

Urban Education Reflection Guide

Definition:

Urban Education refers to the act of educating students in public, metropolitan schools. These schools are often in areas poverty, diversity, and crime. Schools in this setting often lack the resources to face the many challenges held by their students. (University of South Florida, <http://myweb.usf.edu/~aheindel/UrbanEducation.html>).

Statistics:

- In 2011, of the fourth-graders who scored *below* the 25th percentile in the National Report Card (NRC) Reading proficiency test: 25% were African American and 35% were Hispanic.
 - A total of 74% were eligible for free/reduced-priced school lunch.
 - 2/3 of students who cannot read proficiently by the end of 4th grade will end up in jail or on welfare.
- Of the fourth-graders who scored *above* the 75th percentile in the same test: 71% were Caucasian, while only 7% were African American and 11% Hispanic.
- In 2011, of the eighth-graders who scored *below* the 25th percentile in the NRC Reading proficiency test: 26% were African American and 32% were Hispanic.
 - A total of 67% were eligible for free/reduced-price lunch
- Of the eighth-graders who scored *above* the 75th percentile in the same test: 72 % were White, while just 6% were African American and 11% Hispanic.
 - 71% of these students had at least one parent who graduated from college.
- 90% of welfare recipients are high school dropouts.
- What do these statistics suggest about the connections between race and education?
- What do they suggest about the connections between poverty and achievement in education?

Resources:

- Pedro Noguera, a 2012 January Series lecturer and leading thinker on the connections between education and society, writes about the connection between Urban Schools and Prison:
 - http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1207/s15430421tip4204_12
 - Noguera again on the intersections of Poverty and Urban Education:

- http://www.huffingtonpost.com/pedro-noguera/child-poverty-education_b_1118852.html
 - How do these readings strike you?
 - Have you ever thought about there being a connection between poor education and prison? Or a further connection between poverty, poor education, and prison?
 - How does your high school experience compare with those explained in the above texts?
- In his article, *Why are students dropping out of school? The Factors that Contribute to the United States High School Dropout Rate*, Christopher Lund highlights six out-of-school-factors that affect a student's performance in school and their likelihood to dropout of high school. He looks at family structure and income, relationship with parents due to changes in family structure, teacher support, motivation, school performance, substance use and abuse, and residential location. To read the entire article, use this link, <http://www.unh.edu/sociology/media/pdfs-journal2010/ChristopherLund.pdf>.
 - After seeing this list of factors that affect students' performance, what are your thoughts?
 - Are these factors that have played into your educational experience?
 - If yes, how? If no, how could you see these being an obstacle to learning?
- In 2009, this article was written about test scores in the state of Michigan. Take a look at this article, http://www.mlive.com/news/grand-rapids/index.ssf/2009/07/michigan_merit_exam_results.html
 - What challenges do you think students in the Grand Rapids Public Schools are facing?
 - What can we do to combat these challenges?
 - Tests aren't always the best way to show student knowledge, how could the system be improved to better show what students are learning or is testing the best we can get?
- David C. Berliner, in his article, *Our Impoverished View of Educational Research*, says "...school people need to see communities as agents as well as principals and hold communities to standards that ensure all our children are accorded the opportunities necessary for growing well" (p. 988).
 - What can communities do to help combat these factors?
 - As Christians, are we called to do more for these students?
 - What might this work look like?

- Take a look at this article that explores the practice of tracking in schools, <http://www.edweek.org/ew/issues/tracking/>
 - What do you think of the idea of tracking?
 - Have you had experience with this idea? Did your high school have a tracking program?
 - In the article, *To Track or Not to Track: Curricular Differentiation and African American Students at Highview High School*, Chambers et al (2009) look at the tracking system in an American school. They end the article saying, “An overwhelming majority of the research conducted to date on school tracking policies has shown them to have deleterious effects on the learning of all students, despite this research, a majority of the schools in this country continue to employ some form of tracking” (pgs. 44 & 45).
 - From the article earlier and from this quote, how do you think tracking is playing into some of the statistics shown earlier?
 - Is tracking a program that should be continued, why or why not?

What Now: Resources for Further Engagement

- **TUTORING:**
 - ACT Tutoring at Calvin College
 - <http://www.calvin.edu/admin/slc/students/>
 - Offers students the opportunity to mentor youth from the Grand Rapids area to achieve their highest potential on the ACT test, thereby allowing them to go to college.
 - Cesar Chavez Elementary school and South West Community Campus
 - Located in Roosevelt Park neighborhood offer opportunities for Calvin students to tutor Hispanic youths in English.
 - MLK Leadership Academy and Baxter Community Center
 - www.baxtercommunitycenter.org
 - In Baxter Neighborhood offer Calvin Students opportunities to tutor elementary and middle school students.
- **MISC:**
 - Project Neighborhood at Calvin College
 - Offers students the opportunity to live in low-income neighborhoods in Grand Rapids and live intentionally with people of different race and socio-economic status.

- **Books:**

- *Amazing Grace* by Jonathan Kozol
 - Kozol writes about the time he has spent in the South Bronx and the many issues facing children living there today.
- *Ordinary Resurrections* by Jonathan Kozol
 - As a sequel to *Amazing Grace*, Kozol continues his stories of hardship and struggles faced by families living in the South Bronx.
- *Class and Schools: Using Social, Economic, and Educational Reform to Close the Black-White Achievement Gap* by Richard Rothstein
 - Rothstein examines and explores the many issues facing students and the many factors playing into the ever increasing black-white achievement gap
- *The Trouble with Black Boys and Other Reflections on Race, Equity, and the Future of Public Education* by Pedro Noguera
 - Noguera takes an in-depth look at the issues faced by many minority students in United States public schools

If you have any suggestions or comments on what we can improve, please contact us at slc@calvin.edu or 616-526-6455.



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