POLICY AT WORK: AN INSIDER’S CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF TEXTS
SURROUNDING A SCHOOL VOUCHER BILL IN PENNSYLVANIA

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by
Alisa Rhoades Hobbs

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The dissertation of Alisa Rhoades Hobbs was reviewed and approved * by the following:

Patrick W. Shannon  
Distinguished Professor of Education  
Dissertation Advisor  
Chair of Committee

Jacqueline Edmondson  
Professor of Education

Jamie Myers  
Professor of Education

Susan Strauss  
Associate professor of Applied Linguistics, Asian Studies, Education, Linguistics

William Carlsen  
Professor of Education  
Head of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction

*Signatures are on file in the Graduate School.
Abstract

I conducted a study to examine the public texts produced and disseminated to influence and to lobby the outcome of a Senate Bill 1 of 2011, a bill focused on implementing school vouchers in Pennsylvania. By analyzing texts systematically over time I sought to uncover how various groups lobbied and mobilized to be represented in education policy.

Chapters were organized to answer the question: How do the texts that cross my desk as a legislative aide work on lobbying legislators about education policies? To answer that question chapters were organized to explain the punitive problem and hypothesized solutions offered around SB 1 and school vouchers. Chapter 3 shared studies of voucher programs and groups that utilized data findings to further their lobbying. Chapter 4 and 5 shared how I conducted my analysis and then revealed four themes that emerged during analyses. In Chapters 5 and 6, I address what those themes mean for the micro politics of Senate Bill 1 and education policy along with addressing what can be learned from my study and what might those implications tell us about the micro politics of education policy work.

The data for my study consisted of textual materials distributed and shared publicly to influence legislators’ stances on Senate Bill 1. Critical Discourse Analysis revealed insights of the politics of educational policy at a micro-level. The data sample included ten texts from the approximately 100 that crossed my desk as a part of my job as a legislative aide and represented the stances of the producers as being In Support of SB 1, In Opposition of SB 1, or Official Work Texts.
The results represented ideological imaginings and social practices that attempt discursive work. Since no participant had empirical certainty behind his or her position, the study uncovered competing values embedded within the social practices influenced by ideological positions. My analyses revealed four themes that emerged in the texts: A crisis exists, It is personal, Framing a stance as truth, and Forming alliances and partnerships. This work hoped to show teachers and others how groups lobby to influence education policy.
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Growing up I was fortunate to have the best teachers: my parents. Both of my parents taught in the public school system and believed every boy and girl deserved the best education possible, regardless of socioeconomic status. My mom taught high school English, but most of all she taught students how to respect themselves and others. My dad, who was a coach, teacher, and principal became a Pennsylvania state Senator where he served as chairman of the Education Committee and worked tirelessly until his death toward providing every student in Pennsylvania with the best education. They are my heroes, and I thank them for making me study, believe in myself, and work hard in the world.

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for his unyielding support,

and to my children,

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for cheering me on.

“Kids, Mommy is finished her homework!”
Chapter 1

Introduction

“Policy is socially constructed and produced at a particular time and place and is, therefore, subject to social, economic, and political influences of the times: and participants in policy events are members of various discourse groups with distinct values and interests offering a wide variety of opinions.”

J. Edmondson, (2004, 14)
This study sought to understand the micro-level politics of education policy by examining the textual materials that crossed my desk as a legislative aide of a state legislator in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives. By analyzing texts systematically over time, I uncovered how social practices of political groups worked discursively to communicate their desires for education policy. In order to focus this study, I selected the texts associated with Pennsylvania Senate Bill 1 of 2011 which sought to establish vouchers, or opportunity scholarships, by providing public monies awarded to families to choose where to send their children to school. These schooling options included other public schools, private schools, and parochial, or religiously affiliated, schools. The goals for this study were to reveal the social practices carried out within these texts by identifying the ways and the themes utilized by their producers to frame issues according to their ideological positions and to show teachers and others interested in public schools how to read such everyday “political” texts in order to participate in the social practices to influence education policies.

**Education policy**

Because schooling is expected to provide personal, community, and national means of adaptation to change, it is often the center of public debate. Policy acts debate: which changes are meaningful, how should we adapt, who deserves these services, who should make such decisions, how should we provide these services, and who should pay? These concerns bring individuals and groups into the debates, hoping to participate in these decisions that will affect their lives. Theoretically, these debates could be rational endeavors in which all parties present their positions logically, and then, some types of empirical evidence would be used in order to choose the best option to become educational
Cuban’s (2010) definition of educational policy implies this rationality. “A policy is both a hypothesis and an argument that a particular action should be taken to solve a problem.” Yet, he immediately qualifies that rationality, “the action, however, has to be politically acceptable and economically feasible.” Cuban’s qualifications of acceptability and feasibility bend the potential for objectivity of the “best option” toward the subjective, raising questions asking politically acceptable to whom and economically feasible under what conditions. These qualifications add power relations to the debates about educational policy. The texts that crossed my desk as a legislative aide were a metaphor for these power-laden debates about educational policy among groups trying not just to participate but to direct the choice for the best options for public schooling through SB 1.

Education policy consists of mandates and regulations set forth by the government in the form of laws and regulations that govern the operation of education entities (Edmondson, 2004). In this study, the education entity is public compulsory schooling. Traditionally, public schooling occurs for the good of the public, to create responsible citizens, good workers, and patriots for the continuation of our democracy and American way. Because the responsibility of schooling is not established in the United States Constitution, it is therefore the responsibility of each state to oversee. Since the federal government supplies funds for education to the states, the federal government has created relationships with the states and keeps a watchful eye on state schooling practices. With the responsibility of the compulsory education existing at the state level, this study is most appropriately conducted at that level.

