University of Missouri – St. Louis

The Graduate School
Announcement

An oral examination in defense of the dissertation for the degree
Doctor of Education, Educational Practice

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M.A. in History, May, 2004, University of Missouri - Columbia
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The Paradox of Impoverished Schools: The Students That Need the Most Get the Least

Date: April 4, 2016
Time: 4:00pm to 5:30pm
Place: 259 Marillac Hall

Abstract
Most states in the United States guarantee all citizens the right to an adequate education. Missouri passed SB 287 in 2004 with this exact purpose in mind. The bill was designed to ensure that students in high-poverty districts receive a greater share of funds from the state to offset shortfalls in local revenue. The new funding formula has certainly created great disparity in the amounts of state funds various districts receive. In addition, the formula recognizes the financial need of districts that have a high percentage of students living in poverty. Despite this recognition, adequacy has not been achieved for Missouri’s impoverished schools. Using school districts in St. Louis County as a case study, it is clear that outcomes in high-poverty districts are not adequate. Wealthy districts continue to outspend poorer districts per pupil. Poorer districts continue to have unacceptably low outcomes. This disparity is exaggerated by a foundation formula that is not fully funded, pulling an irresponsible amount of resources away from Missouri’s impoverished schools. A new funding formula is not needed; however, small and reasonable changes must be made to the current one. First, the weighting for students on free-and-reduced lunch must be doubled. Second, Missouri should use the current assessed valuation of all districts in the state when calculating local effort, rather than the frozen 2004 levels. Third, Prop C funds should not count as local effort for Missouri’s impoverished school districts. And fourth, wealthy districts should lose their hold-harmless designation until the Missouri General Assembly fully funds the educational formula. These small and important changes are needed to remedy the paradox of Missouri’s impoverished schools: the students that need the most, too often get the least.

Defense of Dissertation Committee
Kathleen Sullivan-Brown, Ph.D. (Chair)
Carole Basile, Ed.D. (Co-Chair)
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