

***Educational Institutions Achievement Index: Measuring Florida
Public Schools; FCAT, Magnet Schools, and Beyond***

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Attached with Power Point Presentation

Intro

Education has been viewed by many, as the cornerstone of ‘success’ in America.

“America may be the land of opportunity but it is also the land of inequality.”
(Annette Lareau)

The goal of this preliminary study is to explore the impact of educational inequalities in Jacksonville, Florida and to reconceptualize educational success and achievement through the creation of an Educational Institutions Achievement Index of primary and secondary institutions. Jacksonville provides an important and unique research opportunity because of the context of which school desegregation occurred and the diverse student populations that were the result. In contrast to the diverse student population Jacksonville also provides a non-diverse public school population for comparison.

The Educational Institutions Achievement Index will address Educational Success, Community Health, Individual Student Achievement, and other inequities of broader social justice.

This study will focus on more than the writing, reading, and math skills but more on the hidden curriculum of socialization, cultural capital, and social capital.

Educational inequalities in the U.S. have been well documented. Scholarship often focuses on the economic consequences of educational disparities including school funding and resources. Additionally, within the educational inequality literature, research has drawn attention to the qualitative differences of educational experiences. More recently, particularly in light of President Bush’s No Child Left Behind initiative, discussions about school performance and assessment have taken a more pronounced role. Indeed, current conceptualizations as well as measures of ‘academic success’ have been critical of the No Child Left Behind initiative claiming that standards of measurement have been unequal.

How I came to this project.

First, as an attendee of Duval County Public Schools I have first hand personal accounts of what its like to be a student in Duval County Public Schools.

I also attended a magnet school as well as my local neighborhood school. This gives me the ability to compare first hand experiences of the various ‘Choices’ available in Duval County public school.

Secondly, Educational Issues of Inequality have been apart of my life. My Grandfather who came down from Maine to Florida in 1962 was the Principal, a Teacher, Coach, and advisor at the town school that facilitated grades 1-12. When he arrived in the summer of 1962 there were racial tensions mounting in St. Augustine. Two summers later, in 1964 Dr. Martin Luther King would come to St. Augustine in support of local youth that wanted to swim in the motel pool they were staying in.

With segregation issues in the air, resistance to integration of the public schools continued until the county in 1970 began with a policy of forced integration. My grandfather by this time was up for a promotion to vice principal and then immediately promoted to principal because nobody else wanted to touch the issue of integration. He took the promotion and went to the first of the county forced integrated schools in Hastings, Fl.

This was the narrative of my upbringing that captivated my interest in education inequities.

Current Literature

Through my interest in educa

When Ralph Nader came and spoke here at the school he talked about how our schools were teaching our students to be consumers over being a good citizen. Corporate versus Civic.

Paulo Freire says that our public education system uses what he calls the banking approach to teaching. It means that a teacher will deposit information for the students rather than engage the students to critically view the topic. In my personal knowledge there is more mutual humanization occurring at magnet schools over traditional neighborhood schools. Some teachers lose the role of depositor and take up the role of 'student among students'. This role allows the student to be more creative and critical.

The banking system of teaching is according to Paulo Freire much like the ready to wear clothes industry, it determines that the students don't want to think about what to know, rather they would like it handed to them.

This study plans to build upon the theoretical traditions of these great contributors.

Methods

This study will explore the human capital as well as the social capital gained by those who attend magnet schools and those who don't. In the year ahead I will address those concerns with in-depth observations and/or interviews with students, parents, teachers, and administrators.

I plan to address certain gaps in the literature of educational inequalities as I conduct the in-depth observations and interviews with magnet school and neighborhood school students and parents.

I will show that inequity permeates the fabric of public education. I will also address the stratification of those who attend magnet schools with those who didn't, by comparing data from school performance, and information obtained from parents.

