

EFOP 2011/3011
Education Policy Implementation:
Students, Families, Educators and Policymakers

University of Pittsburgh
School of Education
Spring 2025

Instructor

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Class Sessions

Mondays, 5:00pm - 7:40pm

Posvar 5405

Zoom room: <https://pitt.zoom.us/j/99562097646>

Passcode: change

Course Description

In this course, students learn about the role of education policy in supporting equitable social structures through a focus on the dynamics of policy implementation. Drawing on theory-driven and applied texts in education, policy, organizational science, social movements, and more, students explore common implementation challenges and identify promising strategies to prevent and counteract them. Working independently and in groups students develop their own expertise around a particular education policy area, producing analytical writing in multiple policy-relevant genres. For masters (2011) and doctoral (3011) students.

Learning Goals

The purpose of this course is to support students' current and future efforts to build a humane and equitable world. Through engagement with course materials, activities, and content, students will be able to:

- Situate policy efforts towards educational change in their historical, political, and social context
- Name and explain common challenges in program and policy implementation, including appropriate allocation of resources, divergent stakeholder perspectives, supporting conceptual shifts, cooptation, and policy churn

- Develop concrete strategies to address relevant implementation challenges
- Explain and address tradeoffs associated with multiple frameworks for analyzing and/or supporting structural change including policy analysis, policy implementation, diffusion/scale up, and continuous improvement.
- Develop expertise in an education policy area of interest
- Develop reading and writing skills in multiple policy-related genres including policy briefs, scholarly research, and organizational planning documents

Required Texts

All assigned materials will be made available digitally.

Course Components

Class Activities

- Class sessions will serve as spaces to co-create shared knowledge by synthesizing class texts and activities with students' personal, professional, and cultural know-how. Therefore, attendance and participation in each class session is expected.
- Recognizing that students often have complex personal responsibilities and life circumstances, virtual participation is available for every session to make class accessible when physical presence is not possible.
- If for any reason a student cannot attend class (that is, neither in person nor virtually) they should contact the instructor and TA. Students will be expected to review the material covered in their absence, and may be asked to complete some additional steps to catch back up with the class.

Equitable Policy Brief

- Early in the semester, students will produce a concise policy brief, framing a policy problem relating to educational equity and proposing a policy solution. This brief will comprise one of the two major writing assignments for the course. Preparing for it will require considerable independent research.
- The purposes of this assignment are: first, to ensure that students have rich knowledge of a particular policy topic through which to engage with the policy implementation concepts we will discuss for the remainder of the semester; second, to provide students with hands-on experience producing one of the most common genres of text found in the policy arena; third for MA students in the Education Policy program, this policy brief is designed to fulfill the Literature Based Policy Brief Milestone requirement, pending the approval of your MA advisor.
- In preparation for the Equitable Policy Brief, students will first submit a tentative statement of the policy problem to be addressed and list of potential sources; an outline of the Brief; and a rough draft. The polished Brief and accompanying self assessment are due Wednesday February 5. Students will also have the opportunity to submit a further revision of this Brief at the end of the semester, if so desired.

Implementation Plan

- Later in the semester students will create a detailed implementation plan meant as an internal guide for a specific stakeholder in the implementation of students' focal policy (outlined in the Equitable Policy Brief, and addressed in Memos throughout the semester—see below)

- As the second major writing assignment of the course, the purpose of this assignment is to synthesize and apply concepts addressed throughout the course and prepare students to engage with stakeholders around the policy implementation process.
- The Implementation Plan and accompanying self-assessment are due on Wednesday April 16. In preparation for this, students will submit a brief writeup of their ideas; and a rough draft of the implementation plan.

Memos

- Students will complete **four** short memo writing assignments throughout the course reflecting on course topics and their application to students' selected policy issue. Each memo should be in the range of 400-800 words in length.
- Memo prompts (A-G) will be available relating to course readings in Weeks 4-10. Students may choose which four of those seven prompts to respond to.
- Memos are intended to provide opportunities for deep engagement and concrete application of course concepts, as well as building blocks for the Implementation Guide.
- Memos may include informal language, unanswered questions and points of confusion as well as more confident analysis. However, the writing should be clear and self-contained enough that a classmate (or you, 3 months from now) can follow your thought process.
- Memos are due on the Wednesday following class of whatever weeks students choose to submit them. However students (particularly in the PhD program) are welcome to submit them in advance of class if so desired.

