good number of stories and other entries were on curricular issues including the push for common state academic standards across the country.

On the flip side of that, the topics that got the last votes from poll respondents tell-me-more list were school sports and scandals or undesirable activities. I can understand people saying that they want less news about undesirable activities if that means it's coming at the expense of coverage that zeroes in on what American kids are actually learning, but I think we should remember that stories that fall into the category of scandal can also be very much about teaching and learning. I think a fine example is a series on highly suspicious scores on standardized tests that "USA Today" has been running the last few weeks. The series is called "Testing the System" and the latest installment ran just yesterday and it focused on the Washington, D.C. public schools. The series is based in part on a sophisticated statistical analysis and it raises troubling questions about cheating by school personnel on student tests

given that they increasingly carry very significant consequences for educators. My larger point about that is that it's not one or the other. Journalists can produce hard-hitting investigations of questionable activities that do address issues about teaching and learning in the schools. That said, it's important that journalists do keep their eyes on the central issue of who's teaching our children and what those children are learning and given all the cutbacks in newsrooms, that's not easy. Time to observe classroom instruction and cultivate sources at the school level is typically hard for reporters to come by and that's especially when they need to master the often really complex policy backdrops so that they will understand what they're seeing and hearing in the classrooms on the occasions that they can get into them.

I'd like to think that EWA is playing a significant role in helping them get that story right and in ways that are changing with the times. In the past year for instance we were involved with the National Reporting Project with the Hechinger Report that involved newsrooms across the country in a collaborative reporting effort on the impact on education by the stimulus law. This kind of collaboration can help journalists understand the context and the scope of complicated policy issues and thus help them do a better job of meeting the public's demand for reliable information about the issues in education that really matter the most.

MR. WEST: Our last speaker is Amy Mitchell of the Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism. Amy, I know you track more general trends in terms of the news media, so what jumped out at you?

MS. MITCHELL: Some of the things that jumped out at me certainly coincide with what others have mentioned. I will bring a little bit different perspective to the conversation and first mention a few of the findings that comport with the findings we see about new consumption more broadly and the trends in that direction. Then I'll talk a little bit about an opportunity that I see based on the import that people are placing on newspapers as their sources that E.J. was talking about earlier. As many of you may know, newspapers aren't exactly in a position to bulk up their resources. They're not rolling in the dough these days. But I do see some opportunity here for ways to grow this information that people are interested in and we'll talk a little bit about that.

First of all, as Caroline was talking about, there is a sense in this report that the evaluations of the coverage were not all negative with 56 percent saying they're getting about the right amount of information about education. It's not an entirely pessimistic point of view, and that does comport with what we see about other areas of coverage as well with 55 percent saying it's easier to get news today and to keep up with information than it was 5 years ago, and survey that we did earlier in 2010 asked about a range of different topics people are getting information on from music, to health, to local community, to religion and science, and for almost all of those the majority said that they were getting enough coverage but they were interested in more. So there is clearly an opportunity to continue to provide added, more detailed, more through information to people because there is an interest for that.

Another thing that jumped out was the emphasis on friends and family and reliance on friends and family which ranked high in our general news surveys not only as a source but as a reason that people keep with the news. In fact, conversing with friends and family in this 2010 survey was the number one reason people named when we asked them why they stay up with the news so that it is an important part of your daily life to be able to converse with those who you care about who you associate with about information that you find meaningful.

We have a new survey that's going to be coming out this spring, hopefully not too long from now, that takes a very, very granular look at local news consumption with a very, very broad definition of what local news is ranging from everything from weather and traffic to news about your social services to other policy-related areas. It finds friends and family as a daily source for local news that ranks right up there with internet search engines so that clearly friends and family are an important part of the process.

This new survey also supports the authors' findings about a strong interest in news, about local schools and education and about newspapers as the main nonindustry-related source for news. Again the survey is not yet released, but I'll share one number with you. More than 58 percent said that they get news about their local schools and education, they get this kind of news, and their number one source far and beyond anything else was the local newspaper so that clearly that's where people tend to think of as their source for news. We see in the content numbers though that the amount of coverage here is miniscule and

as others have talked about, we see in our studies of national media that less than 2 percent of the coverage focuses on educational issues, and some colleagues of ours at the Quello Center out of Michigan did a very, very broad study across more than a hundred local communities looking at a range of local issues and found there even at the local level about 6 percent of the coverage was focused on education. The resources to add original reporting don't look very strong when it comes to newspapers. In our State of the Media report as Darrell mentioned that was released a couple of weeks ago, newspapers were the only sector to continue to see a decline in revenue in 2010. Every other media sector we looked at from radio to magazines, across the board, saw a significant boost in revenue that they were taking in in 2010 and newspapers continued to see a decline.

