

1996

# Inequality in education : America's two-tiered approach to public education

Johanna Vogel  
*Lehigh University*

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Inequality in  
Education:  
America's  
Two-Tiered  
Approach to...

June 2, 1996

**INEQUALITY IN EDUCATION:  
AMERICA'S TWO-TIERED APPROACH TO PUBLIC EDUCATION**

by

**Johanna Vogel**

**A Thesis  
Presented to the Graduate and Research Committee  
of Lehigh University  
in Candidacy for the Degree of  
Masters of Arts  
in  
Government**

**Lehigh University  
May 1996**

This thesis is accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Masters of Arts.

4/29/96

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Date

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Edward P. Morgan, Thesis Advisor

---

Frank Davis, Committee Member

---

Frank Colon, Committee Member  
Graduate Chair

---

Richard K. Matthews, Chairperson  
of Government Department

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the staffs of Hatboro-Horsham High School and University City High School for allowing me to visit their schools. I have also relied on the Central Bucks Library (Doylestown) and Lehigh University's Martindale/Fairchild Library.

Many friends and family members contributed to the production of this thesis through their ideas, suggestions, willingness to listen and overall support. This has involved tremendous generosity of time and spirit as well as understanding. Specifically, I would like to thank Professor Edward Morgan, with whom I took many graduate classes, and who has been gracious enough to serve as my advisor for this thesis, providing valuable advice and support; Professor Frank Colon for helping me put together a workable part-time academic program as well as arranging for my grant; Professor Frank Davis, for agreeing to serve on my thesis committee and, more importantly, for giving me confidence in statistics (a course that showed me what I can achieve if I set my mind to it); Marna C. Whittington, for providing me the priceless gift of a flexible schedule, one that has allowed me to pursue this degree as well as enjoy more time with my daughter; Denise Fingleton, for her reliability and care in babysitting which has allowed me to pursue this degree; Karen Yancey, for pushing me to go back to school; my father, Alfred Vogel, who served as chief babysitter on Monday afternoons; Jane Vogel, who helped edit and inspire this work.

Special thanks go to my husband, Daniel Hillman, whose support and guidance in this coursework has been invaluable.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	pg. 1
Foreword	pg. 3
Introduction: Statement of the Problem	pg. 9
Chapter 1: History of Inequity in Education: How Schools Got to Where They are Today	pg. 20
Chapter 2: Public Policy Attempts to Improve Equity	pg. 28
Chapter 3: Contemporary Policy Solutions to Inequities in Education	pg. 48
Chapter 4: A Future Public Policy Trend: Opportunities-to-Learn	pg. 65
Chapter 5: What "Educational Reform" Means Today	pg. 77
Chapter 6: Model Schools -- Case Study Comparisons	pg. 94
Conclusion	pg. 117
Bibliography	pg. 122

## ABSTRACT

American public education policies have evolved from the 1960s and 1970s to become less concerned about inequities between different schools and school districts and more concerned about equities and opportunities within a school or system. Although America has long maintained a multi-tiered system of public education, the differences between urban and suburban schools is particularly vivid. For the purposes of this study, I have examined these differences and documented the evolution of a specific two-tiered system of public education which services its students very differently. Within these two systems are two distinct reform efforts, each one directed at (or more suited for) a specific type of school system.

One reform effort, focusing on suburban public schools, addresses the problems inherent in "tracking", the tradition of grouping students with perceived similar ability in the same class; the formation of the school day; student/teacher ratios; and ways to make schools more receptive to the different talents and interests of the student body. The other, focusing on urban schools, seeks to address the obstacles facing many children (such as poverty, crime, drug and family problems) by isolating the higher achieving students and reorganizing schools and their bureaucracies into community-backed clusters.

While having two separate approaches to school reform may make sense in the short-term given the vastly different needs of these communities, it promises to further separate these two groups in the long-term. A troubling aspect to this is that the schools largely divide along racial and economic lines. Hence, the two-tiered approach may further exacerbate the gaps between rich, poor, white, and black. Where once public policy towards education sought to bring the different races together, today's policies and efforts ignore this goal and seek instead to improve the given situations within the different schools. Instead of discussing educational reform *across* different school districts, these programs seek reform *within* school districts. The once explicit and often articulated goal of racial balance in public schools is lost in today's discussions of educational reform.



## FOREWORD

I first took an interest in children of other social and ethnic backgrounds in 1967. I was four years old. My mother went to teach a HeadStart class in Trenton, NJ and took the job on one condition: that I be allowed to attend. That is how I came to be the only white student, the only middle-upper class student, and probably the only student whose parents were both college graduates in the Trenton HeadStart program that year. I do not remember a whole lot about that school, except running in the playground, and having a friend named Tina, whom I thought was the most beautiful girl in the entire world. I told my parents that I thought she was beautiful, and that I wished I was black, too. I do not know what they said. Probably not much. But I remember later on, when I echoed similar desires, they smiled and sadly said, "No, you don't." I liked the darkness of the black skin, the smoothness of it, and I liked that there were no freckles since I had many of my own and hated them. But, my parents, older and more experienced in the world, knew that to be black in this country was to be greatly and unfairly hindered.

The next year, when I was five and my sister was eight, my mother signed up to be a "Thursday Mother" in the summer camp reading program organized in our area. Children came from Trenton, NJ, which was then and is still now, a city with a large poor minority population and high unemployment. The summer camp offered these children a daily exit out of Trenton into the mostly white, more affluent town of Pennington, NJ. It

is about a fifteen minutes bus ride at the most, but it might as well be another planet. On summer nights, men in Trenton hang on street corners, sipping from bottles clutched in brown bags, children run and play in the streets while their mothers, grandmothers, and aunts sit on stoops talking and smoking cigarettes. Meanwhile, Summer nights in Pennington mean just a few things: catching fireflies, playing "kick the can", and eating dinner out back at the picnic table.

My mother was a Thursday Mother, meaning that she would agree to spend Thursdays with a child from the summer camp; among other things, she would help the child with reading. Our Thursday Child was Vivien. Vivien was seven and she lived with her grandmother because her mother was dead and her father lived in South Carolina; she did not see him often, if at all from what I recall. Instead, Vivien lived in a rowhouse, sharing her bed with her grandmother and sister, while the other four children and her aunt slept in another room. Vivien was our Thursday Child for four years and we all liked her a great deal, although I do remember some naughty tricks of hers, like bending my fingers back. But Vivien had a big heart and one day she found a five dollar bill on the corner near my house! We were all excited, and at the same time jealous. ("I saw it first!") But, truth be told Vivien saw it first, and she grabbed it first. My sister and I thought that would be the end of it, but Vivien insisted that we go "uptown" (meaning the drugstore that is located four blocks from my house) and spend it! That

little girl, with so little of her own, went and spent that entire \$5 buying each of us a little toy.

That's not the sad part of the story. The sad part is how Vivien, the same age as my sister, began over the years to play less with her and more with me -- most likely because our intellectual skills were closer despite the three year difference in our ages. My sister was advancing -- she was reading more, playing the piano (she's very good at the piano), she was maturing. Vivien, meanwhile, had hardly improved her reading since the summer before; in many ways, she was more a peer of mine, even though I was three years younger -- an age gap that most children take quite seriously!

Being black and growing up in a poor city area, Vivien was given the education that we in America provide for that group. Meanwhile, my sister and I, growing up in an all-white, upper middle class neighborhood, were given the education that we in America provide for that group. They are quite different.

Of course, schooling is not everything and the differences between Vivien's academic development and my sister's and mine can be linked to our family life as well. But, the part that just does not sit well with me from a public policy perspective is that education is *public*, and as such, its quality (like its quantity) should be standardized so that what one school offers in terms of teacher ability, facilities, and resources is roughly

the same as what another offers. I am not talking about a "Big Mac" model for schools (no matter which McDonald's you visit, a Big Mac always tastes the same.) Obviously, if students in one school are eager and excited about foreign languages, and students in another would trade typing for dance, there needs to be room to reflect those different interests in the curriculum. But how do we justify the qualitative schism that existed back then, when I was five and Vivien seven, and the even larger schism that exists today?

I have thought about Vivien during my work on this paper, but not a lot. I guess time has distanced me from those roots. And, I think the media and popular culture have done an outstanding job of disengaging those of us who live in the suburbs from those who live in the city. It rarely even occurs to me that I personally know people there. The problems of poor black people seem just that -- their problems, far removed from mine.

This paper explores how the current educational system and efforts to reform it promise to further exacerbate the differences between suburban and urban education and how the qualitative distance between these communities will continue to expand. Today's education reform efforts are two-tiered: one effort focuses on predominately white, upper-middle-class suburban schools and the other focuses on predominantly black, lower-class, urban schools. The two efforts are distinct in their aims, resources, and requirements. By allowing public policy in this area to take this two-tiered approach,

America is essentially sanctioning the separateness of these two types of schools and abandoning any attempt to try to provide equal educational opportunity for all children in America. As a result, the inequities that exist will continue to exist.

In this paper, I describe the issues related to educational equity, and discuss the policies and practices that have cultivated the current educational divide in America. In addition to the history of the current situation, I present the current reform efforts and my perception of their two-tiered approach. I also discuss "opportunities-to-learn," a nascent educational policy effort that avoids comparing students through standardized tests, but instead, takes into consideration the school, family background, and given opportunities the child has had to perform; many observers believe these theories will form the basis of future reform programs. I visit two schools for my own personal comparison. One, Hatboro-Horsham High School, is located in the Philadelphia suburbs and is a "National Blue Ribbon" school, an award of excellence bestowed by the President of the United States on about 230 schools across the country. The other, University City High School, is located in the Mantua area of Philadelphia, a mostly black community, and has the reputation of being one of the "toughest" schools in Philadelphia, a term that does not refer to its academic rigor.

While many components of the educational reform efforts are admirable and encouraging, I concluded my research more depressed than invigorated. To me, it seems

that the suburban reform efforts are new and promising, and the students in those schools will gain greatly from new class design and teacher methods. The urban reform efforts, conversely, seem over-organized, heavily administered, and far too dependent on a community that may not be equipped to fill the large role requested of it. In addition, the school choice efforts forebode an increasingly stratified urban system. While this research, which has occupied a better part of the last year for me, has tempted me to personally get involved in community work, it has also left a bad taste in my mouth. I am now more puzzled than before when I hear people comment that, no matter what, America is still the best country in the world. I don't know that I can say those words. From what I have seen, both in my visits to schools and from the documented readings, America is sacrificing the futures of a great many poor and minority citizens.

## INTRODUCTION: Statement of the Problem

"Will Schools Ever Get Better?" asks the cover of Business Week's April 17, 1995 issue. The article laments that while enrollments are up, money is scarce and achievement is stagnant. The article questions how American students stack up against earlier generations and their foreign peers and how much public money is wasted and misdirected in the nation's \$345 billion enterprise known as public education. While the story describes changes in many states' financing schemes and examples of curricular reform, it never questions what is equitable and what is inequitable either within or between school districts.

Other media accounts show public policy experts eagerly debating different action to help remedy the problems existing in ghetto schools in America. Some politicians favor voucher programs or other types of "school choice." Others proclaim the need to get tough with the children in ghetto schools, to expect more, lengthen the school day, shorten the school day, decentralize the system, and so on. The ghetto school needs to be safer, parents need to get involved, teachers need to do more with less. What we do not hear in this dialogue, however, is any question of the existence of the ghetto school in the first place. American public policy towards education has accepted the notion of a ghetto school and has stood by while gaps between rich and poor districts have grown.

Just how grave is the problem of inequity?

An analysis of 18 nations conducted by the Luxembourg Income Study in 1995 ranks poor children in the United States among the worst off economically. According to the New York Times, the study indicates that "poor children in the United States are poorer than the children in most other Western industrialized nations because the gap between rich and poor is particularly large in the United States and because welfare programs here are less generous than abroad."<sup>1</sup>

These gaps are well documented in Jonathan Kozol's latest book, Amazing Grace, where he spends two years in the South Bronx area of New York City. The area makes up "one of the largest racially segregated concentrations of poor people in our nation," where the median household income was \$7,600 in 1991.<sup>2</sup> There is an abnormally large AIDS population in the area, because the city has moved large populations of AIDS patients on welfare to the area. The majority of the residents, in what is the poorest congressional district of our nation, receive public assistance.

Naturally, this poverty and degradation is reflected in the local schools, as well. As Kozol points out, "P.S. 65, the elementary school on Cypress Avenue, with one white child in a student population of 800, is, in its near-total segregation, indistinguishable

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<sup>1</sup>"Low Ranking for Poor American Children," New York Times, August 14, 1995, pg. A9.

<sup>2</sup>Jonathan Kozol, Amazing Grace (New York: NY: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1995) pg. 3.



from almost any other public school in the South Bronx, where racial isolation is nearly as absolute as anything one might have seen in Mississippi 40 years ago."<sup>3</sup> Of those 800 children, only seven do not qualify for free school lunches, and five of those seven get reduced-price lunches because they are "classified as only 'poor,' not 'destitute'."<sup>4</sup>

In the later years, in junior and senior high school, "the sense of human ruin on a vast scale becomes unmistakable," writes Kozol.<sup>5</sup> The statistics are more than disconcerting -- they are powerfully alarming. According to a City University professor studying the fate of 1,436 children enrolled in ninth grade in one year, 87 percent had either dropped out, transferred, or been expelled from the school over the course of the next six years and a full 80 percent had yet to receive a degree from any institution<sup>6</sup>.

An observation made in 1969 that Americans may deliberately decide to "sacrifice urban public schools on the altars of its historic and contemporary forms of racism,"<sup>7</sup> hits home when we look at education in inner city schools today. In an earlier book, Savage Inequalities, Jonathan Kozol chronicles in painful detail the conditions of

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<sup>3</sup>Kozol, Amazing Grace, pg. 150.

<sup>4</sup>Kozol, Amazing Grace, pg. 3.

<sup>5</sup>Kozol, Amazing Grace, pg. 150.

<sup>6</sup>Kozol, Amazing Grace, pg. 151.

<sup>7</sup>Kenneth B. Clark, "Alternative Public School System," Harvard Educational Review: Equal Educational Opportunity (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979, pg. 183).

predominantly poor, black schools compared with their neighboring wealthy, white schools.

One of the most striking case studies Kozol considers is between two high schools in the Chicago area: New Trier High Schools and DuSable High School. New Trier is located in a Northern suburb of Chicago, an area stretching along Lake Michigan that is overwhelming white and quite affluent. The school is situated on 27 acres and features three gymnasiums with a fencing room, a wrestling room and a dance studio. Its Olympic-size pool for athletes is matched by up-to-date computer labs and well-stocked science labs. The average class size is 24 and courses for slower learners usually have 15 students. Each teacher serves as an advisor to roughly 24 students; 93% of the students go to college after graduation.<sup>8</sup>

DuSable High School is located on a crowded city block in downtown Chicago; its students are nearly all black. Its makeshift labs often lack the necessary supplies to complete an experiment. There is no campus to speak of, and no schoolyard. Here, guidance counselors are assigned 420 students each, and a student is usually expected to spend no more than 15 minutes a year with his or her counselor, if at all. The school graduates 25% of its students.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Kozol, Jonathan, Savage Inequalities, (New York: Crown Publishers. 1991) pg. 66-73.

<sup>9</sup>Kozol, Savage Inequalities, pg. 69.

In New Trier, students are offered a full array of courses, including Latin, computer science and analytic reasoning. Meanwhile, at DuSable, Kozol observes a 12th grade English class engaged in a lesson where the students are required to pronounce a list of words: fastidious, gregarious, auspicious, dour, demise. The teacher never asks the students what the words mean and when Kozol asks one boy if he knows the meaning, he confirms that he does not. Another course offered is "Job Strategy," where students learn how to dress, calculate deductions, and arrive at work on time.

Kozol documents similar discrepancies in other areas. In New York, for example, a predominantly black and Hispanic public school in the Bronx is compared to a public school in Riverdale, a white enclave situated within the Bronx. P.S. 261 is located next to a funeral home in what was previously a roller-skating rink. The building has no windows on the first floor and no playground. While its capacity is 900, there are 1300 children enrolled. The students have to share social studies books since there are not enough to distribute to all. One 6th grade class of 30 students shares a classroom with 29 bi-lingual second graders. Conversely, the Riverdale school has 825 students and covers seven grades; special programs are offered for gifted students. There are plenty of books to go around and no classrooms are shared or held in supply closets.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Kozol, Savage Inequalities, pgs. 85-99.

Is it any wonder that graduation rates and test scores are lower in inner-city, poor schools when the facilities and resources are so disparate? "Pole vaulters using bamboo poles even with the greatest effort cannot compete with pole vaulters using aluminum poles," writes Kozol.<sup>11</sup>

As he visits inner city schools, Kozol continuously witnesses decaying physical plants, overcrowded classrooms, inadequate supplies and lab facilities, and uncreative and unproductive classroom activities. This, he ardently argues, would not be permitted to happen to white children.