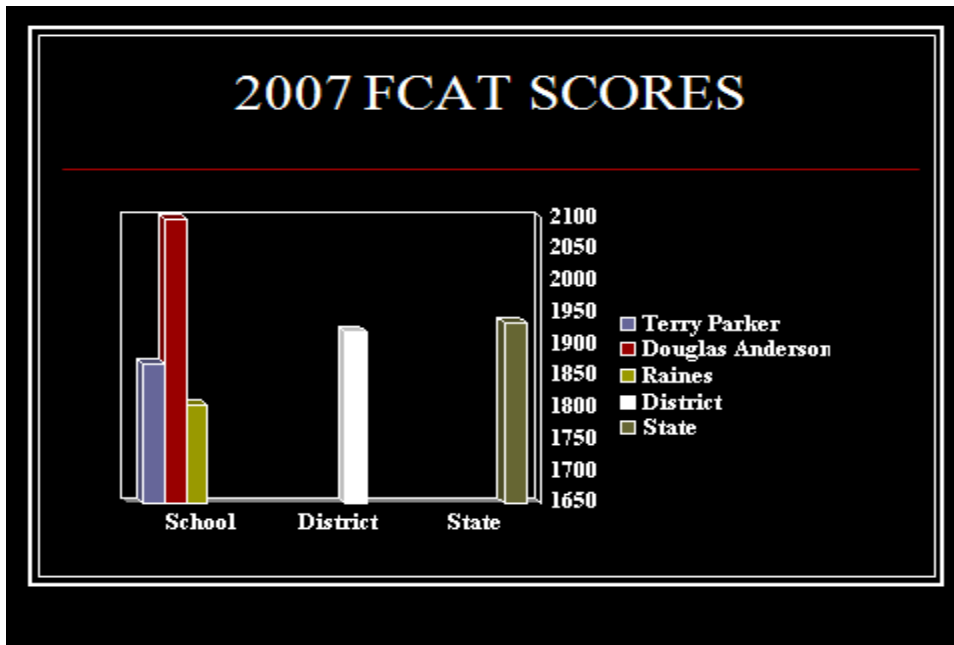
Findings

Educational Success and Individual Student Achievement

This study will show that educational success is more than just knowing how to read, write, and understand math. Education is also social. With who and how you are socialized in ones formative years will have long- term impact on a student's life. While we are addressing public school measurement we should also look at outliers like magnet schools. Currently magnet schools are under th

possible delinquent peers and introduces them to a new peer group. This parent also told me that she wanted her child to be more ‘challenged’. This goes back to what I said about Paulo’s banking method of teaching. One parent also told me that “My son met friends from all over Jacksonville. [The experience] expanded his horizons beyond his neighborhood.” While I do agree with these parents I must interject and state, that not all students can attend magnet schools. Some parents either don’t know about the programs or are uninterested in pursuing the options for their children due to a number of personal reasons.

Power Point Graph



In this graph I have taken the average of both 9th and 10th grade reading and math FCAT scores and given an overall FCAT performance score. Other studies have broken down the scores in to 9th grade reading and math and 10th grade reading and math. For purposes of showing the best comparison of school FCAT performance I have added the four categories in one average of the four.

In this graph you can easily see the disproportionate rate of ‘success’ on the FCAT between the three schools. For comparison I have also included the district and state averages.

Another way this study will impact educational success is in the academic tracking I mentioned. Academic tracking is the separating of either high performing students or low performing students from the student body. This can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Students who know they are in the low performing group will meet those expectations.

I also hope to show with this study that peer-to-peer socialization is one of the strongest ways a student will learn their academic behavior. So I then argue by separating

the top performing students out of their local neighborhood school this is some sort of social penalty for the local neighborhood students. I would also say that the top performing students could also learn from the lower performing students.

I also know that not every student that attends a magnet school are the top performers just as that all students that attend their local school are not the lowest performing.

Community Health

This study will also address concerns of community health.

