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**THE LINK BETWEEN  
THIRD GRADE READING SKILLS AND  
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES**

**Invited Lecture  
The Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy  
and  
The National Institute for Early Education Research  
September 20, 2011**

**SLIDE 1. Title Slide**

Good afternoon. Today I am going to present results from a new study showing how third-grade reading skills and poverty influence high school graduation.

**SLIDE 2.**

**Thanks for Support and Assistance**

I would like to begin by thanking the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Foundation for Child Development for their

support of the research which I am presenting today. For their assistance in accessing data for the study, I would also like to thank the staff of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth in Washington, D.C., and I would like to thank the Center for Social and Demographic Analysis at the University of Albany, State University of New York for their computer assistance.

### **SLIDE 3.**

#### **Overview of New Study**

I will begin by discussing why it is important to focus on third-grade reading skills. Then, I will highlight key features of my new study. Next, I will present results. Then, I will present a brief overview of programs and policies that are especially relevant to solving the problems of poor third-grade reading skills and failure to graduate from high school. Next, I will describe future research which I am planning, to provide a

deeper understanding of factors that lead to low third-grade reading skills and to high rates of not graduating from high school. Finally, I will shift to a focus on the circumstances of children. Specifically, I will present results that I have calculated for that state of New Jersey from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2005-2007 American Community Survey. My aim is to identify and highlight key groups of children in New Jersey who merit particular attention, because they are at special risk of experiencing low third-grade reading scores and low rates of graduation from high school.

#### **SLIDE 4.**

#### **Why Focus on**

#### **Third Grade Reading Skills? (Pivot Point)**

Third grade is a pivot point in a child's education, because third grade marks the point when children shift from "learning to read" to "reading to learn". Until about third grade, teachers and

students spend a great deal of time in the task of learning to read.

But then, the educational process turns a corner. After third grade, elementary school curricula generally assume that children have achieved a mastery of reading. So, the focus shifts to using these reading skills to learn about other topics. As a result, students who have not mastered their reading skills by third grade will be at a substantial disadvantage, compared to other students, as they move further through elementary school, and beyond.

## **SLIDE 5.**

### **Why Focus on**

### **Third Grade Reading Skills? (President Bush)**

Third-grade reading skills have become very important for another very practical set of reasons resulting from the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001(NCLB).

Recognizing the importance of early reading skills, the NCLB asserted “President Bush’s unequivocal commitment to ensuring that every child can read by the end of third grade.”

Reflecting this strong commitment, the NCLB has, from the very beginning, required states to test reading skills for all students beginning in third grade, and to report these results for children by poverty status and race-ethnicity, as well as for English Language Learners and children with disabilities.

## **SLIDE 6.**

### **Why Focus On**

#### **Third Grade Reading Skills? (President Obama)**

More recently in 2010, President Obama developed a blueprint for revising the Elementary and Secondary School Act. This blueprint calls for “Putting Reading First”, by significantly increasing the Federal Investment in scientifically based early reading instruction.

President Obama has called for restoring the United States of its position as No. 1 in percentage of college graduates, compared to being tied for 9<sup>th</sup> now. Accomplishing this goal will mean that millions more students will have to graduate from high school, which in turn means that millions more children will have to master reading skills by third grade.

These education policies embedded in the NCLB are based on research beginning more than three decades ago, which shows that children with low third-grade reading test scores are less likely to graduate from high school than are children with higher reading scores. In addition, as I noted a moment ago, the curricula of schools themselves are organized so that third grade is a key pivot point. Third grade is the point where children stop learning to read and begin reading to learn.

## **SLIDE 7.**

### **New Results in This Study**

In this context, results which I present today are from the first-ever study to calculate high school graduation rates for children with different reading skill levels, children with different poverty experiences, and children in diverse race-ethnic groups.

**SLIDE 8. Fourth-Grade Reading Skills of  
America's Children, Based on NAEP,  
"The Nation's Report Card"**

In order to classify children by reading skill level, we decided to look at results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress, or NAEP, also known as "The Nation's Report Card." NAEP found that in 2009 only one-third of fourth-grade students were proficient readers, that is, only one-third were reading at or above grade level.

