

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

READY TO BE COUNTED?
INCORPORATING NONCOGNITIVE SKILLS INTO EDUCATION POLICY

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The Research Case and Prospects for Policymaking:

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. WEST: Good morning. My name is Marty West. I'm an Associate Professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and also a Non-Resident Senior Fellow here at Brookings.

It's an honor to be here to welcome you to today's discussion of noncognitive skills and their implications for education policy.

I want to begin by briefly addressing the most common feedback or criticism I received when planning this event, and to make things absolutely clear, I don't much like the term "noncognitive skills" either. (Laughter)

I'm aware that it is a misnomer, that every psychological trait is cognitive in the sense that it relies on the processing of information of some kind. The term's emergence simply reflects the historical fact that the term "cognitive" was appropriated early on to refer to intellectual abilities and subject matter achievement, making everything else that is not directly measured by tests of intellectual ability and subject matter achievement noncognitive by default.

Given this fact, the situation we find ourselves in, I tend to agree with former Director of the Institute of Education Sciences, John Easton, who recently said everybody hates this term, but everyone knows roughly what you mean when you use it, and no one has a much better alternative. I think the fact that we have a full room here today in Falk Auditorium and lots of people watching the event on line suggests that he's right.

We will surely return to the labeling issues later, but my hope is that we won't today get bogged down in semantics, because the substantive issues at stake are too important.

The evidence is overwhelming that whatever they are called, skills beyond those captured by test scores play a critical role in supporting students' success

in school and in life. Gaps in those skills appear to play a key role in explaining the differences in access to opportunities that are rightly the focus of so much policy attention at present.

I say this not to disparage test scores, which remain the best short term proxy for long term student success, but it's increasingly clear that test scores don't tell us everything we want to know. It is also clear that educators know this and are devoting considerable energy to developing students' noncognitive skills, but they are doing so largely without the benefit of an organizing policy framework.

The question before us today is how if at all should policy makers at the state, local, and Federal level respond to this situation? What would it mean to incorporate noncognitive skills into education policy? These are hard questions, which I'm glad to be asking questions today rather than answering them, and that we have such a distinguished panel of practitioners to help us think them through.

We built the event mainly around presentations from two organizations that in very different ways stand out due to their coordinated structured approaches to developing students' noncognitive skills.

First, the CORE Districts, which I used to think was the California Office to Reform Education, but I have learned is now an acronym that is no longer an acronym -- is a partnership of 10 Districts in California that collectively serve more than one million students.

CORE received a waiver from the Federal Government to develop a school accountability system that explicitly incorporates measures of social emotional learning.

Rick Miller, the Executive Director of CORE, and a former Deputy Superintendent of the California Department of Education, will share what they have learned so far.

Broadening accountability systems is one way to broaden the definition of school success. Another one that may be particularly attractive when it comes to difficult to measure constructs like noncognitive skills is to rely on market forces.

It's interesting to note that many of the schools that are leading in this space, that are being most innovative, are in fact charter schools, many of the "no excuses" variety.

We are very glad to be joined also by Richard Barth, the CEO of the KIPP Foundation, who will share how his network of 162 schools seeks to track the development of its students' character.

Before that, we have the privilege to hear from Chris Gabrieli. Chris Gabrieli is a successful health care entrepreneur who since has turned his entrepreneurial energies into the field of education. He's been the founder of numerous organizations, including the National Center on Time and Learning, and Transforming Education, the work of which he will talk with us about today.

I should also say that Chris was recently appointed by Republican Governor of Massachusetts, Charlie Baker, to be the Chair of the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education. The fact that he received that appointment despite the fact that he himself was the former Democratic candidate for Governor in the state, I think tells us something about his noncognitive abilities. (Laughter) I think he is well equipped to kick off the discussion.

Without further ado, I will turn things over to Chris. (Applause)

MR. GABRIELI: Thanks for that kind introduction, Marty. I guess political flimflamery is now a noncognitive competency. (Laughter)

Good morning. On behalf of all my colleagues at Transforming Education, several of whom are here with me today, we thank Brookings for the opportunity to participate.

While the title of today's event is "Ready to be Counted?" my job is largely to make the case that the answer is "Ready to be Counted!" To do that, I am going to share a little data and our thinking around two propositions.

First, there is ample and compelling evidence that noncognitive skills predict and influence success in academics, for careers and incomes, and in life well-being.

In light of that, surely schools and education systems must incorporate explicit and effective strategies to help ensure students gain these vital skills.

Second, far from being yet another potential add on to existing work being done by educators, the evidence is there is already a huge amount being done and spent on these skills by teachers in schools, generally under the rubric of social emotional learning. New and better policy is needed to bring more order and effectiveness to existing investments.

By way of brief background on our organization, Transforming Education, we are a Boston based non-profit that works at the intersection of education and psychological science in order to try to build effective education policies and practices that can equip students with the full range of skills they need to succeed.

We are the strategic advisor to education systems serving more than a million students. As part of that, we are fortunate to work with both CORE and KIPP in Massachusetts, and you will hear from both of them later.

We are also active in partnerships that generate scholarships in this field, often in partnership with Marty West and his colleagues, as well as our National Scientific Advisory Board that includes many of the leaders in this field, such as Carol Dweck and Angela Duckworth.

Some of you may recognize the Tower of Babel on this slide. (Laughter)
Either artistically, as the 16th Century painting by Bruegel, or perhaps as the

contemporary cacophony of overlapping terminology in this field, such as social emotional skills, character, soft skills, 21st Century skills, mindsets, EQ, and so on.

Many of us find the National Academy of Sciences' framework to be a helpful way to organize this disparate terminology. It labels two large clusters of competencies outside the cognitive area as intra-personal and inter-personal. Thus, one large domain addresses how we manage ourselves while the other covers how we interact with other people.

We use a further term at Transforming Education for the subset of intra-personal and inter-personal skills that are most ripe for use in schools. The term is "MESH," short for mindsets and essential skills and habits.

Our argument is for this field to become practical for schools, we need to sift the many identified competencies through three filters, which we call the three "M's." Which skills are meaningful and that they significantly impact students' success, which ones are practically measurable in school settings, and finally, which are malleable through the effort of schools and teachers.

The subset of skills that reasonably meet these criteria we label "MESH skills." For example, working with our colleagues and CORE and the CORE Districts, they have selected four such competencies on which to initially focus.

The evidence in this field can be organized around three high level scores: success in academics, in career, and later in life. Later this spring, we will be releasing a working paper for this field aimed at highlighting a range of compelling evidence, but for today, we only have time for a snapshot.

To start with academic success, we can point to evidence such as from the Dunedin longitudinal study on self management, where those with high self control in their early years went on to graduate high school at a 95 percent rate versus only 58 percent for those low in self control.

Carmen Segal's work on self management showed those low in self control in 8th grade were three times less likely to graduate college. In our own work with Marty West, we showed that growth mindset is a significant predictor of test score value added gains from 4th grade to 8th grade in Boston.

In career success, we are compelled by James Heckman's findings on the NLSY longitudinal dataset that for adult employment, adolescent noncognitives were more predictive than cognitive measures. In the Dunedin study, those high in self control in youth were four times more likely to be earning at least \$2,000 per month as adults than those low in self control.

When you ask employers, as Northeastern Researchers did recently, all five of the top skills sought among college graduates were noncognitive ones, such as work ethic and team work.

Finally, when looking at life well-being, Dunedin shows 13 percent of high self control kids ending up with adult criminal convictions, far less than the 43 percent for their low control peers.

