

The Education Policy Bookshelf

An Annotated Bibliography of Selected Studies

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Temple University

Baker, Bruce D., David G. Sciarra, and Danielle Farrie. *Is School Funding Fair? A National Report Card*. Newark, NJ: Education Law Center, 2015.

This report presents findings of a state-by-state comparative analysis of public school finance in the United States. It examines the level and distribution of school funding within each state in relation to student need. This edition (the fourth) of the report card is based on data from 2007 through 2012. The report notes that 14 states have regressive school funding. These states, which include Pennsylvania, provide less funding to school districts with higher concentrations of poor students.

Center on Regional Politics (CORP) of Temple University. A large selection of policy briefs, reports, and presentations related to public education is available through the CORP website (<http://www.cla.temple.edu/corp/publications/>). Among them are these:

Atherton, Michelle J. "How Pennsylvania Funds Public Schools: The Story of the State Share." An issue memo published by CORP, 2014. Available at <http://www.cla.temple.edu/corp/files/2012/12/State-Share-Issue-Memo.pdf>.

Atherton, Michelle J., and Meghan E. Rubado. "Hold Harmless Education Finance Policies in the U.S.: A Survey." A policy brief published by CORP, 2014. Available at <http://www.cla.temple.edu/corp/files/2014/12/HH-Policies-Policy-Brief.pdf>.

Hartman, William, and Timothy Shrom. "Forecasting Fiscal Futures of Pennsylvania School Districts: Where Law and Current Policy Are Taking Our Public Schools." A policy brief published by CORP, 2015. Available at <http://www.cla.temple.edu/corp/files/2015/05/Fiscal-Futures-Hartman-Shrom-Web.pdf>.

Leckrone, J. Wesley. "The Politics of Educational Change: What Can We Learn from the School Consolidation Acts of 1961 and 1963?" A policy brief published by CORP, 2015. Available at <http://www.cla.temple.edu/corp/files/2015/04/School-Consolidation-Leckrone-web.pdf>.

McNulty, Eileen H. "Growth and Stability in Public School Revenue Sources: Can We Have Both?" A policy brief published by CORP, 2014. Available at <http://www.cla.temple.edu/corp/files/2012/12/Policy-Brief-2-Web.pdf>.

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. "Basic Education Funding Commission Final Report and Recommendations." 2015. Retrieved from <http://basiceducationfundingcommission.pasenategop.com/files/2014/08/final-report-061915-.pdf>.

This report presents the findings of the Basic Education Funding Commission, which was created by the Pennsylvania General Assembly in 2014 to examine the existing funding formula and provide recommendations for a new formula to distribute state funds in the BEF appropriation. The report recommended a formula that distributes state funds according to student and school district factors. The formula includes factors reflecting student and community differences such as poverty, local tax effort and capacity, and rural and small district conditions.

———. "Special Education Funding Commission Report." 2013. Retrieved from <http://archive.pasbo.org/Special%20Ed%20Commission%20FINAL%20REPORT.pdf>.

This report presents the findings of the Special Education Funding Commission, which was created by the Pennsylvania General

Assembly in 2013 to examine the distribution formula for state aid for special education. The report recommended a new formula that includes weighing factors that reflect varying levels of student needs (high, moderate, and low), as well as community factors, such as poverty, property tax levels, and rural and small district conditions.

Duffy, Mark. “Local School Governance in Philadelphia: A Look at History and Research.” Philadelphia, PA: Research for Action, 2014.

Recognizing that school district governance in Philadelphia has long been a subject of debate, the author examines the history of Philadelphia school governance; surveys the governance structures in a sample of other large, urban school districts; and reviews research on various models of district governance. The other cities surveyed are Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Denver, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, New York, and San Diego.

Eichel, Larry. “Governing Urban Schools in the Future: What’s Facing Philadelphia and Pennsylvania.” Philadelphia, PA: The Pew Charitable Trusts Philadelphia Research Initiative, 2016.

This report presents the results of an analysis comparing key elements of Philadelphia’s school governance system with those of 15 other major urban districts. The districts—serving Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Denver, Detroit, Houston, Indianapolis, Los Angeles, Miami-Dade, Milwaukee, Newark (NJ), New York, and St. Paul (MN)—were chosen for their size and their demographic and economic similarities to Philadelphia.

Fischel, William A. *The Homevoter Hypothesis: How Home Values Influence Local Government Taxation, School Finance, and Land-Use Policies*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001.

Fischel argues that homeowners, regardless of their status as parents of schoolchildren, have a strong economic incentive to support local public schools with their property taxes for investments that make sense. If neighborhood schools are strong, and if property taxes and crime rates are low, then the value of homeowners’ principal assets—their homes—will rise. Given their interest in home value, homeowners pay attention to local government, not only to protect their quality of life, but also to protect the value of

their largest assets. The book makes a case for local control of the fiscal and regulatory functions of government.