One might plausibly assume, or hope, that most children would be reading at or above grade level. But it turns out that

two-thirds of fourth-graders, 67%, read below grade level, that is, they are reading below the proficient level.

The NAEP indicates that “Fourth grade students performing at the Proficient level should be able to integrate and interpret texts and apply their understanding of the text to draw conclusions and make evaluations”. Again, the NAEP results show that two-thirds of fourth grade students are below this level of reading proficiency, because they are not able to draw conclusions and make evaluations based on their integration and interpretation of a text.

Among students who are not proficient readers, NAEP finds that one-third are reading at the basic level, and one-third are reading below the basic level.

**Slide 9.**

**Key Features of the New Study**



Given these facts, we decided to divide our sample into thirds, which we call high, medium, or low skill readers, reflecting the different reading skills in the NAEP results. We calculated high school graduation rates for these three groups from the 1979 National Longitudinal Study of Youth, because this is the only nationally representative survey that has tested the reading skill of third graders, and then followed these same children into young adulthood. In other words, this is the only national data set for which it is possible calculate high school graduation rates separately for children who had different levels of reading skill in third grade.

Our results are calculated from a sample of 3,795 children who were born between 1979 and 1989, and whose mothers were 22-32 years old. These mothers were born during the last half of the post-World War II baby-boom, in the years between 1957 and 1964.

The Reading test used in the NLSY79 is The Peabody Individual Achievement Test (or PIAT) Reading Recognition subtest, which is commonly used to assess reading skills of children in national surveys.

The NLSY79 conducts interviews every other year. So we had poverty data for each child for a total of five years. We classified children as never living in poverty, or as living in poverty for at least one of those five years.

We were also able to distinguish three major race-ethnic groups, namely, non-Hispanic Whites, non-Hispanic Blacks, and Hispanics.

Finally, we calculated rates for graduating from high school on-time, that is, graduating by age 19, but the data do not indicate whether or not the students actually dropped out.

### **SLIDE 10. Percent Not Graduating**

**from High School by**

## **3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading Proficiency**

What do our results show? High school graduation rates vary enormously for children with different third-grade reading skills. One-in-six children, 16%, who are not reading proficiently in third grade did not graduate from high school. This is four times the rate of 4% not graduating for children who are proficient readers.

### **SLIDE 11. Percent of Students Not Graduating, among Not-Proficient Readers**

Among not-proficient readers the proportion not graduating from high school rises from 9% for students with basic reading skills to 23% for students with below basic reading skills. Third grade reading matters clearly matters for high school graduation.

### **SLIDE 12.**

## **3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading Test Scores**

## **for All Students and Non-Graduates**

As a result of these enormous differences in graduation rates across reading-skill groups, children with the lowest reading scores account for only-third of all children, but they account for more than three-fifths, 63 percent, of all children who do not graduate from high school.

More broadly, although two-thirds of all children read below the proficient level, children who read below the proficient level account for 88% of children who do not graduate from high school. In sharp contrast, 33% of all students are proficient readers, but these proficient readers account for a only a small 12% of students who do not graduate from high school.

### **SLIDE 13. Percent of Students Not Graduating by Reading Proficiency & Poverty Experience**

This slide shows the proportion of students who do not graduate from high school for children who differ in both their third-grade reading skill and their experience with family poverty.

Children in poor families may arrive at school without the language and social skills they need for learning, and they tend to live in neighborhoods with low-performing schools. For these and other reasons, children with low third-grade reading skills and who live in poverty are in double-jeopardy for not graduating from high school.

As the left-hand panel of this slide shows, overall, 22% of children who have lived in poverty do not graduate from high school, compared to 6% who were never poor. This rises to 32% for students spending more than half of the survey interview-years in poverty.

The middle panel of these slide shows that poverty matters even for children who are proficient readers. Among children who are proficient readers with no poverty experience, only 2% do not graduate from high school, but this increases more than five-fold to 11 percent for proficient readers with poverty experience.

The right-hand panel shows how poor reading skills combine with poverty. Among children who are not proficient readers but who do not have poverty experience, 9% do not graduate from high school. But among children who are not proficient readers and who do experience poverty, one-in-four, 26%, do not graduate from high school.

## **SLIDE 14.**

### **Poverty Experience for All Students and Non-Graduates**

This slide shows the poverty experience of students who do and do not graduate from high school.

