

Economic Opportunity and the Role of Education: Cecilia Rouse and Isabel Sawhill chat with Education Week

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Guests: Cecilia Elena Rouse, professor of economics and public affairs, Princeton University; and Isabel V. Sawhill, co-director of the Center on Children and Families at the Brookings Institution.

Kevin Bushweller (Moderator):

Welcome to today's online chat to discuss the role of education in increasing economic opportunity in the United States.

Among Americans' most cherished beliefs is the idea that the United States is a land of opportunity, a place where all children have an equal shot at success regardless of the circumstances of their birth. A growing body of research suggests, however, that idea may be a myth.

Going from rags to riches in this country, some studies conducted over the past 10 to 15 years say, may be harder than it used to be. In fact, newer international studies suggest that children born into poor families in the United States have a smaller chance of rising out of poverty than their counterparts in many other industrialized nations.

With that research in mind, what needs to be done in education to ensure that America continues to offer economic opportunity to its citizens? How does education need to change to meet the challenges of a global economy?

Our guests will tackle those and other questions in this chat. Let's get the discussion started ...

Question from Mark Anthony Carter, Teacher:

I believe that education is a critical determinant of success (economically) in the 21st century. Currently, the economic status of most school districts in country determines which students will have access to a quality education. Since the education level of our citizens will determine future success (or failure), do you think that a "quality education" should be viewed as a fundamental right (ie., Bill of Rights)?

Isabel V. Sawhill:

In a way, I do. I am always amazed that we "entitle" elderly people to medical care but that we don't entitle children to an equal educational opportunity. Our education system grew up in a time when people were less mobile and is financed overwhelmingly at the state and local level. This means unequal spending per child across and within states. As you undoubtedly know, there have been numerous attempts to redress this in the courts and some progress has occurred but not enough in my view. I don't think money is the only thing that matters in education, but it surely must make some difference.

Question from Kevin Cojanu, Professor, ITT Technical:

Do we need to address the type of education that is provided at the middle and high school levels to focus more on real-life conditions and business models to prepare our youth for supporting economic conditions for the future?

Cecilia Elena Rouse:

While it is clear that it is imperative that we figure out what our students should know in order to compete in the U.S. economy of tomorrow, we know much less about how to make that happen. That said, there is compelling evidence that students enrolled in programs that attempt to merge employment experiences with traditional high school, do not hinder educational attainment (that is, those students are just as likely to attend college as students in traditional high schools) while improving labor market outcomes. Thus, providing students with "real world" work experience and making the curriculum relevant for the labor market can be quite effective.

Question from Carrey Meece, teacher, Bellevue High School:

I teach in a poverty-ridden area. What is the key to having students believe that education is the way out? Either many of my kids aren't fully comprehending this message, or they don't want to get out of the cycle of poverty (which just cannot be true).

Isabel V. Sawhill:

One thing that might help is exposing these students to people like them who have been successful.

Another key is parents. If they don't value education it's hard to get their children to be more motivated.

I don't know what grade level(s) you teach at, but would it be possible to ask the students to think what kind of job they want when they are adults and then ask them to do research on what kind of education and experience this requires? They could do internet research or interviews of people in the kind of job they aspire to hold. If their job aspirations are low, then it might be worth asking them what they expect to have in the way of income and what they are going to be able to buy when they finish school.

I imagine you have thought of all of these things already and I hope you don't get discouraged. Education is, indeed, the way out of poverty.

Question from Miles Myers, Senior Researcher, ISCA, Los Angeles:

The two articles focus on the role of education in economic opportunity, but I was puzzled about the absence of any mention of Opportunity to Learn Standards in education. In the mid-1990s, we had such a requirement in Title I, but after the mid-term election it was dropped. Shouldn't we return to a consideration of OTL Standards? Why not?

Cecilia Elena Rouse:

The goal is to educate every child to his or her potential. And, ideally we would provide every child with the type of education that suits his or her leaning style in order to

achieve this goal. However, in practice this is difficult to implement because of a lack of qualified teachers and other inputs that would make such tailoring possible. At the same time, many policymakers grew tired of educators not having high standards for all students and of relatively unimpressive student performance despite increases in education funding. As a result, many began to believe that it was less important to focus on the inputs and hold schools accountable for what students ultimately know.

