



## **EAD 925: EDUCATIONAL POLICY & PRACTICE**

*Spring 2013*

Tuesday, 4:00– 6: 50 pm  
Room 2224 Erickson Hall

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### **COURSE INTRODUCTION:**

The twined concepts of “policy & practice” occupy and confound educational researchers and reformers. If we wish to stretch beyond anecdotes of good teaching and unique cases of good schools then policy that spreads their effective practices would seem the logical means to getting better in a bigger, more equitable way.

In the long view, it can well be argued that policy has driven a steady progression of improvements to education and schooling. It would, for example, be hard to dismiss the profound effects of the Americans with Disabilities Act on the educational opportunities of millions of U.S. children and adults. Many would argue that a steady stream of curricula reforms and learning standards has, if not equalized educational opportunity, suppressed gross levels of inequality in students’ opportunity to learn. Nevertheless, much that is written about policy amounts to a catalogue of disappointment and frustration. The persistence of policy as a lever to better schools would seem to fit into the category of ‘hope over experience.’

Yet policy making does persist. And expand. Few educators today escape the stream of policy dripping if not pouring down around them. And, whereas policy in the past often addressed broad parameters of access, equity and quality, the goal of many recent policies is to influence the instructional core of schooling- to shape what teachers teach, how they teach it and how students, teachers and schools are evaluated. The reality of “government in classrooms” is now pretty difficult to ignore. Some argue that this is because, ill affects notwithstanding, policy is important. The playing field and the rules of the game matter.

The aim of EAD 925 is to study educational policies seeking to influence the core of schooling and the numerous challenges of doing so. In this, it takes a particular cut at policy. Policy studies are often segmented into stages in a policy process broken into considerations of politics & policy making (who makes or enacts policy and how issues suddenly become policy worthy), policy implementation (how policies are disseminated and interpreted by practitioner-stakeholders), and policy analysis and evaluation (assessing if and when policy generates intended outcomes at some scale.) Policy studies can also emphasize the cyclical and reciprocal relationships between policy and practice. The linear assumption is that policy influences practice, but research has long illustrated that influence flows in

both directions, as practitioners routinely mold policy to their own beliefs and interests and pressure changes that redefine it.

There are also many forms and levels of policy. In this course, we tend to focus on what might be termed capital P “Policy”: policies emanating from state and federal governing bodies. But there is also a rich world of little p “policies” from which districts and schools seek to shape an array of teacher and student priorities and behaviors.

With many elements and perspectives available some choices are necessary. Thus, we focus on relatively recent policies that seek to influence teachers and teaching (often via pressures on school organizations) we mostly follow the conventional flow of influence from policy to practice, and we mostly emphasize the challenges of implementation and influence. Additionally, we examine how recent policies express particular formulations of educational problems and how they are theorized to ameliorate those problems. “To propose a policy is to argue that a government action will bring about a desired outcome.” But how, specifically, is this to occur?

#### **GUIDING THEMES:**

***The realities of teaching.*** Because we are interested in “practice” we begin with Mary Kennedy’s description and analysis of “ordinary” teachers and teaching in a set of U.S. elementary schools (Inside Teaching). While Kennedy’s context is the more nebulous realm of “reform” the portraits and analyses provided illustrate what any policy hoping to influence practice will confront. The schools, teachers and classroom profiled serve as reality tests for the arguments and policies we examine.

***Some policy foundations.*** We will work with readings that provide us with some language and definition to what policy is, what challenges educational policy faces, and how educational policy making has evolved over the past 4-5 decades. Emphasized here are long running tensions between equity and excellence and the dramatic expansion of state and federal policy making over the past 25 years or so. Also considered will be differences in perspectives on how policy is best conceptualized.

***Policy and practice relationships.*** We will sample from a collection of thoughtful, up close studies of policy implementations that strive to identify factors that mediate the relative success or failure of policies that intend to influence practice in schools. There is no simple answer to the question-- “Does policy work?” but a range of important insights and understandings can move us towards certain appreciations if not certain convictions.

***Contemporary policy’s fixation with standards, accountability and evaluation.*** The main thrust of policy in recent decades has been in promulgating a trail of mandates and incentives for schools to adhere to more ambitious and specific content and learning standards for all students, to emphasize academic achievement over other valued outcomes and to increase assessment and evaluation of students, teachers, leaders and school organizations. This is the policy arena that now consumes most educators. We will engage in case studies looking at the evolution of content and learning standards, including the new Common Core Standards movement, at various elements of the No Child Left Behind Act, and new policy demands for teacher evaluations linking performance ratings and tenure to student achievement. Beyond the storm of emotions from all sides, what do we know or what is predicted about the effects of these policies? How effective is measurement as a policy tool or lever? What criteria might we use to determine the value of such policies? These are some of the questions we will consider.