As measured in our study, 38% of children lived in a poor family for at least one year. However, because of the high risk of not graduating from high school among children with poverty experience, poor children account for a large 70% of all children who did not graduate from high school. This is very high, but it is important to note many non-poor children also do not graduate from high school. Never-poor children still account for 30% of the all children who do not graduate from high school.

### **SLIDE 15. Percent of Students**

#### **Not Graduating by Reading Proficiency**

#### **& Race-Ethnicity**

This slide shows the proportions not graduating from high school for reading proficiency groups, separately for Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics.

This far right panel of this graph shows that Black and Hispanic children who are not reading proficiently are about twice as likely as similar white children to not graduate from high school. The difference is 24%-25%, compared to 13% for Whites.

**SLIDE 16.**

**Race-Ethnicity of**

**All Students and Non-Graduates**

Still, because the majority of children born in the U.S. during the 1980s were White, a majority of all children who did not graduate in our study, 56% were Whites, while 30% were Blacks, and 14% were Hispanic.

**SLIDE 17. Percent Not Graduating from**

**High School across Reading, Poverty,**

**and Race-Ethnic Groups**



This slide summarizes some of these results. It shows that children who are not proficient readers are 4 times more likely than proficient readers to not graduate from high school, at 16% vs. 4%. If students are not proficient readers, and they also experience poverty, they are more than 6 times more likely than proficient readers to not graduate from high school, at 26% vs. 4%, and if they also are Black or Hispanic, they are about 8 times more likely to not graduate from high school at 31%-33% vs. 4%.

**SLIDE 18. Percent Not Graduating from  
High School across Select Reading  
and Poverty Groups**

At the opposite extreme, only 2% of students who read proficiently and never live in poverty fail to graduate from high school, and there is little difference across race-ethnic groups, with a range of 2%-5% for White, Black, and Hispanic students.

However, proficient third graders who have experienced at least one year of poverty are just as likely to not graduate from high school as not-proficient readers who do not experience poverty, and 11% and 9%.

**SLIDE 19. Government Policies to  
Improve Third-Grade Reading and  
High School Graduation**

These findings point toward three arenas where policies could improve third-grade reading and high school graduation.

First, before third grade, to improve reading skills for the for the substantial majority of students who are not proficient readers, high-quality early education is a highly cost-effective investment for improving both early and later school success, particularly for students in low-income families and for Black and Hispanic children.

Unfortunately, studies show that the effects of good Pre-Kindergarten programs can “fade out”. But research also shows that gains for students are sustained if high-quality Pre-Kindergarten is linked and aligned with the grades Kindergarten to 3rd, to create across Pre-Kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade a common curriculum and standards for social and academic goals.

The integrated PreK-3<sup>rd</sup> approach to education, if fully developed and effectively implemented, involves six components:

- (1) Aligned curriculum, standards, and assessment from Pre-Kindergarten through third grade,
- (2) Consistent instructional approaches and learning environments,

- (3) Availability of Pre-Kindergarten for all children ages 3 and 4, as well as full-day kindergarten for older children,
- (4) Classroom teachers who possess at least a bachelor's degree and are certified to teach grades PreK-3<sup>rd</sup>,
- (5) Small class sizes, and
- (6) A strong partnership between the school and families.

A recent study of an integrated PreK-3<sup>rd</sup> approach implemented in Chicago found improved educational outcomes leading to a long-term societal return of \$8.24 for every \$1.00 invested in the first 4-6 years of school, including the Pre-Kindergarten years.

Second, health and developmental problems undermine student success in school, and need to be addressed with effective government policies. For example, 10% of people in families with incomes of \$50,000 or more are not covered by

health insurance. But this jumps of 19% for those with family incomes between \$25,000 and \$50,000 (\$49,999), and to 29%, nearly one-in-three for those with family incomes below \$25,000.

Children in poor families also are more likely than their peers to have parents with limited education, because lower education is associated with earning lower incomes. These finding suggest that policies and programs which would increase access to health insurance for children and to improved education for parents, particularly in low-income families, could play an important role in fostering children's educational success.

Thus, third, effective education and work training programs for parents can help lift families out of poverty. In addition, two-generation programs that integrate high-quality early

education for children with effective work-force development programs for parents are especially promising.

