

Helping Inner City Schools in the US

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Current Condition of Inner City Schools

Picture this. Imagine going to a school where the football field has no goal posts, and has no staff to manage it, and the coach has to cut the grass himself. Picture going to science class where the lab materials are up to 50 years outdated. The school cannot control the temperature because the heating system does not work. There is never toilet paper in the bathrooms and sometimes the sewage system does not work, and raw sewage comes flowing into the lunch room, sending everyone home. Imagine going to history class, and not having any textbooks because the school cannot afford to buy them. The dropout rate is high, children come to school hungry, and many of them are not received immunization for diseases such as whooping cough, polio and measles. Many children have lost family members to violent acts, and many children do not feel like they have any way to get away. They feel like they are trapped.¹

This is not a school in a developing country, this is a public school right here in the United States. This school is in East St. Louis. Although this is an extreme example, and has improved some in the ten years since *Savage Inequalities* has been written, there are similar situations to this all over the United States. Some schools, mostly inner city schools with high populations of African Americans and other minority students are struggling to buy text books and attract enough teachers to teach the classes. On the other hand, there are schools that have more than enough money to provide their students with books, small classrooms, computers, athletic and art facilities. This just does not seem quite fair.

Or is it fair? Do we not live in a democratic society where everyone has equal opportunity to achieve the American Dream? Everyone can be successful if they just work hard enough, right? Well, maybe. We live in a society with potential to move 'up' or 'down' in society, but there are vicious cycles that keep us where we are. These cycles

begin with, or at least include schools. Certainly, if you are from a poor background where none of your family has graduated from high school and you need to start working at the age of 15 to feed yourself, it is a different circumstance than if your parents are willing to pay your way through your doctorate program.

So how can we make this just a little more fair? How can we help these poor inner city schools whose children are full of problems, not just associated with school itself? And also, how can we do this without negatively affecting those who live in more fully resourced school districts? These are the questions I hope to answer in this paper.

An overview of funding issues in US

The issue of funding in US public schools is a complex one. Each school district receives funding from various sources including local property tax money, state money, and federal money. For each school district nationwide, the amount of funding received from various sources differs significantly. This has to do with fluctuation in both state and national aid. Different districts can receive money for special education students, and other issues in the school, and nationwide funding differs greatly on a state-by-state level. For the most part, federal money is the smallest of these three sources, so it is mostly up to the states to change policy about funding if they want to equalize opportunities.

The first question pertaining to equity is, are opportunities for inner city schools really different than they are for suburban schools? The answer is, for most states, yes. According to the US General Accounting Office, "...the average school in a wealthy district receives 24% more [overall] funding than the average school in a poor district."ⁱⁱ This figure, however, is somewhat misleading, because the range varies so much. In Missouri, for example, wealthy districts receive 70% more funding, and in Oklahoma, the figure is 6% less.ⁱⁱⁱ These numbers are so different for various reasons, one

being the disparities between in the wealthy and poor districts differ greatly across states. These numbers may also be affected by legislation and other decisions made on a state-to-state basis. So basically, the need for equity reform really depends on the situation of each state.

If a state has unequal funding to rich and poor districts, why should they change? In other words, does it really matter? That is certainly a debatable point. Certainly, the statistics show that there is an achievement gap. Students in inner city schools, with less funding, consistently score lower on standardized testing, college attendance, graduation rates, etc. It provides a catch-22. "...poor districts cannot afford to fund their schools because of a poverty level that is virtually guaranteed by the lack of educational funding. Depriving students in poor communities of their ability to succeed after graduation essentially serves to institutionalize a caste system in the US – one from which children in impoverished neighborhoods can entertain little hope of escaping"^{iv}

On the other hand, more funding provides better pay for teachers, which provides more competition for jobs, which mean better teachers and provides a much more optimistic cycle. The structure of school funding in the US is also inseparable from the structure of socioeconomic class^v. This phenomenon should not be surprising because school districts are broken up by residence, people lives close to those of similar social class.

