What Educational Resources Are Necessary to Achieve the State’s Learning Standards? How Can Students Accomplish a Bottom-up Accountability System?

by

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Introduction

Everything begins in the schoolhouse. The development of the mind, personality, and society begins within our school system. Every man, woman, and child has their own mind, their own personality, and all are able to contribute to society. So why isn’t every man, woman, or child receiving the same resources and opportunities to be able to improve themselves? If there is legislation demanding that every student meet certain criteria to progress in the educational system, why doesn’t every student meet the criteria? How is every student, specifically working-class students, expected to reach specified standards if they are not given equal access to quality resources that are absolutely necessary for success?

Right before our eyes certain injustices are occurring. The depravation of opportunity plagues the impoverished streets of our nation. The figureheads of our society have predetermined the lives and destinies of urban youth so that social reproduction persists. While social reproduction is in full swing in urban America, critical thought, creativity, respect, and power flourish in the gold plated streets of suburban America. It is these discrepancies in the school systems that bring about criticism. The fact is that the working class, underprivileged students are taught differently than the upper class, privileged students. For this reason, a critical mindset should be adopted so that our children have complete control in the decisions they make for their lives. Their desires and dreams should not be marred by the fact that they live in a historically impoverished area. The social reproduction that currently exists is the basis of our roles in society. Our lives are preordained. Unless schools encourage critical
thought and reflection, students of poor communities will never have control of their own lives. The point is not to trade one dictator for another. The goal is to have both suburban and urban America fuse to create the diverse America that the outside world observes. The hope is that every student, regardless of socio-economic background, can have equal access to our nation's resources. Ultimately, the cycle of social reproduction must be broken and degraded.

MacLeod (1987) coined the term social reproduction to bring light to the trend and continual reproduction of low-income families’ role in society. He mentions that a school can take two forms. It could either be the “great equalizer” (p.11) by providing each and every student an equal opportunity to contribute significantly to society by means of a quality education. He also says that a school could also “reinforce inequality while pretending to do the opposite”(p.11). It looks as if the great equalizer is only a myth. What reality presents to us is that schools are no longer meant to equalize citizens of the capitalist society. The main purpose of schools is to breed and reproduce mechanical products of society. For example, if an individual lives in a low-income neighborhood and their parents are a part of the working class, then the individual too will be a part of the working class. They become a product of the reproduction. The main phases of the reproduction occur within our schools. MacLeod says that even the work of Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, and Karl Marx all trace the generation to generation reproduction of social class to the school.

The research and writing of Marx, Bowles, and Gintis further analyze the roots and reasons for social reproduction. Marx says, “The capitalist process of production…produces not only commodities, not only surplus-value, but it also produces and reproduces the capitalist relation itself; on one hand the capitalist, on the other the wage-labourer” (p.12). In other words, the nature of capitalism is to create a covert
distinction between the capitalist and the wage-labourer. They believe that all forms of social reproduction stems from the preservation of capitalism. Furthermore, the schools are a form of, as Marx says, creating a systemic form of division by conditioning students to become subordinate and compliant to the fragmentation of the class system.

Bowles and Gintis say that there exists a “correspondence principle” that makes an alarming comparison between schools and the work place. There were four important similarities they identified, which are (1) the organization of power and authority, (2) lack of control regarding curriculum and working conditions in the work place, (3) the role of grades and wages, and (4) the competition (p.12). Bowles and Gintis say that this demonstrates the nature of capitalism and its form of production and stratification. In addition to correlating similarities between schools and the work place, they also saw some important distinction regarding the modes of teaching. They noticed that in low-income communities that the main focus is to maintain “proper” behavioral patterns. In affluent schools, the focus is to develop the student’s person by giving more freedom to the students. Lastly, Gintis and Bowles say that schools serve to accumulate competent and trained group of people to occupy their own respective area in capitalist America, where they are only worth as much as their income. Perhaps MacLeod has the best explanation of social reproduction when he refers to Bowles and Gintis and says, “In short, Bowles and Gintis argue that schools socialize students to occupy roughly the same position in the class structure as that of their parents” (p.13) and to feel they deserve to be there.

The French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, attributes social reproduction to the amount of cultural capital a person has. Bourdieu defines cultural capital as “the general cultural background, knowledge, disposition, and skills that are passed from one generation to the next” (p.13). He believes that one of the main problems in today’s
schools is that they tend to reward students who have the most cultural capital. This becomes problematic because not every student has an equal amount of cultural capital. In other words, children whose parents have partaken in higher learning have the most cultural capital. Children whose parents did not have the opportunity to graduate high school will have a less amount of cultural capital. There is a problem because an unequal playing ground is created for the low-income students. Should a student be at a less of an advantage of their parents are not educated?

