

Iris Rotberg
Virtual Policy Analysis Class
Mar 9, 2020 at 8:47:02 PM
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Hello All,

In view of the continuing reports on the spread of the coronavirus (COVID 19)—and as gatherings in DC and around the country are being cancelled—I have decided to hold our last six classes online. This was a difficult decision, and I will miss spending time with all of you in class and interacting in person. I have always valued our school's seminars and advocated for them, but I believe it is more important at this time to reduce the risk for all of us—and our families—by moving the course online.

Fortunately, the concluding weeks of the class are particularly well-designed for a smooth transition to an

online format. I will also do my best to make this transition as simple as possible logistically.

We will communicate as a class by e-mail. I understand this will require multiple e-mails but, given the limited time for planning, it will be less time-consuming than the alternatives because it involves a technology we all have. The subject line for this initial e-mail is "Virtual Policy Analysis Class" and all CLASS e-mails for the remainder of the semester should continue this e-mail chain.

And to ensure that we go beyond e-mail discussions, I would like to schedule a phone conversation with each of you over the next several weeks.

These are the plans for each class:

**March 11:
Students with Disabilities**

Readings distributed in last week's class:

- **The Supreme Court of the United States, Proceedings in the case of Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District, argued January 11, 2017.**
- **Justia site, Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District, Justia Opinion Summary, March 22, 2017.**
- **John Fensterwald, "Special education funding is a**

morass; straightening it out might not be cheap or easy." EdSource, March 8, 2018.

- Clare McCann, "Report: Federal Special Ed Dollars Not Always Fairly Distributed." New America Foundation, Blog Post, June 27, 2014.
- Maya Srikrishnan, "Federal Education Costs Are Rising." New America Weekly, February 8, 2018.

The class will be conducted in two phases:

- Phase 1:

Please respond to the following two questions. Your responses should be approximately 150 words each and e-mailed to the class (with your name) before 5:00 PM on

March 11th. These are the questions:

(1) What are the main problems in special education funding and how are these problems exacerbated by the inequities in education more generally?

(2) In what ways is the Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District case relevant to issues in school finance cases?

- **Phase 2:**

Please use our usual class time to comment on two of the responses by others in the class to the questions submitted in Phase 1. Your comments should be approximately 100 words each and e-mailed to the class (with your name and the names of those to whom you are responding). I will also send comments at this time.

March 18:
Spring Break

March 25:
Preliminary designs for the DC Integration Projects

- **Phase 1:**

Each group should plan to e-mail its PowerPoint-style presentation, as well as relevant data, by 5:00 PM on March 25th—or earlier if possible. The information presented should be more detailed than originally planned since you will need to communicate your preliminary design without the added points you would have made in

class. Although the members of each group will be working on different parts of the overall design, these should be combined into a single presentation before sending. Please use the following outline, which was distributed in class, to organize the presentation:

- **Description of the problem and overview of the proposed plan to address it**
- **Research evidence that is relevant to the proposed plan**
- **Detailed description of the plan, including current situation (with data) and proposed changes (with data)**
- **Potential unintended consequences**
- **Measures of success and considerations in**

interpreting the findings

- **Phase 2:**

Please use our usual class time to review and comment on the two projects in which you did not participate and give suggestions that will be helpful in strengthening the projects. I will also send my comments at this time.

April 1:

(1) English-language Learners and (2) Undocumented Students

Readings:

- **Find Law Site, Lau v. Nichols, Supreme Court Decision (1974).**
- **Find Law Site, Plyler v. Doe, Supreme Court Decision, (1982).**
- **Rubi Takanishi and Suzanne Le Menestrel, Editors, "Promoting the Educational Success of Children and Youth Learning English: Promising Futures," National Academy of Sciences, 2017, SUMMARY.**
- **Leah Plunkett, Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society at Harvard University and the Data & Society Research Institute, "How the New Immigration Agenda Violates the Promise of Plyler v. Doe & What School Decision-Makers Can Do to Protect Their Students & The Constitution, May 6, 2017.**

- **Phase 1:**

Please respond to the following two questions. Your responses should be approximately 150 words each and e-mailed to the class (with your name) before 5:00 PM on April 1st. These are the questions:

(1) Were the decisions in Lau v. Nichols and Plyler v. Doe consistent with the decision in Rodriguez v. San Antonio Independent School District? Why/Why not?