What would it mean to achieve equity? There are a couple of different ways to define fiscal equity in schools. In Pennsylvania's attempt to achieve equity, they have come up with three working definitions of fiscal equity and how it could be achieved. The first option is to use the average spending per pupil in the state, and make that the statewide minimum spending per pupil. The problem with this, is once the minimum was

set once, there would be a constantly elevated average that would probably become unreasonable fairly quickly. To elaborate, once this was in effect for one year, the state minimum spending per pupil would increase because the average would become the minimum. Then, the next year, there would be a new average that would be elevated from the year before, and that would then become the minimum, hence a constantly increasing spending cost. The second option is to just close the gap; raise money spent in poor districts, and decrease it in wealthy districts some amount. The other option is to determine a minimum amount of money necessary for 'appropriate' education. Again, how do you determine this amount?^{vi}

Can you base equity on something other than money? There are other options other than simple finance that can be possible determiners of equity in education. For example, one could evaluate the student tests scores, attendance, graduation rates, and percent of students pursuing higher education.^{vii} This is a more difficult issue because there are many other issues involved in achievement such as parental involvement, socioeconomic conditions, of which schools or governments do not have much control. Going back to the point that school conditions are inseparable from socioeconomic conditions, the issues of inner cities are so deep and complex, it would take a long time and a lot of systemic change in the US for achievement gaps to be completely gone.

Another problem with looking at test scores is they could be incredibly misleading as they pertain to inner city schools. For example, inner city schools and other poor schools could actually be improving overall education, retention rate and special education programs, and the average score for standardized tests could remain exactly the same. How is this possible? The schools are perhaps drastically improving, and including more special education students in mainstream classes, keeping kids in schools

who might otherwise drop out, and have more bilingual students in school and taking the tests, it will drop the average score if they are taking the test and other students are improving.^{viii}

Let us go back to the issue of more equal spending in inner city schools and wealthier schools. Some cynics have argued that money may not make a bit of difference. If more money is given to poor schools, will it make a difference? Some argue that much of the money that goes to inner city schools is already being wasted because of lack of structure and organization in the schools.

All of these issues (more special education, bilingual and other disadvantaged students) means two things for poor schools. The first is that the issues of poor, and usually urban schools are so deep, they should be receiving more funding, not less funding than richer schools for the simple fact that they have to provide more special classes (such as ELL, ESL, Special Ed). The other issue is that finance reform is an attempt to narrow the gap, not get rid of the gap. To get rid of the gap presents somewhat of an improbability, or perhaps even impossibility in a democratic society. Also, to satisfy those wealthier parents who might feel that they are having funds ‘taken away from them’ can be assured that their family will still have an ‘advantage’ in our society because of other factors.

As was stated previously, some states are in greater need of reform than others. Public schools in Hawaii, for example, already receive 98% of their total funding from the state. Some states are extremely low in their state support. New Hampshire schools, for example receive 8.3% of their total funding from the state.^{ix} The GAO found that this (total state control of educational finance systems) is the single greatest determiner of equity in school funding.

What has already been tried – Equalization Attempts

This next section takes a look at some states, what they have tried to do to equalize funding and what has and/or has not worked. There have been many attempts in court to demand equal funding. Most of these cases were not successful and many were deemed unconstitutional. Although many of these attempts were not successful, there have been positive outcomes to these attempts. “Overall, when a court has declared a state’s school finance system unconstitutional, there has been a 23 percent increase in school spending, and a decrease in inequality among districts”^x

Because of extreme opposition whenever a state has attempted to reform funding, very few states have even attempted. In general, the public is sending somewhat of a conflicting message about reform. First of all, every member of society wants to best education for their own student. This should not be surprising. At the same time, polls have shown that most members of society want more equal opportunity as it pertains to education.^{xi} This provides a dilemma for wealthy suburban voters, who make up most of the registered and active voters in this country. Very few of them are willing to give up their desire for their own child to succeed to help a poorer student who they do not even know.