In Walter Mischel famous marshmallow test of delayed gratification, each minute a four year old could wait longer predicted a .2 decrease in their adult body mass index. Some people think it is obvious if you don't eat the marshmallow, you are thinner, but it is subtler than that. (Laughter)

In the famous Perry Preschool Trial, the rate of becoming a single parent dropped from 83 percent in the control group to 57 percent among those who received the intervention.

We don't have time to go into detail in any or all of this evidence, but I do want to give you just a quick sense of the depth and quality of the studies underlying the evidence I just summarized.

To begin with, I cited the Dunedin study for all three areas of success.

That is an extraordinary study over the past 40 years where nearly every child born in the New Zealand Village of Dunedin in 1972 has been followed longitudinally.

After sifting through all the data, there childhood risk factors explain a great deal of long term outcomes - IQ, SEL, and self control. What Dunedin allows us to see is the incredible importance of self control in children even after controlling for IQ and SEL. We see how low self control children get caught in adolescent snares, such as smoking, dropping out, and getting pregnant, and how over the long term, self control is a major factor in predicting a wide range of adult outcomes.

This busy slide shows a number of key outcomes in health and wealth among that Dunedin cohort, now in their late 30s, mapped against their childhood levels of self control.

As you can see, the gradient of self control in youth highly correlates to adult outcomes, such as physical health, substance dependence, income, and savings.

Here is a 3D data depiction by a Nobel Prize economist, James Heckman, looking at probabilities of gaining a college degree by age 30 among men. As you can see, the level of cognitive and noncognitive predictors are approximately equally important. Neither alone is sufficient to ensure college graduation.

Here are long term outcomes from the Perry Preschool Study. In a wide variety of intermediate and long term outcomes, the program recipients do better than the control group. While the cognitive measure of IQ showed a major gain at age 5, all of that disappeared by 3rd grade, what is known as the "fade out effect." This means the long term positive outcomes are likely attributable to the sustained noncognitive advantages.

While the previous slides have focused more on our criterion of whether these skills are meaningful in terms of long term outcomes, the Perry Preschool also is important for showing that the skills are malleable in that case at age 4.

Here we show an important recent trial of the Tools of the Mind curriculum, which targets executive function, a key driver of self control and other skills. As you can see, the intervention aligns with increasing gains in reading.

Turning to interventions at the middle school level, Carol Dweck's work on growth mindset shows here the ability to halt and even reverse the normal decline in math achievement among the intervention group.

Finally, Raj Chevys' recent analysis of the long term data arising from the famous Tennessee Star Study shows that high quality kindergarten imparts impressive economic value to students. Interestingly, the analysis also shows that the benefit of high quality kindergarten fades once measured through test scores, but continues when it is measured through noncognitive skills, suggesting it is the noncognitive skills that drove the adult economic benefits.

Hopefully, this drive by data dump helps convince you that noncognitive skills matter. Whether you agree or not, this slide shows you teachers sure think they do. In national surveys of teachers, you can see that over 90 percent think social emotional skills are important and teachable, and nearly every single one has at least some students who need SEL help, and 88 percent say there is some SEL programming already at their schools.

Transforming Education's second working paper out later this spring dives deeper into the question of what all these schools and teachers are already doing. In our ongoing survey work, we are seeing interesting differences in the motivations. While district leaders have lofty goals, such as "a more well rounded education and more engaged citizens," principals' top sided reason is academic performance, and teachers' top reason, classroom behavior management. It seems fairly instrumental.

Demand is high. What's the supply? It's important to realize there is some very large programming efforts in the United States today. AVID has been around

for decades, used in more than 4,800 schools. Second Step, another multifaceted curricula and professional development approach, is in 25,000 schools, and Responsive Classroom claims to have trained 65,000 teachers over the past 20 years.

Most recently, the free downloadable App called "ClassDoJo," which allows teachers to immediately assign points for behavior during classes, say they have been downloaded by at least one teacher in half of all American schools, and have interacted with 35 million teachers, students, and parents.

Because all of you have been doing such a fine job listening to us this morning, I am awarding all of you a point now. (Laughter)

Finally, we are working to quantify how much is being invested into noncognitive skill development already. On direct spending, hard dollars spent on materials or training, we are currently yielding a mid-range point estimate of \$640 million per year.

When it comes to considering the allocation of time, a tremendously precious resource for teachers and schools, we are getting an estimate of about four hours and 20 minutes a week of teacher time, about 10 percent of all of their time.

The majority of that, more than half an hour a day, is classroom instructional time, and another 90 minutes a week is in prep time.

We want to provide a monetary estimate for all that teacher time, and depending on which cost allocation model we choose, our preliminary estimate is in the range of \$30 billion of our nation's total annual spend on K-12 education is already being allocated to SEL activities.

I hope you feel this presentation helps shift the question mark to an exclamation point when it comes to the importance of noncognitive skills for education policy. These competencies matter greatly to student success, and they are already the subject of large scale investments.

We think the time is here to move beyond discussing whether these competencies should be incorporated into education policy and instead to focus on how.

Now I'd like to turn it over to Rick Miller, who can share an example of how seven Districts in California have done just that. (Applause)

MR. MILLER: Thanks, Chris. Good morning, everybody. Let me begin telling you a little bit about CORE and CORE Districts.

CORE Districts represent over a million students in California, 10 mostly large districts across the state, eight of the 10 largest Districts in California are part of our network. You can see the Districts here.

We have a waiver from ESEA, so we are unique in that we are the only non-state waived set of Districts. In California, California the state decided not to apply for a waiver. The Federal Government allowed the CORE Districts to come in and get a waiver. That is what we are sort of going to talk about today, that waiver.

We began this conversation thinking about what we wanted to put in our waiver and what we wanted to make as part of our accountability model. We started with collecting the Dashboards of the Districts across our network. The theory being whatever they are paying attention to is what we want to start with.

It was an important way to go into this work, it was less about what we sort of want to make sure we are accountable for and sort of hammering on and more about what do we value, what are sort of the right drivers to move our systems in the direction we want to go, and then how can we incorporate them.

Early on, a decision that SEL was a large part of that made a lot of sense to us. We had a couple of Districts that were in the Castle Districts, working these issues, but across the board, most of the Districts hadn't engaged in these issues, but felt it was going to be an important part of what we did.

We sort of put our three things in front as we moved our accountability

model. One was this imperative that we have to do what is right for all the kids in all of our network, and what does an accountability look like to do that.

Second, how do we share accountability. The way we hold ourselves accountable is actually through a peer review process. We actually don't have an SCA looking into us, looking at whether we are doing what we want, but actually holding each other accountable through a peer review process.

Finally, the notion of disproportionality. In California, the end size for our subgroups in our work book is actually 100, we dropped it to 20 by choice. Disproportionality actually is a critical issue in California across all of our subgroups, and the reality is we are a majority/minority state, the vast majority of kids in our Districts fall within a subgroup. We wanted to make sure we were focusing deeply on them and their needs.

This is a look at our accountability model. We are a multiple measure accountability system. We have an academic domain that makes up 60 percent of our work, and that would include both performance and growth on Smarter Balance in California, and then graduation rates at the high school, and persistence rates at the middle school, which is to look at kids moving from middle school to high school, and actually making sure that they are high school ready when entering 9th grade.

We look at a group of social emotional factors that matter a lot to us as well, chronic absenteeism. We start with culture and climate surveys that will go to parents, teachers, and students, and again, the notion for us that accountability is what we think matters to us, and what kids think of their school matters to us, and we want to incorporate that into what we pay attention to.

Suspension/expulsion rates, very specifically targeted to disproportionality. Social emotional skills, which we made large because of the issue. You see actually these are all eight percent and the reason they are all eight percent is

we have never done this before. We wanted to sort of equally weight them as we figured it out, and as we get the measures in, we will then change the weighting based on what we are finding.

