

Race to the Top

Inequalities in Competition

Reform, Education, and Transformation

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May 3, 2011

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Certificate in Justice and Peace, Georgetown University (Spring 2011)

Acknowledgements:

Thank you Andria for your guidance and support

Thank you Nathaniel for telling me how it is and expecting nothing but the best

Thank you to the students I have worked with over the past four years. You have taught me more than I could have imagined, and have given me direction for the future.

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Abstract:

This thesis was designed to consider the new educational reform effort by the Obama administration, Race to the Top (RTTT). Its purpose is to demonstrate that RTTT will not have long lasting positive effects on education because of its base of competition, which by definition has a winner and a loser. There are many components of society to consider when thinking about education and reform. Each will be outlined and then compared to RTTT as an inefficient mechanism. A distinct challenge for I faced in writing the thesis derive from the lack of data on the actual effects of RTTT. The reform is only two years old yielding few results on what the actual affects RTTT has on students. With the lack of concrete information on the impact of RTTT, I analyze the products of the policy and its flaws through multiple lenses and theorists as well as my own.

The thesis begins with an introduction of the history of education reform in the United States as a base. Working from there, philosophical components of cultural expectations and norms as are examined to explain common assumptions about education. I will discuss how unsustainable RTTT's policy remains through economic principles and will explore segregation and current trends in low-income, minority education.

In carrying out the discussion, I attempted to explore areas from the past such as Jim Crow laws and its effects on the state of society and how that state contributes to the issues in education. I attempt to make the conversation not just about a policy that works, but the need of a policy that contributes to long-term change and success.

Methodology

This thesis was constructed in order to show the inefficiencies of the new educational reform effort by the Obama administration, Race to the Top (RTTT) and to show that multiple social and economic factors that contribute to the state of education. I began by trying to answer the question: “Why is RTTT harmful and what should reform consider to create lasting change?”

I chose to look at educational statistics from the United States, first nationally, then by states and also the District of Columbia. I then decided to focus the number on student test scores and poverty, for these numbers directly impact the argument. A distinct challenge stems from the lack of data on the actual effects of RTTT. The reform is only 2 years old yielding few result on what the actual affects RTTT has on students and other educational components. Fortunately, I used the National Center for Educational Statistics provided the numerical breakdowns of the state of education and poverty. Each report provided unbiased numbers and comparisons.

I then decided to take a qualitative, theoretical approach using the philosophies of multiple people in the social justice realm (Paulo Friere, John Lederach, Jonathan Kozol, Pierre Bourdieu) and connected each of their theories to provide different layers of the conflict. I used economic terms to describe the unrealistic ability for RTTT to last because it is a grant based, completive policy and in order to connect the theories together.

I have seen first hand some of the educational inequalities that occur in communities. From working inside classrooms to conversing with policy makers, my personal experiences

have contributed to my interest in the subject. I went to a school that was in a low-income urban neighborhood with a magnet program and have reflected on the inequalities that existed and still exist today between the students, teachers, and schools. Though I have my own personal interests, the theorists I have used and the data I have collected are unbiased on their own, but I have chosen specific parts of arguments that are conducive to the overall picture I want to show, education reform requires the inclusion of multiple topics and inclusion and that competition only perpetuates the static nature of current reform. I discovered each layer is a part of a larger whole, the state of education. No one part can be taken separately because the complexity of the education situation is comprised of and relies on multiple parts.

Introduction

The fight for educational opportunity internationally dates back to 1989 when the Convention on the Rights of the Child outlined the rights afforded by any child in the world. In Articles 28 and 29, the convention outlined education as a fundamental right for children. The United States did not sign onto this declaration, but has attempted a countrywide education reform in an effort to rectify the education system. In 2001, former president George W. Bush created the No Child Left Behind Act. This first attempt at reform since the 1960s backfired¹ in that it increased inequality and tension in a country that wished to thrive and for students that deserve a future. Today, President Barack Obama and Education Secretary Arne Duncan have commenced “Race to the Top” (RTTT), a race for states to gain money for their school districts. The word ‘race’ constitutes winners and losers. Yet again, someone will be left behind.

¹ Archived: Table of Contents: A Nation at Risk." *U.S. Department of Education*. Web. 25 Mar. 2011.

This thesis will focus on the value of equity, the idea that the U.S values and attempts to operate on equal access. The United States has thrived on the idea of equal access, especially in education since *Brown vs. Board of Education* in 1954, which held that segregation was harmful and separate did not equate to equal.² For decades, the U.S has fought for equal rights and opportunity and for decades the U.S has held itself to that standard. Yet, today the education of children is still separate and still unequal.

For the past four years I have had a unique opportunity to work with students deemed “basic” and “below basic” in literacy by the mandated state tests in public schools in Ward 7, a low-income population in Washington, DC. I have seen first hand high school students who are unable to write in complete sentences, who go to schools where the halls are dark and the windows stained, and who do not have the materials necessary to complete assignments and grasp subjects. Moreover, they know the students in high income; public schools on the other side of the city do not have to deal with the same burdens.

I have noticed, over the years, we often talk about human rights, the rights all should be afforded. With every experience I have inside the classroom and talking to elementary and secondary students, it becomes clearer to me: educational equality is a right that needs to exist for all students; it is a conflict that needs to be transformed.

In its efforts to not leave children behind, the system still does. RTTT, the new solution to quick education reform may have states quickly generating plans to qualify, but in reality not all of them can win. This thesis addresses (1) what happens to those who do not get the money, (2) what the culture of competition means for education, and the (3) need for

² “Civil Rights: *Brown v. Board of Education I* (1954).” *National Center for Public Policy Research - A Conservative Organization*. Web. 9 Mar. 2011. <<http://www.nationalcenter.org/brown.html>>.

education devoid of competition. The goal was and should be equal education for all children, not for those whose state can win. When that occurs those who lose will continue to decline in this new race for education.

This thesis will utilize the thoughts and conclusions of primarily four thinkers: Paulo Freire and the ‘banking method’³, Pierre Bourdieu and the ‘habitus’⁴, John Paul Lederach and the “big picture of conflict transformation”⁵, and Jonathan Kozol and segregation inequalities⁶. In the educational conversation there are many parts that build on each other to make a larger, more complex situation. This thesis will provide the connections among all of the different components of education and reform including the philosophical, political, economic, and physical. RTTT neglects to address the issues that effect education in a positive way and /or makes the situation worse with competition pressure.

This thesis will begin with Chapter 1, a snapshot of education in the United States. The snapshot is meant to give the background information, what the numbers really look like, before entering theoretical conversation. In Chapter 2, the thesis will give an overview of No Child Left Behind, the current education reform effort. The overview will highlight the rules as well as the disadvantaged NCLB created. In Chapter 3, RTTT will be introduced as the new grant based, competition reform effort, highlighting the problems it brings. Chapter 4 will introduce John Lederach’s “conflict transformation” and suggest looking at the educational crisis in a different lens. In Chapter 5, “Banking it and Capital”, the theories of

³ Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum, 2000. Print.

⁴ Bourdieu, Pierre. "Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction." *Power and Ideology in Education*. By Jerome Karabel and A. H. Halsey. New York: Oxford UP, 1977. 487-511. Print.

⁵ Lederach, John Paul. *The Little Book of Conflict Transformation*. Intercourse, PA: Good, 2003. Print.

⁶ Kozal, Jonathan. "Still Separate, Still Unequal: America's Educational Apartheid JONATHAN KOZOL / Harper's Magazine V.311, N.1864 1sep2005." *Mindfully.org | Mindfully Green*. Arper's Magazine V.311, N.1864 1sep2005, 1 Sept. 2005. Web. 10 Apr. 2011. <<http://www.mindfully.org/Reform/2005/American-Apartheid-Education1sep05.htm>>.

Friere and Bourdieu will connect cultural assumptions to the lack of attention given to them in RTTT. Then, in Chapter 6, the economic dysfunctions that occur with RTTT will shed light on the inability for RTTT to provide long-term, lasting improvement.

