

Debating Education Policy: Reducing neoliberal education policies

Gordon Stables – University of Southern California (April 2010)

Introduction

National education policy is currently undergoing a significant transition. No Child Left Behind (NCLB), perhaps one of the most significant domestic policies of the Bush administration, has dramatically changed the very nature of federal education policy. The Obama administration has indicated its desire to change some of the aspects of the standardized testing heavy NCLB program, but there are also indications that some of aspects of the program will continue. The first round of national education grants, known as Race to the Top, has already provided states with a way to compete to earn additional education funding if they meet certain federal criteria. Although there are certainly different views between the administrations, there is a common recognition for a large federal role in education policy. The call of the Reagan administration to abolish the federal Department of Education appear only in the libertarian extremes of national discussion. Many more prominent voices now debate how the federal role in education can best improve national education.

As the Obama administration submits and pushes for approval of its first education budget, an increase of \$3 billion dollars for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the outlines of a national debate are emerging. There is a great deal of frustration with NCLB, but far less agreement about how to proceed. The resulting moment in public policy offers a interesting opportunity for the intercollegiate debate community.

The diversity of potential approaches to improve educational policies provides a daunting challenge when trying to organize them into a single controversy to guide our season-long topic. This is especially true when trying to identify the policy literature that would be most valuable for our research. For these reasons I have decided to frame the proposed controversy around reducing neoliberal policies in national education policy. As I will explore, the term neoliberal in the education context is increasingly being used to represent a series programs designed to promote market based reforms and are consistent with free market ideologies. Standardized testing, teacher merit pay, and charter schools are all very visible aspects of education policy and they all represent important aspects of the approach to education policy under Presidents Bush and Obama. Indeed there is rising body of literature suggesting that President Obama's decision to appoint Secretary Arne Duncan represent an embrace a educational model very heavily rooted in the free market ideology.

By using this controversial framing, we can begin to envision a year of debates where affirmative teams argue for changing education policy by moving away from policies that represent these market based solutions. Reducing support for charter schools, decreasing federal requirements for forms of standardized testing and reducing the move toward privatizing some educational tasks are all concrete aspects of this approach. The negative teams, by contrast, can add to their vast array of options the possibility of defending the Obama administration's efforts to improve education policy and to make students in the US more able to compete in the global economy. In some ways this framing allows us to envision the season's debates as opportunities to debate the role of globalization in future education policy. Both sides can claim a strong ideological and policy-based body of literature support and the expected evolutions in national education policy will only enrich the public consideration of these matters, without substantially undermining the competitive foundation of the topic.

There may concerns about framing the topic with such a potentially charged term as neoliberal, but there is an increasing usage of this term in scholarly education literature. Use of the term in this

paper reflects the concern that in this current moment of dramatic social, economic and political change traditional nomenclature may not be sufficient. Regardless of the term's history, the challenge today is to find ways to engage current issues, especially those rich with policy and value dimensions. The final topic wordings may or may not utilize that term, but it clearly provides a frame of reference about the type of policy direction to guide plan writing. The rich literature on both sides of this question provides an excellent opportunity to ground the upcoming college topic.

Mainstream options for policy change

Debating an education topic will provide students with a number of opportunities to choose how to frame these matters. It is clear that there are a number of ways that this topic could develop and also that there are some common elements that can provide a foundation for the season.

Role of the Federal Government

In the last few years education policy has undergone a dramatic transformation, as the federal government has shifted to playing a primary role in the formation of national education policy. The 1983 Report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education, “A Nation At Risk”¹ is often identified as the origin of this trend and early policy decisions by the Obama administration continue this trend and signal that the presence of federal policy is now firmly established.

Warren Simmons is executive director of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform.
“The Evolving Federal Role”, VUE 24, Summer 2009, p. 54-55

<http://www.annenberginstitute.org/VUE/wp-content/pdf/VUE24.pdf>

A Nation At Risk engendered a significant shift in the federal role in education in a manner unseen since the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954. The *Brown* decision, while groundbreaking in significance for African Americans, followed a historical path of asserting federal involvement to address equity by eliminating legal barriers to access and/or by allocating resources to support specific groups. Traditionally, the federal government has left decisions about educational quality for all students, such as academic standards, assessment, curriculum and instruction, and school design, largely up to states and school districts (Ogletree 2005; Fuhrman & Lazerson 2005). The *Brown* decision, after all, mandated integration with the expectation that greater access to schools would ensure greater quality. But the decision stopped well short of requiring the government to ensure that equity fostered quality, as the intervening years demonstrated so strikingly.

A Nation At Risk changed that dynamic. It inspired the standards movement, and the federal legislation it spawned (e.g., Goals 2000, the Improving America’s School Act, No Child Left Behind) used federal Title 1 funds and other resources as leverage explicitly to improve quality by encouraging states to adopt voluntary national standards; embed these standards in accountability systems; and intervene in failing schools so that all students would receive the supports they need to meet national goals and standards.

While the deadline for meeting these goals and standards has shifted from the year 2000 to NCLB’s 2014 deadline, the emphasis on all has remained constant, while acceptance of an increased federal role has gained wider acceptance. The debate instead has turned to how the federal government should

¹<http://www2.ed.gov/pubs/NatAtRisk/index.html>

exert its influence, not whether or not it should. Moreover, with the recent passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), the federal government has taken unprecedented steps to increase funding for states and districts as it reshapes its approach to how the funds should be used.

The Status Quo – What about current reform?

Rogers, et al, describe how neoliberalism, an ideology that promotes free market primacy is influencing the direction of education policy. It identifies not only the value transformation that resides at the core of these approaches (i.e, defining education as a commodity that can be most efficiently managed) but also to many of the types of policies that would be ripe ground for affirmative research (such as national testing standards that close failing schools, charter schools, school vouchers, private education companies, outsourcing of educational roles, and the privatization of teachers)

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Neoliberalism is a set of economic and social policies and processes that work to expand the free market and eliminate government expansion of social programs. Based on the principle that the markets can and should be in charge of social goods, neoliberalism values competitive markets and the freedom of individual choice within them and devalues governmental attempts to provide social resources (Cooper, 2008; Harvey, 2005; Kumashiro, 2008). Thus, it often manifests itself in policies that reduce governmental regulation of trade and increase the privatization of public services (e.g., health care, prisons, education). These processes result in the diminishment of public and democratically governed spaces while increasing social inequality.

The ideology of neoliberalism transcends political lines. No Child Left Behind (2001), which was bipartisan legislation, is an example of a neoliberal educational policy (Hursh & Martina, 2003; Shannon, 2007). NCLB has buttressed local and state policies that cause schools, especially those in low-income areas, to close as districts lose accreditation, teachers quit, and parents move their children to schools with higher test scores. The closed schools become the sites for charter schools, depending on the specifics of state laws and local policies.

As one of the few remaining public spaces, education has been a prime target for privatization. Approximately 87% of all K–12 schoolchildren in the U.S. are enrolled in public education, which amounts to over \$400 billion in federal, state, and local tax dollars (Cooper, 2008). Proponents of privatizing public education argue that the market can make schools more efficient, cutting bureaucracy. However, as Lipman (2007) wrote, “The real danger of policies that privatize education and throw it into the corporate market is that they will erode the public forums in which decisions with social consequence can be democratically resolved” (p. 14).

Perhaps the most well-known initiatives for allocating public resources to private markets are through voucher programs and charter schools (Lubienski, 2006). Voucher programs provide tax dollars directly to families so they can select a religious or private school of their choice. Charter schools are considered to be public-private hybrids, as they are publicly funded but privately managed. The phenomenon of for-profit corporations— or Educational Management Organizations

(EMOs)—administering and managing charter schools is more recent and on the rise. Examples of EMOs include: Advantage Schools, Inc.; Beacon Education Management, Inc.; Edison Schools; The Leona Group, L.L.C.; and Mosaica Education. EMOs run over 25% of all charter schools in the United States, an increase from only 10% in 1998 (Furtwengler, 1998; Dingerson, Miner, Peterson, & Walters, 2008). EMOs pattern themselves on the model of corporate health services (HMOs). They look for ways to reduce costs and make a profit from cheaply providing education (Saltman, 2005).

This means lowering the number of certified teachers in the building, cutting special services (e.g., ELL and special education), and deterring teachers from organizing for better working conditions (Dingerson, Miner, Peterson, & Walters, 2008). In this model, education is a commodity that can be measured and prescribed, bought and sold as any other product. The problem, as many have pointed out (e.g., Stuart Wells, 2002), is that education differs from businesses in the sense that there is not a direct consumable. Critics of privatization argue that these policies bring schools under the economic and cultural domination of corporations and the market, framing debates in terms of winners and losers (Pini, 2003; Saltman, 2007). Further, teacher professionalism is undermined as decision making is shifted from educators to large corporations, the same corporations that develop and publish the curricula that are, in turn, enforced through mandated tests. Those who value strong public education base their arguments on the merits of universal accessibility, public accountability, and the importance of strong public spaces, values that are diminished under privatization.

Shifting public funds to private markets occurs in many different shapes and forms: turning “failing” schools over to the market; outsourcing curriculum and assessments to large publishing companies (e.g., Open Court and DIBELS); outsourcing and commercializing schools, food preparation, and janitorial services (Molnar, 2005).

The key to privatization is the discourse (and associated identities) of choice and the assumption that if each individual makes the right choice, the greatest number of individuals will be served (Dingerson, Miner, Peterson, & Walters, 2008). However, in a market-based system, parents find many hidden costs, such as transporting their child to school or volunteering to supply basics that should already be provided (e.g., a clean school or paper products), as well as the false promise of educational equity. In this model, people identify more closely in their role as a consumer than in their role as a citizen.