Peer Feedback

- Students will work in small groups to provide peer feedback for others who are working on similar policy topics
- The purpose of engaging with and providing feedback on classmates' work is to learn more about policy areas related to students' own interests, and practice critically applying the analytic skills of the course in a related context. The purpose of receiving feedback from classmates is to deepen students' own thinking by engaging with the perspectives of others.
- Peer feedback groups will convene during class on February 3 and April 14 to read and provide feedback on one another's major writing assignments. Due to the time sensitive nature of this process students are strongly encouraged to make every effort to be present in class on these days, and to contact the instructor as soon as possible if they foresee any obstacles to this.
- Students will also be asked to read and provide written feedback on one another's memos in advance of class during Weeks 7 and 11.

Readings & Annotations

- Materials to read will be assigned each week, and posted on Perusall and/or Canvas. Students are expected to read and add 2-3 annotations on shared digital copies of all assigned materials, highlighting points of interest, connections with course themes and ideas, and/or questions or points of tensions that arise.
- The purpose of these annotations is to begin an asynchronous discussion of weekly content before class. This is intended both to invite deep engagement with course ideas and to provide me with a sense of your thinking in advance of class so that we can use our time together to continue and extend our collective learning
- Annotations are due by 12 noon on Mondays

Revised Culminating Assignment

- At the end of the course, students will have the opportunity to revise and resubmit one of the two major writing assignments of the course—either the Equitable Policy Brief or the Implementation Guide.
- The purpose of resubmitting a major writing assignment is to provide an opportunity to produce work that is of higher quality—more accurately informed by course concepts, clearer, more compelling to an outsider reader, etc.—than what any of us could produce independently, without input and feedback from one another. It also mirrors, and supports the development of skills related to, soliciting and incorporating feedback from others, which is a routine part of the production of written products in both academic and practitioner contexts.
- The Revised Culminated Assignment and accompanying self-assessment and reflection are due on Monday April 28.

Assessment & Course Grades

You are each full human beings, with complex adult lives including multiple competing priorities. As graduate students with personal and professional goals related to the themes of the course, your degree of engagement will likely have natural consequences of far more significance than any grade you receive from me. As such, my focus will be on providing support, structured accountability, and qualitative feedback.

I understand that life happens. Extensions are available for most assignments, although this is more challenging for assignments involving peer feedback. If you anticipate that you will not be able to complete an assignment on time, please contact me with as much advance notice as possible, including a suggested alternative deadline. You do not need to provide a reason for the request. Likewise, if you need to miss a session, please contact me as soon as possible, and I will do what I can to provide an alternative arrangement.

Students who satisfactorily complete all assignments and attend all sessions (or make alternative arrangements, as needed) will receive an A in the course. Students who do not will receive a B, or in extreme cases, an incomplete.

School Policies

Basic Needs. We cannot learn effectively when our basic human needs are not met. The University has [resources](#) available for students who find themselves uncertain of how they will pay a bill, access food, secure medication, maintain their housing, travel for a family emergency, etc. The Care and Resource Support (CARS) Team can be reached at 412-624-5756 or PittCares@pitt.edu. If you are facing any of these uncertainties I also encourage you to contact me, if you feel comfortable doing so, as I may be able to help you locate additional resources, as well as make appropriate academic accommodations.

Disability Services. If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both the instructor and Disability Resources and Services (DRS), 140 William Pitt Union, (412) 648-7890, drsrecep@pitt.edu, (412) 228-5347 for P3 ASL users, as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for these courses.

Statement on Classroom Recording. To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use. Some classes may be recorded by the instructor via Zoom. If this is a concern, please let me know.