Education policy is set forth by the government and is usually the result of a legislative vote. Education policy can also be the result of a regulatory decision by the
governing body for education. In this case, the regulatory body is the Pennsylvania Department of Education. In instances, the state, which is constitutionally appointed to oversee schooling in the United States, is influenced by the federal government. Because public schooling is a government entity, it is political in nature (Edmondson, 2004, Ball 1990).

Within this study, you will encounter a struggle, or a type of tug-o-war, among groups who wish to place their values and voices as the authority, while silencing others by the way they wish to realign the policies of the state regarding school vouchers. As policies are suggested by others to law makers, “(they) are not divorced from interests, from conflict, from domination or from justice” (Ball, 1990, 3). Researchers explain that within the policies put forth by groups struggling to control the way schools work and run values, interests, and power struggles exists through social practices (Edmondson, 2004). Thus, policies reflect some groups’ version of the ideal and some groups’ authority and power is justified or accepted over others. (Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

“Because the study of educational policy has often concerned the definition of problems and policy choices of those in power, other perspectives are often silenced, declared irrelevant, postponed, or ignored” (Heck, 2004, 32). In this policy analysis, I seek to illuminate the social practices taken up around school choice legislation in Pennsylvania highlighting the examples of discursivity and power at work over the 2011 Legislative Session. This critical analysis seeks to uncover and explain the social reality among the groups involved in this movement to privatize schooling in Pennsylvania and the power structures surrounding it to show how education policy is negotiated. I seek to illuminate the past and current relationships of the groups involved and to document the movement
of power historically and over the course of the 2011-2012 legislative session, to uncover the story of social practices and negotiations highlighting contradictions, justice, and relevancy.

Public schooling in the United States is offered to achieve a public good - to grow children into responsible citizens and good workers who support and continue democracy. For more than thirty years beginning with *A Nation at Risk*, a report on school achievement put forth during the Presidency of Ronald Reagan, groups have emerged and established a public rhetoric for the purpose of defining and reorganizing the public school policies in the United States. These groups seek to change the look and function of public schooling to a privatized, market system of compulsory schooling, financially supported but not run by the government. Citing widening socioeconomic and academic achievement gaps, poor standardized test scores, and worn-out, government and union-run monopolies on public schooling these groups seek to reorganize schooling to give families the right to choose where and how their children are educated by dismantling the current structure of local, geographically determined, district run schools and decrease the role of state government in school structures. Since public schooling is integral to the lives of all citizens and a major part of the legislator’s responsibilities fiscally and socially, this challenge to the traditional structure of schooling is significant in the education policy discourse because it questions what public schooling is and to what extent should state government’s involvement should be.

**An Insider’s Viewpoint and Early Assumptions**

As a political insider and former public school teacher, I realized that I had naturally occurring data crossing my desk in my position as a legislative aid that sought to influence
education policy in Pennsylvania. In my position I am responsible to analyze the texts received into the office for stance, messaging, and relevancy. I soon realized that groups from both within and outside of Pennsylvania were employing practices to influence my legislator’s vote on Senate Bill 1, and I began to ask questions as to how and why they were carrying out particular social and political practices to gain stance over this particular education policy issue. I observed the work of these groups and assumed their stance to be one of three: In support of SB 1, In opposition to SB 1, or as Official work texts. I wondered if most bills on education policy took these particular stances and utilized specific practices to lobby for education bills.

In my early assumptions of the texts that worked to influence Senate Bill 1, I observed that each text requested something from the representative and each text said something about vouchers (the main topic of the bill). I also held specific assumptions that the support groups were wrong and employed outrageous social practices to influence the legislator while the opposition groups were right and employed useful social practices to clarify the misrepresentations of the support group for the legislator. I assumed the work official texts were simply providing me, as a legislative employee, basic and foundational information on the legislation. Later, upon further analysis I realized these assumptions were over-simplified and misrepresented, and critical analysis showed further revelations that all texts shared certain qualities and social practices. Furthermore, these social experiences with the texts around SB 1 made me wonder who had the attention and the power to influence legislators’ stances and how did these groups work to provide information to legislators. I also wondered if my former peers, public school teachers, realized this powerful and discursive work was taking place by groups other than
educators in order to influence and to alter the way in which they conducted their work on a daily basis. I observed that while teachers were in their classrooms all day teaching their students, others were taking up a space in a discourse I wrongly assumed teachers, as educational experts, and legislators, as policy makers, communicated and negotiated education policy. This space held opportunities for groups of others to enter into the education policy discourse. I wondered what those groups of others wanted public school education policy to look like and do, and asked what they did and how they acted to negotiate and to influence state education policy work. Critical discourse analysis revealed these answers.

**Discourse Analysis and Surprising Results**

In my job, I examined the SB 1 texts that crossed my desk on their way to my legislator. I am to register each one, regardless of its form, and to prepare summaries of them. These texts included letters, postcards, pamphlets, charts, door hangers, and others. They included prose, images, photographs, symbols and signs within deliberate designs, using layout, color, size, and metaphors to inform and to influence readers concerning the producers’ stances on SB 1. Each text had a code to crack, a grammar to follow, meaning to construct, and intentions to discover. These texts were part of the process of educational policy in which citizens, aides, and legislators were participating actively. I received nearly 100 such texts concerning SB1; overall the legislative office received approximately 600. This was for only one bill, whereas in one two-year legislative session around 2,000 bills are introduced.

The discourse identified for this study sets within the Pennsylvania Legislature during the 2011-2012 years over proposed legislation to create a school voucher program
in the Commonwealth. The texts identified in the study were a natural part of that discourse. The discourse in this study was defined as a process of communication that utilized both language and semiotic resources to affect the movement of the voucher legislation in Pennsylvania at that time. The texts that moved through the voucher legislation audience, including the legislative members and their staffs, sought to provide a frame and stance to the readers. None of texts were neutral and each held specific meaning motivating particular actions and perceptions. Therefore, the use of discourse analysis was warranted.