Bourdieu says that this causes a systemic diminishing of the lower class. He identifies four main points to support his theory of the immense and problematic value of cultural capital. Firstly, he mentions that each social class carries a different form and amount of cultural capital. Secondly, as discussed earlier, there is less value given to the cultural capital of the lower class. Thirdly, the amount of cultural capital is directly related to economic wealth. Lastly, hierarchies are created based upon cultural capital.

No matter what angle you look at the depravation of opportunity, everything leads to the school where children learn of their future and learn about their self-worth in the eyes of capitalist America. Schools, as discussed by Gintis, Marx, Bowles, and Bourdieu, is where the injustices begin by placing value on the amount of culture capital someone has, which then leads to the “practical” or professional curriculum the students are taught. This is not the way the educational system was supposed to be formed and conducted.

In the article written by Jeannie Oakes and Martin Lipton (1999), Oakes and Lipton speak of the original purpose of our common schools, which is that the schools were meant to encourage creative and rational thought that would then result in a functioning and equal society, as seen by Thomas Jefferson. Oakes and Lipton later discuss how the common school is responsible for pursuing success for everyone. During
the year 1997, several attempts towards allowing students to access higher education, which was solely reserved for the elite, was implemented. These attempts personified what was said to “follow in the best of American traditions” (p. 8-9). As time passed, focus was no longer on the system’s inability to provide rather, the focus was now, unfortunately, centered on the student’s ability to take advantage of the opportunities given to them.

Oakes and Lipton later make an important distinction between affluent neighborhood schools and lower class neighborhood schools. This inequality, Oakes and Lipton says, undermines the purpose of the common school. Rather than searching for a solution to the problem of ethnic disparity in more privileged schools, radical movements such as the extraction of Affirmative Action are used to further the gap. Finally, Oakes and Lipton address the issue of educational resources as an essential part of carrying out the purpose of the common school. They refer to a 1997 Los Angeles Times article the concentrated on Fremont High School, a Latino dominated school, and its scarce number of textbooks. Because there was such an outcry against such injustice, money was then provided to Fremont to provide students with textbooks. The public attention that this article received brought about an important issue about white privilege and the inequality that exists within urban and suburban schools. Oakes and Lipton say, “It is difficult to imagine that a school with mostly affluent white students, anywhere, would not have enough. It is unthinkable that the nation would tolerate a lack of textbooks in an entire urban school district—one of the largest—is its children were white and not poor” (p. 13).

When researching the access of educational resources in schools, it is of the utmost importance that a critical comparison be made between how different social classes are taught. First off, social class is a relationship that a person has to the production of goods, services and culture. It also holds a relationship with private
ownership, cultural capital, and authority. Anyon (1981) makes these comparisons. She notices that the educational content that is being taught is divided into two forms of curriculum, qualitative and practical. A qualitative form of curriculum, which concerns the affluent and upper class, deal more with preparing the student for higher education and later a professional career such as legal, business, or medical professions. In contrast, the practical curriculum, which applies to working class peoples, is tailored more to the vocational and blue-collar professions. This kind of distinction is the driving force of preserving the social reproduction that exists. It maintains the unequal class structure that this society is run on. Through a variety of research methods, Anyon saw that in working-class schools, the material was presented without critical thought or reflection. The textbooks were intended for students of “low-ability” while the children had average IQ’s. There was also less discussion about important issues that could potentially effect the student’s lives. The teachers were also known to be very discouraging. Anyon mentions that a second grade teacher said that the children were “getting dumber every year” (p.11). A dominant theme, as Anyon says, was also presented. Resistance was found inside the classroom with the students defying authority in class as a subconscious way of rebelling against the injustice they experience inside the classroom. “According to Anyon these children were developing a relationship to the economy, authority” (p. 12) that suits the role of the working class in our society.

In the middle-class schools, the knowledge presented was more conceptual compared to the working-class schools. Although the material was presented as more conceptual, critical thought was not sought or encouraged. The experience in the middle-class school revolved around memorization and mechanical work. Their mindsets were focused on doing the work and getting good grades because if you only do what is expected of you a reward would be presented, which is a well-paying job. Like the
working-class school, Anyon observes that the students are developing that relationship that is best suited for a middle-class citizen.

The affluent schools were dominant by rich, upper-class students with educated parents. The main goals of the affluent schools, as identified by Anyon, were creativity and personal development, which was not fostered in both the working and middle-class schools. The students were encouraged to think critically, it was not mechanical, and they also were encouraged to pursue wealthy professions, not vocational jobs. They were told that they had the ability to choose what they wanted to do rather than being bred to fill a position as a working member of society.

