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Class meets from 4-7 on Mondays or from 5-8 on Tuesdays plus an additional one-hour, weekly section.

Sign up here for Office Hours
http://merseth-officehours.wikispaces.com

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The primary objective of School Reform: Policy, Practice and Leadership is to explore the broad concepts of school reform utilizing the perspectives of policy, practice, and instructional leadership. The course will help students achieve the following outcomes:

- gain awareness of current policy efforts and what others believe about school reform activities in multiple contexts;
- develop skills of leading change and working with diverse stakeholders with multiple interests;
- expand knowledge of policies, strategies, structures and systems designed to enhance student learning and school practice; and
- identify and articulate personal beliefs and perspectives on a variety of school reform policies.

To achieve these outcomes, the course first examines the context of school reform, why schools have been resistant to reform, and how policy ideas are linked to different conceptions of the purpose of education. The course spends several classes looking at school reform policies (school reform “levers”) that are classroom or school-based: pedagogy, curriculum, professional development, and school culture. The class also examines policy reforms that are larger in scale: alternative schools including charters and home schooling, School Turnaround plans and Teacher Performance and Evaluation policies, and alternative teacher education programs. Finally, it concludes by briefly examining issues regarding leading change and leadership skills. Throughout the semester
we stress diverse perspectives about school reform and acknowledge the realities of the current policy swirl.

**OPTIONAL TEXTBOOKS**

Optional texts are available at Amazon.com or Half.com as well as other textbook sources. Optional texts are:


One copy of **recommended** readings is in Library Reserves in the Gutman Library.

Required readings for the first week of class and ongoing important information are also posted on the course website: [http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k97097](http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k97097)

**BE SURE TO BOOK MARK THE COURSE WEBSITE IN YOUR BROWSER AS YOU WILL BE EXPECTED TO CHECK IT ON A REGULAR BASIS.**

**GENERAL REQUIREMENTS**

**Class Experience**

Students are expected to attend class and section meetings regularly, read assigned material, and participate in class activities, including case discussions, role-plays, and small group assignments. If you cannot attend class, you must inform your teaching fellow or Professor Merseth prior to your absence. Participation and attendance in class and section meetings are important elements of your learning and represent a component of your final grade.

**N.B. Class WILL BE held on November 25-26 (Monday-Tuesday before the Thanksgiving holiday) - attendance is required.** Anyone absent from class on these dates will receive a reduction in their final grade. Please make your travel arrangements accordingly.

**Class Briefs**

In response to each class’s readings, students will offer a one-page, single-spaced informal memo that will help fellow students, the Teaching Fellows, and instructor prepare for sections and class discussions. The briefs are intended to help students make sense of, or pose questions of, the class readings. The briefs must be limited to one page (and should not take more than one hour to compose). They will not be graded but their completion will be a component of the class participation grade. Student briefs often form the basis for section discussions though their use will vary depending on how each TF would like to use
them. Each week Teaching Fellows will read a random selection of briefs. There will be no briefs for the first class of the course. Out of the remaining 11 class sections you will be allowed four (4) “passes” on the briefs. Thus, we are requiring that out of the 11 remaining weeks’ readings, you submit a total of 7 briefs. These will be reviewed by class members and teaching fellows. Please note, neither Teaching Fellows nor Dr. Merseth can accept faxed materials.

**Sections**
Teaching Fellows and sections will be assigned no later than September 13 using a preference for section time that students will submit after September 9 and will be posted to the course website. This is a required one-hour section that will meet each week during the term, beginning after Class 2.

**Optional (Early Warning) Feedback**
Students are invited to submit and optional “argument brief” (no longer than 4 double-spaced pages) on the topics of either week 5 or 6 as an opportunity to have their work reviewed by a Teaching Fellow in order to receive critical feedback on their writing and their ability to make a coherent, cogent argument. We are providing this opportunity so that you have some guidance in persuasive writing for your upcoming purpose paper assignment. Our intention is to give you an opportunity to get this feedback on a low-stakes assignment before you have to compose your high-stakes paper. However this assignment is optional but if submitted, will count toward your requirement of a submission of 7 briefs throughout the semester.

**Purpose Paper**
Students will submit 2250 word paper outlining their views on the purpose of K-12 schooling by **Tuesday November 12, 2013** at midnight. Students are invited, but not required, to submit an outline of their purpose paper for discussion with colleagues and Teaching Fellows at an informal “refinery” held at Professor Merseth’s home on **Sunday Evening October 27, 2013 from 4-7 pm.**

**Major Project**
Students in A-326 will complete a major project of their choosing to demonstrate their achievement of the objectives of the course. The project is due **Friday December 13, 2013** at Professor Merseth’s office in Longfellow Hall, Room 310. **Group projects are encouraged.** Since it is important to demonstrate your understandings, students must informally present their *nearly complete work* in a public exhibition to other members of their section at an agreed-upon section time **during the week of December 2, 2013.**

