

Complete transcripts of our chats are available [here](#).

CHAT ASK A QUESTION

Monday, February 12, 2007

edweek.org's Online Chat is now open. Please [submit questions now](#).

The Topic:
Educational Equity on Trial

Submit [questions here](#).

(Please do not click refresh after submitting your question. That will re-submit it. The page will refresh every 50 seconds. Click here to [turn off automatic refreshing](#).)

NOTE: The newest postings appear at the bottom of the page.

Mary-Ellen Deily (Moderator):

Thank you for joining us for today's live chat with Susan Eaton, the author of *The Children in Room E4: American Education on Trial*. This is the first in what we hope will be a monthly discussion of books of interest to the education community. *The Children in Room E4* considers issues of equity and segregation in the Hartford, Conn., schools up close and reports on the long-running school equity lawsuit, Sheff v. O'Neill.

Question from **Patricia Daboh, Teacher, Sumter School District 17:**

Ms. Eaton, what prompted you to write "The Children in Room E4: American Education on Trial"?

Susan Eaton:

Hello Patricia -- Well, I was a young reporter in Connecticut in 1989, the year the Sheff case was filed. I remember coming across a copy of the complaint and being transfixed by its intellectual underpinnings and its argument -- that racial segregation and concentrated poverty overwhelm schools to the point that they hamper educators' abilities to deliver an equal educational opportunity. I had already spent 3 years reporting in an extremely segregated school district -- Holyoke, Massachusetts -- and the Sheff argument seemed to hit at the core of

the problem. But more than that, the aspiration at the center of the Sheff case -- that in the United States of America, surely we can do better -- surely we can and should provide all children an equal chance in life, moved me emotionally. Sheff was, to me, and to the civil rights lawyers who constructed it, the Brown v. Board of Education of my generation. Once I got to Hartford, the children I met in Room E4 brought two things to life 1) the legacy of segregation, discrimination and the current day effects of racial and economic isolation and 2) the childrens' vast potential that's going to waste. I originally thought that this book would take me a year to write, but I discovered that in order to tell it properly and fully, it would take a lot longer. I ended up spending 5 years researching and writing this book. I believe it was time well spent.
Susan

Question from **O. Thompson, Parent:**

I think one of the main things that contribute to this disparity is this incomprehensible educational system that hinges on generating funding from property taxes. Is there anything being done to try to change this? Why isn't education funded at the federal level? I'm really tired of the endless fundraisers that our children are made to get so excited about, so the school can raise money for needed supplies.

Susan Eaton:

Hi. I agree with you. However, many states have been sued and forced to equalize their funding schemes. There's been mixed success, with some legislatures dragging their feet, others simply not complying. I think it's important to focus on funding disparities and to ensure, especially that high-poverty schools get the dollars they need to provide a decent education. But focusing on money alone obscures other inequalities -- specifically the harm caused by concentrated poverty itself. I address this in my book, *The Children In Room E4* and argue that while more money is likely necessary, it's not sufficient to provide true equal educational opportunity. There's actually far more social science evidence about the benefits of predominantly middle class schools than there is about the benefits of increased funding.

Question from **Hayes Mizell, Distinguished Senior Fellow, National Staff Development Council:**

I'm curious about what you observed regarding teachers' professional development in the Hartford school. To what extent was it present? How would you assess its quality? How did teachers respond to it? How could it have had a greater impact on teacher performance?

Susan Eaton:

Hello Mr. Mizell, Thanks for writing. Sadly, the professional development I observed during my time in Hartford consisted mainly of helping teachers better align the curriculum with the state's standardized tests. Also, there were workshops offered to help teachers better align the pre-packaged reading program, Success For All, with the skills tested on the state exams. Also, there was training available that taught teachers how to use the SFA program. However, I did not conduct a systematic assessment of teacher training programs or PD programs while I was in the district. Therefore, I really can't judge the quality of those programs, generally. I can say, though, that the district employed so many incredibly dedicated, talented educators. At least during the years that I was there, unfortunately, these educators couldn't have made use of high-quality PD programs because of the exclusive emphasis on preparing students for the state test.

Question from **Bob Frangione, Educator:**

What are some of the most difficult challenges to equalizing education for all children?