This is increasingly a global phenomenon, as education is redefined away from a public good and increasingly as a commodity.

Jandhyala B. G. Tilak, National University of Educational Planning and Administration (India) April 2, 2009, UNESCO IBE 2009, “Higher education: a public good or a commodity for trade? Commitment to higher education or commitment of higher education to trade” p. 450

In recent years, however, the growth in market forces and more importantly international law on trade in services tend to question or simply gloss over the long-cherished, well-established view of many that higher education is a public good and to propose and legitimize the sale and purchase of education, as if it is a commodity meant for trade. Higher education tends to be not regarded as a public good or a social service, and it appears as if we have “lost the ‘public’ in higher education” (Zemsky 2003). Even in the earlier decades, while there were some who questioned the concept of higher education as a public good, the heralding of the neo-liberal and globalization policies, and later the advent of international trade in educational services accentuated such thinking. Public good and similar

principles are viewed as too naive to be relevant in the rapidly changing, increasingly privatised and liberalised modern context.¹

Tilak is among many who worry that privatizing education undermines the very foundation of the social fabric that binds current and future generations.

Jandhyala B. G. Tilak, National University of Educational Planning and Administration (India) April 2, 2009, UNESCO IBE 2009, “Higher education: a public good or a commodity for trade? Commitment to higher education or commitment of higher education to trade” p. 460-461

Fifthly, progress in higher education depends on the time-tested “social contract” system, a contract between the older generation, the younger generation and the education system (Martin 2005). The principle of the contract is simple: the present generation of adults finances the education of the future. The principle refers to the bonds between the present and future generations, and between society and its collective children, which constitute the bedrock upon which every successful civilization rests. The responsibility one generation feels towards those that follow is a valuable public asset. The mechanism works through the method of taxation: the present generation of taxpayers pays for the education of the future generations. If higher education is regarded as a private good, as an individual responsibility that one has to finance oneself, through tuition and student loans, for example, one finances one’s own higher education out of one’s own future income, the principle of social contract is in great trouble. Jeopardizing the principle of the social contract may lead not only to impeding the progress of education system, but also to straining of the entire social fabric throughout.

The very nature of the transitory process in the Race to the Top has critics concerned that even as states are left without an alternative to supporting expansion of programs like charter schools, they may go along on begrudgingly. Just as No Child Left Behind required specific changes, critics worry how deeply these new reforms will be institutionalize.

American Enterprise Insittue, “The Professionalization Agenda: The De-Regulation Agenda” March 24, 2010 Education: Stimulus Watch, Special Report 3, p. 3-4
<http://www.aei.org/docLib/edstimwatch.pdf>

Wrong Reasons for Reform. A second concern is that many states were giving the impression that they were competing not because they were deeply committed to reform, but because the recession had decimated their budgets. Nevada schools superintendent Keith Rheault compared Race to the Top to a high-interest-rate credit card offer: “It just depends on how desperate you are for the money.”³¹ He later said, “When you’re starving and somebody puts food in your mouth, it’s amazing what states will do.”³²

Examples soon followed. Massachusetts governor Deval Patrick dropped his years of charter opposition only after a visit from the administration indelicately delivered the message that the state’s charter cap would seriously disadvantage it in the competition.³³ Similarly, New York governor David Paterson dropped his opposition to a charter-cap lift, saying, “There is a potential \$400 to \$700 million that can come into this state to help pay some of these bills. Seven hundred million would be very helpful right now.”³⁴

In state after state, others were similarly direct. Illinois governor Pat Quinn said, “We want to get Illinois in that race and make sure we get as much money as possible from Washington.”³⁵ Even Ohio’s reform minded senator Jon Husted said, “During these tough and uncertain financial times, I

believe it is imperative that Ohio be in a strong position to take advantage of the Race to the Top dollars.”³⁶ A Wisconsin legislator angry about the lack of teeth in an ostensibly reform-oriented bill unknowingly spoke to a much larger phenomenon when he fumed, “This is basically a race for the money, not a race for the top.”³⁷

Most observers have overlooked or downplayed such statements, believing it does not matter why states pursue the program’s goals, as long as they do. But this fails to account for the deeply troubling mindset that has been revealed and its ominous implications. If a state is in it just for the money, it could merely go through the motions, publicly professing support for reforms and meeting minimum requirements but failing to faithfully pursue and implement bold changes. For example, a state could create a new intervention for failing schools, but would it be any different than previous failed attempts? A state could link student-test data to educators, but can that information be used to terminate the lowest performing teachers?

There is certainly reason to ask such questions. In order to continue receiving federal funds under No Child Left Behind (NCLB), districts had to create policies for public-school choice and supplemental education services. But because they disliked these policies, districts refused to carry them out fully, and millions of students with statutory rights to educational choice were unable to exercise them. But there is an equally worrisome consequence of states’ focus on the money: the durability of changes that do occur. We must remember that for decades political forces prevented reform. This juggernaut has only been threatened in recent months through the confluence of two highly unusual conditions: a terribly long and deep recession and an unprecedented federal competitive grant program. But these two conditions are temporary—the recession and Race to the Top will end—while the antireform forces are not. That is, there is no guarantee that the reforms purchased with Race to the Top funding will outlast their funding stream.

In other words, this may be a short romance. We should not be surprised to see many of the officials who warmly embraced reform because of tough budgets and federal largesse turn cold when political conditions return to normal. Charter caps could resurface, data firewalls could be rebuilt, performance-pay plans could be defunded, and meek interventions for failing schools could return. In Henry James’s Washington Square, Morris’s affection for Catherine faded swiftly when her trust fund was taken away. Reform may be similarly jilted by its equally money-hungry suitors.

Henry Giroux and Kenneth Paulman argue that the attacks in public education and the drive for national teaching standards is inherently a movement toward privatizing education. They identify how this also necessitates the separation between the educational role of public education and the punitive institutions of used to punish those who violate social norms.

Henry A. Giroux, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada and Kenneth Saltman, DePaul University, Chicago, “Obama’s Betrayal of Public Education? Arne Duncan and the Corporate Model of Schooling,” *Cultural Studies & Critical Methodologies* 2009; 9; p. 772-773
<http://csc.sagepub.com.libproxy.usc.edu/cgi/reprint/9/6/772>

Since the 1980s, but particularly under the Bush administration, certain elements of the religious right, corporate culture, and Republican right wing have argued that free public education represents either a massive fraud or a contemptuous failure. Far from a genuine call for reform, these attacks largely stem from an attempt to transform schools from a public investment to a private good, answerable not to the demands and values of a democratic society but to the imperatives of the marketplace. As the educational historian David Labaree (cited in Kohn, 2001) rightly argued, public schools have been

under attack in the last decade “not just because they are deemed ineffective but because they are public.”¹ Right-wing efforts to disinvest in public schools as critical sites of teaching and learning and govern them according to corporate interests is obvious in the emphasis on standardized testing, the use of top-down curricular mandates, the influx of advertising in schools, the use of profit motives to encourage student performance, the attack on teacher unions, and modes of pedagogy that stress rote learning and memorization. For the Bush administration, testing has become the ultimate accountability measure, belying the complex mechanisms of teaching and learning. The hidden curriculum is that testing be used as a ploy to de-skill teachers by reducing them to mere technicians, that students be similarly reduced to customers in the marketplace rather than as engaged, critical learners, and that always underfunded public schools fail so that they can eventually be privatized. However, there is an even darker side to the reforms initiated under the Bush administration and now used in a number of school systems throughout the country. As the logic of the market and the crime complex² frame the field of social relations in schools, students are subjected to three particularly offensive policies, defended by school authorities and politicians under the rubric of school safety. First, students are increasingly subjected to zero-tolerance policies that are used primarily to punish, repress, and exclude them. Second, they are increasingly absorbed into a crime complex in which security staff, using harsh disciplinary practices, now displace the normative functions teachers once provided both in and outside of the classroom.³ Third, more and more schools are breaking down the space between education and juvenile delinquency, substituting penal pedagogies for critical learning and replacing a school culture that fosters a discourse of possibility with a culture of fear and social control. Consequently, many youth of color in urban school systems, because of harsh zero-tolerance policies, are not just being suspended or expelled from school. They are being ushered into the dark precincts of juvenile detention centers, adult courts, and prison. Surely, the dismantling of this corporatized and militarized model of schooling should be a top priority under the Obama administration. Unfortunately, Obama has appointed as his secretary of education someone who actually embodies this utterly punitive, anti-intellectual, corporatized, and test-driven model of schooling.

Giroux and Saltman explain the consequences of this dramatic shift in public education as a threat to our very society. Students need to be viewed as humans and resources to their community, not just as potential problems.