In the attempt to uncover and identify the messages, stances, and ideologies of the groups involved in the discourse around SB 1, Critical Discourse Analysis was applied to a sample of the public texts received. Critical Discourse Analysis “centers on discourse as social practice” and believes that all discourse is “shaped by society” (Strauss & Feiz, 2015, 312). Susan Strauss and Parastou Feiz in Discourse Analysis Putting our World into Words (2015) explain, “Critical Discourse Analysis seeks to uncover the discursive processes through which ideologies are shaped and communicated, normalized, and propagated-ideologies which involve hidden dimensions of power, control, injustice, and inequity, all of which typically go unseen and unnoticed because they are couched in what appear to be common-sense assumptions of social reality and ‘truth’ ” (313). This study sought to understand the underlying attempt to frame arguments and stances through social practices to discursively influence legislation through the use of the texts participating groups make public.

Politics includes the coming together of groups of people through the bonding over generally agreed-upon positions, ethics, and ideologies to establish the stances and aims of
the groups decided upon by established structures within the organization with the goal of creating or holding power. Through the use of power resources, attempts to keep or to change the status quo of existing laws, rules, and establishments are acted upon. This is political work since the groups seek to hold or to get power to create or to dismantle specific policies, laws, and mandates for purposeful, framed reasons. In this case, groups created textual documents to create frames, to push forth stance, to control the discourse, and to gain power. Since the texts that moved through the voucher legislation audience, including the legislative members and their staffs, sought to provide social practices that framed stances for the readers the texts were not neutral and held specific meaning to motivate particular actions and perceptions. This analysis realigned my naïve perspective and focused me to evaluate the texts for similarities and differences over texts, not groups, to identify micro-political work to influence education policy.

**Micro-politics**

Micro-politics are the small acts of governing that work to influence acts, attitudes, and perceptions within an organization. In this study, micro politics referred to the ways in which state government is organized to invite, solicit, and regulate groups and individuals to produce texts in order to participate in policy debate and policy making. In this way, the acts of text production and the regulations for delivery, handling, and review of such texts became as relevant as the messages and positions to understanding how power circulated around SB 1 from conception to its closure. For these reasons, the official texts of the PA legislature were treated as “texts that crossed my desk.” My concern was not only what the texts meant, but also what they did and how they worked within the legislature’s consideration of SB 1.
In order to understand how legislation is influenced, one must first know how legislation is established in Pennsylvania. In a single two-year session of the House of Representatives in Pennsylvania, approximately 2,000 bills are introduced. Each bill seeks to introduce or to change regulation in Pennsylvania. The topics are wide-ranging, yet the requests of the legislation are specific. Legislation introduction is powerful, as it can only be carried out by a member of the House of Representatives or the Senate, and it can only become law if both bodies pass it by a majority vote, and it is signed by the governor. Before it is even considered for a vote, the bill must be considered and voted upon by the committee to which it is assigned and only then it is moved on to “the floor” or the House or Senate for a full vote. Before a bill gets a final vote, the House and the Senate must consider it three times. Upon the third consideration, a bill can be passed. If at that point a bill does not pass, it is “killed” and cannot come up for another vote in the session period. Once that bill has passed a chamber, either the House or the Senate, the bill must then go through the same process in the other chamber. Both the House and the Senate must pass a bill for it to become law. If a bill passes both chambers successfully, it is then sent to the governor to be signed. Once the governor signs it, the bill becomes a law. Each legislative session lasts for a two-year period, and a bill has two years to become law. When a new session begins, all previous bills are stricken from the docket, and each bill from a previous session must be reintroduced and then restart the entire process (PA House of Representatives, 2015).

With the lengthy and specific process, one must consider the work and the influence that goes into creating and passing bills. Only a legislator can introduce a bill, and only a legislator can participate in the actual vote to create a law. However, legislators are expected to entertain individuals and groups who seek to persuade them to vote a
particular way on a bill. In the legislative office where I work, constituents and groups from
within our district, as well as outside of our district, communicate their desires for
legislation through various texts. These texts are documented in a computer system and
grouped according to topic and to stance, where, usually, each text gets a response from the
office. Staff members keep the legislator apprised of the correspondence received at our
office. Both the staff and/or the legislator respond to texts and, at times, meet with
constituents. The system for documenting and sharing texts by the staff keeps the legislator
aware of the texts received into the office.

Within the House of Representatives at large, as a working body, regulation on
sharing information exists. With a large number (203) of legislators and their staffs, in-
house texts are created to keep members and staff apprised on the legislative calendar and
its corresponding contents. Information shared in this manner is often annotated as
confidential and provided to summarize and to inform and is not considered general or
summative information. This information is not shared publicly. The in-house work texts
are created to inform staff of the analysis and synthesis of legislative topics. These
confidential texts are not shared outside of staff, as it is considered legally privileged and
confidential. Many of these texts apprise members and staff along the process of proposed
legislation and are fluent, therefore not summative or prepared for public consumption.
This study does not share these in-house work texts and, instead, focused the study to
analyze the way citizens and groups attempt to influence legislators’ votes by submitting
texts.

Likewise, regulations exist on how groups and individuals can influence legislators.
Within the work of government, laws exist around political financial contributions, gifts,
and meetings with legislators. All of this is taken into consideration when considering texts and communications by others who wish to influence legislation. Looking from a micro-political level at the texts created to influence votes for or against Senate Bill 1, this study sought to understand and to identify the use of social practices within the specific discourse in texts to work discursively to push ideological values and stances to influence legislators.