"The most important difference in the urban systems, ... is that they are often just adjacent to the nation's richest districts, and this ever-present contrast adds a heightened bitterness to the experience of children," writes Kozol.<sup>12</sup> "The ugliness of racial segregation adds its special injuries as well."

For Kozol, it is this "killing combination" that makes life within these poor, inner city schools desperate and unconscionable. He considers money the single most important factor in equalizing education across districts and, therefore, across the races and argues that while throwing money at a school will not necessarily help it, a school cannot hope to improve its educational services and student performance without it. Are

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<sup>11</sup>Kozol, *Savage Inequalities*, pg. 68.

<sup>12</sup>Kozol, *Savage Inequalities*, pg. 74.

we really to believe, Kozol asks, that the laws of economics, which control all other aspects of our lives, somehow do not apply to education? Considering how much money is spent on education in wealthy districts, the message is that money is "critical to rich districts but will be of little difference to the poor."<sup>13</sup>

Kozol advocates school financing schemes that would truly distribute funds in a more equitable fashion and that would ensure that all students in all schools receive not just an efficient education, but an outstanding education. Indeed, if education is mandated under the law, how can we justify its coming in such radically different varieties? How can we accept that 700 black children in a Chicago elementary school go to a school with two working toilets? How can we permit Great Neck, New York to spend \$11,265 in the 1986-1987 school year on each of its students, while New York City, less than an hour away, only spent \$5,585 on each? Similarly, how do we reconcile that Princeton spent \$7,725 on each student in the 1988-1989 school year, while Camden allocated \$3,538 per student?<sup>14</sup>

Kozol attributes much of America's acceptance of these discrepancies to racism. If one accepts that blacks are different from whites -- that their customs, habits and standards for cleanliness are different -- one can accept that their schools should be different -- less stocked, less clean. If one accepts that blacks are less intelligent, one

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<sup>13</sup>Kozol, Savage Inequalities, pg. 171.

<sup>14</sup>Kozol, Savage Inequalities, pg. 236-237.

accepts that their schools are of lower academic quality. For Kozol, the key to improving the quality of black schools is to equalize funding across district lines.

"The reliance of our public schools on property taxes and the localization of the uses of those taxes have combined to make the public school into an educator for the educated rich and a keeper for the uneducated poor," says Kozol.<sup>15</sup> Inequity is then mediated by a taxing system that most people do not understand and seldom scrutinize.

These beliefs place Kozol towards the left of the equal educational opportunity and public policy debate. While others may see the same inequities as Kozol, they take a more conservative, less invasive approach to rectify the discrepancies. These critics rigorously defend the locally-controlled system of education in the U.S. Michael W. Kirst, professor at Stanford University's School of Education, for example, says that local flexibility is one of the few things that *is* right about education in America:

Despite the likely evolution of national standards, the locally based education system in the U.S. is flexible and can innovate without feeling the heavy hand of national control. The 15,000 school districts provide the U.S. with the ability to adapt to diverse local contexts. While many districts are stuck in political gridlock, others are increasingly on the move. Citizens with the resources can relocate and find many educational choices to suit their tastes.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Kozol, Savage Inequalities, pg. 207.

<sup>16</sup>Michael W. Kirst, "Strengths and Weaknesses of American Education," in The State of the Nations Schools: A Conference Report, Stanley Elam, ed. (Bloomington, Indiana: Phi Delta Kappa, 1993), pg. 7.

Kirst acknowledges that 20 percent of children live in poverty today compared with 14 percent in 1969, and that the gap between the poorest and wealthiest people has increased substantially. Indeed, he points out that race, ethnicity, gender and family structure are associated with the likelihood of living in poverty and that this likelihood is strongly associated with a lower quality education. But his defense of local school control, noted in his writing, "Districts differ in their mix of secondary school curricula and in their stress on extracurricular activities. They also differ in their local tax burdens," is at direct odds with the type of educational reform Kozol proposes. For us to approach educational equity, Kozol believes we must disassociate the debate with discussions around local tax bases. That is, as long as the premise remains that local taxes should subsidize education, then equal educational opportunity is not possible since wealthier areas will always be able to generate higher tax revenues than poor areas.

One astonishing aspect of the equal educational opportunity discussion is that there is little debate about where the problems lie. Most education experts readily acknowledge that problems are in the urban schools; they differ, however, in how and whether to rectify these problems. While some observers may argue about the most important challenges facing education, comparing students' performance with their international peers, when it comes to equal educational opportunity, all sides concede that the American education system does not provide this; what they don't concede is whether

or not it can, or should, be addressed through public policy and, if it is, to what degree of commitment.

It comes as no surprise then that the economically lowest 40 percent of children in America are in poor educational shape, a situation caused by poverty, physical and emotional handicaps, poor health care, unsettling family situations and violence in neighborhoods. "We know exactly where most of these very difficult students reside -- in our inner cities and our rural areas. If we can locate the young people who need help most, why do we not target our resources and focus our concern on improving the entire system by working on the students who are at the highest risk of school failure."<sup>17</sup> Why, indeed?

As we see in the following chapters, the history of inequity in education can be traced to the beginning of public education. In the 1960s and 1970s, public policy efforts were enacted to help improve the disparities between different school districts -- but most of these were short lived. Today's policy recommendations, such as school choice, appear, in some ways, as a backlash against the more liberal, community-based efforts attempted earlier. This shift as well as the changing demographics, have helped create a two-tiered system of educational reform. Consequently, discussions today about inequity in education center around improving opportunities *within* schools and school districts,

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<sup>17</sup>Harold Hodgkinson, "American Education: The Good, the Bad, and the Task," in The State of the Nation's Public Schools: A Conference Report (Bloomington, Indiana: Phi Delta Kappa, 1993) pg. 21.



but do not address the disparities *between* different schools and districts. The result is that the gaps in educational quality between different districts -- especially between white suburban districts and black urban districts -- are widening.

## CHAPTER 1: History of Inequity in Education: How Schools Got to Where They are Today

Before discussing the evolution of American public education policies, it is important to provide a general overview of how city and suburban schools came to become so different in terms of quality and student composition. In addition to public policies, white flight and the changing economic base in America contributed to the creation of disparate school systems.

In 1834, New York became the first state to adopt free public education, a policy that evolved into compulsory education and came to be adopted by all the states. This policy ensured that all children would receive a free public education until a certain age. Today, this system encompasses 22,000 counties and cities that maintain public education systems, with 14,741 local school boards active in the U.S.<sup>18</sup>

Thirty five years ago, James Bryan Conant first called attention to the disparate educational systems existing between blacks and whites in America. Although the Supreme Court's 1954 ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* abolished school segregation, the implementation of desegregation was a slow process and one wrought

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<sup>18</sup>Guy B. Peters, American Public Policy: Promise and Performance (Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishers, Inc., 1993) pg. 270.

with dissension. Indeed, desegregation was so resented in the South that the National Guard was eventually sent to protect black children trying to attend school.

Although the federal government launched an "unprecedented series of programs to address the urban problems Conant had documented," the problems continue to exist and are even more disparate today.<sup>19</sup> Explanations for continued inequity and segregation vary to a large extent on whether one supports liberal or conservative reasoning.

According to Harvey Kantor and Barbara Brenzel, authors of "Urban Education and the 'Truly Disadvantaged': The Historical Roots of the Contemporary Crisis, 1945-1990," in Michael Katz's book, The Underclass Debate, the Liberal argument maintains that the "Great Society" programs of the 1960s were insufficient and the increase in America's involvement in Vietnam, increasing inflation, and the urban riots of the 1960s, "eroded the country's financial and political commitment to equal opportunity and racial justice before the new school reforms could be funded sufficiently or implemented adequately."<sup>20</sup> Therefore, liberals contend that without a major commitment to changing education's infrastructure, the programs that have continued, HeadStart and Chapter 1, for example, are too marginal and fragmented to really address the larger issue of inequity.

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<sup>19</sup>Harvey Kantor and Barbara Brenzel, "Urban Education and the 'Truly Disadvantaged': The Historical Roots of the Contemporary Crisis, 1945-1990," in Michael Katz, ed, The Underclass Debate (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993) pg. 366.

<sup>20</sup>Kantor and Brenzel, pg. 366.

Conservatives, according to Kantor and Brenzel, believe that efforts to end segregation, provide compensatory education for the poor, and increase participation in the school government by the community, all serve to undermine academic requirements. They trap school leaders -- in rich and poor districts alike -- in a web of regulations that hinder their daily responsibilities. In other words, too much government intervention has diverted school leaders' attention from their business at hand: educating children. Schools should, therefore, return to their conventional, disciplined-based approaches to subject matter and restore the standards established prior to the 1960s.

These are not minor differences. In fact, what is most troubling about them is that they derive from two different premises. The liberal argument, as Kantor and Brenzel have outlined it, examines inequity between the rich and poor. The conservative argument, meanwhile, is focusing on differences in how students learn: it is about tracking, teacher skills, student comprehension. In general, the liberal argument is concerned with inequity across school districts (city vs. suburbs), while conservatives are focused on inequity within a school (tracking).

How did the city and suburban schools get so unequal? According to Kantor and Brenzel, "the reorganization of the American economy since World War II has created a bifurcated labor market, locking poorly educated inner-city youth into low-wage jobs,

despite the implementation of social policies designed to improve their life chances."<sup>21</sup> Demographic shifts that followed World War II dwarfed prewar migration patterns as large numbers of blacks moved to Northern cities from the South. Although this shift reversed long-term trends in city growth, particularly in the Northeast and West, what changed most "was not just the relative proportion of the population living in cities and suburbs, but the racial and economic distribution of the population within metropolitan areas."<sup>22</sup>

As blacks, and to a lesser extent Hispanics, moved into the Northern cities, whites moved from the cities to the suburbs; the economic differences between the two areas was striking. "Though median family income rose in cities as well as suburbs between 1950 and 1980, the income gap between city and suburban families grew wider each decade," writes Kantor and Brenzel. Indeed, by 1980, median household income for the cities was down to 74 percent of that in the suburbs, compared to 80 percent in 1970.<sup>23</sup>

As whites left the cities, school composition changed. While school segregation decreased nationwide after 1968 mostly in the South, this did not apply everywhere; in the 1970s, for example, black students in Philadelphia, New York and Chicago were more isolated than before.<sup>24</sup> While many whites did move from the cities over tensions

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<sup>21</sup>Kantor and Brenzel, pg. 368.

<sup>22</sup>Kantor and Brenzel, pg. 370.

<sup>23</sup>Kantor and Brenzel, pg. 371.

<sup>24</sup>Kantor and Brenzel, pg. 375.

concerning integration and busing, many also remained in the city and opted to send their children to private schools. Apparently, the departure of whites from the city schools and the resulting decrease in tax revenues, along with the increased poverty and unemployment of those remaining, contributed to the schools' decline in quality.

A major contributor to the degradation of city schools was the economy. From the end of World War II to the early 1970s, "economic opportunities for urban minority workers, including those with little education, improved substantially," according to Kantor and Brenzel<sup>25</sup>. Many blacks and other minorities found jobs in the manufacturing industry, which was booming, and minority women began trading domestic service jobs for government positions. Then, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, America's manufacturing focus shifted and the economy became more service and technology oriented. This shift hurt black men and other city workers since many were employed in factories and mills. As jobs became tougher to find, education became less and less a vehicle for escaping poverty. No matter one's educational achievement, the manufacturing companies -- located in urban areas -- were not hiring as they once did. Real wages also stagnated or fell, further reducing opportunities for economic development. These changes in the economy have amplified the differences between the well-educated and less-educated groups.

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<sup>25</sup>Kantor and Brenzel. pg. 392.

As the economy slowed, unions also lost much of their influence with companies. Affirmative action policies began to weaken, and discrimination in hiring became harder to prove since the burden shifted to the employee to prove the case, rather than for the employer to defend itself. As unskilled and semi-skilled labor became less important to the changing economy, companies had no choice but to hire the college graduate over the high school graduate for the entry-level line position. Deindustrialization in the city saw jobs move to the suburbs and increased unemployment and poverty among city dwellers. This bifurcation of the economic structure set the stage for the development of the two-tiered educational model that continued to grow in the late 1970s and 1980s. The economic changes continue to deepen the gaps between rich and poor and suburban and urban regions -- gaps which extend to educational opportunity.

Several education experts writing in the 1960s, including Arthur Mann and Julian H. Levi,<sup>26</sup> blame racism for the discrepancies they saw developing between different schools. Kenneth B. Clark of the Metropolitan Applied Research Center observes that while money had been spent on many programs for poor and minority children and that these programs helped some children, their existence underlines the inadequacy of the regular education these children receive. He finds that programs like HeadStart, which tend to serve students that feed into black schools, highlight the inferiority of these schools, and he fears that they forebode a commitment to continued segregation.

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<sup>26</sup> Charles U. Daly, ed, The Quality of Inequality: Urban and Suburban Public Schools (Chicago: The University of Chicago Center for Public Policy, 1969).

Acknowledging the irony that the same public schools that served to help white immigrants succeed in America help ensure that blacks fail, Clark demands that "Negro parents and organizations must accept and plan their strategy in terms of the fact that adversaries in the battle for higher quality education for Negro children will be numerous and as formidable as the adversaries in the battle for nonsegregated schools."<sup>27</sup>

Some observers of this increasingly bifurcated system put forth alternatives to the way school districts were configured and how state money was allocated. Convinced that the equal rights argument was compelling on its own, they believed that the "necessity of the remedy sought, may well make a school redistricting order palatable to the courts."<sup>28</sup> They believed, apparently, that the enormity of the problem would invite broad-reaching solutions.

Many intriguing solutions were put forth, including regional state schools, where funding would be provided by the state and school districts would be extended to include various communities. Federal regional schools were also promoted; here, funding would be provided at the federal level and district boundaries not limited by state lines. Some advocated that the states be held accountable for assuring that all school facilities were

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<sup>27</sup>Clark, pg. 179.

<sup>28</sup>David L. Kirp, "The Poor, the Schools, and Equal Protection," in Harvard Educational Review: Equal Educational Opportunity (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969, pg. 167.



equivalent; that is, if a wealthy school had a playground, a computer lab, and a school auditorium, so must a poor school. However, as we see in the following chapter, the actual public policies that were implemented were not as broad-reaching and ultimately, many were discontinued or changed. This abdication from broad-based reform helped create the situation we have today -- a stratified public education system that varies significantly with geographic location. The reforms underway to address the problems in suburban and urban schools mirror this stratification; consequently, what may be appropriate for the suburban school would not be feasible in an urban setting and visa versa.

## CHAPTER 2: Public Policy Attempts to Improve Equity

Federal and state policies since the 1960s have attempted to address the issue of inequity in education with different approaches and varying levels of commitment. Indeed, today's seemingly complacent attitude toward the inequities in public education is markedly different from the sentiments and efforts of the 1960s. A discussion of equity today is helped by looking at how vastly policies and interests have changed since the 1960s -- a time marked by revolts against many forms of inequity, including a public policy push for equal educational opportunity. Compensatory education programs, school integration, the open classroom, HeadStart, and Title 1 were launched with varying, but limited, success. While they improved the performance of some individual students, they could not affect overall equity in educational opportunity considering the enormity of the problem.

According to Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis in Schooling in Capitalist America, however, many of these reform movements were hindered by the findings of a widely publicized study known as the Coleman Report. While the Report, published by James S. Coleman of Harvard University, cited strong ties between race and inequity in education, it also showed little correlation between a school's tangible resources or teacher qualifications and student performance. These observations added credibility to conservative arguments that financial resources are not the answer to inequitable school

districts or performance differences between rich and poorer students. Wealthier school districts continue to use these arguments today to deter funding schemes that would divert money to poorer districts.

In 1969 a series of articles were published on the importance of equal educational opportunity in America's public school system. The crux of these essays was that because school attendance was required by law, public education was protected under the Fourteenth Amendment. Since the Amendment affirms that "No State shall . . . deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws," it is the state's responsibility to extend this protection to include public education.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, all schools should provide the same quality of education, with equal financial and economic resources allotted to each district, regardless of class or race. This argument formed the basis for pursuing legal avenues for achieving equal educational opportunity.

In his essay, "The Poor, the Schools, and Equal Protection," David Kirp asserts that while it is tacitly understood that equality depends on the community one grows up in, this phenomenon is unconstitutional. While the disparities between city and suburban schools has "acquired the aura of inevitability," he argues that "from a constitutional standpoint, the inevitability of the status quo is far less clear."<sup>30</sup> Several court cases supported his theory, finding it unconstitutional to put a monetary condition on the

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<sup>29</sup> Kirp, pg. 141.

