

WWS 528c: Issues in Education Policy
Spring 2009

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Wednesday, 1-4 p.m.
**Except Friday, March 6 and
March 27**
Robertson 010

Robertson 216

5 Dec 08

This course will focus on why public policies and practices have failed to narrow significantly the achievement gap between affluent and poor and white/Asian and Black/Latino students. Think of “education reform” as an oxymoron. Forty years of national commissions, thousands of conferences and books, educational presidencies and governorships, and the expenditure of trillions of dollars have produced mainly disappointment. While recent federal policies, most particularly No Child Left Behind, leverage the influence of national policy, the policies that affect schools and districts most are set by the fifty state governments. How all of this works its way into the classroom to influence instruction is usually not a question that policymakers address. Nor do they typically acknowledge the origins and magnitude of the achievement gap or the difficulties of narrowing it classroom by classroom. The seminar will.

The seminar will benefit from visiting experts and will take two field trips to see the work of urban education first hand.

Requirements: Students are expected to attend all twelve seminar sessions, complete the required reading prior to the seminar, and complete written assignments on time..

Grading: 40% on seminar participation, 60% on three policy analyses.. To make the assignments as realistic as possible, the topics will be given a week or ten days in advance, to be addressed to a busy, skeptical policy-maker, and of a length likely to be read by such a person.

Readings.

Most readings will be available on e-reserves or directly through the web sites listed. Reading assignments may be supplemented or revised as the course unfolds.

Each seminar will open with a brief discussion of items of interest in the most recent issue of *Education Week*, the best source for keeping up on education policy and research. It can be found at the Stokes Library. Please read it for interesting/important news each week and be prepared to discuss..

Chapters of the following books will be required reading; they are worth reading in whole.

Richard F. Elmore, *School Reform from the Inside Out: Policy Practice, and Performance*. Harvard Education Press, 2007

Jennifer Hochschild and Nathan Scovronick, *The American Dream and the Public Schools*, Oxford University Press, 2003.

Richard Rothstein, *Class and Schools: Using Social, Economic and Educational Reform to Close the Black-White Achievement Gap*. Teachers College Press. 2004

Gordon MacInnes, *In Plain Sight: The Simple, Difficult Lessons from New Jersey's Expensive Effort to Close the Achievement Gap*. The Century Foundation, 2008.

Week-by-Week

February 4: Introductions, overview of the course, and attention to the origins and magnitude of The Gap. Because social class is such a delicate subject in American discourse, the achievement gap has been attributed to many factors that may contribute to it, but cannot explain it (e.g. poor instruction, teacher unions, television). If policy makers begin by defining the problem incorrectly, they usually come up with the wrong solutions.

Hochschild and Scovronick, *The American Dream and the Public Schools*. Chapter 1.

Frederick Mosteller and Daniel P. Moynihan, editors, *On Equal Educational Opportunity*. Random House, 1972, pp. 3-32; 52-64. The near-contemporary re-analysis of the Coleman Report, the most important social science survey ever conducted.

For a recent re-analysis of Coleman, see Caroline M. Hoxby, "If families matter most, where do schools come in?" pp. 89-125, in Terry M. Moe, *A Primer on America's Schools*, Brookings Institution, 2001

Richard Rothstein, *Class and Schools: Using Social, Economic and Educational Reform to Close the Black-White Achievement Gap*. Teachers College (2004), Chapter 1.

Gordon MacInnes, *In Plain Sight: Simple, Difficult Lessons from New Jersey's Expensive Effort to Close the Achievement Gap*. The Century Foundation, 2008, Introduction and Chapter 2

February 11: Despite its failures, the education reform industry is remarkably durable. It persists in overselling its wares, underestimating the difficulty of the task, disrespecting teachers, and ignoring the crucial roles played by state education departments and school districts.

Hochschild and Scovronick, Chapter 4

David Tyack and Larry Cuban, *Tinkering Toward Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform*, Harvard University Press, 1995. Prologue and Chapter 5.

Richard Elmore, *School Reform from the Inside Out*. Chapter 1

Paul E. Peterson, "Choice in American Education," Chapter 10 in Terry M. Moe, editor. *Primer on America's Schools*, Hoover Institution, 2001

John E. Chubb and Terry M. Moe, *Politics, Markets, and America's Schools*, Brookings, 1990, Chapters 1 and 6.

February 18: The kindergarten gap is at the heart of the reading gap, which, in turn ordains the achievement gap. It is also the gap that most school districts fail to emphasize and narrow.