Data Analysis Revelations and New Perspectives

Once I realized that each text was intentional regardless of stance and accepted that power and conflict were at play over stances, I began to ask: How were the groups doing this?, What did they use to do it?, And how was it working? Critical Discourse Analysis revealed the presence of relations of power through the use of language and semiotic practices to move beyond the surface meanings of the text to reveal particular social practices at play to alter ideas and positions of power. This discursive work existed in each text that crossed my desk. To further consider the attempts at discursivity the texts were analyzed to uncover their role within the specific discourse of SB 1 within the unique political landscape present in Pennsylvania at that particular time. Considerations of the three aspects - text, discourse, and social-historical setting - of a social practice during analysis uncovered the transformative and discursive work carried out within texts during the life of SB 1.

I realized that although the tension among stances was competitive, the tactics, tropes, and themes the groups used were not. Regardless of stance four particular themes emerged over the texts that each groups used to attempt to gain power over their stance and to lobby legislators. The themes were: A Crisis Exists, It is Personal, Framing a stance
as truth, and Forming Alliances and Partnerships. I learned that each of the themes was used to lobby in specific ways in order to change policy, influence participants, gain more participants, and to expose the tactics of others. The texts revealed issues of power, culture, and truth within the discourse of education policy negotiations by revealing discursive work that uncovered ideological imaginings based on truth and knowledge defined by beliefs and values instead of empirical evidence. Groups utilized this “truth” to establish frames to push forth stance and control the discourse of SB 1 and Pennsylvania education policy.

This particular analysis revealed a micropolitical policy discourse present in the negotiations of education policy. I believed that sharing this work with other educators and those interested in public education policy would benefit and expand their understanding and encourage their participation in the micropolitical discourse of education policy in Pennsylvania. It did for me. Since this study opened my educator-eyes to how policy is negotiated and created, I hope it will encourage other educators to participate in the political work to influence education policy in Pennsylvania. I sought to uncover how groups participated in the discourse of policy negotiations, so teachers could “see” what was happening and engage in the work themselves.

My hope is that other educators can learn from this study what I learned and take up advocacy for their work in Pennsylvania’s public schools. I believe teachers need not to be invited into the discourse but need to organize and to mobilize to insert themselves into the discourse as expert voices and representatives for their work. Teachers can learn this independently like I did, however, I would like to make this study public so that further opportunities are created to mobilize educators into education policy negotiations. Both
teacher education programs and teacher professional development programs can provide opportunities to support and to teach teachers policy discourse literacy in order to take up space in the education policy discourse.

**Senate Bill 1 of 2011 as an Example of Political Lobbying**

I used Senate Bill 1 of 2011 as a policy example in this study due to the large amount of attention and texts my office received at that particular time on this particular education policy topic. The data sample was large and enable me to analyze how groups influence and lobby legislators on education policy topics. In 2011, some believed a perfect storm existed to create a voucher system for public education in Pennsylvania due to the political environment at that time. Understanding this setting gives context to the study.

Three factors pointed toward likely passage of a voucher program in Pennsylvania. A newly elected Republican governor who campaigned on voucher reform took office. Additionally, the House of Representatives and state Senate both had Republican majorities, which meant that Republicans filled the leadership positions in both chambers. These leaders championed school choice. Second, the financial crisis of 2008 continued to affect the economy of Pennsylvania. Taxpayers felt the burden of rising property taxes, which is a main source of income for the state’s public schools. Federal stimulus money that the public schools were receiving was soon to expire, and the governor was committed, unwaveringly, to passing a balanced budget, which meant cuts in the upcoming budget, including allocations to public education. Third, the tone of public conversations around public schooling was often negative and focused on questionable standardized tests scores, particularly for low income students.
In October, 2010, the Senate Education Committee held a hearing on school choice, focused on vouchers. According to the website *PA Politics* (2010), it was the first public debate on school choice in over a decade. In particular, the participants discussed the merits of Senator Anthony Williams (D-8), concerning opportunity scholarships for low income students in failing school districts (Politics PA, 2010). During the hearing, the Committee Chairman, Senator Jeffrey Piccola (R-15), stated “timing was ideal to begin the conversation on school choice, and it would be a bipartisan fight for freedom and opportunity” (Politics PA, 2010). Senator Williams’ legislation bill was killed at the end of the 2009-2010 legislative session, but its publicity and discussions led to a number of proposed bills on school choice in the following legislative session.

Senator Jeffrey Piccola (R-15) introduced Senate Bill 1 in early 2011. SB 1 aimed to provide Opportunity Scholarships, otherwise known as vouchers, to low income students in low performing schools to be used to attend public, private or parochial schools other than the students’ home district school (Pennsylvania Senate, 2011). The Commonwealth would send a check to the eligible parents that only the new school could cash as tuition. In the case of parents choosing another public school, the Commonwealth would send funds directly to the new public school (Education Law Center, 2011, Pennsylvania Senate, 2011). At the time of its introduction, at least nine states had versions of voucher programs (Education Law Center, 2011). At that time, other bills existed that addressed school choice, but the biggest emphasis and attention was on Senate Bill 1.

According to the bill, the voucher program would be implemented in three phases. The first year eligible students would include low-income students who lived in the lowest performing 5 percent of public schools (144 school buildings, not school districts). During
the second year, low income students who attended private schools and live in such areas would become eligible. In the third year, the vouchers would be available to all low-income children in Pennsylvania. In this case, the total amount of the vouchers would be capped at a certain amount, and that amount will be divided pro rata as needed (Pennsylvania Senate, 2011, Education Law Center, 2011). SB 1 called for the creation of The Education Opportunity Board to create, establish and oversee the voucher program. Although housed in the Department of Education, the Board would be independent. The Governor would appoint all members of the Board with the consent of the Senate. An evaluation of the program would be required within the first five years (Pennsylvania Senate, 2011).