But there is an opportunity here in some of the larger trends that we're seeing in the way information is evolving to be able to provide information without necessarily having to devote significant new staff to it. To give you a very condensed timeline of what's happened in the newspaper industry, in the early to mid 2000s which was the early stages of the internet becoming a place for news and the early revenue declines for newspapers, we saw most of the beat reporting that used to be standard at newspapers, the education reporter, the health reporter, the science reporter, go by the wayside. Newspapers as they wanted to focus a lot more on up-to-the minute, up-to-the hour news as the transition to the internet occurred, got rid of their beat reporters and made them all staff reporters. If you read the bylines of newspapers now you'll see staff

reporter 95 percent of the time. That was so that a reporter could jump from one topic to the next depending on what was hot in the news. What happened with that was a movement away from having anybody on your staff who could follow an industry day in and day out, and follow the incremental story, the story that evolved over time and be somebody who had the in-depth knowledge about what was happening with a particular issue and that was for many industries including education.

Then as few years wore on and the internet looked like it was here to stay, the situation then become a little more dire for newspapers. We did a survey in 2008 that we sent to every news editor across the country which showed staff cuts at that point about in the range of 10 to 24 percent compared with 3 years prior so that they were already beginning to have to cut back their staffs pretty significantly. In that timeframe was when the newspapers decided that they had a new strategy and this strategy was going to be the hyperlocal newspapers which was to abandon for the most part their coverage of national and international affairs and rely more and more on wire services for that kind of information, and focus their limited staff on being hyperlocal because those communities are very strong and people follow local news and there's a market for this. We then asked editors in this survey in 2008 about what areas were getting more coverage and what areas were getting less coverage as they made this transition with less staff and a more technology focus. It was the range of local issues that were getting more coverage and the one at the very top was

education. More than a third of the newspaper editors had said that they had increased their education reporting in the last 3 years, so that's 2005 to 2008.

But then two things occurred, really three things occurred. The recession hit which brought further cutbacks and further troubles for newspapers, the audiences migrated at a much faster rate to the web than had been anticipated which again furthered the economic troubles at newspapers and the hyperlocal strategy proved largely to be a failure. So when we surveyed executives again in 2010, the average cutbacks reported had roughly doubled in the range of 50 percent over the last 3 years attributed both to the recession and to the transition to the web. Hyperlocal reporting didn't work largely for two reasons. One was that it required more staff than other reporting because there are so many local neighborhoods to cover. If you want to be able to cover one particular neighborhood, Takoma Park, Potomac or Bethesda, you have to really know that neighborhood because the people who live there are going to read that information and they really know it. They live there. They're following it day in and day out. So it was actually more work and it required more staff which newspapers didn't have, and the locals knew this information to well that in many cases they were already turning to their weekly newspapers that got delivered for this kind of information as well so that daily papers had a very hard time gaining traction there.

Other outlets began to step in to the mix, hyperlocal blogs and local community websites where there was a lot of passion for this kind of information on education as well as state and local government information. The

Hechinger Report in fact which Caroline mentioned earlier is one that emerged at the national level. Their function used to be largely to hold seminars to train journalists a lot of what Caroline's group does now on what was happening in education and issues to understand and how to be a good education reporter. As I was talking to somebody from the Hechinger Report years ago, they said what happened was we didn't have any journalists to attend these because there were no more beat education reporters anymore. We said, darn it, we'll just hire our own journalists and issue our own report so they have something called the Hechinger Report which is a national website that carries local education news as well as what's happening at the national level.

At the local level though many of these community sites that started up or bloggers had a lot of passion but didn't necessarily have the reporting capacity to do a full-time reporting job. There were several different studies we've done of these sites and also have done in conjunction with colleagues at Missouri and other places that found generally on average the number of new stories posted per day is not more than one at most of these very hyperlocal sites and it's not because there isn't talent or there isn't passion, it's because there might be three staffers and they just don't have the capacity to do that.