Ellen Frede, co-director of the National institute for Early Education Research, and former director of the early childhood education office at NJDOE, will join us.

Paul E. Barton and Richard J. Coley, "The Family: America's Smallest School." Educational Testing Service. Policy Information Report. (September 2007). Available at www.ets.org/Media/Education_Topics/pdf/5678_PERCReport_School.pdf

Valerie Lee and David Burkam, *Inequality at the Starting Gate: Social Background Differences in Achievement as children Begin School*. (2002) Economic Policy Institute, Introduction and Chapters 1 and 2

Donald Rock and A. Jackson Stenner, "Assessment Issues in the Testing of Children at School Entry." In *School Readiness: Closing Racial and Ethnic Gaps*. The Future of Children. WWS at Princeton University and Brookings Institution. Vol. 15 No. 1 Spring 2005.

Greg J. Duncan and Katherine Magnuson, "Can Family Socioeconomic Resources Account for Racial and Ethnic Test Score Gaps?" in *School Readiness*

Betty Hart and Todd R. Risley, "The Early Catastrophe: The 30 million word gap at age 3." *American Educator*. Spring 2003. available at http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/american_educator/spring2003/catastrophe.html

E.D. Hirsch, Jr. "Building Knowledge," *American Educator*, Spring 2006, available at http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/american_educator/issues/spring06/hirsch.htm

MacInnes, Chapter 6, "Providing Quality Preschool is not Child's Play"

February 25: What high-poverty, high-performing schools do that others do not. There is wide agreement about the characteristics of effective schools, but little certainty about how to make more schools more effective.

Fred Carrigg, the former urban literacy leader at the New Jersey Department of Education and the former instructional leader of the Union City public schools, the highest-performing city district in the nation, will be our guest.

Lawrence W. Lezotte, “Revolutionary and Evolutionary: The Effective Schools Movement.”

Abigail Thernstrom and Stephan Thernstrom, “Schools that Work,” Chapter 7 in John E. Chubb and Tom Loveless, editors. *Bridging the Achievement Gap*, Brookings Institution, 2002.

Rothstein. Chapter 2. “Schools that ‘beat the demographic odds’”

MacInnes, Chapter 5, “Switching the Priority from Compliance with Court Mandates to Early Literacy,”

March 4: NO SEMINAR; First Policy Paper Due

March 6: What happens in a high-poverty school and how to spot good pedagogy, or its absence. Seminar will begin with a van pickup at 8:00 a.m. to “walk through” one or two Trenton elementary schools. We will conclude by noon or so and conduct discussions on the van.

Abby Goodnough, *Ms. Moffett’s First Year: Becoming a teacher in America*. Public Affairs. (2004) Chapter 3.

Mary M. Kennedy, *Inside Teaching: How Classroom Life Undermines Reform*, Harvard University Press, 2005, Chapters 1 and 2.

John I. Goodlad, *A Place Called School*, McGraw-Hill, 2004, “Inside Classrooms,” Chapter 4.

March 11: To borrow a phrase from the 2008 campaign, standards-based instruction/reform is the “game changer” for public schools. Or, it is supposed to be. State academic standards ordain what is taught, when—or should. The drive for standards-based reform was introduced “outside-in” by politicians, business executives, and academics to address the growing gap between American and students in places like Singapore and Finland. Its implications for teachers and schools were hardly considered.

Deanna Burney, a consultant, city educator, and researcher, who may know more about the teaching of academic standards in city classrooms than anyone, will join us.

A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform, The National Commission on Excellence in Education, April 1983. Available from www.ed.gov/pubs/NatAtRisk/title.html

Lauren B. Resnick, Mary Kay Stein, and Sarah Coon, "Standards-based Reform: A Powerful Idea Unmoored," Chapter 3 in Richard D. Kahlenberg, editor, *Improving on No Child Left Behind: Getting Education Reform Back on Track*. Century Foundation, 2008.

Chester E. Finn, Jr., Liam Julien, Michael J. Petrelli, "2006: The State of State Standards." The Thomas Fordham Foundation, August 2006. Available from www.edexcellence.net/foundation/publication/publication.cfm?id=358

Diane Ravitch, "'50 Standards for 50 States' is a Formula for Incoherence and Obfuscation." *Education Week*, January 5, 2006 available at www.edweek.org/cw/articles/2006/01/05/17ravitch.h25.html?levelId_1000&rale2--

Elmore, Ch. 3, "Bridging the Gap Between Standards and Achievement."

