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PANEL II: ORGANIZING SCHOOLS TO IMPROVE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT: START TIMES, GRADE CONFIGURATIONS, AND TEACHER ASSIGNMENTS

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. GREENSTONE: Okay, we're going to -- we're on a very strict schedule here -- no fun, all work -- and we're going to go right into Panel II, which is Organizing Schools to Improve Student Achievement: Start Time's Great Configurations and Teacher Assignments. And we are very fortunate to have Brian Jacob from the University of Michigan here. He'll make presentation, and then we'll have a discussion about his work. And Jonah Rockoff, his co-author, is also on stage. And you'll be able to -- we can pester both of them about what they did wrong in their research.

Okay, and again the way we'll do questions is we'll pass out cards and collect them and we'll answer them at the end.

Okay, Brian, do you want to start us off?

MR. JACOB: Okay. Hello, good morning.

Let's see we're -- so, we'll be talking about the paper, "Organizing Schools to Improve Student Achievement." I think as we heard a little bit on our first panel, a lot of the education reform debates that people talk about focus on very controversial and/or political issues, and student incentives is certainly a prime example of this. Others are vouchers, charter schools, merit pay, etc. And ironically I think history shows that many of these kinds of glamorous, you know, dramatic reforms fail more often than not. I do think I need to keep trying them, but what Jonah and I wanted to bring out in this paper is the fact that there are many less glamorous reforms that really have a great deal of potential, a very high benefit/cost ratio.

In this paper we talk about three such reforms: shifting school start times later; converting middle schools to K-8 structure; and a variety of proposals involving teacher assignments. And so while we think each of these three issues is kind of important and promising, our broader message is not these three per se, but it's shifting the mindset of policymakers, practitioners toward kind of less flashy reforms that focus on organization and/or management practices in schools.

So, start times is the first one. So, adolescents and teenagers biologically need later sleep wake times. There's just a wealth of physiological evidence on this. My children are not adolescents yet, but I certainly believe that it will come. The sleep-inducing hormone, melatonin, physiological studies have shown, that peaks at about 4 a.m. in adults doesn't peak till 7 a.m. in

adolescents, which led one prominent researcher to quip that, you know, waking a teenager at 7 a.m. is like trying to wake an adult at 4 a.m. And, yet, all of our schools -- a vast majority of high schools in the United States start by 8 a.m. And in our paper what we discuss is the fact that there are a number of very high-quality, convincing studies that show start times have a large impact on student achievement and, for example, shifting start times for middle and high school students back one hour from 8 a.m. to 9 a.m. would kind of lead over the course of their career to about almost two standard deviation increases in achievement, which is a substantial impact.

Now, we also discuss the cost associated with this proposal. You know, the primary one in many school districts is student transportation. But we show that even under very, very conservative assumptions the benefits for this reform would far outweigh the costs.

Okay, grade configuration is I think the next topic there I'd like to focus on.

So, middle/junior high schools are very popular in the United States. Three quarters of seventh- and eight-graders nationwide attend middle/junior high schools, and there's been a longstanding concern among educators that middle schools are a less-than-ideal learning environment for pre-adolescents. They note that the transition from elementary to middle or junior high school forces students to adapt to new teachers, peers, and a much larger, less personalized learning environment at a particularly difficult time in their lives. And earlier in my career I was actually a middle school math teacher myself, and I can personally attest to the difficulty that students and their teachers faced with this transition. But I think, more importantly from our perspective now, there really is, you know, quite a large body of very rigorous, convincing evidence that shows that students that switch from elementary to middle school show dramatic decline in achievement relative to their peers who remain in a K-8 setting.

I think, even more importantly, this is not a one-time transition effect. It's not as if they kind of -- it's difficult in sixth grade or seventh grade when they make the transition but that by eighth grade or certainly by high school they're back on track.

A recent study in Florida that was able to follow students throughout high school finds that the dramatic drops that they experience in sixth grade or seventh grade when they make the transition are never erased, and they, you know, end up leaving high school significantly less prepared than their peers in a K-8 system.

And so our proposal on this realm has kind of encouraged districts to shift from middle school/junior high school models toward a K-8 model, or to work in other ways to ease the transition of students from elementary to middle school.

And, finally, teacher assignments. So, as we have talked about today, teachers are a key input in the educational process. There's, you know, a wealth of evidence. There's a large variation in teacher effectiveness, and many of the debates that we're consumed with today focus on very controversial issues, which I think are very important and can have some benefits involving alternative certification, teacher evaluation, merit pay. But I think what we point out in this paper is I think there's a less recognized importance of teacher assignments -- within school teacher assignments -- important influences on teacher effectiveness. And what I'm talking about here is assignments to grades and or subjects. So, in addition to kind of the well-known returns to experience -- general experience, that is -- teachers learn on the job. They get better in their second, third, fourth year.