Lastly, the executive elite schools were very similar to the affluent schools. The only differences lie in the complexity of the material. “Knowledge in the executive elite school was academic, intellectual, and rigorous” (p.18) Anyon identifies “excellence” as the dominant theme in the executive elite schools. There was constant preparation to be the best and the leader of the bunch, which is what society, has predetermined for them.

The backbone of all disputes regarding the lack of access and equity of educational resources goes to William S. Koski’s beliefs regarding what educational resources students deserve following the standards-based requirements that the state implemented so that all students can have equal opportunity to succeed. Koski has been able to analyze the California Assessment of Academic Achievement Act, which is supposed to serve as a way to set clear expectations and standards to all schools regarding what students should learn in each tear of their education. This way an accurate assessment could be made on where the accountability should be set. Koski believes that the accountability should not be put on the shoulders of the students because they all do not have equal access to quality resources and thus the accountability should be placed upon the state. The Act requires that all standards be measurable and objective, should
teach the knowledge and skills that are necessary in order to contribute to society, be competitive compared to other education systems in other parts of the world, and maintain democratic ideals. The standards are broken up into four sections: English-Language Arts, Mathematics, History-Social Science and Science. Within each section specific frameworks then are implemented.

Although the standards may be specific, the resources are not always appropriated as they should be. If they are not appropriated correctly and equally then the standard-based reform that the state underwent becomes problematic. Koski believes that the main loophole in this new reform is that there is no assurance that all students will or have received all the resources needed to meet the high expectations of the state. If low-income students are not given the right resources then they should not be expected to meet the same standards that the wealthy, owning class is required to meet. Because of this problem, Koski says that the standard-based reform cannot live up to its full potential.

The writings of MacLeod, Oakes, Lipton, and Anyon all culminate in the support of Koski’s beliefs. MacLeod’s theory of social reproduction would show that the schools who are not receiving the appropriate materials are only being trained to maintain the capitalistic roles that has been predetermined. In addition to MacLeod, Oakes and Lipton writing would show how these standards undermine what the school system was originally meant to do, which was to educate people equally. So if they are not given equal access to quality materials then they are not able to meet the same expectations. Furthermore, Anyon went into the depths of her research to expose the blatant differences in the educational systems in different social strata. Anyon shows first hand how certain standards are not being met because a lack of resources is present. As we sink into the depths of the debate regarding the lack of equity and quality of educational resources, we
will carry with us the research and writings of MacLeod, Oakes, Lipton, Finn, Anyon, and Koski. With these writing we will be better equipped and educated to think critically of what is occurring in our nation’s schools and as well as the schools we will be visiting.

**Methodology**

A group of student researchers decided to investigate the importance of educational resources in Los Angeles schools. The research team wanted to prove the theories that MacLeod, Oakes, Lipton, and Anyon have developed on the subject of education and social reproduction. Educational resources and access to those resources is crucial to the development of students’ critical thinking skills. The following states each step taken to encounter these supportive findings in various schools and community settings.

The group of student researchers visited two high schools and one middle school. These schools and community settings were not chosen at random. John Rogers with the assistance of Tony Coladas were responsible for arranging the site visits through various contacts. One of the high schools was located in a middle class neighborhood while the other high schools and middle schools were located in working class neighborhoods. The reason for visiting two types of schools is to have an equal variety in students, communities, and responses. The student researchers also spoke to community leaders and students in public settings. The educational resources group used two types of assessment tools: surveys and discussion questions for focus groups. The questions for discussion were developed a few days earlier than the survey questions because they were tested on friends and/or relatives attending public schools first. Afterwards, the questions were improved based on practice interviews. The survey questions were
developed on the basis of what educational resources students need to succeed in their classes. The protocol for each school visit varied slightly.

West High was the first school that the student researchers visited. Fifty-one percent of West High’s population is white/European American, thirty-two percent of students identified themselves as Latino/Hispanic, ten percent of students identified themselves as African-American and seven percent of students identified themselves as Asian-American/Pacific Islander. The student researchers walked in to the classroom and introduced each other and described the program they were participating in. First, students filled out surveys on the conditions of their schools. Afterwards, the class was divided in half into two discussion groups consisting of two student researchers. They held two discussion groups based on the questions developed earlier. Students voiced that they did not have enough working computers in their classrooms. At West, on average, seven students share one computer and 86 classrooms are connected to the Internet in the 2000-2001 school year. The researchers conducted a second focus group with another group of older students who were more open to talking about their school condition. About 91 percent of the faculty at West held a single subject credential and have an average of 15 years teaching experiences in the 2000-2001 school year.