The Foundation for Child Development, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and others are working to design and implement effective two-generation policies. For the Foundation for child development, this means tightly linking strong early education and PreK-3<sup>rd</sup> schooling with sector-based workforce development programs.

Sector-based workforce development programs identify jobs for which there is a demand in local areas, such as the health sector or the high-technology sector, that allow families to rise out of poverty and enter the middle class. These workforce development programs provide the education, training, and wrap-around services that lead to a career path with well-paid work.

Linking high quality early education with high quality sector-based workforce development program can lead to positive synergies for the success of both children and parents. The links between parent education, family income, and children's educational success suggest the potential value in pursuing this kind of two-generation strategy.

## **SLIDE 20.**

### **Future Analyses to Provide**

#### **Deeper Understanding**

Before turning to a focus on children in New Jersey, I would like to briefly describe the next steps for the research I have presented here. First, my colleagues and I are studying how much difference it makes for high school graduation rates, if children with various third-grade reading skills live in neighborhoods with high concentrations of poverty. I also have received funding to systematically assess and identify resources

leading to proficient third-grade reading and high school graduation associated with mother's education, family income, access to health insurance, access to Pre-Kindergarten and high quality schools, and improved neighborhood safety. Finally, I also am seeking funding to expand the research to study specific processes that link family, school, and neighborhood resources to third-grade reading success and to high school graduation.

Now I would like to turn to a focus on children in the state of New Jersey. This second slide show presents results for children ages 0-17 in New Jersey based on the U.S. Census Bureau's 2005-2007 American Community Survey.

**SLIDE 1. Percent with ELL Parents Only & 200% Poverty**

In focusing on children in New Jersey, I will highlight 12 groups of children who experience high poverty rates, or who are likely to live in families where the parents are limited in their English language fluency, or both. I have already shown the



links between limited reading proficiency by third grade, living in a family with poverty experience, and not graduating from high school graduation.

But there's another factor which I was not able to study, and which is quite likely to be related third-grade reading success and not graduating from high school, namely growing up in a family with parents who are not fluent English speakers.

Children in these families confront the additional challenge associated with not having exposure in the home to strong English language role models. It is quite clear that young children who are not exposed to proficient English speakers at home will require additional language opportunities to become proficient readers of English by third grade.

It is important, therefore, to identify those groups of children with parents who are not English fluent. In view of the ways in which other family and socioeconomic circumstances

may influence the acquisition of reading skills, it also is important to understand the family and socioeconomic circumstances in which these children live. To address these issues, I have calculated a range of results for children in New Jersey.

I am focusing on 12 groups which are comparatively large and which experience high poverty rates, high rates of parents not speaking English proficiently or both. I have also calculated additional results for a much larger set of groups which I can provide to anyone who is interested, as well as similar results for children every state, and the U.S. as a whole.

This slide shows the proportion of children who live only with parents who English Language Learners, that is, parents who are not fluent English speakers. It also shows the proportion living in families with incomes below 200% of the federal poverty threshold.

Four of these groups have small proportions with ELL parents only, but high 200% poverty rates. The first two groups are Black children in native-born families with parents born only in the U.S., and Hispanic children in native-born families. No more than 10% of these children in New Jersey live with ELL parents only, but 41-46% have family incomes below 200% of the federal poverty threshold. Taken together, Black and Hispanic children in native-born families account for one-in-five, 19% of all children in New Jersey.

Two additional groups fit this pattern, children in immigrant families from the Middle East and Black children in immigrant families from Africa. Children in these immigrant families live with at least one immigrant parent, that is, one parent who was not born in the U.S. Together with the two native-born groups, these children account for 21% of all children in New Jersey.

Four additional groups of children have both high proportions living with ELL parents only and high 200% poverty rates. These are children in immigrant families from Mexico, the Dominican Republic Central America, and Pakistan.

The proportions with ELL parents range from 34% for Pakistan, to 51-53% for the Dominican Republic and Central America, to 71% for Mexico. Similarly, the proportions in families with incomes below 200% of the federal poverty threshold range from 34% for Pakistan to 43-49% for the Dominican Republic and Central America, to 69% for Mexico.