Chapters 7 and 8 will show how the United States is “still separate and still unequal” with socioeconomic and racial segregation as well as the individualistic and harmful structures capitalism creates. Chapter 9 will propose Restorative Justice, a continuation of the transformative process in order to come to long-term lasting change. Lastly, in Chapter 10, the thesis will ask the question: “Where do we go from here,” the conversation does not end in this thesis; it is an ongoing intricate process that needs attention.

1. A Snapshot Of U.S Education: Achievement and Poverty

The education system in the United States is in and has been in turmoil. In the latest set of data, in the 2008-2009 school year 49,809,606 students attended school and 92,334 schools existed.⁷ Out of these students 44.2 percent were low-income students; they were eligible for free and reduced priced lunches.⁸

Each year students have to take state and national tests to determine their knowledge of particular subjects. The most important years of testing include 4th grade and 8th grade. These tests separate student achievement in four different titles: below basic, basic, proficient, advanced, all of which provide insight into the achievement of the country's students. In 2009, 66 percent of students in the 4th grade achieved a basic mark on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading test and only 32 percent achieved a proficient.⁹ This high number of students at a basic level causes alarm. Breaking down the number by ethnicity, 41 percent of white students, 15 percent of Black students, 16 percent of Hispanic students received proficient.¹⁰ For those in low-income schools, only 17 percent of students were proficient.¹¹ By the time students reached the 8th grade, the numbers were worse. Only 30 percent of students received a Proficient mark on NAEP.¹²

It is estimated that over 42 million American adults cannot read and are functionally illiterate. A large percentage of high school students (20 percent) can be classified as

⁷ *National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) , a Part of the U.S. Department of Education.* Web. 03 Mar. 2011. <<http://nces.ed.gov/>>.

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² *ibid.*

functionally illiterate by time they enter the job market.¹³ The future problems start in elementary school where students score on basic levels of reading and literacy knowledge.

In the 2009-2010 School year 1,822 schools closed as a result of No Child Left Behind standards and other factors.¹⁴ In the schools in existence, the student to teacher ratio was 16.1 compared to 15.8 in 2009.¹⁵ The number of students who received free or reduced price lunch, which is sometimes used as a mechanism to measure poverty, was on average 47 percent.¹⁶ This number ranged from 24 percent of students in New Hampshire to a high of 72 percent of students eligible in District of Columbia.¹⁷ The number of students receiving free and reduced priced lunch shows the poverty students face in every state. In D.C the district has instituted a breakfast and supper program for students at all qualifying schools.¹⁸

There exist fundamental problems in the education of students. Low-test scores and indications of high poverty lead to issues in the population of students who will eventually enter the workforce and seek higher education. All of the above factors contribute to the “achievement gap”, a term used to describe the “gap that occurs when one group of students outperforms another group and the difference in average scores for the two groups is statistically significant.”¹⁹

¹³ National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) , a Part of the U.S. Department of Education. Web. 03 Mar. 2011. <<http://nces.ed.gov/>>.

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ Turque, Bill. "D.C. Schools Dinner Program Aims to Fight Childhood Hunger." *The Washington Post: National, World & D.C. Area News and Headlines - The Washington Post*. Web. 20 Apr. 2011. <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/10/18/AR2010101805040.html>>.

¹⁹ National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) , a Part of the U.S. Department of Education. Web. 03 Mar. 2011. <<http://nces.ed.gov/>>.

2. In Need of Reform and No Child Left Behind

In 1954, *Brown vs. Board of education* the Supreme Court's landmark case on education overturned previous decisions such as those found in *Plessy v Fergusson* "separate but equal".²⁰ As long as facilities had the same resources, segregation was accepted. The foundation of the *Brown vs. Board*'s decision came because of a system where equity of resources was nonexistent and because it perpetuated inefficiencies and treatment among people of different races.²¹ The court ruled and overturned "separate but equal" and the determined all people had a right to equality in education.²²

Equity, the balance and fairness of resources and access, is paramount. Applied to education, every student needs the same access, resources, and educational opportunities and success. All students should be provided the support and materials necessary to get them to the same high achieving levels. In 1981 the National Commission on Excellence in Education was chartered to review learning and teaching America's schools. *A Nation at Risk*, the title of the report issued by the Commission in 1983 stated:

Part of what is at risk is the promise first made on this continent: All, regardless of race or class or economic status, are entitled to a fair chance and to the tools for developing their individual powers of mind and spirit to the utmost. This promise means that all children by virtue of their own efforts, competently guided, can hope to attain the mature and informed judgment needed to secure gainful employment, and to manage their own lives, thereby serving not only their own interests but also the progress of society itself.²³

Regardless of all the varying reasons, the U.S established its foundation on the principle of equity and education for prosperity. The two terms equity and fair allude to the responsibility of governments and states to create institutions in which these two processes can carry

²⁰ "Civil Rights: *Brown v. Board of Education I* (1954)." *National Center for Public Policy Research - A Conservative Organization*. Web. 9 Mar. 2011. <<http://www.nationalcenter.org/brown.html>>.

²¹ *ibid.*

²² *ibid.*

²³ "Archived: Table of Contents: *A Nation at Risk*." *U.S. Department of Education*. Web. 25 Mar. 2011. <<http://www2.ed.gov/pubs/NatAtRisk/index.html>>.

themselves out. Unfortunately, this speech points out how the institutions around education have failed to provide the previously mentioned attributes. The report found that about 13 percent of all 17 year olds in the United States could be considered functionally illiterate, meaning they would not be able to complete the tasks needed for the job market.²⁴ Equally, in 2007, the rate of 5 to 17 year olds in poverty was 17.6.²⁵ Poverty has a great impact on the education of students. Supplies, food, and parental time for involvement, all become scarce as poverty increases, which have a direct affect on student achievement.

One would think after the land mark case *Brown vs. Board of Education*, one of the biggest education reform efforts would have had a lasting change. Unfortunately, the condition of schools and education is still separate and still unequal²⁶ leading to panic concerning test scores and overall achievement.

In recent years, education reform has become an important topic in America once again. As international test scores come back unsatisfactory, the nation discusses possible solutions, competitive workers, and successful students. The first big education reform effort since the 1960s came in the form as *No Child Left Behind*, which actually lead to students being left behind²⁷.

In the search for ways to make sure all students succeed, President George W. Bush signed into law the *No Child Left Behind* Act of 2001.²⁸ He signed it into law as a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). This initial ESEA was

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ *ibid.*

²⁶ Kozal, Jonathan. "Still Separate, Still Unequal: America's Educational Apartheid JONATHAN KOZOL / Harper's Magazine V.311, N.1864 1sep2005." *Mindfully.org | Mindfully Green*. Harper's Magazine V.311, N.1864 1sep2005, 1 Sept. 2005. Web. 10 Apr. 2011. <<http://www.mindfully.org/Reform/2005/American-Apartheid-Education1sep05.htm>>.

²⁷ "No Child Left Behind - ED.gov." *U.S. Department of Education*. Web. 3 Jan. 2011. <<http://www2.ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml>>.

²⁸ *ibid.*

first enacted in 1965 which set up standards for the funding of education in elementary and secondary schooling years,²⁹ the restriction of a national curriculum, and includes Title I (financial assistance to low income families), which NCLB held.³⁰

At a time when the public panicked about student achievement,³¹ NCLB expanded the role of the government in education. It created different measures designed to assess broad gains in student achievement.³² One of its goals included having states and schools more accountable for the education of students. The act included four components: (1) annual testing; (2) academic progress; (3) report cards; (4) teacher qualifications.³³

Beginning with the ESEA, standardized testing became a plausible way to gain assessments in a rapid and accurate manner. NCLB continued this assumption with the requirement of states to test students from 3rd grade to 8th grade annually in reading and mathematics.³⁴ The standards continued with eventual testing in science and all tests have to stay in line with individual state standards.