Ultimately, SB 1 failed in Pennsylvania. Since the bill originated in the Senate Education Committee, the Senate would be the first body to pass the bill then move it over to the House of Representatives. Then the bill would be sent to the House Education Committee. SB 1 passed the Senate on October 26, 2011, with a vote of 27 in favor and 22 opposed to the legislation. One member did not cast a vote. Once the bill arrived in the Education Committee of the House, the bill was never moved or voted upon by that committee. Without that movement, the bill had no chance of getting voted on by the members of the House or becoming law. The bill never reached the House floor for a vote of the entire membership before the end of the session period and thus was “killed”.

Although Senate Bill 1 did not become law, the work to influence the movement of the bill as education policy provided a deep example of education policy negotiation.
Summary of the Study

The focus of this study was to answer the question: How do the texts that crossed my desk as a legislative aide work on lobbying legislators about education policies? This study utilized texts created to lobby on Senate Bill 1 of 2011 to answer that question. The outcome of the study revealed that four themes worked as discursive devices in service of the social practice of lobbying legislators. Using the public texts created to influence Senate Bill 1 provided an example of how groups produce texts as a social practice in order to do specific work to influence legislators’ votes on education policy.

Chapters were organized to show and to support the way the texts that cross my desk as a legislative aide worked on lobbying legislators about education policies. Chapter 2 identified the subject of the bill, and explained who favors and rejects it and why. Chapter 3 shared past studies of voucher programs to show how groups in favor and in opposition of education policies utilized data to push forth stance. The chapter also asked if the arguments utilized by lobbying groups was based on empirical evidence. Chapter 4 explained how I selected texts and showed how I systematically analyzed the sample data. Chapter 5 revealed the themes utilized as social practice to do discursive work within the texts. Finally, Chapter 6 discussed my claims based on the example of Senate Bill 1 to show how texts work to lobby legislators on education policy work and provide implication for those who wish to take up education policy advocacy.
Chapter 2

Contemporary School Reform In America:
Senate Bill 1 as a Milieu for School Reformers

“To be brief, then, let us say that history, in its traditional form, undertook to ‘memorize’ the monuments of the past, transform them into documents, and lend speech to those traces which, in themselves, are often not verbal, or which say in silence something other than what they actually say; in our time, history is that which transforms documents into monuments.”

M. Foucault, (1972, 7)
This chapter provided a review of the literature and addressed the subject of Senate Bill 1: school vouchers. The chapter details the historical-political perspective of the topic and laid the foundation to understanding how school voucher policy in America came to exist. The chapter also discussed how the political landscape allowed for the mobility of the privatization movement and explained who favors and who rejects it and why. By understanding how school vouchers and school choice groups began to mobilize, to establish a discourse, and to become a political presence, the reader can have an understanding of the social-historical setting that allowed for the introduction of Senate Bill 1 in Pennsylvania and its resulting negotiations. Groups for and against this particular education policy motivated to action thus providing a detailed example of lobbying and education policy negotiations. This chapter also offered a definition of vouchers and a description of the arguments for their use in order to give the reader an understanding of the context of Senate Bill 1 as an example of education policy negotiation.

Historically in the United States, regardless of wealth and social status, public schooling has been the foundation of learning for the vast majority of our young citizens. According to Diane Ravitch (2010), “Our public education is a fundamental element of our democratic society. Our public schools have been the pathway to opportunity and a better life for generations of Americans, giving them the tools to fashion their own life and to improve the commonweal. To the extent that we strengthen them, we strengthen our democracy” (Ravitch, 2010, 241-242). Current attempts at school reform touted by policy makers as school improvement legislation are the same mandates that others argue are weakening and diminishing the quality and survival of truly public schools.
This study focused solely on vouchers and does not include other school choice movements. However, at times a reference to school choice may be made in a more general manner, which is identified and clarified within the text.

**Reform in the Public School System: How a “Crisis” was Built**

Looking back over the last four decades, American politics have seen major proclamations for reform in America’s public schools with attempts to shift the nature of public education reform, depending on who held office and when. Looking at the national level, reform has held broad sweeping policy changes based on the politics and governing ideologies of the time (Spring, 1997, Bracey, 2002). The need for these changes is “often proclaimed by major leaders of our government and industry and has been repeated endlessly by a compliant press” (Berliner & Biddle, 1995, 3). For so long, Americans have come to believe in the need for major public school reform, arguably because they have been told it by others.

Many historians and researchers give President Ronald Reagan, who served from 1981-1989, the credit for bringing public school reform, including vouchers, into the national spotlight with his 1983 report *A Nation at Risk* (ANAR). According to education scholar Frederick Hess (2010), “many regard (ANAR) as the starting gun for modern school reform efforts” (10) by its strong call to recognize problems and shortcomings of our public schools and spawned intense conversations on how to fix them. Hess argues that the response to Reagan’s *A Nation At Risk* and the educational mandates of reform that have followed over that last few decades are too simplified in its requirements and “even *A Nation at Risk*’s grand vision of a hostile invasion yielded relatively mild recommendations” offering school improvements such as “curricular content be strengthened, that more
academic courses be required, and textbooks be better” to highlight a few. (10) Hess, like others, argued these proposed remedies were not extreme enough to make transformative differences in American schooling. Chester Finn, calling on the review of a quarter-century of school reform since ANAR, argued that reform must move beyond the basic to “more fundamental questions, challenging long-held assumptions about how education is managed, funded, designed, and overseen”(C. Finn in Hess, 2010, 11). In this light, school reformers attempted to “rethink the shape or structure of schooling” (Hess, 2010, 11). Some educators and others considered this perspective dubious with claims it is anti-teacher, schooling, and education, even anti-American. And so the argument has persisted since ANAR, as to whether the public school system can be fixed from within and succeed within its existing framework, or if a larger transcendence needs to occur, where schools function and look in a variety of ways where “many legitimate ways to provide public education” exists in a variety of public and private manners and settings (Hess, 2010, 11).