Susan Eaton:

Hello Bob - Two challenges come to mind. One, getting suburban-dominated state legislatures to recognize the moral imperative to ensure all children receive an equal educational opportunity. Also, when we think about inequality, our minds usually gravitate to financial inequities created in part by the property tax system. While I strongly believe -- based on years upon years of observation and study -- that providing more money to high-poverty schools is necessary, it is not sufficient. No matter how much money we provide, high poverty schools will still be overburdened and carry a disproportionate share of the educational challenges in a region. It seems to me, then, that educational equality is hampered by this condition. Also, the vast inequalities that exist outside of school -- disparities in health outcomes, in decent housing, in neighborhood safety, even neighborhood pollution that leads to childhood illness -- weigh on schools that enroll disproportionate numbers of children from lower income families. There's clear social science agreement about the benefits of desegregated schooling and too, the benefits of providing children access to well-functioning, predominantly middle class schools.

Question from **S.Tegano, Consultant:**

Hello Dr.Eaton, Focusing on the role of the principal, what would you suggest administration preparation programs include to address the vast needs of this type of school, student, faculty?

Susan Eaton:

Hello, In my experience in and out of all types of schools over 2 decades, I think the principal is vitally important in setting the tone and direction of a school. The best principals are dedicated and passionate and treat their teachers as trusted professionals. This is much more difficult to do, of course, in an urban, high-poverty school where so many of the teachers are inexperienced. In a high-poverty school, it seems to me that the good principals I've known have a rapport with the students, let the students know that they care and will be fair with them and work to ensure that their more experienced teachers are able to mentor the less experienced teachers. The principal I write about in my book, *The Children In Room E4*, wasn't one to brag. However, the one thing he did admit to doing well was having a good eye in hiring decisions. That is, he felt he had a good instinct for hiring good teachers. -- Susan

Question from **Lori Bouza, Wagner Early Learning Center:**

Our families have a poverty rate of 75% and we struggle with the decreased value of education is their lives. Have you found a successful way to encourage parents to become more involved and supportive of the school?

Susan Eaton:

Hello Lori -- My book did consider the role of parents to some extent. And while I've been in a lot of urban schools that reached out to parents effectively and brought them into the community in positive ways, the general trend is far less involvement than you'd see in middle class districts. However, I think we need to be careful, here, about blaming parents for the lack of involvement. Often times, parents in urban communities I've been in, work two, sometimes three jobs to support their families. Single parenting leaves so many mothers and grandmothers exhausted at the end of the day. My experience in Hartford leads me to the conclusion that while parents are incredibly important in the educational process and can contribute mightily to a student's success, we have to remember that the parents can do little about the larger social environment, characterized by immense poverty, isolation and disenfranchisement, which has been decades in the making. A lot of times I've noticed that parents who administrators assume are uninvolved, actually are quite involved at home, working with their children and encouraging

them in private ways we never see.

Question from **Cynthia Pugh-Carter, Student of Education, Grand Canyon University:**

What would your response be to a community whose parents want to send their children to a school where the quality of education is obviously better but the parents lack the resources (financial, transportation) to take advantage of "school choice"?

Susan Eaton:

Hello Cynthia -- I like your question. Ideally, the government would not only pass legislation for public school (as opposed to private school...) choice, but, in order to level the playing field, would also provide transportation for that child to attend another school outside of his or her district. When we talk about school choice in this country, it's usually referring (strangely) to private school choice. However, there's a good argument to be made for public school choice. In the No Child Left Behind Act there is a provision for children who are in so-called failing schools to transfer to another school. But that allows for choice only within ones current school district. In many urban districts, that means only that children will be allowed to transfer to another high-poverty, segregated, overwhelmed school. I think it makes sense to allow students to transfer outside their district. However, it's not enough to merely provide the option. Parents need information and assistance in making the switch in addition to adequate transportation.

Question from **Jill Jacobs Cohen, Doctoral Candidate, Harvard Graduate School of Education:**

Given that the political climate is so hostile towards the maintenance of race-sensitive policies, do you believe those interested in desegregation should focus our attention on pushing for programs that use economic criteria for student placement, as Kahlenberg suggests?