English language, re-designation rates, a critical thing in California, about a quarter of our kids are English language learners, and then special ed rates, and in particular the number in California, the number of African American males that specifically are special education in a disproportionate way.

That sum total is our accountability model, and this summer will be the very first time we introduce this and give it to the schools. We call it the "School Card Improvement Index."

Our focus on social emotional, as Chris sort of laid out, is sort of the combination of intra-personal and inter-personal. There was multiple measures, I think, Chris had up that you could have chosen from. Several in the Castle Districts have done a number of these.

After lots of conversations, these five seemed to jump out to us as the right place to begin. What I would really want to emphasize as we look at this is we view this as a grand pilot. We are trying to figure this out, so we want to sort of move slowly with what we know we can do and work with, and then remove beyond that.

I think in hopefully 10 years from now, that would not be the total look at what we are considering, but we thought those five in particular made a lot of sense for us to begin our work.

This is the group of folks that are working where we are doing these and which grades, and the folks helping us. Most of these folks are key partners, are advisors to Transforming Education, who are our advisors in this work, so they have sort of helped us think through how to think about this and how to consider this in our work.

We are now in the process of actually surveying about half a million kids,

and we believe -- we like to say this is the biggest pilot of social emotional skills ever in the history of the galaxy, planet -- what do we go with? Galaxy. We're going with galaxy. No one has ever said that's not true, so we are just going to keep going with it.

(Laughter)

This is a huge undertaking for us. For the most part, we are testing both teachers and students, so we would ask the students several questions about their social emotional skills, and ask teachers their thoughts. What we found was where we asked teachers, it was actually more helpful, and that was our best data source, but continuing that is actually very, very hard.

It was costly, and most of our Districts in the pilot paid teachers to do that work, but couldn't at scale continue to do it. It got caught up in a lot of cases in our bargaining agreements. It is part of our CBAs, it has to include it. It is a very hard issue to do locally.

I'm happy to say Fresno Unified is the one District that has said wall to wall, every teacher in those grades will be looking at their students. The one thing you also have to understand about this when we asked teachers to do this, think about a secondary teacher, if you're asking a secondary teacher to ask three or four questions about every student she has in her classroom, you have 150 kids sometimes they come across in their classrooms, it's an enormous burden.

Trying to figure out how we sort of work with the need and desire for that data with the practical implications of how hard that is to collect locally is something we are struggling with and trying to figure out.

We are glad that one District is doing it at scale, and then other Districts are on a pilot basis going to continue to have teachers in certain classrooms do it, but all students across our entire network will be taking these or are in the process of taking these surveys. Most actually have completed at this point.

Then we are going to produce that this year, give them the initial results. One thing we are absolutely adamant on is we never give a school data and hold them accountable before they have seen it.

This year, this summer, they will get the results of these surveys. They will get the results of where it would look normally on their index, but they would not be held accountable for it. Next year, so the 2016-17 school year, will be the first year we will actually hold them accountable for these results.

This is a look at ultimately how we are going to produce our index. The notion is we are really trying to get away both in the Federal and state accountability model from a single number. Like in California, we actually have an academic performance index that gives you a number between 2 and 800 or 2 and 1,000, 800 being your desire or AYP, you made it you didn't make it.

We actually stole in part from Alberta, Canada or the theory behind this of sort of a multiple measured Dashboard that gives parents a look across the board at multiple things we are considering and how your school is doing.

This is a mock. The data is fake. The mock may not look exactly like this. We are actually working with grade schools to see if we can use their sort of growth and work with them to produce a measure like this so parents can have a better understanding of what's going on at school, recognizing that a single number doesn't really capture what is happening in a school, and social emotional will be a huge part of that process.

That is the overview of our work and what we are trying to do. I appreciate your time and look forward to questions as we move forward.

At this point, I'd like to ask Richard Barth to come and talk to us a little bit about KIPP. (Applause)

MR. BARTH: This is great. I have to say listening to our last two

speakers, I feel like we are about to enter the Minor Leagues. I'm not a researcher. I'm not a policy guy. I have not worked in a large system.

I want to share a little bit of a story but with immense amounts of humility and just say the most important thing for me and the reason I came here was I think in an organization like ours, and when people think about KIPP, they could end up in a lot of this work saying well, you guys must be about academics and we are talking about something different over here.

If there is one thing that I hope people take away by virtue of my joining you here today is that is not the case.

I start by saying what is KIPP as a reminder to us because if you look at the last word in the description of what we are about, we are about preparing young people for success in life.

As Chris and Rick spoke, I think it gets to the heart of this, which is our mission, our purpose, our reason for being and in building this network is not to get a certain score this year. It is actually to prepare young people for success in life, and that has been true from day one.

We have grown a good bit over the last stretch. As you heard in Marty's introduction, we have 162 schools today, we are serving around 60,000 children, grades Pre-K through 12. More important to us than our growth is that we have really honored this commitment to preparing kids for success in life.

To this point, over 94 percent of our KIPPsters who graduate from high school, we now have 6,000 KIPPsters in college as we speak today. We have another 3,500 who are seniors getting ready for that next year. We view college, just to be clear, as one of the best proxies in America today to putting yourself on a pathway to success. College is not our mission in our life, but we think it is still one of the best pathways.

The question we are grappling with is how do we ensure we deliver on

this promise we make to kids all across the country.

You can look at our 60,000 KIPPsters, as we know them and love them, and you could look at the story more broadly and say well, it must be again all about just teaching, learning, and academics.

I do want to emphasize that since the beginning, if you went back to the earliest days of Mike and Dave, Mike Feinberg and Dave Levin, teaching 5th grade in Houston, at the core of KIPP was this belief we are going to work hard and be nice. If you go back and look at the original artifacts and the discussions about what we were actually doing with 47 5th graders, there was this belief that character and academics both matter, and one doesn't matter differentially than the other, they are equal.

Looking at a Dashboard, you want to think about it as a Dashboard. It is our DNA these are mutually reinforcing. I want to be clear about that. This is who we have been from the very beginning.

It was with the passage of time that this belief has only been reinforced. In 2011, we stepped back and looked at all of our KIPPsters. We track every single KIPPster from 8th grade on. We don't lose track of what is going on in their lives.

We put out this report on how they were actually doing. Everyone who knew our KIPPsters, and at this point we are talking about looking at young people who are now 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 years old, we are looking at how the kids are doing, and specifically how are individuals we knew as 6th graders and 7th graders are doing.

What was clear to people without a big research base was this wasn't simply a story of academics. If you go back to the original thinking of Mike and Dave, this belief that it wouldn't just be academic potential that would dictate how you were doing in life was coming true.

We came out of looking at all of our original KIPPsters, 45 percent of whom had BA degrees, and we said what was differentiating the ultimate outcomes, and

we came to believe again academics matters deeply. Our kids have to be prepared to a high bar.

We also recognize college counseling mattered immensely. We need to do a much better job of that. Yes, we recognized that our investment in developing strong character really mattered.

This was going on. It was always part of KIPP, I just want to emphasize, getting us to this point, now we have adults, young adults, and we are saying wow, it is just reinforcing what we believed all along.

At the same time that was going on, Dave Levin, one of our founders, started actually tapping into the research community, which you all heard about. These are the giants in this work that we have been working with closely for several years now.

We began looking at the work you think about, Marty Selliman and Pete Peterson, this field they pioneered of positive psychology. Carol Dweck. Walter Mischel with the work he did with delayed gratification.