However, there are some latest trends over the last year or year and a half that suggests there is a real opportunity here with people continuing to believe that their newspapers are the place to go for education news and educational reporting. We saw in 2010 a movement among newspaper

organizations in particular to embrace what we at the Project for Excellence in Journalism have been talking about for the last couple of years as their 21st century function which is to be much more of a service to people than a product. As a part of that service there are many functions that these newspapers need to fill that go beyond just doing original reporting. It involves aggregating, it involves curating, it involves authenticating, and in doing so carrying information that others may be doing the reporting on themselves partnering with local bloggers. If they have passion and they have knowledge about a local area and they understand the principles of journalism, to partner with them, carry them on your website, they get a much bigger audience and you get that area covered. As consumers, consumers are looking to know that they can go to the "Chicago Tribune" ' website or the Cleveland newspaper's website and get the information they need and if the newspaper has it on their website, they believe the newspaper has authenticated that, has given their stamp of approval to it and that's okay. Consumers are not necessarily asking the newspaper to do the only one to do the reporting, but to authenticate it and to aggregate it and we began seeing over the last year a lot more partnerships with smaller journalism organizations and also with institutions that are knowledgeable and are studying and being able to provide this information.

One of the other areas that is really ripe for education when it comes to putting this information out are databases. Consumers are much more comfortable today with wanting to handle, manipulate, look at, digest raw data than they were in the past and if we think about the areas in the survey that

people said they were more interested in knowing about, finances, teacher/student performance, the legislative issues that are on the docket, those are all really easy things to be able to post on a website to link to an educational organization or the state-based organization for the raw data for that information.

It's not necessarily a simple process. We have as a part of our State of the Media report a case study that looks at Seattle which is one of the most high-tech areas that is doing a lot of this partnering with local and traditional news sites and others in the area and there are certain roadblocks and challenges to being able to merge information but the opportunity is there and it may be the most realistic way to get education news coverage to those who are interested in having it. Thanks.

MR. WEST: Thank you, Amy. Amy mentioned this interesting idea of the opportunity for the news media to grow information. Let me throw out a couple of questions, anyone on the panel can comment and then we'll open the floor to questions and comments from you.

There are a couple of different aspects of this, one on the substance of coverage and, second, on the delivery system. In terms of the substance of coverage, I'm curious as to the advice that you would have for journalists in terms of either the style or the content of coverage. For example, we found people say that they're more interested in teacher performance and student achievement. What's the best way to do this? What advice would you offer? Then on the delivery system part of this, we had interesting results in terms of the combination of old versus new media so that I am curious as to what

each of you believe some of these consumer trends mean for the future of journalism.

MS. HENDRIE: I'd like to make a comment about blogging. I thought the numbers were pretty low for people relying on blogs because I've seen blogs as a tremendous resource for coverage when you talk about news coverage as well as commentary. People think of blogs as commentary, but I think that blogs can be a terrific vehicle for coverage as far as in the moment keeping up with all kinds of developments in education, I think they're tremendously promising. We know that newspapers run a lot of them. There is a lot more content that is available online on the blogs than make it into the print paper. Often papers are running excerpts from their blogs but not the full conversation so that I definitely see that as an area that we need to continue to develop.

As far as the delivery of some of this material, I'm very interested that you mentioned the database. The most controversial development in education journalism in the last year was the "L.A. Times" ' project on value-added measures of teacher effectiveness and right now there is a big debate going on, a court fight going on, in New York City over whether the news outlets there are going to print similar information about New York City teachers and that's a really difficult issue. On the one hand somebody mentioned just how popular it was in terms of how many page views it got, but I will say that journalists are very conflicted about the issue, about whether it makes sense to with the kind of individual teacher effectiveness ratings when there are so many

questions swirling around about the validity of the value-added measures. So while it's very promising, it can really get you on hot water.

MR. DIONNE: Just a couple of real quick points. First, on the blogs. In our first report we were struck with how much information newspaper blogs conveyed. I think when people often hear the word blog they have in their head a place where people express very sharp political opinions, whereas the education blogs tend to be places where there are opinions on them but they are a source of news. They are a kind of alternative place for news reporting and when you look at our finding about newspapers, I'd be very curious if we ever could do another survey. I would love to break down when they say newspapers are they talking only about the print paper or are they talking about a combination of the print paper and the online paper, because when looking at what we looked at before, we were really impressed by how much news in certain communities was getting on the blogs.