Since the presidency of Reagan, the school choice and school vouchers topics have continued to be a strong influence on the platforms and agendas of Presidential hopefuls, Presidents, and others seeking office. Following Reagan, President George HW Bush, who served from 1989-1993, continued the support of vouchers and the exploration of new types of schools and schooling for Americans. Among other school reform agenda items, his program for education, Goals 2000: Educate America Act, accrued additional attention and support for school vouchers. The groundbreaking and controversial work of political and social scientists Terry Moe and John Chubb, Politics, Markets, and America’s Schools (1990) asserted the current public school system was a political and governmental
system governed by “the usual top-down forms of democratic control (which) inherently tend(s) to bury the schools in bureaucracy and erode their performance. Because the causes are rooted in the system itself, significant improvement is difficult or impossible if reforms leave the system intact” (Moe, 2001, 31). Moe and Chubb suggested true improvements for public schools would be a “shift away from top-down control to a very different type of system, based largely on markets rather than politics” which promoted the work of vouchers and reignited the work of the voucher advocates (31).

Although the Presidency of Bill Clinton brought a slowing of the voucher movement support from the Presidency, he did not thwart it. Some researchers contend the transition from the first Bush White House to the Clinton administration showed a consistent message initiated from Goals 2000 that emphasized a goal of schooling to provide America with a top notch work force, business leaders as partners in the school improvement work, and consistently achieving schools (Spring, 1997). Vouchers may not have been a part of Clinton's education reform agenda, but it wasn’t going away either.

Likewise, since education policy was delegated by the states, voucher groups understood the need to infiltrate state governments. As the 1990’s progressed, the voucher movements did not grow from Presidential support in the Clinton White House; actually he vetoed the first voucher bill that progressed through Congress, but the voucher movement did have the opportunity to grow from a greater recognition at the lower levels of governance. During the early 1990’s experts claimed voucher advocates were practicing and preparing by
learning how the political process worked, understanding their losses, building
alliances at state levels of government, and working on voucher details. According
to Moe and others, voucher reformers understood the movement would be slow, if
at all and, retrospectively, time seemed to have given them much needed

Leading advocates and conservatives of the time, Lamar Alexander,
William Bennett, and Jack Kemp, worked with wealthy foundations that supported
the reform movement by canvassing the country to promote the marketization
and privatization of America. They pushed hard for vouchers, holding rallies and
publishing op-ed pieces highlighting outcomes of foundation-supported research
in key geographies across the country that had voucher audiences (Spring, 1997).

Privatization reformers implemented strategic methods for promoting and
gaining support for their work. Claiming evidence of poor performance by public
schools as the justification of altering the structure of schooling, reformers created
a strong rhetoric of discontent to introduce into the public school discourse. This
rhetoric was strategically constructed to appeal not only to traditional
conservatives and Republicans, but to the general audience of Americans, who
worked hard to pay taxes that supported schools and to parents who sent children
to public schools. Reformers touted empirical evidence to back their claims for
school reform and combined that with rhetoric to appeal to the American people
to convince many that a crisis in American public education existed. Their rhetoric
created a frame on which various privatization/voucher groups came together to
strengthen their movement and lay a platform on which to grow their core and unify their messages.

The well-crafted rhetoric was carefully implemented to promote the reformers ideas and promise of a privatized schooling system. Groups with traditionally divergent ideals, who normally had not collaborated, found ways to come together over a shared vision of voucher implementation. These voucher groups created coalitions in order to strengthen their force by creating wealthy foundations and focusing on think tanks to support and carry out research along with hiring professional strategist to craft educational policy statements, briefs, public communications, and legislation backed by their evidence to gain a place in the education policy discourse.

This very strategic and purposeful work established a new education political rhetoric portraying a sense of crisis in America’s public schooling system driven by the compilation of evidence highlighting failures in public schools created and collated by the pro-voucher coalitions, marketed publically by their participants, proclaimed by the public officials they enlisted, and shared by a participating media (Berliner & Biddle, 1995). Although opponents and many education researchers argued the evidence was flimsy and deficient, their campaign was so well crafted and delivered, many American citizens believed and accepted the crisis in public education as truth that continues to show itself in the discourse of American public education.

This crisis portrays the current public school system as lacking in proficiency and achievement in a multitude of ways. Claims that America’s schools
at all levels from pre-K to college are lacking in student performance and
achievement, that international academic stance and competition is waning, and
that students have lower aptitudes for reading, math, science, and problem-solving
making America less competitive in the global market created a widespread belief
that our public schools need revamping. Furthermore, this crisis strategy includes
blaming the current government-run and union-supported system as too
bureaucratic, expensive, and cumbersome, teacher performance and
professionalism as marginal, and standardized test scores as subpar (Berliner &
Biddle, 1995, Weil, 2002). Reformers claimed enough money has been spent
without successful results and therefore justified their strategies for educational
reform.

Leading education researchers like David Berliner and Bruce Biddle (1995)
were not alone in claiming the work of the privatization reformers as wrought
with “myths, half-truths, and sometimes outright lies” based on “misleading
methods for analyzing data, distorting reports of findings, and suppressing
contradictory evidence...tied to misguided schemes for ‘reforming’ education-
schemes that would, if adopted, seriously damage American Schools” (4).
Additionally, claims that this manufactured crisis evidence was hard to locate and
often stretched to fit the reformers ideas were asserted along with the notions
that the implementation of reform strategies would progress an ideological stance,
not sensible school reform. (Berliner & Biddle, 1995, Weil, 2002) However,
 voucher reformers were not deterred. Reformers had the perfect storm: a
reinvigorated strategy, a collaboration of groups to support vouchers, wealthy
financiers and foundations that created public forums to attract media, and the attention of many elected officials on state and federal levels that supported their work toward privatization. Having the attention of the President to promote their crisis rhetoric was a big help, too.