Henry A. Giroux, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada and Kenneth Saltman, DePaul University, Chicago, “Obama’s Betrayal of Public Education? Arne Duncan and the Corporate Model of Schooling,” *Cultural Studies & Critical Methodologies* 2009; 9; p. 776-777
<http://csc.sagepub.com.libproxy.usc.edu/cgi/reprint/9/6/772>

It is difficult to understand how Barack Obama can reconcile his vision of change with Duncan’s history of supporting a corporate vision for school reform and a penchant for extreme zero-tolerance policies—both of which are much closer to the retrograde policies hatched in conservative think tanks, such as the Heritage Foundation, Cato Institution, Fordham Foundation, American Enterprise Institute, than to the values of the many millions who voted for the democratic change he promised. As is well known, these think tanks share an agenda not for strengthening public schooling but for dismantling it and replacing it with a private market in consumable educational services. At the heart of Duncan’s vision of school reform is a corporatized model of education that cancels out the democratic impulses and practices of civil society by either devaluing or absorbing them within the logic of the market or the prison. No longer a space for relating schools to the obligations of public

life, social responsibility to the demands of critical and engaged citizenship, schools in this dystopian vision legitimate an all-encompassing horizon for producing market identities, values, and those privatizing and penal pedagogies that both inflate the importance of individualized competition and punish those who do not fit into its logic of pedagogical Darwinism.⁸

In spite of what Duncan argues, the greatest threat to our children does not come from lowered standards, the absence of privatized choice schemes, or the lack of rigid testing measures that offer the aura of accountability. On the contrary, it comes from a society that refuses to view children as a social investment, consigns 13 million children to live in poverty, reduces critical learning to massive testing programs, promotes policies that eliminate most crucial health and public services, and defines rugged individualism through the degrading celebration of a gun culture, extreme sports, and the spectacles of violence that permeate corporate-controlled media industries. Students are not at risk because of the absence of market incentives in the schools. Young people are under siege in American schools because, in the absence of funding, equal opportunity, and real accountability, far too many of them have increasingly become institutional breeding grounds for racism, right-wing paramilitary cultures, social intolerance, and sexism (Gaines, 1999). We live in a society in which a culture of testing, punishment, and intolerance has replaced a culture of social responsibility and compassion. Within such a climate of harsh discipline and disdain for critical teaching and learning, it is easier to subject young people to a culture of faux accountability or put them in jail rather than to provide the education, services, and care they need to face problems of a complex and demanding society.⁹ What Duncan and other neoliberal economic advocates refuse to address is what it would mean for a viable educational policy to provide reasonable support services for all students and viable alternatives for the troubled ones. The notion that children should be viewed as a crucial social resource—one that represents, for any healthy society, important ethical and political considerations about the quality of public life, the allocation of social provisions, and the role of the state as a guardian of public interests—appears to be lost in a society that refuses to invest in its youth as part of a broader commitment to a fully realized democracy.

As the social order becomes more privatized and militarized, we increasingly face the problem of losing a generation of young people to a system of increasing intolerance, repression, and moral indifference. It is difficult to understand why Obama would appoint as secretary of education someone who believes in a market-driven model that has not only failed young people but, given the current financial crisis has also been thoroughly discredited. Unless Duncan is willing to reinvent himself, the national agenda he will develop for education embodies and exacerbates these problems, and as such, it will leave a lot more kids behind than it helps.

These arguments about the quality and degree of education policy can also be rooted in a variety of values. Other authors ground the problem in the way that the economic crises has undermined the fragile progress made toward providing greater opportunities for many Americans. Shrinking tax revenue threatens to further undermine urban schools.

Warren Simmons, executive director of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform. “The Evolving Federal Role” , VUE 24, Summer 2009, p. 54-55

<http://www.annenberginstitute.org/VUE/wp-content/pdf/VUE24.pdf>

The recent economic recession – for the poor, it’s a depression – threatens to slow the pace of improvement in central cities that were beginning to reestablish themselves as founts for economic, cultural, and community renewal, where families seeking opportunity and inspiration joined with others to transform their lives and to forge a new society (Annenberg Institute for School Reform

2001). As this recession has painfully revealed, the transformative power of urban life is tapped more deeply by some and remains beyond the grasp of far too many. High proportions of low-income African American and Latino youth in urban areas continue to have their progress impeded by high rates of incarceration, displacement created by gentrification, and the lost opportunity caused by being on the wrong side of the achievement gap, the new “track” demarcating the fate of privileged and disadvantaged communities. These forces weaken and obscure the pathways to success available for disadvantaged youth as they seek to become more productive and engaged members of society, a task made more daunting in urban school systems, whose halting progress in closing the achievement gap is threatened by the loss of tax revenue caused by the downturn.

Simmons is one of many authors that considers how the recent economic problems have broadly disproportionate impact on already disadvantaged youth. There are a number of ways to assess the loss of human potential when education fails. Some express the the lost potential in staggering economic terms for the nation as a whole.

Kristin Buck, Alliance for Excellent Education, Issue Brief, August 2009

The High Cost of High School Dropouts: What the Nation Pays for Inadequate High Schools

p. 1 <http://www.all4ed.org/files/archive/publications/HighCost.pdf>

Every school day, more than seven thousand students become dropouts. Annually, that adds up to about 1.3 million students who will not graduate from high school with their peers as scheduled. Lacking a high school diploma, these individuals will be far more likely than graduates to spend their lives periodically unemployed, on government assistance, or cycling in and out of the prison system.

Most high school dropouts see the result of their decision to leave school very clearly in the slimness of their wallets. The average annual income for a high school dropout in 2005 was \$17,299, compared to \$26,933 for a high school graduate, a difference of \$9,634.1 The impact on the country’s economy is less visible, but cumulatively its effect is staggering.

If the nation’s secondary schools improved sufficiently to graduate all of their students, rather than the 69 percent of students who currently graduate annually,² the payoff would be significant. For instance, if the students who dropped out of the Class of 2009 had graduated, the nation’s economy would have benefited from nearly \$335 billion in additional income over the course of their lifetimes.

Everyone benefits from increased graduation rates. The graduates themselves, on average, will earn higher wages and enjoy more comfortable and secure lifestyles. At the same time, the nation benefits from their increased purchasing power, collects higher tax receipts, and sees higher levels of worker productivity.

Even when authors like Buck attempt to broaden the loss beyond economics, it is apparent that so much is lost in basic human potential. Education is the foundation for how societies organize and function. Debaters will have no shortage of options to articulate how poor education influences the lives of all.

Kristin Buck, Alliance for Excellent Education, Issue Brief, August 2009

The High Cost of High School Dropouts: What the Nation Pays for Inadequate High Schools

p. 3 <http://www.all4ed.org/files/archive/publications/HighCost.pdf>

The nation's economy and competitive standing also suffer when there are high dropout rates. Among developed countries, the United States ranks eighteenth in high school graduation rates and fourteenth in college graduation rates.⁵ Dropouts represent a tremendous loss of human potential and productivity, and they significantly reduce the nation's ability to compete in an increasingly global economy.

High school graduates, on the other hand, provide both economic and social benefits to society. In addition to earning higher wages—resulting in attendant benefits to local, state, and national economic conditions—high school graduates live longer,⁶ are less likely to be teen parents,⁷ and are more likely to raise healthier, better-educated children. In fact, children of parents who graduate from high school are far more likely to graduate from high school than are children of parents without high school degrees.⁸ High school graduates are also less likely to commit crimes,⁹ rely on government health care,¹⁰ or use other public services such as food stamps or housing assistance.¹¹ Additionally, high school graduates engage in civic activity, including voting and volunteering in their communities, and at higher levels.¹²

Finally, this topic can allow students to discuss the foundation of public goods and the nature of democracy in the United States. For critics like Giroux and Saltman the current approach to education threatens to undermine the very foundation of the public role that schools provide.

Henry A. Giroux, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada and Kenneth Saltman, DePaul University, Chicago, "Obama's Betrayal of Public Education? Arne Duncan and the Corporate Model of Schooling", *Cultural Studies & Critical Methodologies* 2009; 9; p. 773
<http://csc.sagepub.com.libproxy.usc.edu/cgi/reprint/9/6/772>

Barack Obama's selection of Arne Duncan for secretary of education does not bode well either for the political direction of his administration or for the future of public education. Obama's call for change falls flat with this appointment, not only because Duncan largely defines schools within a market-based and penal model of pedagogy but also because he does not have the slightest understanding of schools as something other than adjuncts of the corporation at best or the prison at worse. The first casualty in this scenario is a language of social and political responsibility capable of defending those vital institutions that expand the rights, public goods, and services central to a meaningful democracy. This is especially true with respect to the issue of public schooling and the ensuing debate over the purpose of education, the role of teachers as critical intellectuals, the politics of the curriculum, and the centrality of pedagogy as a moral and political practice.

But what about arguments against the resolution?

Even as this literature base appears daunting there is the very clear sense that an active body of literature resists this characterization of the free market. The following article is a bit dated by modern standards of evidence, but Nobel Prize winning economic Milton Friedman provides a foundation for one potential avenue of scholarship supporting negative teams this year.

Milton Friedman, a senior research fellow at the Hoover Institution, won the Nobel Prize for Economics in 1976, Cato Institute Briefing Paper No. 23 June 23, 1995, "Public Schools: Make Them Private" <http://www.cato.org/pubs/briefs/bp-023.html>

Our elementary and secondary educational system needs to be radically reconstructed. That need arises in the first instance from the defects of our current system. But it has been greatly reinforced by some of the consequences of the technological and political revolutions of the past few decades. Those revolutions promise a major increase in world output, but they also threaten advanced countries with serious social conflict arising from a widening gap between the incomes of the highly skilled (cognitive elite) and the unskilled.

A radical reconstruction of the educational system has the potential of staving off social conflict while at the same time strengthening the growth in living standards made possible by the new technology and the increasingly global market. In my view, such a radical reconstruction can be achieved only by privatizing a major segment of the educational system--i.e., by enabling a private, for-profit industry to develop that will provide a wide variety of learning opportunities and offer effective competition to public schools. Such a reconstruction cannot come about overnight. It inevitably must be gradual.

The most feasible way to bring about a gradual yet substantial transfer from government to private enterprise is to enact in each state a voucher system that enables parents to choose freely the schools their children attend. I first proposed such a voucher system 40 years ago.

Friedman continues and explains how the current model cannot produce the needed types of changes.

Milton Friedman, a senior research fellow at the Hoover Institution, won the Nobel Prize for Economics in 1976, Cato Institute Briefing Paper No. 23 June 23, 1995, "Public Schools: Make Them Private" <http://www.cato.org/pubs/briefs/bp-023.html>

So far, our educational system has been adding to the tendency to stratification. Yet it is the only major force in sight capable of offsetting that tendency. Innate intelligence undoubtedly plays a major role in determining the opportunities open to individuals. Yet it is by no means the only human quality that is important, as numerous examples demonstrate. Unfortunately, our current educational system does little to enable either low-IQ or high-IQ individuals to make the most of other qualities. Yet that is the way to offset the tendencies to stratification. A greatly improved educational system can do more than anything else to limit the harm to our social stability from a permanent and large underclass.