There's very good evidence that they are also returns to grade-specific experience. So, if you look at a second-year teacher who is teaching fourth grade for the second year and compare that to a second-year teacher who taught second grade last year and fourth grade this year, the one who's in their second time teaching fourth grade is noticeably more effective than an otherwise identical teacher who is bouncing around in grades.

And so we cite some evidence, some work that others have done and that we've done in New York City showing that every year 20 to 40 percent of teachers, elementary school teachers -- kind of K-5 classroom-based teachers -- will switch grades each year, and actually in New York City only 28 percent of third-year teachers have been teaching the same grade for all three years. Only 28 percent. And what we discuss in the paper is that there are substantial gains in student achievement that could be made by kind of principals within schools, district officials focusing on these within-school teach assignments.

So, I see my time is up, and so I'm going to just, in conclusion, kind of point you to a table that we had in the paper that shows the cost/benefit ratios for each of these reforms. I think some of -- Pete in Charlotte Mecklenburg has kind of implemented some of these reforms, so hopefully he'll be able to talk about them. But these are very, very conservative estimates that we have for the benefit/cost ratio,

and I think these and other less glamorous reforms to organization management are, again, an important piece of the puzzle. We certainly don't think these are a panacea, but we think they've been overlooked by policymakers and practitioners.

Thank you.

MR. GREENSTONE: Thanks, Brian.

So, I'll just start by noting I went to a middle school, and as far as I can tell school always started at least at 8 or maybe even earlier. So, what would have happened to me if I had gone to a K-8 school and started school later?

MR. JACOB: Well, you would have been much more successful. For example, you might have been teaching at the University of Michigan instead of at MIT. (Laughter) But I think, like -- but you've done fine for yourself as it were -- we're less worried about folks like you. I mean, one thing that I didn't get to mention is that each of these reforms -- the school start times and the middle school transition -- the research shows these work on the average benefit and the average cost/benefit ratios that we show. If you focus on low-income, non-white students, for example the evidence on school start times, the benefits are twice as large for black and Hispanic students who are eligible for free lunch starting school one hour later, twice as large as the average affects they showed here. So, I think --

MR. GREENSTONE: My only question is to teach in the University of Michigan do you have to live in Ann Arbor? (Laughter)

MR. JACOB: You have the pleasure and the honor of living in Ann Arbor, that is true. (Laughter)

MR. GREENSTONE: All right, ha-ha -- so, we could go on, yeah, yeah.

So, Michael, you're, like, deeply embedded in the New York system, and I know this was not your decision, but I just watched this fascinating presentation --

MR. MULGREW: Mm-hmm.

MR. GREENSTONE: And then I remembered, I think I read I read in the newspaper last week -- I think the New York City Public Schools just announced that they're going to start middle school.

MR. MULGREW: A new middle school, yes.

MR. GREENSTONE: Did they not see this presentation?

MR. MULGREW: You know, it's one in a series of middle school initiatives in New York City. Every couple years we have another middle school initiative.

Well, look, we're a very large system. We have a lot of K-8s. We have middle schools.

I applaud you for being a middle school math teacher.

You know, one of the things that they announced in their initiative was that when they're recruiting teachers now they're going to tell them we're not going to give you a job unless you agree right now to go into a middle school. I don't know if that's going to help recruitment by and large. (Laughter)

We have some middle schools who work very well. We have others who -- look, the data is clear. It is a big problem. There is learning loss. It is significant in middle schools, in a lot of the middle school settings. So, looking at changing the system -- but it's just all right, this isn't working, we need to figure out exactly why it's not working -- should it be K-8 all the time.

But then you have some middle schools who have been extremely successful, and they would have an argument. Rightfully so. But then what are they doing that we can bring to other schools.

So, it's a very complicated question, but to every two or three years have a middle school initiative, okay, it gets a little frustrating to say the least. The way the schools are organized, that could be part of this. It's very -- I believe in trying all sorts of different structures.

We have schools now who have changed their configuration of their day. Our contract -- the teacher's contract in New York City -- allows the school to do a school-based option. If the staff wants to change, go right ahead. We have schools who go to school in the summer. They've decided to do that. We have other schools who have open classrooms, where you have three classes inside of one big classroom and you'll have four teachers inside of it. You have three classes with four teachers. If they want to do it, if there's a real plan behind it that deals with the students' needs, I'm all for it.

As an average teacher, I tried starting the school later in the day, because a lot of my children have lateness problems, so I went from 8 to 9. My principal allowed me to do that. They were still 20 minutes late, because of the bus and the train. It doesn't -- if I would have moved it to 10, they would have been 20 minutes late because of the bus and the train. (Laughter) I would have to look at some sort of different incentive to make that work.

MR. GREENSTONE: Was that a technical term, "delateness problem"?

