



NYU

**ROBERT F. WAGNER GRADUATE
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE**

PADM-GP 4440

**Education and Social Policy
Spring 2023**

Instructor: Jessica Wertheim

Class dates: Thursdays, March 23 to May 4 Email:
jw4295@nyu.edu

Class times: 6:45-8:25pm Class
location:

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 everchanging 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 let me know 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, 2nd floor (www.nyu.edu/csd). I am happy to provide any accommodations recommended by the Moses Center.

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

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 2024. Be prepared to advocate for that policy using the data and outcomes from your article with a small group of your classmates.

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. Final paper: policy proposal (50%)

Incorporating a revised version of your memo (if you wish), 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. Please come to class 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 Brightspace.

Class	Topic	Date	Item due
1	The U.S. public education system What are schools supposed to do? Why is it so hard to know what works?	Thursday, March 23 6:45-8:25pm	Student Questionnaire
2	NCLB, RTTT, and ESSA	Thursday, March 30 6:45-8:25pm	Weekly Discussion Questions
3	Neighborhood, vouchers, and housing policy	Thursday, April 6 6:45-8:25pm	Weekly Discussion Questions
4	Special education and disproportionality monitoring policy	Thursday, April 13 6:45-8:25pm	Weekly Discussion Questions Policy Memo!
5	Nutrition, health, and education <i>Guest Lecturer: Milan Reed (she/her), Senior Advisor, NYC Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services</i>	Thursday, April 20 6:45-8:25pm	Weekly Discussion Questions

6	Immigration, language, and schools <i>Lecturer: Humberto Cruz-Chavarría (He/They), Director Second Generation Programming, Jeremiah Program</i>	Thursday, April 27 6:45-8:25pm	Weekly Discussion Questions
7	Covid -19 and social intervention influencing policy What's next for U.S. education?	Thursday, May 4 6:45-8:25pm	Weekly Discussion Questions
Policy proposal due via email by May 18th, 2023 11:59PM			

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. *Wither 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.

Wilson, N. M., & Strassfeld, R. N. 2015. "Turnaround in reverse: Brown, School Improvement Grants, and the legacy of educational opportunity." *Cleveland State Law Review*, 63(2), 373-396.

Week 2: NCLB, RTTT, 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.

Rich, P.M., & Jennings, J.L. 2015. Choice, Information, and Constrained Options: School Transfers in a Stratified Educational System. *American Sociological Review*, 2015, Vol. 80(5) 1069– 1098, American Sociological Association. DOI: 10.1177/0003122415598764

Week 3: Neighborhoods, Vouchers, and Housing Policy

[Audio] 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>

Chang, A. 2018 We can draw school zones to make classrooms less segregated. Vox. Found at:
<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*.

Faber, J. & Sharkey, P. (2014) Where, When, Why, and For Whom Do Residential Contexts Matter? Moving Away from the Dichotomous Understanding of Neighborhood Effects. *Annual Review of Sociology*. 40(1):559-579. DOI:10.1146/annurev-soc-071913-043350

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 4: 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.

Strassfeld, N. 2019. Education Federalism and Minority Disproportionate Representation Monitoring: Examining IDEA Provisions, Regulations, and Judicial Trends. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*. DOI: 10.1177/1044207319835185

Voulgarides, C.K. et. al., 2021. Unpacking the Logic of Compliance in Special Education: Contextual Influences on Discipline Racial Disparities in Suburban Schools. *Sociology of Education* 2021, Vol. 94(3) 208–226. DOI: 10.1177/00380407211013322

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: 10.1080/09687599.2019.16491199.

Blackwell, W. et. al., 2017. Addressing Ableism in the Common Core State Standards. *National Teacher Education Journal*, Volume 10, Number 1.

Week 5: Immigration, Language, and Schools (Guest Lecture)

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.

New York City Department of Education. 2022. Policy and Reference Guide for Multilingual Learners/English Language Learners for the 2022-2023 School Year.

Optional

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*.

Villegas, L. 2022. "Re-starting and Strengthening Accountability for English Learners." *New America*.

Lead Coalition. 2019. Investing in our Future: A Multilingual Learner Policy Agenda for New York State.

Week 6: Nutrition and Education (Guest Lecture)

Currie, J.M. 2005. "Health disparities and gaps in school readiness". *The Future of Children*. 15, 117-138.

Murphey, K. 2015. "Feeding Young Minds: The Importance of School Lunches." *The New York Times*. June 2017.

Available: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/05/well/feeding-young-minds-the-importance-of-school-lunches.html>

Wines, M., McGeehan, P. & Schwartz, J. 2016. "Schools nationwide still grapple with lead in water". *The New York Times*. March, 26. Available:

http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/27/us/schoolsnationwide-still-grapple-with-lead-in-water.html?_r=0

Corcoran, S.P., Elbel, B. & Schwartz, A.E. 2016. "The effect of Breakfast in the Classroom on obesity and academic performance: evidence from New York City" *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4977577/>

Optional

Hinrichs, P. 2010. "The effects of the National School Lunch Program on education and health." *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*. 29(3), 479-505.

Week 7: 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

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>

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is a vital component of Wagner and NYU. All students enrolled in this class are required to read and abide by [Wagner's Academic Code](#). All Wagner students have already read and signed the [Wagner Academic Oath](#). Plagiarism of any form will not be tolerated and students in this class are expected to report violations to me. If any student in this class is unsure about what is expected of you and how to abide by the academic code, you should consult with me.

Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Student Accessibility

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Please visit the [Moses Center for Students with Disabilities \(CSD\) website](#) and click the "Get Started" button. You can also call or email CSD (212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are strongly advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

NYU's Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays

[NYU's Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays](#) states that members of any religious group may, without penalty, absent themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations. Please notify me in advance of religious holidays that might coincide with exams to schedule mutually acceptable alternatives.

NYU's Wellness Exchange

[NYU's Wellness Exchange](#) has extensive student health and mental health resources. A private hotline (212-443-9999) is available 24/7 that connects students with a professional who can help them address day-to-day challenges as well as other health-related concerns.