There is enormous room for improvement in our educational system. Hardly any activity in the United States is technically more backward. We essentially teach children in the same way that we did 200 years ago: one teacher in front of a bunch of kids in a closed room. The availability of computers has changed the situation, but not fundamentally. Computers are being added to public schools, but they are typically not being used in an imaginative and innovative way.

I believe that the only way to make a major improvement in our educational system is through privatization to the point at which a substantial fraction of all educational services is rendered to individuals by private enterprises. Nothing else will destroy or even greatly weaken the power of the current educational establishment--a necessary pre-condition for radical improvement in our educational system. And nothing else will provide the public schools with the competition that will force them to improve in order to hold their clientele.

No one can predict in advance the direction that a truly free-market educational system would take. We know from the experience of every other industry how imaginative competitive free enterprise can be, what new products and services can be introduced, how driven it is to satisfy the customers--that is what we need in education. We know how the telephone industry has been revolutionized by opening it to competition; how fax has begun to undermine the postal monopoly in first-class mail; how UPS, Federal Express and many other private enterprises have transformed package and message delivery and, on the strictly private level, how competition from Japan has transformed the domestic automobile industry.

Recent discussion also frames the importance of education reform as tied to promoting the types of skills needed to compete in an increasingly globalized world. Active defenders of current reform efforts argue that these changes are the only way to move forward in these areas. If anything, they embrace more aggressive demands of evolving education toward teaching these types of skills.

Former West Virginia Governor Bob Wise & Robert Rothman, Alliance for Excellent Education, Issue Brief, February 2010, "The Online Learning Imperative: A Solution to Three Looming Crises in Education" p. 2-3, <http://www.all4ed.org/files/OnlineLearning.pdf>

CRISIS #1: Global Skill Demands Grow While U.S. College Graduation Rates Fall Behind President Obama has set as a goal that the United States will be first in the world in college graduation rates by 2020. Similarly, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has pledged to double the number of low-income Americans who attain college degrees, and the Lumina Foundation for Education has set a goal to increase the college-completion rate from 40 percent to 60 percent by 2025. These are noble and important goals, but they will be virtually impossible to reach without dramatic changes in how our nation educates its students.

Fifty years ago, the United States had the highest college-completion rates in the industrialized world. Now, even though the United States has increased its postsecondary participation rates, other nations have outpaced the U.S. in educational attainment. As a result, the U.S. college-completion rate is now fifteenth out of twenty-nine developed countries with membership in the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD).² Demographic data suggests that the United States is falling further behind. Although the U.S. trails only Canada in the percentage of twenty-five to sixty-four-year-olds with at least an associate's degree—39 percent versus 47 percent, respectively—it is tenth among developed nations in the proportion of twenty-five to thirty-four-year-olds, meaning that other countries are graduating more youths. In order to regain the lead and ensure a productive future for all young people and for the nation, simply continuing along the same trajectory, or making incremental gains, is not adequate. The only hope for reaching both global and domestic goals is to rapidly accelerate the pace of improvement.

Underlying all the national cries for increasing college-completion rates is the recognition that the twenty-first-century economy requires all young people to develop higher levels of knowledge and skill. The gap between the income earned by those with a college degree and those with a high school diploma is large and growing, and almost 90 percent of the highest-paying and fastest-growing jobs require some postsecondary training.³

In part, this is because many low-skilled jobs have been automated or shipped overseas. The perennial truth is that labor migrates to the cheapest cost. Even more of a factor is that many jobs that once required relatively low skills are now more demanding. Where diagnosing automobile engine problems once required simple mechanical skills, today's service technicians must be able to work with computerized testing equipment and solve problems using complex digital models.

The presidential goal for greatly increasing postsecondary attainment rates is not simply lofty, it is also essential to our nation's continued economic security. Recent projections from the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce project that by 2018, thirty million new and replacement jobs will require some college or above. However, the report also notes that the current output from postsecondary institutions will not permit demand to meet supply.

What will affirmatives look like?

In the previous section many types of harms-based literature was provided and it should allow us to see that an education topic of this sort would both allow for debate on the specific programs used to promote educational reform and the values that inform those approaches. Each of the next set of policies provide exactly the type of intersection of policy and value that would be ripe for affirmative teams to explore.

Charter Schools

The Obama administration continues to emphasize reforms that will force under-performing schools to transform into charter schools.

Alyson Klein, March 17, 2010, Education Week, “ESEA Plan Draws Bipartisan Praise—and Questions”

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2010/03/17/27congress.h29.html?tkn=ORUFTRuttL/U%2BzjYpB//UxMmyyg1D6o5mJ2Y&cmp=clp-edweek>

Less than a week after it was unveiled, the Obama administration’s blueprint for overhauling the Elementary and Secondary Education Act is drawing both bipartisan support and skepticism from the congressional committees tasked with the law’s reauthorization.

In a pair of Wednesday appearances, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan assured members of the House Education and Labor Committee and the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee that the administration wants to extend flexibility to states and districts while boosting student-achievement goals.

The reception, particularly in the Senate, was generally positive to the plan unveiled March 13 for revamping the ESEA, whose current version—signed into law by President George W. Bush in 2002—is the No Child Left Behind Act.

Key Republicans called the plan a good jumping-off point for debate. Sen. Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn.—himself a former federal education secretary—deemed it “an excellent beginning,” particularly its support for rewarding districts that are making strides in raising student achievement.

Sen. Michael B. Enzi of Wyoming, the top Republican on the committee, said he thought that the blueprint stayed true to Secretary Duncan’s promise to be tight on goals for student achievement, but looser than the NCLB law on how districts and schools must get there.

The blueprint seeks to revamp the accountability system at the heart of No Child Left Behind by focusing federal resources and direction on the schools that are struggling the most to improve student achievement. It would give states and districts more flexibility to determine how to intervene in schools that are generally performing well but may have trouble reaching students in a particular subgroup, such as English-language learners.

The broad proposal would place more of an emphasis on students’ academic growth, rather than comparing different cohorts of students with one another. But it would retain NCLB’s testing regime and its requirement that states disaggregate student-achievement data by racial and ethnic group and by other populations such as students in special education.

Sen. Enzi’s main objection appeared to be the perceived lack of a good option for low-performing rural schools among the four “turnaround” models spelled out in both the blueprint and the regulations for \$3.5 billion in School Improvement Grants, the bulk of which is being made available under the 2009 federal economic-stimulus law.

Those models, aimed at perennially low-performing schools, include some dramatic interventions, such as closing a school and reopening it as a charter. In nearly all cases, the school’s principal would be removed.

Mr. Duncan told Sen. Enzi that low-performing rural schools could try the so-called “transformation model,” which is widely considered the least drastic of the four options. It requires schools to offer extended learning time, institute alternative pay plans, and try out new instructional programs, among other remedies.

The emphasis on this transformation model carries with it all of the concerns already outlined and it also carries with it disturbing implications for the integration of schools. The The Civil Rights Project at UCLA identifies disturbing aspects of the rise of charter schools.

Frankenberg, E., Siegel-Hawley, G., Wang, J. (2010). Choice without Equity: Charter School Segregation and the Need for Civil Rights Standards. Los Angeles, CA: The Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles at UCLA; www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu. p. 1

The charter school movement has been a major political success, but it has been a civil rights failure. As the country continues moving steadily toward greater segregation and inequality of education for students of color in schools with lower achievement and graduation rates, the rapid growth of charter schools has been expanding a sector that is even more segregated than the public schools. The Civil Rights Project has been issuing annual reports on the spread of segregation in public schools and its impact on educational opportunity for 14 years. We know that choice programs can either offer quality educational options with racially and economically diverse schooling to children who otherwise have few opportunities, or choice programs can actually increase stratification and inequality depending on how they are designed. The charter effort, which has largely ignored the segregation issue, has been justified by claims about superior educational performance, which simply are not sustained by the research. Though there are some remarkable and diverse charter schools, most are neither. The lessons of what is needed to make choice work have usually been ignored in charter school policy. Magnet schools are the striking example of and offer a great deal of experience in how to create educationally successful and integrated choice options.

Our November 2009 report, *Equity Overlooked: Charter Schools and Civil Rights Policy*,¹ showed a critical lack of basic civil rights policy in state charter legislation. Our 2008 report on magnet schools showed that a significant share of magnet school programs has a clear policy favoring integration and that those with such policies had better outcomes.² It is surprising that a new administration expressing a commitment to civil rights has given so much priority to expanding charters and has not seriously focused so far on insuring that they embrace civil rights policies or on the better educational experience of magnet schools in combining choice and integration. The Obama Administration's intense pressure on financially desperate states to expand charters, or lose urgently needed federal funds, should not further intensify segregation, especially for African American students. Since the great majority of states have very small fractions of students in charter schools now and have not chosen to expand them substantially, this federal pressure must be accompanied by unambiguous accountability and civil rights standards. I'm sure that a President who benefited from integrated schools and colleges and is a proud follower of Martin Luther King would not want to use federal funds to further accelerate resegregation of students of color or perpetuate inferior schools for those same students.

Charter schools provide such a good example of the type of debate because there are very wide differences of opinion about both their effectiveness and the values they promote. Consider Harvard Professor Paul Peterson's assessments about why charter schools work today and are uniquely situated to be more effective in the future.

