

EPRS 8620 – Educational Evaluation
Fall Semester 2006
409 College of Education
7:15 – 9:45 p.m.

Instructor

John Bare

Vice President, Strategic Planning and Evaluation
Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation / Atlanta Falcons Youth Foundation
3223 Howell Mill Road
Atlanta, Ga. 30327
jbare@ambfo.com

Syllabus

The course syllabus provides a general plan for the course. Changes may be necessary.

Academic Honesty

University policies regarding academic honesty and plagiarism apply.

Attendance

The instructor will record attendance at each class. Students with more than two absences may be dropped from the class or may have their final grade reduced. Students dropped after the midpoint of the semester automatically receive a WF.

Office Hours

By appointment.

Goal of the Class

To increase expertise in educational evaluation and its relationship to policy.

Objectives of the Class

By the end of the semester, all students are expected to demonstrate mastery of the following skills and competencies:

- Understanding and articulating how the state of Georgia, the federal government, the public, and at least one school district in Georgia defines “success” for educating high school students;
- Modeling of local, state and federal education systems, including data and accountability systems;
- Integrating quantitative and qualitative methods into large-scale educational evaluations;
- Using outliers to identify and model examples of practice that may be used by others to improve performance on a larger scale;
- Understanding and articulating arguments on both sides of the paradigm wars;
- Aligning measurement and variables with the intended use of a large-scale educational evaluation;
- Identifying target audiences and producing evaluation reports that meet those audiences needs.

Course Project

The class will function as an educational evaluation policy firm. Students will focus their work on one of five class teams. Together, the teams will complete an educational policy evaluation project, from start to finish. This will involve exploration of the relationship between programs

and policies at various levels of government. This work will involve data management, quantitative and qualitative analysis, systems modeling, policy analysis and writing, and stakeholder analysis.

Students will work with data on all high schools in the state of Georgia. The data come from the state department of education. Teams will accomplish the following:

- Produce and manage and clean data set, with variables describing student performance, student characteristics and school characteristics of every high school in Georgia.
- Design and execute quantitative analysis that includes a predictive model of student performance and generates information on overachieving and underachieving high schools.
- Design and execute qualitative analysis of Georgia high schools to inform the analysis and interpretation of the quantitative findings and to help frame findings within the existing policy context.
- Explain and describe the local, state and federal education systems and the correspondent pressures, as they pertain to Georgia high schools and definitions of a successful high school.
- Produce and submit for publication a case study of overachieving Georgia high schools, articulating the implications for policymakers, parents and the public.

As part of the course work in identifying target audiences, the class will explore and select one or more target publications for the case studies. The outlets may include scholarly journals, electronic publications, professional publications or others. The style and content of the cases will be shaped by the decision on targeting for publication.

Reading

The instructor will provide students with copies of relevant articles, as part of a course packet. In addition, students will be expected to read current editions of *Education Week* (<http://www.edweek.org/ew/index.html>) and to become familiar with and remain current with content on the following web sites. Students should subscribe to the American Evaluation Association listserv, evaltalk (<http://www.aime.ua.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A0=EVALTALK>) for the semester.

National Center for Education Statistics
<http://nces.ed.gov/>

Governor's Office of Student Achievement (Report Cards and AYP reports)
<http://www.gaosa.org/>

Atlanta Public Schools
<http://www.atlanta.k12.ga.us/>

American Educational Research Association
<http://www.aera.net/>

Public Agenda
<http://www.publicagenda.org/>

PBS Frontline – Testing our Schools
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/schools/nochild/>

The Thomas Fordham Foundation (produces *Education Gadfly* newsletter)
<http://www.edexcellence.net/foundation/global/index.cfm>

Grades

- 1/2 of final grade will be determined by the production of publishable case studies on Georgia high schools defined as overachievers. Each student in the class will receive the same grade, based on the quality of the case studies.
- 1/4 of final grade will be determined by ratings of fellow team members. Team members will grade fellow members (A, B, C, D or F), based on each member's perceived contribution to the project.
- 1/4 of final grade will be determined by students' participation and contributions to learning during class. As a reference point, attendance at every class with no participation would equate to a grade of a C on this portion.