Departmental Grievance Procedures. The purpose of grievance procedures is to ensure the rights and responsibilities of faculty and students in their relationships with each other. When a student in the School of Education believes that a faculty member has not met his or her obligations (as an instructor or in another capacity) as described in the Academic Integrity Guidelines, the student should follow the procedure described in the Guidelines by (1) first trying to resolve the matter with the faculty member directly; (2) then, if needed, attempting to resolve the matter through conversations with Dr. Lori Delale O'Connor, Chair of the Department of Educational Foundations, Organizations, and Policy; (3) if needed, next talking to the academic integrity officer of the school, Assistant Dean Dr. Andrea Zito; and (4) if needed, filing a written statement of charges with the academic integrity officer.

Academic Integrity. Students in this course will be expected to comply with the University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity. Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity. This may include, but is not limited to, the confiscation of the examination of any individual suspected of violating University Policy. Furthermore, no student may bring any unauthorized materials to an exam, including dictionaries and programmable calculators.

See the [Pitt Graduate Catalog](#) and [School of Education section](#) for more information

Tentative Course Outline (subject to change)

Week # - Class Date	Topic	Assignments Due (12 noon)
Week 1 - Jan 13	Education policy, implementation & change	Read syllabus & course assignments
NO CLASS THIS WEEK - Jan 20	Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day - University Closed	Tentative Policy Problem & Source List - Weds Jan 22
Week 2 - Jan 27	Policy analysis & sample briefs	Read & Annotate - Mon Jan 27 Policy Brief Outline - Weds Jan 29
Week 3 - Feb 3	Peer feedback session: Policy Brief	Policy Brief Draft - Mon Feb 3 Full Equitable Policy Brief & Self-Assessment - Weds Feb 5
Week 4 - Feb 10	Policymaking & context	Read & Annotate - Mon Feb 10 Memo Option A - Weds Feb 12
Week 5 - Feb 17	Theorizing implementation	Read & Annotate - Mon Feb 17 Memo Option B - Weds Feb 19
Week 6 - Feb 24	Allocating resources	Read & Annotate - Mon Feb 24 Memo Option C - Weds Feb 26
Spring Break		
Week 7 - Mar 10	Resistance & buy-in	Read & Annotate - Mon Mar 10 Peer Feedback: Memos A-C - Mon Mar 10 Memo Option D - Weds Mar 12
Week 8 - Mar 17	Learning	Read & Annotate - Mon Mar 17 Memo Option E - Weds Mar 19
Week 9 - Mar 24	Cooptation & power	Read & Annotate - Mon Mar 24 Memo Option F - Weds Mar 26
Week 10 - Mar 31	Churn & sustainability	Read & Annotate - Mon Mar 31 Memo Option G - Weds Apr 2
Week 11 - Apr 7	Implementation Synthesis	Read/Skim - Mon Apr 7 Peer Feedback: Memos D-G - Mon Apr 7 Implementation Plan Outline - Weds Apr 9
Week 12 - Apr 14	Peer feedback session: Implementation Plan	Implementation Plan Draft - Mon Apr 14

		Full Implementation Plan & Self-Assessment - Weds Apr 16
Week 13 - Apr 21	Alternative models: Continuous Improvement, Diffusion & scale up	Read & Annotate - Mon Apr 21
Week 14 - Apr 28	Celebration & future visioning	Revised Culminating Assignment - Mon Apr 28

Full Reading List (subject to change):

Week 2: Policy Analysis & Sample Briefs

READ

- Young, E., & Quinn, L. (2017). *An Essential Guide to Writing Policy Briefs*. International Centre for Policy Advocacy.

READ at least 1:

- Cummings, A. (2021). *Making early literacy policy work in Kentucky: Three considerations for policymakers on the “Read to Succeed” act*. National Education Policy Center.
- Gallagher, H. A., & Cottingham, B. (2020). *Improving the quality of distance and blended learning* (No. 8; EdResearch for Recovery). Policy Analysis for California Education, Stanford University.
- Sepanik, S., & Brown, K. T. (2021). *Solutions for educational equity through social and emotional well being: School-community partnerships*. MDRC.
- Stohr, A., Fontana, J., & Lapp, D. (2018). *Patching the leaky pipeline: Recruiting and retaining teachers of color in Pennsylvania* (Research for Action). Pennsylvania Clearinghouse for Education Research.
- Taconet, A. V., Tarconish, E. J., Sinclair, T. E., Lee, M., Allegra, R. P., Rose, S., & Adams, T. A. (2022). *Students with Disabilities in Postsecondary Education: Identifying and Addressing Barriers to Access and Success*. College Promise.