Paul Peterson, professor of government at Harvard University and a Hoover Institution senior fellow, March 16, 2010, Wall Street Journal, "Charter Schools and Student Performance"
<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703909804575123470465841424.html>

To uncover what is wrong with American public schools one has to dig deeper than these recent developments in education. One needs to consider the impact of restrictive collective bargaining agreements that prevent rewarding good teachers and removing ineffective ones, intrusive court interventions, and useless teacher certification laws.

Charters were invented to address these problems. As compared to district schools, they have numerous advantages. They are funded by governments, but they operate independently. This means that charters must persuade parents to select them instead of a neighborhood district school. That has happened with such regularity that today there are 350,000 families on charter-school waiting lists, enough to fill over 1,000 additional charter schools.

According to a 2009 Education Next survey, the public approves of steady charter growth. Though a sizeable portion of Americans remain undecided, charter supporters outnumber opponents two to one. Among African Americans, those who favor charters outnumber opponents four to one. Even among public-school teachers, the percentage who favor charters is 37%, while the percentage who oppose them is 31%.

A school can have short-term popularity without being good, of course. Union leaders would have us believe that charter popularity is due to the "motivated" students who attend them, not the education they provide. But charters hold lotteries when applications exceed available seats. As a result—and also because they are usually located in urban areas—over half of all charter students are either African American or Hispanic. More than a third of charter school students are eligible for the federal free or reduced lunch program.

To identify the effects of a charter education, a wide variety of studies have been conducted. The best studies are randomized experiments, the gold standard in both medical and educational research. Stanford University's Caroline Hoxby and Harvard University's Thomas Kane have conducted randomized experiments that compare students who win a charter lottery with those who applied but were not given a seat. Winners and losers can be assumed to be equally motivated because they both tried to go to a charter school. Ms. Hoxby and Mr. Kane have found that lottery winners subsequently scored considerably higher on math and reading tests than did applicants who remained in district schools.

In another good study, the RAND Corp. found that charter high school graduation rates and college attendance rates were better than regular district school rates by 15 percentage points and eight percentage points respectively.

Instead of taking seriously these high quality studies, charter critics rely heavily on a report released in 2004 by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). The AFT is hardly a disinterested investigator, and its report makes inappropriate comparisons and pays insufficient attention to the fact that charters are serving an educationally deprived segment of the population. Others base their criticism of charters on a report from an ongoing study by Stanford's Center for Research on Education Outcomes (Credo), which found that there are more weak charter schools than strong ones. Though this report is superior to AFT's study, its results are dominated by a large number of students who are in their first year at a charter school and a large number of charter schools that are in their first year of operation. Credo's work will be more informative when it presents findings for students in charters that have been up and running for several years. You can't judge the long-term potential of schools that have not amassed a multi-year track record.

To identify the long-term benefits of school choice, Harvard's Martin West and German economist Ludger Woessmann examined the impact of school choice on the performance of 15-year-old students in 29 industrialized countries. They discovered that the greater the competition between the public and private sector, the better all students do in math, science and reading. Their findings imply that

expanding charters to include 50% of all students would eventually raise American students' math scores to be competitive with the highest-scoring countries in the world. What makes charters important today is less their current performance than their potential to innovate. Educational opportunity is about to be revolutionized by powerful notebook computers, broadband and the open-source development of curricular materials (a la Wikipedia). Curriculum can be tailored to the level of accomplishment each student has reached, an enormous step forward. If American education remains stagnant, such innovations will spread slowly, if at all. If the charter world continues to expand, the competition between them and district schools could prove to be transformative.

Standardized Testing Policy

As today's students can attest, the recent wave of education reforms have been perhaps most noticeable for their embrace of standardized testing policies. The Obama administration is interesting in adjusting these policies, but it will continue to emphasize the foundation using testing as a means of evaluating students and their schools.

Robert Rothman, a senior fellow at the Alliance for Excellent Education, "Principles for a Comprehensive Assessment System. February 25, 2010, p. 10
<http://www.all4ed.org/files/ComprehensiveAssessmentSystem.pdf>

Federal education policy over the past two decades has played a dominant role in shaping state assessment systems. The Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 required states to put in place tests at three grade levels that were aligned to state content standards, and in response many states revamped testing programs or established them for the first time. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 added additional requirements, mandating tests in reading and mathematics each year from grade three through eight, and once in high school; science tests were added in 2006. NCLB also required tests for students with disabilities and tests of English language development, and the law provided funds for the development of new assessment systems. The pending reauthorization of the ESEA offers an opportunity for the federal government to reshape testing practice yet again. The Obama administration has signaled that it intends to shift the ESEA to focus on college and career readiness, which will require new assessments to measure student progress toward that goal.

This new emphasis fails to reverse NCLB and threatens to lock the US into a long-term system of promoting education to achieve certain test scores at the expense of the essence of creativity and learning. A distinguished educational scholar noted the tremendous irony of recent US and Chinese trends in this context.

Yong Zhao, University Distinguished Professor of education at Michigan State University, March 24, 2010, "Does the U.S. Want what China Wants to Throw Away: The Role of Testing in Two National Education Reform Plans"
<http://zhao.educ.msu.edu/2010/03/24/does-the-u-s-want-what-china-wants-to-throw-away-the-role-of-testing-in-two-national-education-reform-plans/>

In front of me are two documents that could significantly affect the future of the world. I am not exaggerating because these two documents are plans to overhaul education in two of the most powerful nations in the world: China and the United States. If the plans are executed as intended and outcomes achieved as expected, the future will see China moving closer to being a center of innovation and the US? – a nation of test-takers, like China today.

China released the second draft of Guidelines for Mid and Long-Range Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020) at the end of February, 2010 to solicit public comments. A couple of weeks later, the United States released A Blueprint for Reform: The Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which also uses 2020 as the target year.

While both plans are a continuation of reform efforts that had been undergoing for a while, they propose some thing much more serious for the next round. In other words, the two plans now are pushing exactly the “right button” to generate systemic and long lasting changes.

The “button” is the criteria and means to judge the quality of education. Every society uses some way to measure the quality of education its schools and teachers provide and reward or punish them with tangible (e.g., money) and or intangible (e.g., recognition) consequences. What and how education is measured often drive educational practices in schools and classrooms, which in turn affect the ultimate outcome of education: the qualities of talents a society gets.

In China, gaokao, or the College Entrance Exam, has been used as a primary indicator of the quality of education for several decades. Although it takes place only at the end of basic education, it drives educational practices from kindergarten on. Technically the gaokao assesses only individual students and does not explicitly or directly assess teachers and schools, but because it practically determines whether a student can get into college and then a better life, it is the summative evaluation of schools. In other words, how well schools and teachers prepare their students to take the gaokao has been accepted as the primary indicator of the quality of education they provide.

Therefore, in China, high schools are judged based on the proportion of their students admitted to colleges. High schools with more students doing well on the gaokao are considered better schools and are rewarded with more funds, better reputation, and attract more students. Their principals and teachers are considered celebrities and better compensated. Similarly, middle schools that have more graduates moving into these high schools are considered better, and elementary schools that send more students into better middle schools are viewed as better schools.

Thus, although China never had a national education quality assessment program, the gaokao has been the de facto measure of educational quality. Since the education system revolves around getting good scores on the gaokao, the Chinese government has termed its education systems “test-oriented,” a system viewed incompatible with China’s determination to transform into an innovation-based economy because the “test-oriented” education results in citizens who maybe good test takers, but nothing else. In addition, the gaokao only tests knowledge in a few subjects (primarily math, Chinese language, and English, plus some other subjects depending on which province one resides in), it seriously discriminates against students with abilities and talents outside these tested subjects, who have little chance of success in their education career.

To fulfill its desire to become an “innovation-based” economy, China needs a diversity of creative and innovative talents.

China has fully recognized the damages of the gaokao and has been working on curriculum and pedagogical reforms in order to mitigate the negative consequences of gaokao. It has also been trying to reform the gaokao. But until now it has not touched the root cause on a national scale (for more discussion about education reforms in China and the problems of gaokao, pls. read my recent book *Catching Up or Leading the Way: American Education in the Age of Globalization*).

In this new reform plan, China seems to be much more determined to make significant changes to the gaokao in a number of ways. First, grant universities more autonomy in deciding how they wish to admit students, thus possibly diversifying admissions criteria and procedure. Second, allow students to take the gaokao multiple times and turn it into more like the SAT or ACT. Third, make scores on the gaokao only one of the elements in admissions decisions. Fourth, encourage schools to recommend students with special talents to universities. These measures have been piloted in China on a smaller scale in different provinces. The plan is to implement them across the system.

To further reduce the negative impact of gaokao, the plan specifically forbids the use of percentage of graduates admitted to colleges to evaluate teachers and schools by local authorities.

In contrast, the Blueprint for the reauthorization of ESEA in the U.S. pushes to another extreme.

Despite all the language about innovation and flexibility, the true leverage the federal government wishes to use is test scores in a few subjects on a national scale. “Common standards” in math and language arts are to become a mandate for all states. To implement these standards, common assessment is called for. One can well expect that once common assessments in these two subjects are in place, schools and teachers will be evaluated based on their students’ performance on these tests. Then accountability measures follow. Soon, the US will have a system like China’s gaokao. The gaokao has not produced citizens China wants in the 21st century. I doubt it will do wonders for the United States.

There are alternatives and the experience of other nations, such as Chinese efforts, signify that nations can move away from such standardized practices.

Robert Rothman, a senior fellow at the Alliance for Excellent Education, “Principles for a Comprehensive Assessment System. February 25, 2010, p. 11

<http://www.all4ed.org/files/ComprehensiveAssessmentSystem.pdf>

Require that tests for accountability purposes measure the breadth of standards for college and career readiness, and authorize the inclusion of curriculum-based assessments that measure competencies that cannot be assessed effectively by end-of-year tests.