Make-up Exam Policy

The final will be project based.

Key Dates

Classes begin on Aug. 21 and end on Dec. 8. The Final Exam period is Dec. 9 – 15.

Course Schedule

Section 1: Understanding the Data and Local, State and Federal Systems

Week 1. Tuesday, Aug. 22

- Discussion: Overview: Program Evaluation, Why We Do Evaluation, Theory of Change and Connections to Policy
- Team Assignments: (1) Data Cleaning & Management; (2) Methods and Analysis; (3) Systems Modeling; (4) Parents & Public Support; (5) Media & Policy Implications
- ◇ Distribute Background Reading and Reference Materials for Semester & Reading for Class Discussion
- ◇ Discuss Systems Modeling and *Utilization-Focused Evaluation*

Week 2. Tuesday, Aug. 29

- Discussion: Defining Educational Success: State of Georgia Education Report Cards and Adequate Yearly Progress
- Confirm Team Assignments: (1) Data Cleaning & Management; (2) Methods and Analysis; (3) Systems Modeling; (4) Parents & Public Support; (5) Media & Policy Implications
- ◇ Review state accountability policies and programs www.gaosa.org
- ◇ “Long road to school sanctions,” Vogell, *AJC*
- ◇ “One school keeps system from meeting state goals,” Reynolds, *AJC*
- ◇ “What No School Can Do,” Traub, *NYT*
- ◇ “To Cut Failure Rates, Schools Shed Students,” Lewin & Medina, *NYT*
- ◇ “On Education: The ‘Zero Dropout Miracle,’” Winerip, *NYT*
- ◇ “For Houston Schools, College Claims Exceed Reality,” Schemo, *NYT*
- Guest Speaker: Martha Reichrath, Executive Director, Governor’s Office of Student Achievement

Week 3. Tuesday, Sept. 5

- Discussion: Defining Educational Success: Variations Across Local Schools and Systems
- Team Reports
- ◇ “Towns are Rejecting No Child Left Behind,” Gordon, *NYT*
- ◇ “Set Up for Failure,” Ralph and Crouse, *EdWeek*
- ◇ “Federal tests give diversity a downside,” Ghezzi, *AJC*
- ◇ “Inside High Schools,” Maxie, *AJC*
- ◇ “On Education: Discovering Crisis, Again and Again,” Winerip, *NYT*
- ◇ “Schools in Norfolk, Va., Get Award for Gains,” Herszenhorn, *NYT*

(continued) Section 1: Understanding the Data and Local, State and Federal Systems

Week 4. Tuesday, Sept. 12

- Discussion: Defining Educational Success: Federal Education Policy Implications
- Team Reports
- ◇ “Testing the NCLB,” Harvard Civil Rights Project
- ◇ Full Report: http://www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/research/esea/nclb_naep_lee.pdf
- ◇ “Acid Tests,” Murray, *WSJ*
- ◇ “Dropping Acid,” Finn, *Gadfly*
- ◇ “No child standards soften,” MacDonald, *AJC*
- ◇ “Critic of No Child Left Behind was Disinvited From Meeting,” Saulny *NYT*
- ◇ “The Two Faces of No Child Left Behind,” Finn, *Gadfly*
- ◇ “What Works vs. Whatever Works,” Pretrilli, *EdWeek*
- Screening of PBS Frontline Documentary: “Testing Our Schools”