At South High, the second school visited, the student population and other important factors were quite different from the physical and social ecology West High. The total school enrollment for the 1999-2000 school year at South High was 2,244 students. In the 1999-00 school year 1,699 students were identified as Hispanic, while 542 students were identified as African-American. Only one student was identified as Pacific Islander and two were identified white. During the 2000-01 school year, 66 of 98 teachers were fully credentialed and 30 teachers had emergency credentials. In the School Wise Press School Profile, 2000-01, there is an average of ten students per
computers. However, during the 1999-00 school year under technology in the School Report Navigation File the number of computers reported were 670 and 3.3 students were reported to one computer. These are very different numbers and a large difference within the span of a year it is important to note these discrepancies when doing research.

Researchers held two discussion groups at South. One class was divided into two groups with two researchers. However, there were future principals present that were participating in a separate. This might have been an important factor why students were not so apt to participate. First, students filled out surveys and then the discussions began. The students, however, did not feel comfortable discussing their schools condition for reasons that cannot be easily hypothesized.

The researching process at Southeast was not the same. Student researchers split up into two teams and visited two separate classrooms. In the first classroom, the first research team did not conduct a discussion group, but did have students fill out the surveys on the educational materials they felt were important to have. The second team of researchers only observed the classroom and materials. Since some of the researchers were in a sixth grade class, they had to explain each part of the survey to the students and even skip many of the sections on the survey. The enrollment by ethnicity at Southeast in the 1999-00 school year is broken down by the following: American Indians were 0.1% of the population, 0.1% were Asian, 0.1% were pacific islander, only two students were Filipino, Hispanics composed 98.6% of the population. African Americans only made up 0.4% of the population while white students made up 0.6% of the student body. It seems that although the schools visited served a different population one race seem to dominate the school by a large number.

After visiting some high schools, the research teams visited several Los Angeles malls to ask high school students to fill out surveys. The surveys contained questions
ranging from the quality of teachers in their schools to the condition of their textbooks. The researchers decided that surveys would be the best tool in this situation because they are a good form of obtaining quantitative data, whereas focus groups or interviews was more qualitative. There were several instances where the researchers were approached by security guards refusing to allow the researchers to conduct their surveys because the malls were private property. Although this hindered the data collection, the researchers either eluded the security guards or they moved to a different site near by.

At the Downtown Youth Center site, researchers also surveyed approximately 15 younger students. These students were from various elementary and middle schools in the Los Angeles area. Again, the student researchers had to be extremely specific on how to fill out surveys. They also decided to skip certain questions because of the students’ inability to comprehend the questions. The children were then asked similar questions to the questions asked at the high schools. With these questions however, the researchers had to ask each student individually for their responses because the students became restless. In order to keep the space productive, the researchers felt it necessary to give the children a break. Once the break was over, the discussion continued. The setting at the Downtown Youth Center was a lot more comfortable and fun. The researchers gave students an incentive for answering the questions, which really motivated the participants.

With the help of Solange Beltcher, who coordinated interviews with state superintendent of schools, attorneys, assembly members, and senators, representatives of each research team were able to ask for the opinions of people in power, on the importance of equal access of educational materials. All phone interviews were conducted in the offices of John Rogers and Jennie Oakes at the IDEA office.
Substantive Analysis

In a democracy, we need to produce citizens that are well rounded and educated, so they can elect different politicians into office that will produce ideas that reflect the society. That is what a democracy should be. In addition to producing capable citizens for the purpose of maintaining a functioning democracy, public schooling should produce citizens that are capable of contributing to society in whatever role they choose by using critical and rational though, which Oakes and Lipton say. But, the inequalities in the public schooling system do not produce these sorts of citizens. Why are people not given equal opportunities everywhere? Why should one’s cultural capital determine the quality of education one receives? To further explore these issues, our focus group investigated different inequalities in resources and materials in the classrooms. Textbooks were one main focus. The textbooks were analyzed by the cultural representation in them and the quality and quantity of them. Also, we investigated classroom supplies and Internet and computer access.

Textbook

We will report and discuss the cultural content represented in student’s textbooks, the conditions of textbooks in public schools, and the equal distribution of the textbooks. We also try to answer why are these recourses so important not only to the students but to the teachers too.

It is very important to have an equal amount of representation of different cultures and genders in a textbook or curriculum so the information the student is obtaining is not one-sided or bias. The California Ed code 60040 states:
“States, when adopting instructional materials for use in the schools, governing boards shall include only instructional materials which, in their determination, accurately portray the cultural and racial diversity of our society”.