<sup>30</sup> Kirp, pg. 141.

exercise of a right. Just as the poor are guaranteed equal protection to vote or have court-appointed attorneys in criminal cases, they should be guaranteed equal educational opportunities under the law.

For a long time, advocates were able to challenge the existence of disparate school districts citing *Brown v. Board of Education* and the 14th Amendment. One outlawed segregation, while the other "guaranteed" equal protection for all citizens under the law -- which, since schooling is mandatory, could be applied to education. These arguments were effective and as Myron Lieberman points out, "Since 1968, lawsuits in at least thirty-two states have alleged that the state system of financing public education fails to provide equality of educational opportunity."<sup>31</sup> However, in 1973 the Supreme Court ruled in *Rodriguez v. San Antonio* that the state funding mechanisms were not in violation of the 14th Amendment, a decision that virtually kicked the school finance debate out of the federal courts.<sup>32</sup>

A year later, the Supreme Court dealt educational equity another hard blow. In a case where civil rights groups had challenged the inequities in public schools based on race and income, the Court ruled in *Milliken v. Bradley* that legal actions cannot remedy the effects of city-suburban segregation. Instead, the Court said, plaintiffs had to prove

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<sup>31</sup> Myron Lieberman, *Public Education: An Autopsy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993) pg. 206.

<sup>32</sup> Lieberman, pg. 206.

that violations had occurred in suburban districts or that suburban district boundaries had been deliberately drawn along racial lines. Otherwise, said the Court, mandatory desegregation only applied within the city limits. As Edward P. Morgan points out, "De jure school segregation was abolished [in the South], replaced by the de facto segregation pattern that prevails in Northern urban areas."<sup>33</sup> The Court had concluded that local control of schools and overall local autonomy prevailed over equal educational opportunity; Thurgood Marshall pointed out in his dissent that racial and economic segregation would only worsen as a result.

Despite the Court rulings, several attempts were made during the 1960s and 1970s to increase equity between rich and poor schools. A major contribution from the federal government came under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, ESEA, which allowed direct general subsidies for education, particularly for poor schools. This program was so expansive that only five percent of all school districts failed to receive funds, and segregated schools were not eligible for funds. The formula used to distribute this money gave states funding equal to half of their annual per pupil educational expenditure times the number of low income children maintained. The formula helped wealthier states more, and since the money was channeled through the state government, local districts could lobby for their stake. However, in 1967 the formula was changed to help poorer states, with states now getting half their own per pupil expenditure or half the

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<sup>33</sup>Edward P. Morgan, The 60s Experience (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1991) pg. 36.

national mean per pupil expenditures, whichever was higher. This program helped equalize funding between rich and poor states and increase the overall financial commitment of the federal government.

Short-lived, however, this federal commitment once again diminished when President Nixon adopted a new formula in 1974. [President Reagan, subsequently, shifted the funding to a more compensatory focus and in 1981 established the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act (ECIA), which supported poor districts, but concentrated on those with the most poor students; ECIA today accounts for 80 percent of federal aid to elementary and secondary schools, with the remaining 20 percent mostly in block grant form.<sup>34</sup>]

In addition to advocating new funding approaches, many educational experts in the 1960s and 1970s proposed equalizing educational opportunity through desegregating schools and busing white and black children to different school districts in order to increase diversity within a classroom and equalize opportunities for all students. After much resistance and many lawsuits, these efforts have all but died as wealthier districts have become less and less willing to open their doors to outsiders and parents on all sides argue against long and circuitous bus routes. The history of desegregation and busing is far more complicated, but the critical point here is that conversation about equity and

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<sup>34</sup>Peters, pg. 281.

equal opportunity has generally been steered away from socio-economic and racial inequities and the concerns of the 1960s.

Another important movement in the 1970s, albeit short-lived, was the community control effort directed at education. In one example, the New York public education administration opened three experimental community controlled school districts within the city -- the most well-known of which was Ocean Hill-Brownsville.<sup>35</sup> "Each community elected a lay board that would have discretionary power over personnel, curriculum, and budget,"<sup>36</sup> writes Morgan. After the Ocean Hill-Brownsville board transferred 19 teachers out of its district, the American Federal of Teachers (AFT) went on strike, the schools were in turmoil, racial tensions grew until finally, the next year, "the schools reopened under a new state decentralization law that divided the city schools into large sub-districts with watered-down parent advisory councils."<sup>37</sup>

In some respects, community control efforts were developed from observers' and community leaders' realization that desegregation and integration would not necessarily improve the educational disparities between blacks and whites in a meaningful way. According to Charles V. Hamilton, blacks sought community control, not integration with whites because they had begun to question the entire process, "because they are

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<sup>35</sup> Morgan, pg. 79.

<sup>36</sup> Morgan, pg. 79.

<sup>37</sup> Morgan, pg. 79.

aware that the schools, while not educating their children, are at the same time supporting a particularly unacceptable situation."<sup>38</sup> Hamilton describes a 1968 conference of the National Association of Afro-American Educators in which 800 teachers met and discussed their concerns about education. Their interests, remarkably similar to current concerns in black communities, were to get control of their local school boards, to increase parental involvement, to hire more black principals and celebrate national holidays for black heroes, and develop curricular and instructional materials that reflect black history and contributions.

Today, however, the policy recommendations and brief attempts at equity of the 1960s and 1970s remain in history books, for such policies as desegregation and busing are rarely proposed *across* school districts. Instead, an already segregated school district may discuss redistributing children throughout the system, but it is not often proposed that a suburban student and city student switch schools. The discussion, instead, focuses on specific reforms that we can implement in different school districts: in suburban districts the emphasis is on curricular reform, while in city districts the discussion centers around school choice and decentralization. This is not even close to equal educational opportunity; this is reform specific to social class. Continuing with this outlook virtually guarantees the continued increase between the "haves" and the "have nots."

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<sup>38</sup>Charles V. Hamilton, "Race and Education: A Search for Legitimacy," Harvard Educational Review: Equal Educational Opportunity (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979, pg. 179).



Indeed, city schools continue to suffer today, and comparison achievement tests show city children consistently performing at lower levels than their suburban counterparts. Federal reaction to the problems of inner city schools has varied. President Ronald Reagan's first Education Secretary, Terrel Bell, entered office announcing that he wanted to dismantle the Department of Education since it was too bureaucratic, large, and unwieldy, although he actually initiated some small, new programs for the poor. His successor, William Bennett, changed directions and launched a campaign that was "largely a highly structured curriculum stressing basic skills and Western civilization."<sup>39</sup> President George Bush, who ran under the campaign promise that he would be the "education president," ignored education for the first two years of his term until 1991, when he unveiled a federal education policy that set broad competitive-based goals.

Many of these latest federal efforts developed from the emergence of A Nation at Risk, a report published in 1984 by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, citing alarming statistics about education in America. According to the report, American students lagged behind their foreign peers and, in fact, as a group came in last in seven out of 19 academic tests. In addition to steadily declining SAT scores, the study found that while the average U.S. citizen is better educated today than he was 20 years ago, the average high school graduate is not as well educated as his counterpart was in 1964.

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<sup>39</sup> Peters, pg. 283.

While the report worries that public education is at risk of becoming a "rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a nation and a people,"<sup>40</sup> it warns that the "twin goals of equity and high-quality schooling have profound and practical meaning for our economy and society, and we cannot permit one to yield to the other in principle or practice."<sup>41</sup> This latter reference to inequity, of course, triggers fear among Americans concerned that change in their school district will mean financial sacrifice and redistribution of resources to poorer communities. Happily for them, the report makes no such recommendations. Instead, it cites the need for strengthened high school graduation requirements. Known as the "Five New Basics," the report heralds English, math, science, social studies and computer science as the "new" core requirements. The report also recommends more rigorous and measurable standards, increased school time spent on the core subjects, improved teacher preparation and training, and increased state leadership.

Following the report's publication, the nation's Governors met in 1990 to clarify key issues facing education and establish goals to improve the system and American children's educational performance. The current federal policy dictating school reform ensued and on March 31, 1994 President Clinton (previously the Arkansas Governor

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<sup>40</sup>A Nation at Risk, The National Commission on Excellence in Education. (Cambridge, MA: USA Research, 1984, pg. 5).

<sup>41</sup>A Nation at Risk, pg. 16.

present at the 1990 meeting) signed into law Goals 2000: Educate America Act. A lofty plan, it establishes eight goals for American schools to reach by the year 2000, including, for example, that all children will start school ready to learn, that the high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent, and that the country's students will be first in the world in mathematics and science achievement. <sup>42</sup>

Without saying exactly how these goals will be reached, the policy outlines how federal funds will be distributed to the states to support reform efforts. The policy establishes in the Executive Branch a National Education Goals Panel (NEGP) and a National Education Standards and Improvements Council (NEST); these are responsible for reporting on school progress as well as establishing broad structural guidelines and certifying national and state standards. The Secretary of Education is given additional funds to help finance state education reform; for states to receive this money, they must develop content and performance standards as well as a comprehensive improvement plan that provides strategies to deal with governance, accountability and management of education. Parental involvement and safety issues must also be identified.

Goals 2000 is essentially a system for providing extra resources to the states to help them improve their students' test scores. It avoids looking at new curricular schemes, teaching methods, or how students learn under different teaching techniques.

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<sup>42</sup>James B. Stedman, Goals 2000: Overview and Analysis, Congressional Research Service, The Library of Congress. June 3, 1994.

While it may support teacher training and recruitment, a primary goal is to improve standardized test scores and ensure that "United States students will be first in the world in mathematics and science achievement."<sup>43</sup> Besides being a bureaucratic labyrinth, Goals 2000 has distanced itself from the American classroom; its chain of communications connects only with other policymakers, not with teachers and students, and avoids issues of equity or unjust funding procedures. While it does provide some funds for poor schools, it completely ignores inequity as a policy problem in American education.

#### *Public Financing Schemes in Education*

Part of the answer to why schools are failing in their mission and why America is failing in equalizing educational opportunity lies in the funding policies used in public education. Interestingly, despite all the interest in school reform in the 1960s and thereafter, the basic formulas as well as the types of taxes used at the federal, state and local levels to support public education were developed by 1930. These formulas include: Flat Grant, Full-State Funding Model, the Foundation Plan, the Guaranteed Tax Base, the Percentage Equalizing plan, and the Power Equalizing plan. Today, education finance remains a function of local governments and is determined through property tax values with an equalizing role given to state and federal governments.

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<sup>43</sup>Stedman, pg. CRS-2.

The first attempt at equalizing government support for education came in the form of a Flat Grant, where the state supplies each district with a uniform sum per pupil. Prior to this, states typically provided 50% matching funds to what each district contributed; naturally the wealthier the district, the more it contributed and hence, the more it received from the state. While the Flat Grant was an attempt to equalize state support, it could not help equalize overall spending on education since districts still controlled their own contribution levels. The Full-State Funding model, an approach advocated by policy experts supporting greater equity between schools and districts, would collect all district funds at the state level and distributed them evenly across the districts; it would not permit an individual district to contribute over the state-mandated amount. The Full-State Funding model leaves budget issues to the state and curriculum issues to individual districts.

By the 1970's, the Foundation Plan was used in 34 states; under this scheme the state set minimum local property tax levels and minimum spending levels in each district, but allowed districts to exceed these minimums if they desired. Despite its inherent tax and spend inequities, the Foundation Plan is still used today in various forms in many states including, the Carolinas, the Dakotas, Tennessee, Oregon, Missouri, Maine, and Florida.<sup>44</sup> The Guaranteed Tax Base (GTB) is a matching funds plan where the state pays a percent of the total cost of education desired by each district. The state contribution is

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<sup>44</sup>Deborah A. Verstegen, School Finance at a Glance. (The School Finance Collaborative: Education Commission of the States and the National Conference of State Legislatures, 1988, pgs 5-13).

higher in low income districts and lower in wealthier districts. Since every dollar in state aid is contingent on the local tax effort, the state matches the amount the district raises, but at a variable rate. The resulting problem in this scheme is that the poor and ultra rich districts are helped the most, because either their need or their contributions are extreme. The Percentage Equalizing plan is quite similar to the GTB plan except that it is more mathematically oriented. Power Equalizing is something of a Robin Hood plan since it would require very wealthy districts to pay a portion of the school taxes they collect back to the states; these funds are then redirected to poor schools.

Virtually all states today use a combination of these six schemes or use one particular scheme with several variations for a given year. For example, in 1988 Pennsylvania's formula was a combination of Percentage Equalizing and Foundation approaches. Basic state aid is the product of each district's aid ratio, which is measured by both property valuation and personal income, times its weighted average daily enrollment times a foundation guarantee (\$2,125 for 1987-1988).<sup>45</sup>

While the various funding mechanisms may attempt to equalize the state's distribution of finances, they do not address inequities perpetuated through local funding schemes. Essentially, the state's role is to try to distribute state money in the most equitable way, without questioning the local district's use or allocation of money. For

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<sup>45</sup>Verstegen, pg. 11.

richer districts, this leaves them free to generate as much revenue as they want and can; for poorer districts, it ensures that no matter how high they tax themselves, they will not be able to catch up to wealthier communities (unless the state were to use the Power Equalizing model). Instead of ensuring that all schools in the state are adequately and equally funded, the system establishes minimum level of funding and permits vast variations from this level.

Using the local property tax as the funding base for education has serious implications. First, property tax revenues have not kept pace with inflation; in inflationary periods, then, assessments do not reflect the real value of property or costs of goods and services, so the revenue raised through this tax are inadequate. Second, in periods with low inflation, the tax base available to some districts is markedly different from that available to other districts; poor parents would have to tax themselves at higher rates than wealthier parents irrespective of inflation. This regressive tax burdens the poor taxpayer to pay a higher rate for the same service, which in most cases is actually a lower quality service. As B. Guy Peters points out, "The usual result of this pattern of funding is that the education provided to poorer children is not as good as that provided to wealthier students."<sup>46</sup> As early as 1968, Otto Davis illustrated the racial implications of education funding, writing that, "Even after adjustments are made for the effects of the lower incomes, poverty values, and the level of education, it still remains true that the

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<sup>46</sup>Peters, pg. 274.

greater the non-white proportion of the population, the lower the level of per pupil expenditure."<sup>47</sup>

It is compelling to see how government financing responsibilities have played out. In 1920, states paid 16.5 percent of school revenues, with local and federal government contributing 83.2 percent and .3 percent, respectively. By 1990-91, states contributed 49.3 percent with local and federal levels at 44.5 and 6.2 percent, respectively.<sup>48</sup> While the burden on local government has decreased since the beginning of free public schools, it is still significant. Meanwhile, the federal contribution has declined substantially from its 1960s levels. Many critics argue that school boards are essentially state agencies, and as such, have an obligation to ensure equal treatment of their constituents -- and the standards in one district should be the same as those in another within the same state. Educational funding levels should not, they assert, depend on where one lives.

As evidenced with Goals 2000, the Federal government has issued regulations and mandates for schools without supplying any supporting funding. This is a major obstacle to equity in education since states and local districts are strapped for cash and lack the impetus to equalize funding schemes. Many argue that only the federal government can help ensure equal opportunity across districts. Not only is the federal government

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<sup>47</sup>Otto A. Davis, "Quality and Inequality: Some Economic Issues Related to the Choice of Educational Policy," in The Quality of Inequality: Urban and Suburban Public Schools (Chicago: The University of Chicago Center for Policy Study, 1968) pg. 92.

<sup>48</sup>Lieberman, pg. 208.



shielded more from the local and state politics that perpetuate current funding schemes, but bears the functional duty of trying to implement policies that promote equity.

*Affirmative Action as a Replacement for Equal Educational Opportunity*

The differences between black and white educational opportunities are, in many cases, only the first of many inequities facing disenfranchised members of society. After graduation, many young men and women enter a workforce unprepared for the challenges ahead. One way in which our nation tries to address this is through the affirmative action programs. In effect, affirmative action policies serve as one way to help make up for the inequities in education that prevail between urban, mostly black schools and suburban, mostly white schools.

In some respects, American public policy has abandoned the goals of equal educational opportunity and turned to affirmative action to help equalize the socioeconomic and employment opportunities of minorities. However, by doing so, we have created a system that ignores the underlying educational inequities and tries to play catch up in the job market.

Indeed, affirmative action has been put forth as a cure-all, easy answer to problems far more complicated and deeply rooted in our society and business cultures.

~~By seeking to redress past discriminations~~ without addressing current educational

inequities, affirmative action policies seem ill-equipped to influence long-term, fundamental change in America's corporate power structure -- leaving blacks and other minorities relatively unaffected. This is especially true in today's political climate, where affirmative action policies have come under attack.