During the Presidential campaign of 2000, George W. Bush “promised that education reform would be his number one domestic policy priority” (Stern, 2004). Media spoke of candidate Bush as the one to be the Education President. Bush’s plan would include a focus on the science of reading in order to close achievement gaps, the implementation of standardized testing for all students every year in grades three to eight, and the development of a voucher system that would allow students to transfer to more successful schools (Shannon, 2014, Stern, 2004, Ravitch, 2013). Candidate Bush talked of the value of competition to reform public education.

Once elected, President Bush began working on education reform on the first day he was President and planned to enact broad education reform, similar to the education reforms put in place when he served in Texas as governor. His education reform package offered sweeping public education reform from the federal level, and its enactment greatly expanded the role and the power of the federal government in public education, which has traditionally been left to the individual states. (Shannon, 2014). The President claimed his Texas success by touting rising test scores, closing achievement gaps, and higher graduation rates. However, as time passed critics claimed his touted “Texas miracle” was really a “Texas mirage,” stating that Texas students’ scores made some gains but were average in comparison to the rest of the country (Ravitch, 2013). His reform package focused
on accountability in the form of standardized testing and competition with a focus on vouchers. Bush’s reform for education, *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB), became legislation by passing Congress with a large margin of bipartisan victory.

With the continuation of strong lobbying and communication of the “evidence” for school reform coupled with the passage of NCLB into law, a certain form of accountability and assessment became the focus of public schooling curriculum and instruction to extents never seen before. Some experts explain the NCLB model did not focus on the engagement of better teaching and learning for schools and students, but created a structure that would ultimately lead to the privatization of public schooling in America (Bolick, 2003, Meier, 2004). Some argue that was the goal from the start (Kohn, 2004, Ravitch, 2013). Others argue that the legislation could not pass without a voucher provision (Bolick, 2003). The focus of NCLB was continual standardized testing of students as the focus of measure of students’, schools’, and teachers’ success. NCLB mandated all students to become proficient in reading as evidenced by standardized test scores by 2014, which many scholars and government officials soon realized was impossible (Meier, 2004, Shannon 2014). Also, schools that performed at lower levels of this form of accountability over a period of time would be labeled as not proficient and the students of those schools would be granted vouchers to move to another better performing school (Stern, 2004). This was good news for the school choice contingent and enabled them to activate at bigger and stronger levels than ever before. The election of George W. Bush and the enactment of *No Child Left Behind* was a significant win for the school choice movement.
Educational experts argue that much of the complaints with educational issues as reported by governmental studies on the national level and publicly reported had been based on unfounded and flimsy evidence (Berliner & Biddle, 1995, McNeil, 2000). Yet the rhetoric surrounding the issues of public schooling reform has remained. Tyack and Cuban discuss in *Tinkering Toward Utopia* (1995) that in America, unlike other countries, the major political parties have not differed in their views of the need for public education reform, as they might on other issues, and that the discourse of public education reform has been unwavering in presence since the early 1980’s.

**What is an education voucher?**

Since the establishment of our public school system in America, political involvement and negotiation have been present. There exists a politics of education. During negotiations on schooling within the politics of education, many times groups radically disagree. Implementing vouchers into public education serve as a method of school reform that is both political and controversial.

Generally, an education voucher would serve as a financial allowance by the government for a compulsory school student to attend a school, public and/or private, outside of the public school where the student is geographically assigned to attend. The voucher would provide payment of the tuition to the newly attended school by the government for the student. Vouchers provide an alternative approach to schooling and school funding that gives choice to the student and his or her parents. Vouchers remain a controversial method for school reform since the money usually earmarked for a certain public school would be sent to another school, possibly providing a public source of money
to a private, even religious, source for educating. Additionally, this shift from a government-centered structure of schooling to a parental-choice structure draws a great deal of attention.

Voucher advocates claim implementation would allow for choice thus increasing the diversity of schools and students' experiences and providing a market-driven form of schooling, which would naturally allow the best school to survive while the worst would close. Advocates claim this market-driven system would improve schooling in America. With competition motivating schooling, schools would become more innovative and function at higher-levels of teaching and learning due to the implementation of competition. With the breakup of government bureaucratic monopolies that currently run, regulate, and mandate schools, schools would have more freedom to implement a variety of methods and structures to teach students more effectively thus narrowing the achievement gap along with the dissolution of the union establishment that reformers claim stunt academic growth due to union monopolies that incur the status quo (Weil, 2002, Bracey, 2002).

**Vouchers from the Federal Perspective**

Although most voucher programs exist on the state level, currently there is one federal voucher program. This program evidences the interest of the structure of public education at the highest levels of governance.

In addition to NCLB, President Bush oversaw the implementation of the first federally mandated voucher program in Washington, D.C. Established in 2004 by the passing of *D.C. School Choice Incentive Act of 2003* by a Congress with a Republican majority, and signed into law by a Republican President, the D.C. voucher program allowed
parents to select schools best-fitting the needs of their children, while being able to opt-out of schools that rank as in need of improvement under section 1116 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, using a three-sector approach that includes private, charter, and public schools (Craig, T., 2011, The DC Children and Youth Investment, 2013).

Originally administered under Washington Scholarship Fund from 2004-2010, the program continued through administration by the D.C. Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation with scholarship amounts ranging for elementary students to over $8,000 and for secondary students to over $12,000 in 2011-2012 (The DC Children and Youth Investment, 2013).