MR. MULGREW: "Delateness problem" yes, yes.

MR. JACOB: Yes.

MR. MULGREW: Yes. It was a lateness problem that those students had because the students I worked with that was something that was a problem beforehand. And we all know people, adults, who have that issue I'm sure also. (Laughter) So, I think that was a learned behavior, that we'd have to figure out something else.

MR. HUGHES: Let me just jump in for one second.

MR. GREENSTONE: Yeah.

MR. HUGHES: Having worked in New York City for a number of years, this was on the table in the prior administration, and there was some conversation about consolidating to K-8s.

A couple of things that I think are important in that conversation -- one is we have our community school district that has complete K-8s --

MR. MULGREW: Mm-hmm.

MR. HUGHES: -- and is not particularly knocking it out of the park, to say the least. So, you've got strong evidence from New York City; there's that anecdotal evidence that drives so much of the conversation in education.

I think the second thing is I both love your paper and am frustrated by your paper, to be honest, because I think you're a hundred percent on the money. Organizing schools for success means that we're going to need to look at leadership, look at professional development. We're going to have to look at interlocking systems in schools, one of which is the overarching structure that we've put into place.

So, I am a hundred percent in agreement that there is low-hanging fruit. This, though, I think when you actually sit and do the numbers in transitioning, even if it's a one-time cost from a wheel-and-spoke system to a K-8 system, is going to be extraordinarily expensive. I know you started to address that in the paper.

MR. JACOB: Yeah, my --

MR. HUGHES: That was the primary impediment when it was discussed internally six years ago.

MR. JACOB: Right. We actually -- we did, and Jonah has worked extensively in

New York. We had the benefit of a discussant in kind of a pre-conference, who was involved in, you know, running the numbers for the New York City, you know, potential transformation of middle school to K-8. And kind of very, very large, surprisingly large.

The other district we had talked to that's done this is Denver, and we got kind very detailed cost data from Denver that takes into account not only the one-time transition costs of reconfiguring capital, buildings but also any sort of ongoing operational cost differences.

I don't know why, but the costs were dramatically lower in Denver than in New York City, but even in New York City, taking their numbers at face value, that's where we get the 40-to-1 benefit-to-cost ratio. If we use the Denver numbers, it's 200-to-1 benefit/cost ratio for transitioning, and I think -- so, there might be some, as the Congress referred to it, liquidity constraints. The benefits are, you know, realized down the road. You have to invest the money now. But -- and I wasn't inside the room, but I -- it seems hard to believe, even using numbers that were given to us, that it would pass a benefit/cost test.

I guess the last piece -- I think you -- you weren't advocating this yourself, but I think I have a notion that oh, there's this one district or there's this one school that's K-8 and it's lousy, so the hundred rigorous research studies that I showed that K-8 is more effective, well we're going to let this anecdote trump it. I mean, I think that's --

MR. HUGHES: That's a problem.

MR. JACOB: I mean, I think that's -- for those who are guided by this anecdote, that's a problem. Along with the fabulous middle school -- I mean, this research -- no research is showing that some middle schools aren't great. This research is not telling us that are K-8 structures that are ineffective. This is showing on average, particularly for low-income, non-white population of students, that K-8 tends to be more effective.

MR. HUGHES: I don't know, I didn't see the numbers. All I can say is that the conversation I had with you very recently in preparation for this panel suggested there's still --

MR. JACOB: Yeah, I mean, they --

MR. HUGHES: -- economics that aren't captured in these numbers. But it is what it is. I think there is a transition cost, and there's political ramifications involved, economic --

MR. JACOB: Yes, we discussed -- yes.

MR. HUGHES: That's right, that's right.

MR. GREENSTONE: I'll just underscore. It's a problem, I think, the research says all the time, which is well, you know, I've crunched the data and there's millions of observations here. And then someone has a personal story, and how can you outdo a personal story with millions of observations that are basically zeros and ones hidden in the computer somewhere.

MR. MULGREW: Right.

MR. GREENSTONE: And I think -- you know, my own view is that there just has to be an acceptance that the zeros and ones can tell us something, and even if they make us uncomfortable or go against what our neighbor told us, I think the path to improving achievement has to be by paying attention 0-1.

But none of that's really the important question. The important question here is for Pete. So, now, Brian and Jonah have showed us 40 to 1, 200 to 1, 9 to 1 -- these are just total no-brainers it seems, according to the zeros and 1s in the computer. But what they did not put into the calculation, as far as I can tell, is football, and the problem with starting later is that football teams can't practice, because middle schools don't have lights. But, yet, we are on stage with the super hero who overcame this very problem and implemented late start times.

MR. GORMAN: We have K-8s this year in Charlotte.

MR. GREENSTONE: So, how did you do that?