In a survey taken from West High, 54% students said “YES” there was equal representation of different cultures and genders. 44% students said “NO” there was not an equal representation of different cultures and genders. When the surveys were given to students at South High, 47% students said “YES” there was a representation of different cultures and genders. 38% students said “NO” there was not an equal representation of different cultures and genders. When a student in a focus group at West High was asked, “Do you think your culture is accurately and equally represented in your textbooks”? The student replied:

“I think they only represent white people…In my Spanish book even though it’s Spanish every other page there is something about a white person. And in my history book like every thirty pages you may see something about a black person or a Hispanic person. I feel that students don’t get exposed to different cultures”.

The students were also asked, “How does that make them feel”? Students replied by saying,

“Of course it’s going to make you feel bad. It’s like why do they do that”.

At South High students were also asked, “If they felt their culture was equally represented in their textbooks.” Students felt that all cultures are accurately and equally represented in school textbooks. If a textbook does not equally and accurately represent all cultures, the teachers bring in outside information to make all students feel excepted and represented. Not every student felt like the majority in the class. The same question was asked to another focus group. The students replied, “They don’t equally represent everyone, and I would like to see more diverse text. Because it’s my history”.
In the overview and Introduction of Creating Classrooms for Equality and Social
Justice, an interview with Educator Enid Lee was conducted and he stated,

“If you don’t take multicultural education or ant-racist education seriously, you
are actually promoting a mono-cultural or racist education. There is no neutral
ground on this issue”.

Later in the interview he also says,

“A struggle is taking place in the 1990’s to regain those victories of the 1960’s
and 1970’s. I think that anti-racist education can help us do that….”

The conditions of textbooks are very important not only because it impairs the
learning of the material contained in the textbooks but it also produces the students not to
receive a well-rounded quality education. The California Ed code 60045 says:

“States, all instructional materials adopted by any governing board for use in schools
shall be, to the satisfaction of the governing board, accurate, objective, and current
suited to the needs and comprehension of pupils at their respective grade level”.

The survey conducted at West High revealed that 77% students said “YES” that
their books were complete. Also, 21% said “NO” that their books where not complete. At
South High, 69% says “YES” that their books are complete, and 28% said “NO” that
their books are not complete. In West High, 56% students stated that their books are five
years or younger, and 38% students answered that their books were not five years or
younger. At South High, 47% students said that their books are five years or younger, and
47% said that there books are not five years or younger.

The problem of the unequal amount of distribution of the textbook raises different
problems in the classroom. Article 4 section 1 of the Education code states,

“Individual textbooks, workbooks, and other instructional materials for use in
and out of the classroom”.

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The data collected from the surveys at West High showed that only 38% students had two sets of textbooks, and 59% said they did not have two sets of textbooks. Also, at South High, 47% said they did have two sets and 47% said they did not have two sets. In focus group interviews at West High, a student who did not have two sets of textbook was asked, “Do you think it is important to have two sets of textbooks”? The student replied, “Yeah, if we had a home set we wouldn’t have to bring our books everyday to school. It’s a burden on our backs to carry our books around”.

Another student answered, “If you don’t have a textbook a home, you don’t have the encouragement to study the material”. Most of the students agreed. Students also replied that they do not have time in the class period to copy all the notes in class, and the notes are not in detail. They also mentioned that the teacher is not going to write every little thing in detail. Students from South High were asked the same question. They stated that, “Yes, it is very important to have two sets of textbooks to have one at home and one for school. This would extremely help because then we don’t have to carry them back and forth. This would eliminate the problem of forgetting books at home and then missing the daily lesson.” Most teachers do not get upset if they forget their books because they allow students to share books with each other. There are around the same number of classes that have two sets and one set. Even though the students have lockers, they are far from their classes and it is less of a hassle to just have two sets.

In an ACLU Press release about the Lawsuit brought up from students and parents from 18 California Schools against the State of California, one of the factors adding to the lawsuit is because the lack of materials and basic resources. There are no textbooks or other educational material in most classrooms in public schools.
Computer Access

Imagine having the world at your fingertips, well in the year 2002 it is possible. Technology is a booming enterprise that has revolutionized society. Computers have become part of everyday life and our thinking process. General knowledge of computers is considered to be a common skill in the work force. Thus, making computers a necessity rather than a luxury, similar to Koski’s beliefs. Knowing this, it is apparent that a successful learning environment requires access to computers and the Internet.