Question from Hayes Mizell, Distinguished Senior Fellow, National Staff Development Council:

Most public schools do not embrace as their explicit mission the task of ensuring that youth develop the specific knowledge and skills necessary to obtain economic security as adults. How important is it for schools to go beyond meeting "standards," to intentionally prepare students to keep themselves and their families out of poverty when they reach adulthood? How would you suggest they do this?

Isabel V. Sawhill:

It seems to me that a good teacher will think of creative ways to relate what children learn in school to what they will be expected to do as adults or on the job. I've also seen evidence that so-called "career academies" have had a quite a bit of success in boosting the earnings of their students. Vocational education and apprenticeship programs have gotten a bad reputation in the U.S. but they have been used more successfully in some European countries. I'm no expert on all of this but I have gotten the impression that some students learn much better when they can see the utility of what they're learning very directly.

Question from Joanna Calderwood, Special Education, Rockland District High School, MSAD#5:

The issue of poverty raises a question for me: due to a number of factors, children living in poverty make up a significant portion of identified special education students across the nation. When PL-94-142 was initiated, the US government pledged something like 40% of funding to states to cover cost of these programs. This has never been carried out, to the detriment of programs (and tax levels) in the US education system. If the education system in this country is going to be the solution to the poverty problem, exactly what is the federal government going to contribute, in terms of dollars, to implement this? Will the federal expenditures for special services- which will target a large number of these students- ante up and provide for these programs? Thank you.

Isabel V. Sawhill:

You are exactly right that the federal government made this commitment and has never provided the funds to cover more than a small proportion of these costs. Many governors call this an "unfunded mandate" and there is no question that it has placed a major burden on state and local budgets. Some research shows that investments in early childhood education for poor children reduce the need for special education in a very substantial way. So I would put the emphasis, to the extent possible, on prevention. That may be a wiser use of the same federal dollars.

Question from Cheryl Jaffe, Radar Systems Engineer and Mother:

From the legal exemption that has allowed age discrimination to become entrenched in the educational system, to standards-based curriculum and assessment, schooling has evolved into a strict "one size fits all" model of education. This is despite an abundance of research to the contrary (as well as common sense). In your opinion, has this educational evolution influenced the access to economic opportunity?

Cecilia Elena Rouse:

Ideally education would be tailored to each student's interests and learning style. However, to do so requires highly qualified staff (who can identify each child's learning style and make the best of it) and other customized inputs. Unfortunately, this is beyond the reach of many school systems that are struggling to find qualified teachers, maintain infrastructure, and simultaneously address a multitude of other issues. Further, your question suggests that there has been a change in educational approach and yet the fact that students from more disadvantaged families have worse educational outcomes has existed for some time (dare I say from the beginning of our educational system?).

Question from Jessica Walters, Federal Policy Fellow, Pre-K Now:

Research has clearly found that high quality pre-kindergarten programs, especially when followed by quality kindergarten and early elementary programs, lead to long-term educational and economic benefits for individuals and society. How can we encourage more policymakers to focus on early learning as a foundation for later success in school and life?

Isabel V. Sawhill:

I totally agree and have written several papers and briefs and spoken in many places on exactly this point. I am somewhat optimistic that policy makers will do the right thing eventually, although such programs are expensive and are hard to fund in the current environment. Getting more people outside of the education field interested (e.g., the business community, faith-based communities, etc.) is one strategy. Another need, in my view, is to stress that education doesn't begin at age 5. This is a matter of changing people's mindset.

Question from Jean Stohlman, teacher, Jefferson Elementary School:

Under NCLB, test scores are often used as the sole basis for exiting students from programs, such as ESOL. Do you feel that the pressure to exit students early from such programs may be a contributor to their level of success in high school and their economic opportunities afterward?

Cecilia Elena Rouse:

This is an important, yet tough, question. The reason is that we have little rigorous data on how effective ESOL programs are at helping students to succeed in high school and later in the labor market; nor do we fully understand what elements of such programs are potentially important (such as the structure or duration).

Further your question raises the issue of how well test scores truly reflect what students do and do not know. While there is no question that test scores are not the only outcome that matters for a child, a well designed test can be a powerful diagnostic tool.

Question from Mike Sorohan, parent, Alexandria, Va.:

As a parent, what should I be looking for in my son's high school curriculum that would tell me whether he is receiving the kind of education he'll need in the economy in which he will spend his working life.