———. *Making the Grade: The Economic Evolution of American School Districts*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.

This book makes the case that the historical development of American school districts reflects citizens' desire to make their local communities attractive to outsiders. This has resulted in a standardized, interchangeable system of public education not overly demanding for students or teachers. Fischel focuses on bottom-up processes generated by individual behaviors and provides a new perspective on education reform that emphasizes how public schools form the basis for the localized social capital in American communities.

Goldstein, Dana. *The Teacher Wars: A History of America's Most Embattled Profession*. New York: Doubleday, 2014.

Goldstein tells the history of public school teaching in the United States, demonstrating a pattern of recurring questions related to the profession: Who should teach? What should be taught? Who should be held accountable for learning outcomes? These questions are not new, she shows, and neither are the hot-button policy debates over merit pay, using test scores to evaluate teachers, and recruitment of top quality graduates into the field. These approaches have been tried before without producing widespread change. Goldstein maps out an emerging effort with the potential to make a real difference in improving learning outcomes: drawing on the best practices of existing public school teachers.

Hanushek, Eric A., and Ludger Woessmann. *The Knowledge Capital of Nations: Education and the Economics of Growth*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015.

The authors argue that the knowledge of a nation's workforce is an essential contributor to that nation's long-term prosperity. But researchers and politicians often rely on poor proxies, such as average years of schooling or graduation rates. These proxies do not help explain economic performance because they do not measure knowledge. The authors find that a better measure of educa-

tional outcomes (scores on international tests, like PISA) correlate strongly with economic performance.

———. *Universal Basic Skills: What Countries Stand to Gain*. Paris: OECD Publishing, 2015.

This OECD report documents the quality of educational outcomes in various nations and estimates the long-run economic gains of improving access to education and raising the quality of these outcomes. The report shows that many lower-performing countries could meet the goal of universal basic skills over the next 15 years, if they could replicate the approaches, practices, and records of rapidly improving education systems.

Hartman, William T. “Analysis of Special Education Enrollments and Funding in Rural and Urban School Districts in Pennsylvania.” Harrisburg, PA: Center for Rural Pennsylvania. 2015.

This report examines special education student enrollments in rural and urban school districts and in charter schools in Pennsylvania. It includes a fiscal analysis of the expenditures and revenues from state, federal, and local sources, and it describes the long-term fiscal impacts of special education on school district budgets and state and federal funding levels. The research covers the period of 2002–2003 through 2012–2013 and uses financial and enrollment data from the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

Kamenetz, Anya. *The Test: Why Our Schools Are Obsessed with Standardized Testing—but You Don’t Have to Be*. New York: PublicAffairs, 2015.

This book addresses the dramatic increase in standardized testing over the past 20 years—the tradeoffs it has created, the limitations and flaws of the tests, and the options for parents, teachers, and citizens who want better educational outcomes. It presents the stories of families, teachers, and schools to demonstrate how the testing game is played and won, and suggests what better tests might look like in the future.

Karoly, Lynn A. “The Economic Impact of Achievement Gaps in Pennsylvania’s Public Schools.” Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corp., 2015.

This report, commissioned by Temple University’s Center on Regional Politics, projects that Pennsylvania could realize tens

of billions of dollars in additional economic growth and move its students to the top of world and U.S. rankings by closing test score gaps based on race and ethnicity, family economic status, and parental education. The study documents the magnitude of the gaps and estimates the economic consequences of those gaps.

Klein, Joel. *Lessons of Hope: How to Fix Our Schools*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2014.

This memoir by the former chancellor of the New York City schools tells the story of the city's campaign to improve public education. In 2002 New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg won control of the city's school system, and in a controversial move, he appointed Joel Klein, an accomplished lawyer from outside the education establishment, to lead the effort. Klein describes his eight-year mission to improve outcomes by demanding accountability, eliminating political favoritism, and fighting the teachers union. Klein's initiatives are linked to more school choice, higher graduation rates, and improved test scores. He takes readers through the problems in public education, his ideas for tackling them, and the challenges he faced to make them reality in New York.

McKinsey and Company. "The Economic Impact of the Achievement Gap in America's Schools." Los Angeles: McKinsey, 2009.

This report quantifies racial and socioeconomic gaps in educational outcomes in the United States, as well as gaps between U.S. student outcomes and those of higher-performing countries, and connects these gaps to projected long-term economic losses to the American economy. The report estimates the gaps shortchange potential gross domestic product by trillions of dollars.

Peterson, Paul E. and Martin R. West. *No Child Left Behind? The Politics and Practice of School Accountability*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2003.