I want to be clear, this was always inside our belief, we need to be focused on these things just as we are focused on reading and math. We are then looking at our oldest KIPPsters and saying hey, when we look at who is making it and who isn't, it is not just about who had the high reading score in 8th grade, that's a correlation but it's not the only correlation, and then we began seeing there were whole researchers that we could start connecting to.

Through that work with Seligman and Peterson, we ended up narrowing down based on their research -- they had identified 24 key strengths that predicted lifelong success. You saw in prior slides people used different words, these are the ones that we zeroed in and kept.

Seven key strengths, research based, that are highly predictive of life long success and fulfillment. One of the things when I look at these pictures that I

realized, most of you, this is intuitive, one of the funny things about people want this to be either/or, I can't say it enough, do you need to learn how to read really complex text to be able to make it in today's economy? You do. Does self control matter? Absolutely. Are these things at opposites? Any parent would tell you hopefully not.

These are very practical issues. What is curiosity? Curiosity is this passion in asking lots of questions, digging for deeper understanding. Zest: people get passionate for a topic. In fact, it is contagious for others. The one that everyone loves to talk about these days – grit -- how do you handle setbacks.

Again, anyone who is a parent in this room knows this is a big part of your life working with your children, how do they actually handle setbacks. Setbacks are guaranteed. How you handle them is the work.

You hear this great discussion today, and I have to think at some level you say where do you take this, from a practical standpoint, what the heck would KIPP do? This was part of our DNA, it was a belief system, it was permeating in our schools, we are tracking our kids over time, we are recognizing we were right to care about these things, whether you call them “noncognitive,” “character,” we were right to care about them.

The research base is emerging. How can we become more intentional about this, more systematic, from the standpoint of our schools? We started looking at this and said with Marty Seligman and Angela we think the key here is going to be creating positive institutions to which this work can flow.

There are a couple of components to this, and this is very real time, we are working on this, we began to see that schools are institutions just like your family is an institution, like your church is an institution, there are so many institutions, and we said well, we think this research is clear, and our own experience tells us it is important, we can get more intentional about schools as institutions that are positive ones.

PERMA, I'm not an expert in. I defer to our team that is focused on this. It is speaking to positive emotion, engagement, relationships, accomplishment. The goal is you actually step back and say how does a school deliver on what we think will actually allow for the development of these strengths.

Macro structures, fancy word. Let me make it simple. I was just at our school in Northeast this morning. A macro structure in a school is what do you do with your morning meetings. A macro structure in a school is what happens in your student government. There are structures that you can build, in our case, schools, into an institution, that have the opportunity to be incredibly intentional and deliberate about building these strengths.

My big take away here is we miss these opportunities all the time in life. The question for institutions like a school is do you identify the macro structures that intentionally are devoted to building these strengths, and do you leverage them.

An example of missed opportunities that happens everywhere across the country every day, think about someone who is coaching a basketball team, a football team, a soccer team. They have all these incredible opportunities to reinforce these character strengths.

They have actually not been brought into the work of the school. They are missing in their macro structure the opportunity to be explicit about things like grit or curiosity or gratitude. Think about it when you are intentional. I was in a morning meeting this morning with four year olds, and the opening discussion is gratitude, what are you grateful for today. Every child is talking about what they are grateful for, and they are grateful for each other. That is an intention, seizing an opportunity to make a connection. That is a macro structure.

Micro moments, what are we doing with that? We are basically acknowledging there are 20,000, we think micro moments a day, where all this can be

reinforced. If you really believe character strengths matter, just like you really believe learning to read matters, well, and you want to have data on that, does your entire staff recognize these moments are happening as we sit in this room, the minute a child walks in a room, when a school security person taps you on the shoulder.

There are moments that either push us forward in building these strengths or set us back. If we want to create positive institutions, you have to be committed to both identifying deliberately the micro structure opportunities, big fancy word for what are the structured things you are explicitly setting aside, and then recognizing there are these moments that are happening every day that either reinforce the building of these strengths or actually tear them down.

This is what we are training all our leaders. We have a huge opportunity to have this impact.

In case you wondered, do you really think we have this opportunity? Again, I just want to keep this real. We show at KIPP this slide. This is James Baldwin. Many of you recognize him.

To us, this is at the end of the day, like what is real. The reality is through our work, in our schools, our KIPPsters are picking up on this every day, and if we are going to be successful in building these character strengths, and if we are clear the research ties that these are key to success in life, the number one thing our KIPPsters, in our case, are going to pick up on, is this.

They are going to watch how the adults in the building interact with not just children but actually interact with each other, what is visible to children. Not what we say, what we do.

My big hope today is that in joining you, you hear from an organization that is absolutely committed to preparing kids for success in college and life, and in some ways, our track record has been based on what many talk about, academic outcomes,

that we are obsessed with this equally, that we think this is just as important for what's going to enable our young people to succeed.

We think about this every day because in five years, we are going to have 40,000 college age or older alum's. When I started at KIPP, there were 6,000 KIPPsters and a couple of hundred in college. Today, there are 60,000 and 6,000 in college. In five years, there will be 120,000 KIPPsters, 40,000 in college.

We truly believe these young people are going to change the world. Our investment in these character strengths, we think, are going to be as important as anything else we do.

I am excited to hear the panel take up the question of what are the implications of this from a policy standpoint. Not going to touch it. Not even going to try to go there.

I just want to register that from our standpoint, having people pay attention to this absolutely matters.

Thank you all for having me today. (Applause)

MR. WEST: Thank you to Chris, Rick, and Richard for three excellent and remarkably well timed presentations.

Now, it is my honor to invite to the stage three commentators to respond to what they heard, as well as to share some of their own experiences.

First, I will be inviting up Chancellor Kaya Henderson of the D.C. Public Schools. Under her leadership since 2011, DCPS has become the fastest improving urban school district in the country.

She's accomplished this through an intense focus on improving teacher quality, and by launching and expanding a range of innovative programs to increase student achievement, including a number that explicitly target students' noncognitive development as we will hear about today.

Next, we will hear from John King. He's the Senior Advisor Delegated Duties of Deputy Secretary of Education, which is a title that tells you everything you need to know about Washington, D.C. at the moment. (Laughter)

Prior to his arrival at the Department, Mr. King served as the Commissioner of Education for the State of New York as the first African American and Puerto Rican to serve in that role. Before that, he was the Co-Founder and Co-Director for Curriculum and Instruction at Roxbury Prep Charter School in Boston, which remains one of the highest performing charter schools in the country.

Finally, we will hear from Russ Whitehurst. Russ is a Senior Fellow here at The Brookings Institution, and before that was the founding Director of the Institute of Education Sciences, where he made an important and hopefully enduring impact on the real rigor and relevance of education research funded by the Federal Government.

I will invite them all to the stage, and invite them to speak for five minutes or so in the order they were introduced. (Applause)

MS. HENDERSON: Good morning. My name is Kaya Henderson. I am the Chancellor of D.C. Public Schools.

(Audio malfunction)

MS. HENDERSON: Okay, we are on. We are doing a lot of the things that are best practice in this field, everything from Tools of the Mind, which is in 45 of my 50 elementary schools, developing executive function for our youngest learners to things like advisory programs in our middle grades, AVID programs, ClassDojo, everywhere, including on my phone for my kids, so I know what's going on at all times. We also do the Brainology work out of Carol Dweck's work in a number of our schools and are seeing incredible results.

Even in our large District-wide goals, we have five big goals for the District, student satisfaction is one of our most important goals because we think that our

students being happy is as important as our students being successful.

I guess commentators and panels are only interesting when there is a little disagreement, so I'll start by saying I clearly think that noncognitive skills are incredibly important.