Unfortunately, in the California School system and its school accountability report card system, access is measured on a quantity not quality basis. This makes it difficult to demonstrate the inequality of distribution, considering that the numbers show that there are an adequate amount of computers, but what is not shown is that several of them do not work. Another limiting factor to take into consideration is the teacher, who often only allows students to use the computers in the library. The strict operating hours of the library, along with the uneven number of students per computer, makes this process extremely inconvenient. There is also a lack of printers, thus inhibiting students without printers at home to print their reports at school. Internet access is also somewhat hindered by the research restrictions and blocked web sites for children protection.

Considering that computers and the Internet are essential educational tools for both the teacher and the student, it would be appropriate that all schools would be offered the same resources. Computers not only enhance classroom lectures, but the Internet also serves as an excellent instrument for advanced research. Students are often given projects that require access to computers and the Internet. Those who do not have them at home have to use the ones at school or the public library.
When the students were asked if they had access to computers and the Internet in their classrooms, the responses were similar to what was expected. Several students demonstrated that they had computers in their classrooms, but were unable to access them. According to Article 4 Section 1 of the California Educational Code all students must have “access to reasonably current information technology and the Internet” (p. 240). In other words, all students deserve access to computers and the Internet in their classrooms. The students survey at West High resulted in 92% have access to computers in their class and 5% do not have access to a computer in their classrooms. Considering that most of the students at West High have access to computers in their classroom, it was not surprising that 61% of them rated it a “5” on an importance scale from “1-5”, “5” being very important to students. While another 28% rated it a “4” on the same scale. When the same survey was done at South High, which is located in a high poverty-stricken neighborhood, resulted in similar results. The students showed that 81% of them have access to computers in their classrooms and 19% do not have computers in the their classrooms. Much like at West High, 43% of students at South High rated computer access a “5” on the importance scale and 28% of the student gave it a “4”.

On this same survey the students answered questions pertaining to Internet access, which resulted in a variety of responses. At West High 95%, of the students expressed that they had access to the Internet in their classrooms, while the other 5% did not. When asked to rank its importance, 54% gave it a “5”. At South High, there were considerably fewer students that had the Internet in their classrooms. Only 68% had Internet and the other 32% did not. This might play a role in why only 41% of the students gave it a “5”.

Analyzing these numbers and information is a crucial component in gaining equity for all students in public schools throughout California. Through these surveys and focus group results, it is clear that the distribution of resources is uneven. According
to the California Educational Code, all students deserve access to certain learning materials; unfortunately, several of the students in highly poverty-stricken areas are being denied these resources. As a society we often measure success or intelligence by high-stake exams, and yet we do not equip students with the resources to successfully learn the material that they will be tested on. We then punish them for not scoring well on these standardize exams by denying them financial incentives that higher performing schools receive.

**Classroom Supplies**

This is an overview of the data collected from the topic of classroom supplies. Specifically dealing with what the students had to purchase and what outside money the teachers had to spend on them. Students at South High were complaining about the different materials they had to buy for different projects. Some students say they received lower grades on their projects because they cannot afford to buy the nicer boards and markers like the other students. Others said, “some times it’s hard to buy graph paper all the time it gets expensive”. But some students said that it would be easier if the school supplied us with some supplies but if you can’t get them it’s not like it’s hard to borrow. California Ed Code 60070 states that,

“No school official shall require a pupil, except pupils in classes for adults to purchase any instructional materials for the pupil’ use in school”.

Students at West High were asked, “What have you been required to but for school that have been a burden on you or your family? Do you feel the school should have provided that item? Why or why not?” Ironically, students attending the same school had
completely opposing responses. Some said, “Yeah, teachers make us spend a lot of our own money for supplies that they should have in class”. While other students responded by saying “Not really, mostly everything that they want us to have they supply or let us borrow.” Students became extremely vocal when they were asked if teachers gave students with more elaborate projects better grades. They asserted that it was unfair that a student receive a better grade simply because they have the money to buy more supplies and produce a more elaborate project. Though West High is located in one of the wealthier communities and the students generally come from middle to upper class families, they still felt that the teachers should supply the simple supplies in class. If a student would prefer to purchase their own supplies, then they should be free to do so.

**California Assessment of Academic Achievement Act**

Upon observing the scarce amount of resources that exist in some schools, a question arises. If students are not given the same quality educational resources, how are they supposed to meet the standards set forth by the California Assessment of Academic Achievement Act? Using Koski’s rubric of necessary educational resources, we could determine that the need for quality educational resources is not being met. Students in low-income neighborhoods do not have access to the resources, so they should not be accountable for not meeting the high standards. Because the state sets clear standards on what should be learned and taught, they believe that the accountability for the turmoil that exists in the school system is no longer on them. The responsibility now lies on the students. The state is not meeting their standards.
Analysis of Process

Upon reflection of our research we discovered aspects that can sustain change for the next team researching educational. We learned that when interviewing teachers a respective environment must be produced, likewise for student interviews. Many of the findings and improvements are listed in the following analysis of process.