In June 1995, the Supreme Court ruled 5-4 that race-based affirmative action programs must be "narrowly tailored" and meet a "compelling" national interest. Arguing that the constitutional principles of racial equality protect individuals, and not groups, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor wrote for the majority that "all governmental action based on race should be subjected to detailed judicial inquiry to ensure that the personal right to equal protection of the laws has not been infringed."<sup>49</sup> This decision essentially wipes out earlier rulings that gave Congress more latitude than states or localities in designing affirmative action programs to benefit specific minority groups. Earlier, such programs were justified if they were "substantially related" to an "important government objective," such as desegregation or increasing diversity.<sup>50</sup>

On the same day as this ruling, the Supreme Court also ruled on a Missouri case, setting "limits to time and money that could be spent on city desegregation programs."<sup>51</sup> Here, the court overturned a lower court's instruction that Missouri had to continue to pay

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<sup>49</sup>"Justices Limit Affirmative Action's Scope," The Philadelphia Inquirer, June 14, 1995; pg. 1A.

<sup>50</sup>The Philadelphia Inquirer, June 14, 1995; pg. 1A.

<sup>51</sup>"Court Curbs Efforts to Desegregate," The Philadelphia Inquirer, June 14, 1995; pg. 1A.

for Kansas City's desegregation program despite its high costs and low results. In this case, the city had been ordered to pay for across-the-board salary increases and program help to minority children in order to help them reach national norms in educational performance. Despite its 18-year, \$1.3 billion effort, the city's program failed to significantly improve the academic performance of minority students. Thus, the Court effectively set monetary and duration limits on desegregation programs, prohibiting programs to go on indefinitely without demonstrating proven results.

Affirmative action is also taking a hit on a regional level. In California, for example, two university professors have succeeded in gaining support for a proposal to curb these policies. Slated for appearance on the November 1996 ballot, the "California Civil Rights Initiative," is designed as a state constitutional amendment that would ban government preferences in employment, education and contracting.<sup>52</sup>

As the Court and different states have begun constricting affirmative action policies, so too has the Executive Branch. In the summer of 1995, the Clinton Administration issued a 38-page memorandum listing guidelines that all federal agencies must follow in order to justify affirmative action programs. Such programs must be "justified by particular discrimination in a specific sector rather than a general assumption

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<sup>52</sup>"A Debate Explodes on Affirmative Action," The Philadelphia Inquirer, June 4, 1995, pg. D1.

of racism or sexism."<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, Senate majority leader, Bob Dole vowed to introduce legislation banning all federal affirmative action efforts that involve preferences.

Indeed, the conflicting principles inherent in affirmative action complicate the case for or against it. If one considers these policies as preferential, it becomes difficult to substantiate them since ideally race should not justify treating people differently; this interpretation has led to cries of "reverse discrimination," mostly from white males. However, this interpretation of affirmative action -- as a preferential policy -- is relatively new. Historically, affirmative action was not established as a preferential policy, but as a means to help equalize opportunities for all races. In this context, today's sentiment against affirmative action and its redefinition present increasing concerns over the conditions and opportunities for blacks and other minority groups -- especially in light of the disparate education these groups largely receive.

Perhaps the real problem with affirmative action has been that it is too little, too late. Instead of enacting policies and provisions for employers to recruit and promote minority workers, governments need to improve educational conditions for minorities so as to better prepare them for successful careers. "Equal opportunity must start in the classroom and, after that, in broader access to credit, for which blacks are still classed as

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<sup>53</sup>"U.S. Issues New, Strict Tests For Affirmative Action Plans," The New York Times, June 29, 1995; pg.

bad risks by a banking establishment that is almost entirely white," writes The Economist.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, affirmative action may be considered a compromise -- a token gesture to minorities to appease them for not doing what government leaders should have done from the beginning: provide equal educational opportunities for all races and classes.

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<sup>54</sup>The Economist, April 15, 1995, pg. 23.

## CHAPTER 3: Contemporary Policy Solutions to Inequities in Education

Following the mixed results of many of the policies and programs developed in the 1960s and 1970s, new public policy proposals emerged. More conservative in nature, they can be viewed as a backlash against the earlier efforts that attempted to address inequities across school districts. While some observers of public education today believe that inequities between different school districts are unconscionable and must be addressed through new funding schemes, redistribution of resources, or improved public services, many do not. This chapter provides an overview of more well-known proposals, namely school choice and voucher proposals -- as well as some more esoteric ideas. Interestingly, none of these, except the legal solution, seeks true equality of educational opportunity, but rather they seek to improve the educational situation for some students in the less advantaged schools.

### *School Choice and Voucher Programs*

Although school choice ideas have existed for several decades, plans have been proposed by state governments as a means to address problems in their public educational systems following the efforts of the 1960s and 1970s. While advocates and opponents both agree that the problems in education loom large, they differ in their approach, interpretation, and remedies. Opponents of school choice and voucher plans contend that

such programs will hurt, even dismantle, the very schools that are most in need of help -- inner city, poor, predominantly minority schools.

While school choice plans, such as Pennsylvania Governor's Tom Ridge's plan, continue to make headlines today, the concept is not new. Many observers trace school choice to the writings of Economist Milton Friedman in 1962 and earlier. In fact, by 1971, the voucher concept was discussed so often among academics and think tank scholars that one observer noted, that "on the intellectual circuit . . . vouchers are the hottest thing going."<sup>55</sup> With such a long history, school choice as a concept has been packaged and defined in various ways. Sometimes choice is limited within a set boundary or state. In other cases, school choice means choice for all students -- regardless of economic ability. Other plans offer choice only to lower income students. Likewise, some plans offer choice and guarantee access to a particular school, while others offer choice, but do not guarantee admittance.

Significant differences in the school choice debate exist depending upon whether the plan includes private and parochial schools. As Amy Stuart Wells points out in Time to Choose, "Voucher proponents do not hesitate to cite the success of public-school choice programs -- programs that differ dramatically from private-school choice plans -- as evidence that all school choice policy is good and necessary."<sup>56</sup> To be sure, the two

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<sup>55</sup>Jeffrey R. Henig, Rethinking School Choice (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) pg. 64.

<sup>56</sup>Amy Stuart Wells, Time to Choose (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993) pg. viii.

concepts are extremely different as they relate to competition. When school choice is confined to only public schools, the emphasis is focused more on structure, goals, and philosophy of particular schools -- assuming that financial resources of the schools are similar. However, when we include private and parochial schools, additional problems of access, affordability, and constitutionality become apparent.

Before considering the viability of school choice, it is important to ask what Americans want from their schools. Although this is a very broad and complicated question -- one that people have written books on -- Wells offers a useful and simple model. She notes that since the mid 19th century, three overlapping goals have helped steer our public education system:

1. education for the common good;
2. education for individual growth and fulfillment; and
3. education for a more competitive workforce and stronger economy.<sup>57</sup>

If we consider these goals with respect to school choice, an advocate of education for the common good might want to provide everyone at no cost total choice, where racial and religious tolerance would be stressed, and transportation to school provided. An advocate of education for individual growth and fulfillment might choose a program that maximizes individual choice to the degree that students (and not parents) pick their schools and what they learn in school. Finally, an advocate of education for a more

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<sup>57</sup>Wells, pg. 6.



competitive workforce and stronger economy might propose a plan that uses a corporate model of competition, where money and test scores are used to determine "better" schools, and where schools that fail to attract students are put out of business.

Interestingly, one could argue that school reform plans enacted in the 1960s, such as desegregation and busing, reflected the first sentiment (common good); plans enacted in the 1970s, such as the Schools Without Walls programs, reflected the second sentiment (growth and fulfillment); and plans enacted in the 1980s stressing achievement test scores reflected the third (economic benefit). Remembering that the goals established in Goals 2000 include ensuring that all children start school "ready to learn," increasing high school graduation rate to at least 90 percent, and propelling American students to be first in the world in mathematics and science achievement,<sup>58</sup> it seems clear that the 1990s will continue to be marked by education reform that encourages education in the third vein: to prepare students to help America compete and succeed in the global marketplace.

With this business-like, bottom line regard for education, school choice plans have increasingly been introduced with varying success in states across the country. Minnesota, Colorado, and California have enacted various types of choice programs over the last several years. In fact, public sentiment in favor of voucher programs is strong. A statistic from a 1992 Gallup poll commissioned by the National Catholic Education

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<sup>58</sup>Stedman, Goals 2000: Overview and Analysis.

Association cites that seven out of ten Americans supported a voucher system that could be redeemed at any public, private or parochial school.<sup>59</sup>

Advocates of school choice plans that include private and parochial schools, such as the Ridge plan, point to the increased opportunity given to individual students who otherwise would not have the chance to attend a better school. They argue that schools in the inner city are in such bad shape that this would give them incentive to improve. Advocates see school choice as a way to help privatize educational decisions. In addition, they argue, parents believe that public schools need to be more accountable to their customers and less expensive. An economic-model for education, as they see it, would introduce competition and market forces in public education so that schools would actively compete for students by improving their offerings. By giving people broader choices, schools will be motivated to perform well and parental values could be echoed in the educational system.

Opponents of this type of school choice see things differently. They argue that it is precisely because schools in the inner city are in such bad shape that the school choice plan threatens them. Students with better abilities, grades, or more parental involvement in their upbringing will have the information and encouragement to choose better schools in different neighborhoods. The effect would be to leave the lower-performing, neglected

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<sup>59</sup>Wells, pg. 129.

children back in the already-needy schools; the dichotomy between the "good" schools and "bad" schools would be exacerbated, leaving the lower performing students even further marginalized.

Opponents note that transportation is rarely included in these plans, rendering the "choice" -- as a practical matter -- very limited. They also are concerned that voucher programs would create inappropriate pressures on schools to improve their physical plant and public relations effort at the expense of academic programs since much of the choice would be based on appearances. Most importantly, they argue that vouchers will not work: schools have limited space and consequently, good schools would quickly fill up leaving many students without any choice at all. They point out that the subsidy accompanying voucher programs (in Ridge's case, \$1,000) is rarely enough to pay for a private education or enough to cover the difference between disparate school districts. For example, in New Jersey, Camden's district spends approximately \$3,500 per pupil while Princeton's spends \$7,700 per pupil<sup>60</sup>. If we apply the Ridge model in New Jersey, would an extra \$1,000 really entice Princeton to open its doors to a Camden student? More likely, opponents point out, the Catholic schools, where tuition is much lower and where the need for students is high, would welcome him. The result is that the only choice poor students are given is this: go to your public school, go to any public school

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<sup>60</sup>Kozol, Savage Inequalities, pg. 236.

where the average student expenditure is within \$1,000 of your own schools, or go to Catholic school.

There are three key issues surrounding arguments for and against school choice: public vs. private schooling; resources and equity in financing education; and constitutional interpretations. Considering that 81% of our private schools are religious with missions that include the "inculcation of beliefs of a particular denomination,"<sup>61</sup> choice plans that include private and parochial schools threaten to redefine our interpretation of "separation of church and state." Whereas public schools support democratic morality, religious tolerance and mutual respect among races, private schools are not required to espouse such beliefs. Similarly, public schools are run by elected officials responsible to their constituents -- parents and taxpayers. Private schools are run by Boards of Trustees, where parents' voices may or may not be heard. Since choice programs do not require participating schools to change their administrative processes, private schools can continue to run the way they want to and receive public funds while doing so.

In the area of resources and equity, school choice programs do not address or truly question the current system of school finance. The impetus for these proposals -- poor and unacceptable schools -- is not addressed. That is, if this type of reform is proposed

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<sup>61</sup>Wells, pg. 134.

because we recognize the inequities in education, then the solution needs to help equalize education; but, in the case of vouchers, this does not happen. Vouchers do not attempt to help equalize schools; their programs or their resources; instead, they recognize and accept the discrepancies and propose helping a few children caught on the wrong side. They are a way to placate complaints that schools are not doing their jobs.

Many see constitutional problems with school choice since taxpayer money is spent on private and parochial education. They see the lines between church and state blurring and are concerned that state money should not go to religious-affiliated groups. However, in the 1983 *Mueller v. Allen* case, the Supreme Court found that tax deductions for school-related expenses were constitutional since the money goes directly to the parents and not the institution.<sup>62</sup> With this model, it is likely that most legislation on school choice can be written to withstand constitutional tests by providing that voucher payments are made directly to parents, who in turn are free to spend the money as they like.

What effect would a school choice plan have on schools such as University City High School (UCHS) in Philadelphia? With already 50 percent of its students dropping out, what mechanisms could the school employ to improve its competitiveness and attract students? Many opponents argue that such schools would have even higher attrition rates

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<sup>62</sup>Wells, pg. 160.

since achieving students would elect to go to another school. Under a choice plan, schools like UCHS could be left with a 10 percent graduation rate. While choice advocates may contend that UCHS would "go out of business," as a practical matter, this probably would not happen. By law, the remaining children would have to go to school somewhere and places like UCHS would be the only ones willing to take them.

As Wells points out, "If court orders, federal troops, and expensive magnet school programs could not guarantee equal educational opportunity for all children, how could tuition vouchers -- slips of paper worth nothing to those rejected by private schools or those who had no transportation to a school of choice?"<sup>63</sup> Indeed, how could voucher programs hope to improve public education in poor districts considering the obstacles already facing them?

Wells concludes that school choice plans, when considered in their historical context and against the current realities of inner city schools today, are a token gesture towards fixing the serious and complicated problems in American education.

### *Transformative Choice*

Some school reformers advocate transformative choice, a solution that attributes the problems facing education to the role, size and organization of school bureaucracies.

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<sup>63</sup>Wells, pg. vii.

Nathan Glazer, professor of education and sociology at Harvard University, sees three divisions of education in the United States: schools in rural, small-towns in America; schools in the inner-cities of large and mid-sized metropolitan areas; and schools in sections of large cities that do not have huge social problems.<sup>64</sup>

Among the three divisions, he argues, are three distinct obstacles to quality education. In the first case, the schools are far too homogenous, therefore depriving students of a well-rounded, multicultural education; the major problem in these schools is the dominant role that social life plays over academic life. In the second case, the schools are overcrowded, the students poor and obstacles to success are less related to social life distractions than about the drain imposed by the social problems of violence and drugs on the individuals there. In the third case, the students are mostly from middle and working class backgrounds, and while there is some overcrowding and disciplinary problems, the threat of busing and integration with nearby inner-city schools concerns parents and students.

Glazer argues that while inequities exist between these three sets, the solution is not to equate the three, but to bring out the best in each. To him, the solution involves changing the bureaucratic structure in order to make the curricula more rigorous in all

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<sup>64</sup>Nathan Glazer, "American Public Education: The Relevance of Choice," in The State of the Nation's Public Schools: A Conference Report, Stanley Elam, Editor (Bloomington, Indiana: Phi Delta Kappa, 1993) pg. 69-72.

schools, allowing the curricula to be more reflective of the culture and interests of the student body, increasing educational funding, and promoting integration where possible. Transformative choice would decrease the role of the large school bureaucracies crippling urban education and establish new schools that offer a myriad of specialized programs. Reminiscent of the community control efforts of the late 1960s and early 1970s, transformative choice would create schools controlled and designed by a community. Acknowledging that the notion of "community" is ambiguous, Glazer writes, "the model of choice that was developed in East Harlem -- a system of small schools created by groups of teachers with the sympathetic support of higher authorities, who found them space and planning money and whatever else was needed to start up a school -- seems to me a convincing picture of what choice, properly understood, can do to help," the largely minority inner city schools.<sup>65</sup>

Other reformers agree with the need for community involvement in the transformation of urban education. John Murphy, superintendent of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools in North Carolina asserts:

Schools represent neutral ground, and the entire community has a connection to them in one way or another. Tragically, this strategic real estate -- so well-suited to meet family needs -- remains vastly underused. With a few notable exceptions, schools are open for six hours on weekdays and closed tight all weekend and during vacations."<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>Glazer, pg. 74.

<sup>66</sup>John Murphy, "What's in? What's Out? American Education in the Nineties," in The State of the Nation's Public Schools: A Conference Report. (Bloomington, Indiana: Phi Delta Kappa, 1993) pg. 64.



Murphy argues that Great Britain's ability to use schools to meet a range of community needs -- day care, literacy development, health services, job placement, counseling -- should be America's model for its inner city schools.

### *A Legal Solution*

Asserting that, "one of the most frustrating problems that confront American society today is the manifest inequality of educational opportunity available to American children dependent on nothing more rational than place of residence," Robert B. McKay of New York University's School of Law argues that legal remedies may be the best hope for ameliorating inequities in public education. "The supreme irony -- indeed, tragedy -- is that those who need most help because of racial discrimination or economic deprivation . . . are almost invariably doomed to attend the most inferior schools."<sup>67</sup>

Writing in the late 1960s, McKay and others argue that one possible solution is for the courts to declare current school taxes invalid "until the states work out a system of more equal distribution" between districts.<sup>68</sup> Along with Arthur Wise, a well-known

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<sup>67</sup>Robert B. McKay, "Defining the Limits," in The Quality of Inequality: Urban Schools and Suburban Public Schools, Charles U. Daly, ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Center for Policy Study, 1968) pg. 77.