READ at least 1:

- Alshammari, Nour (2023). *Academic misconduct and plagiarism in Kuwaiti schools*. Policy Brief. EFOP 2011/3011.
- Daughtery, Rebecca (2022). *Cultivating Native Teachers: Considerations for the Bureau of Indian Education*. Policy Brief. EFOP 2011/3011.
- Irondi, Ogechi (2022). *Improving Access to Homeschooling as a School Choice Option*. Policy Brief. EFOP 2022/3011.

Week 3: Peer Feedback Session

No additional reading

Week 4: Policymaking & Context

PICK 2 OF 3:

- Ewing, E. L. (2018). *Ghosts in the Schoolyard: Racism and School Closings on Chicago’s South Side*. (pp. 53-93) University of Chicago Press. <https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/G/bo27506579.html> (Links to an external site.)
- Vossoughi, S., & Vakil, S. (2018). Toward What Ends?: A Critical Analysis of Militarism, Equity, and STEM Education. In A. I. Ali & T. L. Buenavista (Eds.), *Education at War* (pp. 117–140). Fordham University. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt2204pqp.9> (Links to an external site.)
- Montague, Z., & Green, E. L. (2025, January 29). Trump Signs Executive Order to Promote ‘Patriotic Education’ in Schools. *The New York Times*, 20.

PICK 1 of 2:

- Chow, A. (2014). Understanding Policy Change: Multiple Streams and National Education Curriculum Policy in Hong Kong. *Journal of Public Administration and Governance*, 4(2), 49. <https://doi.org/10.5296/jpag.v4i2.5184> (Links to an external site.)

OR

- Lewis, W. D., & Young, T. V. (2013). The Politics of Accountability: Teacher Education Policy. *Educational Policy*, 27(2), 190–216. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904812472725> (Links to an external site.)

Memo Prompt A:

When and how did the current polic(ies) in your issue area come to be? Who advocated for or supported them and why? If you can't find good info on this, make an educated guess: Who are some of the stakeholders (policymakers, industry groups, communities, etc.) who might see or originally have seen this policy as beneficial, and why? How might these different stakeholders viewpoints be similar and different to one another? How might this have influenced the design and/or adoption of the current policies?

Week 5: Theorizing Implementation

PICK 2 of 3:

- Cohen, D. K., Moffitt, S. L., & Goldin, S. (2007). Policy and Practice: The Dilemma. *American Journal of Education*, 113(4), 515–548. <https://doi.org/10.1086/518487> (Links to an external site.)
- Century, J., & Cassata, A. (2016). Implementation Research: Finding Common Ground on What, How, Why, Where, and Who. *Review of Research in Education*, 40(1), 169–215.
- Iowa Reading Research Center blog posts series of fidelity of implementation (2018, 2018, 2024)

Memo Option B

Who would need to change what they are doing in order to implement your proposed policy solution? (E.g. teachers, museum leadership, district HR staff, etc.) What would these stakeholders need to do? What changes do you think would be most critical to successful implementation? Where would you anticipate flexibility? Be as specific as possible. Please draw on at least one concept or example from this week's reading in your discussion.

Week 6: Resources for Implementation

PICK 3 of 4:

- Schrag, P. (2006). Policy from the Hip: Class-Size Reduction in California. *Brookings Papers on Education Policy*, 9, 229–243.

AND/OR

- Morgan, I. (2022). *Equal is not good enough: An analysis of school funding equity across the U.S. and within each state*. Education Trust.

