

Meeting Notes - Law Night

Scott Ellison's research: How ideas bounce around the globe. The things we talk about at UNI or in the classroom aren't problems here in the US but all around the globe. Who is propagating these ideas? How do they move around the globe?

Three Big Policy Issues

- **Social Problems**

- Economic decline and polarization
 - Middle class is declining
- Racial and ethnic inequality
 - No Child Left Behind

- **Assumptions**

- Schools are root cause of economic decline
 - Educational failure
- Schools root cause of racial and ethnic inequality
- Higher achievement and STEM will fix this

- **What's left out**

- Globalization and economic policy
 - Wasn't education that did that, it was trade
- Historical and structural issues with race
- Low wage future and automation
 - Aren't STEM jobs for the future but low wage service jobs

Schools can fix everything

- Social problems outside of schools are erased

Technocratic Fixes

- **Standards, Testing and Accountability**

- Elaborate, detailed standards by calendar year
- Standardized assessments for all
- High stake incentives

- **Assumptions**

- Achievement is a function of effort
- If we change the incentive we will fix the issue by raising achievement and fix inequality

- **What's left out**

- Humans develop at different rates
- Reductive measure of learning
 - Are standardized assessments really what we want for learning?
- Campbell's law
 - If you use standardized assessment as the end all be all isn't the learning but the test prep for the standardized results.

Technocratic Fixes

- Deprofessionalization, Individualized Learning, and Production of Failure

- District taking away the ability of the teachers to decide the pace of the classroom
- “You’re behind there is something wrong with you.”

Privatization

- **Educational Markets “Choice”**

- Charter schools
 - Privately owned, publicly funded school
 - Submit a charter with how you want to run the school to the district and if approved you will get your school
- Voucher schools
 - If i have a child in the school district that accepts vouchers, I have a voucher
 - Voucher is accepted as a full cost of admission
- ESA
 - Education Savings Accounts
 - Basically a voucher, parents can use those vouchers to buy more like laptops and after school activities

- **Assumptions**

- Market competition incentivizes better performance
- Private means less bureaucracy
- Private means efficient

- **What’s left out**

- International and national evidence on achievement
 - Doesn't have a negative effect, doesn't have a positive effect
- New policy-actors and policy networks
- Rent seeking and corruption
 - People opening up schools and profiting from them

Privatization

- Democratic Deficit
 - More privatization the less control you have over school

Q&A

Q: Religious organized schools are not federally funded so how can they accept vouchers?

A: Must education dollars come from state and local, they are accepting state and local tax dollars.

Q: Why are people drawn to charter schools?

A: They are freed from a lot of restrictions (tenure, licensures, etc.). One of the big issues in public schools are low funded, new teachers, under resourced, and so on. Charter schools must be better. They want their local schools in their area to have good opportunities. They are trying their best.

Q: How do charters schools compare to public on standardized tests?

A: Looking at the peer reviewed literature, charter schools have a modestly positive achievement. Doesn't have that big of an impact, it's not high performing, it's not low performing.

Q: What's the difference between voucher program and open enrollment?

A: Open enrollment allows you to enroll into a district outside of your own, it is a form of choice. The money follows the child.

Q: Is there voucher programs in Iowa right now?

A: Nope. It hasn't because of the budget crisis going on right now. If the budget clears up, I suspect you will see some.

Q: How are charter schools boards chosen?

A: They are completely unelected, whoever starts them up gets to pick who they want to help them run the school.

Q: Why do private schools have the reputation of being better?

A: Their achievement is almost always higher. They just have a different population of students rather than they are doing something different in the classroom. The students come from more privileged backgrounds.

Q: What are there so few charter schools in Iowa, there is only 2?

A: Iowans are hard headed about education. Iowa has always exceeded everyone else on tests especially in literature. We are generally purple, we don't swing from democratic to republican which influence the education system. We dig our education system, not to say there won't be any in the future I am sure there will be.

Q: What are your thoughts on Teach for America?

A: The folks that go into it are good natured folks, they are going in to solve problems.

They are coming in with their heart in the right place BUT they don't stay long. Started in an area where they don't have many teachers but not it is used as a way to find teachers for charter schools. I can't say that it is a positive thing.

Q: How do we use this information in our classrooms?

A: This is unsustainable, this cannot go on so something is gonna give at some point. I don't think there is a quick and easy answer. For me, I would say to get active, be active in your classrooms and schools. Teachers are considered to be the big problem, we got to fix teachers. You have to advocate for yourselves and for your profession.