

**Closing Remarks of Eric A. Hanushek, Chair of the National Board for Education Sciences
June 29, 2010 at the Fifth Annual IES Research Conference in National Harbor, MD**

Thank you John. My background is doing econometric statistical models and my talk here gives new meaning, personal meaning to the term "residual," since we are over time. When I was asked to come here, I was unsure what my role was. I thought at first that it was to give the invocation for this ceremony, but then I saw in the program that I was giving the final words on this morning's session. So this might be the benediction that I give.

What I wanted to do is take just a couple of minutes to put John's talk into a larger perspective that I have from the research side. In 2002, the National Academy of Sciences released a report called "Scientific Research in Education." Frankly, the motivation of this report was that education research had such a bad image, that there was an attempt to try to shore up what was scientific about education research. At that time, it wasn't entirely clear what science meant in education, let alone whether we had a broad community of researchers, an active peer review processes, and so forth. I think that this room demonstrates the change that has come about with IES. IES has demonstrated that in fact, you can do rigorous scientific research in education that has a meaningful focus on education. It's not just RCT's that have gotten a lot of attention. In fact, the majority of IES research is not in RCT's, but it is in rigorous research about education issues.

Now what is interesting about this morning's discussion from John Easton is the challenge to move this research agenda even farther ahead and to make it relevant. He wants to make education research useful. Strange idea. But he wants to go deeper than just the simple questions, "did something work, or did it not work?" When does it work? Where does it work? How or why does it work? The charter school study that's being released today is a very good example. On average by this study, which uses a lottery study of charter schools, charter schools produce about the same achievement as the traditional public schools that they draw from. But the interesting story is not the on average. It's the fact that there are some very, very good charter schools and there are some very bad charter schools. How do we identify these different types and what do we do about them? The challenge that we have in this room as researchers is how do we increase the relevance, while at the same time retaining the rigor? It's very easy to see what the challenges are.

Think about implementation. We have a new research initiative for reading comprehension. Assume for the moment that we have some program for reading comprehension that we tried to introduce in some schools. When we evaluate it, we find that some classrooms do better than others. We send a researcher in to check on the implementation of this program, and

we carefully tote up whether the new program had been faithfully followed and implemented in the classroom, or not. Presume for a moment that we find that classrooms that faithfully implement this program also have higher achievement growth in their students. What do we make of that? Should we immediately call forth our friends in France to tell us how to keep everybody on the same page day after day? Clearly, virtually nobody in this room would think that that was the right answer. Unless we know that the teachers are the same and we know that they are randomly deciding to faithfully implement or not, we're not convinced that this is programmatic versus the people in the classroom, or whether it is both.

But the challenge to us as researchers (the reason for going through this story) is that we don't really have yet good scientific designs that allow us to go deeper into these questions. And so one of the real IES challenges for the future is in fact to invent this new science of how we go deeper in a rigorous scientific manner.

Well, let me stop by just returning to my economics role, where I've been spending a lot of time recently trying to convince people that better education of the US population is really important for the US's future, for individuals and for the economy. I think it's only going to happen by in fact going deeper into the research as John suggests -- finding ways to understand when things work and how we introduce better information into what goes on in schools.

The final thing that I would remark is that the public now demands this. If we look at the extraordinary program introduced by President Obama and by Secretary Duncan, one of the remarkable things is that along the edges of this program, people are saying, "Well, where is the evidence that this is the right program?" That's what we're about. Preparing and producing rigorous, scientific, reliable, validated evidence that will inform how the program of the current administration and the next administration evolve.

Thank you. By the way, I decided at the end, since I left you with a challenge, that I am really giving the invocation, and not the benediction. This is to lead you into the next days of discussion in this vibrant research program.