***Theory and ideology underlying recent policy designs.*** When educational policy making was targeting the balance and distribution of equity and excellence it was heavily informed by sociological perspectives on social structure and human interactions. In the current era, policy making is shaped by economic propositions about rational choice and principal-agent arrangements that by-pass institutions. While educators live with policies, they often have a weak grasp of the ideological and theoretical propositions that form the basis of them. While we cannot dig into the complex economic theories active in many contemporary policies, we can consider the arguments and evidence that make the case for diminishing the role of government and traditional educational institutions in favor of parents (self-interests), markets (competition) and new non-governmental actors. With this, we can also consider the case for preserving a strong, “common good” criterion at the center of educational policy and rejecting contemporary notions of separate but equal collections of schools that embrace choice (consumerism) and variation as a pathway to better schools.

***New Policy Realities.*** Again, much has transpired since this course was first taught. In addition to themes noted above, some others draw my concern. For example, special education policy and practice, the policy and practice of online learning, and the policy possibilities of research on non-cognitive outcomes (to name a few. ) We may not get to all of these but we will try to bring in some of them.

## **COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS**

A key component of this course is active engagement with sophisticated texts. Your first job as a reader is to seek to understand what the author is saying. After understanding, your job is then to think critically about assumptions, arguments and evidence. This requires a significant amount of time and advises old fashion note taking also. In some cases, all students will not read all the same material, and thus must be good presenters of their assigned texts to others in class. Reading assignments will often include particular preparation tasks, and our work in class will often require direct use of texts. ALWAYS BRINGS TEXTS TO CLASS. Beyond compliance with task directions it is expected that you will bring your own observations, questions and assessments to class.

There will be brief periods of lecturing, but class time is primarily used for learning activities that are student centered and interactive. Please bring to class a spirit of intellectual curiosity and inquiry, readiness to explore texts and a willingness to teach and learn with each other.

Sometimes we will use online interactions as a supplement to class or in place of a class. We will use our ANGEL website regularly and you are expected to log on regularly when online work is assigned.

You will also demonstrate your understandings and accomplishments through written work. Writing is a process that requires stages of effort- rough thinking and outlining, drafting, redrafting, checking for substance and coherence, finalizing. Don't put off writing until you are up against a deadline. Write all along the way. No one knows how hard this is more than me. But, it always produces better and much more satisfying work. The standards applied to written work are commensurate with doctoral level expectations. If writing is difficult for you, arrange a support system that provides assistance and feedback on written work.

### REQUIRED MATERIALS:

We use two texts which you are to purchase from the bookseller of your choice. Other materials are made available via the course Angel page.

- 📖 Kennedy, M. (2005). *Inside teaching: How classroom life undermines reform*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. ISBN: 0-674-02245-9- paperback. (Also available for Kindle /I-Pad via Amazon. )
- 📖 Cartwright, N. & Hardie, J. (2012). *Evidence based policy: A guide to doing it better*. Oxford University Press. ISBN-10: 0199841624 (Also available for Kindle /I-Pad via Amazon. )

### ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING:

Learning and understanding is demonstrated through 4 tasks:

- Class readiness and contributions (15%)
- Argument Paper on Policy and Practice Relationships (25%)
- Implementation Analysis Paper (30%)
- Policy Analysis Paper or Research Project (30%)

Take note that class contribution points are not a giveaway for showing up or even participating in general. Points are earned through readiness that leads to active contribution to the quality of our work together in class.

Elaborated instructions, guidelines and assessment criteria for written assignment will be posted to Angel and discussed in class.

I mark all assignments on a simple 100 points scale. The scores correspond with the grading brackets below. At the end of the course I weigh scores by their percentages and reach a final score.

94–100 = 4.0	81–87 = 3.0
88–93 = 3.5	73–80 = 2.5

The final grading categories for MSU are 2.5, 3.0, 3.5, 4.0

- A 4.0 indicates superior work that resourcefully meets the challenges of the assignment. In the case of participation it indicates strong and consistent readiness and thoughtfulness along with strong contributions to the learning of the class overall.
- A 3.5 is assigned to high quality work that capably completes the assignment. In the case of participation it indicates consistent readiness and efforts to contribute to the learning of the class overall
- A 3.0 is given for good work marked by some inadequacies. In the case of participation it indicates mixed readiness and efforts to contribute to the learning of the class overall
- A grade below 3.0 signifies significant inadequacies in work turned in. In the case of participation it indicates low levels of readiness, participation and a pattern of leaning on classmates for missed and incomplete work.

Late work may be marked with a penalty.