<sup>68</sup>Julian H. Levi, "An Alternative Solution," in The Quality of Inequality: Urban Schools and Suburban Public Schools, Charles U. Daly, ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Center for Policy Study, 1968) pg. 73.

education expert from the University of Chicago, he uses the 14th Amendment argument to promote intrastate equality efforts. McCay and Wise point to two main barriers to equal educational opportunity: 1) de facto racial segregation in the schools; and 2) educational limits suffered by children from poor backgrounds who usually attend inferior schools. Legally, they contend, courts can be made to require new efforts to decrease de facto segregation in public schools as well as require equal funding between schools in the same state. McKay professes, "Congress cannot, so it seems to me, stand idle while the disadvantaged schools become steadily worse, infecting further the already serious ills of urban decay and mounting crime."<sup>69</sup>

Currently, many lawsuits are underway at the state and local level to address disparities in the public education system. While some rulings have been in favor of improving equity between schools and districts, legislatures have often been slow to reallocate money. In addition, we have seen in the Supreme Court cases how the legal route has not necessarily been successful at the federal level. Congress, too, has not traditionally played a very prominent role in addressing educational inequities, and its appropriate level of involvement continues to be debated today.

Many observers contend that the federal government plays a vital role in changing behavior and ensuring fairness in this country and that it needs to exert its influence in the

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<sup>69</sup>McKay, pg. 86.

area of education. For example, once the federal government issued its report on the dangers of smoking, people radically changed their behavior, stopping smoking and the incidence of cancer and smoking-related deaths began to decline. In the case of civil rights, they argue, if left to the states, blacks would still not have the right to vote, eat at an integrated lunch counter or ride in the front of a bus. Considering the response of the Mississippi, Alabama and Georgian state government, civil rights would never have succeeded without the federal government's involvement. Indeed, as a practical matter, the legal question has been whether the courts will preserve state and local autonomy or whether they, along with the federal government, will intervene and dictate more equitable educational arrangements.

### *Classroom Solution to Inequity*

Other attempts to equalize educational opportunity focuses on activities within the classroom. This solution sees the problem of inequality as one that can be addressed by the classroom teacher. Christopher Jencks, professor at Northwestern University uses a five-prong model in which Ms. Higgins, the imaginary teacher, has 25 students, all with varying abilities and interests: how can she spend her time appropriately to ensure equal education? According to Jencks, she can apply "moralistic justice" where she gives her time and attention to those students who try the hardest; "humane justice," where she focuses on the most disadvantaged; "myopic utilitarianism" where those who want her attention, get it; "enlightened utilitarianism," where she tries to use time so it will help the

most students and more of society in the long term; and "democratic equality" where she splits her time evenly, albeit the total is less time overall to all students.<sup>70</sup> Although his model is somewhat caustic, it raises the question of whether one can divide time equitably.

Other educators have further explored this question, in what seems like a departure from equity reform based on funding and resources. John Rawls, for example, rationalizes inequities existing between different schools, justifying the differences if they lead to the betterment of "the least advantaged members of society."<sup>71</sup> In other words, since no procedure for the equal distribution of education is likely to occur considering today's political environment, we can rationalize the discrepancies if they mean more affluent students go into such fields as medicine and end up helping the least advantaged. In his theory, Rawls can accommodate classroom inequities if it means that the least able students will benefit from the gains of the high achievers.

### *Pure Market Solution*

Some economists and education experts see choice, vouchers, new funding schemes and other reform proposals as peripheral, Band-Aid-like solutions to the very troubled and problematic education system in America. Arguing that "public education

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<sup>70</sup>Lieberman, pg. 215.

<sup>71</sup> Lieberman, pg. 215.

as we know it is a lost cause,"<sup>72</sup> Myron Lieberman writes that, "like individuals, social institutions die, and their death forces us to face an uncertain future."<sup>73</sup> According to him, the rationale for free, public education has died. In its place, Lieberman argues, America needs to establish a pure market-based educational system.

"Our preoccupation with government as the focus of equalization efforts is contrary to our experience," writes Lieberman.<sup>74</sup> Instead, in a market economy, producers constantly seek larger markets where they can increase quality and decrease costs. For example, theatre arts are now available through radio and television, a situation that has increased people's access to the arts and decreased their associated costs. Similarly, argues Lieberman, education -- if left to its own devices -- could respond to customer needs. Although Lieberman never fully explains what a market-based school system would look like, he makes one point that many other observers allude to: "Whenever a large bureaucracy owes its existence to a problem, the problem never goes away."<sup>75</sup>

There are many opponents to a pure free market approach to education, most of whom note that the theory conflicts with America's deeply held belief in free, guaranteed public education. They also recognize that a market system may further polarize the

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<sup>72</sup>Lieberman, pg. 2.

<sup>73</sup>Lieberman, pg. 1.

<sup>74</sup>Lieberman, pg. 222.

<sup>75</sup>Lieberman, pg. 228.

socio-economic classes in the United States. While participants in 1993's The State of the Nations Public Schools conference offered various proposals to the problems facing American education, they agree in their concluding position statement that, "There is a serious equity problem in the distribution of resources within schools, within and among school districts, and among states. Court and legislative efforts to correct these inequities usually have been inadequate and unsuccessful." This is largely due to the historic decisions of the Supreme Court which have denied the use of the 14th Amendment as a legal argument for equity in education. Similarly, many state legislatures have been unresponsive to appeals for equity in education and slow to change funding schemes even when their own state courts have required them to. In their vision for change, they conclude that the education profession must put aside its turf battles and come together to rebuild public education, update the notion of a common school, promote safety and order within the schools, and incorporate new programs that "open the American Dream to all children and challenge the growing concentration of poor and minority children."<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup>The State of the Nation's Public Schools, pg. 216.

## CHAPTER 4: A Future Public Policy Trend: Opportunities to Learn

Examining the differences in the opportunities for students to learn is important in understanding the implications of inequities in education. In an earlier chapter, we discussed conservative tendencies to measure inputs against student outcomes and evaluate educational achievement through other standardized measures. While "opportunities-to-learn" have come to mean different things to various educational researchers, one interpretation resembles the Conservative approach in that it looks at inputs and outputs, but it does so in a way that accounts for or explains the differences in performance and then sets appropriate standards for various types of students. In other words, one "opportunities-to-learn" model seeks to establish *relative* measures of achievement that take into consideration family histories, socioeconomic status, and geography. These efforts are significant because they are gaining attention today among educators and may become the basis for future curricular and programmatic reforms. (In this chapter, the term "black schools" refers to schools where the student population is predominantly black; the term "white schools" refers to schools where the student population is predominantly white.)

Given that individuals learn in different ways, "opportunities-to-learn" standards look at two classroom conditions critical to the delivery and enhancement of education: the time to learn and the quality of that instruction. How are these two conditions met in

different schools? Is class time spent in the same ways in different schools and districts, or is more time spent on disciplinary-action or silent study in different schools? Does teacher quality vary between higher- and lower-track classes and schools?

If answers to these questions vary at random, we might not be concerned. That is, if we found that in School A, more time was spent in quiet study, while in School B, more disciplinary action was required, but that there was no correlation between race or income, we might chalk it up to random differences. However, in looking at the studies of Jeannie Oakes of Yale University, we see a pattern that mimics other differences seen in urban and suburban schools. For our purposes, the differences she notes between various "tracks" are assumed to hold for different schools -- city vs. suburban -- since in many ways these schools are physical manifestations of socioeconomic tracking. One solution devised to help equalize how we measure student achievement in different tracks, and different schools, is to use "opportunities to learn" benchmarks. Here, student expectations vary according to opportunities they have had in (and out of) the classroom to learn and excel.

Many suburban schools have begun to shift to "intensive scheduling," where the schoolday is divided into fewer parts, giving more time for each class, condensing a year-long class into a semester-long class, and a less frenetic feel to the day. This change was



brought about by the desire to have smaller student/teacher ratios in a given semester as well as to decrease what Oakes describes as a day filled with startling disruptions:

Day in and day out, the rhythm continues, the tight schedule of slow hours in class interrupted by the hurried frenzy of five or seven or nine and a half minutes between -- a few noisy moments of juggling textbooks and notebooks stuffed with worksheets and answers to a string of questions at the end of some chapter, minutes of half-finished conversations, partly made plans -- and then rush to be somewhere else on time.<sup>77</sup>

In response to what may be as critical to students' access to education and learning, schools and administrators have begun to reorganize the bell schedule to accommodate longer blocks of classes -- offering them on a semester-long rather than a year-long basis. Yet, what Oakes notices in her work is that "the learning opportunities teachers are able or willing to create in classrooms are affected in some ways by their perceptions of the character of the groups of students they encounter,"<sup>78</sup> making it more likely for teachers to reward creative students with creative methods and keep uncreative or quiet students in a more traditional, didactic method. What is overlooked, is that the classroom differences in learning opportunities are often created by the institutions and perpetuated through tracking -- and through the inherent differences in city and suburban school districts.

What happens if different kinds of classrooms or schools then provide different kinds of learning experiences? What is the effect on the students? Does it mean that

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<sup>77</sup>Jeannie Oakes, Keeping Track (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985) pg. 1.

<sup>78</sup>Oakes, pg. 94.

some students have greater opportunities to learn than others? If these differences coincide with racial and social characteristics of students, what do these practices say about our ability to provide equal educational opportunities in America? An answer to these questions may be found by understanding two English and Math classes studied in the 1970s.

The Study of Schooling sample, which was conducted by John Goodlad, Dean of the Graduate School of Education at the University of California at Los Angeles, looked at class time and the quality of instruction to see if differently-tracked students received a different quality of education. In this paper, where we are looking more at inequities across school districts, the case of tracking applies, since in many respects the city school students are already tracked lower than their suburban counterparts.

Many educational scholars believe that time is the pivotal issue for student learning, explaining the current interest in intensive scheduling. But, according to Oakes, "those who need school the most are likely to be getting the least of it in terms of quantity of schooling." Studies, while inconsistent in measuring the relationship between time and achievement results, do conclude that it is not the quantity of time spent, but how that time is used. Notice how time was spent in the classrooms observed in the Goodlad study:

<u>Class/Track</u>	<u>Time Spent on Instruction</u>
High Track English Class	82%
Low Track English Class	77%
High Track Math Class	71%
Low Track Math Class	63%

Active instruction time vs. routine and empty time (attendance, announcements, discipline, etc.) was consistently higher in the higher-track classes. Taking an average, in a 50-minute class, high-track students get about 40 minutes of learning time, while the lower-track students get roughly 33 minutes. Seven minutes may not seem like much, but taken cumulatively over a six-year time period the difference mounts to nearly 240 hours of class time, which Oakes points out equals about 12 semester units of study at a typical college.<sup>79</sup>

Similar differences between tracks were observed in the expectations for homework in the Goodlad study:

<u>Class/Track</u>	<u>Time Expected on Homework</u>
High Track English Class	42 minutes
Low Track English Class	13 minutes
High Track Math Class	38 minutes
Low Track Math Class	27 minutes

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<sup>79</sup>Oakes, pg. 96-101.

Oakes observes that, taken together, these various measures show that low-track students receive less of the essential classroom time needed for learning and are expected to spend less time at home continuing the lesson. Regardless of the causes, she notes, "the actual circumstances of schooling are such that these differences, in themselves, constitute an educational injustice if we believe that active student learning time is one of the most critical school-based contributions to achievement outcomes."<sup>80</sup>

The effect of these differences puts the lower-track student, or the urban student if we carry the analogy, in a "double bind." First, he cannot learn without sufficient time and second, the student who may actually need more time is getting less. An interesting finding by educational researcher Benjamin Bloom -- and one which makes these trends more concerning -- is that the differences in the time a slow-learning student needs to learn decreases dramatically as he experiences success.<sup>81</sup>

Another critical component to learning and achievement is the quality of the instruction. Typical characteristics that policy makers and parents alike seek in "good" teachers are:

- Clarity of presentation
- Use of various materials -- tests, exercises, visual tools
- Enthusiasm
- Task-orientation
- Avoidance of open criticism of students
- Materials/tools consistent with the lesson

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<sup>80</sup>Oakes, pg. 104.

<sup>81</sup>Oakes, pg. 104.

Although these characteristics would seem important, Oakes points out that none has been shown to account for a substantial portion of the differences in student outcomes.<sup>82</sup> Instead, new studies have shown that what teachers do in the classroom only affects the proportion of allocated time students use to learn; so, it is not the methods or teacher skills that matter on their own, it's how these methods and skills translate to minutes used academically. That is, it is not time alone that matters, but how engaged students are in the lesson that results in different learning and achievement by the students. This phenomenon helps explain variations in student learning within the same class as well as variations in student learning among different classes, tracks, and schools.

While earlier scholars looked at how teachers' behavior affected outcomes (looked at via test scores), more contemporary scholars study how students turn teacher behaviors into learning that is reflected in outcomes (also measured through tests). In Oakes' work, she noticed that the higher-track classes spent more time on the lesson plan, students were engaged in the learning activity, fewer students seemed off-task, more involved in instructional and motivational projects, and were expected to spend more time and effort on homework. Since lower-track teachers are less likely to have many of the six characteristics believed desirable among teachers, lower-track students in effect get less from the school: less time for instruction, fewer teaching behaviors considered positive

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<sup>82</sup>Oakes, pg. 106.

and likely to be translated into active learning time, and less time spent engaged in the learning process. In effect, "students in high-track classes seem to have greater opportunities to learn than those in low-track classes."<sup>83</sup>

In looking at Oakes' work, we have made the assumption that the tracking model can be applied to the inequities existing between urban and suburban schools in America. While Oakes' research did not compare school programs based exclusively on geographic location and race, she did look at the placement of students into vocational programs based on race and ethnicity. This research, while not specifically related to inherent differences in urban and suburban schools, illustrates the different academic expectations set for students based on race and ethnicity.

As Oakes points out, course content is "often grounded not only in what appears to be the students' current level of achievement -- where they are now -- but also in some assumptions about their educability -- where they are going."<sup>84</sup> Considering this, trends in vo-tech placement suggest that our assumptions about students' educability vary according to race and ethnicity. Notice the following vocational placements in predominantly white high schools compared with non-white high schools:

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<sup>83</sup>Oakes, pg. 111.

<sup>84</sup>Oakes, pg. 73.

Vocational Course Program	White Schools	Non-White Schools
Business*	39%	27%
Trade*	12%	31%
Military	-1%	5%
Agriculture	4%	3%
Home Economics	13%	19%
Industrial Arts*	25%	10%
Consumer/Career	6%	5%

(Table shows percentage of vo-tech students were placed in specific course programs.)

The course programs indicated with an asterisk (\*) show the greatest differences in placements between white and non-white schools. According to Oakes, "neither the content of vocational education courses nor the format was consistent among schools. Most differences, however, seem to be related to the racial and ethnic makeup of a school's student population."<sup>85</sup> More students from predominantly white schools are placed in the business curriculum than the group in the non-white schools, while far more students in non-white schools are placed in a trade program (carpentry, electrician, etc.) than those from white schools. In addition, more students from white schools are placed in the industrial arts program (desktop publishing, printing, etc.) than their non-white counterparts. Interestingly, not only did white schools have more students participating in the business program, but 62 percent of the non-white schools had disproportionately high white enrollment in its business vo-tech program.

<sup>85</sup>Oakes, pg. 158.

The two sets of schools also differed in where their vo-tech programs were offered. Among the white schools, only ten percent of the vo-tech program courses were scheduled for extended time or held off campus, allowing the student to continue to take classes in the regular academic program and not face scheduling obstacles. At non-white schools, on the other hand, 37 percent were either extended in time or held off-campus, further disrupting the student's regular academic program.

In addition, only students at white schools were offered courses such as the role of business, banking, taxation, the stock market, and business law. These trends suggest clear differences in expectations and tracking based on race and ethnicity in American schools. This raises the question of the nation's commitment to providing equal educational opportunity when access to certain kinds of knowledge or skill is restricted for students, especially when that restriction is not even apparent to the student.

Recognizing these and other obstacles to learning, many educational reform experts today are advocating using "opportunities-to-learn" as a way to benchmark student performance within a set of comparable boundaries. These experts recognize that urban students face enormous obstacles to learning: poverty, drugs and violence in the community, single parent households, absentee parents, etc. In addition, their schools are often hindered by lower quality instruction (using the six measures previously outlined),



inexperienced teachers, and serious disciplinary problems in the schools. Because of this, they argue that students in city schools should not be judged using the same measures/tests as those in suburban schools. In other words, it is not fair to compare "outputs" when the inputs are not the same.

