

**PADM-GP 4440: Education and Social Policy**  
**Spring 2022**  
**New York University**  
**Wagner Graduate School of Public Service**

Instructor: Jessica Wertheim

Class dates: Thursdays, March 24 to May 5

Email: [jw4295@nyu.edu](mailto:jw4295@nyu.edu)

Class times: 6:45-8:15pm

Bldg: GCASL Room: 275

Office hours: By appointment

**Course Summary**

This course focuses on current issues in education and social policy, with an emphasis on identifying underlying causes, how contextual factors present challenges for public schools, as well as considering potential solutions. Throughout the course we will engage in a critical examination of theoretical perspectives in policy formation, evidence for and against various policy choices, and an evaluation of those policies.

We will first discuss the role of schools to debate what exactly schools are supposed to do and how we measure their performance. In this section, we review why it is so challenging to understand what works in education, and the framework for understanding education inputs and outcomes. We will explore the context of U.S. education and develop tools and frameworks for evaluating specific approaches to solving policy challenges. We will analyze trends in U.S. student achievement, address the case for public intervention in the market for education, and discuss evidence about the problems facing U.S. education.

In the second half of the course we turn our attention to the intersection between education and social policy to focus on how different policy choices (e.g. around language, housing, regulatory landscape), as well as factors outside of schools, influence student outcomes and are a source of challenges for schools. We conclude by discussing the role of schools in an increasingly complex context and ever-changing political landscape.

**Other class information:**

NYU BrightSpace: You will need to have access to NYU BrightSpace. All announcements and class-related documents will be posted there.

Attendance: Please email me immediately if you have any conflicts with scheduled classes or assignments, as attendance is required in this course.

Academic integrity: NYU Wagner policies on academic integrity will be strictly enforced in this class. You can find the school's official statement on academic integrity here. Please contact me if you have any questions about these policies.

Accommodations: Any student requiring an accommodation due to a psychological, visual, mobility, or learning disability, or who is deaf or hard of hearing, should register with and consult with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980, 726 Broadway, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor ([www.nyu.edu/csd](http://www.nyu.edu/csd)). I am happy to provide any accommodations recommended by the Moses Center

## **Course Requirements and Grading**

### **1. Weekly Discussion Questions + Policy Search (15%)**

Weekly discussion questions: To encourage class discussion, please submit two discussion questions pertaining to the assigned reading materials and centered on an education issue of interest to you. These should be *submitted by midnight before each class in the NYU BrightSpace Forum*. The submitted questions will be used in our class discussion. These questions can be related to parts of the readings that you did not understand, ways that you relate the readings to education and social policies of interest to you, or ways in which the readings influenced your thinking.

Policy search: Our last week of class together, in lieu of submitting two weekly discussion questions, please come to class prepared with an article about a policy you believe should be implemented in either rural districts, urban districts, or suburban districts starting the fall of 2023. Be prepared to advocate for that policy using the data and outcomes from your article.

### **2. Policy Memo (25%)**

On a topic of your choosing (broadly related to schools and social policy) define a policy problem and its stakeholders, provide background context and evidence of the problem, and provide policy options/alternatives for consideration (these can be bullet points).

This is an individual assignment. (5-page maximum, double spaced). Additional guidelines for this assignment will be made available on NYU BrightSpace.

### **3. Policy Proposal (50%)**

Incorporating a revised version of Memo #1, define a policy problem and its stakeholders, provide background context and evidence of the problem, provide one or two policy options/alternatives for consideration and define a set of criteria for evaluating the revised options. Then, project the outcomes and confront the tradeoffs of your suggested alternatives, develop an argument in support of a single policy recommendation, and discuss feasibility of implementation. This is an individual assignment. Additional guidelines for this assignment will be made available on NYU BrightSpace.

### **4. Attendance and Participation (10%)**

Active student participation is important to keep each class engaging. Every student is expected to make at least one contribution each class. It is expected that students will be prepared to discuss all required readings for the week.

#### **Course text**

There is no required text for the course. If you would like background reading I recommend: Wheelan, C. (2011). *Introduction to Public Policy*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton.

All required readings will be posted on NYU BrightSpace.