Academic progress meant bringing all students to “proficient” by 2014.³⁵ According to NCLB all students in a state need proficiency in understanding all on standards, not performing at a basic or below basic level. NCLB set up “adequate yearly progress” (AYP), a system with numbers in the law that states how much advancement students should gain.³⁶ These targets must

²⁹ *ibid.*

³⁰ Note that NCLB and ESEA, though both are a part of the education reform, are different parts of the reform effort.

³¹ Archived: Table of Contents: A Nation at Risk." *U.S. Department of Education*. Web. 25 Mar. 2011. <<http://www2.ed.gov/pubs/NatAtRisk/index.html>>.

³² No Child Left Behind - ED.gov." *U.S. Department of Education*. Web. 3 Jan. 2011. <<http://www2.ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml>>.

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ "History of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001." Pearson Education. Web. 2 Feb. 2011. <http://www.pearsonassessments.com/NR/rdonlyres/D8E33AAE-BED1-4743-98A1-BDF4D49D7274/0/HistoryofNCLB_Rev2_Final.pdf>.

³⁵ *ibid.*

³⁶ *ibid.*

be met each year including similar gains for all student populations in the school and for certain demographic subgroups (ie: black/ African-American, white, Hispanic, and Asian students, ESL, and disabled).

“Title I” is an act created under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Title I itself is a set of programs for the distribution of funding to schools and school districts with a high percentage of students from low-income families. In order to be considered a Title I school, about 40% of students must come from families that are deemed low income by the government. These funds are used for children in grades 1-6;

The purpose of this title is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging State academic achievement standards and state academic assessments. This purpose can be accomplished by — ... meeting the educational needs of low-achieving children in our Nation's highest-poverty schools, limited English proficient children, migratory children, children with disabilities, Indian children, neglected or delinquent children, and young children in need of reading assistance.... distributing and targeting resources sufficiently to make a difference to local educational agencies and schools where needs are greatest.³⁷

Title I is important to the larger discussion of education reform because the students impacted by Title I funding are the same students that need support in a time of reform. One interesting flaw in the competition of RTTT that will be discussed in depth later is the lack of leveling the playing field, for RTTT does not allot additional funding for Title I.³⁸

If a school receives Title I funding, and it fails to meet AYP, students in that school may have the option to attend other public schools.³⁹ If it continues to fail for more than two years, it can and will go under restructuring, meaning faculty and staff may change, or the school could

³⁷ "Title I - Improving The Academic Achievement Of The Disadvantaged." *U.S. Department of Education*. Web. 10 Mar. 2011. <<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg1.html>>.

³⁸ "Race to the Top (RTTT) « School Board News." *School Board News*. Web. 10 Mar. 2011. <<http://schoolboardnews.nsba.org/category/race-to-the-top-rttt/>>.

³⁹ "History of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001." Pearson Education. Web. 2 Feb. 2011. <http://www.pearsonassessments.com/NR/rdonlyres/D8E33AAE-BED1-4743-98A1-BDF4D49D7274/0/HistoryofNCLB_Rev2_Final.pdf>.

suffer termination. Restructuring can mean teacher firings, current faculty and staff kicked out, and can lead to school closures and student dissemination to other schools creating possible crowding, loss of jobs, and instability. Each state is required by the law to produce a report card divided by each racial sub group.⁴⁰ The report card has to include all of the relevant information about student progress. Districts must provide similar information. This report card correlates to the funding schools receive. Low scores means less funding, even for Title I schools.

Other than systematic requirements, there exists a new assumption that great teachers create high achieve students and teachers must be “highly qualified”. This broad title means each teacher must have has at least 2 years in college, an associate’s degree, or have passed the tests necessary to teach in the specific district.⁴¹ These teachers are then required to create a classroom where students achieve the highest gains and reach proficient, sometimes without the appropriate resources. The broad assumption of highly qualified becomes important for the next steps of reform.

The Controversy

NCLB, as a whole, has been controversial with theorists debating on the efficacy of the program.⁴² The propose of NCLB was to “ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high quality education.”⁴³ This marked the first time government created a larger role in its hand in public education.

One area of controversy lies within funding. The amount of money reserved for the plans are not sustainable and questions arise in the methods for the division of funding. The way in

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁴¹ "No Child Left Behind - ED.gov." *U.S. Department of Education*. Web. 3 Jan. 2011. <<http://www2.ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml>>.

⁴²

⁴³ *ibid.*

which NCLB rewards funding includes positive reinforcement in the form of money to schools that achieve, and for the schools who do not, a negative consequence happens, with no money.

In 2003, 28,134 schools did not make AYP and even though the number remains steady, perhaps because a school can remain on the list for multiple years before restructuring, NCLB continues to remove power from the classroom and create systems of bureaucracies for schools.⁴⁴ As the discussion on NCLB and education reform continues, the historical mission of the education system to prepare children has remained the same. The goal was to create citizens and develop individual powers as they enter the workforce as mentioned in the *Nation at Risk* piece. Unfortunately, the type of demand the US workforce requires has changed.⁴⁵ Regrettably, the tools and mission have as NCLB reached in the 21st century. As the nation continues to worry about international success in scores of students, this factor must be examined.

Another controversial factor is the separation that NCLB created, as the schools that fail AYP are mostly located in low income, at-risk neighborhoods. The coercion mechanism set up in NCLB does more harm than good.⁴⁶ NCLB does not provide the resources necessary to combat the issues in these areas. As teachers and administrators experience anxiety in order to make AYP, curriculum in subjects other than math and reading suffer,⁴⁷ and the learning gap between wealthier students and low-income students widens.⁴⁸ A recent study showed that: “the children

⁴⁴ "No Child Left Behind: Admirable Goals Disastrous Outcomes." Web. 10 Mar. 2011. <<http://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/wlsj12>>.

⁴⁵ "Five Years after NCLB Took Effect, Problems Remain - USATODAY.com." *News, Travel, Weather, Entertainment, Sports, Technology, U.S. & World - USATODAY.com*. Web. 10 Mar. 2011. <http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2007-06-06-schools-qa_N.htm>

⁴⁶ *ibid.*

⁴⁷ "No Child Left Behind: Admirable Goals Disastrous Outcomes." Web. 10 Mar. 2011. <<http://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/wlsj12>>.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

closest to making AYP, not those most in need of assistance, are the ones receiving the bulk of the attention”.⁴⁹ Children in high-risk, low-income schools are those being left behind.

As researchers study the results and effects of this education reform, more and more are finding the outcomes misleading.⁵⁰ The effectiveness of NCLB has been more difficult to measure than expected for some states have been accused of making their tests less rigorous over time. Some people are accused of giving students practice tests with questions on the exams.⁵¹ One study found that: “Using NAEP data on 4th graders the growth in student achievement was actually slowed since the introduction of NCLB.”⁵² A sense of urgency started to take over the country and a necessity of reform became present.

NCLB intended to raise educational achievement and close the racial and ethnic achievement gaps. Unfortunately, the complex requirements of the law have failed to achieve these goals, and have provoked negative consequences that harm students and their learning even though its intention was to help. Teaching to the test, focus on low level skills, inappropriate assessment of English, avoiding giving the numbers of low-scoring students, and more separation are all consequences from the act. The goal NCLB set of proficient students in reading and math by 2014 is nowhere close to succeeding. In addition, the law fails to address the pressing problems of unequal educational resources across schools serving wealthy and poor children and the shortage of well-prepared teachers in high-need schools.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

⁵¹ "Teaching to the Test." *University of Manitoba*. Web. 10 Mar. 2011.
<<http://umanitoba.ca/publications/cjeap/articles/volante.html>>.

⁵² Dee, Thomas, and Brian Jacob . "Evaluating NCLB : Education Next." *Education Next : Education Next Is a Journal of Opinion and Research about Education Policy*. Web. 10 Mar. 2011.
<<http://educationnext.org/evaluating-nclb/>>.