The last set of four groups is children in immigrant families from Vietnam, South America, Korea, and China. These children experience lower 200% poverty rates, in the range of 12-19%, but they experience substantial proportions with ELL

parents only, ranging from 30% for China, to 39-42% for South America and Korea, to a high of 55% for Vietnam.

Taken together, the 10 immigrant groups in this slide about for 17% of all children in New Jersey. Combined with the two native-born groups, these 12 groups of children account for 36% of all children in New Jersey.

By comparison, White children in native-born families account for just under one-half, 49% of children in New Jersey. Thus, taken together the number of children in 12 groups in this slide is three-fourths as large as the number of White children in native-born families.

Now I would like to turn to more detailed results for these groups regarding English language skills, U.S. citizenship, family composition, parental education, work, and wages, as well as poverty, homeownership, overcrowded housing, housing cost-burden.

**SLIDE 2. Percent of Children Ages 5-17 Potentially Bilingual, i.e., Speaking English and Another Language**

Despite the high proportions with only ELL parents in the home for many of these groups, about one-half or more of children in most of these groups are potentially bilingual, speaking both English and another language at home.

The proportion is only 3% for Whites and Blacks in native-born families, but this jumps to 45% for Hispanic children in native-born families and Black children in immigrant families from Africa, and then to a range of 63% to 75% for most other groups, and the extremely high level of 83% for children with origins in Central America, and 89% for children with origins in Mexico or the Dominican Republic.

Thus, most children are learning English, although these statistics not indicate the extent to which they are learning the academic English which is necessary for success in school.

### **SLIDE 3. Percent in Linguistically Isolated Households**

Still, substantial proportions live in linguistically isolated households where no one in the home over age 13 speaks English exclusively or very well. The proportion is less than 1% for White children and Black children in immigrant families.

But this rises to 5% for Hispanic children in native-born families, and 10-13% for children in immigrant families from the Mideast and Blacks from Africa. The proportion is in the range of 21-25% for most other groups, but this rises to about one-third, at 30-36% for children in immigrant families from the Dominican Republic, Central America, and Vietnam, and to a very high 53% for children in immigrant families from Mexico.

Children and parents in these families face special challenges as they seek success in school and work, or access to health care and other services. Schools and other institutions that do not provide outreach in the home languages of these

groups are at risk of failing to provide needed services to their many constituent, clients, and customers who do not speak English fluently.

#### **SLIDE 4. Percent with U.S. Citizen Parent**

Children in immigrant groups live in families with substantial-to-high proportions that have at least one citizen parent in the home, reflecting a strong commitment to the U.S. For the groups in this slide, more than half, and as many as 85% live with at least one parent who is a U.S. citizen. Even among children in immigrant families from Mexico, one-fourth, 26%, have at least one U.S. citizen parent in the home. This proportion will no doubt rise as the parents spend additional years in the U.S. and improve their English language skills.

Still, many children in immigrant families live in mixed-status nuclear families, which may act to limit their access to important public benefits and services.



## **SLIDE 5. Percent Children U.S. Citizens**

The vast majority of children in immigrant families with origins in this slide are themselves U.S. citizens, mainly because they were born in the U.S. The proportion is in the range of 86-95% for most immigrant groups, and is only slightly lower at 80-81% for children with origins in Mexico and Korea.

Most of these children are likely to spend most or all of their lives in the U.S., learning English, attending schools, and ultimately entering the paid labor force. These children of immigrants, as U.S. citizens, share precisely the same rights and privileges as do those citizen children in native-born families. All of these children clearly are important to the future of New Jersey and the nation.

## **SLIDE 6. Percent Living with Two Parents**

Children living with two parents tend, on average, to be somewhat advantaged in their educational success, compared to

children in one-parent families Among White children in immigrant families in New Jersey, 85% live with two parents.

The proportion living with two parents is within a 5-7 percentage point range, at 80-92% for most groups in this slide.

The proportion is somewhat lower for children in immigrant families with origins in Mexico or Central America, at 76-78%, and for Black children in immigrant families from Africa, at 73%. Least likely to have two parents in the home who are children in native-born families are Hispanics at 53% and Blacks at 38%.

### **SLIDE 7. Percent Living with Four or More Siblings**

Siblings can play an important role in the lives of children as companions and during adulthood as sources of social and economic support. But larger numbers of children must also share scarce resources in the family home including parental time and income.