Philadelphia's educational reform plan, *Children Achieving*, advocates developing a set of opportunity-to-learn standards "to ensure that all students are provided adequate opportunities to meet the new systemwide standards, to enable students and parents to hold schools accountable, and to enable teachers, administrators and schools to hold the system and the wider community accountable."<sup>86</sup> Some of the plan's "fundamental opportunity-to-learn standards" include:

- \* Ensuring that schools provide safe and conducive-to-learning school settings;
- \* Ensuring that schools treat students as active learners who gain knowledge from meaningful experiences;
- \* Redesigning schedules, curricula, instructional methods to give students the time they need;
- \* Distributing resources at the school level equitably and adequately.

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<sup>86</sup>Children Achieving, The School District of Philadelphia, February 6, 1995, pg. I-7.

In effect, the concept of opportunities-to-learn for this city school is far more basic than whether a teacher's instructional method evokes academic engagement from the student. Instead, the notion of opportunities-to-learn means creating a physically safe school, seeing the students as individuals, creating a bell schedule that helps teachers spend more time with students, training teachers, and making sure all students in a class have a book. Clearly by altering the measures to match the schools' provisions and student body backgrounds, these educators hope to compare students' abilities in more egalitarian ways, thereby acknowledging that the delivery of public education is not equal in the first place.

In the last chapter, we will see how the differences in classroom activity play out in urban and suburban schools. While exploring whether different opportunities-to-learn should be in place for the different schools (and therefore whether different measurement tools should apply), is outside the scope of this paper, it is remarkable how closely the case study mirrors what Oakes writes about. In the two models -- one a non-white urban school and the other a white suburban school -- the differences in time and quality instruction are strikingly clear, further exemplifying the inequalities existing in our public education system based on geographic and socioeconomic settings.

## CHAPTER 5: What "Educational Reform" Means Today

Separate from school choice and other structural reform efforts, many of today's substantive efforts focus on improving student performance as measured by grades, test scores, and attrition rates through better teaching methods and new scheduling schemes. In keeping with the goals outlined in Goals 2000, most educational reform efforts are structural and achievement-based. The interpretation, however, seems different for suburban and city schools. Based on my readings and limited observations, I believe that there are two distinct reform efforts underway -- each having a distinct geographic application; I have labeled these models "suburban" and "urban" because that is how I see them played out. In essence, public policy in this area, along with historic and economic trends, have promulgated increased inequities in education that divide along geographic, racial and economic lines. These disparate systems have led to the creation of reform efforts that are similarly stratified.

In suburban schools, the structural change is focused on the format of the school day, such as intensive scheduling where class time is almost doubled. On the achievement front, suburban schools are trying to cultivate various opportunities to learn, provide opportunities for students to excel in their areas of interest, and offer different teaching styles that better match students' learning styles. In urban schools, on the other hand, reform efforts are also structurally-based, but not so much with the format of the

school day as with the bureaucracy of the schools and the central district office.

Achievements, meanwhile, are still more numbers-oriented and certainly not as theoretically-driven as their suburban counterparts. Any earlier interest in increasing equity between schools and school districts is absent from either set of efforts.

### **The "Suburban" Model**

The intent, apparently, in suburban schools is to improve student performance and present a more uniform curriculum to all students within a particular school. By focusing on how students learn, administrators and teachers are beginning to reorganize the school day and implement new teaching methods in an effort to enhance student performance. More emphasis is placed on increasing opportunities for all students and decreasing the tendency to "track" students within a particular school. Though by no means adopted by all suburban schools, these theories are gaining popularity and most schools are at least contemplating revisions to the school day schedule, while others are trying to decrease the tendency to track students.

The suburban reform efforts can be linked to the theories of Theodore R.Sizer and the model provided by the Paideia Program. Since the publication of A Nation at Risk, Sizer and other education experts have developed programs and theories to improve the delivery of education and student performance in the United States. In his books, Horace's Compromise and Horace's School, Sizer interviews students, teachers, and

parents in an effort to understand what happens during the school day. He observes a frenetic and disjointed school day and comments on inequities that arise from this structure. His observations, recognized by urban education leaders, have been more widely praised, and his solutions more actively pursued, by suburban education reformers.

Sizer lacks confidence in such numbered-based policies as Goals 2000 and notes that the 1980s reform movement did not spawn ambitious research into why American students were behind their peers. Instead, the movement merely identified where the gaps were and set high standards for improvement. As he points out, "The rhetoric of high school purpose has been uniform and consistent for decades. Americans agree on the goals for their schools."<sup>87</sup> What they fail to understand, says Sizer, is that the words behind these goals lack meaning or plans for implementation. Watching how students spend time in the classroom reveals more than any test scores or superfluous statements of goals, the important purposes of education and how they failed in current practices, according to Sizer.

The school schedule is "a series of units of time: the clock is king," notes Sizer.<sup>88</sup> The frenetic time schedule, coupled with the incongruent mixing of courses and subject matter, results in a disjointed and hectic educational experience that leaves little room for

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<sup>87</sup>Theodore R. Sizer, *Horace's Compromise* (New York: Houghton Miffling Company, 1992), pg. 78.

<sup>88</sup>Sizer, *Horace's Compromise*, pg. 79.

learning and demonstrating one's understanding of a subject. Students learn theories of math in one room, and their practical application in another. Similarly, a student may read Romantic poetry in English class and learn about European history in another without ever understanding the politics of the Romantic period that influenced its writers. Such disjointed delivery of knowledge, says Sizer, undermines student learning. The school provides nuggets of information without providing context. Simultaneously, not enough attention is devoted to each individual student.

According to Sizer, student achievement can be greatly affected by close contact with teachers, positive encouragement from teachers, and providing the opportunity for exhibiting knowledge. "Get a person to believe in himself and give him a powerful incentive to learn, and the results can be striking," Sizer writes.<sup>89</sup> Because all students will benefit from more focused attention, the opportunities for equal education will be increased.

Sizer's proposal calls for dramatic change in the school day, redefines standard department lines, and demands for students to prove what they have mastered through public "exhibitions." In general, his plan proposes:

- \* Decreasing the number of class taught in the school day, while increasing

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<sup>89</sup>Sizer, Horace's Compromise, pg. 65.

the length of class periods.

- \* Restructuring departments to include three core areas: Math and Science, Literature and the Arts, and Philosophy and History. A fourth area, Inquiry and Expression, would be devoted to helping students think critically and express themselves orally and in writing on various subjects contained in the other three core areas.
- \* Decreasing the student/teacher ratio.
- \* Allowing teachers and students to work creatively together, using new teaching/learning methods.
- \* Increasing teachers' role as "coaches".
- \* Requiring students to exhibit their knowledge in the three core areas.
- \* Offering different degree programs/certifications reflecting academic interests.

While Sizer offers reforms based on curriculum revision, another reform movement that sprouted in the 1980s, known as the Paideia Program, concentrates on helping teachers become more effective. Suburban reform efforts have also looked at the Paideia Program as a model for reducing the role and effect of "tracking," the practice of placing students in different academic levels within each grade with students of similar perceived abilities. The Paideia Program seeks to "overcome the elitism of our school system...and replace it with a truly democratic system that aims not only to improve the

quality of basic schooling in this country, but also aims to make that quality accessible to all our children."<sup>90</sup>

This program seeks to correct what it sees as a historical injustice: that educational equality has meant equal quantity, but not equal quality. While we have expanded required schooling to twelve years from the original three mandated under Jefferson's presidency, the elitism that marked the earlier years still prevails. The Paideia Program operates on the premise that we continue to foster two types of students: those destined for leisure and learning (college bound) and those destined for work.

The Paideia Program seeks to improve equality by decreasing the use of tracking in schools and helping teachers elicit stronger performance from all their students. It takes issue with five common beliefs about education:

1. that some and not all children are educable and that only some have the right to aspire to higher educational levels;
2. that the process of education occurs only in our schools;
3. that teachers are the sole cause of learning;
4. that there is only one kind of learning and teaching; and
5. that schooling should be preparation for work.

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<sup>90</sup>Mortimer J. Adler, The Paideia Program, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1984; pg. 1).



The Paideia Program believes school should be a single, integrated system without grade levels, and calls for a required curriculum, the dissolution of vo-tech programs, and a focus on humanistic learning. The single most important factor in a child's learning is the activity of his or her mind and therefore, it is the teacher's responsibility to excite and stimulate that mind. To do this, the teacher must draw on three methods of teaching: didactic, coaching and seminar/discussion format.

Since all students, regardless of their backgrounds, should have equal opportunities to learn and find learning stimulating, teachers must employ different skills to spark their interest and help them reach their potential. The theory emphasizes three methods, believing that a teacher's ability to use these styles will evoke the appropriate responses in students and will help them use their minds and acquire knowledge. Under the didactic method, the teacher essentially lectures or uses books to share knowledge. Under coaching, the teacher draws out the student and gets him or her to employ knowledge in different ways on a given problem. To be effective, coaching requires that the teacher know the student and how he/she thinks and attacks a problem; it also requires small classes so that the teacher may work individually with a student or so that small groups of students can work together. The seminar/discussion format involves conversations between the students and the teacher. Here, the teacher's role is to ask probing and thoughtful questions that help bring out and clarify ideas raised either in a

book or work of art. To be effective, the teacher must listen carefully, be able to think about the direction of the conversation, and allow students to explore different aspects of a certain issue.

Both Sizer's proposal and the Paideia Program -- which I consider examples of suburban reform theory -- seek to improve and equalize the delivery of knowledge and education in a single classroom or school. Their focus is on how students learn and the appropriate structures to help develop student abilities. Equal opportunity, as they see it, occurs within schools; their strategies help each individual student reach his or her potential.

While their theories are valuable and promise inspiring teaching methods, they are probably better suited for the more affluent, suburban schools that do not face the same disciplinary and financial obstacles as city schools. Schools struggling with resources, unable to pay for cafeteria aides or afford books for all its students, are probably unlikely to implement these theories. Because the suburban schools have a more lucrative tax base, school resources are better able to implement programs designed for individual achievement -- an applaudable goal.

## The "Urban" Model

While reform in America's urban areas steals somewhat from the suburban models, it is more focused on such practical matters as the health and safety of students. City school districts lack the resources and training required to implement many of the suburban efforts, like intensive scheduling, but they also face more immediate problems. In addition, city school districts are large, intractable bureaucratic mazes that do not easily invite change; nor are the students, parents, and teachers necessarily prepared to adopt change. In many respects, the reforms often underway in suburban environments cannot even be contemplated in urban settings, where poverty, family, and disciplinary problems present larger, more immediate obstacles to learning. How can an urban school consider lengthening the class period from 40 to 80 minutes, when students barely stay in their seats for 25 of the 40 minutes currently slated?

Instead, reform efforts in city schools have focused on community partnership programs and hard-line, no-nonsense administrations. In Philadelphia, for example, the new superintendent, David Hornbeck, unveiled his reform plan in the spring of 1995, calling for community involvement and business support. The plan, *Children Achieving*, has been met with mixed reaction from schools and political leaders and has had trouble getting the required funding from the city and state governments. Politics aside, the plan is interesting in how it compares with suburban efforts.

*Children Achieving* charts a four and one-half year course, centered around ten goals, to help its large and diverse student body increase its achievement levels. These ten components include:

1. High achievement standards for everyone -- students are expected to learn the basic academic skills in English, math, science, social studies, technology, foreign languages, arts, and health and physical education, meeting set benchmarks at the fourth and eighth grades;
2. Accurate performance indicators that hold everyone accountable for results -- Students will be given performance-based assessments, as opposed to norm-referenced multiple-choice tests, that let students demonstrate their mastery of subject matter; staff, too, will be given an incentive system that links student achievement to real rewards.
3. A smaller central bureaucracy and increased local school control -- Schools will be organized into small learning communities within each school, and several schools will be grouped as a "cluster"; reliance on central administration will be decreased as clusters, working with the community, manage their own affairs.
4. Intensive professional development for staff;

5. Students ready for school -- the program advocates full-day kindergarten and coordination with other city services to ensure that children are healthy and happy and ready to learn.
6. Community support and services for students -- Schools will work with other community associations, provide safe sex education, and link social services with needy students.
7. Up-to-date technology and instructional materials -- Computers, books, lab equipment, library and other learning tools will be increased.
8. Public support for and participation in school reform;
9. Adequate resources used effectively -- Additional funding as well as better use of space is required for effective school reform.
10. Simultaneous attention to all nine priorities.

The plan is similar to Sizer's, and therefore the suburban model, in that it calls for benchmarks and advocates demonstrating academic knowledge over mere test-taking.

Like Sizer, it calls for two degree programs -- the Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM) and the High School Diploma. The CIM is awarded to the student after successful completion of the "core curriculum" -- typically to be completed in the freshman and sophomore years, but without a set time restriction. After receiving the CIM, the student's academic program is centered around a broad set of career or thematic interests and includes a set of field-based learning experiences (internship, community service, job shadowing, co-op) designed to complement the student's thematic learning program. According to the Philadelphia plan, "Because the CIM is awarded only after demonstrated mastery of the core curriculum, not on credits accumulated, students would attain it at various ages and stages of their educational career, with repeated opportunities to meet the standard."<sup>91</sup>

*Children Achieving* differs from its suburban counterparts most in its plans for district organization and overall administration of a school. Unlike Sizer's program or one we see later at Hatboro-Horsham High School, the Philadelphia plan relies heavily on active community participation; in the suburban model, however, community support is almost a given. For example, restructuring the school day with class time increased dramatically is an issue for teachers, but not so much for parents; indeed, the only community support required in the suburban setting is a commitment to spend additional tax dollars on education.

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<sup>91</sup>Children Achieving, The School District of Philadelphia, February 6, 1995, pg. I-6.

*Children Achieving* demands much more than increased dollars. It completely redefines how schools are organized. Small Learning Communities (SLC's), small schools within a school with about 200-500 students, are used to decrease the huge factory-like setting of urban schools and contain students in a smaller, intimate environment; SLC can be organized around themes, such as law, business, health care, or tourism.

The plan also calls for Clusters, a group of schools made up of elementary and middle schools that feed into a particular high school; each cluster is composed of all neighborhood schools that children may attend from kindergarten through high school graduation. A Cluster Leader coordinates and leads the activities of the Cluster, working with a Cluster Council. Every Cluster has a Cluster Council, a representative body composed of the Cluster Leader, a teacher and parent from each member school, and the principal of each member school. The Cluster Council makes sure that resources are distributed equitably within the cluster and assists with budgets and educational plans. The School Council, meanwhile, makes specific decisions for the schools; this council is composed of teachers, the principal, elected parent representatives, and two students (at the high school level). The School Council has governance over school-wide policies and resources and is responsible for developing a public engagement plan to involve parents, local businesses, civil leaders and the wider community in understanding the work of the

SLCs within their schools. Two additional organizations, the Family Resource Network and the Teaching and Learning Network are designed to help support needy children and families and provide professional development for staff and parents.

Clearly, it is an elaborate organization, designed to decrease the role of a distant central office that may be unaware of and ineffective in addressing the different needs of communities that span from far West and South Philadelphia to the North and Great Northeast. But it expects a lot from its community, particularly parents, who may not be prepared to get that involved in school governance or who may not be equipped to serve as neighborhood representatives.

Philadelphia and other urban schools face enormous problems, that, no matter how well intentioned, this type of plan may not be able to overcome. For example, disciplinary problems in city schools are serious and rampant; they vary from vulgar calling out and other classroom disturbances to gang fights and guns in school. The socio-economic backgrounds of students and their families has a large impact on the health, spirit, and readiness with which students attend school. In many cases, students have not had proper breakfasts or have had to hold down after school jobs to help support their family. It is interesting that the dismantling of the school district's governance is absent from the suburban discussion of school reform -- just as abolishing "tracking" and adopting intensive scheduling is not seriously considered in the urban plan.



In Tales Out of School, Joseph A. Fernandez, the former Chancellor of New York City Schools helps us understand why the dismantling of the bureaucracy is so critical to huge city school districts. "New York City's public school system is an insult to the city's stature as the cultural heart of America, and it is in the sick, sad shape it's in not because the custodians don't clean the windows but because those in a position of leadership have been inept at dealing with -- or blind to -- its failings," writes Fernandez.<sup>92</sup>

Instead of centralized bureaucracy, Fernandez recommends programs like School-Based Management, where the operation of a school is run by a cadre of about 15 to 25 people, "including the principal and representatives from the teachers, the administrative staff, the clerical, custodial and cafeteria staffs, and the parents."<sup>93</sup> The cadre, and therefore the local parties, are accountable then for a school's progress and student achievement. Unfortunately, during his time in New York, Fernandez was unable to make as much progress on this front as he did in Florida because so much of the system needed to be "cleaned out" -- principals fired, teachers discharged.