Second, I take Caroline's point about our question about scandals and undesirable activities. Again looking at that question, I wonder does anyone want to admit they want to know about undesirable activities? What does that mean? Because I suspect there is a way in which either rephrased you might get a different answer and also as you suggested on say teachers cheating with their kids on tests, that's part of educational policy, that's part of teacher performance and I'm really curious about that.

The last thing is I was intrigued with Russ's comments on people looking around for information on teachers and I wasn't surprised by the friends

and family that we had to know with our kids. We would always want to know from friends whose kids had just gone through the grade how a teacher was. You can argue those subjective judgments by parents and Russ knows more about this than I do. There are studies about how good they are. On the other hand, we know that everybody agreed on a certain third-grade teacher who was absolutely wonderful and she turned out to be absolutely wonderful and we are now part of the families and friends network and pushes everybody less toward that particular third-grade teacher. But what's striking when Russ mentioned higher education, when you think that there are so many colleges now where you can go online and find out about teachers and particular courses and students themselves can have fairly sharp opinions about how good or bad a class is or how effective it is. And we all remember back before the web you knew that the geology class that was an easy science credit seemed inevitably called Rocks for Jocks, and I remember still from my time in college a professor who was described as having a cocktail party lecture style. At the time I don't think I'd ever been to a cocktail party, but I knew what they meant and they were absolutely right about the particular professor.

Obviously you wouldn't have a blog of say fourth graders talking about rating their teachers, but you do wonder if there could be a more organized way of sharing that kind of family and friends information in a way that allows people to check each other and where you can discover there are actually multiple views of particular teachers. My friend Clara Hemphill in New York got a lot of attention when she did a report on the 100 best public schools in New York

City. She did an enormous amount of work and it became a real resource for parents around the city. I do think that on Russ's point there have to be more ways, and especially here obviously both of us in a sense spoke from the perspective of parents, where there have to be ways to get more of this information no matter where you stand on the issue of publishing those databases.

MS. MITCHELL: I would speak to the question of delivery and dissemination. Even though blogs were not a high mention in this report, clearly people are moving to the web and to digital mobile devices. In a survey that we just put out, 47 percent say they get some local news from their mobile device, not just from the internet but from their handheld mobile device which is huge and it's only growing. Seven percent of the population now has tablets which is not huge but it's doubled that from about 4 months prior. So that the comfort level of getting information from these devices and in this manner is clearly growing and is the direction where people are headed.

I think what is suggested in the results of this survey is that people haven't found that place yet for education news and that newspapers are still the most trusted and the most reliable place to go for that information. But there is opportunity here for somebody to develop that place electronically on the web and on their mobile devices in a way that has yet to emerge.

MR. WHITEHURST: I would that there are various levels here of the need for information for education coverage. There's a level at which I consume information that I need to know what's going on in a policy framework

and then there's the hyper, hyper, hyper local level at which a parent needs access to information that relates to a particular class or grade in a particular school. To reiterate my earlier point and points that have been made here, I think it's that hyper, hyper, hyper local level that's not being particularly well served now by journalists or the media and I think there are opportunities there. How about for example just simple consumer-satisfaction surveys carried out perhaps unscientifically to begin with but making that information available on individual schools? I think almost anybody would want to go read that if they had anything to do with that school. And it's the absence of the kind of information that consumers need to consume anything that's remarkable about K-12 education contrasted with almost any other industry including the postsecondary industry. I think if we gather here 5 or 10 years from now and had a forum on a similar topic we'd find a different landscape in K-12 education. One of our sponsors, the Gates Foundation, made a large investment recently in a for-profit firm, Integral, which intends to be the Facebook of higher education allowing students and prospective students to interact with each other about particulars of education at certain universities, colleges and community colleges, again suggesting that there are unmet needs out there even in higher education and I think massive unmet needs in K-12 education for better information and I think newspapers are perhaps one place that that information could be aggregated and provided in ways that would be useful.

MR. WEST: Caroline, you had a quick comment before we turn to the audience?