**ACCOMMODATION:**

It is MSU policy to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet certain requirements. Students with special needs are welcomed to speak with me but are also encouraged to contact the Handicapper Operations and Services Office at (517) 355-2270.

**SPRING 2013**  
**EAD 925 SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND TASKS**

DATE	TOPICS FOR CLASS	READINGS AND TASKS DUE THIS DAY
Jan 8th	<p><u>Topic:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teaching in real life and the challenge of policy that matters.</li> </ul>	<p><u>Readings:</u>  <b>Kennedy</b>, <i>Inside Teaching</i>.</p> <p>Supplemental: Huberman, <i>Recipes for Busy Kitchens</i></p> <p><u>Task/Activity:</u>            Introductions            Discussion (guide on Angel)</p>
Jan 15th	<p><u>Topic:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can policy ever penetrate teaching? Some reflections to set the stage.</li> </ul>	<p><u>Readings:</u>  <b>McLauhlin</b>: <i>The Rand change agent study 10 years later</i>  <b>Odden</b>: <i>New patterns in education policy</i>  <b>Weatherly &amp; Lipsky</b>: <i>Street level bureaucrats &amp; Special Ed reform</i></p> <p><u>Task/Activity:</u>            Formulations of the 'policy problem'.            Displaying and weighing perspectives and evidence.</p>
Jan 22nd	<p><u>Topic:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy basics 1: definitions, developments, tools, typologies</li> </ul>	<p><u>Readings:</u>  <b>Fowler</b>: <i>What policy is and where it comes from (scan)</i>  <b>McDonnell &amp; Elmore</b>: <i>Getting the job done</i>.  <b>Schneider &amp; Ingram</b>: <i>Behavioral assumptions of policy tools</i>.</p> <p><u>Also useful: (books, not provided)</u>  <b>Fowlers, F. (2008)</b>. <i>Policy studies for educational leaders</i>. Prentice Hall  <b>Cross, Christopher: (2010)</b> <i>Political Education: National Policy Comes of Age (updated edition)</i> New York: Teachers College Press</p> <p><u>Task/Activity:</u>            Overview of policy assumptions, mechanics, designs.            Comparisons, applications</p>
Jan 29th	<p><u>Topic:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher's beliefs and policy implementation. Studies from California's 1985 math reform</li> </ul>	<p><u>Distributed Readings:</u>  <b>Cohen &amp; Ball</b>: <i>Policy and Practice: An Overview</i>  <b>Ball</b>: <i>The Case of Carol Turner</i>  <b>Wiemers</b>: <i>The Case of Joe Scott</i>  <b>Wilson</b>: <i>The Case of Mark Black</i>  <b>Cohen</b>: <i>The Case of Mrs. Oublier</i>  <b>Darling-Hammond</b>: <i>The Power of the Bottom over the Top</i>  <b>Sykes</b>: <i>Organizing Policy into Practice</i></p> <p><u>Task/Activity:</u>            Interpreting policy-practice assumptions and dynamics among teachers.</p>

<p><b>Feb 5<sup>th</sup></b></p>	<p><b>Topic:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy basics 2: Conceptual framing and value choices in policy formation and analysis.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Readings:</b></p> <p><b>Green:</b> <i>Policy questions.</i></p> <p><b>Stone:</b> <i>Policy symbols &amp; Policy numbers</i></p> <p><b>Supplementals:</b> (on Angel)</p> <p><b>Perry:</b> <i>Conceptualizing Education Policy in Democratic Societies (on Angel)</i></p> <p><b>Task/Activity:</b></p> <p>Considering policy values, tensions and their implications, reality testing concepts against cases, experiences</p>
<p><b>Feb 12<sup>th</sup></b></p>	<p><b>Topic:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The influences of policy framing by teachers and leaders</li> </ul>	<p><b>Readings: Pick 3:</b></p> <p><b>Hill:</b> <i>Policy is not enough: Language and the interpretation of state standards.</i></p> <p><b>Coburn:</b> <i>Collective sensemaking about reading</i></p> <p><b>Coburn:</b> <i>Framing the problem of reading instruction</i></p> <p><b>Spillane, Reiser &amp; Reimer :</b> <i>Policy implementation and cognition: Reframing and refocusing implementation research</i></p> <p><b>Spillane:</b> <i>the role of Organizations in Policy Implmenetation</i></p> <p><b>Fuller &amp; Clarke:</b> <i>Raising school effects while ignoring culture</i></p>
<p><b>Feb 19<sup>th</sup></b></p>	<p><b>Topic:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individual versus context influences on policy interpretation and implementation</li> </ul>	<p><b>Readings: Pick 2 - Scan 2</b></p> <p><b>Datnow, Hubbard &amp; Conchas:</b> <i>How context mediates policy</i></p> <p><b>Spillane:</b> <i>School districts matter: Local authorities and state policy</i></p> <p><b>Honig:</b> <i>Building policy from practice: District leader roles</i></p> <p><b>Youngs:</b> <i>State and district influences on PD policy</i></p> <p><b>Supplementals:</b></p> <p><b>Wallace:</b> <i>Policy Interaction and Implementation</i></p>
<p><b>Feb 26<sup>th</sup></b></p>	<p><b>Topic:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NCLB 1. Case Analysis: Restructuring in Michigan</li> </ul>	<p><b>Readings:</b></p> <p><b>CEP reports</b> on NCLB Restructuring , plus some related readings in the Week 8-9 Folder</p> <p><b>Task/Activity</b></p> <p>Assessing and explaining- "What is happening?" "Is it what is expected or desired?" Why is it happening as it is?"</p>
<p><b>Mar 5<sup>th</sup></b></p>	<p><b>MSU SPRING BREAK- NO CLASS</b></p>	
<p><b>March 12<sup>th</sup></b></p>	<p><b>Topic:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NCLB 2. Analysis of NCLB more broadly</li> </ul>	<p><b>Readings:</b></p> <p>Groups are asked to self-organize reading assignments from a large library of readings in the Week 8-9 folder.</p> <p><b>Task/Activity</b></p>