Susan Eaton:

Hi Jill-- Excellent question. You are at my alma mater! I think that, unfortunately, we do need to move in the direction of ensuring that all children have access to middle class schools. However, it still makes sense for our society and our democracy to maintain models of desegregated schooling and to ensure that those schools remain desegregated, high-functioning and accessible. As Kahlenberg notes, there is a social science consensus that children from lower-poverty backgrounds are likely to achieve at higher levels in middle-class schools. Based on past research, though, I don't think that this policy will achieve desegregation without conscious attention. However, while I think you are right about the political climate, in my experience, many parents and educators at the local level still very strongly support desegregation. For example, in Connecticut, where my book is set, several thousand urban and suburban parents sit on waiting lists for a handful of desegregated, high quality schools. -- Susan

Question from **Lee R. McMurrin, Retired Supt., Milwaukee Public Schools:**

Would a Metropolitan School District bringing the rich and the poor together provide the political motivation to bring all schools up to the highest standards of equity of resources and academic achievement.

Susan Eaton:

Hello Lee -- Well, I don't think there are any magical solutions out there. However, I do think that a district that contains a mix of students from varying backgrounds (rather than just the poor) is more likely to win political favor and attention for a variety of reasons. Of course the poor are always vulnerable for educational neglect in every district. But an overwhelmed, high-poverty district is especially vulnerable to educational neglect.

Question from **Ray Phelps North Hardin High School Racliff,Ky.:**

There is a great disparity between rich/poor; black/white; urban/suburban; county/county/state/state. Local boards strive to provide the same dollar investment, per student, no matter the students situation/need. Most boards think this way. Equitable is not equal-money amount or time on task. There is not a one size fits all-same amount of money spent/same amount of time spent on content for all students. Do you think we are asking for students to fail having this type mindset?

Susan Eaton:

Hello Ray, I agree that we can't measure equity by dollars spent on time spent on task. Achieving true equality is a far more complex matter. Some states consider the challenges of a particular community (for example poverty level) and apportion dollars and other resources based on that need. I think that's far fairer and while high-poverty schools surely need more money and attention than their middle-class counterparts, I think, too, that creating predominantly middle-class schools for all children would be the more successful course. Thanks. Susan

Question from **Chaney Williams-Ledet, Ed.D. Administor Houston,Texas:**

How does this inequitable situation compare with the disparities that existed for African-Americans over 56 years ago (e.g Brown v Board of Education)?

Susan Eaton:

Hi Chaney -- Well, 56 years ago blacks in the South were required BY LAW to attend segregated schools that were inferior on every measure. After enforcement of Brown, the south became (and remains) our most integrated region. Our most segregated region now is the Northeast. Segregation outside the South, in most cases, was created by a complex mix/tangle of forces. But most of it, at least in the regions I've researched and written about, is a result of housing segregation borne from racial discrimination. African Americans have made substantial progress in the last half century. However, the learning gaps between white and black, particularly, remain large.

Question from **Steve Kirkpatrick, Teacher, Monroe Co. High:**

Mrs. Eaton, through all of your research on this subject what could you tell us as teachers how we can help the situation that some kids have no control over? Ex. race, welfare

Susan Eaton:

Hello Steve -- This is a tough question and I'm not sure exactly what you are asking. I hope my answer suffices. I think it's really important that policymakers, citizens and others construct a realistic view of teachers. Teachers do have the power to make huge differences in students' lives. There is no question about that. However, I think it's a shame that we focus so much on the "miracle" teacher who helped inner city kids "overcome the odds" so to speak. I'm not doubting that those teachers are out there. It's just that often times, we focus on the sentimental, happy, miracle stories to the point that we obscure the more typical story in which a teacher is overwhelmed by social problems in his or her classroom and is forced to teach dull material culled from old standardized tests. The best teachers I've seen develop personal relationships with children -- let the children know that they understand or want to understand them, set clear expectations (for performance and behavior) and remain consistent. The teacher I profiled in my book, *The Children In Room E4*, used the term "love, learning and limits..." She constructed a beautiful, healthy and productive classroom community by staying true to these

values, getting to know each child well and investing herself in that child's success. A teacher can't do much about poverty and discrimination in the larger society. But from what I've seen, it means a lot to kids when a teacher acknowledges what his or students are up against instead of just repeating meaningless platitudes such as "Believe in yourself" and "You can do it." Better to do what Ms. Luddy, the teacher I write about does, which is to let the kids talk about the mayhem that characterizes their lives, the culture of the street, the murder that happened the night before rather than pretend it's all irrelevant. -- Susan

Question from **Michael Baker**:

Should NCLB be dismantled? I am a 27 year veteran teacher with National Board Certification and find NCLB to be a hindrance and invasion of my academic freedom.