MS. HENDRIE: Yes, just a quick comment. I was a little surprised and I wondered what your thinking was about the fact that weekly newspapers weren't included as one source because I think about my own community and the weekly newspapers really do a tremendous amount of education coverage. You'd often see the whole front page and inside covered with education stories. I guess that's not hyper, hyper, hyper local, but it's much more local than say "The Washington Post." I think that's an important source of news and often they have blogs too. They're online. It depends on how sophisticated and well funded they are, but very often they have online analogues and they're a really good source I think.

MS. MITCHELL: I would second that when you get your funding for that next survey to add the weeklies to that. One of the things we saw in the declines in newspaper circulation, one of the biggest losers starting 3, 4 or 5 years back were the big metro dailies. What was happening was people returning to their weekly papers for their local information because they were getting more local information in their hyper if not hyper, hyper, hyper local from these weeklies to a significant degree, and then their next source was their national news, their national outlets that they were going to from the web or from another subscription so that the weeklies are an area that have grown in terms of circulation for these folks.

MR. DIONNE: For what it's worth, I kept using the word newspapers rather than the words daily newspapers but I have your hunch that people who answered that question were answering with a combination of daily

and weekly is my strong suspicion because you're right that weeklies do quite an extraordinary job in many cases of keeping a real eye on the schools.

MR. WEST: Let's open to floor to questions and comments. We have someone with the microphone and we have a question right up here up front. We'd ask if you'd give your name and your organizational affiliation, and if you can keep your questions brief so that we can get to as many as possible.

MR. GLUCK: My name is Peter Gluck. I don't have an organizational affiliation. I'm interested in what you can tell me about the accuracy of the information that people get. The reason I ask is that given that most people getting their information from family and friends, what family and friends report is influenced by personal experiences and values and may not be entirely accurate as regards to what actually happened in education in the community. Thank you.

MR. DIONNE: Russ, haven't you looked at data on that? I remember a conversation, maybe I'm misremembering a conversation where you talked about that.

MR. WHITEHURST: I was probably just making up an answer for you to pretend. There is no question that the lens for dealing with information has lots of distortions built in and some of the professionalism you hope comes out of journalists is a way of taking a more objective and wide-ranging look at information is very different from the personal view you get from people. Again I think people are turning to family and friends because there is no other place to turn for the information they want and that's why if you want to know about the

third-grade teacher, who else are you going to ask? But I think better sources of information would be consumed and appreciated.

MR. WEST: There is a question over here.

MS. SADER: My name is Morissa Sader. I'm with NEA Research. I think one of the services that newspapers could provide to the public is often times when these stories come out they're in conjunction with a study and if you could help us understand what is a good study and what is a bad study. There is a lot of horrible education research being done.

MR. WEST: Ours is a good study.

MS. SADER: I know that. I'm thinking particularly of the "L.A. Times" story and how many people really even understood what value-added measurement was. If newspapers could help parse that out for us that would be very helpful.

MR. DIONNE: Could I ask you a question back on that which is I agree with you that there is junk research and good research, but the question is if a newspaper reporter is confronted with a study that appears to have a reasonable academic pedigree of one kind or another, how is one to draw that distinction for readers?

MS. SADER: There is a group out called Think Tank Project and they're doing this. They're explaining what is fault correlation. When you jump to a conclusion based on very little data, then you point that out. These are things that every researcher knows and the public needs to learn.

MS. HENDRIE: I totally agree with you in terms of the need for reporters having more resources on how to interpret research. Just to comment quickly on the Think Tank Project, one of the issues for reporters about that is while they dissect research studies, they tend to not do it in real time, at least real reporter time. Real reporter time is you next deadline and the Think Tank Project will dissect a study from often a particular point of view. One of their interests is to focus on what they see as advocacy research coming out of right-leaning think tanks, but it comes out several weeks later often and that's a rushed schedule for the researchers, but by then very often journalism has moved on, the story has moved on and it's late.

To speak to your initial point, EWA is having our National Seminar, it's our big annual conference next week and I scheduled it to coincide exactly with the American Educational Research Association's Annual Conference so that right after our 3-day conference is over, 2 hours later we're starting a seminar specifically for journalists with senior scholars. It's a joint seminar with EWA and AERA. Right before I came here in fact I was writing an email to the people on my panel specifically on the topic of how do journalists cope with claims made by educators and policymakers that studies show that such and such program, practice or policy is research based? How do you identify strong research? EWA has done a lot of work on that. We will continue to do more. It's a really important part of what we do.