The question that I would ask is whether or not they are an end in and of themselves or whether they are a means to an end. I don't know I have a definitive answer, but I think there is a danger if we treat noncognitive skills as an end in and of themselves that people will ignore the really hard work of academics that all of my colleagues clearly said is very important, and just focus on the social and emotional skills.

I talk to teachers all the time who are struggling, really struggling, on the academic and instructional front, and they say if I just had more social and emotional help, and sometimes that is a clear assessment of the situation. A lot of times, it is not.

My worry is that it becomes an input type of thing as opposed to an outcomes type of thing, and people begin to focus too much on that.

My second thought about the conversation is whether or not this is new thinking or whether or not teachers and schools have actually been doing this all along, and we just didn't have a fancy name for it or we didn't have the research base for it, or what have you.

Some of the behavioral management systems, some of the social and emotional strategies are things that we have seen since I was a young person or any of you were young people, but they didn't have an organizing framework or they didn't have an App or a company that was welling them to school districts.

I think one of the questions that we have to ask ourselves, I will tell you very honestly in probably what is the shrine of policy, that education policy scares the mess out of me, because I think sometimes we think a little too hard and a little too deeply about things that then get, I guess, perverted in the practical execution.

I actually wonder whether or not our concentration in the policy realm on hard core academics, on disaggregating data on reading has taken us away and told teachers not to focus on these things that they used to focus on alongside academics, and now, I think we might be seeing a pivot back to things that we told teachers were not important because we really want to drill down on hard core academics, right?

This is when teachers go crazy, right? They are like wait a minute, I was doing this kind of stuff before, and you told me all that mattered were my test scores, right, and now you are telling me that I need to also pay attention to noncognitive skills. I think that is when policy and practice actually are at their worse. I'm worried.

I guess ultimately I would say I also worry about noncognitive skills in accountability systems. I say that a little bit as a hypocrite because as I looked at the CORE framework, we have a Dashboard that looks like that, it is called "SPIDE," which stands for something or another. We look at all these different dimensions of noncognitive measures when we set goals with principals, but I really worry when these things become accountability measures, like hard core goals, and things aren't implemented the way they need to be implemented.

I think teacher evaluation is a really good example of that. We all know that teacher evaluation is good and right and necessary, but as we have looked at how teacher evaluation has evolved over the course of some of the accountability work that has been done around it, I think there have been gross perversions of what it is supposed to be.

I worry about the accountability space around noncognitive skills. My hope is that we give ourselves time to see some of these early projects through. I think from a policy perspective, what I would hope for is we would watch, we would disseminate best practices, but we wouldn't rush to an accountability solution around this, because I think it is going to take us some time to settle into the right balance between

noncognitive skills and how we measure them, and how we avoid people swinging that way versus the other way.

Ultimately, I think this is all about balance. We have to do both, as Richard said, and I think in our quest for silver bullets, we run from one side to another side, and I guess I just don't trust us right now to get to the happy middle around this.

I would caution us to move very slowly and very carefully.

MR. KING: I will try to pick up where Kaya left off. I was telling a friend of mine about this panel, and he said oh, no, is there going to be a bureaucracy of noncognitive skills. (Laughter)

MR. KING: I hope not. I think what "proceeding carefully" means at least from our perspective at the Department is trying to give districts and states, like the CORE Districts, the flexibility through the waiver process to experiment in this area, and to figure out what works in supporting schools and helping students develop noncognitive skills.

Two, to try to support good research, whether it is through the Institute of Education Sciences, through our Investing in Innovation Program, through our First in the World Program, which focuses on higher education, to invest in initiatives that try to leverage noncognitive skill development to get better outcomes in terms of high school graduation, college completion, academic outcomes, and so forth.

We want to be humble about the role that the Federal Government can play here and thoughtful about the role we can play.

A few cautions about the conversation so far. One, which builds on something that Kaya warned about, is that the phrase "noncognitive skills" or the motion of social emotional learning could become an excuse not to do academic work that students desperately need, or an excuse to blame students for their failure when what they are really missing is academic skills.

The student who is sitting at a community college, a short distance away from here, in a remedial math class, yes, noncognitive skills will help, but they are not going to grit their way out of not knowing how to do basic operations with whole numbers.

We have to make sure that as we do this work, we are thinking about how we connect the noncognitive with supporting students academically, that they don't become a distraction.

Similarly, when we look at students who are struggling in high school and college, there are lots of factors, some of which are under their control, some of which aren't.

Again, we just have to be careful that we don't end up blaming students for factors that are outside of their control. We can't ignore the crisis around violence in the community or a parent who is a substance abuser or domestic violence in the home, or a student just can't afford to buy books for college. We have to tackle as a society those things as well.

A second caution is that just telling teachers do more noncognitive stuff is inadequate to the challenge. Part of what we have to do is figure out how do we support teachers in the concrete actions in the classroom that can support both academic success and noncognitive skill development.

A few examples. I was a high school history teacher, so you will have to forgive me taking advantage of the opportunity to get into the classroom level. I think there is a lot of important work that happens at the classroom level.

If a teacher provides specific praise, that is better than the teacher who just says you did a good job. If the teacher can help a student see it was that you wrote a strong thesis statement, I liked how you struggled at the beginning of this project but then you persevered to the end. I liked how when you got the first part of this math problem wrong, you went back, you changed it, and then you persevered to the end of the

problem. Specific praise rather than just good job, great job, is very important, and it is a skill that teachers can develop and that our teacher training should support.

A second example is around writing. We know many students when they get to college struggle with writing. The drafting process, the process of working through a draft, getting feedback on that draft, revising that draft, supports the kind of noncognitive skill development that we are talking about. It is again something that can be taught to a future teacher.

Similarly, teachers can learn to construct activities that help students develop strong interpersonal skills. You can develop a project in which students have different roles and their work together on the project produces a better outcome. That is a teachable skill.

We have to make sure that we support teachers in developing these kinds of skills.

A third caution is around neglecting the role of race and class and gender in this conversation. I want to add another strain to the research conversation. Claude Steele has done a lot of work on the notion of stereotype threat, that when students come into the classroom -- there is very solid research on this -- when students come into the classroom, if they know there is a certain stereotype about their performance, imagine female students in an advanced mathematics course or African American students entering into a college where they know many of their classmates are not like them, first generation students.

Those students may have a set of assumptions about how they are viewed by the institution, so when they get a bad grade, they internalize that as confirming the stereotype. We know from Claude Steele's work that stereotype threat can easily be activated by things that are said in the classroom by the teacher or institutional messages.

Similarly, helping students overcome that stereotype threat, showing

them they can succeed, teachers communicating their faith and confidence that students can do well, can help to overcome stereotype threat. We sometimes in our culture, I think, are reluctant to have conversations where race and class and gender are squarely on the table, and it would be a mistake in this discourse to do that.

A final sort of cautionary note is around data elements, that we have to be very careful that as we try to pick intended outcomes that we pick really good ones, and not ones that actually people can game or easily show progress on that actually are irrelevant to our intended long term outcome.

Figuring out which things are leading indicators, which things are the right long term outcomes in this work, I think, is complicated, and we should approach it with humility.

MR. WHITEHURST: I'm pleased to be here. Per my introduction, I'm a researcher, so I'm going to probably say the same things my colleagues have said here, but get at it from a slightly different perspective.

I want to start with a question for you. Let's focus on the Western world, and you tell me today what country or group of countries are thought to be the most pacifist, the most focused on social justice, what would that be?

SPEAKER: Scandinavia.

MR. WHITEHURST: Scandinavia. Let's cycle to the 10th Century, and what were the Scandinavians called then? They were called the Vikings. (Laughter)

MR. WHITEHURST: The baddest guys on the planet; right? If you are in England, the Vikings are coming, you know, you were going to be dead shortly thereafter.