I hope to show a link between busing students to neighborhoods that they don't interact with the neighborhood in which their school is located is doing harm to the neighborhood rather than helping. For example, Jacksonville has placed a majority of its magnet school programs in schools that have been historically underperforming as a way to encourage voluntary busing to integrate schools and neighborhoods. Douglas Anderson and Stanton come to mind. The criteria for neighborhood children being admitted to the magnet school program are that they get bumped to the top of the list. First, they must apply and if necessary audition. Some magnet programs are school within a school. This means that they have a curriculum schedule that seldom allows them to interact with the neighborhood students who attend the school. This seems to be an opposite effect for voluntary desegregation. This tends to leave the communities more segregated than before 'voluntary' desegregation occurred.

As an answer to forced integration, Jacksonville utilized the concept of magnet schools to desegregate neighborhood schools by drawing students from their 'voluntary' segregated neighborhoods to other 'voluntary' segregated neighborhoods. There seems to be a disconnect between how this desegregation can impact students and the communities that the magnet school are placed. Like I mentioned earlier, the programs seldom allow students to interact with the neighborhoods within which their schools are located. Some programs seldom allow students to interact with each other at school.

Magnet schools are a 'choice' for parents. Other choices parents have had in the past were to; send their child to private school or move to a neighborhood with an outstanding school. The issue with magnet schools is that they are public schools that don't require any mobility of the students and parents, allowing them to live in their 'voluntarily' segregated neighborhoods while their children go to and don't interact with the local neighborhood community. This is an issue with not schooling but with neighborhood viability. Magnet schools do not have the effect that originally perceived when magnet schools were first implemented. We understand that private school and public schools will have inequities, but expect public schools to offer equal curriculum for all students. The magnet schools are funded by the tax dollars allocated to the neighborhood school and for every child that leaves to go to a magnet school those funds

follow the student. This type of funding allocation can be detrimental to community health.

I will hope to show that it is more than just a funding issue. That we cannot just build ourselves out of this complex problem with new schools, although that is an important step after we address the inequality of the system. To truly have an equal public education it will require a mixing of the student population rather than further segregation.

My preliminary findings so far indicate that restructuring a new school measurement would require an extension of current measurements to include other salient factors in a successful school, such as truancy rates, dropout/graduation rates, and in-depth after school programs.

*Since this paper's original completion the current school measurements are being reviewed and plans are in the works to include some of these factors (truancy rates, graduation rates, dropout rates) into a more complete school measurement. School measurement should be about how to improve school, not necessarily about a groundless letter grade. Attention always seems to go to who continues to be successful and who continues to fail, when the discussion should be about what is best for the communities and students.

Power Point Pictures

(For full effect of the pictures I suggest viewing the pictures that are attached in the PowerPoint presentation.)

These pictures are from a recent magnet school function aimed at drawing attention to the many choices available to students that attend Duval County Public Schools.

At this event I felt that it was much like a carnival, flea market, or even a car lot. As you can see there was row after row of tables and information. As we view these pictures I would like for you to understand the consumer focus at this event. Much like a home and patio show, these booths are selling their wares. The difference being that the wares offered by the "public/private" education system is an experience versus an education.

After seeing these pictures I would like to take in these wonderful words by Henry Giroux.

Summary

"Public Schools provide a critical referent for measuring the degree to which American society fulfills its obligations to provide all students with the knowledge and skills necessary for critical citizenship and the possibilities of a democratic public life". "No longer are institutions designed to benefit all members of the community...Public

schools are refashioned in market terms, designed to serve the narrow interests of individual consumers, and national economic policies”. “[As] government support for schools dry up, corporations attempt to harness educational institutions to corporate control [with] calls for privatization, vouchers, so-called choice programs, and diverse forms of school-business partnerships.”

With these words and my preliminary findings in data and events, it left me with these questions to be answered.

If magnet schools were abolished would neighborhood schools FCAT scores increase? Would the motivated students rub off on the less motivated students? Would the less ‘successful’ students have some reference point for what it means to be successful, talented, and motivated? If the students are not receiving that socialization at home and not at school then what is going to happen to those children? Do magnet schools help more students or do they penalize more students?

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