MR. GORMAN: Our number one concern was how are you going to do middle school football. (Laughter) It was, far and away, the number one concern. We started the season earlier and you put games on Wednesday night at high schools.

When high schools aren't playing and the kids get the opportunity to play on a high school field, it's one of the coolest things that ever happened to them instead of this detriment, because instead of playing on their middle school field.

We actually did all three things, though, this year in Charlotte, and we did it largely based on the economic challenges that we looked at doing some things differently. And we did close some large, low-performing middle schools, and we went with a K-8 model. But we didn't then put the kids in low-performing elementary schools. We looked and we reconfigured how we were doing things, and in

doing that I spent two weeks ago answering questions for the civil rights complaint that was filed for closing those schools and giving less opportunities for kids because they're now not in a middle school.

So, don't think this is easy. This isn't a main contributor why I'm a former superintendent of Charlotte-Mecklenberg Schools. (Laughter) But it is one of those pieces. And what us makes us think that a large, hulking, low-performing middle school can just be converted that easily? So, we did go to the K-8 model. What we found was a lot of the costs were capital costs, not operational costs. We had to redirect some bond funds that we had done, but they worked as long and ongoing.

We do transport kids to change sporting events. We group kids together a little bit different way. We're able to accomplish that.

I'm probably also one of those folks in a unique position that my daughter is in eight grade and has a 9:15 start time. And it fits her so well, because she doesn't do well. We moved 108 of our school start times this past year. And, again, we did it because of a financial push, and what we did was we moved the middle schools back. We extended the day for elementary so we could still do some of the triple run and quadruple-run types of things.

But we haven't tackled high school. And we have got to tackle that high school piece, because we are disadvantaging our kids. But we just made a decision last year -- there are only so many times you can poke people in the eye. You know, we just couldn't take on that high school piece last year.

We also did the work that we actually looked at, and I know we're going to talk later about different methodologies for looking at measuring performance, but we looked at value-added data and found that we had a severe drop for teachers when we changed what they taught. So, while we create a structure for system, where we disadvantage them by an area that they were really -- granted, there's so much more to measure than just that. What we realized was we were structurally doing things that disadvantaged our teachers. But with all three of these things as well, we didn't do it across the board, because not every middle school needed K-8. So, if you've got to be strategic and do that, then come up with what's the best model that fits for her particular school. And it's working.

MR. GREENSTONE: Bob, I know New Visions has done a lot of thinking about how to help students transition between grades think I think is at the heart of what's only concern is about the

middle schools. Do you want to talk a little bit about that?

MR. HUGHES: Sure. I mean, two things really. One is, what's interesting for us is we've not gone to the K-8 structure, just for a variety of political reasons in New York City.

Secondly, we have gone to a 6-12 structure and have, frankly, not been as successful as we might have imagined in that 6-12 structure. So, we're spending a lot of time trying to figure out what that is.

But I do believe that the transition piece that's -- you can't argue with that. When you look at longitudinal data across school systems, you see a significant drop after third grade and then particularly after fifth grade.

And so I do think we have to start thinking about rituals and routines that are common across those areas and start to think about the underlying causes of why kids aren't successful in middle school.

If you look at adolescent literacy research, for example, young people in urban areas face three problems. They face their own developmental issues. Middle school students are very complicated individuals, to say the least. They have -- and the increasing complexity of the material we ask them to undertake is significant. They're no longer just reading for comprehension; they're reading to create product themselves. And in an urban environment you have an enlarged number of kids who, because they're starting to fail, because they don't have coherent social structures -- which I do think speaks to the K-8, our argument -- they start to feel alienated and angry in school, so that by the time you get them in ninth grade, you've got very angry, low-performing young people; and you've got a remediation challenge that is double what might be there.

So, I think we have to think about the K-8 structure, but I would also argue that -- you know, I'm going to defend the chancellor here -- I think that there is a comprehensive set of systems that have to be in place ranging from literacy to relationships to community to youth development strategies, like rights-of-passage programs in some of our schools are absolutely crucial to be part of it.

So, I agree with the comment, one step back, we shouldn't drive by anecdote. But by the same token I think we should recognize that the best research findings have to land in a system that's complicated and needs to be taken into account as you move or reform agenda forward.

MR. GREENSTONE: Yes, please.

MR. MULGREW: I think that what you said in allowing the flexibility of the school to meet the needs is -- and putting some really pragmatic ideas in lace -- there are schools in New York City that I know you have -- the middle school student actually is responsible -- and these are not anecdotal, these are large numbers -- are responsible for taking their younger siblings to school in the elementary school. So, that later start time would be an automatic no-brainer in that situation, because there's -- if you don't do that, the detrimental effect on the older student is problematic. So, having the flexibility to match the school's communities needs to the design of the school is something that you don't see a lot of but I think it's something that we need to move forward into. We're saying look, it's about having a decision made based on the needs of the student population and the needs of the community at the same time. And if we can move towards that, that would be something we would completely endorse, because it's stronger and you're basing it off of the actual needs versus the system's needs. You are actually basing it off the needs of the person who's most important, which is the student.