Texas tried in 1993 to equalize funding. The law capped the amount of wealth that any given district could tax for its own purposes. If a school district taxes above the cap, money is transferred from one district to another. The many opponents of this law have made it very difficult to implement. There was an original three-year transition period that turned into a seven-year one which puts into question whether poor districts are really being helped by this new law.^{xii}

Vermont passed a reform law in 1997 which is perhaps the most extreme and controversial attempt at reform that the US has seen. In Vermont, there is a statewide property tax which distributes funds equally to all school districts. If an individual school wished to tax itself more, it can choose to, but must give a proportion of that extra taxing to a statewide 'sharing' pool. There has been some uproar, especially from those who live in wealthy districts, where property taxes has significantly increased. Those who live in poorer districts, in general feel that wealthy citizens are feeling what it is like to have to make different choices about school and personal funds. Some middle class citizens are having to make more decisions about personal spending and having to prioritize their spending. Despite conflict, the law is still being implemented.^{xiii}

New Jersey also attempted to implement a new law to help with fiscal equity, but the issues of New Jersey proved to be much too complicated to 'fix' with one law. New Jersey, despite being one of the richest states in the country, has some of the poorest districts, and is extremely segregated. Despite passing a law, it was implemented because the state proved much too complicated and the governor who did all the work to pass the law was defeated in the next election. This provides another reason why many states do not deal with this issue. Politicians are in the business of getting elected and re-elected, and to bring up ideas about fiscal reform in schools is not a good way to achieve that.^{xiv}

The struggle for fiscal equity has been a difficult one, at best. So then, the real question becomes, is it the best way to help poor inner city schools in America? If not, what is the best way? In the next section of this paper, this question will be addressed with some ideas for helping inner city schools that go beyond the political realm of legal fiscal equity.

Broad Based Applicability

First of all, the following proposals are not going to be applicable to just inner city schools. Any of these programs can be used in any school. The focus of this paper, however, is to get money into the inner city schools. But, in general, schools in the United States would benefit from extra funds. Any school can look at these ideas and try to incorporate them to increase finances in the schools. In addition, this does not mean that congressional change does not make sense. It may or may not be the 'right' thing to do, but until then, or instead, here are some ideas.

To improve the condition of schools, the whole community has to join in and help. When I say the whole community, I mean students, teachers, parents, administrators, and every one else that pays taxes in that area. Everyone needs to help.

Having said that, these programs are focused on inner city schools for a couple of reasons. The first and main reason is because inner city schools have more problems. These problems are not just advanced problems, but problems at the most basic level. Some of these problems include; low test scores, low grades, high drop out rates, poor attendance, unmotivated students, burned-out and ineffective teachers, dilapidated and unsafe buildings, bad administration, and bad health and nutrition.^{xv} All of these issues are issues that need to be dealt with immediately. However, there is not a sense of urgency associated with political officials to deal with urban schools.^{xvi} One reason for this is that many officials have not been reelected because they have brought up issues of inner city schools. Also, there seem to be many other issues that are more in the forefront of today's politics (gay marriage, abortion, religion, terrorism). No student should have to wait one more day to have decent facilities to use or teachers who are enthusiastic about teaching and students who are enthusiastic about learning. There should be a sense of urgency. There is a crisis in urban schools, and we cannot sit around and wait for legislative change. Something has to be done now.

There are many needs of students. For the purposes of this paper, I have broken them down into five main categories. These needs include; the students physical health, emotional health, academics, supplies/facilities, and staff (mostly teachers and administration). These different needs can be met to varying degrees. Where the line is drawn from meeting these needs 'well' and meeting these needs in an 'unsatisfactory' rate, is unclear. But I think that walking into a school where these needs are met, and

where these needs are not met, are clear. This section will lay out each one of these general needs, discuss some specific needs within the general category, and suggest ways to affordably improve these conditions, with the help of the community.

Mental Health

What is Going On

Schools with a lack of funding have to prioritize their needs and wants and have to do without some programs that could be very beneficial to the children. One of these programs that is often one of the first to be cut in times of shortage are mental health professionals – social workers and psychologists. In some public schools, there is one professional who is attempting to be both a psychologist and a social worker for hundreds of students. This person may briefly chat with each student for five to ten minutes, a couple times a year, hardly enough time to get to know a student, and learn about their problems. Granted, not every student needs to talk to a professional about what is going on in their lives. But some students lose family members, become substance abusers, become involved in violence, or become depressed. Many of these students could benefit from speaking to someone.

