

Choose 3 questions and write a short essay response of at least 250 words each. Your responses will be evaluated based on the insight and accuracy of your claims, and the strength of your supporting evidence. In this open-book interpretive exam, students may use their readings, notes, and online resources, but **may not** communicate or share information with anyone other than the instructor (come to my office if you need me). To directly quote from a source on our syllabus during this exam, you may use a simple inline citation, without a full reference: (Smith, p. 32). To quote directly from any other source not on our syllabus, include a full citation.

You may handwrite and scan your essays OR type them in a word processor. Upload your essays **no later than 9:30pm** via link at bottom of our online syllabus: <http://commons.trincoll.edu/edreform/>

Start each essay on a NEW page, place the question number at the top, and also include your Student ID number (NOT your name), so that I may conduct a blind review.

*****Pasted below are selected student essays that illustrate writing strategies that were generally successful.**

1) Linda Christensen and Stan Karp's 2003 essay, "Why is School Reform So Hard?" makes an argument about its "dual character." Clarify their argument in your own words, and justify how it does (or does not) apply to ANY school reform topic of your choice in our syllabus. Include a direct quotation from Christensen and Karp, and also a direct quote from a source on the reform topic you choose.

Selected student essay:

Linda Christensen and Stan Karp's 2003 essay, "Why is School Reform So Hard" sheds light on the ever lasting problems educators and reformers face when it comes to education reform. Christensen and Karp introduce the idea of "the dual character of schooling" in their article by first stating what the internal problem is. Christensen and Karp state, "Under the No Child Left Behind legislation, the federal government is using test scores to identify which schools will face an escalating series of mandatory reforms, ranging from intervention by consultants to wholesale dismissal of school staff...yet even according to a recent study by the conservative Thomas B. Fordham foundation, the reform interventions mandated by the law have a success rate of well below 50 percent" (Christensen Karp, p. 1). According to these two educators, the NCLB act has not only placed many "underperforming" schools at-risk of being ultimately shut down, but the legislative law itself is not providing any real solution to the problem. Instead, the NCLB act is showing signs of failure in schools across the nation.

According to Christensen and Karp, a school's "dual character" is to blame for the failed attempts to reform school and make it equal and produce successful students. "Public schools remain perhaps our most important democratic institution...Schools

play a key role in American dreams of class mobility and generational progress” state Christensen and Karp (p. 2), but they also go on to say that, “schools historically have been instruments for reproducing class and race privilege as it exists in the larger society” (p. 2). In other words, schools are supposed to be an institution that will lead children of all ethnicities and backgrounds into a better life, yet schools are in a way responsible for creating situations of social inequalities that at some point most students of diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds face.

Educational reformer Horace Mann might have been one to disagree with Christensen and Karp’s central argument of the dual characteristics of schooling and education. In an address given by Mann in 1848, he stated “Education, then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men, the balance-wheel of the social machinery...It does better to disarm the poor of their hostility towards the rich: it prevents being poor” (Mann, p. 669) In his 1848 address, Mann argues that public education *creates* new wealth, rather than preventing it, as suggested by Christensen and Karp. He suggests that by providing these types of opportunities to people living in poverty, that the common-school reform movement would ultimately progress, and that this in turn, would prevent poverty from persisting.

2) Philanthropist Bill Gates made this argument in a 2012 *New York Times* op-ed essay:

I am a strong proponent of measuring teachers’ effectiveness, and [the Gates Foundation] works with many schools to help make sure that such evaluations improve the overall quality of teaching. But publicly ranking teachers by name will not help them get better at their jobs or improve student learning. On the contrary, it will make it a lot harder to implement teacher evaluation systems that work. . . Some education advocates in New York, Los Angeles and other cities are claiming that a good personnel system can be based on ranking teachers according to their “value-added rating” — a measurement of their impact on students’ test scores — and publicizing the names and rankings online and in the media. But shaming poorly performing teachers doesn’t fix the problem because it doesn’t give them specific feedback. Value-added ratings are one important piece of a complete personnel system. But student test scores alone aren’t a sensitive enough measure to gauge effective teaching, nor are they diagnostic enough to identify areas of improvement. Teaching is multifaceted, complex work. A reliable evaluation system must incorporate other measures of effectiveness, like students’ feedback about their teachers and classroom observations by highly trained peer evaluators and principals.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/23/opinion/for-teachers-shame-is-no-solution.html>

Would educational researcher Doug Harris agree or disagree with Gates' argument? Explain your reasoning and include at least one direct quote from Harris.

