Research exercise: Syntheses of Research on Differences Across Schools and Classrooms

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Differences Among Different Schools and Classrooms

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Charter Schools

“If you want a better school for your kids, its all about options”

• Charter schools are smaller in size and therefore teachers are able to give a more individualized attention to their students
• Students and teachers chose to be in charter schools, which creates a passionate learning environment where students and teachers take pride in their education
• Charter schools integrate community services and resources to benefit both students and their families
• Charter schools teach for mastery opposed to teaching to the test, which promotes students becoming lifelong learners

Urban Schools

• Strong principals
• Teachers
  - Teacher preparation (many teaching outside of their fields or fail certification)
  - Shortage of teachers
  - Qualities of effective good urban teachers (not all, but include):
    - able to discipline
    - high standards
    - willing to go above and beyond
  - many characteristics (such as having lived in a city, being of the culture dominant in the school, etc)
• Resources
  - Higher class sizes
  - Fewer resources
  - Most disabled students
  - Little control over curriculum

Catholic Schools

• Catholic education ties in many characteristics of the Christian faith not only in religion classes but also in other areas of academic life (Neal, 1995).
• Teachers need to understand the importance of integrating faith with content (Rymar, 2010)
• Because most private Catholic schools are smaller than most public schools, they stress a more close knit community of believers
• Catholic social teaching highlights three main core values in schools: “human dignity, the common good, and a preferential option for the marginalized” (Scanlan & Zehrbach, 2010).
• Because many private Catholic schools depend on tuition to keep them going, most families are limited in their ability to send their children there.

Influence of Funding in the Classroom

• Economic inequality in schools has existed as long as schools have existed in the U.S.
• The most significant event that greatly widened this gap in school funding was the decision in the Supreme Court case Plessy v. Ferguson.
  • This made segregation legal in public places. Although facilities were supposed to be “separate but equal,” Facilities for African American students were greatly underfunded and bad.
• The federal government continued to stay out of school funding until the 1980’s when the National Commission on Excellence in Education published a report titled “A Nation at Risk”
• 1991, Johnathan Kozol wrote his book entitled “Savage Inequalities”
• 2010, the documentary “Waiting for Superman” came out.
  • It follows the stories of certain students who live in some of the worst school districts in the country.

Family Influences

• 2009 it was recorded that 24%, 18.1 million of American children come from single parent families and 9.2 million were under the age of nine.
• 60% of kids will spend time in a single parent family before they are 18
• Children living in single parent families have a hard time escaping the effects of their home life when entering and participating in school
• Families have “limited incomes”
• Educators can do more to change perceptions of single parent families in the school context.