When interviewing a teacher, like when interviewing a student, it is imperative that the questions be unbiased and inoffensive. Although students have a vast amount of opinions regarding their school experiences, the teachers have a different, yet, valuable perspective. Some of the unique experiences that the teachers usually deal with involve direct communication with the administration. They also have a unique perspective regarding the equity and quality of educational resources. For example, a teacher mentioned that although textbooks are crucial to the learning of students, it should not be a barrier to teaching. It would be hurtful to a student if the teacher relied heavily on the text because of the notorious content within it. Another teacher mentioned, on the lack of desks, that a message is being sent to students “they are not welcome or wanted in the school.” This is the kind of perspective that proves to be invaluable.

It also helped that the teachers had progressive mentalities because they tended to be much more receptive to all the questions. One thing I learned regarding the interviews is that if you present yourself in a professional manner the teachers will take you more seriously. For teachers, confidence and a “no nonsense” rule enhance the interview because they realize the severity of the situation. If one acts in a professional manner one becomes more of a colleague instead of a student. This may not work with students because too much confidence can lead to intimidation and possibly prevent the students from responding to questions, becoming more reserved and cautious. To get valuable
answers from students, a significant amount of trust must be gained in a small amount of time. No matter the interview situation, it is important to use various types of methods to elicit honest and detailed answers. In addition to attaining honest, detailed answers, it is also crucial to make the person being interviewed comfortable.

Although the questions asked in the interview were appropriate for the topic, we suggest that a nice flow be developed. The questions should be organized in a way that it resembles a conversation rather than an interview. A lack of trust in the classroom can cause conflict in the discussion group. It is important to introduce yourself and the purpose of the project so those students have a clear understanding of why we are conducting research. The entire research team should have the same questions. Having various questions for one survey causes confusion when putting all the research together. Another way to improve data collection would be to be in a private environment so that the person being interviewed does not feel threatened of possible repercussions. If a private environment is achieved, then free and truthful answers are more likely to be heard. If interviews are conducted in public spaces where an authority figure may be within listening distance, fear and a sense of caution overrides the person for the fear of the possible consequences.

Based on our experience, we learned that before conducting surveys in malls, researchers should consult mall management regarding their policies concerning surveys. Because of our contact with hostile security we were not allowed to continue surveying teens. When dealing with mall security, it is important to communicate your cause in a calm manner so that you do not cause any more unnecessary hostility. When all else fails, search for a non-violent, alternative for gathering data.

When interviewing/surveying younger children in the middle school and elementary schools ages, it would be useful to be in a relaxed and private area to
interview/survey them. More often than not, young children can be restless and possibly interfere in the interview/survey. One tactic that proved to be useful was to implement a break in between to play a game so that the children will not become uninterested and distracted. It is also of the utmost importance to simplify the questions for the younger children so that they can understand what is being asked. We found it beneficial for the facilitators to walk the students through the surveys.

Although our findings are not completely accurate because of the limitations presented to us, we have enough substantial data to prove that students can no longer be expected to succeed in an unsuccessful school.

**Politics of Implementation**

One of the most difficult questions our research group had to answer was how to use our findings to bring about change in California’s educational system. Many times, schools report figures that seem reasonable and appropriate, but are not accurate representations of the conditions inside the school. One proposed strategy to alleviate this problem was to create a supplement to the existing school accountability report card that goes into greater detail regarding the amount of learning resources a school has. We believe that this supplement paints a clearer picture of the amount of learning resources a school has, which is essential information for students and students’ parents to have.

Instead of quantitative data, schools need to report the qualitative data through quantitative measures. In this supplement, schools would be required to report the number of computers per classroom on average, the number of computers accessible to the internet, the number of textbooks the school has, the number of classes that provide students with home and class sets of textbooks, the age of the books used, the hours of
operation of the school’s library, questions regarding materials appropriated to teachers and students, etc. We believe that mandating schools to report this type of information opens school officials’ eyes to the problems that exist within the school. It gives parents the incentive to pressure school officials’ to bring about changes. It opens elected officials eyes to the drastic differences that exist between California’s schools, and equips them with the knowledge they need to adopt appropriate legislature to fix these problems. Many are aware of the conditions; few know what to do.

As aforementioned, politicians and elected officials recognize that there is an uneven distribution of learning resources among California schools. In interviews with assembly members, senators and the State Superintendent of Education conducted by students in our research team, several elected officials stated that they were privy to the inequalities that exist in urban schools in reference to learning resources. (Add specific comments from interviews that back this statement up!) These officials recognize that change is needed; we must pressure them to manufacture them.