Isabel V. Sawhill:

I think the ability to read critically and write clearly are essential and I see too many people -- even those with college degrees -- who have never learned these basic skills. I would worry less about the content of the curriculum and more about how rigorous the standards are and what kind of assignments your son is given in whatever courses he is offered. Beyond that, math and science are going to be in big demand, and the ability to use a computer to do research on just about anything is key. Too often, I fear, parents are lulled into thinking their children are getting what they need to know in school if they bring home good grades. Not always the case so you are right to worry about this.

Question from George Kobil, Policy Analyst, NJ Dept of Human Svcs:

Other countries appear to be making significant investments in the role that early childhood education can play in creating a skilled workforce that can compete in the global economy. How does the US investment in ECE compare? Any thoughts or comments on the need for a strategic plan & policy at the federal or state level would be of interest.

Isabel V. Sawhill:

The U.S. does not compare very well with most European countries although many states, as you may know, are now jumping on the bandwagon of early childhood education (ece). In addition, the business community is supportive (see recent report from the Committee for Economic Development for a nice overview and set of proposals on this topic). The research shows that ece is a great investment. The benefits in terms of less spending on grade retention and special education, higher high school graduation rates, and ability to close the test score gaps between more and less advantaged kids is very impressive. I have written several papers on this which should be available on the Brookings website by February or March at the latest. One paper (Ludwig and Sawhill), called "Success by Ten" argues for a major commitment of federal funds to provide high-quality ece to all low-income children starting at a very early age, followed up by a more structured and effective curriculum in elementary school.

Question from Taniasha Woods, Congressional Fellow:

Recently, the conversation about education seems to have taken on the idea that poor people (who are disproportionately people of color) are faced with a cultural deficit relative to middle class families. This cultural deficit leads to low achievement. For example, the NYT Tough article while raising very important and relevant issues seems to nicely package the idea that poor children of color do not succeed because their

families are dysfunctional and do not instill the proper morals and/or goals in them. How can we move the conversation about educational attainment for poor children away from a cultural deficit model, while still addressing the social problems that come with poverty and low educational attainment? Thank you.

Isabel V. Sawhill:

This is a very good question. I read the Tough article and somewhat agree with your characterization of it. But whatever words we use, the fact is that children don't start school on an equal footing. Moreover, most parents, including poor parents, want the best for their children. The fact that they don't have some of the advantages and resources that matter doesn't make them bad parents. I think, as you suggest, this is about how we talk about the issue rather than whether or not there is a problem that needs to be addressed.

Question from Charles Fuller:

How does one break the cycle of the affluent not wanting to spread the wealth to even the playing field within education?

Cecilia Elena Rouse:

This is the \$10,000,000 question! Clearly we all want the best for our children which means that those who can afford to do more will do so. Any approach will have to balance this desire of the affluent with the need to redistribute to the less-affluent. State education finance reforms have attempted to do this within the education system (and the evidence suggests that these reforms are reasonably successful at doing so). However, we all know that parents can influence what their children learn outside of the classroom and it is much harder to legislate these private inputs and expenditures.

Question from Brad Burch, Registrar, Guilford Technical Community College:

If education is viewed as crucial for economic success, what careers do you see as important for future employment? THE WORLD IS FLAT seems to suggest that creatively thinking outside the box is what is necessary and not specific careers. What do you think?

Cecilia Elena Rouse:

My colleague Alan Blinder emphasizes that in the future globalization will be much more important than it is today and that it's not clear that it'll strictly be the less-skilled jobs that go abroad. For example, it's about as easy to have x-rays read by local radiologists as by radiologists one-half of a world away. Thus, what will be crucial for labor market success in the future will be finding jobs and careers that are done much better locally than abroad. Unfortunately, at this point it's very hard to speculate on which careers will be important domestically in the future (primarily because the rate of change in technology is so fast) which means that it's harder to reform our educational system to meet this new demand. Given so much uncertainty, thinking creatively will undoubtedly be one of the very important skills.

Question from Jane Meyer, Vice President, JMH Education:

How can U.S. corporations play a positive role in the education arena relative to increasing economic opportunity?

Cecilia Elena Rouse:

This is an interesting question because in this country the private sector can be so powerful. Some companies have partnered with schools, providing revenue and other inputs -- they have essentially "adopted" the school. In addition, there are successful high school school-to-work programs in which students combine work and school (the work making the school more relevant). I imagine that participating in these programs would make a difference such that students who might otherwise dropout of school would become more successful students.

Question from Paul J. Smith, Ed.D., Facilitator, Accelerated Learning Center, Little Rock School District:

How does the educational systems in the United States K-12 schools reinforce the gaps between the haves and the havenots?