Susan Eaton:

Hi Michael -- Well, this is a tough question for me. Generally, I think the impulse toward punishments and sanctions for "failing" schools is a negative one. This is because it blames schools for what are in large part social problems and vast inequities that are not being tended to. However, the one good thing that NCLB does, in my opinion, is that it does protect against extreme educational neglect. What I mean is that poor children in impoverished schools are our most vulnerable students and the one most likely to suffer from inexperienced teachers and the like. Because the challenges in these institutions are so overwhelming, administrators have far less time and resources to spend on monitoring whether or not teachers and others are doing their job by kids. Therefore, NCLB does require that children get something from someone at least some of the time. Also, it controls for inexperienced teachers which predominate in urban schools and gives them a clear instruction about what to teach and when. THAT SAID, NCLB is NOT a route to equal educational opportunity. It is being touted as a grand reform, but it actually lacks substance and focuses only on testing and punishments, as you know. What's worse -- while it might control for bad or inexperienced teachers, it sacrifices the excellent, creative teachers who feel stifled by the standardized testing requirements. It's a Catch-22. My reading of the data shows NCLB has made absolutely no meaningful progress on improving the education of children of color in the nation. Thanks for writing -- Susan

Question from **sally Manly, teacher, East Fairmont High School**:

Like most, I strongly feel that parents are the key to any child's success. How can we help bring non participating parents into the process? Thank you.

Susan Eaton:

Hello Sally -- Of course parents are important to a child's success in school. Sometimes it's difficult to bring in non-participating parents, though. For example, in the community where I did the research for my book, *The Children in Room E4*, most of the parents worked 2 or sometimes 3 jobs. Also, in many impoverished communities, single parents are the rule not the exception. Basically, when you've coralled the most stressed out, exhausted overburdened clients into a handful of institutions, you've got a huge challenge on your hands. I think the best thing to do is simply let the parents know you are on their side, that you are their advocates and that you've got the best interest of their children in mind. Further, many parents I've spoken with are simply intimidated by the school. Ensuring that your classroom is a welcoming place, where teachers consider parents partners not inhibitors is really important. In my book, the teachers I write about, Lois Luddy, finds that many parents come in to conferences waiting and ready for a fight. But once she lets them see that she's on their side and not confrontational, barriers begin to melt away...slowly...Susan

Question from **Mark Anthony Carter, Teacher:**

Presently, many people have differing opinions on the relationships between financial resources and quality schools. What arguments do you make in favor of "equity" that may convince more Americans of the importance of providing adequate financial resources for all students? For example, how do you define "adequate"? What funding mechanism (besides property tax) would you use to finance education?

Susan Eaton:

Hello Mark -- Well, certainly adequate resources are necessary in order to provide quality schools. How do I define adequate? That's a difficult question to answer. However, I would certainly include measures of school poverty and, too, neighborhood impoverishment in any funding formula. The poorer a school, the more money it should receive because research shows how many challenges are present as a result of that condition. However, while more money may be necessary in order to provide quality schools, I don't think it is sufficient. I think it far more forward-thinking and effective to work at breaking up concentrations of poverty that are the cause of much inequity in the first place. -- Susan

Question from **Dale Brown, Senior Manager, LD OnLine:**

What is your best thinking about the relationship between learning disabilities, poverty, and the experiences of the children of room E-4? The book was excellent by the way.

Susan Eaton:

Hi Dale -- Thanks. Hmm. Well, I'm not sure what you mean about learning disabilities. However, I think we generally fail to recognize that the ability of children to reach their full potential is often hampered by their traumatic experiences and their unstable lives. That could be viewed as a learning disability. That's not to say that poor children can't learn. I'd never argue that. But so much of our discourse about education these days fails to take into account the reality of a child's social environment. It seems to me a small miracle, for example, that a child with regular exposure to street violence, living in an economically unstable home and seeing no clear path out, is able to come in every day to school and focus on fractions. In other words, there is a relationship between poverty and chances for school success. That's one strike against a kid. It's a second strike if that kid then goes to a school where all the children are also poor...Susan

Question from **Jeffery Johnson, Teacher, Milwaukee Public Schools:**

Do you see your work in Hartford being related in any way to Dr. Ruby K. Payne's "Language of Class?" If so, how? (See Education Week article, "Payne's Pursuit," at www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2006/05/03/34payne.h25.html)

Susan Eaton:

Hello Jeffery -- I am having trouble accessing this article. If you can give me a synopsis of Dr. Payne's argument, it would be helpful. Then I will write back to you. Thanks. Susan

Question from **Renee Pardovich, Teacher, Lee Vining High School:**

The information you discuss is interesting, however I do not see a reference to rural school systems. The discrepancy between urban and suburban is huge but how do you explain the discrepancy between urban/suburban and rural?