Don’t leave your project work to the last minute! In order to document your learning in A-326, the project should, through its contents, illustrate your own beliefs and perspectives, an awareness of others’ beliefs and knowledge, and an understanding of strategies in school reform/restructuring.
Evaluation
Students may take this course for a letter grade or Pass/Fail. Students will be evaluated on the basis of class participation and attendance, the purpose paper, and the project. Rubrics will be provided as guidance to students regarding grading. All assignments must be completed at a satisfactory level in order to receive a satisfactory grade in the course. The weights of the various assignments are:

- Class and section participation (including briefs) 30%
- Purpose paper 45%
- Final Project 25%

A-326 COURSE SYLLABUS

CLASS 1
Sept 3 (“Mon” class), 10 (“Tues” class)
School Reform: Where are we? Where are we going? What do we want?

Required Readings:


Case Discussion:
CASE: Childress, S. (2008) If we blew it up, then we could... Harvard Business School Press. #309-042. (iPac)
CLASS 2
Sept 9, 17    Is it Poverty or is it School Policy and Organizational Structure?

**Required Readings (Viewing):**


**Case Discussion:**
Schechter, J. (2012). *Expanding access to AP: A path to excellence and equity?* An unpublished case study. (iPac)

CLASS 3
Sept 16, 24   Why are Schools so Difficult to Reform?

**Required Readings (Viewing):**


Case Discussion

Class 4
Sept 23, Oct 1 What is the Purpose of Schooling?

Required Readings:


Murnane, R. & Levy, F. (1996). Preparing to meet the future; Skills for middle-class wage; 
and Five principles for managing frontline workers. In R. Murnane & F. Levy, Teaching the 

Dede, C. (2011, May). Reconceptualizing technology integration to meet the challenges of 
educational transformation. Journal of Curriculum and Instruction 5(1), 4-16. 
http://www.joci.ecu.edu/index.php/Joci/article/view/121/Dede

Video Discussion (Viewed in Class)
Student voices: Are we listening? Student Final Project, A-326 
Sudbury Valley School Video.

Recommended/Resources for Purpose Paper (Library Reserve)
Merseth, K., Schorr, L. & Elmore, R. (1999). Schools, community-based interventions, and 
children’s learning and development: What’s the connect? Temple University Conference on 
Improving Results for Children and Families. Philadelphia: Temple University. (Library 
Reserve)

Willingham, D. (2009, April 7). Why don’t students like school? Teachers College Record. 
(iPac)
Required Readings:


Closing the Door on Innovation. Why one national curriculum is bad for America: A critical response to the Shanker Institute Manifesto. Issued May 9, 2011. 
http://www.edweek.org/media/closingthedoor-blog.pdf


Class Discussion
Go to http://www.corestandards.org/ and download standards either for English Language Arts or Math and examine a particular grade level of interest

Recommended Readings:

CLASS 6
Oct 7, Oct 15   Pedagogy and Classroom Teaching

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Readings**

CLASS 7
Oct 21-22   Changing and Managing School Culture

**Required Readings:**


**Case Discussion**


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**CLASS 8**

Oct 28-29  
Reform Policies: School Turnaround

*Required Readings:*


**Case Discussion:**


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**CLASS 9**

Nov 4-5  
Reform Policies: Teacher Evaluation

*Required Readings:*


**Case Discussion**

CASE: Merseth, K. & Schen, M. *Time and time again – again*. (iPac)

**Suggested readings:**


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**NO CLASS WILL BE HELD ON NOVEMBER 11-12**

Purpose paper is due at midnight November 12, 2013

**CLASS 10**

Nov 18-19  Reform Policies: Alternative Schooling-Charter Schools and Home Schooling

**Required Readings:**

Merseth, K (2009). Building a foundation: What effective schools and high performing nonprofits have to say; Classroom instruction and student outcomes; Stepping back and looking forward. In K. Merseth, *Inside urban charter schools* (pp. 111-125; 197-226; 227-233). (Library Reserves)


**Additional Readings:**


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**CLASS 11**

**Nov 25-26  Reform Strategies: Teacher Education and Supporting New Teachers**

**Required Readings:**


**Case Discussion**

**Suggested readings:**
CLASS 12  
Dec 2-3  
The Personal Costs of Leading School Reform

Required Readings:
http://hbr.org/2013/03/do-you-play-to-win-or-to-not-lose/ar/1


http://www.awberymanagement.co.uk/resources/files/HBR_10_Must_Reads_on_Leadership_1_.pdf#page=36


Case Discussion
CASE: Mt. Everest Case-1996 HBS # 9-202-061 (iPac)

FINAL PROJECT SHARING IN SECTIONS  
DURING THE WEEK OF DECEMBER 2, 2013

PROJECTS DUE AT 5:00 pm FRIDAY, December 13, 2013  
IN PROFESSOR MERSETH'S OFFICE, 310 LONGFELLOW