Unfortunately, NCLB has had no positive effect; many have worsened the gap between minorities and white students, as well as English as second language learners.⁵³ With its requirement to include all students in classes to make sure no one is left behind, the attention needed for each section has been ignored. A new reform was needed to reboot the system.

3. The “New” Reform: Race to the Top (RTTT)

In the new presidential administration, President Barack Obama and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan outlined a plan to reinvent, but ultimately keep NCLB. As a part of their plan, they created Race to the Top (RTTT). This grant based reform effort provides money competitively to states that meet certain requirements.⁵⁴ In the grant, \$4.35 billion dollars became up for grabs and encouraged the 50 states to rethink and remodel their system of education.⁵⁵

In a short amount of time (2009 to 2011), The Obama administration created a system for educational change, RTTT. Unfortunately, the RTTT does not guarantee change for students across the country; not every one can win the competition, and every district does not get the same amount of money if their state wins. RTTT creates a winner verses loser scenario. Each state that wants consideration for the grant submits a proposal to the federal government that demonstrates the rules and guidelines they set.

The government chooses which states win and which states will not. As a result, each state tries its best to look better than the other through innovative policies. Though positive effects may occur through RTTT, one thing remains certain: students should not be held accountable losing districts. As the country continues the conversations about the need to be competitive across the globe, students at home lose everyday and RTTT perpetuates that

⁵³ "Race to the Top Fund." *U.S. Department of Education*. Web. 10 Mar. 2011. <<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/index.html>>.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*

⁵⁵ *ibid.*

system. The perpetuations will be discussed in the upcoming chapters by showing how home life impacts school life.

The Rules

In February of 2009, President Barack Obama signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment act of 2009 (ARRA).⁵⁶This act of legislation was created to help stimulate the economy as well as fund reform in education. As a part of ARRA, \$4.35 billion were set-aside for the RTTT Fund. RTTT is the new grant based reform hitting every state in the country. RTTT is a competitive grant described as being:

Designed to encourage and reward States that are creating the conditions for education innovation and reform, for achieving significant improvement in student outcomes, including making substantial gains in student achievement, closing achievement gaps, improving high school graduation rates, and ensuring student preparation for success in college and careers.⁵⁷

With the announcement of RTTT, states started putting together the foundation of what was needed in order to “win” the funds allocated. Although \$4.35 billion dollars seems like a large amount of money, the United States is composed of 50 states and over 13,000 school districts.⁵⁸ Only schools winning would receive funds leaving other schools, whose states did not win, trying to implement change without the necessary resources.

RTTT sets up four specific criteria of reform that a participating state must possess:

1. Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy;
2. Building data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principles about how they can improve instruction;

⁵⁶ "Race to the Top Fund." *U.S. Department of Education*. Web. 10 Mar. 2011. <<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/index.html>>.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*

⁵⁸ *ibid.*

3. Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most; and
4. Turning around lowest achieving schools.⁵⁹

The standards described here create, what seems like, attainable guidelines for states to model after. However, models of education conducive to the demand in the job market and global competition do not exist. A data driven system provides information sets, but it does not provide the understanding of the needs individual children and schools have. It also does not account for student growth in areas other than those on the test (reading, science, math).

A New Hope?

RTTT has quickly picked up momentum with almost every state restructuring and creating new plans to gain the funds needed for their districts.⁶⁰ In the January 2011 State of the Union Address President Obama regarded RTTT as “the most meaningful reform of our public schools in a generation.”⁶¹ He and his administration fully believe this effort will help the gap and will help states create meaningful connects between different parts of the education system. For instance, California and the District of Colombia have fought to link student achievement with teacher salaries.⁶² The discussion of the importance to the system relevant in NCLB has expanded to the importance of the teacher. The classroom and the over system are now linked into one.

With RTTT the charter school movement has been able to see more mobility. Charter schools are education institutions that take money both public money and private money.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*

⁶⁰ *ibid.*

⁶¹ "Race to the Top : NYSED." *New York State Education Department*. Web. 10 Mar. 2011. <<http://usny.nysed.gov/rttt/>>.

⁶² *ibid.*

They have the ability to raise funds for schools, unlike regular public schools, and are not subject to some rules and regulations required for traditional public schools.⁶³ To participate in RTTT, states remove caps preventing the creation of more charter schools, and instead encourage them in order to stay competitive for the grant competition⁶⁴. Now, there is a stronger effort to create new systems in the form of public charters instead of focusing on rectifying the traditional public schools that fail. The specific guidelines of RTTT and the definitions it provides has come the closest to a U.S reform with a universal system and monetary gains, with a competitive game.

4. Rephrasing the Problem, It is a Conflict:

The state of education is often referred to as a problem, an issue that needs fixing. The word problem has a daunting connotation, one to be feared. Instead, looking at the educational situation as a conflict allows a transformation process. A conflict emphasizes the possibility for transformation. Conflict transformation is:

To envision and respond to the ebb and flow of social conflict as live giving opportunities for creating constructive change processes that reduce violence, increase justice in direct interaction and social structures, and respond to real-life problems in human relationships.⁶⁵

⁶³National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), a Part of the U.S. Department of Education. Web. 03 Mar. 2011. <<http://nces.ed.gov/>>.

⁶⁴"Race to the Top Fund." U.S. Department of Education. Web. 10 Mar. 2011. <<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/index.html>>.

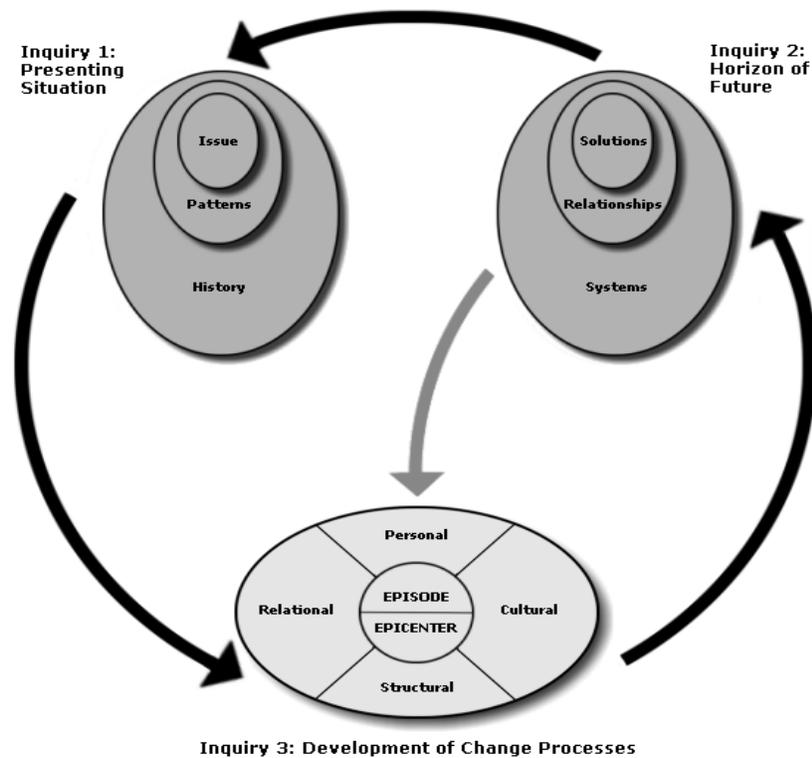
⁶⁵ Lederach, John Paul. *The Little Book of Conflict Transformation*. Intercourse, PA: Good, 2003. Print.

This requires the ability to look at conflict positively and to see the relationships between people.

Conflict Transformation also

means to be constructive by building and shaping and realizing conflict can move from negative to positive, and participating in direct action.⁶⁶

John Paul Lederach asks the question, “How can we address ‘A’ and at the same time build ‘B’?”⁶⁷



The answer to this question, in terms of short term and long-term goals is to focus not only on the individual episodes, but also the epicenter in order to build lasting change all while acknowledging the conflict that still exists. Lederach’s “Map of Conflict”, which has 3 parts, presenting the situation, the horizon of the future and the development of change processes provides a paradigm to view the situation in that focuses on the past, present and future.