Susan Eaton:

Hi Renee-- I have not studied rural school systems in any depth, so I won't pretend to be an

expert on this one. But I wonder if one might begin to answer this question by considering differential rates of poverty in the districts? If you start there, you might begin to get some answers. I hope this helps. Susan

Question from **Lynn Deutsch, parent, DeKalb County Schools:**

With most urban and now many suburban school systems serving primarily minority children, what role do you think race should play in education policy?

Susan Eaton:

Hi Lynn - I think that government has a compelling state interest to avoid and ameliorate racial segregation and concentrated poverty. The ideal situation would be one in which any parent who WANTS their child to attend a predominantly middle class, racially/ethnically diverse school can do so. Susan

Question from **Toby Portner, Complex Resource, Honolulu District:**

Has your research uncovered any successful movements to reduce the "experientially impoverished" children? I'm specifically interested in community partnerships. Thank you.

Susan Eaton:

Hi Toby -- Well, it's usually left to school teachers and schools to do this sort of thing. However, in my opinion, these are programs that represent a great impulse, but will always be band aid solutions, in that they fail to get at the root problem of racial and economic isolation. But I have seen examples of good programs designed to get children out of their neighborhoods, interacting in the world and making a clear contribution. There are good sister-school programs that I've seen in action in Connecticut, for example. But again, unfortunately at the end of the day, everyone has to return to their segregated schools.

Question from **Patrice Mitchell, GT/AP Coordinator, Dollarway School District:**

Does the ethnicity of the teacher impact the success of the teaching situation. Ex: Do poor black high school students do as well with a white teacher as they would with a black teacher, assuming both are teachers are of equal ability.

Susan Eaton:

Hi Patrice -- I've not read the research on this question. Let me just say what I guess is probably the obvious -- I've seen marvelous white teachers (Ms. Luddy in my book is one example) who connect beautifully with children of all ethnicities. I've seen black and Latino teachers too, with the same skills and power. I've also seen really poorly trained white teachers who could not reach the kids and failed them. Also, I've seen poorly trained black teachers who had no connection or success with their kids. Among children, I see far more similarities between African American/Latino students in the city and white students in the suburbs. -- Susan

Question from **John Stallcup Co Founder APREMAT/USA:**

A primary reason schools are more segregated than ever is existing labor agreements do not allow a district to place their most experienced teachers in the classrooms where they are most needed. How can this situation ever really change without an over haul of the present administration/labor relationship. Brown V Board has had virtually no effect on the ongoing, accepted "separate but unequal" allocation of resources within school districts.

Susan Eaton:

Hi John -- I'm not familiar with this issue, but I'll take your word for it. The principal I write about in my book, *The Children In Room E4*, in fact, said that one of the things that made his school a relative success was his ability to spot and hire good teachers. So, no question that we'd be better off as a society if we could somehow find a way to get our best teachers into the schools that need them most. However, a lot of good teachers I know have been turned off from inner city teaching because of the incessant emphasis upon testing. -- Susan

Question from **Lynn Schore, parent, Portland Public Schools:**

If you as a parent in a public school system see gross inequities in facilities, curriculum and after school offerings -- and could not get this corrected working with the district -- would it be worth your time to file a Civil Rights Complaint with the Office of Civil Rights in Washington, DC?

Susan Eaton:

Dear Lynn -- If you have exhausted avenues at the local Board of Education, I'd go first to the State Board of Education in Oregon, explain the problem to them and see what happens. The Office of Civil Rights in DC., would probably only be interested if there were some discriminatory aspect to the claim. It helps in such instances to have everything documented, which take a lot of time. Susan

Question from **Diane Witt, M.Ed. Gifted Education Consultant , New Albany, Ohio:**

There are alot of questions regarding equity in education. What are your suggestions for providing service for children that demonstrate high achievement in school. While most teachers try to differentiate, some students need more. Can you provide some insight into meeting the underchallenged student? Thank-you.