MR. GREENSTONE: Jonah, yes.

MR. ROCKOFF: I'll defend the chancellor a little bit, even though they didn't kind of take -- the advice that comes out of paper at least didn't take it too far. But I think there are a couple of things that I heard when I saw the video of his talk last week, which was this is still a problem, we've been here before but we recognize it's still a problem, and I know it starts to sound like we'll never get this right, but I think if you know it's a problem you've got to keep the focus there until you get it right.

MR. GREENSTONE: Yeah.

MR. ROCKOFF: He does say there are a lot of great middle schools out there, and I agree with that.

You know, I think one of the pieces of evidence I find so compelling about -- you know, power for middle schools comes from the charter schools, like Harlem Children Zone schools; like Pokips schools; like a whole bunch of high-performing charter schools. But they're running middle schools. They're taking kids that have come from very different areas and they're coming in at fifth and sixth grade and they're doing great with them.

So, there's nothing in our research that says you can't make it work with a middle school.

But what it does say is primarily if you had to start from scratch, middle schools might not be the right way to go, okay?

Too, if you're already serving a whole bunch of students through middle schools, you're probably not handling that transition very well, okay? Maybe there are a couple of schools that are doing it well, but overall, there's got to be a lot of schools that are not handling that transition very well and they need to put a lot of focus on that entry point, because that seems to be the place where middle schools perform the worst. And the students just don't recover after that. And that I heard from the Chancellor of New York City Schools, which was we need to figure out what works and get connections between middle schools and the elementary schools that serve them, have continuity, create structures like team teaching within the school where a group of students are all taught by the same set of subject teachers so that different teachers can share information very easily about students and come to agreement and share ideas about what reaches particular students, how to tailor instruction to particular students. And those are all ideas that come easily in a K-8 school, because the student body is so much smaller.

In the middle school, just because of the way that the school system is structured with school buildings that serve roughly 800 to 1000 kids, if you only serve three grades, you've got a lot more kids per grade. Trying to narrow -- trying to make a small school environment within that big building requires a little bit of creativity, a little bit of ingenuity. And in a K-8 model, when you're serving nine grades you automatically only have 80 or 100, so it comes natural. That small feel comes natural. And so I think, you know, I would like to see more places experiment with the transition to the K-8, because I think the evidence points in that direction.

But I'm not saying that everybody's got to go there; they've just to focus on how to make middle schools -- all middle schools -- as successful as the ones we've seen can do a job.

MR. MULGREW: I'm sorry, did you do any -- on the middle schools themselves, did you find middle schools that were using small learning communities, house structures type of things? The high schools have now -- because the high school entry point is also very problematic, many more of the high schools -- Bob does a lot of this -- is ninth-grade academies. So, we note there's extra support and extra focus right on that ninth grade. Did you study any middle schools that were doing that type of work?

MR. ROCKOFF: So, the short answer is no, and the reason is the data. So, we need to

find -- you know, the problem is when you're doing research on a district like New York City, the fantastic thing is you've just got lots of schools, you've got lots of data points, but understanding what all of the hundreds of middle schools are doing and the hundreds of K-8 schools are doing is just not feasible for the kind of research that Brian and I are doing. We do look at things like class size, teacher experience, overall spending, how much are courses that are offering things like art and music and technology and those kinds of things, and there the K-8s performs just as well both on efficiency grounds and also on course offerings and (inaudible).

And they also do really well on parent-student satisfaction, and middle schools don't.

You know, I would love to know more about programmatic aspects and I think if you had a great date on programs all across the city you could then start getting inside that lock box and get to your question.

MR. JACOB: I mean, I completely agree with -- kind of Bob's point that we, eager for research, are very convinced is compelling in general certainly doesn't mean it could or should be applied universally to context. I think that's why I opened up by saying we cold highlight these three specific types of reforms, but the bigger picture or the bigger theme of our paper was not these three per se, but the theme of kind of focusing on the less glamorous low-hanging fruit out there. And I think there has been -- I mean, it's interesting, this middle school thing. This has been (inaudible) program. I know when I was teaching, I was actually teaching in junior high -- JHS45 -- that was at that point trying to transition from a junior high to a middle school, and there's a hole in the '80s and '90s, a middle school movement that was going to try to institute block scheduling, team teaching, smaller learning environments, etc.

I mean, to address this exact issue, there's a very well known Carnegie Foundation report. I have focused on the middle school model. And it is just a very difficult issue for a lot of the kind of historical, political, financial reasons. It's not a simple thing.