We, as law-abiding citizens, deserve fair and equitable distributions of resources. One cannot expect equitable performance on state-mandated exams when students are not allocated a fair share of learning resources. Many state that it costs too much money to equate schools; however, one must ask, “How much do we value education?” Without an education, many of the state’s officials would not have as much power as they do. Did they forget what got them there? Students and parents need to organize locally, rally support behind this deserving cause, and ride officials—not just senators and governors, but school board members, school district officials, and school officials like administrators and teachers—until they see significant changes. It was we that got them in the positions they had; it’s about time they listened to us.
Conclusion

Education is the key to every door in our society. It is a common trend to see that the people with the best education have a more prosperous role in society. Although it may seem that everyone is genuinely being educated, through our critical research, it is fairly obvious that everyone is not being properly educated. Not everyone has the opportunity to play a prosperous role in society. The patterns show that working-class people do not have an equal opportunity to become more than a blue-collar worker. Why is that? It is because student’s different social classes are taught differently. The upper class and working class are taught, as Anyon says, using a professional and practical curriculum, respectively. Equal opportunity does not exist if students are taught different curricula especially since it is for purpose of keeping social reproduction.

Based on our critical research, we are able to see the obvious discrepancies that exist in our educational system. We could see that students do care about their education and that they want the same opportunity that the upper class has. They want equal access to quality resources. They want textbooks that tell their history. They do not want the eurocentric lectures they are accustomed to hearing. Furthermore, they want the knowledge to keep pace with the information age. People nowadays are relying heavily on technology and internet access. If they are not able to keep up with society then they will be at a heavy disadvantage. The working-class students also want the simple things. They want staplers and basic materials needed for presentations. They do not have the luxury of being able to afford excess materials to enhance their presentations. They must rely on the little they have but they want the materials provided by the state educational code.

We were able to see that what the students want and what they deserve differ greatly from what they receive. Students in urban schools are not being given the same
opportunity as students in the more affluent schools. The textbooks they use are
eurocentric and unrepresentative of other cultures. They progress in the educational
system not knowing the history of their own cultural background, which is also in
violation of an educational code. Many students do not have access to computers. If
computers are in the classroom they are not allowed to touch them. This is not an
example of preparing students to engage in the new information age. Finally, teachers
are grading some projects based on presentation and superficial qualities. The students
with the most money are at a higher advantage. The students who are not able to afford
the basic necessities that are should be provided, are looked upon as incapable and
incompetent.

The differences are exposed. The demands are voiced. Like the Chicano, Black,
and Women’s civil rights movements before us, we are engulfed in social and educational
reform. We demand equity and the preservation our civil rights. We demand that all our
schools in urban and suburban communities be taught equally and be provided with the
same quality educational resources. Otherwise, how are working-class people supposed
to become an active part of society? Cesar Chavez once said, "Once social change
begins, it cannot be reversed. You cannot uneducate the person who has learned to read.
You cannot humiliate the person who feels pride. And you cannot oppress the people
who are not afraid anymore.” We are educated, full of pride, and united by a common
goal for social change. We cannot be uneducated nor can we be humiliated. We are no
longer afraid.
Teacher Interview Questions

1. Do you feel as if you have all the necessary resources to teach your classes?
2. Are there any resources that are missing that you would like to have?
3. How much do you personally spend on attaining resources that are not provided for you?
4. When you have certain needs that you need met, do you approach the administration? If so, do they seem to be receptive or resistant to your requests?
5. What do you think the students need in order to learn better?
6. Do you have easy access to copy machines and other basic office supplies?
7. Do you have functional technology in your classroom(s)?
8. Is there anything about your classroom(s) that you are not particularly pleased with?
9. What would your ideal classroom look like? What would be in it?
10. What do you think about your textbooks? Are they in good condition?
11. Do you find the content with in the book troubling?
12. How much do you need to supplement to your lesson plan? How does this effect your lesson plan?
13. Are there any other concerns, comments, or hopes that you would like to share about anything regarding your experience as a teacher here?
Student Interview questions:

1. Do you feel it is important to have home and school copies of textbooks? Why or why not?

2. How does Internet access help enhance your educational experience?

3. Do you feel your culture is accurately and equally represented in your schools’ textbooks? Why or why not? Why is this important?

4. What have you been required to buy for school that was a burden for you or your family? Do you feel the school should have provided that item? Why or why not?
References


- Educational Codes: 60040, 60045, 60070 and Article 4 Section 1

- California Assessment of Academic Achievement Act