While on-demand tests provide important information about student performance, they cannot assess all that students would be expected to know and be able to do to be prepared for colleges and careers—for example, the ability to conduct research and write an extended essay—and thus provide limited and potentially misleading information about students’ preparation for postsecondary success. The heavy emphasis on such tests also encourages some schools to focus on the kinds of skills that can be assessed on paper-and-pencil tests and to downplay the deeper learning experiences that might better prepare students for the future.

Through legislation and regulatory guidance, the federal government could encourage the development and use of assessments that incorporate measures of classroom work conducted throughout the year as well as end-of-year, on-demand assessments. Such assessments should be scored by teachers through a moderated scoring system, a practice that other countries and regions, such as Queensland, Australia, have used effectively. The experience in Queensland and elsewhere demonstrates that teachers can score assessments accurately and reliably, and that the involvement of teachers improves classroom instruction by providing them with a clear sense of the expectations for student performance.

Even as scholars note their problems, there are discussions of the correct path to improvement. A recent report by the National Research Question raised the question of the best way to adjust testing practices.

National Research Council, October 2009, "Report to the U.S. Department of Education on the Race to the Top Fund" Board on Testing and Assessment; October 2009
<http://www.nap.edu/catalog/12780.html>

These issues do not mean that test scores are unimportant or generally invalid. They do mean that test use should comport with relevant professional standards. A list of relevant professional and technical standards applicable to the use of educational assessments is included in Attachment D. Three core issues reflected in these documents are (1) the need to develop multiple measures of key outcomes, ideally using multiple assessment formats; (2) the need to validate these assessments for specific uses; and (3) the need to consider the populations involved and any associated validity and fairness issues. These documents also point to several technical issues (e.g., the reliability or precision of the measures, scaling and equating issues) and operational issues (e.g., data collection and processing) that can undermine the interpretability and usefulness of the test results if not handled appropriately. The documents provide guidelines on how to avoid these kinds of problems. In addition, a thorough account of the steps needed to improve the gathering and use of data by state assessment systems can be found in the BOTAs report, *Systems for State Science Assessment* (2006).

We encourage the Department to pursue vigorously the use of multiple indicators of what students know and can do. A single test should not be relied on as the sole indicator of program effectiveness. This caveat applies as well to other targets of measurement, such as teacher quality and effectiveness and school progress in closing achievement gaps. Development of an appropriate system of multiple indicators involves thinking about the objectives of the system and the nature of the different information that different indicators can provide. Such a system should be constructed from a careful consideration of the complementary information that is provided by different measures.³

Teacher Performance Pay Initiatives & Teacher Unions

One of the central features of the rise of neoliberal educational policies is a shifting set of expectations and approaches to evaluating teachers. As the earlier evidence has noted, concern about unionized teachers is a central aspect of the fight over the future of education. Many recent approaches either attempt to tie teachers evaluation to test scores. In this way, teacher evaluation is an important research base for this topic.

Teacher's unions are a political contentious issue that is often raised as a way of linking education programs to Democratic candidates.

Andrew J. Coulson is Director of the Cato Institute Center for Educational Freedom. "The Effects of Teachers Unions on American Education" *Cato Journal*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (Winter 2010), Cato Institute., <http://www.cato.org/pubs/journal/cj30n1/cj30n1-8.pdf> p. 156

Public school employee unions are politically partisan and polarizing institutions. Of the National Education Association's \$30 million in federal campaign contributions since 1990, 93 percent has gone

to Democrats or the Democratic Party. Of the \$26 million in federal campaign contributions by the American Federation of Teachers, 99 percent has gone to Democrats or the Democratic Party (Center for Responsive Politics 2009). Perhaps not entirely coincidentally, conservatives and Republicans have often accused these unions of simultaneously raising the cost and lowering the quality of American public schools. Many advocates of charter schools, vouchers, and education tax credits have cited union political influence as the greatest impediment to their chosen reforms. But in academic circles, scholars have sometimes disagreed on the unions' impact on wages and educational productivity.

Supporters of the traditional teaching model, which often includes unions, express their concern for the new initiatives that tie teacher evaluation to these testing procedures.

Richard D. Kahlenberg, The Century Foundation, "Turnaround Schools That Work: Moving Beyond Separate but Equal," November 6, 2009, p. 19

<http://www.tcf.org/publications/education/turnaround.pdf>

Fundamentally, it is time to rethink the basic theory of turning around failing schools. One unspoken assumption of many current approaches is that teachers in high-poverty schools (and their union protectors) are to blame; and that if we could fire those teachers, and bring in union-free charter schools, we could fix the problem. This approach is mistaken. Teacher unions are hardly perfect, but there is no solid research suggesting that they are on balance damaging to the education of children. The American South, and America's charter schools, both of which have weak teacher unions or none at all, generally have lower student performance than schools in states, such as New Jersey and Massachusetts, that have strong unions.⁹⁶ Moreover, there is ample research to suggest that teacher unions produce very positive educational benefits: they reduce teacher turnover, boost salaries, and reduce class size.⁹⁷ (In charter schools, most of which are not unionized, the chances a teacher will leave the profession are 230 percent higher than in traditional public schools.)⁹⁸

Teachers themselves express the problems of changing the basic evaluation model for their profession.

Megan Behrent, High School English Teacher, Harvard Educational Review. Summer 2009, "Reclaiming Our Freedom to Teach: Education Reform in the Obama Era," Vol. 79, Iss. 2; pg. 240

Amid all the debates around failing schools and teacher quality, the voices of teachers and educators frequently get lost. Most teachers I know chose a career in education based on a genuine desire to inspire students; these teachers want to support students in developing their talent and potential. The teachers with whom I work are incredibly dedicated, creative, and compassionate individuals. They work long hours and frequently spend their own money for supplies. They have strong beliefs in the potential of every student and enjoy fostering creativity and critical thinking in their classrooms. Too often, however, their efforts are stymied by a lack of resources and support, overcrowded buildings and classrooms, outrageous amounts of paperwork, and pressure to become mindless drones of the testing industry. The high teacher turnover rate in public schools is a testament to the pressure placed on teachers. If we are to stem this tide, we need to abandon the blame-the-teacher rhetoric that is so fashionable today.

As in each of these areas, there is a robust defense of why these new programs are needed ways to promote educational innovation.

Bryan C. Hassel & Dan Katzir, Education Week, April 20, 2010, "Teacher Incentive Fund: Trivial or Transformative?" http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2010/04/21/29hassel_ep.h29.html?r=1844622039

The historic agreement this month between the District of Columbia public schools, the American Federation of Teachers, and the Washington Teachers' Union will provide the school district's teachers with some of the highest levels of professional rewards, salaries, and support in the nation.

("Foundations to Subsidize Merit Pay in D.C. Teachers' Pact," April 21, 2010.) And there is reason to hope that the nation's capital won't stand alone: The Obama administration's proposed funding boosts for the federal Teacher Incentive Fund present an opportunity for other states, districts, and schools to follow suit and create effective performance-based-compensation systems for teachers and principals. For a long time, teachers and principals have toiled through the hardest parts of their jobs simply because they are motivated to improve young people's lives. Yet most advocates agree that performance pay is a common-sense tool to reward success. Studies across industries and nations have revealed this fundamental truth: The opportunity to earn higher pay attracts talent, motivates professionals, and encourages high-performers to stay in their jobs.

At present, however, the vast majority of districts and states offer educators not a penny in performance-based compensation. The rare exceptions provide such small bonuses and short-lived incentives that they aren't designed to truly make a difference in attracting, retaining, or motivating staff members.

This picture can change in the coming years, as the Teacher Incentive Fund, or TIF, provides states and districts with hundreds of millions of dollars to reward teacher and administrator performance. But the change requires a choice: We can use these new dollars to continue tinkering incrementally with current compensation systems, or we can use them to transform outdated pay systems so that they play a direct role in creating dramatic improvements in teaching and learning. Here's how.

Use TIF to permanently transform compensation models.

In most districts that offer educators performance pay, leaders have glued new salary and bonus incentives onto existing compensation systems, meaning that they've paid for these incentives through temporary funding sources like TIF, rather than through traditional per-pupil allocations. The problem is that when funding dries up, compensation returns to the status quo.

Meanwhile, nearly all teacher pay in the United States—about 99 percent—continues to be based on years of experience, or "steps," and advanced degrees, or "lanes." A growing body of research, however, shows that degrees and experience beyond a few years have little or no effect on how much a teacher's students learn. Rarely in such a system do the best teachers have an opportunity to earn more than the worst teachers. So committed are we to paying for what does not count that we cannot pay for what does.

The only way to pay for what counts is to slice up the compensation pie differently, paying much less (if anything) for degrees and later years of experience and using the savings to pay more for performance and other meaningful contributions.

Privatization of Schools – Direct and Indirect Forms

The discussion of privatization schools takes many forms. Some options include providing economic alternatives to public schools in the form of vouchers for other schools or creating magnet

schools to centralize academic opportunities. These should very much be part of the topic, but there are also direct discussions of privatization.

Magnet schools are clearly part of the trend toward free market educational models.

Grace Chen, Public School Review.com, July 23, 2009, "Are Public Schools Facing Privatization Amidst the Economic Crisis?"<http://www.publicschoolreview.com/articles/127>

Public schools, unlike private institutions, are funded through community, state, and national tax revenues. Some communities, through the voting process, have chosen to pay higher taxes for increased educational funding, while other communities choose to pay less. Local funds combined with national funds and the success of a school's test scores ultimately also determine the size of a school's budget. While each school community has its own formula for the amount of money it receives, nearly all public schools are struggling with lowered budgets from recent financial cuts. In the past several decades, however, some school leaders have grown increasingly frustrated with the many educational restrictions set by either state or local officials. To provide public school students with the opportunity to participate in a uniquely designed curriculum program, some areas have created publicly funded "magnet schools."