What Can be Done

-Recruit a Team of Psychologists/Social Workers

Since psychologists and social workers are in the helping profession, I would hope that most of them would be eager to help others who are in need. One of the things schools could do is to recruit a team of psychologists who would be willing to donate one or two days a month to coming into the school and helping out. Perhaps each could take on a couple of targeted children as ones who are particular need to help, and spend their time at the school talking to them. Also, other students are great tools for helping kids

who are in need. Perhaps a psychologist or social worker could come into the high school and volunteer to give a daylong training session to willing high school students about how to talk to and help younger children. They could go talk to the younger students and help them with their problems. Of course, they would not be assigned a student who was dealing with extremely difficult issues (like severe depression) but maybe less threatening issues (like living in a single-parent household).

-Conflict Resolution

In terms of conflict resolution, children can start from a very early age to learn about peer mediation. Peer mediation can even be used for children of the same age group. These mediators do not tell the children who are having conflict what is right, and what is wrong, but rather facilitate a calm and rational discussion between students who are having some kind of conflict. Another way students could be used is for drug and sex education. Sometimes, having an adult stand up in front of a class (like a DARE officer) telling children not to do drugs, makes the students want to do them even more. The best way to educate children would be to have older students that they respect talk to them about their experiences and where they went wrong. It is much more powerful for students who are thinking about those kind of things to hear from someone that they did them, and made a mistake, than hearing someone tell you that it is just plain wrong. Also, many children who are at the 'beginning to think about drugs and sex age' probably look up to athletes. Perhaps the school could ask a local college or professional athlete to volunteer to come to the school and talk about their experience with drugs.

Physical Health

What is Going On

Students in poor inner city schools have poorer health than those in wealthier school districts. There are a couple of reasons for this. First of all, fewer of the children have health insurance, and therefore fewer children have access to health care. Also, with less money, and less health education, children eat less healthy food. If the parents do not understand the importance of fruits and vegetables, they will settle for something more economically feasible. Also, the greater the time restraint in someone's life, the more likely they are to use the convenience of fast food and pre-made meals. There are higher rates of asthma and allergies and other related problems. Part of these problems stem from living conditions, and part of them come from the problem of a lack of health care. Both the children and the parents could benefit from health care, and education about living more healthy lives. In addition, teenage pregnancies tend to be high, so there is also room for more education about lifestyle choices. Some inner city schools are unable to afford nurses and other health care providers, which would help with some of these problems.

What Can Be Done

-Safety-net health care

Although these individuals have less health care access and service use, the uninsured do have some sources of care. According to a website by The Urban Institute (a nonpartisan economic and social policy research organization), a health care system, or "safety net," for the poor, comprising public hospitals, community health centers, local clinics, and some primary health care physicians, exists in all communities. However, the capacity of these systems and their sources of financial support vary widely.^{xvii} One thing that schools could do is research this safety net health care system and educate the parents about this system. Also, the school could perhaps work with this system and take kids

there when they see fit. If the program in the area is not doing well, perhaps there could be a community effort to improve the condition of these programs and facilities.

-Education about Health

Another issue is just general education about physical health. If parents and students understand easy and affordable ways to eat healthier, a lot of improvements can be made. Perhaps the school could find some nutritionist to volunteer to come to the school to talk to parents and students about eating healthily.

-Athletics

Another issue is physical education. Students may not have an easy way to participate in athletics. Perhaps the school does not have enough money to have sports teams or good PE classes. If a couple of parents or faculty could get together, they could come up with some information about local recreation sports and give that information out to the parents. There could also be a carpooling system so that parents would not always have to take their kid to practices and games. Also, a group of adults could get together and contact sports organizations and other schools (perhaps in more wealthy areas), and have a donation area where people could come and donate used sports equipment for the students to use. The students would not need to know where it came from, but know that they are able to play sports because someone no longer needs equipment and it was donated to the school.