The epicenter, or the “rational patterns from which episodes emerge,”⁶⁸ consists of many larger issues like segregation, capitalism, economics, and is connected to different

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ ibid.

⁶⁸ Lederach, John Paul. *The Little Book of Conflict Transformation*. Intercourse, PA: Good, 2003. Print.

factors of a nation including culture, economy, philosophy, and practices. An episode is an individual occurrence. Today the episode is the failing education system, student achievement, and overall success. The epicenter is the history of education, segregation, systems, and cultural expectations. In order to create lasting change, conflict transformation must occur. Lederach proposes the “Big Picture” for conflict transformation (See Figure 1). One must understand the present situation, have expectations for the future and understand how it will affect different relationships, and it must address and understand all of the components and processes: personal, relational, cultural, and structural. These relationships are not about completion, and solutions will be absent of such as well, for understanding the needs and creating strategies that tackle all of the different components has the most value.

There exists a conflict with RTTT. In order to transform the conflict from negative outcomes to positive outcomes, the conflict transformation and restorative processes must be applied.

The Conflict

By definition, a race creates winners and losers. As phase one of RTTT comes to a close and phase two continues, the funds promised are dwindling with each state that wins. RTTT has created a system in which not all win, winners receive varied benefits, districts do not receive the same amount, schools do not receive the same support, and ultimately, in the wake of competition, some students lose.

As the education reform continues from NCLB to RTTT, the problems of the former seem to have some answers in the latter. Unfortunately, RTTT creates a new system, one that

goes against the belief of equity most Americans fight to achieve. The actions the government takes directly impacts the students in the classroom, and will sometimes replicate it. The competition scenario ultimately harms the reform effort and will potentially create harmful effects for districts and students who do not win. In education, the model should promote inclusion and equity.

As the competition scenario continues, this reform insufficiently provides one important thing that NCLB lacked as well. The U.S is at the top of the list for children in poverty in the industrialized world.⁶⁹ Studies have found that poverty directly impacts a student's ability to learn.⁷⁰ With students starting off at an economic disadvantage, competition does not start off on a level playing field. Without rectifying the initial set backs, the reform may not have crucial effects. Further more, RTTT does not address other issues like cultural capital that makes up the system.

5. Banking it in and 'Capital'

Paulo Freire asserts in his educational theory that all education is political.⁷¹ This assumption leads to the premise that the government's wants will translate to the classroom. He argues that schooling is never neutral. Instead it always serves political interests and impedes others, especially the oppressed. Thinking about it in terms of Race to the Top, the standards and interests presented by the government will be replicated in the classroom, there is a standard and some will win, while others lose.

⁶⁹ "Child Poverty: U.S. Leads Industrialized Nations with Appallingly High Rates." *People's World*. Web. <<http://www.peoplesworld.org/child-poverty-u-s-leads-industrialized-nations-with-appallingly-high-rates/>>.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ McCowan, Tristan. "Approaching the Political in Citizenship Education." *Educate* 6.1 (2006): 57-70. Web. 11 Mar. 2011.

RTTT perpetuates Freire's idea of the banking method. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire introduces the "banking method". Freire explains it as:

In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing. Projecting an absolute ignorance onto others, a characteristic of the ideology of oppression, negates education and knowledge as processes of inquiry.⁷²

The government decided they know what is best and disseminated the information to the masses. RTTT created an outlined standard of what the government believes leads to success in districts. With the combination of monetary incentive, and a designated course of action it was assumed one of the best models that states should consider. This structure moves from governmental expectations to state guidelines, to district plans, to the classroom and the inherent relationships in it, all interrelated and connected to each other.

Starting with the governmental reform, the projection of ignorance translated onto the states. As a grant based reform, RTTT continues to include standardized testing and asks states to create a mechanism for evaluating teachers. The teacher evaluations also include the impact of teaching on the scores students receive on tests. Before moving forward, it is important to note Freire's observations of the oppressive practices and attitudes between a teacher and a student in most systems of education. A few examples include:

- (a) the teacher teaches and the students are taught
- (b) the teacher knows everything and the student knows nothing...
- (c) the teacher chooses and enforces his choice, and the students comply.

⁷² Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum, 2000. Print.

(d) the teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher.

(e) the teacher chooses the program content, and the students (who were not consulted) adapt to it.⁷³

These relationships observed by Freire in an oppressive classroom apply directly to RTTT, the states of education and all those affected by it, creating a static relationship. If one substitutes the word teacher with government and the word students with all of the other components (state, district, school, classroom, teacher, student) the relationship between the classroom educational environment and politics becomes transparent, the government knows and the states must follow if they want to gain funding, and the government chooses the relevant content and the states adapt to it without consultation. By creating a standard and the inclusion of competition, the effects trickle down to the classroom. This includes the depositing of actual information into students in order to pass the tests that are required by each state and factored into the evaluation of teachers. People in the academic world call this teaching to the test.⁷⁴

RTTT creates and participates in the depositing of information. Another tier to this problem relies on the performance of schools in this paradigm. If a state wins the RTTT grant, they would have had to of created a plan that abides by the regulations and demonstrated the high possibilities of success. This means the state created a “rigorous” test as defined by the RTTT guideline. This also means the state has created a mechanism linking teacher success with student achievement. If student success is correlated to the scores on a

⁷³ *ibid*

⁷⁴ Popham, James. "Teaching to the Test?" *Helping All Students Achieve* 58.6 (2001): 16-20. Web.

test and those scores demonstrate how well a school is doing, new models suggest it also then relates to how well a teacher is doing.⁷⁵ Each state wants significant gains, and each teacher wants a good evaluation. When a good evaluation is directly linked to test scores, then a teacher wants his students to succeed so the phenomenon of teaching to the test, or banking can arise.

For low performing schools, which were already struggling before the RTTT funds, the need to pass AYP remain functional overshadows the actual learning necessity for students. With the higher risk of failure there comes a higher risk of depositing information through the banking method. Students and districts expected to ‘bank’ more information have a greater chance of failure, generating Freire’s oppression.⁷⁶ All of these mechanisms existed before RTTT in NCLB, providing evidence of the lack of change in educational reform thought by policy makers.

The growing concern of student achievement begs the question why the education reform efforts still seem to oppress rather than create mechanisms for students to learn for themselves, develop their critical thinking, knowledge, and problem solving. Freire expresses this; “the solution is not to integrate them into the structure of oppression, but to transform that structure so that they can become beings for themselves.”⁷⁷ The structure must create opportunity for students to grow, analyze, and come to conclusions. Integrating students into systems that have failed perpetuates the system. Instead, for transformation to occur, systems must change. A system must exist that does not create dependence for the

⁷⁵ Turque, Bill. "D.C. Launches Rigorous Teacher Evaluation System - Washingtonpost.com." *The Washington Post: National, World & D.C. Area News and Headlines - The Washington Post*. Web. 03 Apr. 2011. <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/09/30/AR2009093004729.html>>.

⁷⁶ Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum, 2000. Print.

⁷⁷ Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum, 2000. Print.

people involved. Instead, the structure should provide the ability for independent growth and achievement.

This mechanism continues to replicate, unknowingly, what Pierre Bourdieu calls the “habitus”. Habitus refers to a system of dispositions that operate in synchronization with the structural principles of the social world.⁷⁸ He suggests people learn this habitus at home and in social networks (sports, dance classes, etc). Habitus is learned and replicated, with the habitus of education being set by a certain group, the middle class. Two students can have a very different habitus. For one student (Student A), the mother requires weekly participation in soccer in order to obtain team skills and tutoring on the weekends in order to keep up with studies. When it is Student A’s bed time, she discusses with her parents why she should be able to stay up a bit later and when at restaurants, her parents insist she orders on her own, even as a child. The second student (Student B) has a very different experience. She get along well with her friends in the neighborhood, doesn’t have tutoring on the weekends because her family cannot afford private lessons, and when she is told it is bed time she goes because she must respect her elders. When each student is in a classroom that requires teamwork and asks students to create arguments and defend their opinions, one student may be at a different advantage than the other because there exists a habitus in the classroom that aligns closer with one student’s rather than the other’s.