Susan Eaton:

Hi Diane -- Yes. There were many underchallenged students in Room E4. Teachers were unable to indulge these students because testing mandates left no time for "extras." The idea under No Child Left Behind is that kids who score okay on the test are doing fine. But in the view of the teacher I write about in my book, her inability to take kids to the next level of their learning, is a source of constant frustration for her. There's a boy in E4 who is fascinated by science, for a example. But she can barely teach science at all because of the test. Another boy does everything right, has all the answers, but she worries that he lacks a passion for learning that will keep him engaged over the long term. In a different environment, Ms. Luddy, the teacher, would have been able to engage that student, help him find his passion, etc. But with the testing and the social problems caused by poverty, she has little time to do that.

Comment from **Rodney Libert, Special Educator, Weaver High School:**

Thank you for noting that the majority of administrators and teachers in the district are dedicated to the students' success. This is certainly not what the press has been suggesting in recent years.

Question from **O. Thompson, Parent:**

How can a predominantly middle-class school be created in a low-income neighborhood?

Susan Eaton:

Yes, this is a huge challenge. There have been some successes with magnet schools, which develop a specific theme not available in other schools. The school then attracts families from other communities. For example, some successful magnets in other cities include Performing

Arts schools, etc. They have varying degrees of success and depend upon people receiving adequate information about their options, transportation being made available and the school maintaining a high quality program good enough for people to choose over their regular school.
-- Susan

Question from **Erin, Middle School English Teacher, Revere Public Schools, MA:**

How do you think school assessment could be revised so that a more diverse spectrum of achievement and performance are measured? For example, do you think additions to NCLB, such as evaluating teacher quality, having students produce portfolios rather than just being tested, or looking at the variety of courses offered to students provide incentive for schools to do more than test-prep would improve the quality of urban schools under intense testing pressure?

Susan Eaton:

Hi Erin -- I think all your ideas are good ones. I also think that under NCLB, funds should be provided so that high-poverty high schools offer the same college preparatory classes as the suburbs -- even if that means that only 1 or 2 students will take the class. Now, in many of our high schools, things like AP Biology, etc. or AP Spanish are being cancelled because not enough students sign up. One measure of school quality is if the student has the opportunity to get the courses he or she needs. -- Susan

Question from **Jenna Shank, PA Ofc. of Child Dev. & Early Learning / Penn State Univ. student:**

With respect to NCLB and federal funding, how do low test scores &/or an inability to meet AYP standards impact a school's ability to provide (pay for) services for students? Shouldn't we be funneling MORE money into the schools that need the most help, rather than punishing them by taking away the funds they need to improve?

Susan Eaton:

Yes. I also think that the government should allow students who want to leave so-called "failing" schools in high-poverty areas to transfer out of district. Yes, it would cost a lot of money. Or so it seems until the war in Iraq comes to mind... Susan

Question from **Lucia Villarreal, kinder teacher, Starlight Elementary School, Watsonville, California:**

Ours school is in year 5 of School Improvement and will be "taken over" or "shut down" next year. What can you tell me about the edubusiness/edupreneurs that are taking over these "failing" schools? On an edupreneur site I found this: (<http://www.ccsindia.org/edupreneurs.asp>): "We believe that education should be granted the status of an industry and access to credit for opening schools should be made simpler. To this end, we also envisage the setting up of a body that would provide mentoring services to enthusiastic educational entrepreneurs or edupreneurs. Such a body can also develop on the lines of a venture capital fund that would provide the edupreneurs with funds to open schools and other educational institutions. We seek to empower educational entrepreneurs to fulfill their passion for the cause of education." I am very concerned about what education will look like under this "venture capitalist" model. Should we not fear for the future of our student's minds and our democracy?