MR. GREENSTONE: I want to pick up on that. When we talked to you guys originally about writing this paper, the appeal was well, there might be lots of things laying around, none of which are going to transform schools over night. But there might be some beneficial gains available for students. And I think a lot of the pushback on some of those ideas tends to come down to political interest, I think, and the system is built in a particular way, and what that reminded me of is when we were

considering where to send our children to public school -- I went to a -- granted Cambridge, Massachusetts, is not the rest of the United States, but I went to a Cambridge, Massachusetts, school board meeting -- and what I was really astonished and unprepared for was the number of goals that people had for the school system. There were the people who had more organics in the schools, and that was a very loud part of that meeting. (Laughter) There were the people who were very concerned about scheduling of recess time and could the two fifth grade classes have the recess time at the same time because the kids in the two fifth grade classes -- and it was just on and on and on and then people were extraordinarily passionate about it -- all -- on each of their topics. I'm not sure any of them was less passionate than the other. (Laughter)

What was missing from that was how are we going to get better student achievement. And people had lauded on all these extra goals onto the poor public schools who were -- you know, teachers trying to show up and do their job and supposed to 11 other things. But my brother's a high school teacher and he'll be the first to tell me this.

So, I wanted to shift the conversation a little bit. Let's just suppose that Brian and Jonah have scratched the surface of all the wonderful things that we could do that might give us .2 standard deviations. But you add them up, might add up to something. What can we do to get schools better focused on a little more single-minded about student achievement? Is there -- and I understand it's a deep and hard question, but does anyone want to try and take a bite at that?

MR. MULGREW: And New York City has schools graded every year -- A, B, C, D, F -- and 85 percent of that is just on the math and ELA test score. So, I want -- you know, is that the right question to ask -- is something that needs to be looked at more? But right now there is -- we have a school system that is saying that student achievement is their performance on a standardized test. So, the entire school system and the principal's annual performance review is based upon that. So, there is a focus. The question we're asking is, is that the right focus for student achievement? But the focus on student achievement amongst the teachers, the administrators is clearly there in New York City. The question again is, is that the right -- and I know that's part of our third, you know, discussion, but there is a lot of -- but what you're saying -- yes when you are dealing with a whole school community, the parents -- and they have their needs, which they're bring in, too, and a lot of it has to do with what time they go to

work, what time they can get home, what time they can arrange for child care. It's tough, but in New York City we are definitely focused on student achievement.

MR. HUGHES: I mean, I think what's interesting is the culture shifted when I started 10 years ago in New York City. If we wanted a cohort graduation rate, we literally had to send people into guidance counselors' offices and pull individual student records. That's gone. I mean, we have much more sophisticated data systems now. We're starting to get to the place where we're capturing microdata as well as macrodata. We still have a long way to go in building systems that are coherent against what we want kids to know and be able to do. Just witness the recent work that Kip has been doing around character education and the role that that plays undergirding the types of resiliency you want to see with young people to be successful over time.

What I do -- I really want to want to just underscore -- I think his paper is right on the money in the sense that we need to now start looking at issues like high school schedules, like the first five minutes in class and how teachers transition into instruction. The time between fifth and sixth grade may be a very appropriate time to go to K-8 or it may be an appropriate time to go to year-round schooling in that one instance to get the transitions right. I mean, there are a multitude of things that happen in a school building that we just don't pay attention to, and when you look at industries like health care, we kind of embrace the Deming, Shewhart types of analysis to really look at how they're structured at micro and macro level. They are making real improvement on basic things that lead to significant better health outcomes.

So, I think we're just at the cuffs. Tony Bryk is doing a lot of this work at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. We're doing some of it; others are doing it. I think it's really important to start to really hunker down and get the management of schools right, because if we can get the management right I think we're going to have a significant bump -- as much as -- and I think it's equally important to make sure we have the people in front of kids for producing outcomes.

MR. MULGREW: In Carolinas you're doing the 6-2 models in certain schools. That's six weeks on, two weeks off throughout the entire school year. And I'm very interested in that. I've spoken to a lot of teachers in New York City about -- their first response also is -- you know, some of them would be, like, well, that would be great, and others were, like, I'm not sure, I have child care issues. But I'm

very interested to see where that leads and if that does have a direct impact on student achievement.

MR. GORMAN: In Charlotte we are. We're picking certain schools and experimenting with year-round options coming in, and we're looking at that. But I think you mentioned a piece, and that is in many cases there's a huge disconnect obviously with what goes on at a school board meeting and what goes on in a school. (Laughter) And I often viewed that my job was -- and I enjoyed the board (inaudible) what was to protect our staff from the craziness that occurs at our board meetings. (Laughter)

But we've set up systems and structures that bring that. We have an unlimited number of speakers for public comment for three minutes each at the start of the meeting. You might as well say why don't we get as many people to come and take us off target as possible (laughter) as we -- you would never run a meeting that way.