Selected student essay:

Philanthropist Bill Gates is accurate in claiming that while value-added ratings are helpful in improving school systems, they are not accurate enough to stand-alone. In fact, they should only be considered in a larger group of data and measurements of

teachers. Doug Harris, an education researcher, who studied value-added measures, wrote the book *Value Added Measures in Education: What Every Educator Needs to Know*. In his book he critiques the benefits and limits of value-added tests. In general, Harris would agree with Bill Gates, stating that value-added tests can be helpful if used correctly and the limits are understood.

Harris argues that, “value-added measures offer a potential way out of this accountability dilemma. While we can use individual student test scores to diagnose student needs, value-added allows us to go further and evaluate how well teachers and schools are addressing those needs” (Harris 6). Contrary to many of the tests created under the accountability movement, Harris identifies the benefits of value-added measurements. He claims that they only hold teachers accountable for what they control, can improve teaching and learning, create little incentive to exclude students, and takes into account where the students start when teachers receive them.

While Harris praises value-added measurements, he also, like Bill Gates, recognizes that they tests also have limits. Harris states, “value-added measures grade teachers on a bell curve, so that no matter how good the entire pool of teachers is, someone will always be at the bottom and half, by definition, will always be below average” (Harris 2). Despite the many benefits of these measurements, they also have limitations, something that both Harris and Bill gates agree on. While value-added measures have a lot of potential in helping improve the public school system, educators and administrators need to be careful how much they rely on. Both Harris and Gates would agree that they should be considered, “but student test scores alone aren’t a sensitive enough measure to gauge effective teaching, nor are they diagnostic enough to identify areas of improvement” (Gates). Harris and Gates believe that value-added measures should be used, however, with other gauges of measurement as well.

3) If John Hughes (Roman Catholic Archbishop of NYC, 1842-1864) had a time machine, would he have supported either or both of these US Supreme Court decisions?

a) the 1971 *Lemon v. Kurtzman* ruling (the origin of the "Lemon test")

b) the 2002 *Zelman v. Simmons Harris* ruling (the Cleveland voucher case)

Support your reasoning with at least one direct quote from Bishop Hughes, and another from Haynes & Thomas (or another source of your choosing).

Selected student essay:

In *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, The Court ruled 8-1 against using taxes to reimburse religious schools for the salaries of teachers of secular subjects and their instructional materials, and subsequently created the “Lemon Test.” In the 2002 *Zelman vs. Simmons-Harris* case, The Court ruled 5-4 in favor of the practice to use taxes to fund vouchers for low-income urban parents to send their children to religious schools—subsequently creating the “Private Choice Test.”

To begin, John Hughes would not support the US Supreme Court decision regarding *Lemon v. Kurtzman*. He most likely would argue that it was this sort of unjust discrimination against the Catholics that caused them to break away from public school education. Moreover, John Hughes would attest that the Supreme Court Justices—along with all other people of New York City—were out to get the Catholics, arguing how the books used within the public schools were targeted at the Catholics. Said passages within those text books, administered by those hateful public schools, “...Were not considered as sectarian, inasmuch as they had been selected as mere

reading lessons, and were not in favor of any particular sect, but merely against the Catholics" (pg.10).

John Hughes would most likely be more supportive of the 2002 Zelman vs. Simmons-Harris case. He would be thrilled that children of low-income urban parents were able to send their children to religious schools, as Catholicism is all encompassing and does not discriminate upon socioeconomic status. He would argue that religion is a choice and people who wish to engage in it and its teachings should do so.

Charles C. Haynes and Oliver Thomas, authors of Finding Common Ground, would attempt to put John Hughes' mind at ease by claiming that the "Lemon test" and the cases decided under the Establishment clause merely just ensure that "the government [remains] neutral among religions as well as between religion and non-religion" (Haynes pg.38). In fact, they would go as far to say that "...schools are encouraged to accommodate religion when they can"—Catholicism and all (pg.38).