Academics

What is Going On

Students in inner city schools do not perform as well as students in wealthier students. Minority and disadvantaged students do not do as well in school as affluent white students.^{xviii} Even within the same school, White students and/or affluent students

consistently outperform their non-White and/or poor counterparts.^{xix} The reasons for this are so complex that trying to briefly explain them would be foolish. There are historical contexts, social and political contexts, and cultural contexts to take into account. Some of these same factors are being used as excuses to give up on the education of the disadvantaged. For example, there is a common view that poor, inner city school families are working multiple jobs, just getting by, and they cannot support their children (as it pertains to school), and do not value education. In general, this is not true. Most families nation-wide value education over pretty much everything else. There just needs to be a practical way to get parents involved considering other factors in their lives, including work, raising a family and making ends meet.

What Can be Done

-Get Parents Involved

The issue of getting parents involved (especially busy ones and those who do not speak English as a first language) is a very complicated issue. Having said that, it is a very important issue, and one that could drastically improve the education of students. One idea, would be to put together a packet of information (sponsorship/donations may be needed) to give or send out to the parents. This packet could include information about what to do at home, and how to get involved directly in the school. Also, the greater the communication between the parents and the teachers, the more likely it is that they parents will get involved in their child's education. Conferences could be set up at the school, or outside of school, if it is more convenient for the parents and the teacher.

-Books

Having book available to students can make a huge difference in their educational experience. One option might be to get donations from bookstores or other places to

purchase books. If this is not a priority, or a possibility for the school, the local area library could be a huge resource. The library could put books on reserve that only student from that local school can use while they are at the library. The teachers could take their classes to the library as a field trip (hopefully it is walking distance) and the librarian could teach the students how to use the library. This would be a place where student could go and study and have resources that they may not have at their school. Also, depending on the situation, if the local library does not exist, or is poor, maybe there is another library or bookstore that could serve that same purpose. Also, many college libraries are very comprehensive and could provide a similar resource.

Supplies/Facilities

What is Going On.

Students learn better if they are in an environment that is safe and comfortable and lends itself to learning. Some inner city schools have facilities that are so poor that it's a wonder the students even show up. Windows are broken, they are in need of paint, lockers are broken, poor temperature control, there are not enough text books for every student, science labs have outdated equipment, etc. Also, in younger grades, teachers may not have enough supplies to do exercises and activities that would be useful to the students. Many teachers end up buying their own scissors and markers and other basic material and bringing them into class so that the students can learn. Also, environment has a lot to do with student and teacher attitudes. It is much more professional for both students and teachers to have an organized and equipped classroom.

What Can Be Done

-Clean-up Weekend

It is extremely expensive to improve the physical condition of a school. So, the best thing to do is to start where you can. A team of adults could come together to organize a 'clean up the school' weekend. This weekend should have lots of advanced planning, but if all goes smoothly, could be a huge success. This weekend would comprise of volunteers from the school and community, and business who are able to donate supplies. To whatever degree possible, the team would contact businesses and encourage them to donate paint, wood, cleaning supplies, and other building supplies. Volunteers would take these supplies and spend the weekend painting and cleaning up the school. This could happen on a small scale (like painting classrooms) or on a much larger scale (like painting the building and clean the entire school and build a playground). The businesses are likely to get media coverage and other kinds of support for donating time and/or materials.

-Greater Improvements

Since some schools have structural damage, sewage and heating issues and other major problems, these issues also should be addressed. It might be difficult for a group of parents, students and teachers to deal with some of these issues, because of their complexity, these issues should probably be addressed in a different way. This is one issue where corporate sponsorship might be helpful. A team of people could go to some local businesses and ask them to donate money to help with this specific problem. Also, maybe some company could throw some kind of fundraising event, like an auction where they could have people they know donate items, and all the money would go towards fixing up the school. Also, maybe some companies that do this kind of major structural work would be able to give a discount on their services, or maybe even charge for supplies, and not labor. These companies that are involved could get a plaque at the

school, and publicity in local newspapers (and maybe even newspapers beyond the local realm or the internet!)