AND/OR

- Rosenberg, L., Christianson, M. D., & Hague Angus, M. (2015). Improvement Efforts in Rural Schools: Experiences of Nine Schools Receiving School Improvement Grants. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 90(2), 194–210. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0161956X.2015.1022109> (Links to an external site.)

AND/OR

- Bryk, A. S. (2010). Organizing Schools for Improvement. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, 91(7), 23–30.

Memo Prompt C

Create an estimated budget for implementing your proposed policy solution effectively. Make a chart listing out each of the elements that would cost money, and about how much money would be needed for each one. You may find it useful to create a Year 1 budget that includes up-front/startup costs, and an Annual budget that reflects ongoing costs. (Don't worry about using precise numbers. The goal here is to consider the elements you think are most important, and get a very general sense of the magnitude of costs).

A few rules of thumb:

Salaries: The costs to an employer for a full time employee are typically 1.25-1.4x that worker's annual salary. You might estimate 50k for an early career / living wage job, or 100k for a specialist (e.g. a teacher, counselor, etc).

Training: K-12 teachers typically need substitute coverage to attend trainings, or need to be paid themselves to attend trainings outside of school hours. (Subs are also typically wildly under paid.) You might estimate \$100/teacher/day to cover the cost of substitutes. School and district administrators, counselors, etc., typically don't get coverage when they attend trainings (their other work just gets delayed), but for larger projects additional full- or part-time staff will be needed to lighten the load. You might estimate the cost of a trainer/consultant at \$100-200/hour, with 10 hours of upfront prep. Whenever possible, it's a good idea to provide food at trainings. You might estimate that cost at \$10/person for lunch.

Time: For a complex change, you might estimate ~3 years to get an initiative up and running smoothly; longer for it to become deeply ingrained in culture.

Week 7: Resistance & Buy-in

PICK 2 of 4:

- Pease-Alvarez, L., & Thompson, A. (2014). Teachers working together to resist and remake educational policy in contexts of standardization. *Language Policy*, 13(2), 165–181. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10993-013-9313-8> (Links to an external site.)

AND/OR

- Kellogg, K. C. (2009). Operating room: Relational spaces and microinstitutional change in surgery. *American Journal of Sociology*, 115, 657–711. <https://doi.org/10.1086/603535> (Links to an external site.)

AND/OR

- Liera, R. (2020). Moving beyond a culture of niceness in faculty hiring to advance racial equity. *American Educational Research Journal*, 57(5), 1954–1994. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831219888624>

AND/OR

- Hagopian, J. (2025, February 11). Trump's Goal of Burying History Won't Work If Teachers Refuse to Stop Teaching. *Truthout*.

Memo Prompt D

How might your focal policy align or misalign with implementers' perceptions of their own interests and needs? What frames and/or actions might (re)shape these perceptions? In other words: why might implementers resist making the changes asked of them? How might you cultivate "buy in"? Please draw on at least one concept or example from this week's reading in your discussion.

Week 8: Sensemaking & Learning

PICK 3 of 4:

- Spillane, J. P. (2009). *Standards Deviation*. Harvard University Press. Chapter 4 Making policy, making sense, pp. 71-90

AND/OR

- Allen, C. D., & Heredia, S. C. (2020). Reframing Organizational Contexts from Barriers to Levers for Teacher Learning in Science Education Reform. *Journal of Science Teacher Education*, 1–19.

AND/OR

- Philip, T. M. (2011). An "Ideology in Pieces" Approach to Studying Change in Teachers' Sensemaking About Race, Racism, and Racial Justice. *Cognition and Instruction*, 29(3), 297–329

AND/OR

- Shalaby, C. (2017). "A letter to teachers: On teaching love and learning freedom" in *Troublemakers: Lessons in freedom from young children at school*. The New Press.

Memo Prompt E

What do implementers need to understand in order to implement this policy well? Where might you anticipate sources of confusion, with what consequences for implementation? How might you build supports for sensemaking into the implementation process? Please draw on at least one concept or example from this week's reading in your discussion.