And I think also we really bear some of that as well in that we don't focus it and we don't come and report back the right data, the right information, because it's not sexy.

I remember we did something about what some of our teachers were doing with a family model. They were trading kids -- they were just doing great work. And we presented that, and I'll never forget one of our board members came afterward and said that was the most boring presentation ever. And I thought so we just talked about the highest level of engagement and growth any of our kids have in any of our middle schools and it bored you, I'm sorry. That's the kind of stuff we need to be talking about at those meetings.

MR. ROCKOFF: Can I add a point from some work that Brian did, not, obviously, this paper but, you know, thinking about parental motivation and what parents care about. I think that it's worth saying in response to the point that Michael brought up. And if I -- correct me, of course, if I'm misstating.

I think he shows that, particularly among low-income and minority parents, there is a big emphasis on student achievement, that there does seem to be a lot of value placed on getting particularly teachers -- this is from Brian's work -- having their child placed with a teacher who is fantastic at improving student achievement. And among more affluent parents, there was actually less emphasis on the student achievement piece, as we measure it, and of course how we measure is very important But a lot more evidence on the student satisfaction on how their child felt. Were they happy in school, that sort

of thing.

And, you know, I puzzle over that, because we often think that more educated or affluent parents put more emphasis on education. We have this preconception that ultimately their parents care more; that's why these kids are doing well and the poor kids -- their parents must care less. And that actually wasn't true in what Brian found, and I -- that's thought provoking.

And it also makes me wonder well, why are they putting less emphasis when they think about which teacher they want their child to be with. They want the teacher that makes the kid happy and not the kid that raises their achievement test scores. And one reason -- one answer is well, the achievement test scores aren't measuring what the parents car about and that the happiness actually implies learning other stuff. That's possible.

But I think another reason is information is difficult overall. And if you're the parent of a poor child, you maybe have a good sense that look, I need my child to do well on these basic skills tests. I need to know that they're reading, they're doing math, they're doing well on all these things in order to be successful in the world. As a child of amore affluent parent, you've got to take some of those things for granted. And you don't have good information about all the other things that your kid is learning in the classroom. So, the only thing you base it off of is happiness.

So, I think a challenge for motivating the parents who are focused on the organic food instead of the fact that their child may not be able to compete with children in China who are, you know, acing those international exams are going to have job for them waiting, you know, 10, 20 years down the road is they need to add more information about what goes on in the classroom, what their kids are learning, and how important those are for those kids later on.

MR. GREENSTONE: Okay.

MR. HUGHES: Could I just -- and we've been doing experiments on different types of report cards. If you look at the typical report card that comes out of a school district, it is very hard to figure out where you are, particularly if your goal is to go to college or, you know, some sort of career. So, we've been just trying to figure out how you do the visualization of where the students are with skills so that parents get a better sense of it. But take a policy example in New York City. Up until five years ago, we said the promotion standard was eight credits at the end of ninth grade. What's fascinating is

when you do the longitudinal analysis, if you have eight credits at the end of ninth grade, you have about a 40 percent chance of graduating three years later. Are we really being honest with parents in the policies that we've set up?

You know, when we look at our college readiness numbers, we're tracking our kids into college. If students don't have a Regents or Advance Regents diploma, it's highly unlikely that they're going to succeed in college. When do we have those conversations with parents about what the standard really is to be successful in college. I think we're afraid to have them, because we aren't managing our system against them. We're starting to have them, and I think it's important because it's going to change how we think about where we put our resources, how we talk about what we're doing, and what the standards for ourselves and everybody -- the adults in the building as well as the students. But this information piece is absolutely crucial, and we have to get better at it.

MR. GREENSTONE: Okay, I think we're going to turn to the questions, and I wondered if Bob Rubin wanted to ask the first question. (Laughter)

MR. RUBINS: I apologize. I know your handling (inaudible). Let me try one.

You have had two remarkable conversations at least deeply thoughtful. What is the principal impediment to moving forward either on a pilot process, pilot project basis, or, more broadly, an arrangement where there is clear evidence of progress so that you don't wind up with the kinds of graphs that Roland started us off with?

MR. GORMAN: A couple of things initially come to mind for me. The first is this desire to have whole scale changes in school districts that we tend to have, that we want to be able to do it across the board and not try different things and to take away -- it's that piece of local control versus district-wide, and we struggle with that greatly.

And I think the other piece that we talked about was that one individual who comes and gives a narrative taste for something that could happen that is so compelling that gets to sway folks and brings fear to individuals. In many cases it's elected board members. In a lot of cases in superintendents. And I'm not willing to try that so I'll go the safe route. And I think we back down and we don't try different things or give schools the leeway to do that. As a superintendent, those are two things I'm worried about.

MR. GREENSTONE: Michael, you want to try?