Staff

What is Going On

There is a high turnover rate in inner city schools. In general, teachers in schools in lower socioeconomic areas do not stay for more than two to three years. Because of this high turnover rate, schools are forced to hire teachers who have temporary licenses and/or inadequate education and paperwork. Many teachers in inner city schools are unqualified. With this turnover rate, it seems logical that teachers are pessimistic and do not enjoy teaching in these schools. Why is this? There are a couple of reasons. First of all, the school may be poorly structured with an inefficient administration. Also, the pay is not good. The school climate, for many reasons may not be enjoyable. If the administration is not willing and able to make changes in the school, or listen to the needs of students and teachers, the school will be unable to improve.

What Can Be Done

-Carry-over Effects

Some of the problems of staff happiness and effectiveness can be solved by some of the other issues that have already been addressed. For example, if the physical buildings improve at the school, there could be a huge climate change without having to change anything else. Also, if some of the students' physical and emotional needs are met, the students will feel more comfortable and make the whole school environment better.

-Training

One of the last things some teachers may want is more workshops and training sessions. However, maybe some experts on school climate could volunteer their time to go into the school and give the staff some advice.

-Social Improvements for Staff

One of the major problems with teachers and faculty at schools is the issue of isolation. Many teachers feel that they are alone and unable to connect with others. Much of their time is spent in classrooms with students, and there is not much time for teacher to talk with each other and share their problems. One idea that might help this is a monthly social gathering between teachers, administrators and perhaps their families. One family might be able to host an event, where other faculty comes to their house, brings food, and there is time for the teachers and other faculty to talk and socialize outside the school setting.

There can also be time set aside during the school day for teachers to come together and talk about problems they might be having. Even something as simple as setting aside a half-hour after school to talk, or have lunch meetings while the students are eating or doing other activities (specialty classes or recess) might significantly help. Also, something as simple as an email and phone list of even staff member might help with communication.

Conclusion and Broader Implications

All of these ideas, although can be helpful and good do not stand alone in their implications. Painting the school with volunteers and donated paint serves more than just having a newly painted school. The idea, and broader implications have to do with personalization of public schooling. For many of the population, there is little personal interest invested in public schools. A decent portion of the population lives in

neighborhoods and do not have family going to the school where they pay taxes. An even great portion of the population does not know students or teachers from different districts. In other words, public schools are impersonal institutions for a lot of people. The only relationship they have with that school is financial. Thinking of personal finance versus impersonal kids who go to different schools, most Americans would chose to keep some money for other purposes.

The solution to funding schools is not brain surgery. In fact, it is simple. People have to agree to give schools more money. How to do that, however, is a little more complicated. It is not as simple as going door to door before election time and encouraging voters to support their local schools. It has to be a much greater effort. But, with the short term, small efforts that have been discussed above, the greater efforts might be closer to being realized. With more involvement from the broader community, with donations or money, time, supplies or support, each individual that helps out will have a greater personal involvement in the school. The greater these efforts to get charitable donations, the more people that will be affected, and the more people with personally care about the nation's schools.

Dissemination Plan

- Meet with urban education experts to gather more information about the issues of inner city schools.
- Develop ideas and come up with more concrete program ideas and lay out programs more clearly.
- Spend time in inner city schools, teaching and understanding the real issues that lie in our schools today.
- Attempt to publish this article in an education magazine or other publication
- Give presentations to administrators, and have them read this article
- Actually run some of these programs and/or do training to help to implement some of these programs.

- ⁱ Kozol, Jonathan (1991). *Savage Inequalities – Children in America’s Schools*. HarperCollins, chapter 1.
- ⁱⁱ Wintington, Daphne (2000). “School Funding Equity.” <http://www.geocities.com/schoolfunding/equity.html>. 10/24/04, page 1.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.
- ^{iv} Ibid.
- ^v Hochschild, J. & N. Scovronick (2003). *The American Dream and the Public Schools*. Oxford University Press, pg. 54.
- ^{vi} Pennsylvania Economy League (2003). “School Funding Equity, Part II: The Quest to Define Equity.” <http://www.issuespa.net/articles/5004/>. 10/24/04, pg 1.
- ^{vii} Ibid
- ^{viii} Hochschild and Scovronick, 56.
- ^{ix} Wintington, 3.
- ^x Hochschild and Scovronick, 68.
- ^{xi} Hochschild and Scovronick, 69.
- ^{xii} Hochschild and Scovronick, 70.
- ^{xiii} Ibid.
- ^{xiv} Hochschild and Scovronick, 70-73
- ^{xv} Noguera, Pedro (2003). *City Schools and the American Dream*. Teachers College Press, 3.
- ^{xvi} Noguera, 4.
- ^{xvii} Urban Institue (2002). “Health Care Access for Uninsured Adults.” <http://www.urban.org/Template.cfm?NavMenuID=24&template=/TaggedContent/ViewPublication.cfm&PublicationID=7521>. 12/11/04. Page 1.
- ^{xviii} Noguera, 42
- ^{xix} Ibid.