What's my point? My point is that certainly culture and environment shape behavior to the extent that over a few centuries, the whole nature of a group of people can change based on changing circumstances.

A story for you. I don't remember how old I was. I think I was a teenager. I was riding around town in a car with my mother. This was a small Southern town. She was not particularly well educated. We were just talking. She pointed out the Alleygoods' house up there. She said, you know, they're really smart people. I said what do you mean. She said, well, look at the house, everything about it is meticulous, the grounds are perfect, it's painted, it's in good repair, they planted stuff around.

Thinking about that in the context of the Vikings. What she was saying was in the culture in which she grew up, hard work was smart. That's what made a difference. The stuff I was interested in, grades and school, wasn't relevant very much in her culture.

I would ask you to think about the Vikings and the people in the small town in which I grew up, and I would ask you were the Vikings maladjusted in some way. They were not. They were supremely adjusted to the circumstance in which they found themselves.

I think we need to be very careful about identifying particular characteristics of people as somehow inherently good or inherently bad. They very much adjusted to circumstance, and we need to create environments in which adjustment flows to everybody's public good, not to narrow good's that in effect disrupt the rest of society.

Let me put on my researcher hat for just a minute and go to the malleability question. It's been raised previously. It is very important as we get into this space that we focus on characteristics that can be changed by school environments rather than characteristics that cannot.

I'm a psychologist by training. Psychologists have been looking at personality traits now for at least 75 years, something called the "Big Five Traits" that psychologists have agreed are there and can be measured reliably, and everybody open this to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and eroticism.

These overlap with what we are talking about as soft skills.

The heritability quotient for the Big Five is extremely high, about 50 percent of the variants is determined by genetics, the rest of it, we don't know what it is determined by. It is mostly error.

What I'm saying is that identical twins reared apart are highly similar on these traits. If we get into the business of holding schools accountable for changing these traits, we are on a fool's errand because of the high heritability. It is very important to keep that in mind.

We have heard some evidence this morning and it is solid evidence of the strong predictive relationship of noncognitive skills to later outcomes. We don't know how much of that predictive relationship is determined by non-malleable components or personality components or Big Five personality traits, versus how much is determined by home and school. We very much need to understand that.

My own bias is we are going to do much better as we get into this space with interventions, if we ask teachers and schools to teach specific skills and abilities rather than trying to modify personality traits, making eye contact, being polite, being on time for class, having something nice to say about the work of others, doing homework, not cheating, dressing appropriately.

These are things that schools can transmit as important, and I think what may emerge from that is something that looks like character and acts like character, but it is not a direct attempt to teach character.

We have to be very keenly interested in learning what works and learning what works in a rigorous way. One of my big bets when I came to the Institute of Education Sciences was an investment in research called "the Social and Character Development Program." We funded randomized trials of seven of the most promising school based social and character development programs we could identify.

Each was a randomized trial. Schools were randomly assigned to carry out the intervention or not. The interventions took place in 4th and 5th grade, and the kids were followed for three years.

Multiple outcomes were measured. When you combine the programs, there were 60 impact estimates, "impact" being what's the difference between the control group and the intervention group. Two were statistically significant. They had to do with the perception of teachers of the character climate in the school. There were no impacts on student behavior whatsoever, either the social character development outcomes or academic outcomes.

Good intentions here and nice sounding programs don't necessarily work. We need to be very careful to find out what works going forward.

Finally, I think in keeping with comments we have already heard but coming at it again from a slightly different perspective, I want to remind those who know about it already and introduce you if you don't know about it to Campbell's Law, named after Donald Campbell, a famous social psychologist.

Campbell's Law is this: "The more any quantitative social indicator or even some qualitative indicator is used for social decision making, the more subject it will be to corruption pressures, and the more apt it will be to distort and corrupt the social processes it is intended to monitor."

We have to be very careful as we connect accountability to our interest in developing social skills that we don't generate a system that can be gamed from an administrative perspective and can distort what kids are learning.

That said, this is a new generation of work in this area. I think it has the potential of being extremely important, and I will certainly be looking forward to the pilot efforts that we have heard about today and seeing what success they generate.

Thank you. (Applause)

MR. WEST: I am going to invite all the participants back to the stage now. It looks like we have a good bit of time to engage in some questions and answers.

I'm going to take the prerogative as moderator to kick off the discussion. Rick, as you get settled, I wanted to raise what I think is a common criticism of efforts to expand the measures included in educational accountability systems or to broaden the definition of "educational success," one that was alluded to on the panel, that really this is all an attempt to soften accountability for academic outcomes.

How do you all at CORE respond to that potential criticism? I'm sure it is something that has come up. I assume it's not the way you think about what you are engaged in.

MR. MILLER: We disagree. (Laughter)

MR. WEST: Yes.

MR. MILLER: Respectfully. I'd start by saying if you looked at our percentages, we overweight academic, so 60 percent of our weighting falls in academic, so it's absolutely clearly something much like Richard talked about, that we view as two sides of the coin, both matter.

We ultimately would argue that hyper focus on a single assessment score was not effective. It did not move our systems in the way we needed to move. We found it very interesting as we went through this that there was this AYP score and then there was these Dashboards of what Districts did pay attention to, like Long Beach and others with our networks that were very successful moving student achievement forward, and there was this disconnect, I think, in our classrooms where teachers were expected to pay attention to these issues but then told it was a distraction.

In a sense, I think partially what we are arguing is that schools are not as simple as a single score, that you have to pay attention to multiple measures in it, and this was our best attempt when we look at our accountability model, our argument again

is not what we are going to hammer you for, but if you look at all these measures collectively, if you are successful at moving these measures, you will get a student college and career ready, which is our ultimate goal.

We have to value paying attention to these different measures and then give assistance to teachers in how to do these things in the classroom, so that is where our argument is, and that is also, by the way, what I say why we are doing it as a pilot, we are starting, figuring out, moving it along, but ultimately you don't have the luxury of not paying attention to all these measures if you want academic achievement.

MR. WEST: Richard, I wanted to ask you to reflect a little bit on the conversation that has come up about malleability. Chris suggested that should be a key criterion when thinking about which noncognitive traits schools might think about focusing on, policy makers might think about focusing on.

I'd say that a lot of the enthusiasm for noncognitive skills as a strategy for improving students' life outcomes comes from this sense that perhaps there may be even more malleable than other aspects of students' performance.

I think the malleability point can arguably cut both ways in the sense that any impacts on a skill or curve because of its malleability may prove to be entirely non-persistent.

How do you all at KIPP think about ensuring that what you are doing when the students are in the schools sort of stays with them as they move to college if that is the choice they make, or into other settings?

MR. BARTH: That's why I said I'm beyond my pay grade. Let me take a crack at just what I think our experience is, and actually, I thought the panel's discussion was great and raised the right questions.

You will see that I didn't put up here a score card, an accountability system. We, too, have a balanced score card for KIPP. We think these actually flow

through these long term outcomes, but we don't have an accountability system that's wrapped around it.

Here is what I would say we have seen, and this isn't at the level that we described in the research, but we spend a lot of time with our alum's, in fact, IDO is working with our alum's right now, and they have just been spending a lot of time meeting with them.

Let me just say that if two things come out of it, when I sat listening to actual voices of alum's right now, it is that there are signature experiences that actually they draw upon that get them through their challenges. It is about their connection to teachers who shape their beliefs they could do this.

I'm listening to 24 year olds talk about what happened in 5th grade, and I remember my teacher kept saying you're going to climb the mountain, you're going to climb the mountain, and every time there were these moments where she had doubt, they would work through it.