This scholarly assessment of the 2002 No Child Left Behind Act examines the law's origins, the political and social forces that shaped it, the potential issues that will surface with its implementation, and the law's likely consequences for American public education.

Portz, John, Lana Stein, and Robin R. Jones. *City Schools and City Politics: Institutions and Leadership in Pittsburgh, Boston, and St. Louis*. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1999.

This examination of the relationship between civic capacity and educational outcomes focuses on three rustbelt cities. The authors explore sources of variation across the cities in levels of civic support for public education. Pittsburgh has had the most success in educational reform, followed by Boston, while St. Louis has lagged. The authors argue that successful reform is tied to cross-sectoral coalitions, organizational arrangements in the business community, leadership quality, and municipal institutions and culture.

Ravitch, Diane. *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education*. New York: Basic Books, 2010.

A national bestseller, this book evaluates current educational reform ideas, including charter schools, vouchers, and test-based accountability. Ravitch, an education policy analyst and research professor at New York University, once supported such reform policies, but she carefully explains why these efforts have failed to bring about improvements in the American education system and how they may instead do harm.

Ripley, Amanda. *The Smartest Kids in the World: And How They Got That Way*. New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 2013.

To explore why American students perform worse than so many other countries on international tests, Ripley's book explores the experiences of three American teenagers who spent a year in other countries that have rapidly improving educational systems: Finland, South Korea, and Poland. She notes the features of the systems that differ dramatically from that of the United States. An example: in Finland, to become a teacher, one must be an absolute top student and enroll in a competitive and rigorous teacher-training program. Teachers in these systems are more universally talented, well trained, well paid, and respected professionals.

Roza, Marguerite. *Educational Economics: Where Do School Funds Go?* Washington, DC: Urban Institute Press, 2010.

This book examines education finance from the perspective of the public school. Roza outlines the problems created by the complexity of the many educational funding streams, which include local, state, and federal sources, many of which are tied to specific programs or expenses. This system not only makes finance data

confusing, it also prevents schools from matching their spending to their specific priorities. Roza argues that giving schools more flexibility in use of funds would allow them to spend more effectively and respond creatively to challenges.

Russakoff, Dale. *The Prize: Who's in Charge of America's Schools?* New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing, 2015.

This book presents the results of an investigation into the efforts to reform the public schools of Newark, New Jersey, following the 2010 donation of \$100 million by Mark Zuckerberg, cofounder and CEO of Facebook. The donation announcement launched an attempt by Mayor Cory Booker and Gov. Chris Christie to create a national model for education reform. Russakoff's investigation covers a range of issues in education reform, including charter schools, testing, accountability, and philanthropic donors. She shows how the existing power structure of the Newark political machine blocked attempts by Zuckerberg, Booker, and Christie to engage the community and make meaningful changes.

Stone, Clarence N., Jeffrey R. Henig, Bryan D. Jones, and Carol Pierannunzi. *Building Civic Capacity: The Politics of Reforming Urban Schools*. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2001.

Past and current attempts to reform urban education have failed, the authors argue, largely because many cities lack “civic capacity”—the ability to build and maintain a broad social and political coalition across all sectors of the urban community in pursuit of a common goal. The book draws upon a study of 11 U.S. cities, including Pittsburgh. The authors argue that a shared vision of problems and solutions among the large majority of important actors in a city is crucial for positive outcomes. Drawing on data from several cities, the authors make the case that effective civic coalitions can be built.

Taylor, Paul, and Pew Research Center. *The Next America: Boomers, Millennials, and the Looming Generational Showdown*. New York: PublicAffairs, 2014.

Drawing on Pew public opinion surveys and demographic data, this book outlines dramatic changes in the American population and a widening gap between boomers and millennials. Taylor examines these shifts and their implications: the aging of Ameri-

can society has led to political polarization, a stressed social safety net, and a daunting challenge for elected leaders; how to keep faith with the old without bankrupting the young and starving the future.

Tough, Paul. *How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity, and the Hidden Power of Character*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing, 2012.

Tough argues that the qualities that matter most in determining life outcomes of children have to do with character: skills like perseverance, curiosity, optimism, and self-control. The character traits important in turning children into happy, successful adults come from encountering and overcoming failure, he argues. Tough explains why both rich and poor American children are missing out on these character-shaping experiences. Rich parents tend to protect their children from encountering failure, while poor parents may be unable to provide the support children need to overcome failure.

Tucker, Marc S., ed. *Surpassing Shanghai: An Agenda for American Education Built on the World's Leading Systems*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2011.

This edited book looks at strategies that are used in nations that are achieving the best educational outcomes in the world. The first part of the book describes in detail the educational systems of Shanghai, Finland, Japan, Singapore, and Canada. The book analyzes the contributing factors to success across the cases and proposes policies and practices of these top-performing systems that could be implemented in the United States.