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Berke, J. & J. Moskowitz (1976). “Research in School Finance: A Concern with Equity and Equality” *Review of Research in Education*, Vol. 4 (1976), 309-335

This article gives a history of the developments in school finance. From the article conclusion ‘the overall thesis of this review is that school finance is a field of study which has drawn its method and theory from a variety of disciplines, which has combined a central focus on value questions with a substantial use of empirical techniques, and which brings together the worlds of academic research and practical politics.

Hochschild, J. & N. Scovronick (2003). *The American Dream and the Public Schools*. Oxford University Press.

This book is co-written by Hochschild and Scovronick. Hochschild is one of the nation’s leading experts on race and education and is a professor at Harvard. Scovronick is a professor of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University. They combine to write a book about the condition of America’s schools including topics like desegregation, school reform, choice and the American Dream. They also write a chapter on finance reform, which is the chapter that is most closely related to this paper.

Kozol, Jonathan (1991). *Savage Inequalities – Children in America’s Schools*. HarperCollins

This New York Times Bestseller takes a comprehensive look at the conditions of America’s schools. It takes a heartbreaking look at children and what they deal with in their everyday lives in some of the worst schools in the nation. Kozol clearly did a lot of field research because the book is packed full of real life examples that allows the reader to relate better to the current circumstances. The description of East St. Louis is a summary of his descriptions from the first chapter where he explains the lives of those living, working and going to school in East St. Louis.

Noguera, Pedro (2003). *City Schools and the American Dream*. Teachers College Press.

This book gives an overview of the trials and tribulations of inner city schools in the United States. This book helped in determining the five main problem areas of inner city schools in the reform section of the paper.

Odden, A. & Clune, W (1998). “School Finance Systems: Aging Structures in Need of Renovation” *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (Autumn, 1998), 157-177.

This article explains that the current structure of school finance in the US is an aging one and in drastic need of change. It talks about some of the problems with the current condition, and some ideas for change. One of these changes includes a shift from fiscal equity toward educational adequacy.

Pennsylvania Economy League (2003). “School Funding Equity, Part II: The Quest to Define Equity.” <http://www.issuespa.net/articles/5004/>. 10/24/04.

This article gives a brief overview about the issues of Pennsylvania. Most of the article, however, is very general and talked about equity in general, not just as it pertains to PA. It raises the issue that equity is difficult to define, and discusses their attempts to define equity as it pertains to reform. For the PA Economy League, to achieve fiscal equality in their schools, they must first look at the issue of equity and determine what it really means.

Urban Institute (2002). Urban Institute (2002). “Health Care Access for Uninsured Adults.” By John Holahan and Brenda Spillman

<http://www.urban.org/Template.cfm?NavMenuID=24&template=/TaggedContent/ViewPublication.cfm&PublicationID=7521>. 12/11/04.

Article by the Urban Institute who are noninsured and in need of health care. This article gives statistics about uninsured rates and about the safety net concept that is working in some places, its problems, and what needs to be done about health care in the United States.

Wintington, Daphne (2000). "School Funding Equity."

<http://www.geocities.com/schoolfunding/equity.html>. 10/24/04.

This article by Wintington gives an overview of the issues of funding equity. Despite being from a 'dot com' site, her article is well documented, and most of the information comes from the US General Accounting Office. Most of the article is presenting and explaining statistics about achievement and funding gaps. Her facts seem to be straight, there is also a slight democratic slant to the article.