<b>Class</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Item due</b>
1	The U.S. public education system  What are schools supposed to do? Why is it so hard to know what works?	Thursday, March 24  6:45-8:25pm	<b>Student Questionnaire</b>
2	NCLB, ESSA, and Factors that Contribute to Student Outcomes	Thursday, March 31  6:45-8:25pm	<b>Weekly Discussion Questions</b>
3	Immigration, Language, and Schools <i>Guest Lecturers: Kyle McDonald (he/his), Senior Director NYC DOE, Division of Multilingual Learners</i> <i>Dr. Owen (she/her), Associate Dean of Students at Yale-NUS</i>	Thursday, April 7  6:45-8:25pm	<b>Weekly Discussion Questions</b>
4	Neighborhood, Vouchers, and Housing Policy	Thursday, April 14  6:45-8:25pm	<b>Weekly Discussion Questions</b>  <b>Policy Memo</b>
5	Special Education and Disproportionality Monitoring Policy  <i>Guest Lecturer: Dr. Strassfeld (she/her), Professor of Special Education at UT Austin</i>	Thursday, April 21  6:45-8:25pm	<b>Weekly Discussion Questions</b>
6	Covid-19 and k-12 public education	Thursday, April 28  6:45-8:25pm	<b>Weekly Discussion Questions</b>
7	Social Intervention Influencing Policy	Thursday, May 5  6:45-8:25pm	<b>Policy Search</b>
<b>Policy proposal due via email by May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022 11:59PM, EDT</b>			

### **Week 1: What are schools supposed to do? Why is it so hard to know what works?**

Duncan, G. J. & Murnane, R. J. 2011. "Introduction: the American dream, then and now." In Duncan, G. & Murnane, R.J. eds. *Whither opportunity? Rising inequality, schools, and children's life chances*. New York: Russel Sage Foundation, ch 1.

Levin, H. 2012. "More than just test scores." *Prospects*, 42(3), 269-284.

Schanzenbach, D. W. 2012. "Limitations of experiments in education research." *Education Finance and Policy*, 7(2), 175-199.

Furstenberg, F. F. 2011. "The challenges of finding causal links between family educational practices and schooling outcomes." *Whither opportunity*, ch. 22.

## **Week 2: NCLB, ESSA, and In-School Factors that Contribute to Student Outcomes**

- Rhodes, J.H. 2014. *The Origins and Evolution of No Child Left Behind*. Cornell University Press. Pages 154 - 158
- McGuinn, P. (2016). From No Child Left Behind to the Every Student Succeeds Act: Federalism and the education legacy of the Obama administration. *The Journal of Federalism*, 46, 392-415.
- Chingos, M. M. 2013. "Class size and student outcomes: research and policy implications." *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 32(2), 411–438.
- Jackson, C. K. 2020. Does school spending matter? The new literature on an old question. *Confronting inequality: How policies and practices shape children's opportunities* (p. 165–186). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0000187-008>
- Ladd, H. F. 2008. School policies and the test score gap. In K. Magnuson & J. Waldfogel (Eds.) *Steady gains and stalled progress: Inequality in the black white test score gap*.

### **Optional**

- Simon, N. S., & Evans, G. W. 2014. Poverty and child development: Beyond the schoolyard gate. In J. Hall (Ed.) *Underprivileged school children and the assault on dignity: Policy challenges and resistance*. New York: Routledge Press.

## **Week 3: Immigration, Language, and Schools**

- Gándara, P. 2015. Charting the Relationship of English Learners and the ESEA: One Step Forward, Two Steps Back. *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences*, 1(3), 112-128. doi:10.7758/rsf.2015.1.3.06
- Menken, K. & Solorza, C. 2013. Where have all the bilingual programs gone?: Why prepared school leaders are essential for bilingual education. *Journal of Multilingual Education Research*, 4, 9-39.
- Robinson-Cimpian, J. P., & Thompson, K. D. 2015. "The effects of changing test-based policies for reclassifying English learners." *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*.
- Schwartz, A.E. & Stiefel, L. 2011. "Immigrants and inequality in public schools." *Wither opportunity*, ch.20
- Villegas, L. 2022. "Re-starting and Strengthening Accountability for English Learners." *New America*

### **Optional**

- Cortes, K. E. 2006. "The effects of age at arrival and enclave schools on the academic performance of immigrant children." *Economics of Education review*, 25(2), 121-132.
- Lead Coalition. 2019. Investing in our Future: A Multilingual Learner Policy Agenda for New York State

## **Week 4: Neighborhood, Vouchers, and Housing Policy**

The Myth That Busing Failed. 2019. New York Times. Listen Below:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/18/podcasts/the-daily/busing-school-segregation.html>

Burdick-Will, J., Ludwig, J., Raudenbush, S. W., Sampson, R. J., Sanbonmatsu, L., & Sharkey, P. 2011.