		Assessing and explaining- "What is happening?" "Is it what is expected or desired?" Why is it happening as it is?"
March 19 <sup>th</sup>	<p><b>Topic:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher evaluation policy and practice</li> </ul>	<p><u>Readings:</u></p> <p><b>Chetty, Friendman, Rockoff:</b> <i>the Long Term Effects of Teachers</i>  <b>CCSR:</b> <i>Lessons from Evaluating Teachers in Chicago</i></p> <p><b>Selectives:</b></p> <p><b>Hamilton:</b> <i>Measuring Teacher Quality</i>  <b>Corcoran:</b> <i>Can Teachers be Measured by Test Scores?</i>  <b>Brookings:</b> <i>Passing Muster: Evaluating Teacher Evaluation Systems</i>  <b>Education Trust:</b> <i>fair to Everyone!</i></p> <p><b>Task/Activity</b></p> <p>Assessing and explaining- "What is happening?" "Is it what is expected or desired?" Why is it happening as it is?"</p>
March 26 <sup>th</sup>	<p><b>Topic:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Competing ideologies underlying current policy environments</li> </ul>	<p><u>Readings:</u></p> <p><b>Brandl:</b> <i>Money and Good Intentions Are Not Enough</i>  <b>Anyon:</b> <i>What counts as educational policy?</i>  <b>Darling-Hammond:</b> <i>The right to learn</i></p> <p><b>Supplementals: (on Angel)</b></p> <p><b>Payne &amp; Knowles:</b> <i>Promise and Peril: Charter Schools, urban school reform and the Obama administration</i></p>
April 2 <sup>nd</sup>	<p><b>Topic:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy and Privatization</li> </ul>	<p><u>Readings:</u></p> <p><b>Burch:</b> <i>Hidden Markets; the New Privatization (selections)</i>  <b>Arsen:</b> <i>A letter to Governor Synder</i></p>
April 9 <sup>th</sup>	<u>Reading and Writing Week</u>	
April 16 <sup>th</sup>	<p><b>Topic:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research and Evidence Based Policy</li> </ul>	<p><u>Readings:</u></p> <p><b>Cartwright &amp; Hardie:</b> <i>Evidence Based Policy: A Practical Guide to Doing it Better (BOOK)</i></p>
April 23 <sup>rd</sup>	<p><b>Topic:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research and Evidence Based Policy; the <i>What Works?</i> debate</li> <li>(Plus course evaluations)</li> </ul>	<p><u>Readings:</u></p> <p><b>Honig:</b> <i>What Works in Defining "What Works" in Educational Improvement</i>  <b>Slavin:</b> <i>Evidence Based Education Policies</i>  <b>Coalition for Evidence Based Policy:</b> <i>Bringing Evidence Based Progress to Education (scan)</i>  <b>Pick 1:</b>  <b>Achinstein &amp; Ogawa:</b> <i>Teachers Resistance to Prescriptive Policy</i>  <u>OR</u>  <b>Anderson &amp; Herr:</b> <i>Scaling-up Evidence Based Practice is</i></p>

*Discredited*

**Supplementals:**

Hargreaves: Teaching as a Research Based Profession

Hammersley: Response to Hargreaves

Hargreaves: Response to Hammersley

**FINAL ASSIGNMENT DUE THURSDAY, APRIL 25TH**