Although much of Fernandez's discontent is directed at what he saw as a political, corrupt school board, throughout the book he brings up system-wide practices that ultimately hurt and deprive the students whom the schools are supposed to serve. For

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<sup>92</sup>Joseph A. Fernandez, Tales Out of School (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1993) pg. 281.

<sup>93</sup>Fernandez, pg. 152.

example, on his first day in New York, he noticed that his office windows were filthy and the carpet littered with wire clippings from a computer hookup evidently just installed, and he asked a secretary to call the custodian to tidy up. His secretary reported that the custodian would not come because he only vacuums every third day and washes windows once a year, as directed by his union contract. According to Fernandez, New York spends more to get less custodial services than any other city system in the U.S. "Our custodians' average salary is a whopping \$58,000 -- \$20,000 more than teachers, \$18,000 more than cops, \$16,000 more than firemen," writes Fernandez. "And despite that, their contract is loaded with things they won't do. Such as mop the cafeteria floors more than once a week or the school floors more than once a year. Or move furniture."<sup>94</sup>

Like many other school administrators in tough, city districts, Fernandez has a fairly hard-nosed attitude about running these schools. While he tries to be empathetic with the socio-economic and family problems these students face, he believes that the time for excuses is over. He notes that when he talks with black advocacy groups, "they are more concerned that police acted 'hastily' in reacting to a violent act than the fact that the violence had profoundly disturbed the learning process at the school."<sup>95</sup> He acknowledges that there are many causes for the problems in the schools: poverty, drugs, unemployment, absentee fathers, illiterate mothers. "But that still doesn't make

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<sup>94</sup>Fernandez, pg. 198.

<sup>95</sup>Fernandez, pg. 77.

sociopathic behavior right, and to excuse it gets us nowhere."<sup>96</sup> Like others, Fernandez advocates cleaning up the schools and making them safe, which as a practical matter means getting rid of students not willing to learn and actively trying to interfere in the learning process.

Having two separate educational reform movements (suburban and city), further illustrates how far American public policy has shifted from equity across districts to equity within districts, and even that is still questionable. There is no longer any pretense for making city schools (predominately black) and suburban schools (predominantly white) equal in quality and the needs of the students justify the decision in the short-term. Would it make sense to offer city students free periods when they cannot currently walk the halls without fights regularly breaking out? Do the problems in suburban education warrant parental involvement to the degree of helping to actually run the school -- and would parents, already busy working and taking care of their families, want to get that involved? While logical, the differences in the current reform efforts merely reflect how disconnected parts of American society have become in that public education can have such radically different problems to warrant such different remedies. Yet, while the different reform efforts make sense considering the short-term needs of the different constituencies, they promise to further exacerbate the differences in quality existing between urban and suburban schools in the long-term.

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<sup>96</sup>Fernandez, pg. 78.

## CHAPTER 6: Model Schools -- Case Study Comparisons

As part of my research on inequity in education, I conducted site visits of two schools -- one, a suburban, mostly white high school, and the other, an urban, mostly black high school. I visited both schools twice; the first meeting was a preliminary interview with the assistant principal or principal. The second visit was a day-long observation of classes at both schools and interviews with students. The purpose of this empirical work was three-fold: to compare what I have read about reform efforts with the current state of different schools (city vs. suburban); to talk to people "in the education business" and the students affected; and to see for myself the implications of the inequities between schools on a first-person, non-scientific basis. The intent was not to conduct systematic, extensive research on the overall effects of inequities or the socioeconomic relationship between tracking and achievement. In essence, I wanted to get a basis for comparison that I could name: Hatboro-Horsham High School vs. University City High School.

### Case 1: Hatboro-Horsham High School -- A Model of Reform

#### *Background*

As mentioned earlier, many schools are embracing new scheduling techniques, commonly called "intensive scheduling," in an effort to decrease whatSizer describes as

a frenetic, disconnected sequencing of subject matter. Five years ago, Hatboro-Horsham High School in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania began looking at different scheduling schemes and curriculum reform programs and set out to change its own system. Now considered a model program, Hatboro-Horsham High School allows other schools to visit and sends its teachers to speak to other schools; these services are performed for a fee and the school uses the added funds for special teaching training workshops or conferences.

Under the Hatboro-Horsham schedule, students attend four, 83-minute academic periods a day, three of which are in "core" subjects -- English, Math, History, Science, Foreign Language, and Computer Science. The students' remaining class can be an equally intense elective, such as Theatre Arts and Drama, or can be two half-period classes, such as typing and speedwriting. These half periods are also used to teach driver education, health, and physical education.

According to school officials, reform was launched after the school principal posed a question to teachers at a 1991 faculty meeting: Is our educational system working? Apparently, everyone agreed that it was not and the school set out to create a committee of teachers, administrators and students charged with changing the system so as to improve student interest in education and performance.

Jim Sullivan, assistant principal at Hatboro-Horsham, points to improved grades, better student attitudes, and higher graduation rates, as evidence that the new format helps students academically while preparing them for college. The school, in fact, does operate somewhat like a college in that students have a 45-minute "free period" either before or after their particular lunch period, when they are free to go to the library, attend a club meeting, or otherwise use their time, and they are given a "Course Selection Guide" with paragraph-long descriptions of each course.

An important factor in the program's success is the District's reaction. Teachers had to be trained, since filling 83 minutes with lesson plans takes work and fortitude. While they each must teach three courses a semester, teachers are not assigned hall, lunch, study hall or any other non-academic duty. The district, impressed with the new scheduling and the readiness of the teachers to be retrained and teach more intense courses, provides funds for the school to hire more aides for these non-academic functions. Another important factor in the program's success is the improved student/teacher ratio it engendered. Where a teacher once taught two sections of the same course over a year, he or she would now teach one section in each semester -- allowing them to get to know the students better and apply many of the teaching techniques described in the Paideia Program.

The high school has essentially been able to equalize educational opportunities for all of its students to some extent by freeing up teachers' time, decreasing the number of students a given teacher must teach at one time, simplifying the school day, reducing the noise level and frenetic qualities associated with constantly ringing bells and masses of students scrambling to get to their lockers and then their next class, and increasing the amount of concentrated time spent on certain core subjects. While tracking still exists, the combination of the extended class time and increased availability of teacher help, the decrease in the number of subjects students juggle simultaneously, increase the opportunities for students of all tracks to enhance performance. However, there is no evidence that these changes have any effect on increasing educational opportunities outside of this school or this district. The impact on the rest of American school children is limited, indeed.

Administrators at Hatboro-Horsham quickly point out that they have been willing to "export" their product and help other schools implement change. But at a cost. The school has made it a business to share its experience, with the pool of money collected used to support special teacher training programs or attendance at advancement conferences.

This, of course, highlights the importance of money. Without money, Hatboro-Horsham High School representatives would not have been able to visit schools in

Atlanta, Colorado, and New England to see other reform efforts. Without money, teachers would not have been able to undergo thorough in-service training. Without money, the district would not have been able to support additional aides. Where Hatboro-Horsham's district can afford extra money for cafeteria aides, schools in the city must spend their money on security guards.

Sullivan admits that other schools have been unsuccessful at implementing similar reforms because teachers were not trained or excused from other non-academic duties. Clearly, success is determined at least in part, by money. Consequently, schools that can afford reform are more apt to implement reform and the resulting benefits -- improved student performance, increased graduation rates, and enhanced appreciation for education -- are bestowed on select students and communities. The goals established in Goals 2000 may well be reached, but only in certain schools -- those with the financial ability to enact change.

*My One-Day Visit*

I visit Hatboro-Horsham on Valentine's Day 1996, and am greeted by students selling and delivering carnations, carrying bouquets of balloons, and altogether engrossed in the holiday's romance and cheer. The assistant principal and many teachers don small blue ribbons on their shirt lapels: the school had just been named a Blue Ribbon school --



an honor bestowed by the Department of Education on 228 schools across the country and recognized in a ceremony with the President of the United States.

Sullivan has arranged for me to "shadow" three students this day: a high-track sophomore, a middle-track junior, and a low-track freshman. In addition, I am to have lunch with a group of students -- a group that turned out to be quite randomly put together and our conversation evolved from basic teenage chatter to race and racism.

My first class is the high-track, 10th grade Biology class. The teacher is so invigorating and full of spirit that even I, loathsome of science since grade school, would have been motivated to listen and do well. Her lesson plan is outlined neatly on the blackboard, letting the students know how the class time will be used and what the homework assignment will be. The lesson on spontaneous generation is conducted in two parts: first, the teacher discusses the concept with the students, eliciting their answers and knowledge about the science involved; then she organizes a "jigsaw activity." Here, students are organized into groups of four and each group member is assigned a number one through four. All the number ones then form a group, same with the twos, etc. Each group then studies one aspect of spontaneous generation, answering a set of questions the teacher had distributed. Once these groups are completed, the students reconvene in their original groups and each member has a turn, explaining to the other three, the lesson he just learned from his numbered group. Clearly, there is more

being taught here than spontaneous generation: the students are practicing presentation skills, summary skills, and teamwork. The kids are bright-eyed and eager to learn; there is no disciplinary requirement from the teacher, and she and I are able to talk quietly in the back of the room only interrupted when a student needs a question clarified.

After class, I proceed to the principal's office to meet Jen, the 9th grade low-track student. She is a quiet girl, not motivated much, and tells me her parents are divorced. The Biology teacher had told me that "even here, you can tell right away which kids have the family involvement and which don't," and I see in this girl, Jen, the lack of family support or encouragement. Jen has been in trouble at school, mostly for cutting classes. I try to get her talking about the differences between her school and what she might find in a city school, but she is oblivious to any differences; she believes all schools are the same and has no real interest in whether her white school may be better than a mostly black school.

Next, at lunch I join the junior-year, middle-track girls and try to get them talking about their school versus city schools. I am clearly at the popular girls' table; they are all attractive and outgoing -- they remind me of the types of teenagers seen on television on such shows as Beverly Hills 90210. For me, the conversation about race and inequitable schooling gets sad. Their answers are rather pat and clear-cut. One girl tells me, "The problem in Philadelphia is bad attitude. Most of those kids don't want to go to school. In

bad parts, they aren't brought up to aspire to go to college, so they don't see the point of going to school." My host, Kelli, is somewhat more sensitive and points out that she would not want to go to school in Philadelphia, because "I wouldn't want to be looking over my shoulder the whole time."

The conversation gets more interesting when the girls ask Cory and John, two black students, to join in. These boys have both lived in Philadelphia prior to moving to Hatboro-Horsham. While both live with either one or both their parents, they tell me that most of the other black students at Hatboro-Horsham live in a "group home" down the road. Here, more than 60 students who come from broken homes and troubled backgrounds live amongst themselves and some adult chaperones and attend the nearby high school. This leads to a conversation about whether white society owed anything to blacks in America, and whether that debt should or could be repaid in better educational opportunities.

The girls are rather disturbed by that notion. One remarks, "I don't really think that it's our problem. It's theirs. They should help their kids. They should make them value their school and do well. It's their choice to live there," referring to the ghetto, to the inner city. "I think welfare is part of the problem," she continues. "If you give people something and constantly hand them something, they won't bother to try to do anything or get a job." The black boys were not so easily convinced, but nor are they insulted or

highly bothered by what the girls said. They seemed to take it in stride. While one comments that people "didn't choose to live there," he is not sure that white society owes him or other blacks anything. Both black students acknowledge that there are large discrepancies between Hatboro-Horsham and the high schools they came from in Philadelphia, but they do not have a sense of how to fix the inadequacies.

From lunch, Kelli and I go to her English class, which was pretty boring. It is a good example of how longer class periods can mean extended boredom if the teacher is not well equipped to use the time effectively. During the video section of the class, more than half of the students sleep, one of them even sprawled out on the floor -- a few feet from the teacher.

The last class of the day is pre-algebra with Jen, the freshman, low-track student. For a math class, this one is very lively. The students participated actively, raising their hands quickly to volunteer, jumping up to put answers on the board. Although many of the students do not quite comprehend the material -- the symbols of greater than and less than -- they all participate and the longer time period gives the teacher more time to review homework and problems that students are working on.

I am about to leave the school, impressed with what I had seen as a solid, well-run, seemingly happy school, when I meet Shoshona in the hallway. Shoshona, a black

17-year-old girl, lives in the group home mentioned to me at lunch and had entered the school in November. She tells me that she wants to be a lawyer someday, and to my surprise she begins to discuss with me various court cases that have been in the news lately. She says that she believes O.J. Simpson was not guilty, but Susan Smith is "awful and evil." Timothy McVeigh, while guilty, should not get the death penalty, according to Shoshona, because he looks remorseful. Before I can pursue this thought, she asks me, "Do you believe in capital punishment?"

What is most refreshing about the conversation with Shoshona is that she is the first student I have met that day who has demonstrated any knowledge of or interest in anything outside of school-life, friends, and the latest gossip. She is up on current events and eager to talk about her opinions and dreams. She is the oldest among the girls in her group home, and apparently has no family nearby; although she later mentions her mother, it is clear that there are deep family problems. I ask her about the differences between urban and suburban schools, between black and white schools, and she acknowledges there are differences. She attributes the differences at first to student attitudes, saying that students in the city need to "leave their problems at the door." But she also put forth her own solution: "the 'good' schools should team up with the 'bad' schools and help them get better."

## Case 2: University City High School -- A Tough, Inner City School

### *Background*

Many of my observations at University City High School (UCHS) in Philadelphia mirror what Jonathan Kozol documents in his school tours. Located in the Mantua section of the city, UCHS is 92.7 percent black, 5.8 percent Asian, .8 percent Latino and .6 percent white and 88.5 percent come from low income families.<sup>97</sup> Of the 2358 students enrolled last year, about 950 were suspended (out of school) at least once. The school has one principal, two vice principals, 97 classroom teachers, and no administrative assistant; there are eight clerical/secretarial workers for the entire school. The school is literally one block from the University of Pennsylvania campus -- one of the nation's most prestigious and affluent universities.

As part of the Philadelphia School District of Philadelphia, UCHS is currently part of the *Children Achieving* plan. Although few of the plan's components have been implemented yet, the school does maintain different "clusters" within it -- schools within the school, where students have all their classes. This helps to shrink the size of the school, since students are essentially relegated to their clusters for all their courses and daily interactions. The district's newsletter, descriptions of the plan, and applications for transfer to the school, are all available on the counter in the main office. Unlike many

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<sup>97</sup>School District of Philadelphia School Profile, University City High School, 1994-1995.

suburban schools, intra-district transfers of students -- for disciplinary or family problems -- are relatively common.

*My One Day Visit*

When I get to UCHS, I have to knock on the school doors to get in. Mantua is a poor, mostly black community that includes several housing projects, dilapidated row houses, and some homeless shelters. The crime rate is high, as is drug use and the existence of "crack houses," places where crack cocaine users go to get high and hang out. A few students are outside with me, and when the guard opens the door, I am ushered in, while most of them are left outside. When I ask the principal, Dr. James Lyttle, who they were and why they were not readily admitted as I was, he tells me that they were late for school, but his tone tells me they are in more serious trouble than that.

Lyttle, who became the principal last September after having served for many years in the central administrative offices of the School District of Philadelphia, tells me he has been sent here, "as his punishment," by the superintendent, Dr. David Hornbeck. Apparently, he and Hornbeck do not agree on school reform strategies. Lyttle explains the difference this way: "Well, you see, Hornbeck believes in internal, systemic reform consisting of achievement-based comparisons and reconfigurations of schools, and I believe in urban revolution."

Lyttle is an interesting character, and unlike my day at Hatboro-Horsham, which was well-organized by the assistant principal who made sure I was led from class to class by my student escorts, Lyttle simply drops me off on the third floor, introduces me to Mr. Mueller, the coordinator of the Magnet program, and leaves me to find my way around UCHS. I stay pretty close to Mr. Mueller for the first hour. He is carrying a walkie-talkie and is standing in an amphitheater-like area that looks down on an open gallery below. He tells me he is "monitoring the hallway to make sure that none of the clowns from downstairs try to come up and mess things up around here."

I subsequently learn that the school was built in 1970 as a magnet science school for the sons and daughters of Penn faculty members. Like many other American schools, its architecture was designed after a prison. Each floor of the school has a large inner circle, with four separate halls shooting off from the circle that reach an outer circle that forms the school's perimeter. Classrooms are located along the hallways and the outer perimeters. On the first floor, the inner circle includes the auditorium and the lunch room; on the second floor, the inner circle is a large empty room which I am told is the site of many fights and problems; on the third floor, the inner circle is the amphitheater that lets students look down on the activities in the second-floor circle.