“Converging evidence for neighborhood effects on children’s test scores: an experimental, quasi-experimental, and observational comparison.” *Whither Opportunity*, ch. 12.

Chang, A. 2018 We can draw school zones to make classrooms less segregated. Vox. Found at :[https://](https://www.vox.com/2018/1/8/16822374/school-segregation-gerrymander-map)

[www.vox.com/2018/1/8/16822374/school-segregation-gerrymander-map](https://www.vox.com/2018/1/8/16822374/school-segregation-gerrymander-map)

Schwartz, H. 2011. Housing Policy is School Policy. *The Education Digest*; Ann Arbor Vol. 76, Iss. 6, 42-48

Schwartz, A. E., & Stiefel, L. 2014. Linking housing policy and school reform. In A. Lareau, & K. Goyette (Eds.) *Choosing homes, choosing schools*.

### **Optional**

Chetty, R., Hendren, N. & Katz, L.F. 2016. “The effects of exposure to better neighborhoods on children: new evidence from the Moving to Opportunity Experiment.” *American Economic Review*, 106(4), 855-902.

Jacob, B. A. 2004. “Public housing, housing vouchers, and student achievement: Evidence from public housing demolitions in Chicago.” *The American Economic Review*, 94(1), 233-258.

Jacob, B. A., Kapustin, M. & Ludwig, J. 2014. “The impact of housing assistance on child outcomes: Evidence from a randomized housing lottery.” Working Paper, University of Michigan

## **Week 5: Special Education and Disproportionality Monitoring Policy**

Cruz, R. A., Lee, J., Aylward, A. G., & Voulgarides, C. K. (2020). The effect of school funding on opportunity gaps for students with disabilities: Policy and context in a diverse urban district. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*, 1-12.

Ahram, R., Fergus, E., & Noguera, P. (2011). Addressing racial/ethnic disproportionality in special education: Case studies of suburban school districts. *Teachers College Record*, 113, 2233–2266.

Rossetti, Z. et. al., 2020. Parent Leadership and Civic Engagement: Suggestions for the Next Individuals

With Disabilities Education Act Reauthorization. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies* Vol. 31(2) 99–111

Morgan, P., Farkas, G., Cook, M., Strassfeld, N. M., Hillemeier, M. M., Pun, W. H., & Schussler, D. L. 2016. Are Black children disproportionately overrepresented in special education? A best-evidence synthesis. *Exceptional Children*, 83(2), 181-198.

Morgan, P. L., Farkas, G., Cook, M., Strassfeld, N. M., Hillemeier, M. M., Pun, W. H., Wang, Y., & Schussler, D. L. 2018. Are Hispanic, Asian, American Indian, or language minority children overrepresented in special education? *Exceptional Children*, 84(3), 261-279.

### **Optional**

Lim, S. 2020. The Capabilities Approach to Inclusive Education: re-envisioning the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act's Least Restrictive Environment, *Disability & Society*, 35:4, 570-588, DOI: 10.1080/09687599.2019.1649119

### **Week 6: Covid-19 and Schools**

García, E. & Weiss, E. 2020. COVID-19 and student performance, equity, and U.S. education policy. Economic Policy Institute. Washington, DC View this report at [epi.org/205622](https://www.epi.org/205622)

Lieberman, M. & Ujifusa, A., 2021. Schools and COVID Relief Funds. EdWeek.

Found at: <https://www.edweek.org/policy-politics/everything-you-need-to-know-about-schools-and-covid-relief-funds/2021/09>

Education Commission of the States. 2022. State Education Policy Tracking, Found at: <https://www.ecs.org/state-education-policy-tracking/>

Kraft, M., Simon, N., & Lyon, M. (2020). Sustaining a Sense of Success: The Importance of Teacher Working Conditions During the COVID-19 Pandemic. (EdWorkingPaper: 20-279). Retrieved from Annenberg Institute at Brown University: <https://doi.org/10.26300/35nj-v890>

### **Week 7: Social Intervention Influencing Policy**

Please come to class prepared with an article about a policy you believe should be implemented in either rural districts, urban districts, or suburban districts starting the fall of 2021 in K-12 schools. Be prepared to advocate for that policy using the data and outcomes from your article.