Habitus relates to “field” and capital, two terms important to Bourdieu and this discussion. The “field” is a structured space in the social realm that contains its own rules,

⁷⁸ Bourdieu, Pierre. "Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction." *Power and Ideology in Education*. By Jerome Karabel and A. H. Halsey. New York: Oxford UP, 1977. 487-511. Print.

ideas of domination, legitimate opinions, and other qualifications.⁷⁹ In the realm of education, Race to the Top and NCLB have created a certain field with its own criteria, set by a dominant set of ideas. Once these, or any rules are internalized, the habitus is created. Education currently has a specific habitus. This habitus in most cases is a middle class standard that is not always perpetuated explicitly, but without knowledge or without attention. Instead the standards set by a specific group of people, with a similar habitus create the policy that trickles down. RTTT reiterates that standard, standard based tests and competition create success without addressing the larger cultural and structural issues already in existence. Bourdieu assumes that with different habituses and the inclusion of a dominate habitus in the system, those with a lower class habitus may be at a disadvantage, or rather have more to learn within the defined system. Examples of habitus include appropriate behavior in class, test-taking discipline. Looking back to Student A and Student B, the students whose experience most aligns with the values replicated in the classroom has a higher success rate.

These differences in habitus lead to clear differences in social and symbolic capital, and the current reform efforts further perpetuate this. Social capital refers to “the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition.”⁸⁰ Social capital produces the symbolic capital, or prestige that can be leveraged against those with less capital.

⁷⁹ *ibid*

⁸⁰ *ibid*

The education of the child should focus on the leveling of the playing field and the success of students. Leveling the playing fields means providing access to methods that close the gap between students in every way. It also means creating policy and systems that do not discriminate against people with different habituses. The position of symbolic capital and social capital create a space where the advantage goes to the schools and districts with high amounts of those type of capital: higher income, higher educational capital, more leverage, more involvement, with more understanding of the system.⁸¹ There are students inherently left behind in the current social system. Instead of addressing this inequity, Race to the Top furthers it, providing states that pass the requirements more monetary capital, but lacks the social capital needed to make a change for schools that are at the bottom of the symbolic capital.

Race to the Top also contributes to symbolic violence. It uses its symbolic capital as the governmental answer, supported by monetary systems, the president, and a certain habitus. It is also used as the power against agents with less of that power like states, school districts, schools, classrooms, and seeks to change and reform their actions with their own. These mechanisms are accepted as right because of where they come from, but instead should be challenged in order to produce a system conducive to all, excluding none.

One other concept to take into consideration is cultural capital. In the realm of education, this can be described as the manners and reaction one learns.⁸² For Bourdieu, this capital is apparent in the formal education processes. Success means a range of cultural

⁸¹ Grenfell, Michael, and David James. *Bourdieu and Education: Acts of Practical Theory*. London: Falmer, 1998. Print.

⁸² Bourdieu, Pierre. "Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction." *Power and Ideology in Education*. By Jerome Karabel and A. H. Halsey. New York: Oxford UP, 1977. 487-511. Print.

behaviors that are not just academic, dress, stride, and public character/manners. The assumption that the structures set in place are middle class based means some children learn these behavioral standards at home for they are a part of this specific class, while others may not. Cultural capital can fit teacher and school expectations, while a lack of cultural capital can be misunderstood. Cultural capital can be a source of symbolic violence, where the working class can see educational success of their higher-class peers as legitimate when it is actually an inherent class based inequality.⁸³

The banking method, in combination with habitus, field, cultural, symbolic, and social capital, provide a base of inconsistencies relevant to current education reform. While the reforms attempts to rectify educational injustices, the effort does not. Unfortunately, no focus is on rectifying the cultural and systematic violence still existent, and does not attempt to fully create an even playing field. Instead, it creates more standards that are perpetuations of the already existent habitus. Without change in this perception, students are still left behind. This applies to a complaint about the entirety of the education system, and not just the reform. Instead of creating policy to combat the issues found with inequity of capital, RTTT simply does not address it. Not only does RTTT neglect cultural capital, it also contains inefficiencies pertaining to monetary capital.

6. The Economics of it All...

Economically, RTTT creates the unfortunate phenomenon of diminishing marginal returns. Diminishing marginal returns occur in the short run when a factor is fixed. In the case of RTTT, that factor is monetary capital. If a factor of production is increased (the

⁸³Ibid.

giving out of the grants) there will come a point where production will have to cease. The production will eventually cease because the capital is fixed, which means it will eventually run out.

Without more money (and the amount needed is unlikely with the new budget)⁸⁴ the success of the grant will eventually run out of funds. Relying on money to fix the problem is not a plausible long-term solution, as money runs out so will the eagerness of states to comply with policy according to supply and demand theory.⁸⁵ Ultimately, this produces another system for winners and losers based on monetary means that will deplete.

Another inequality, price discrimination, presents itself. Price discrimination involves charging different price to different groups of people for the same good. In the system currently intact and with the introduction of RTTT, a state can be rewarded money.⁸⁶ Once the money is rewarded, the state will then distribute it to the districts that will distribute it to the schools. If the amount of money is not equal across the board, price discrimination sets up another mechanism of failure. Some districts, schools, and students will end up paying high prices. This price could be the lack of resources, or unequal resources to a similar district, or even a similar state. There ultimately exists a decline in consumer surplus; meaning graduation rate and district success.

Economic efficiency creates a scarcity of monetary resources, upon which RTTT depends. Within the budget, a maximum amount of money, a ceiling, is established. As each

⁸⁴ Sawchuk, By Stephen. "Education Week: NEA Plan for Rewriting NCLB Departs From Obama's." *Education Week American Education News Site of Record*. Web. 10 Mar. 2011. <<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2010/04/13/29nea.h29.html?tkn=WYOFx6T29VXvr2KvSQ8NZGi2 q/1xVOvEa9>>.

⁸⁵ *Economics E-Journal*. Web. 10 Mar. 2011. <<http://www.economics-ejournal.org/>>.

⁸⁶ "Race to the Top : NYSED." *New York State Education Department*. Web. 10 Mar. 2011. <<http://usny.nysed.gov/rttt/>>.

state takes its portion, less is left in the entirety. With the ceiling, only a minimum number of school districts can benefit. In combination with the previous theories, the inequality inherent in the RTTT policy is unacceptable for the success of students wholly.

7. Still Separate Still Unequal

Philosophically and economically RTTT does not address a host of inequalities as discussed above. Jonathan Kozol addresses these discrepancies in his article “Still Separate Still Unequal: America’s educational Apartheid,” in which he argues schools today are still segregated and still unequal. Kozol explains this phenomenon by writing:

The truth, unhappily, is that the trend, for well over a decade now, has been precisely the reverse [of integration]. Schools that were already deeply segregated twenty-five or thirty years ago are no less segregated now, while thousands of other schools around the country that had been integrated either voluntarily or by the force of law have since been rapidly resegregating.⁸⁷

A study in 2010 found that 80% of students in a high need public school were black or Hispanic while 75% of students in low need schools were white.⁸⁸ On average, students from these schools did not gain proficiency on the educational assessments given by states on reading and mathematics.⁸⁹ These numbers alone show the discrepancy in the intermixing of students and where they attend school.