Academic tracks are organized according to floors. The lowest-track classes are held on the first floor, the middle-track on the second, and the higher-track classes on the



third. The third floor consists of the Magnet and Motivation Programs -- district-wide programs for the highest achieving students. The second floor consists of the "cluster" programs -- thematic group learning environments where students take all their regular courses together; cluster themes include law, communications, health care, and business. Mr. Mueller's goal, as he explains it, is to keep first and second floor students off his floor so he can isolate the highest-track students and keep them focused on their schoolwork.

There is a police sub-station of sorts on the first floor, and I'm told by Mr. Mueller that many of the students on the first floor have been incarcerated and are busy dealing drugs and organizing gang activity during school hours. "I hear it all in here," he tells me, pointing to the walkie-talkie.

My first class is Mr. Mueller's 10th grade Magnet-level English class, where his student teacher, Mr. Craul, is administering a test. Never in my dreams would I have guessed that a test was in process, based on what I saw. The room was extremely loud, students talked openly about the questions, reading them out loud, asking each other what they meant. Many walked around the room, switching seats randomly, sometimes to get a better view of the board or to copy something down, sometimes simply to move. The test is on the play, A Raisin in the Sun, which they had read in class since the students are not allowed to take most books home with them. The clock in the room doesn't work, and the room, which is actually a science lab room, has only two small, 12" by 24"

windows in the rear. All the students are black, except for a single Asian girl. While most students are laughing and clowning around during the entire period, one shy girl wearing thick eyeglasses sits on the side working seriously on her test, quietly sitting once she is finished. The Asian girl, too, works diligently and seriously on the test questions. Even in what is considered the "cream of the crop" for this school, these two girls stand out.

It is impossible to consider this high-track class in the same academic league as the high-track class witnessed at Hatboro-Horsham; the students' unruly and inattentive behavior is so unlike that of their suburban counterparts and their questions on the play seem more basic than one might expect from a high-track class. For example, a student asks the teacher a question that relates to a female character's actions in the play -- not intent, not feelings, not meaning; her question was one of simple action, rather than substance.

After class, I talk with Mr. Mueller and the student teacher, both of whom are white. They have very different views of school reform. Mr. Mueller, who has taught in the district for 20 years, has little faith in such efforts as intensive scheduling and believes that the best solution for his school is to get rid of all the students from the first and second floors so that they can focus on the students "who want to be here." Mr. Craul, who is a student in the University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of Education, is

more idealistic and optimistic about the effect he can have on students and the goals of educational reform. He does not see isolation as the solution, but he is cautious about expressing himself in front of his superior. He tells me privately that more could be done to stimulate these students and that the heavy, no-nonsense approach of Mueller and others is not the only way to deal with the students. He reminds me that, despite their tough facades, these students are really just kids, after all.

In Mr. Mueller's opinion, compulsory education -- a student's right to a free education until the age 21 -- is a major hindrance to his school because it prevents the school from getting rid of the majority of students who get in the way of others. With 29 weapons offenses and 30 assaults reported last year, not to mention the daily hall fights and misdeeds that occur, Mr. Mueller sees his mission as protecting those students on the third floor -- the ones who have made it -- and trying to keep them on a steady path to academic success.

When asked about school choice or voucher programs, Mr. Mueller is steadfastly against them, saying that "no one would pick this school. This school would just go down the drain completely." When I point out that his proposal, to remove the lower-track students, would pretty much have the same effect as the choice and voucher programs, only in reverse, he cannot see the analogy. I explain that both proposals, while understandable, would result in the complete stratification of students within the district -

- dividing masses of unmotivated and lower achieving students from stronger, more capable students. But, Mr. Mueller is looking at it from his school's vantage point, and his goal is single-minded: to help and protect *his* students.

Although I place little stock in school choice, I cannot criticize Mr. Mueller's ideas after what I see that day. The school is literally Pandemonium. At no point is it clear whether classes are in session or not. Students roam the halls in groups, cluster in dark corners, shout obscenities in hallways and in classrooms. Mr. Mueller wants to help those who he believes can go to college or a junior college -- he wants to help those with the small chance of getting out of Mantua and doing better.

In my next conversation, Mr. Tracy, the coordinator of the law cluster on the second-floor, agrees with Mr. Mueller's isolationist solution, but is somewhat more thoughtful in his explanation. When asked about the inequities between city and suburban schools, and therefore black and white schools, Mr. Tracy, who is white, responds:

I have taught in this school for 24 years and before that I taught in wealthy communities in Connecticut and I'd like to address the issue of inequity because I have thought about it a lot. Yes, there are inequities based on race. These are inequities in infrastructure and supplies. But those inequities could be overcome if we were not forced to spend 60 percent of our time on kids who are only here to buy drugs, make dates, and score. Most of our time is spent on discipline and getting the kids to settle down and focus. We have a lot of white sympathizers who believe that more

money and less racism would do a lot to help the situation. But they don't want to come here. They have a lot to say about what is wrong, but they won't come to this school.

Tracy tells me that his priority in the classroom is not academics, but developing "socialization" skills. "These kids think nothing of shouting, 'f--- you, you mother f---- as their greeting,'" says Tracy. "I do not tolerate that in my classroom, and I have had to employ tactics of deception and intimidation in order to get a 'good' group of kids in my charter." Tracy explains that he was able to free his charter of "thugs" by "one at a time, getting them into another charter," often by telling them and their parents that they really would do better and succeed in the other charter. "I've also hounded parents -- called them at 7:00 in the morning to talk about their kid and what charter he should be in, just to get them to want to get out of my charter, just to get away from me!" Tracy is an affable guy, and although his tactics are questionable, it is not hard to understand his motives after seeing what he faces every day in this school. As we talk in his classroom, the wall next to us practically vibrates from students shouting on the other side and slamming each other into the wall. The students, many of whom have wandered into his classroom during his free period, clearly like him.

Tracy introduces me to Siobhan, who he warns me is "very charming and likable, but gets herself in a lot of trouble." Talking with her, I can immediately hear her ignorance and lack of understanding about the world. She is not cognizant of possible

differences between any schools, much less white or black ones. I mention two nearby white working class communities -- Manayunk and Roxborough -- but she says she has never even heard of them; I get the feeling she does not get out of Mantua very often. She tells me she lives next to a crack house and that she knows her mother's boyfriend is using drugs, but she does not plan on telling her mother since she says she will not believe her.

From there I go to Mr. Cregler's 10th grade Motivational-level Biology class. It takes Mr. Cregler, who is black, five minutes to get everyone who should be in the classroom, in and everyone who should not be in the room, out. Ten more minutes are spent fussing around, taking attendance, getting kids to take their seats and stop talking. Two of the 21 students are wearing Walkmen throughout the entire period. In the remaining 30 minutes of classtime, Cregler spends about five minutes on the lesson plan and 25 letting the students read and answer questions from the textbook. The actual lesson -- how a cell divides -- consists of writing the six stages of Mitosis on the board (the names of each stage) and having the students copy them down. These phases -- prophase, metaphase, anaphase, etc. -- are never explained. Instead, the students are instructed to read the book and answer the questions. At no point in the 45 minute class is the room anywhere close to quiet. Students are constantly jumping up and leaving the room, or walking into the adjacent room, or calling across the room to a friend.

Later, I tell Mueller that I've seen a lot of classtime spent on reading alone and not much at all on either lecture or discussion. He explains that the students -- even those in the high-level Magnet and Motivational programs -- are not "ready for or capable" of that kind of lesson. "We do a lot of reading and writing in class because they are not able to listen that long to a lecture and they are not going to really participate in a discussion session. So, I read to them sometimes and tell them what they need to know."

It is a far cry from any of the reform efforts discussed bySizer or Paideia, and after one visit, I cannot judge if Mueller and Tracy are correct in their approaches. Is it fair to ignore whole populations of students in order to help those that are more likely to succeed? Is it fair to those who may succeed to subject them to obstacles many of these other students present?

I do not know what to make of this school. It is part prison, part street, and a small part learning. It is a place where, in the words of Kelli, one has to watch one's back. The students are loud, they are angry, they shout obscenities, fights are regular. Unlike Kozol, I did not feel sad while I was there. I was too scared, too on guard to feel sad. Kozol spent most of his time visiting elementary schools, where I imagine it is sad to see poor children full of life and laughter and know that the future is not one of hope for them, but they are too young to know it. But among these older, tougher students, I did not feel so much sadness as fear and bewilderment. The situation here results from a

labyrinth of problems: family problems, drugs, violence, poverty, lack of parental supervision, lack of role models, no clearly visible path to achievement. I tell the principal upon my departure that after today, I have no answers.

A few days later, still thinking about the school, I am reminded of Lyttle's comment advocating "urban revolution." Was he referring to the internal revolution Mueller and Tracy promoted or an external, activist revolution? I call him to see what he had meant and he tells me rather sadly, "It is the community situation that I am concerned about. I really do believe that political activism on behalf of the kids and their families is at the heart of true reform."

#### Summary of Model Schools

There is very little that is similar between these two schools. Physically, one is in a modern, contemporary building with clean, well-equipped classrooms. The other looks like a jail, is locked from outsiders, with classrooms littered with garbage and chairs strewn about carelessly. In the Philadelphia school, cluster offices have virtually nothing in them except a few chairs and a table. Five out of eight toilets work in the third-floor bathroom.

In the suburban school, students are treated more like adults, given free class periods where they can seek teacher help or go to the library. At UCHS, the teachers take



it upon themselves to run into the hallways between classes with their walkie talkies and usher students along to their next class. At Hatboro-Horsham, my day had been well orchestrated by the assistant principal and nearly all of it, with the exception of the lunch-room conversation and my meeting with Shoshona, was planned. At UCHS, I was completely free to go wherever I wanted; it would not have mattered or even been noticed if I'd walked into or out of a class. At Hatboro-Horsham, I was introduced first to the teacher and then to the class; at UCHS, my presence was never publicly acknowledged by the teacher to the students.

The priority at Hatboro-Horsham is academics. At UCHS, it is safety and discipline. The inequities in infrastructure, teaching, and the readiness of students to learn (at all track levels) are vast. Consider how the 10th grade Biology class at UCHS resembled the lower-track classes observed by Oakes in the Goodlad study, mentioned earlier. With a disproportionate amount of time spent on discipline and routine administrative tasks, there was less time for a meaningful academic lesson. In addition, the lesson that did take place failed to engage the students or demand much thinking from them. The parallel class at Hatboro-Horsham, on the other hand, spent virtually no time on discipline and the lesson plan required not just thinking, but presentation skills and teamwork from its students.

My site visits offer simply one glimpse at the differences between two schools in radically different neighborhoods in the United States. But no matter how arbitrary or unscientific, the inequities witnessed were not just extreme, they are unjust when we recall that both represent a basic tenet of the American democratic system: free, public education that provides equal educational opportunity for all.

## CONCLUSION

Considering the current trends and sentiments surrounding affirmative action in this country, it is highly unlikely that America can continue to rely on these policies to compensate for the inequities in educational opportunity that have marked our educational system for decades. Unfortunately, however, there is little agreement or support for the massive, structural change needed to alter the dissemination of funds and, in effect, education. Instead, America has at least two separate educational reform efforts currently underway, each targeted at completely different communities: cities and suburbs. Both reform programs, while understandable in their context and what they are trying to achieve for their constituents, could result in further enlarging the equity gap between these types of schools. In addition, public policy experts have put forth peripheral remedies such as school choice that do not directly address the underlying problems facing poor communities and their schools.

In all the materials reviewed for this paper, no author or narrator debates the existence of inequity in education. That is, the fact that America harbors very different types of public schools -- with different resources, capabilities, and programs -- is not contested; nor is it contested that the differences constitute a problem. What is disputed, however, is the appropriate method to correct the inequities. Methods proposed range from drastic reform efforts that change funding mechanisms to small-scale school choice

plans targeted mostly to inner city, poor schools. These solutions promise different results: Redistribution of funds would spread money more broadly across school districts and result in financially equivalent resource allocations from which schools could build their programs. School choice, conversely, would directly affect poorer schools and conceivably create even more inadequate schools for lesser qualified students. Thus, while all sides agree that inequity is a problem, the various solutions reflect seriously different philosophies. In the first case, the philosophy seems to be that inequity is unfair, and we must at least equate schools financially. In the second case, the philosophy seems to be that schools are not equal, there is nothing we can do to change this, but we can try to make things better for a few students in the lower-quality schools by giving them an honest way out.

As a result, a class-based approach to education reform exists, where equity is not considered a universal right, but rather, a relative right within one's given class (or race). Suburban educational reform efforts do not seek parity with other districts; they seek to improve their own schools and the students enrolled. The resources within a school like Hatboro-Horsham will be divided as equitably as possible to help minimize tracking and develop the skills of all students there. Urban educational reform efforts do not seek parity with their suburban counterparts; rather, they aim to reorganize the bureaucracy, the school and the community in order to foster a specific, positive role for the school within its neighborhood. Abolishing tracking is not a priority and there is no promise or

goal to equalize resources across the different tracks within a school; instead, resources will be allocated across the district in a way that begins to redefine schools and their importance to families and communities in the hope that, together, these groups will support each other and provide a better educational environment than currently exists.

It is clear from my personal visits to the high schools and the readings from Kozol and others that city schools are so far behind their suburban counterparts in virtually every respect -- academically and physically -- that to some extent this two-tiered reform effort is necessary in the short term. We must be careful, however, that by pursuing the different agendas, we do not let the two types of schools grow further and further disparate. Once urban schools are better organized, funded, and positioned to provide a solid education for their students, they must begin to consider the issues their suburban peers are already prepared to address, issues such as tracking and intensive scheduling. To do so, now, however, is premature considering their more immediate challenges in safety, morale, community support, and resources.

Money is an important aspect to the problems facing education; however, it is not the only problem, nor the only solution. Clearly, resources need to be more evenly divided between districts, and this should probably be done at the state level to ensure that the white suburban school is not allowed to spend more than twice the annual per pupil expenditure than the neighboring black city school. Considering the extent of the

funding discrepancies and the physical manifestations noted by Kozol and others, the best answer would be for both schools to have the higher level of per pupil expenditure so that both schools could start from the same financial base. It would then be up to schools to determine the best use of those resources for the student body they support. This solution would require moving away from local property taxes as the source of school revenue, and instead, using increased state taxes.

Increased funding is still not the only requirement for improved public education in the city or suburban schools. City schools need to continue with their efforts to involve parents and other community groups in education. The differences in performance between students whose parents are involved in their lives and schools and those whose parents are not are clear: parental involvement is critical to educational success. In addition, these schools need to be safe and happy places; the community has a role to play here as well: parents and residents can help refurbish their schools and protect them from vandalism. These schools also need a political voice to ensure that their interests are represented by policymakers: residents need to organize politically to fight for increased expenditures, better teachers, and effective educational programs.

Suburban schools, on the other hand, should continue the work they have begun to minimize the use and effect of tracking within the school. Too often, students' academic and career success have been predetermined by administrators pigeonholing them into a

particular track. All students should be given opportunities to excel within their interest areas and we need to recognize and appreciate different abilities and interests for what they offer. As these suburban schools make headway on minimizing tracking, they can lend their support to city schools to do the same once improvement in infrastructure and programs has occurred. Remember Shoshona's suggestion, for 'better' schools to help the other schools improve.

In the meantime, America does owe something to these poor, mostly minority urban populations, whose schools are inadequate and unfairly underfunded. The poverty in black urban neighborhoods has a complicated history, one marked by manufacturing shifts, job losses, and white flight. It is inaccurate and unconscionable to simply write off this group of people as if their socio-economic predicament were self-inflicted. When we look at the history of the cities and the purposes of affirmative action programs, we begin to understand that poor urban communities have been created by all of us -- and the only way to help turn them around is through broadly supported programs, particularly focused on schools, that can attack the basic underlying problems of poverty, unemployment, and lack of education.

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## VITA

Johanna Vogel is a master's degree candidate in Lehigh University's Government Department. She was born September 11, 1963 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and is the daughter of Jane and Alfred Vogel of Pennington, New Jersey. Ms Vogel received her B.A. degree in 1985 from the University of Pennsylvania in the area of Russian Language and Literature. Following her graduation, she worked in several non-profit organizations that focused on international relations. From 1988 to 1992, she worked at the University of Pennsylvania as the associate director of News and Public Affairs in the Office of University Relations, with an assignment in the Office of the Executive Vice President. She subsequently worked at Lehigh University as the Director of Advancement for the College of Engineering and Applied Science. She entered Lehigh's Government program in the fall of 1992 on a part-time basis. For the last two and half years, Ms. Vogel has worked as a consultant for the investment firm of Miller Anderson & Sherrerd, where she serves as the senior marketing communications professional. She is married to Daniel Hillman; they have a daughter, Madeline Jane.

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