Cecilia Elena Rouse:

This is a complicated question but fundamentally the focus of the paper I wrote for the issue on the Future of Children on which this chat is based. After considering many potential explanations, my co-author, Lisa Barrow, and I believe that a major force is access to high quality education, both in schools and at home. That is, at home the children of the "haves" are exposed to much more enriching environments from birth (if not before!), including high quality child care/pre-school, better health care, more reading materials, etc. In addition, these children have the opportunity to attend higher quality schools as well. These opportunities stem from the fact that all parents want the best for their children and the "haves" can afford more than the "havenots." Since our educational system is so decentralized, much funding is based on local property values, high quality teachers prefer to teach more affluent children, and the like, the educational system tends to reinforce the gaps. If you're interested and want to read more, you can find the article at: www.futureofchildren.org.

Question from Norah, Student Advisor, inner-city program for low-income wage earners:

How can we help adult and younger students who are low income and have so many issues in their lives (domestic violence, housing problems, etc.) be more resilient? How does resilience affect positive outcomes for students?

Isabel V. Sawhill:

I don't have any magic answers. Clearly, education is only part of what these wage earners need. So, some community colleges are experimenting with providing more counselling and support to their students and these programs seem to be having a positive effect. Look on [MDRC's website](#) for some descriptions of such programs.

Question from Joe Rueff, President, Eye2theWorld:

As important as are improvements at the K-12 level, why hasn't there been more

discussion and action regarding adult education in order to upgrade the existing level of the workforce? It will take decades for those students now in school to make a mark in the labor force. The workers there today will be there by the millions for many years to come.

Cecilia Elena Rouse:

In fact, there are many that focus on raising the skill level of the existing workforce. This is the focus of the Workforce Investment Act and of the many adult education programs that are run by state and local agencies. While most policymakers believe such programs are vital, the evidence on their effectiveness has been somewhat mixed. The best training programs do seem to generate better employment outcomes for participants, but there is much variation in quality. One of the struggles with adult education is that adults lead busy lives and it can be hard to juggle work and family, much less work, family, and education. As such a promising way in which adults can obtain additional training is through the workplace but this requires the commitment and cooperation of employers.

Question from Shawn Gross, Managing Director, DMC:

McKinley Technology High School, located in Washington DC and part of DCPS is utilizing this new model whereby core subject areas (i.e, math and scienc) are alligned with hard skills (i.e., Java Development). They are just beginning to collect research but I am wondering if any other data has been collected which reinforces this model of teaching?

Isabel V. Sawhill:

My sense is that this is a good model. I think, in a previous answer, I referred a questioner to the work on career academies. See www.MDRC.org.

Question from Amy Vaughn, Teacher, North Carolina:

I see a new class separation in our high schools that I'm not sure existed in the past. We spend more time job training and less time educating all our citizens. Wealthy students go to college and poor students are trained to work. Is this a trend nation wide?

Cecilia Elena Rouse:

I completely agree that we can see a class separation in high schools and there is some evidence that the gap has widened nation-wide.

Comment from AnnRene' Joseph, Program Supervisor, The Arts, Office of Supt. of Public Instruction, WA State:

Please keep Arts Education as a core academic subject area to assist in celebrating the culture, diversity, civilization, strengths, talents, and skills of all learners! More Arts in all of our schools will assist in closing the achievement gap, raising achievement for all learners, celebrating individuality, allowing for relationship, rigor, and relevance to all learners, and preparing "out of the box" creative, problem-solving entrepreneurial thinkers for the 21st century! MORE ARTS is the answer!

Question from Anne Kornfeld, Special Education, Gresham-Barlow School District:
How can students who do not readily accept middle class, public school values be taught that in today's world you earn what you learn?

Cecilia Elena Rouse:

Programs -- at least at the high school level -- that combine elements of work with traditional education have been found to be successful at placing students in better jobs while not discouraging those who would otherwise like to attend college. It may well be that one reason for the success of such programs is that students start to understand that what they learn in school is relevant and that they are rewarded for doing well.

Question from Kelly Creque, Director of Assessment , Trenton Public Schools:
I work in an Abbott district in New Jersey. We have had our funding levels increased, but have not been as successful in improving student scores, are there examples of districts that have been successful at improving student outcomes?

Isabel V. Sawhill:

Clearly, there are. But I simply don't know the details. Sorry, because it's a very good question.

