

Third Wednesday Night

Reading Assignment:

Chapter 31, *The Toxic Mix* (Poverty and Segregation)

Chapters 21-30 What needs to change? Conversation should move into how to begin creating the political will.

Beginning Questions to Refresh People's memories and Help Summarize for Those Who Haven't Read

1. The theory underneath the test-and-punish accountability movement is that we can pressure public schools on their own to raise school achievement in our poorest communities. Ravitch challenges this belief, writing: "We should set national goals to reduce segregation and poverty. In combination, these are the root causes of the achievement gaps between economic and racial groups." (p. 298) In an earlier chapter she also quotes groundbreaking research from Stanford University that economic inequality is also connected with an enormous and growing "inequality" achievement gap: "The black-white achievement gap is now smaller than the achievement gap between the poorest and the most affluent students, according to the sociologist Sean Reardon of Stanford University." (p. 59) **Why do you think our society and our political leaders buy into the test-and-punish strategy of holding schools and teachers accountable for test scores instead of accepting what the sociological studies have proven since the Coleman Report in 1966?**
2. In Chapter 30, Ravitch describes the role of the federal, state, and local governments to oversee schools. **Who would summarize what was the role of the federal government as conceptualized in the original 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act?** Think about the No Child Left Behind Act (the 2002 reauthorization of ESEA) and Arne Duncan's new competitive grant programs like Race to the Top. **How has the federal role in education drifted over the past 48 years?**
3. Here are Ravitch's proposed solutions: good prenatal care; universal, high-quality early childhood education; a full, balanced curriculum in every school; smaller classes to help children and teachers; banning for-profit charters and charter chains; wrap-around medical services, after-school programs, summer programs, and parent support programs at every school; eliminating high-stakes standardized tests and using assessments that provide feedback to teachers; strengthening teaching as a lifetime profession with excellent preparation and on-going staff development; protecting democratic control of public schools, and developing an action plan to reduce child poverty and racial segregation of schools. **Is this the right agenda? What will it take to develop the political will to shift our society's priorities behind such an agenda?**

Broad Questions to Open Wide, and We Hope, Very Safe and Non-Threatening Conversation

What surprised you or made a really strong impression in what you read and what we have discussed tonight?

(Need to make time for a very safe conversation here, not letting anyone correct or reject what surprised each person and ensuring that all participants at the small table have plenty of time to speak and reflect.) After each person who wishes to speak has described the surprises or take-aways, **ask whether there are one or two other surprises we haven't covered.** Cut it off after two.

What has struck you in our reading or in our conversation tonight that seems relevant to what you may have noticed happening in Ohio or in our CH-UH school district? (Need to make time for a very safe conversation here, not letting anyone correct or reject what surprised each person and ensuring that all participants at the table have plenty of time to speak and reflect.) After each person who wishes to speak has described what seems most important and timely to him or her, **ask whether there are any additional relevant points we haven't covered.** Cut it off after two.

As we come back together, the overall moderator might want to surface two or three surprises/strong take-aways and two or three of the most relevant issues to Ohio and CH-UH from among the small groups.