E.D. Hirsch, Jr., "Curriculum and Competence," Chapter 10 in Terry M. Moe, *A Primer on America's Schools*, Hoover Institution Press, 2001.

March 18: Spring Recess

March 25: Frequent standardized testing of curricular standards is at the heart of the NCLB accountability system. The question is whether the reliance on standardized testing is potentially useful or harmful to the goal of improved academic performance.

Danny Oppenheimer, Assistant Professor in the psychology department and WWS, will be our guest.

W. James Popham, *The Truth about Testing: An Educator's Call to Action*. ASCD, 2001. Chapters 1-4.

Rothstein, Chapter 3 "Standardized testing and cognitive skills."

Alfie Kohn, "Burnt at the high stakes." *Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol. 51, No. 4, September/October 2000, pp 315-327.

Elmore, "Change and Improvement in Educational Reform," Chapter 6.

The American Federation of Teachers. "Smart Testing: Let's Get it Right." Policy Brief, July 2006 available at www.aft.org/pubs-reports/downloads/teachers/TestingBrief.pdf

April 1: The district central office does not exist in most educational policy discussions. With abundant evidence that the school-by-school approach to system-wide academic improvement is insufficient, the job falls to "downtown." Meantime,

the states set the rules (and a lot of them there are), pay some of the bills, and handle USDOE, but what can they do about closing the achievement gap? Students in DE, VA and NJ have shown some movement in narrowing the gap, but do the state departments deserve any of the credit?

Pablo Munoz , the Superintendent of the Elizabeth Public Schools, will be our guest.

Diane Massell, “The District Role in Building Capacity: Four Strategies.” CPRE Policy Briefs. September 2000.

Julie A. Marsh, Kerri A. Kerr, Gina S. Ikemoto, Hilary, Darilek, Marika Suttorp, Ron W. Zimmer, Heather Barney, *The Role of Districts in Fostering Instructional Improvement: Lessons from Three Urban Districts Partnered with the Institute for Learning*. Rand Education, 2005. Chapter 5.

Check as replacement for Marsh et. al.: T. Corcoran, S. Fuhrman, and Belcher, “ The District Role in Instructional Improvement,” *Phi Delta Kappan*, v. 83, n 1. (2001) pp. 78-84/

Jim Spillane, “Standards Deviation: How Schools Misunderstand Education Policy.” CPRE Policy Briefs, June, 2005. Available at http://www.cpre.org/images/stories/cpre_pdfs/rb43.pdf

Paul T. Hill, Christine Campbell and James Harvey, *It Takes a City: Getting Serious About Urban School Reform*, Brookings Institution, 2000. Introduction, Ch. 1 and Ch. 4.

Joe Williams, “District Accountability: More Bark than Bite?” Chapter 12 in Frederick M. Hess and Chester E. Finn, Jr., *No Remedy Left Behind: Lessons from a Half-decade of NCLB*, American Enterprise Institute, 2007.

Diane Massell. “State Strategies for Building Local Capacity: Addressing the needs of Standards-based Reform.” CPRE Policy Briefs, July 1998, available at http://www.cpre.org/images/stories/cpre_pdfs/rb25.pdf

The Thomas Fordham Foundation, “How Well are States Educating Our Neediest Children? The Fordham Report 2006.” Available at <http://www.edexcellence.net/doc/TFR06FULLREPORT.PDF>

A first, and so far last, stab at trying to tie state standards and choice policies to academic achievement of poor minority students. Scan and pick the state you are most familiar with and test the Fordham assertions.

Gail L. Sunderman and Gary Orfield, “Domesticating a Revolution: No Child Left Behind Reforms and State Administrative Response,” *Harvard Educational Review*, Vol. 76, no. 4 (Winter 2006).

FRIDAY, April 3: Visit to Union City, NJ public schools. Union City, one of the nation's most densely-populated and poorest districts, has produced sustained and impressive academic results through the middle grades. We will visit one or two schools to see how the district-led system works. Details to follow.

April 8: A typical answer by states, districts, and schools to evidence that their students are not performing well enough is “we don't have enough money.” The struggle for adequate financing has received more attention than how additional funds might be/are used.

Hochschild and Scovronick, Chapter 3.

Kozol, *Savage Inequalities*, Chapter 4.