MR. MULGREW: All the change I'm looking at right now has to deal with instruction inside of a classroom. There's been a lot of debate about outside, looking at what happens as a result of what happens in the classroom. Children learn much differently now, and children -- learning modalities will continue to change as our society changes, as the use of technology and everything else. So, we as a profession and as a country -- we don't look at that. So it's how do we adapt the classroom to the learning needs of the student. Yet, that's not sexy. That's not fighting. That's not on the front page of the papers. That's not an ugly debate. Because when you get deeply into that discussion, people start to yawn. But that's really where the focus has to be, and the political navigation, as you thought about, is a tough one. But I do believe it you have people saying this is what's going to make a difference, there's a way to figure out the navigation. It might be tough at times, but there's a way that you can get to it with good research, and that's why I wanted to take part in this when you invited me. I said this is research that can start adding to that discussion about how do we -- yeah, there is low-hanging fruit out there for schools. I agree with you. But how do we adapt it so that the schools have the ability to do those changes.

And there are certain incentives. When you -- when I read your piece about the inputs and looking at that I said, you know, that's interesting stuff. We've done so much on the outputs, and the research is pretty clear on it, that we have to start looking at these things. How will that be able to enhance the teacher-student interaction inside of the classroom, because that's what's going to move the student and therefore move education.

So, creating an environment where you're allowed to have flexibility based off of accepted, good research and just do that navigation, I am more than happy to do all sorts of experimental things in New York City. We have a benefit, because we have so many schools and we can play. But let's play based on real good ideas versus, you know, political agendas, ideological ideas. Let's do what we know is actually working, and I would support that and push it politically at all different levels.

MR. HUGHES: I would agree with everything that's said. We need multiple tests of change that are low stakes. We new intensive, new investments in the research community. We need people thinking about high-quality research like the research you presented. Here it is. You go to the

typical education research conference, you walk away thinking never have so many labored so hard for so little. (Laughter) And so I think we need substantially different kind of research. I would say we need room for failure. We need white papers, and I affectionately call them red papers -- we tried this, it didn't work. That needs to be incentivized down to the teacher and the principal level. We need morbidity and mortality conferences where you can talk about why the patient died and know what you said at that conference is not going to show up in a lawsuit in two weeks. If we can be honest about what's working and not working, I think we do have a shot. Until we build those conditions, we're not going to make it.

MR. MULGREW: Yeah, I think, you know, culture experimentation and willingness to accept failure, you know, not all good ideas are going to work out just way like this.

MR. GREENSTONE: Okay, I think we have time for one more question, and we are in Washington, D.C., home of the federal government, so this question seems appropriate. Are there are (inaudible) indications at the federal level on this topic in what might those look like. And I guess in the shadow of the President's recent announcement about waivers for No Child Left Behind, maybe one of you would like to take that on.

Yeah, you start. (Laughter)

MR. GORMAN: Well, I spent a lot of time with already talking through things, and, you know, there's that -- I don't know that I want them to get involved. There are -- be careful what you ask for sometimes. And -- but I do think there is certainly legislation that could be supportive or help you move in a particular direction. And let me give you just an example. So we had to report out some high-stakes assessment results in the way we were grouping kids that best fit their needs. We had a very difficult time identifying them and tying them back to a specific grade and standard. So, we had to restructure what we were doing that was having a benefit. So, to say yes, my advice is give us more waivers doesn't exactly seem like the best piece of advice. But I'd just say be cautious when you ask for something that is going to impact a hundred thousand schools being made in one blanket sweep. Reminds me to be cautious.

MR. MULGREW: I'm not -- the idea that we're going into waivers all over the place because we have a law on the books, that when it was passed people said oh, well, we can never get to the end of it, we're going to have to change it before we get to the end of it. Now we're near the end of it

and now we have to give waivers because there's no way to change it because of the political climate and the federal government asking me if it would be a good idea for federal policy -- I'm probably on your side on this one. If you're having a discussion based on politics and making decisions based upon that, then please stay out -- stay out of this. It's just not going to work anymore. Political gains are not good for the children of the country. It has to stop. If you want to have meaningful legislation and policy based upon real research, then sit down and let's work on something. But right now schools are jumping through hoops to try to supply all sorts of data. They're spending I don't know how much of their percentages or their budgets just meeting all the testing mandates, reporting out mandates, and all that information is going out, and nobody really knows what to make of it all. It's confused the public, and it's made education probably one of the hottest political topics in the country. But I don't see real policy that's trying to help students inside of the classroom. I can see a lot of adults struggling here in D.C.

MR. GREENSTONE: Okay, Bob, you're going to, I think, lose your turn here for a second. I think we're going to have an eight-minute break, and then I assure you that the next panel will be thought provoking and entertaining.

Join me in thanking the panelists.

(Applause)