Week 5. Tuesday, Sept. 19

- Discussion: Defining Educational Success: Parents & Public
- Team Reports
- ◇ Public Agenda’s Reality Check 2006 (summary of 8 findings at link below)
http://www.publicagenda.org/specials/realitycheck06/realitycheck06_main.htm
- ◇ Reality Check 2006, Issue Brief #1
<http://www.publicagenda.org/research/pdfs/rc0601.pdf>
- ◇ Reality Check 2006, Issue Brief #2
<http://www.publicagenda.org/research/pdfs/rc0602.pdf>
- ◇ Reality Check 2006, Issue Brief #3
<http://www.publicagenda.org/research/pdfs/rc0603.pdf>
- Guest Speakers: Beth Schapiro, President, Schapiro Research Group and representative from Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce Regional Education Committee

Section 2: Evidence

Week 6. Tuesday, Sept. 26

- Discussion: Positive Deviance
- Team Reports
- ◇ “SAT Analysis,” Kelly, *USAT*
- ◇ “SAT Scores, Journalism and Public Policy,” Meyer, *Economics of Education Review*
- ◇ What is Positive Deviance? <http://www.positivedeviance.org/>
- ◇ Positive Deviance Example: Improving Pregnancy Outcomes
http://www.positivedeviance.org/projects/egyppreg_outcomes/

Week 7. Tuesday, Oct. 3

- Discussion: What it Means to Get to Scale With Educational Innovations
- Team Reports
- ◇ “Bill Gates,” Ravitch, *LAT*
- ◇ “Getting to Scale With Good Educational Practice,” Elmore, *Harvard Educational Review*
- ◇ Executive Summary of Year 2 evaluation report, at:
<http://www.gatesfoundation.org/NR/downloads/ed/researchevaluation/Yr3SynthesisReport.pdf>
- Guest Speaker: Victor Kuo, Evaluation Officer, Gates Foundation

Week 8. Tuesday, Oct. 10

- Discussion: Education and the Debate over Equity
- Team Reports
- ◇ “First Graders’ Achievement in Top and Bottom Schools,” Ralph and Crouse, NCES
- ◇ “Starting First Grade at a Disadvantage,” Ralph, et al., NCES unpublished
- ◇ *The Black-White Test Score Gap*, Chs. 1, 4, 7, 9

Week 9. Tuesday, Oct. 17

- Discussion: Aptitude, Achievement, Persistence, Attainment and Test Scores – what Matters to Whom?
- Team Reports
- ◇ “Commentary,” Jencks and Crouse, *EdWeek*
- ◇ “Why We Should Replace Aptitude Tests With Achievement Tests,” Krist and Rowen, *EdWeek*

Week 10. Tuesday, Oct. 24

- Discussion: Boruch v. Patton: The Paradigm Debates
- Team Reports
- ◇ Thomas Cook essay in *Annals of the American Academy of Political & Social Science*
- ◇ “What Good Is Polarizing Research Into Qualitative and Quantitative,” Ercikan and Roth, *ER*
- ◇ *Social Experimentation*, Ch. 1
- ◇ *The Experimenting Society*, Ch. 2
- ◇ *Utilization-Focused Evaluation*, Ch. 12

Section 3: Communicating Educational Evaluation Findings to Various Audiences

Week 11. Tuesday, Oct. 31

- Discussion: Identifying Audiences, Uses and Gratifications, and Messages and Messengers (class will use Smart Chart tool, from Spitfire Strategies, to create communications plan)
- Team Reports
- Screening Spitfire Strategies Communication Workshop, from C-SPAN

Week 12. Tuesday, Nov. 7

- Discussion: What's the Lead? What Will be the Reaction?
- Team Reports

Week 13. Tuesday, Nov. 14

- Discussion: Staff Feedback on First Draft of Cases
- Team Reports (as needed)

Week 14. Tuesday, Nov. 21 – Thanksgiving Holiday

Week 15. Tuesday, Nov. 28

- Discussion: Staff Feedback on Second Draft of Cases
- Team Reports (as needed)

Week 16. Tuesday, Dec. 5

- Discussion: Student Presentation of Findings