Question from Jennifer Doak, Intern, NCTAF:

I work for an organization dedicated to improving teacher quality in the U.S. With all the attention given to test scores, it seems that improving teacher quality and retention falls by the wayside. In your opinion, what are the most effective ways to improve the working environment for teachers so that they may better equip children for a 21st-century economy?

Cecilia Elena Rouse:

This is an excellent question. In fact, the next issue of the Future of Children -- due to be released in March 2007 -- focuses on policies to improve teacher quality and effectiveness. Clearly the working conditions of teachers matter. Some of these can be improved by increased funding to lower class sizes, provide additional aides in the classes and the like; others can be improved with more professional development for principals and superintendents so they are better prepared to lead schools and school districts.

More generally, however, I think that we still don't fully understand what students will need to know for the 21st-century economy, primarily because of such rapid technological growth.

Question from M. Derry, Director Career and Technical Ed:

Global competition is increasingly challenging the "American way of Life". How do you feel we can wake up parents, economically disadvantaged or not, to the fact that their child's education is critical to our survival as leading nation in the world!

Cecilia Elena Rouse:

Good question! I've always been a fan of providing more and better information to parents. This means ensuring that our school curricula emphasize the importance of education and that our educators bring this knowledge into the classroom. Of course, "real life" examples are the best.

Question from Kevin Cojanu, Professor, ITT Technical:

I struggle with the concept that traditional classroom settings cannot be changed to adapt to what the rest of the world is doing. Do you think that the role of our educators needs a change that brings real world to the classroom versus pure academia?

Cecilia Elena Rouse:

I think that with the rapid technological advances we are seeing and increased globalization, there may well be a shift in the skills that our children need to compete. Whether that change means bringing the real world into the classroom versus pure academia, I don't know. That said, there are many successful models in which students combine some work experience with their traditional learning in high school suggesting that both are important.

Question from Kelly Creque, Central Office Director, Trenton Public Schools:

Do the experts notice that the life chances for poor students of color are even worse than poor white students? If so, what are the implications for reform in urban public schools?

Isabel V. Sawhill:

Yes, they are worse, although once you adjust for income, the gaps are not huge. I think we need to focus on creating a better learning environment and having high expectations for everyone. My colleague here at Brookings, Hugh Price, is doing a lot of thinking about this questions and has given speeches on the topic. You might want to contact him.

Question from Dr. Dyaz Godfrey , Title I School Improvement Program:

I agree that the secret to success of these programs is highly qualified and well paid teachers. At this time U.S. Dept of Ed has a grant for Teachers Incentive Pay based on the academic performance of students, however the criteria is based on school performance and class performance. This provides a gap to leave the difficult students behind by removing them from the class. How can this be addressed?

Any program incentive should be at least omparable to the NCLB student group criteria accountability component.

Isabel V. Sawhill:

Sounds right to me, although by insisting on too many criteria we may inadvertently discourage achievement of the main objective of the program. That is, don't make the best the enemy of the good. But you probably know far more about this than I do.

Question from Joannah Nwokeabia, Copyeditor/Writer, the Education Trust:

Intergenerational poverty has disproportionaltely effected Blacks more than any other

race in America. No doubt, that is tied to education. Someone here proffered that some parents don't value education, hence their kids do not, either. I wonder how much of this is parents entrusting the public education system too much, as their parents did when they were growing up. How much has the role and responsibility of parents educating their children effect this?

Isabel V. Sawhill:

Very interesting question. I had never thought about how the fact that your parents entrusted the education system might affect your own choices or behavior. I do think that parents need help in assessing schools and need to be encouraged to attend PTA meetings or otherwise get involved. But, of course, most are working long hours, some are intimidated by the prospect of challenging school personnel, and some are not trusting enough (or downright hostile which is demoralizing for teachers and principals.)

Question from Carmen McLeod, volunteer teacher, Center for Literacy:

The great thing about teaching young adults in their 20's is that they regret not listening to their teachers/parents and did not finish high school. Now they work during the day and come at night to study for the GED. Most are very committed. Many students were not encouraged to finish high school because their parents didn't. I think that the single parents need counseling or a motivation center so that could inspire children to bring themselves out of poverty through education. ARE there any programs around the country that work with to inspire the mostly single parents?

Isabel V. Sawhill:

I believe there are some but I'm afraid I don't know the details. I recall that Avance had a program of this sort. You might look at the Carnegie Corporation's website to see if they have more information on this.