4) If W.E.B DuBois, the author of the 1935 essay, "Does the Negro Need Separate Schools?" had a time machine, would he have supported or opposed the group below? Choose ONE and support your answer with at least one direct quote from DuBois, and another from the book you selected:

a) African-American activists in Hyde County, NC (*Along Freedom Road*)

OR

b) The Carter family in Sunflower County, MS (*Silver Rights*)

Selected student essay:

DuBois argues that whether it be through separate schooling or integrated schooling, the Negro needs Education. The capitalization of education symbolizes education, not only through the knowledge and fact-learning of schools but in the way they are taught to think and interact. Looking at his essay, I would argue that DuBois might support either group. In *Along Freedom Road*, African-American activists in Hyde County, NC protest against school desegregation. Two historically black schools in the community would be closed; these institutions allowed for black students to get an education. DuBois explains that separate schools "where children are treated like human beings" are better than "making our boys and girls doormats to be spit and trampled upon." However, DuBois concludes his essay saying, "Other things being equal, the mixed school is the broader, more natural basis for the education of all youth" (335). In this way, DuBois might support the Carter family in their fight for equal education. The black schools in Sunflower County, MS were in terrible condition; Mae Bertha Carter explains how she was "tired of [her] kids coming home with pages torn out of worn out books that come from the white school...riding on these old-raggedy buses after the white children didn't want to ride on them any more...and [she] would hear my kids say something like, "Well maybe I'll get a ticket today to eat..." (Curry, 34-35). When the U.S. Civil Rights Act of 1964 ordered desegregation, the Carter family thought their kids could have a chance of a better, and maybe equal education. However, the kids faced many obstacles and difficulties in the majority white schools that would leave DuBois angered. However, in the end, the children finished high school and 6 of them attended University of Mississippi. DuBois would support the Carters fight to make all things equal.

5) Frederick (Rick) Hess, the author of *The Same Thing Over and Over* (2010), writes the "Straight Up" blog on Education Week. During Hess's sabbatical, Marc Porter Magee filled in and made the following argument, drawing examples from Hartford:

There are two kinds of people in the education reform world: those who believe the best way to improve schools is through systematic policy making aimed at changing the structure of public education itself, and those who believe that we need strong, visionary and sometimes rule-bending--or "cage-busting"-- leaders to secure breakthrough results. . . .

When [Hartford Superintendent Adamowski] stepped down in June 2011, he left a completely remade system of schools in place. What's more, the system he helped create--with a sturdy foundation of statues, policies, rules and regulations--has continued to yield better public schooling for Hartford students, even under new leadership. These results may not have earned the headlines of many cage-busting leaders, but they have staying power because of Adamowski's focus on systemic reform and policy changes. That's better than any headline.

As Rick notes in "Cage-Busting Leadership," we should draw inspiration from people who have the uncommon ability to bend systems to their will. . . . But we should not let their success fool us into thinking our systems aren't truly broken. What education needs most are leaders who think not just about the obstacles they can overcome during their terms, but how they can alter their school systems--in terms of rules, regulations or laws--so that future leaders can continue to secure amazing results for their students. Reforming policy isn't easy. But it's the only path that will ensure lasting change.

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/rick_hess_straight_up/2013/04/the_promise_and_peril_of_cage_busting.html

Based on the essay above, explain whether Magee agrees or disagrees with Hess's "cage-busting" thesis, and/or Hess's central thesis in *The Same Thing Over and Over*. Support your argument with at least one direct quote each from Magee and Hess.

Selected student essay:

Based on this essay, Hess's central thesis to *The Same Thing Over and Over* is at odds with Magee's interpretation of school reform. Though both Hess and Magee agree that the education system is in dire need of transformation, these scholars each have different interpretations of what such reform entails. Specifically, Hess and Magee differ on their opinion of what type of reformer would be best at creating a lasting change within the system, and how such a leader would go about implementing that change. Hess believes that the entire educational system needs to be stripped bare, and the only way in which the system could be positively, effectively and lastingly changed is by deconstructing the outdated system in place, and re-vamping it so that it reflects the demands of the 21st century. For example, Hess seeks "adequate accountability systems, a re-imagined teaching profession, and retooled systems of government and student funding" (Hess, 2010, pg. 183). And though Hess advocates for "Cage-Busting Leadership," bending the rules and gaming the system to create immediate reform, he (in somewhat of a contradictory fashion), is also weary of the ability to turn-off supporters of change by seeking a goal too fantastical.

In contrast, Magee believes that the key to implementing a lasting change is “Reforming policy” (Magee, 2013). Though policy makers such as Hartford’s 2011 Superintendent Adamowski do not receive the “headlines of many cage-busting leaders” (Magee, 2013) the policies that he enacted have “staying power because of [his] focus on systemic reform and policy changes” (Magee, 2013). In sum, Magee believes in the systematic, legislative approach to the system. Magee argues that this is the only way to “ensure lasting change” (Magee, 2013), and that the case-busting techniques encouraged by Hess, though entertaining, ignore the changes that need to be made “so that future leaders can continue to secure amazing results for their students” (Magee 2013).