Susan Eaton:

Hello Lucia -- Yes. Be afraid. Be very afraid. I don't know why people think the private sector should be the one to take over education for the poor. It's not as if private industry has ever been good to the poor. In Hartford, where my book was set, the public set their hopes on private

management, only for everything to fall apart shortly thereafter just as has happened in many places across the nation. - Susan

Question from **Margaret Sorensen, PhD Candidate, Walden University:**

As a resident of a state (Ohio) that has been unable to move toward equity despite four state Supreme Court rulings, I wonder if we lack the social perspective needed to support equity. Even to reach simple equality would require either that there be a massive infusion of cash to lift all districts to the level of the highest spenders--or some reduction at the top in order to raise the bottom. Either way, those with the most clout (financially) are likely to receive some form of reprieve. All of the most recent attempts at redistribution have included some form of "guarantee" to ensure no district gets less. Can you offer any insight into how to move to a different sense of buy-in to fostering the "greater good?"

Susan Eaton:

Hi Margaret -- I wish I had some wisdom on this subject. All I can say is that while money surely is necessary, I don't believe it is sufficient especially when we are talking about policies related to high poverty schools. Research shows far more success with programs that get kids into middle class schools than from policies that simply provide more money to those schools. That's not to say that urban, high-poverty schools should not get more money. They should get more money than less challenged schools. I'm arguing simply that more money doesn't get at one of the root causes for inequity -- which is concentrated poverty.

Question from **Cynthia Pugh-Carter, Student of Education, Grand Canyon University:**

Regarding the educational disparity between affluent children verses the needy, how would you propose we close the gap as "educators" to ensure the needy children are protected against the obvious biases displayed in the classroom? If we treat this population of students differently they will react differently, do you agree?

Susan Eaton:

Dear Cynthia -- Yes, sure. Though I apologize if I don't answer your question exactly, because I'm not sure of it's meaning. Absolutely, as you say, all children deserve to be treated fairly, with respect. In my book, I do see clear differences between what kinds of treatment is tolerated in high-poverty, predominantly African American and Latino schools versus what kind of treatment is tolerated in heavily white, middle-class schools. Most teachers in the school I write about treated the children well. But on the edges, adults (both black and white and Asian...) were cruel, dismissive and intolerant of the children. That kind of behavior hardly ever manifests itself in middle class schools I've visited. It's simply not part of the scene. Yelling and insulting the African American and Latino students in the school where I spent time was, though not encouraged, not actively discouraged, either. It was impossible for me to measure bias, say, against black children as opposed to white children in this school. There were no white children in this school. -- Susan

Question from **Susan Galletti, Senior Policy Analyst, West Wind Education Policy:**

As a result of writing your book and spending so much time with the students in Room E4, what action are you taking, personally, to improve the schooling for underserved children?

Susan Eaton:

Hi Susan -- I'm working, now, as research director of the Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice. We are attacking inequity in many areas of society, including education. We work with practitioners, policymakers, scholars, litigators and others to develop strategies

and programs to address inequality in educational opportunity, racial disparities in the criminal justice system, etc. I hope that any attention my book receives will begin conversations that might not have started otherwise. You ask what action I am taking. To me, writing this book was action. --Susan

Mary-Ellen Deily (Moderator):

We've come to the end of the chat. Thank you so much to all the participants. This has been a truly interesting discussion. A transcript of the chat will be available soon on teachermagazine.org and edweek.org.

The Fine Print

All questions are screened by an edweek.org editor and the guest speaker prior to posting. A question is not displayed until it is answered by the guest speaker. Due to the volume of questions received, we cannot guarantee that all questions will be answered, or answered in the order of submission. Guests and hosts may decline to answer any questions. Concise questions are strongly encouraged.

Please be sure to include your name and affiliation when posting your question.

[Edweek.org](http://edweek.org)'s Online Chat is an open forum where readers can participate in a give- and-take discussion with a variety of guests. [Edweek.org](http://edweek.org) reserves the right to condense or edit questions for clarity, but editing is kept to a minimum. Transcripts may also be reproduced in some form in our print edition. We do not correct errors in spelling, punctuation, etc. In addition, we remove statements that have the potential to be libelous or to slander someone. **Please read our [privacy policy](#) and [user agreement](#) if you have questions.**

—*Chat Editors*

Nominate your
candidate
for the
**McGraw Prize
in Education**

The
**Harold W.
McGraw, Jr.**
Prize in Education

Celebrating
20 Years

Accepting
entries until
March 16

[CLICK HERE](#)

The McGraw-Hill Companies

[About Us](#) [Policies](#) [Contacts](#) [Customer Service](#) [Advertise](#) [Help](#)