After the struggle for integration, it is interesting to see how many schools are going through contemporary segregation yet again. Segregated schools in segregated neighborhoods still exist. Schools in non-segregated neighborhoods where certain

⁸⁷ Kozal, Jonathan. "Still Separate, Still Unequal: America's Educational Apartheid JONATHAN KOZOL / Harper's Magazine V.311, N.1864 1sep2005." *Mindfully.org | Mindfully Green*. Arper's Magazine V.311, N.1864 1sep2005, 1 Sept. 2005. Web. 10 Apr. 2011. <<http://www.mindfully.org/Reform/2005/American-Apartheid-Education1sep05.htm>>.

⁸⁸ "The Condition of Education 2010." *National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Home Page, a Part of the U.S. Department of Education*. Web. 10 Mar. 2011. <<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2010028>>.

⁸⁹ *ibid*.

populations have the ability to send their children to alternative educational institutions also contain segregation.

Some educators make the argument that when considering demographics, one of the only realistic goals should be the creating strong, empowered, and well funded schools in low income, segregated neighborhoods.⁹⁰ One flaw resides in this thinking process:

“The willingness to set aside the promises of [Brown v. Board of Education] –though never stating this or even thinking of it clearly in these terms –to settle for the promise made more than a century ago in *Plessy v. Ferguson*... separate but equal was accepted as a tolerable rationale for the perpetuation of a dual system in American society.”⁹¹

The idea of equity alone still exists, something RTTT also neglects to consider and reform.

The system’s set up does not consider these factors.

Some schools have resources while other schools do not.⁹² While RTTT tries to balance this with the money available it is neither sustainable, nor does the concept of compete for these funds create easy access for those without. Other questions RTTT should answer are how much is adequate for per pupil spending, and to create equality making sure the same about is spent on every student. In 1998, New York’s Board of Education spent about \$8,000 on education of a child in the third grade in a New York public school. In a suburb, that number increased to \$12,000 for a middle class neighborhood, and increased even more to \$18,000 for the wealthiest neighborhoods.⁹³ A report in 2010 showed that a

⁹⁰ Bryan, Julia. *Strengths-Based Partnerships: A School-Family-Community Partnership Approach to Empowering Students*. American School Counselor Association, 2010. Print.

⁹¹ Kozal, Jonathan. "Still Separate, Still Unequal: America's Educational Apartheid JONATHAN KOZOL / Harper's Magazine V.311, N.1864 1sep2005." *Mindfully.org | Mindfully Green*. Arper's Magazine V.311, N.1864 1sep2005, 1 Sept. 2005. Web. 10 Apr. 2011. <<http://www.mindfully.org/Reform/2005/American-Apartheid-Education1sep05.htm>>.

⁹² *ibid.*

⁹³ *ibid.*

New York school district with few low-income students received about \$17,000 per pupil, while a district with 30% of low-income students received about \$14,000 per pupil.

Adding to the conversation, the achievement gap between white and black children has been significantly large, which is reversed from the decades before the 1980s where the gap narrowed, “the period in which school segregation steadily decreased –started to widen once more in the early 90ss when the federal courts began the process of resegregation by dismantling the mandates of the Brown decision.”⁹⁴ The physical position of a child matters to the reform conversation; these are the places where graduation rates are down, proficiency is not met. Yet, RTTT creates a competition when the starting line is unequal.

Society has become complacent with the generally segregated communities, but research shows integration matters. The population in low performing schools roughly reflects the entire system, which are overwhelmingly minority and poor. Most of the highest performing schools are opposite.⁹⁵ After *Brown v. Board* and initial attempts to desegregate, the conversations stopped. The transformation of racial segregation with socioeconomic segregation has created separation norms. Reform has become static in integration and educational equity.

RTTT does not produce any additional funding. Title I directly impacts the schools in low performing low income neighbor hoods. This funding directly impacts the student populations mentioned in this discussion. Unfortunately, RTTT continues to grant funding without equally increasing Title I funding for low-income students, again creating an uneven

⁹⁴ *ibid.*

⁹⁵ "Fearing a Class System in the Classroom; A Strict Curriculum, but Only for Failing Schools, Mostly in Poor Areas of New York ABBY GOODNOUGH / New York Times 19jan2003." *Mindfully.org* | *Mindfully Green*. Web. 10 Mar. 2011. <<http://www.mindfully.org/Reform/2003/Classroom-Strict-Curriculum19jan03.htm>>.

starting line for students in the race of education that has been set up. The truth of the matter is, funding for Title I is as important when thinking about the funding states receive. How can one expect fair results in a competition that is uneven?

An excerpt from Kozol's *Still Separate Still Unequal* addresses this challenge:

As racial isolation deepens and the inequalities of education finance remain unabated and take on new and more innovative forms, principals of many inner-city schools are making choices that few principals in public schools that serve white children in the mainstream of the nation ever need to contemplate. Many have been dedicated to vast amounts of time and effort to create architecture of adaptive strategies that promise incremental gains within the limits of inequity allows.⁹⁶

RTTT is indeed an innovated strategy, but one that still requires the methods above, again showing the uneven playing field.

8. Structural Inequalities in Competition

Competition creates a general platform, there must be a winner and there must be a loser. But, when a nation focuses on equity for all, this assumption directly contradicts itself, as does RTTT. There exists an inherent inequity in competition structures as demonstrated in a capitalistic society.

Competition and Capitalism

Capitalism by default creates a system in which the best, or those most equipped, wins. Capitalism is a competition. As a system, one America follows; capitalism strives on the assumption that the individual is sovereign. This means the way of thinking is individualistic, that is, the individual is the center of his or her own world. The concept

⁹⁶ Kozal, Jonathan. "Still Separate, Still Unequal: America's Educational Apartheid JONATHAN KOZOL / Harper's Magazine V.311, N.1864 1sep2005." *Mindfully.org* | *Mindfully Green*. Arper's Magazine V.311, N.1864 1sep2005, 1 Sept. 2005. Web. 10 Apr. 2011. <<http://www.mindfully.org/Reform/2005/American-Apartheid-Education1sep05.htm>>.

draws on the ideals of the Enlightenment that individuality and individuals make up a society that pursues their own interests, “economic freedom”.⁹⁷

Operating on the value of equity, and drawing from the continuous fights for equality in education, to operate on a capitalistic system in education is contradictory. RTTT replicates capitalistic ideas by creating a good; it also drives on the competition of individuals (in this case, the states). As states are interested in their own individual needs, each is going to do what is necessary to gain access to the product and create systems that are more competitive and more appealing than the next to get them. In this system, sight is lost on the actual goal of education, to ensure every child in the United States has equal access in education.

As individual needs become the same as the next individual, competition can take a harmful turn. First, slavery was created as an institution because of capitalism. When cotton became a lucrative market, in order for plantation owners to be competitive, they had to have the ability to produce large amounts of cotton at a time. Slave labor created the opportunity for the competition to survive at the risk of African American slave.⁹⁸ That competition produced a system of inequity and human rights violations. A product was needed, slavery at one point was the cost efficient way of providing that need, and individuals profited. It produce the materials needed, it also created a system of oppression, creating the inability for African Americans to compete, closing the opponent gap.

⁹⁷ "Globalization and Economic Development: Impact of Social Capital and Institutional Building - Cheng - 2008 - American Journal of Economics and Sociology." *Wiley Online Library*. Web. 10 Mar. 2011. <<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1536-7150.2008.00600.x/ful>

⁹⁸ *THE ROAD TO HELL Is Not Paved with Good Intentions*. Web. 15 Feb. 2011. <<http://www.theroadtohellonline.com/>>.

Jim Crow laws show clearly the dangers of capitalism and competition in a post slavery society. Freed slaves gained restrictions from the majority class to restrict competition including use of specific systems, creating the inability to gain political positions and other spaces of competition. Before *Brown v Board of Education* capitalism had constructed ideas to “justify the manifest injustice of concentration of wealth and oppression of working people.... Capitalism under a democratic system of government allowed everyone to compete equally and many people were able to reap enormous wealth,”⁹⁹ that had, appeal emotionally. Jim Crow laws, on the other hand, were used as a structural violence to secure privileged for some while destroying the instructions of community and equality.