MS. MITCHELL: I would add that it's unfortunately not special to education in terms of the challenge and the problem of being able to interpret

research and report on valid research versus not valid research. One of the effects of this lack of a beat reporter is deep-seeded knowledge to know faulty research when you see it. One of the things we talk about in our shop before we put out any reports and any of our data is the gut check. Does this seem like it could be right or does something tell you something is not right here? Even if people said this, it doesn't seem right. Even if the content analysis come back with this percentage, something just doesn't seem right so we're going to go back and redo this piece of research. That's how we would address it.

But for a journalist to know enough about the organizations that are doing research in this area, to know the history of what they're doing, to know the background, to know who's behind it and to know the sources to turn to for their evaluations of it before you go out to report, to turn to six different people across a wide range of outlets to say what do you think about this?

MR. WEST: This is a topic that's been of long interest to me. I would say there's a real difference in the type of talent that newspapers put on the education beat versus the science beat so that if you're the science reporter, you either have or are expected to develop some knowledge of the science on which you're doing the reporting. Education coverage is typically covered as a human-interest story. There is not a lot of expertise even in the beat reporters who are left about when it gets to the science of education. So what you get are reports of science findings that turn not to legitimate empirical criticisms of the science, but to other points of view as if the three other people who have a point of view about what the policy should be have as much weight as the researcher

who did the research that has some implication for policy. I don't know how to fix this, but I think it is a continuing problem and maybe for research studies it should be the person who covers science who gets that report to report on rather than the reporter who covers the local school boards or different type of reporting.

MR. DIONNE: I just happened to be talking to my students are Georgetown where it's a class on religion and politics and we were talking about public opinion. I was saying that one of my pet peeves are sponsored surveys that are designed almost to come to a conclusion, 80 percent of Americans support repealing Section 2014(k) of the Tax Code. I doubt if 1 percent of Americans have a view on that at all. So I think there is that sort of general problem. I think the beat reporting issue is so important. I think that one of the biggest problems with all these layoffs is that there are fewer and fewer people who just have a feel for this and know who does honest research, knows where to have suspicions. I think that's a huge loss. And I do think that there is always an obligation to say who sponsored this study? That's not dispositive. Good academics can do good studies no matter who the sponsors are, but it's still awfully helpful to know. The Italians have this great word (speaking in Italian) which is behindology where people say it can't be what's on the surface, there is something behind it, and I think behindology is a good approach to a lot of studies.

MR. WEST: Here in the front we have a question.

MS. VENECIO: I'm Rachel Venecio with the Cato Institute's Center for Educational Freedom. I was wondering if you could talk more about the kind of financial information that parents and other education media consumers are interested in hearing about. Are they interested in budgets or per-pupil spending, funding formulas, budget breakdowns, and also if you could comment on whether you think they would be interested in manipulating that data themselves. I know one of you mentioned that parents are more interested in having the hard data and manipulating it and I'm wondering what kinds of information with respect to finances they'd be interested in.

MR. WEST: My impression is people were really interested in the question of the fiscal condition of schools because that has been so much in the news over the last years and that has been the object of a lot of attention, so anything that relates to school finances and the fiscal circumstances would be of great interest to people.

MS. HENDRIE: I would say that I think that for many years finance has been a real staple of the education beat. It's been the source of huge fights over the years, court fights over equity and adequacy, of finances, very often databases with per-pupil spending amounts are very popular. This past year EWA and the Hechinger Report collaborated on a National Reporting Project involving new organizations across the country looking into how the money from the stimulus law was spent on education and how much it really triggered education reform versus saving jobs. EWA has a website called edmoney.org that is specifically focused on all the grants that were made all the

way down to the district level across the country through the stimulus. We know that this is an issue that districts across the country are really interested in, that readers are interested in so that we got a very good participation rate among newspapers who knew that this would be something that their readers would be interested in.

MR. WEST: Over there is a question.