Nine percent of White children in native-born families live in larger families with four or more siblings. This proportion is somewhat larger for only five groups in this slide, Blacks and Hispanics in native-born families at 11-12, and children in immigrant families from the Mideast, Pakistan, and for Blacks from Africa at 15%-17%.

### **SLIDE 8. Percent with Grandparent in the Home**

Grandparents in the home can provide essential child care, nurturing, or economic resources. Only 6% of White children in native-born families have a grandparent in the home, similar to the proportion of groups in this slide. This nearly doubles to 11% for children in immigrant families from Central and South America, and it rises to 13-17% for Blacks and Hispanics in native-born families, and children in immigrant families from Pakistan, Vietnam, and China.

### **SLIDE 9. Percent with Mother Not H.S. Graduate**

It has long been known that children whose parents have completed fewer years of schooling tend, on average, to themselves complete fewer years of schooling and to obtain lower paying jobs when they reach adulthood. Parents whose education does not extend beyond the elementary level may be especially limited in the knowledge and experience needed to help their children succeed in school. Immigrant parents often have high educational aspirations for their children, but may know little about the U.S. educational system, particularly if they have completed only a few years of school.

Only 3 percent of White children in native-born families have a mother who has not graduated from high schools. The proportion is no more than 8% for several groups in this slide, but the remaining groups are 3 to 19 times more likely to have a mother who has not graduated from high school. The proportion

for children in immigrant families from the Middle East and Pakistan is 10-11%, but this rises to 14-19% for Black and Hispanic children in native-born families and for children in immigrant families from South America. Still higher, 23-25% have a mother who has not graduate from high school among children in immigrant families from the Dominican Republic Vietnam, and this jumps to 35% for Central American and 57% for Mexico.

### **SLIDE 10. Percent with Mother 0-8 Years of School**

Parents who have completed only 8 years of school or less have not entered, let alone completed high school. This low level of educational attainments for mothers is found among only 1% or fewer White and Black children in native-born families. But the proportion with mothers completing no more than 8 years of school climbs to 5-7% for Hispanics in native-born families and for children in immigrant families from the

Middle East and South America. Higher still, 10-12% have a mother with no more than 8 years of school among children in immigrant families from the Dominican Republic and Vietnam, and high still for 18% for Central America, and 36% for Mexico.

Parents with little schooling may, as a consequence, be less comfortable with the education system, less able to help their children with school work, and less able to effectively engage teachers and education administrators.

It may be especially important for educators in New Jersey to focus attention on the needs of children in immigrant families from Mexico and Central America, the Dominican Republic, Vietnam, because these children are especially likely to have parents who have completed only a few years of school.

**SLIDE 11. Percent with Father Employed**

The overwhelming majority of children live in families with a strong work ethic. Among White children in native-born families with a father in the home, 97% have a father working in the paid labor force to support the families. This proportion is in the narrow range of 89-97% for all the groups in this slide.

**SLIDE 12. Percent with Father Employed Full-Time**

Many fathers cannot, however, find full-time year-round work. Even among White children in native-born families, nearly one-in-eight, 16%, with fathers in the home have a father who is not working full-time year-round, while 84% do have a fully employed father in the home.

The proportion also is 79% or more for children in immigrant families from the Middle East, the Dominican Republic, and Pakistan, and for Black children in immigrant families from Africa. This proportion falls to the range of 68-77% for Black and Hispanic children in native-born families and

for children in immigrant families from Mexico, Central America, South American, and Korea.

Thus, substantial proportions of children in these families may experience disruptions in father's employment that could undermine their concentration and engagement in school.

### **SLIDE 13. Percent with Mother Employed**

Many children also have a mother who is employed. This proportion is 73% not only for White children in native-born families, but also for Hispanic children in native-born families, and children in immigrant families from Vietnam and South American. Even higher, 77-79% of children in immigrant families have working mothers if they are from the Dominican Republic or China, or are Blacks with immigrant parents from Africa.

Somewhat lower are the proportion with working mothers from Central America at 68%, and Mexico at 53%, while



proportion drops to just under one-half at 46% for the Middle East, and 37% for Pakistan.