Week 9: Cooptation

PICK 3 OF 4:

- O'Brien, D., & Nygreen, K. (2020). Advancing Restorative Justice in the Context of Racial Neoliberalism: Engaging Contradictions to Build Humanizing Spaces. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 53(4), 518–530. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2020.1791768>

AND/OR

- McCambly, H., Colyvas, J. (2022). Dismantling or Disguising Racialization?: Defining Racialized Change Work in the Context of Postsecondary Grantmaking. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muac021>

AND/OR

- Chatelain, M. (2020). How colleges co-opt Black-Student protests. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

AND/OR

- Joffe-Walt, C. (2020). Nice White Parents. *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/23/podcasts/nice-white-parents-serial.html> (Links to an external site.) (annotations optional)
 - o Episode 1: The Book of Statutes
 - o Episode 5: 'We know it when we see it'

Memo Prompt F:

What might it look like if your equity-focused policy were to be implemented (poorly) in such a way that it actually served to reinscribe current inequalities? By what logic or process could you envision this happening? What strategies might protect against it? Please draw on at least one concept or example from this week's reading in your discussion.

Week 10: Churn & Sustainability

READ:

- Anderson, E. R., & Colyvas, J. A. (2021). What Sticks and Why? A MoRe Institutional Framework for Education Research. *Teachers College Record*, 123(7). <https://www.tcrecord.org/library/abstract.asp?contentid=23785> (Links to an external site.)

PICK 2 of 3:

- Coburn, C. E., Russell, J. L., Kaufman, J. H., & Stein, M. K. (2012). Supporting Sustainability: Teachers' Advice Networks and Ambitious Instructional Reform. *American Journal of Education*, 119(1), 137–182. <https://doi.org/10.1086/667699> (Links to an external site.)

AND/OR

- Alhashem, F., & Alhouti, I. (2021). Endless Education Reform: The Case of Kuwait. In A. W. Wiseman (Ed.), *International Perspectives on Education and Society* (pp. 345–367). Emerald Publishing Limited. <https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-367920210000040019>

AND/OR

- Anderson, J. (2025). *Unpacking the U.S. Department of Education: What Does It Actually Do?* (455) [Broadcast]. Retrieved March 24, 2025, from <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/ideas/edcast/25/02/unpacking-us-department-education-what-does-it-actually-do>

Memo Prompt G

What would it look like if implementers reverted back to the status quo or changed course shortly after the adoption of your policy? What implementation strategies might you recommend to promote high quality implementation for the long term? Make reference to at least one of this week's course readings in your memo.

Week 11: Implementation Guide Prep

SKIM at least 2 out of 6:

- Instruction Partners (2018). *Curriculum Support Guide Workbook*
- Stafford, T. & Duchak, T. (2020). *Trauma in Schools: A Toolkit for Educators and School Administrators Implementing Trauma Supports in Schools*. Transforming School Discipline Collaborative
- Zaragoza, M. (2022). *Towards Equity and Accessibility: An Implementation Guide for a California State University addressing High-Impact Practices*. Implementation Guide. EFOP 2011/3011
- Goldstein, H. (2022). *Holistic Data Use Policy for Multilingual Learners*. Implementation Guide. EFOP 2011/3011
- Kaliyeva, S. (2023) *Housing for Educators: A Policy Implementation Guide to Tackle the Teacher Shortage in California State*. Implementation Guide. EFOP 2011/3011.
- Spiezia, J. (2023) *Implementing the School Breakfast Program*. Implementation Guide. EFOP 2011/3011

READ:

- Catch up on any readings you missed or want to revisit from earlier in the semester!

Week 12: Peer Feedback Session

No additional reading

Week 13: Scale Up

Pick 2 of 3:

- Cohen, D. K., & Mehta, J. D. (2017). Why reform sometimes succeeds: Understanding the conditions that produce reforms that last. *American educational research journal*, 54(4), 644-690. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831217700078> (Links to an external site.)

AND/OR

- Elmore, R. F. (2016). "Getting to scale..." it seemed like a good idea at the time. *Journal of Educational Change*, 17(4), 529-537. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-016-9290-8>

AND/OR

- Brown, A. M. (2017). *Emergent strategy: Shaping change, changing worlds*. AK Press.