MR. SHICKMAN: My name is Greg Shickman and I'm with the University of Central Florida but I'm asking this question more as a parent and a former civic association present and PTA president. You made many excellent points. By the way, I haven't seen any more political situation than a school boundary study. I've been through four of them in 10 years and I'm done. I don't want to do it anymore.

The point was made, and Caroline this is especially for you, many of you are from Montgomery County so you know this which is where I am also, Governor O'Malley trumps the fact that "Ed Week" has named Maryland three times in a row, a triple crown, so he goes around all the time Montgomery, Howard a number of the countries go around and talk about where the rankings are. You made the point about where college rankings come out and how people pay attention to it and we take great umbrage with it whether you're up, down or what quartile and everything else, but there is the college portrait, there is the -- and there are some real numbers that you can go after. You have "Ed Week" rankings, but you have great schools also. So as we're looking for a house right

now, my wife is looking at grade school rankings and making decisions about where to locate based on grade schools among "Ed Week" and everything else.

The question I have for you is, and I'll also put a former hat very quickly, I was a community college trustee for almost 8 years. I knew what the remediation rates were by school and not just by district. I knew it by school. That data is reported. It's rarely covered if at all. Can you imagine in Fairfax where I was, and we spent \$14,000 a year, if they knew how many students were coming out any of those blue-chip schools people knew were having to go into a remedial class at Nova.

MS. HENDRIE: I'm really interested. May I make a comment about that? At our national seminar that we're having as I said next week, for the very first time we're doing a new kind of session called the Story Lab, kind of a workshop on how to do a story that's been done really successfully by other news organizations. We're having reporters come to talk specifically about how they took the data from individual high schools, looked at the grades that students were getting and then match it up to the remediation rates, the graduates of those high schools, what percentage of them once they hit state schools had to take either community colleges or in some cases 4-year schools, had to take remedial classes. What they found is that despite the fact that GPAs were averaging high-B's, low-A's, a huge percentage of kids have to take remediation. So these grades, they're getting good grades in high school but that doesn't mean that they're college ready by any means. So I agree that it's a

really important story and we're doing our part to make sure that more reporters do pick up on that story.

MR. DIONNE: Could I just say first of all, bless you. I think you deserve a citizen of the year award for all that service. You were talking about looking for an elementary school. I always thought that we do have vouchers in America but they're distributed by real estate agents and it really is one of the striking aspects of our education system and I actually think we have a sort of vicious and virtuous cycles in this where even people without kids in good school districts ending up having an economic interest in the school being good because it raises their property values so that it's a classic case where the better schools get better. And in areas where all kinds of middle-class people of all races have seceded from the public system it has a sort of ratcheting downward effect and it's a profound unfairness built into the system. I don't know how you do more reporting on that.

But I am struck lastly with how much the folk knowledge of what's a good school and what's not a good school is fairly reliable. It's not 100 percent reliable, but I would love to see more reporting school by school for people to have a sense not just for the house they buy, but also as a form of competition for everyone to try to get better. I say that as somebody who loves our public schools because we were just like you in this respect.

MR. SHICKMAN: One of the great things about No Child Left Behind was the fact that we do have to report adequate yearly progress for all of our schools. Very rarely do they get reported and the ones that do get reported

are usually the schools that in the troubled areas to begin with. But in Fairfax where I was, and I was in South County, I had a school that was essentially a Title I school. It happened at the GT Center also. It didn't make AYP in one of the small categories. The best school in that area missed AYP in three of those categories. Guess which one got reported on and guess which one didn't.

MR. WEST: You have a very important point to make that as you're dealing with real estate issues you can link through the realtor's site to greatschools.net to get information on individual schools suggests both that there is a need for that information and there is an area in which journalists could be doing something that they are not. Why do I have to get the information about an individual school through the realtor's site rather than the newspaper?

I think the great complexity here, first the great need is for more information. Why not really know college entrance rates and college persistence rates linked to particular high schools? Most states have those data now. But the complexity is taking into account the challenge that particular schools face in the population of students that they serve. One of the things that's quite distorting at the postsecondary level is to learn that Princeton University does a better job than the University of Central Florida. You don't know that that's true. You just know that they attract a different selection of students to begin with. So how that information can be presented in a way that gives parents a good sense of how schools are likely to perform with kids like their kids I think is extremely important and is needed.

MR. WHITEHURST: Sounds like we needed a survey question friends, family members and realtors.