The capitalistic racism present in society trickled down and created new norms. With the end of Jim Crow laws and the end of segregated schools because of *Brown*, Cheryl Brown Henderson notes:

There were many unanticipated legacies of [*Brown v. Board of Education*]. The most obvious is white flight. Who could have anticipated that whites would start leaving communities because their schools were going to be integrated? Who would have thought that an academic achievement gap would be something that we would be talking about five decades later?¹⁰⁰

All of these mechanisms were a direct reaction to the threat of losing in a capitalistic system. The amount of people competing became larger, the structural protection against people was broken and new systems were put into place to again try to find away to gain individualized wins over other citizens.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid

Balancing competition with equality does not work as demonstrated through history. Dividing a community creates both tension and inequalities as the society tries to live out the capitalistic habitus. We are all a part of a larger whole. Behavioral patterns that were learned do not always have to be passed to the next generation if a conscious effort to understand the problems and create transformational, strategic plans occurs. Unfortunately, RTTT preserves the capitalistic way of thinking and does not address the cultural and structural damage done by the capitalistic, competitive society created and replicated. Moreover, RTTT divides the whole. It puts state against state, so that the best (the state that abides by the rules set forth best) wins, when education should not be a competition, rather accessed equally by all, a liberator.

9. A Different Way to Look at Reform

Restorative justice is a value-based approach to conflict and harm. These values are often identified as inclusion, democracy, responsibility, reparation, safety, healing and reintegration. But one value is more essential than any other—Respect.¹⁰¹ It emerged in the 1970s as a medium to provide people a chance for peace after overcoming, or coming through a troubled experience. Restorative justice has a "consensus-based correction, healing, and reconciliation that seems therapeutic, pastoral, and public"¹⁰². With the injustices occurring in education, RTTT is static, it does not move away from previous thought and systems that created the problem. The solution, the victims, and the solution maker should work together to create a plausible solution.

¹⁰¹ "What Is Restorative Justice? — RJ Online." *RJ Online*. Web. 03 Mar. 2011. <<http://www.restorativejustice.org/university-classroom/01introduction>>.

¹⁰² Heyer, Kristin E. "Restorative Justice as a Prophetic Path to Peace." Pg. 20. Web. 08 Dec. 2010. <www.ctsa-online.org/Pope_Plenary_2010_Convention.pdf>.

Instead of focusing on the laws of punishment, restorative justice focuses on the needs of the people involved. Most often, writings on restorative justice have to do with the violent crimes or acts between individuals. This way of conflict restoration can be applied to multiple conflicts that are not seen as such at first glance. For example, education injustice around the country leaves thousands of children without adequate education and leaves states with high drop out rates. The main ideas of restorative justice can be applied to the current state of education, where injustices live.

Unfortunately, it is difficult to think about these terms when the state of so many schools is far from just. In education in particular, there are students in the 5th grade who still read at a 3rd grade level and who will pass on to the 6th grade. There are those same students who are expected to pass their proficiency exams when their entire education career they had inadequate teachers and were not taught. The state of schools across the country differ from one neighborhood to another, visible by wealthy neighborhoods and poor, as well as segregated school that are not segregated by law but as a result of other social and economic issues plaguing students across America.

For victims, restorative responses empower by offering them a voice in the process, an opportunity to ask questions and seek answers, afford them a role in decision-making and avenues for healing, restitution and emotional support. For wrongdoers, restorative responses enable wrongdoers to be accountable for their conduct; affords opportunities to make amends and express remorse; offers constructive ways to repair harm; supports making responsible choices; and creates forums for forgiveness, reconciliation and reintegration.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ "What Is Restorative Justice? — RJ Online." *RJ Online*. Web. 03 Mar. 2011. <<http://www.restorativejustice.org/university-classroom/01introduction>>.

RTTT is a reform effort that perpetuates the capitalistic, competition based ideology that has the state of education in turmoil. It focuses on a premise the one type of reform, a guideline set out by the policy, can create lasting, long-term change. Unfortunately, as Lederach mentions, the entire situation, the episode and the epicenter, must be discussed. RTTT's premise that the reform will work for every state does direct harm. Different circumstances exist for the nation, differences by states, cities, districts, and by schools that have to be reconciled in order for lasting change to happen. "Justice requires that we work to restore those who have been injured,"¹⁰⁴ participation and understanding is required

Restorative responses can re-invest states, districts, and schools with the power to contribute meaningfully to the resolution of community problems in education; allowing citizens to articulate and affirm the moral standards of the community; provides a forum for addressing the underlying conditions which generate harm; and contribute to the building of safe, thriving and peaceful schools with educated students.¹⁰⁵

In order to apply the principles to education, the focus has to move away from the behaviors of the government and policy makers and focus on repairing and sometimes building the relationship between them and educational institutions, who have a better idea of the problems they face and the needs they require

In order to create the change necessary, the government must embark in conversations and come up with transformational strategies. Questions to ask include: (1) what is

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ "Suffolk University - Center for Restorative Justice." *Suffolk University Homepage*. Web. 08 Dec. 2010. <<http://www.suffolk.edu/college/1496.html>>.

happening? (2) What happened? (3) What are the needs, and(4) How can we service that need.

Asking, "what is happening" is an important first question. It means taking a step back and reflecting on what is happening at the moment, what are the circumstances right at this moment. Then, asking, "what happened?" allows reflection on what brought the people involved (the education system, students) to the situation that is occurring, the epicenter. "Why is the education system failing, what systems have caused this? What are other factors?" Now that the conflicts have been identified, actions can begin that lead to the fulfillment of that need.

As the reform effort occurs nationwide, the connection between teachers, schools, the district, and the federal government soon needs to undergo a restorative process. Teachers sometimes blame principals, while principals blame district and budget pressures, and the district blames the low-test scores and the national reform effort and RTTT create a system of competition around these factors. The reality of the matter is, the conflict between all of these different entities needs to transform in order to fulfill their goal: educate the youth of the country. The question becomes, how do you restore the ideology of a community, of a nation?

First, we must identify and recognize the needs of the harmed individuals. When focusing on the assumed value of equity, the need is an adequate system of education that provides every student, regardless of socio-economic background and race, an education conducive for college and career readiness. The issues now come from the messiness of ideology. The reconciliation between the personal relationships could happen through effort.

The tougher question is how does one begin to get people to understand the conflict presented with education, and the harm it has done to them individually, even when the conflict is not as visible.

Restorative justice focuses on the individual identifying needs and coming to reconciliation, but individuals first have to recognize the need and the conflict, which becomes sticky when referring to changing the ideology of a nation in relation to education. The nation must interact together to come to a restored view of the education system, requiring it to live up to the standards previously set and creating individuals who will stand up to make sure it is done; invoking the responsibility we all have. This will also require the ideology and habitus of a nation to evolve as well, to individuals coming together for the communal needs, not just individuals needs for success as expected in capitalism. Once these things occur, the restorative justice process could be successful. It would then become the balance of all the different strings pulling on the education issue and reform efforts. After restoring each different level, full transformation can shine, without competition, working together.

10. Where do we go from here?

Education in the United States is failing. Concern is perking all over and a solution is needed. Though Race to the Top tries to provide support and solutions in this time when all eyes are on education, it neglects to tackle the underlining issues and instead perpetuated a competition putting states, districts, schools, and classrooms against one another. The goal of education should be equality, but a race denotes everything but that.

Through the lenses of the carious parts of the issue: historical, philosophical, economic, and physical, one sees the complexity of the situation. More importantly, one can

see how the race is counter-productive. It is all linked together. Instead of short term reform, long term transformational change needs to reach the classrooms around the country before the United States can dream of once again dominating international tests and scores. We must examine the past, the present, and come up with solutions for the future together, at the same pace, no losers, all winning. The discussion does not end here. What can be done? How can people change the culture of education that creates policy not passed capitalism, but that changes the wheel? Perhaps the classroom could affect policy and not the other way around.

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