For example, Wake County Public Schools, located in North Carolina, offer magnet programs that adhere to the state-wide mandatory course of study; however, the magnet programs are free to utilize more innovative approaches to learning. Specifically, magnet schools generally have more freedom to determine their own curriculum standards and practices, allowing such institutions to be run in a more personalized and private manner than larger public regions.

Adding to this, most magnet programs allow students to pursue a more specialized educational pathway. As Wake County further reveals, "Our network of magnet schools offer parents a choice of instructional programs such as Creative Arts and Sciences, Gifted and Talented, International Studies, Active Learning & Technology, International Baccalaureate," along with additional programs in language studies and leadership.

Through popular magnet programs, some leaders feel that public schools have already taken a small step towards becoming more privatized. Since magnet schools operate with slightly more independence than traditional public institutions, magnet schools are commonly viewed as a "tuition free" private school setting. In fact, all public school students are almost always permitted to apply for a magnet opportunity; however, since magnet venues are limited in their space and allotments, some students are only permitted to attend magnet schools if their names are chosen out of a lottery or another form of drawing.

The trend toward privatization doesn't stop with magnet schools or vouchers.

Grace Chen, Public School Review.com, July 23, 2009, "Are Public Schools Facing Privatization Amidst the Economic Crisis?"<http://www.publicschoolreview.com/articles/127>

Beyond magnet schools, rumors now abound regarding schools that may become privatized in the wake of our economic recession. For example, as reported by The Detroit News, 17 Detroit Public Schools will now be managed by four private educational management companies in efforts of turning around its financial and academic performance. In addition, the school district may also be facing bankruptcy. If the school district is forced to declare bankruptcy, the system should be able to revamp

its operational practices, while the school district would also be able to eliminate previous vendor and labor agreements in order to achieve most cost-effective management.

Although the Detroit Public Schools Emergency Financial Manager, Robert Bobb, has insisted that declaring bankruptcy would be used as a last resort to save the schools in Detroit, opponents to Bobb's agenda argue that his current strategies will ultimately only push Detroit schools to mass privatization. A similar movement has already occurred in Chicago, who also hired private companies to manage public schools. In Chicago, many of these public schools have already been replaced by "charter schools," which some view as a privatized version of public institutions.

Although these extreme examples are located within several cities now, it does offer both mainstream examples (magnet schools) and concerns about potential trends.

As with each areas there are active defenders of magnet schools.

Richard D. Kahlenberg, The Century Foundation, "Turnaround Schools That Work: Moving Beyond Separate but Equal," November 6, 2009, p. 7

<http://www.tcf.org/publications/education/turnaround.pdf>

A number of studies over the past quarter-century have found that magnet schools have higher levels of achievement than do other schools, and produce faster achievement gains in most subjects. Several of these studies account for self-selection bias by examining gains in over-subscribed magnet schools and regular public schools, comparing lottery winners and losers, and continue to find advantages to attending magnet schools.²⁷ For example, comparing lottery winners and losers in interdistrict magnet schools in Connecticut, a 2008 study by Robert Bifulco of Syracuse University, Casey Cobb of the University of Connecticut, and Courtney Bell of the Educational Testing Service found positive effects on math and reading scores in high school and on reading scores in middle school.²⁸ Moreover, the magnet school turnaround model—in which schools seek to improve the performance of low-income students by drawing into a high-poverty school a contingent of middle class students—is backed up by four decades of research finding that the socioeconomic composition of a school profoundly affects the achievement of any given student in the school. This research dates back to the landmark 1966 Coleman Report, which found that the most important predictor of academic achievement is the socioeconomic status of the family a child comes from, and the second most important predictor is the socioeconomic makeup of the school she attends.²⁹ More recently, a growing number of studies have linked a school's socioeconomic status with student achievement, after controlling for the individual socioeconomic status of a student's family.³⁰ Indeed, a new re-analysis of Coleman's data using a more sophisticated statistical technique (hierarchical linear modeling, or HLM) finds that the social class of the school matters even more to student achievement than does the socioeconomic status of the family. Geoffrey Borman and Maritza Dowling of the University of Wisconsin at Madison concluded that "the achievement difference between a school attended by students of average wealth and a school with a student body composed of students 1 standard deviation below the mean level of wealth was nearly 1 ¾ times greater than the achievement difference between a student of average wealth and a student who was 1 standard deviation less wealthy."³¹

Unique educational opportunities

There is a tremendous opportunity for today's students, themselves among the first generation of students educated with NCLB as the governing approach, to discuss its revision. The Obama administration is engaged in reforming education policy and today's debate programs could take part in that national conversation. Encouraging the large intercollegiate policy debate research base could be a powerful means of increasing the visibility of these issues as well as exposing students to the policy dimensions of these changes. It would certainly seem possible to approach state and federal educational organizations who might be interested in working with the intercollegiate community to promote public discussion of these issues. Debating education also offers students a rich source of information to consider as they determine potential career paths. Debate is itself a unique educational activity and a year spent examining national education policy could be a powerful way to examine debate as part of the new trends in US education policy. In other words, debating offers us a way to both examine trends in education policy and to engage in new directions in education policy. Consider how some of the previously cited authors discuss the importance of critical literacy education in the context of how education should be practiced.

Rebecca Rogers, Melissa Mosley, and Angela Folkes, *Language Arts*, November 2009, Vol 87
"Standing Up to Neoliberalism through Critical Literacy Education" p. 129

In classrooms, critical literacy has been used to explore gender equity (Bee, 1993; Cherland, 2008; Jones & Clarke, 2007), homophobia (Martino, 2001; Young, 2009), racial equity (Rogers & Mosley, 2006; Hall & Piazza, 2008), and class equity (Jones, 2006; Powell, Cantrell, & Adams, 2001). While critical educators often pivot in their teaching across the "isms" of racism, classism, and sexism, much less work has been done around class struggle and exploitation, which are at the heart of neoliberalism. (For an exception, see *Rethinking Globalization* [2002]).

In particular, during a crisis situation, as in the market crash of 1929 or the 2008 banking/mortgage crisis, there is an opportunity to rethink our government's involvement in market regulation and the allocation of public funds to private firms. We must ask who benefits and suffers as a result of regulation. What literacy practices are necessary for democratic debate towards socially just reforms? Professor Harold Rugg wrote the following in 1934, at a time when the relationship between society and the economic market was rapidly changing:

In the midst of much widespread yearning after social reconstruction the educator asks what he can do. He is dared by the reconstructionists to help "build a new social order" and to "teach" its concepts and loyalties in schools. He is warned by the economic fraternity of the community, however, that his teachings must fit the prevailing climate of opinion; that his business is to pass on the great American tradition of individual success through exploitation and not to participate in social criticism and reconstruction. (p. 4)

The most recent economic crisis in 2008 and responses from economic theorists, politicians, educators, and other public intellectuals offer a current-day context to debate philosophies and how they impact the communities in which we live and work.

The talk, texts, images, and relationships that comprise the literacies of labor are constituted through historical and social processes. Historically, neoliberalism can be understood as a set of social relations between labor and capital. As such, the policies and practices are not natural or inevitable, but rather can be challenged and redefined most forcefully by those they exploit. It is important to recognize class both as a form of social stratification and as a relational process between people and capital.

Critical educators can use the literacies of labor to center class conflict and help people reimagine how they might position themselves in relation to capital.

Because the topic encourages switch side debate it is important to appreciate that these authors are not dogmatic in specifying a single answer. They wonder what the correct focus can be and how both theory and practice can help students develop the skills they need. In doing so they offer a powerful justification for using education policy as our topic.

Rebecca Rogers, Melissa Mosley, and Angela Folkes, Language Arts, November 2009, Vol 87
“Standing Up to Neoliberalism through Critical Literacy Education” p. 137

We also wonder about other limits of this approach. In what ways does critical literacy education focused on neoliberalism make a material difference in the lives of our students and their families? Indeed, the Ford factory closed in St. Louis. The parents in Angy’s classroom still face anti-immigration legislation. Teachers are being fired as their schools are shut down. People identify more closely with their rights as consumers than their rights as citizens. We wonder, too, if critical approaches to neoliberalism in literacy education are too narrowly focused, and if as educators we are imposing our old solutions on new problems. Students might engage simultaneously in critical pedagogy and the determination about what tools are necessary for civic life in changing times. As conditions of work change under neoliberal policies, people change as well. These conditions may lead to major shifts in how we, as a society, provide for post-secondary education and how we view rights to health care, employment, and education. We need to make sure we are not imposing frameworks from another time and set of social and political conditions to a new age, where technology enables greater communication and opportunity. The limits and possibilities of literacy education that centers class struggle are still an open question. However, we are optimistic that the social practices that engage with both critique and hope can contribute to building a more sustainable future.

Education policy is also an area that has not been selected as the intercollegiate topic in many years. The high school community last debated the topic in the 1999-2000 season, but the college community has not had an entire education topic since 1985-1986. The last exposure to debating education, using the Milliken v. Bradley case on the 2006-2007 topic, proved to be a very interesting subject for many teams, even as the specific nature of the legal topic influenced the scope of that debate. This topic would be a means of fully exploring that discussion of school desegregation as part of a much larger review of education policy.

The below list identifies the education topics from both the college and high school communities. It should serve both as a guide for potential wording efforts and also a reminder that historically debating education policy is an important aspect of our community.

CEDA/NDT Topics

1985-1986 RESOLVED: "That more rigorous academic standards should be established for all public elementary and/or secondary schools in the United States in one or more of the following areas: language arts, mathematics, natural sciences."

1963-1964 RESOLVED: "That the federal government should guarantee an opportunity for higher education to all qualified high school graduates."