**SLIDE 14. Percent with Mother Employed Full-Time**

The proportions with mothers employed full-time year-round are smaller, but still substantial. In the middle of the range are White children in native-born families and children in immigrant families from Korea at 32%.

The proportion with mothers working full-time year-round is substantially higher in the range of 39-54% for Black and Hispanic children in native-born families, and for children in immigrant families from the Dominican Republic, Central America, Vietnams, South America, and China, as well as for Black children in immigrant Families from Africa.

In the lower range of 18-25% are children in immigrant families from the Middle East, Mexico, and Pakistan.

Overall between about one-in-five and more than one-half of children in every group in this slide has a mother working full-time year round, with much higher proportions for fathers, and still higher proportions if we include parents working part-time.

These statistics reflect indicate that these children live in families with a strong work ethic. But they also point to the difficulties that many parents may have in engaging with teachers and schools during either regular school hours, or during evenings when parents with non-standard work shifts have to be on the job. These results point toward the value and the need for schools and teachers to be flexible in the times they are available to parents, to assure that parents have the opportunity to engage with teachers and schools.

**SLIDE 15. Percent with Father < 200% Minimum Wage**

Although fathers and mothers often work to support their families, low wages for many parents place a limit on the income they can earn. Only 5% of White children in native-born families have fathers who earn less than 200% of the federal minimum wage. But the proportion is about 2-3 times greater at 12-17% for Black and Hispanic children in native-born families, and for children in immigrant families with origins in Pakistan, Korea, and China. The proportion is about 4 times greater at 19-22% for children in immigrant families from the Middle East, Central America, and South America, and for Black children with immigrant parents from Africa, and nearly 10 times higher at 48% for children in immigrant families from Mexico.

**SLIDE 16. Percent with Mother < 200% Minimum Wage**

Children with working mothers are even more likely to have mothers with earnings below 200% of the federal

minimum wage. The proportion is 11% for Whites in native-born families and about 13% for children in immigrant families from China. But this jumps to 18%-29% for Black and Hispanic children in native-born families, and children in immigrant families from the Middle East, Pakistan, Vietnam, and for Black children with immigrant parents from Africa. Still higher, 41-45% of children in immigrant families from the Dominican Republic, and Central and South America have mothers earning less than twice the federal minimum wage, and this jumps to 69% for children with origins in Mexico.

### **SLIDE 17. Federal Poverty Rate**

Low wages, even for full-time workers, can lead to high poverty rates. Children from low-income families tend to experience a variety of negative developmental outcomes, including less success in school, lower educational attainment, and earning lower incomes during adulthood.

Poverty rates merit considerable attention in part because extensive research documents that poverty has greater negative consequences than either limited education among mothers or living in a one-parent family.

In 2005-2007, the federal poverty rate for White children in native-born families in New Jersey was 4%, and about the same for children in immigrant families from China at 5%. Federal poverty rates were 2-3 times greater at 10-15% for children in immigrant families from Central and South America, Pakistan, Vietnam, and Korea, and for Black children with immigrant parents from Africa. The federal poverty rates were 4-5 times greater in the range of 19-25% for Black and Hispanic children in native-born families, and for children in immigrant families from the Middle East and the Dominican Republic, and this climbed to 28% for Mexico.

**SLIDE 18. Percent below 200% Poverty Threshold**

The official federal poverty measure is used most often to assess economic deprivation in the U.S., but more than a 15 years ago a National Research Council report urged that the official poverty measure be revised, because "...it no longer provides an accurate picture of the differences in the extent of economic poverty among population groups or geographic areas of the country, nor an accurate picture of trends over time".

Recognizing the limitations of the official approach to measuring economic deprivation, major public programs for children increasingly are setting eligibility criteria at higher levels. This slide also shows results indicating the extent to which children live below 200% of the federal poverty threshold. This measure is often used in discussions of public policy, and I will refer to it as the 200% poverty rate.

One-in-ten White children in native-born families in New Jersey, 11%, lived in poverty in 2005-2007, about the same as children in immigrant families from China at 12%.