(2) The Lau v. Nichols opinion stated: "No specific remedy is urged upon us. Teaching English to students of Chinese ancestry who do not speak the language is one choice. Giving instruction to this group in Chinese is another. There may be others. Petitioners ask only that the board of

education be directed to apply its expertise to the problem and rectify the situation." This statement has led to endless political and research controversy over the "best" language instructional method. In your view, what factors would a school district need to consider in deciding whether (1) to focus on teaching children English as soon as possible so they can be enrolled in classrooms that use English as the language of instruction, or (2) to give instruction in the child's first language and make a gradual transition over the years to English?

- **Phase 2:**

Please use our usual class time to comment on two of the responses from others in the class to the questions in

Phase 1. Your comments should be approximately 100 words each and e-mailed to the class (with your name and the names of those to whom you are responding). I will also send comments at this time.

April 8:

Final Designs for the DC Integration Projects

- **Phase 1:**

As you can see, I have moved the presentation of all three group projects to April 8th to allow more time to finalize your designs. Each group should e-mail its PowerPoint-style outline, along with relevant data, to the class on April 8th by 5:00 PM, or preferably earlier. As before, the outline

should be as detailed as necessary to communicate clearly, and the separate parts should be organized into a single plan.

- Phase 2:

Please use the usual class time to review and comment on the two projects in which you did not participate and e-mail your comments to the class. I will also send my comments at this time.

April 15:

International Test-Score Comparisons

Readings:

- Jill Barshay, The Hechinger Report, "What 2018 PISA Rankings Tell Us about U.S. Schools," December 16, 2019.
- Tom Loveless, Brookings, "The Children PISA Ignores in China," December 19, 2019.

Please respond to the following two questions. Your responses should be approximately 150 words each and e-mailed to the class (with your name) by the end of the day on April 15th. I will then add some general comments.

(1) In your view, are the rankings a valid indicator of the quality of each country's education system? Why? Why not?

(2) Policies such as test-based accountability and school

choice have, in part, been a response to concerns about the ranking of U.S. students on international test-score comparisons. In your view, have these policies been a relevant response to the results of these comparisons? Why?/Why not?

April 22:

International Policy Comparisons

The readings listed below are a very small sample of the international research on topics we have discussed in class. The international literature shows that countries throughout the world face educational inequities, but the factors that contribute to the inequities, how the inequities

play out, and the government policies that mitigate or exacerbate them often differ.

Please review the readings listed below, select one, and write an analysis of approximately 300 words that compares the situation and policies of the country (countries) described in the reading with those in the United States. Please e-mail your analysis by the end of the day on April 22nd. I will then add my comments.

Readings:

- Maurice Crul and Jens Schneider, "Children of Turkish Immigrants in Germany and the Netherlands: The

Impact of Differences in Vocational and Academic Tracking Systems," 2009.

- **Helen F. Ladd, Edward B. Fiske, and Nienke Ruijs, "Parental Choice in the Netherlands: Growing Concerns about Segregation," June 9, 2010.**
- **The Council of Europe, Commissioner of Human Rights, "Fighting School Segregation in Europe through Inclusive Education: A Position Paper," September, 2017.**
- **Helen F. Ladd and Edward B. Fiske, "Lessons for US Charter Schools from the Growth of Academies in England," November 3, 2016.**
- **The Conversation, "Affirmative Action Around the World," August 7, 2017.**

CULMINATING PAPER DUE APRIL 24th (two days later than listed in the syllabus)

Please e-mail (to my individual e-mail) some afternoons or evenings that would be convenient for you to schedule a phone call and the best number to reach you. You might want to have a topic for the culminating paper in mind first so we can discuss it when we talk.

Thank you—and all the best,

Iris

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