That does not pass the hard core research test, but what I would say just as a human being is it is clear to me that what John talked about in terms of teacher professional development and investing in teachers, there is huge amounts of low hanging fruit out there where we do not have to look at these in conflict, and actually our teachers and our leaders can understand that investing in seizing the opportunities to use again what we call these macro structures and these micro moments are going to have a big impact on our kids' belief they can do it.

Which one of these, we are going to find out over time hopefully with good research, are going to have the biggest basis, but I would want people to come away from this recognizing that I would be scared, too, if people were thinking about this as some big new thing.

The real opportunity is we have low hanging fruit in school institutions,

and good schools do this all the time, which is they actually look at explicit opportunities and then all these micro moments, are you reinforcing these elements that based on our experience our kids look back on and say were absolutely material to their belief they could do that.

We're not presenting a score card. I wouldn't be proposing a policy change. John said something about this research on race and what young people are feeling when they are in environments.

Those moments, if you are the first in your family to be in college, what we hear from alum's all the time, and I literally hear them speak to it, I read their e-mails, they go back to moments, you cannot believe how long back in their life where people said you're going to earn this, they draw on those absolutely repeatedly.

If we miss as an institution the opportunity to build those strengths, I think we have missed a huge opportunity to move beyond just whether you feel like you can make it academically.

I don't want anyone to be confused about this. If you are not prepared academically, this does not compensate for all those deficiencies. If you're not prepared to write effectively, if you're not prepared to communicate effectively, if you don't have core basic math skills, this will not get you over all those things.

It will see for many of our kids the reason they would actually persist to have developed those skills, it will help them. It's not going to solve for real hard core academic deficiencies that too many kids in the country have.

MR. WEST: One more question before we turn to the audience. I will start with you, Russ, but I'd also like to get Chris and anyone else who wants to weigh in.

As I understand it, and it predates my involvement in education research a bit, but in the 1970s and 1980s, there was a lot of talk about how schools should do more to raise students' self esteem. There was a lot of evidence presented not too

dissimilar to what we saw presented today showing how predictive high levels of self esteem were over educational and life outcomes.

As I understand it, the consensus is now that efforts to promote self esteem independently, that is to raise self esteem rather than promoting students' underlying skills that were driving these predictive relationships was ineffective and potentially even counterproductive.

I guess the question for you, Russ, is am I right about that story, and if so, what should we take away from it, and then really for anyone who wants to weigh in, are we at risk of walking down that same path currently.

MR. WHITEHURST: Yes and yes. Those were the findings from the earlier research on self esteem, and education is very faddish, and there is always a danger that an underlying conceptually good model gets taken over by a fad and made into something that generates unintended effects.

I think there is some danger of that here. Again, I believe that we are talking about something critically important that schools can have an impact on, but if we don't retain the skepticism, kind of show me, worry about the bad things, if we don't retain that, if we just go with the flow or the fad, I think there is a potential for damage.

MR. WEST: Do you want to respond to that?

MR. GABRIELI: Yes. I think that in trying to start with the data today, one of the things I hope to highlight is we can't ignore the fact that the data is overwhelming, that in college success and academic success, in career and life success, and well-being, these noncognitive factors are highly predictive of outcomes.

They are probably, by the way, likely in the range of academic ones. We are struggling to teach literacy, too. Things that are engrained people are engrained in people, and I certainly agree with Russ that some things are probably more malleable. The entire cognitive behavioral therapy field, which has revolutionized psychiatry, is all

about changing things that are unbelievably hard for people to change.

Yes, I think there are lots of reasons to be optimistically focused in on it. In terms of the fad, one of the things that is really important for people in the policy world, I think, to hear, and I was fascinated to hear that list, Kaya, of really thoughtful programs you have rolled out, but to Russ' point, going backwards, those seven IES funded studies that showed no effects for them, many of those programs are among that \$640 million a year I laid out that American education is spending, and the 10 percent of all teacher time.

I think any notion that we shouldn't open the barn door before what might come out, hey, folks, the barn door is way wide open. The real problem is there is zero information in scale about whether it's helping kids.

If you ask people in classrooms, and what was fascinating about those two items that Russ said were positive in those trials were what teachers thought. I'm a big believer we ought to listen to teachers, and I found fascinating, Kaya, your point about what teachers say and the list of excuses for sure instead of the academic side.

I think we need to recognize we need as much understanding of the hard issues of raising noncognitive skills as we do now have, I think, about the hard challenge of raising literacy skills. That means understanding the micro specifics of them.

Many of the things that we now understand about literacy, we do not have the same vocabulary for these noncognitive skills, and until we get about the business of intentionally collecting that kind of data and information, running the kind of experiments we have, what we are really going to have is no policy and lots of practice.

MR. WEST: Let's turn on that note to the audience. Please raise your hands. We have microphones that will come to you. Please identify yourself and your organization. Remember that questions usually end in a question mark.

Yes, ma'am. Right here in the front.

QUESTIONER: Hi. I'm Hilary Rhodes from the Wallace Foundation. Really interesting discussion today. I really appreciate you sharing your thoughts.

One issue that hasn't really come up in earlier discussions is our confidence in the measures to actually assess these skills with sufficient validity and reliability that we can rely on them as good accountability measures.

I'm hoping that you can respond to that issue.

MR. WEST: Rick?

MR. MILLER: Why don't you talk about your work?

MR. WEST: I'm very interested in this issue because my one contribution to the research on noncognitive skills is really to show how tricky they are to measure, especially through student self reports, that when a student tends to assess their self control or their grit more critically, does that mean that they actually have lower levels of grit or they held themselves to a higher standard.

It appears there are some findings that I produced that it may be a bit of the latter, and that schools may influence the standards that students hold themselves to.

I do admit to having some reservations about especially using self reports as a basis for an accountability system. They are easily corruptible when stakes are attached. Nonetheless, I am pleased to be working indirectly with CORE to help them pay careful attention to these issues going forward.

Rick?

MR. MILLER: Again, you two are more the experts than I, but our initial look was encouraging, that we were able to actually deal with referenced bias. Again, it was better when we had teachers. We had both student and teacher mostly looking at a student, and that is clearly the ideal way to go, and ultimately probably -- I don't know how far we can get unless we can do that in a meaningful way.

I think we did feel when doing that, we were confident we were moving in

the right direction. That is the best I can say with the limited pilot we did.

MR. WEST: Yes, sir?

QUESTIONER: Hi. I'm Fred Altman. I'm retired. I have a comment and a quick question. The comment is maybe looking at big data will help a lot of these problems. There is a book out, "Social Physics," by Pentland, that may be relevant for a lot of this work.

The question is for Richard, how successful are those who did not go to college?

MR. BARTH: We are still early in this because our kids are not -- we have small numbers of folks who are at an age where you would say we could make a determination about how successful they are.

What we know right now that is pretty clear is our KIPPsters who graduated from college are on a better trajectory. For all of those who say is it really that material, for our kids and our alum's, those who have gone to college are feeling stronger about their place in the world, their economic well-being, the opportunities ahead of them, even when they have debt. Even though they do have debt, that everybody is talking about these days.

Nothing about our experience so far would have us advising young people who really are in a position to go to college not to do it. I think there is a lot of work to do by us and by everyone to get far better at understanding what the alternative paths are that really work.

In most of the places where we do our work, those paths are not that well articulated, and this is what Kaya and I have talked about, the real clear articulation of if you do this, here's the opportunities, that people like to talk about. When you go to Chicago or you go to New Orleans or you go to Oklahoma City, they are just not that well mapped out.

I'd love to think there are those pathways, but there is a lot of work to do site by site to make them real.