MR. WEST: Are there other questions? We just have 5 minutes left.

MR. STERN: An excellent panel, by the way. I've learned an awful lot. I'm Barry Stern affiliated with the Haberman Educational Foundation. The question is, and I'm going to give some context afterwards, where do school websites fit into all of this? Are they school publications or internet sites? I know as a workforce and educational development consultant myself that I spend a lot of time on school websites and I developed my own axiom that the worse the schools do, the harder it is to find good, solid outcome information on the school. At the same time, I remember in Michigan that we had an analyst bonanza at one time. We had Standard & Poor's come in and do a complete work-over on outcomes, finances, the whole nine yards that you could look at and you could begin to compare schools and do some real serious analysis work because they had the data there for you. Of course it became a victim of budget cuts very soon, and the fact that the schools didn't like it. Again, when schools aren't performing, they don't want us to have good outcomes and input information. Where do you see the school website as being a valid source or a decent source of school news?

MR. WEST: That's a very interesting question and it certainly points to the imprecision of survey research in this area because with various of our potential news sources, they could have fit in more than one category like

with newspapers, is it the print newspaper or is it the online version with websites, is that an internet site or is it a school communications. But on your larger point, I have spent a lot of time looking at government websites of various, ed department websites as well as those in other areas. They are increasingly a source of information for a lot of people on education, health care and other sorts of things. So I think if we were making recommendations out of this for schools, paying attention to that school website is very important because there are lots of people like out there who are going there for a source of information. We find that the search engines are driving a lot of the traffic to these sites to that web developers have to incorporate that kind of information in the site development as well.

MS. MITCHELL: One of the things that struck me in the survey in the findings was the degree to which the different kinds of sources of information were mixed together. You have newspapers with sort of traditional journalistic reporting, family and friends and school newsletters which weren't necessarily the websites but was information produced by school or the school board. Those were the three top areas not only where people are returning now, but where they thought improvements -- if you were going to do more information, newsletters, newspapers, family and friends, a really mixing across of the different kinds of sources you turn to and I would be interested in seeing if there were a different in the kind of information they turn to each for. We did a question in our broader news consumption survey with Andy Kohut this past summer where we tried to do that for new outlets more generally, asking people

if you're a listener of NPR, if you watch Keith Olbermann or watched Keith Olbermann, if you read your daily newspaper, why do you go to those places and what do you go to them for? Do you go to them for breaking news, for analysis, for entertainment? What we saw was a pretty clear distinction among the public why they go to these different kinds of outlets. So I would be curious to know if there is that level of distinction at the education news level too.

MR. WEST: I really resonate to your question. The Brown Center here at Brookings has an ongoing project that's looking at the 100 largest school districts in America and the degree to which they support provision of good information for parents. Part of that process is looking at the websites and how transparent they are. They differ tremendously in terms of where the information is, how many levels down you have to click for it, you know it's there but if you don't it's there, if you don't what you're looking for can you possibly find it? I think there is a role here for foundations or perhaps government to at least put out some templates for what a good information display should look like.

MS. HENDRIE: I think states have a roll too and I think states very much vary and I think there has been a lot of attention recently to that with the Data Quality Campaign for example to have states not only have robust data systems themselves but also lead the way for districts and even to the school level to make a lot more information available.

MR. DIONNE: I want to get this plug in somewhere and this is the best place to stick it in. One of the things that troubles me is the cutbacks in money for extracurricular activities which is destroying the tradition of the school

newspaper. It's remarkable how at schools where they have good school newspapers and where the principal gives at least some freedom to the students to report, kids are very inquisitive about their own schools and you can learn an enormous amount about what's going on inside from a decent school newspaper.

MR. HENDRIE: If the kids aren't censored like crazy.

MR. DIONNE: That's what I'm saying. You need a principal who's willing to give them some room to do the work and now the lucky schools not only have newspapers, but good websites which actually provide a flow of information to the parents that's slightly independent of the school itself. Again, you need a gutsy principal who is willing to give them some room to run.

MS. HENDRIE: And not fire the journalism teacher when things don't turn out the way he wants.

MR. WEST: With that plug for school newspapers, we are out of time, but I want to thank Caroline, E.J., Amy and Russ, and thank you very much for turning out as well. Thank you.

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I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

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