The proportion doubles to about one-in-five, however, for children in immigrant families from Vietnam and Korea. And, it triples to about one-in-three for children in immigrant families from Pakistan and South American. Even higher, the 200% poverty rate is in the range of 37-46% for Black and Hispanic children in native-born families, and for children in immigrant families from the Middle East, Central America, and Black children with immigrant parents from Africa. Still higher, the 200% poverty rates rises to about one-half of children in immigrant families from the Dominican Republic, at 49%, and to two-of-every-three children in immigrant families from Mexico, at 69%.

These levels of economic deprivation can have serious consequences of the success of children in school, pointing to the need for the school breakfast and lunch program, and other policies to reduce economic deprivation among children.

### **SLIDE 19. Percent in Home Owned by Family**

High poverty rates carry through to the housing situation of children, with lower rates of homeownership and high rates of overcrowding. Still, many children in the groups included in this slide live in homes owned by parents or other family members. These levels of homeownership reflect a strong commitment by these families to their adopted cities, towns, and neighborhoods. Children in immigrant families from China are about as likely as White children in native-born families to live in family-owned homes, at 88-89%. The proportion is about 40% or more for most other groups in this slide. Even among



children in immigrant families from Mexico, one-in-five live in family owned homes, despite their very high poverty rates.

### **SLIDE 20. Percent in Home Owned by Family**

Families with low wages and below-poverty-line incomes may double-up with other family members or nonrelatives to share housing costs and make scarce resources go further, leading to overcrowded housing conditions.

Overcrowded housing can make it difficult for a child to find a place to do homework, and it can have negative consequences for behavioral adjustment and psychological health. Children are classified in this slide as living in overcrowded housing if they live in a home with more than one person per room.

The rate of overcrowding is 3% for White children in native-born families, and somewhat higher at 5-8% for children in immigrant families from Vietnam and Korea.

This climbs to the range of 11-14% for Black and Hispanic children in native-born families, and for children in immigrant families from the Middle East, and to 17%-23% for children in immigrant families from the Dominican Republic, Pakistan, and South America, and for Black children with immigrant parents from Africa.

The highest rates of overcrowding are for children in immigrant families from Central America at 26% and Mexico at 46%.

### **SLIDE 21. Percent with Moderate or Severe Housing Cost Burden**

Families that spend a large proportion of their income for housing have less money available for food, clothing, medicines, and other necessities. The Census Bureau defines moderate or severe housing cost burden as a family that spends more than 30% of its income on housing.

Nearly two-in-five White children in native-born families experience these levels of housing cost burden, at 38%. The proportion is lower for only two groups, children in immigrant families from Vietnam and China. For the other groups in this slide the proportions range from about one-half at 53% to about two-thirds at 69%.

### **SLIDE 22. Conclusions (1)**

In conclusion, the new results which I presented today show that third-grade reading proficiency is strongly associated with high school graduation. Children who are not reading proficiently by third grade are much more likely to not graduate from high school.

This is especially true for Black and Hispanic children and for children who experience family poverty. Since reading proficiency means reading English, children growing up in families with parents who are limited in their English

proficiency also are likely to be at risk of not reading proficiently by third grade.

### **SLIDE 23. Conclusions (2)**

These findings point toward the need for strong early education policies that teach reading from an early age, and to policies that foster English language proficiency among parents, and improved skills that lead to higher paying jobs for parents.

These policies and program include high-quality PreK-3<sup>rd</sup> education with curricula and standards aligned to maximize the school success of children. They include health insurance and nutrition programs that will foster the health and development of children. And they include the Dual-Generation programs which tightly link high-quality early education for children with sector-based workforce development programs for their parents.

### **SLIDE 24. Conclusions (3)**

I've also presented results from the American Community Survey showing the largest groups of children in New Jersey who experience high poverty rates, who often have parents who are English Language Learners, or both.

Children who experience especially high poverty rates, but lower rates of living with ELL parents only, are Black and Hispanic children in native-born families, and children in immigrant families from the Middle East and Black children with immigrant parents from Africa. Children who experience high rates of living with ELL parents only, and lower poverty rates, are children in immigrant families from Vietnam, South America, Korea, and China. Children who experience both very high poverty rates and very high proportions living with ELL parents only are children in immigrant families from Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Central America, and Pakistan.

Taken together, these children account for about for 36% of all children in New Jersey. These children merit special attention from educators and policy-makers. The future of New Jersey depends in no small part on the success these children in experience in reading proficiency by third-grade, and their success in graduating from high school.