Question from Paul J. Smith, Ed.D., Facilitator, Accelerated Learning Center, Little Rock School District:

Why do you think it is that the Scandanavian countries have higher proportions of poor Scandanavian children move out of poverty than in the United States?

Cecilia Elena Rouse:

Scandanavian countries have much stronger social safety nets than we do here and much more redistribution of wealth. With broader and more generous social assistance, more equal distribution of educational quality, and the like, the penalty for being born to a poor family in Scandanavia is much smaller than that in the U.S. As for why the Scandanavians have pursued these policies more vigorously than Americans has been the focus of much academic discussion....

Question from Toi Ford, Philadelphia Federation of Teachers:

I believe that K-12 virtual education may be an answer to closing the gap between the haves and the have nots. Yet, I find little conversation about it, nor do I see any funding being put towards it. It's almost as if some people know that this innovative form of

education has the potential to revolutionize education; it has the power to teach the marginalized. I'd like to hear your thoughts.

Isabel V. Sawhill:

I share your view of this. I recall reading about a program in Newark (I think) where they gave every student in a low-income area a laptop and encouraged them to use them at home as well as in school. That said, if you can't do the basics (e.g., read well), a computer isn't going to help.

My understanding is that the so-called digital divide is closing fast so your idea should be getting more attention.

Question from Kevin Cojanu, Professor:

I see that changes need to occur in the middle and HS levels to prepare students to become contributors to the economic growth of a community. Are there any programs that are using business and real world studies to change the type of students that are coming out of the "establishment?"

Cecilia Elena Rouse:

Yes, I believe this is part of the focus of high school reform models that focus on the "school-to-work" transition. The idea is that by exposing students to the "real world" while in high school, they have a better idea of what the labor market is really like.

Question from Erica Fortescue, Breakthrough Collaborative, Director of Site Support:
What needs to change in the US education system in order to enhance opportunity for low-income students?

Isabel V. Sawhill:

The most important thing that needs to change, in my view, is the number of qualified teachers in the schools these children attend. We need to recruit differently, pay them more, and measure their performance over time.

Question from Jim Roe, Arizona Department of Education:

One of the key indicators for educational success children is the educational level of their parents. Adult literacy rates, reported recently by NRS, are so low it is shocking. We (as a country) continue to allocate billions of dollars to K-12, yet spend a very small fraction of that on educating adults. Here, in Arizona, we spend \$6 billion on K-12, \$14 million on adult education. The K-12 population? 1.1 million students. Those adults without a high school diploma or equivalent? 1.1 million. So, for each student each year we spend approximately \$6,000; for their parents each year we spend \$14. I don't think this ratio is much different in other states. As part of a plan to help educate our children so they can have access to economic opportunity, doesn't it make sense to put more focus on adult education?

Cecilia Elena Rouse:

Personally, I agree that we should spend more on adult education but not everyone agrees

with us! The reason is that the evidence on the effectiveness of adult education programs is, at best, mixed. Most would agree that the very best programs improve the welfare of participants. However, the quality of such programs is extremely uneven. In addition, adult learners do not have the time to devote to the kind of intensive study necessary to generate tangible economic gains. As I noted in an earlier response, there is some evidence that workplace education programs can be effective likely because they address the time issue while also making the curriculum relevant to the adults.

Question from Edwin Darden, Director of Education Policy, Appleseed:

In your view, are gifted and talented programs and other enrichment efforts an equalizer that will allow academically advanced children of all economic circumstances to climb. Or, are they as some critics claim, yet another sorting device that keeps economically well-off children academically and physically away from their poverty-stricken peers?

Surely such programs have an effect on high school, college and future economic earning power.

Isabel V. Sawhill:

My personal view is that high-performing or gifted students should not be held back out of some sense that this is unfair to the less gifted or well-performing. I don't buy the idea that this harms the latter.

Isabel V. Sawhill:

A number of people have asked for more information on such things as early childhood education, career education, the role that poverty plays in school success (or lack thereof) and so I want to share a few website addresses that may be of interest. They are: MDRC.org for descriptions and evaluations of promising educational interventions. CED.org for a new report on preschool education; FOC for the reasons for the test score gap by race and income at school entry and how we improve school readiness, and Brookings.edu for a variety of things on education.

Thanks for all the great questions!

Kevin Bushweller (Moderator):

Thank you for joining us for this informative discussion. And a special thanks to our guests for taking time out of their busy schedules to address your questions.

[View the transcript on Education Week's website.](#)