1948-1949 RESOLVED: "That the federal government should adopt a policy of equalizing educational opportunity in tax-supported schools by means of annual grants."

National High School Debate Topics²

1999-2000 Resolved: That the federal government should establish an education policy to significantly increase academic achievement in secondary schools in the United States

1981-1982 Resolved: That the federal government should establish minimum educational standards for elementary and secondary schools in the United States.

1972-1973 Resolved: That governmental financial support for all public and secondary education in the United States be provided exclusively by the federal government

1962 Resolved: That the federal government should equalize educational opportunity by means of grants to the states for public elementary and secondary education.

1935 Resolved: That the federal government should adopt the policy of equalizing educational opportunity throughout the nation by means of annual grants to the several states for public elementary and secondary education.

1928 Resolved: That a federal department of education should be created with a secretary in the president's cabinet.

Potential directions for wording papers

This paper has only begun to examine how the topic could be developed. The controversy about the desirability of a strong federal in encouraging neoliberal or free market policies is clear. This next sections briefly mentions some of the directions that the wording papers should consider as the potential next step.

The stem of the topic: Reducing federal support

First, Confirm that the optimal stem is

Resolved: The United States Federal Government should substantially reduce federal support for

2 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Resolution_\(policy_debate\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Resolution_(policy_debate))

There is extensive use of the term federal support to refer to the broad range of financial and programmatic support for educational policies. When Senator Tom Coburn wanted to end federal funding for political science programs this was the preferred description

<http://chronicle.com/article/Senator-Proposes-an-End-to/48746/>

David Glenn, Chronicle of Higher Education, October 7, 2009, “Senator Proposes an End to Federal Support for Political Science”

This is far from the first time that Congress has entertained proposals to cut **federal support** for social science. In 1995, a House committee approved a bill that would have eliminated almost all social-science programs at the NSF. And in 2006, Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, Republican of Texas, introduced a similar measure.

This is consistent with federal usage. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) the primary federal entity for collecting and analyzing data related to education in the U.S. and other nations and a part of the U.S. Department of Education describes federal programs that increase funding for education through use of the term 'federal support' as seen below.

The National Center for Educational Statistics, Digest of Education Statistics: 2008, March 2009, http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d08/ch_4.asp

Vocational Education Act of 1963 (Part of Public Law 88-210) increased federal support of vocational education schools; vocational work-study programs; and research, training, and demonstrations in vocational education.

Similarly, the Department of Education utilizes federal support to refer to the broad array of federal programs that provide for educational initiatives.

US Department of Education, “OVERVIEW: The Federal Role in Education” January 2010 <http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/fed/role.html>

World War II led to a significant expansion of Federal support for education. The Lanham Act in 1941 and the Impact Aid laws of 1950 eased the burden on communities affected by the presence of military and other Federal installations by making payments to school districts. And in 1944, the "GI Bill" authorized postsecondary education assistance that would ultimately send nearly 8 million World War II veterans to college.

Specifying what is reduced – Use of neoliberal

Second, the topic committee should examine the appropriate means of specifying the types of programs to be reduced. There are several options. The topic could choose to use the broad unifying phrase neoliberal education programs.

The USFG should substantially reduce support for neoliberal education programs.

Despite the potential hesitation mentioned at the outset of the paper there is an increasingly large body of scholarship regarding the use of this term. Taylor C. Boas & Jordan Gans-Morse, Ph.D. candidates in political science at the University of California, Berkeley, have studied the use of the term in scholarly journals and noted both that the term is widely used and there is very much an academic benefit to utilizing it in specific contexts.

Taylor C. Boas & Jordan Gans-Morse, Ph.D. candidates in political science at the University of California, Berkeley, February 21, 2009, "Neoliberalism: From New Liberal Philosophy to Anti-Liberal Slogan" *St Comp Int Dev* (2009) 44:137–161

In recent years, neoliberalism has become an academic catchphrase. Yet, in contrast to other prominent social science concepts such as democracy, the meaning and proper usage of neoliberalism curiously have elicited little scholarly debate. Based on a content analysis of 148 journal articles published from 1990 to 2004, we document three potentially problematic aspects of neoliberalism's use: the term is often undefined; it is employed unevenly across ideological divides; and it is used to characterize an excessively broad variety of phenomena. To explain these characteristics, we trace the genesis and evolution of the term neoliberalism throughout several decades of political economy debates. We show that neoliberalism has undergone a striking transformation, from a positive label coined by the German Freiberg School to denote a moderate renovation of classical liberalism, to a normatively negative term associated with radical economic reforms in Pinochet's Chile. We then present an extension of W. B. Gallie's framework for analyzing essentially contested concepts to explain why the meaning of neoliberalism is so rarely debated, in contrast to other normatively and politically charged social science terms. We conclude by proposing several ways that the term can regain substantive meaning as a "new liberalism" and be transformed into a more useful analytic tool.

Not only do they outline that there is not a limitless use of this term in scholarly use, but that the term is valuable because of its ability to organize and provide input on pressing materials of public policy used by competing perspectives.

Taylor C. Boas & Jordan Gans-Morse, Ph.D. candidates in political science at the University of California, Berkeley, February 21, 2009, "Neoliberalism: From New Liberal Philosophy to Anti-Liberal Slogan" *St Comp Int Dev* (2009) 44:137–161 P. 158

In conclusion, we wish to underscore that the problem with present-day use of neoliberalism is not that scholars hold normative opinions about the value of free markets, or even that they sometimes express these opinions in their empirical research. Normative concerns provide an important stimulus for conducting research that is relevant to real-world problems and sheds light on substantively important issues in new ways. Whether free markets are good or bad for society is one of the most important questions scholars can debate. Our contribution should be to bring facts and reasoned arguments to the table as opposed to politically charged language. We can begin to do this by transforming the term neoliberalism into one that conveys a common substantive meaning rather than a common ideological orientation, and is used by all parties to this debate.

Specifying what is reduced – Lists

I strongly contend that there are both descriptive and enumerated ways to frame this topic. The relative strengths and weaknesses of each can be evaluated, but they should both be considered by the committee and community.

If there is a desire to express this topic in a list form it may or may reduce the need for the phrase 'neoliberal' The topic could be worded without it as such (obviously not all need to be included, but all of these policies are referenced in this paper).

The USFG should substantially reduce federal support for one or more of the the following: charter schools, magnet schools, school vouchers, standardized testing, teacher pay for performance programs, privatization of schools.

A desire for positive federal action?

In some cases there have been concerns expressed about offering a topic that only reduces federal programs. There are some advantages to this approach, but it may be determined as too limiting to develop potential policy proposals. A broader version of this wording that is still authentic to the core approach follows:

The USFG should adopt an education reform policy including the substantial reduction of federal support for neoliberal education programs.

This approach could be used with the list or descriptive option and it would empower the affirmative to take a more aggressive action, even as it would preserve the ability of negative terms to have predictable ground as it relates to the type of support that would be reduced.

In each of these areas additional specific wording research should follow, if selected. This can help provide the best choices to express each of these concepts.

Recommendation of the author

There are many good choices to debate about in 2010-2011 and I strongly believe education is one such option. It would provide a useful pedagogical means of looking at our craft, it would help identify outside organizations and elements of our community that might be interested in such debates and it is a deeply contested and rich body of literature to help frame arguments.

I have avoided discussing much of the specific argument constructions that might take place on such a topic, but let me identify one concern. I believe the topic does somewhat help reduce the concerns posed by the States CP, but I would argue that this topic is a reason why we should be increasingly skeptical of that argument construction. I do not lightly engage in attacking a specific

argument, but I think that it is destructive for our community to embrace an unlimited notion of negative fiat power to act as a coordinated effort of all states and territories.

The topic is framed to reduce federal support for programs and based on the experience with the agricultural support topic this should provide one avenue of reducing the utility of the States CP. Theoretically it should be the purview of the affirmative team to reduce such authority.

At the same time, that experience also reinforced my concern that the States CP is a uniquely troubling argument because it dissuades us from even considering a wide range of domestic policy actions. Debaters can, and should, certainly argue the merits of a wide range of arguments. When an argument construction becomes so pronounced that it deters us from even engaging in that topic we must carefully reassess our perspective.

I am not immune to the warrants that this argument resembles important public policy debates about the federal role in state policies. There can be no doubt that federalism is an important public policy principle that should certainly be part of our shared curriculum. For our practices I would encourage us to recognize the between some level of state based fiat and the utopian alternative. If negative teams utilized two standards to guide their 'state action CP' we might enjoy more educationally sound debates.

First, we should consider borrowing propensity standard from historical argument form known as a minor repair. for the scope of the negative fiat power. Negative teams would need to provide evidence demonstrating some degree of likelihood that the actors of the CP have acted in such a manner in this regard. Items like the Common Core Standards initiative, which represent a loose coalition of 40 states, could provide both sides with a level of fiat power that is drawn from the education policy literature. These examples could inform a rich debate. Why are certain states excluded? Why is the common effort not more binding? These are valuable debates that reflect a solid foundation for competition.

Second, if the goal is really to test the authority of one layer of government against another, fiat should be limited to that level of government. Allowing negative teams to reduce federal authority, utilize federal funding or act on overseas territories nullifies the centrality of federal action warrants even as the educational rationale to test these claims.

Obviously voting for this topic doesn't signify an embrace of these principles, but I would hope both that individuals consider voting for this topic on its merits (not on the potential role of the States CP) and that we do consider the influence of this argument form of future topic selection.

Research Resources

I will be bundling a series of google reader RSS feeds for public consumption. I hope that if this topic is selected others will share their links. In the interim, let me suggest Education Week's very useful central RSS feed as a good starting point <http://www.edweek.org/ew/section/feeds/index.html>