MR. WEST: Just a brief interjection on the big data point, I think that is actually where a lot of the most interesting activity around measurement is heading, trying to take advantage of information that schools may already have been collecting even if they're not tracking systematically, things like absences, merits and demerits, in a way that might allow you to make inferences about students' noncognitive or character development.

The challenge there is the more you go in the direction of a concrete behavior, the further away you are from an underlying construct that you can think about developing interventions to improve.

One of the things I took away from Russ's remarks is that maybe that is the level at which we should be focusing, and that becomes a more intriguing possibility.

Yes, ma'am?

QUESTIONER: Thanks for your presentation, especially the commentary. I think if a good teacher can teach, good teaching skills plus noncognitive skills, and by example is very important for the students. When a student has good family care and teachers' loving care environment, that would be very important for not only social skill development but also concentration on studies.

I think if we can emphasize our main priority is how to change our students' environment and teachers' quality is more important. I think noncognitive skills is very important, but it should be built in the quality of teachers, and also family of the students.

If we can change our priority and concentration and emphasis on noncognitive skills to the teachers and change a student's environment, that would be wonderful.

MR. WEST: Richard, that reminds me of the point you made with James Baldwin. Kaya, I wonder if you could talk about the way in which you think about that in terms of selecting or developing your teachers' capacities.

MS. HENDERSON: Yes. I think Richard's point was absolutely right, and I think one of the big missing pieces on the panel is a School of Ed, right, and what implications this has for teacher education.

She is absolutely right. If we actually believe that the best way to teach kids is by putting the right examples in front of them, then this conversation would have the most impact at the teacher training level, not at how do we fix our kids' level.

One of the challenges around some of the character programs that I've seen come through our doorstep is that they seek to displace values that a family might have, right, in exchange for some other inherently good values, and I think that's a recipe for disaster, and I think as Russ suggested, we just can't do.

I think the best way to avoid those kind of sticky wickets is to put great teachers who model the kind of behavior, the kind of character and noncognitive skills that we want in front of kids, so that kids then learn that way.

Ultimately, we are having this conversation because you know, teaching is an art and a science, but we have now all of this data, so we are trying to reduce it to the scientific part of teaching, to every single element that we can then teach somebody how to do so they can do it right.

Ultimately, we don't trust our teachers because we don't always hire the smartest people to teach, so we have to deconstruct teaching in such a way that we can give it to them in bites and bits, and then they can do the right things, and it will all work out, right?

The truth of the matter is that's not true, that's not right. We have to harken back to the fact that some of this is imperfect, like we are in the people

development business, and it's not all reductionist.

I think how we cultivate the people who are in front of our young people matters a lot more than sometimes what we do with our young people.

MR. BARTH: One reflection, and I was like what am I going to do in this panel, how do I belong here. Here's one of my worries. One, this whole thing gets positioned as a response to a current focus on higher standards, academic standards. Big mistake, right? We have to make sure it doesn't happen, and leads to this fad thing, driving people crazy.

The second thing I would just say we almost could be in denial for what is actually happening on the ground every day, and the reality is like before there was all the research and all the data we were looking for, teachers, parents, families, institutions we know of, grapple with this very issue every day, which is you run into specific moments with specific young people, and you are running all the things you think you know, every play you can think of, every technical thing, and the reality is it's not working. It is not working.

Then the question is: are there other things that matter that unleash the potential of people. Anyone who has a child knows this is true, you just know this is true. If you're a parent, you know this is true. Anyone who has watched their kid play a sport, they know this is true. Coaches work with them.

You are like why is this not happening. You could say well, because they have not figured out how to do this. Half the time, they have to get inside kids' heads to figure out what is holding them back from approaching it a new way.

I say this because I worry that we could end up saying well, is this a yes/no answer, and I actually think this speaks to something which is real educators, people on the ground, grapple with, if we think about something like how do you handle setbacks, this is something that everyone who hires someone would know this is going to

be an important thing, and the question is how do we actually equip teachers and institutions where teachers work to handle this more effectively, before we even think about a data system, an accountability system.

Teachers need this, schools need this, in order to meet their ambitions for young people.

MR. WEST: I think we have time for one more question from the front row here.

QUESTIONER: I'm Jean Goss from Education Daily. I wanted to discuss measures as well, especially considering what Mr. King said and Dr. Whitehurst said about people's background and the sensitivity of some of these issues vis-à-vis their background and their temperament, and whether or not they can change things as easily as we might like.

It seems to me this is indeed heading somewhat inexorably towards standards and measurements, and what are you going to do, I mean once you get the indicators all worked out in X years, but it's coming closer and closer that people want this and want it now, even in the common core or in state standards.

The barn door is open and the bull is out, so how are you going to rein it in and measure and have standards that won't be harmful in the immediate or medium term? Thank you.

MR. WEST: John, do you want to tackle that?

MR. KING: Yes, and Russ should certainly add to this because he's played a key role in this idea. I think we have to be disciplined about rigorous evidence around the effectiveness of interventions.

The thing we should be measuring is long term outcomes, and what we have, I think, in this noncognitive work is a hypothesis about what intervention might get to a better outcome.

To give you an example, at City University of New York, they have a program called ASAT. The idea is community colleges generally have very poor graduation rates, but if you take a group of community college students and you provide them with intensive support, help them to think about which courses they pick, advise them when they're struggling in a course, provide them with access to academic remediation, but also the social emotional support to allow them to persevere in college, you can get better outcomes.

The randomized control trial with this ASAT program, the community college three year graduation rate was about 20 percent for the control group and about 40 percent for the students in the ASAT program. They didn't set out to measure do the students at the end have more grit, perseverance, et cetera. They sought to measure whether an intervention based on the hypothesis about noncognitive and academic supports would work.

I think we have to do the same thing here. We should test out are there interventions around growth mindset that lead to better academic outcomes, and we should use randomized control trials to do that, and we should test on professional development where we have a very weak evidence base. Are there programs that train teachers in a particular set of skills that then lead to better academic outcomes for students.

I think you are right, there is a real danger that what we do is essentialize noncognitive to an isolatable set of skills that results in a Campbell's Law problem that Russ was describing.

MR. WHITEHURST: We are on exactly the same page. It is partly a big data answer. We should be measuring things that are valid outcomes everyone should value. Do the kids actually come to school or is there a high truancy rate, do they graduate from high school, do they enroll in college, are there misbehavior referrals.

These are the outcomes that I think we could agree are important and ought to be measured, and schools or teachers, people ought to be held accountable for. If we attach accountability to a student's rating of a teacher on the climate created in the class, no would be my thought.

MR. WEST: We are officially a couple of minutes past time. This has been an extraordinarily informative discussion for me. Before you depart, I actually want to invite Chris Gabrieli up to say a few closing words. Transforming Education had a huge role in putting together this event, and I think he wants to be able to send you off and invite you to thank the panel.

MR. GABRIELI: Thank you, Marty. First of all, thanks to you. It's a total pleasure to work with you. You range across policy leadership to rigorous quantitative evaluation of these things, and we are fortunate to have you.

I think the quality of the panel today heartens me in terms of I think this is a very difficult issue, and I think the cautions our three excellent panelists gave us, we feel strongly at Transforming Education as well.

I also think their presence here today and their engagement highlights this is a large area of both practice and policy that has a small current base of activity.

We at Transforming Education appreciate Brookings embracing this, and encourage everyone in this room to go more to this "how" question, how do we respect the concerns that have been raised, which we share, and yet go from large scale practice, no policy, towards smart policy.

Thanks to a fabulous set of speakers and panelists, thanks to all the interest from the audience, and let us figure this out in the time ahead. (Applause)

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