Abbott v. Burke V, available at

www.edlawcenter.org/ELCPublic/Publications/PDF/Abbott_V.pdf

This decision represents the high water mark in school funding litigation both for the extent of the funding mandated and delivered, and for the prescriptiveness of how additional funds will be spent.

David K. Cohen, Stephen W. Raudenbush, Deborah Loewenberg Bell, “Resources, Instruction, and Research.” *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, Summer 2003, Vol. 25. No. 2 available at <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~dkcohen/ResourcesEEPA2003.pdf>

This analysis points to the difficulty (impossibility?) of tracking the effects of additional resources on achievement.

The Education Trust, “Funding Gaps.” December, 2007. Available at <http://www2.edtrust.org/NR/rdonlyres/5AF8F288-949D-4677-82CF-5A867A8E9153/0/FundingGap2007.pdf>

April 10 SECOND POLICY PAPER DUE

April 15: If the teacher-student transaction is at the center of improving academic performance, what can policy do to improve the quality of teachers and of teaching?

Steve Farkas, Jean Johnson, and Tony Folleno. “A sense of calling: who teaches and why?” Report of Public Agenda, 2000.

Richard J. Murnane and Jennifer L. Steele, “What is the problem? The challenge of providing effective teachers for all children.” *Excellence in the Classroom*, The Future of Children, vol. 17, no 1, Spring 2007

John I. Goodlad, *A Place Called School*, McGraw-Hill, 2004 edition. Chapter 6
“Teachers and the Circumstances of Teaching.”

Mary Kennedy, *Inside Teaching*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004, Chapter 6,
“Sources of Problems in Teaching.”

Linda Darling-Hammond, Deborah J. Holtzman, Su Jin Gatlin, and Julian Vasquez
Heilig. “Does Teacher Preparation Matter? Evidence about Teacher Certification, Teach
for America, and Teacher Effectiveness.” *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, vol. 13, no.
42, October 12, 2005

Go to the Teach for America website and examine the layered information available to
determine how the Darling-Hammond conclusions might be rebutted. Give attention to
the Mathematica evaluation found at

http://www.teachforamerica.org/assets/documents/mathematica_results_6.9.04.pdf

Is this a consequential dispute?

April 22: For forty years, the debate over educational reform has included proposals to strengthen the right of parents to select their children’s school. Public “choice” involves magnet schools, theme schools, NCLB-facilitated intra-district transfers, but, mainly, charter schools. Private choice revolves around home schooling, private management and vouchers.

Hochschild and Scovronick, Chapter 5

Gordon MacInnes, “Kids Who Pick the Wrong Parents and other Victims of Voucher Schemes,” The Century Foundation, 1999.

http://www.tcf.org/Publications/Education/voucher_schemes.pdf

John E.Chubb and Terry M. Moe, *Politics, Markets, and America’s Schools*, Chapter 6

Paul E. Peterson, “Choice in American Education,” Chapter 10 in Terry M. Moe, *A Primer on America’s Schools*, Hoover Institution, 2001

Something about charters

April 29: Final seminar will include a wrap-up and attention to federal policy in the Obama era. So, the focus of this session may change depending on the early decisions and direction of the new administration. The road to (educational) hell may be paved with NCLB testing and accountability measures, but it has put the spotlight on the achievement gap. Does it deserve to be re-authorized?

Kevin Carey, “The Pangloss Index: How States Game the No Child Left Behind Act. The Education Sector. (November 2007). Available at

www.educationsector.org/usr_doc/The_Pangloss_Index.pdf

A clear explanation of how the NCLB system as designed and implemented undercuts its rhetoric about accountability

Richard Rothstein, “Leaving ‘No Child Left Behind’ Behind.” *The American Prospect*, January/February 2008, pp. 50-54. Available at http://www.prospect.org/cs/articles;jsessionid=aRH5EghdIDLbmGY7_D?article=leaving_nclb_behind

Rod Paige, “No Child Left Behind: The Ongoing Movement for Public Education Reform,” *Harvard Educational review*, vol. 76, no. 4 (Winter 2006).

Forwarding Page: http://www.prospect.org/cs/articles;jsessionid=aRH5EghdIDLbmGY7_D?article=leaving_nclb_behind

The Education Trust is the strongest “progressive” supporter of NCLB. Review its suggestions for revising the bill found at <http://www2.edtrust.org/NR/rdonlyres/5A150FED-85FD-4535-8DF6-737A536EB0FB/0/EdTrustNCLBRecommendations41607.pdf>

May 1: Final Paper Due