The election of the current president, Barak Obama, led some to believe the school choice momentum would halt or slow, in part based on his Democratic Party affiliation. Others argued this is not the case. President Obama’s education agenda promoted competition among schools. Some argued his promotion of competition in public education exceeded those of his Republican counterparts. Although, the President’s focus in education was not based on voucher programs in particular, an emphasis on competitive funding around teacher evaluations, charter school expansion, and higher standardized test scores, called Race To The Top, enabled the voucher community to stay focused and positive in regard to their agenda. As a matter of fact, President Obama agreed to continue funding the DC voucher program in the federal budget.

**Voucher Advocacy at the State Level: Pennsylvania**

In 2011, certain leadership roles within the PA government were positioned to create a voucher program in the state. This structure lead to the
influx of voucher advocates from around the nation and the move to action of Pennsylvania’s pro-voucher community. At this time, these groups often partnered to strengthen their work.

Gerald Bracey (2002) explains “In some cases, the enemy is found within” and this could be the case in Pennsylvania. Bracey explains the formation of the pro-voucher group Education Leaders Council (ELC), consisting of state-level education officials that favored privatization and vouchers, was founded and lead in part by then Pennsylvania Secretary of Education Eugene Hickock along with a few other chief state school officers (Bracey, 2002). Eugene Hickok served as the Secretary of Education in Pennsylvania under previous Governor Tom Ridge, a privatization and pro-voucher governor, who laid a foundation for voucher work in Pennsylvania (Murphy, 2011). Hickok was also a former undersecretary of Education in the Bush administration (Bracey, 2002). When Hickok “assumed his position in 1995, (he) refused to be a member of the Council of Chief State School Officers because that organization opposed school choice” (Morken and Formicola, 1999, 94). In other words, he was the lead administrator of the public schools in Pennsylvania while wanting a pro-voucher, school choice agenda paving the way for voucher discourse in Pennsylvania (Murphy, 2011). Additionally, in 2011-12, in Pennsylvania Education Secretary Ron Tomalis, who was a former undersecretary in the Ridge administration alongside Hickok, headed the Education department for the state under the governorship of Tom Corbett and during the life of Senate Bill 1 (PA Department of Education website, 2012). These
top state education officials were prominent voucher supporters positioned to transition Pennsylvania into an education voucher program.

Governor Tom Corbett campaigned on the education agenda of expanding choice in Pennsylvania's school system (Tom Corbett for Governor, 2012). Governor Corbett's campaign plan for public education was to “enhance charter school quality and accountability,” to “provide Opportunity Grants (vouchers) for students attending failing public schools,” and to “grow the Education Improvement Tax Credit program”, which would provide scholarships to private and parochial schools (Tom Corbett for Governor, 2012). Each of these objectives included in his education platform added to an agenda focused to expand market solutions to Pennsylvania’s current public education system. The governor presented his education agenda as part of the solution to the current economic crisis explaining, "The expansion of our economy, the creation of jobs, and the stimulation of growth all depend upon one foundation- a solid education that prepares students to compete in a global economy" (Tom Corbett for Governor, 2012). Governor Corbett’s definition of “a solid education” included the use of vouchers to improve education in the Commonwealth and as an economic solution for Pennsylvania.

Upon his election, and the successful election of pro-voucher leadership in the House of Representatives and the State Senate, the voucher and choice movement gained strength in Pennsylvania. This momentum and the governor’s work for vouchers continued even when more than sixty percent of Pennsylvanians opposed school vouchers (PSEA, 2012).

Within the current economic climate, some elected officials were looking for relief for taxpayers, so the climate for something “new” was approaching. Additionally, over the
previous 20 years, educational choice in Pennsylvania slowly and steadily grew, making Pennsylvania an attractive campground for pro-choice, pro-voucher, pro-charter advocates (Boehm, 2012). Lawmakers had expanded the role and the amount of charter schools, home schooling options, and the use of tax credits called Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC), to provide scholarship money to low-income students who attended private schools (Boehm, 2012). Even though the expansion of choice programs in Pennsylvania had been slow, proponents were not deterred but rather empowered, according to Ana Puig, a lobbyist for school choice group Freedom Works (Boehm, 2012).

Introduction of Senate Bill 1 in Pennsylvania in 2011-12 was no surprise based on the socio-economic environment and the culture of politics that created a distinct political culture ripe for a negotiation of the education discourse established in the state. This discourse had distinct players and power structures, some appointed and established by elected leadership to fight for the implementation of an education voucher program. The struggle over Senate Bill 1 was a hegemonic battle between the way things are and the way others thought it could be.

At that time, the Governor proposed a budget cut to public school funding by $860 million, potentially forcing school districts to cut academic programs, services, and teachers. This cut was an attempt by Governor Corbett, to balance the budget. His original 2011-2012 budget proposal asked for a $1 billion cut in the state public education budget (PSEA, 2012). Other areas were cut also, but the cut to traditional public school districts was viewed by many as an attack on schools, students, and teachers (PSEA, 2012). Additionally, the governor called for a one-year pay freeze for all public school teachers (PSEA, 2012).
President Obama’s *Race To the Top* competition seemed to add to the momentum of pro-choice momentum in Pennsylvania. One of the many aspects of the competition was to take specific actions to address under-performing schools (Schackler, 2011). In Pennsylvania, that translated into the oversight and expansion of charter schools, which was an important goal of the Corbett administration (Schackler 2011, Tom Corbett for Governor.com, 2012). President Obama emphasized the importance of “using innovation and effective approaches to turn-around struggling schools” which appears to translate into offering market-solutions for public schools in Pennsylvania (Tom Corbett for Governor.com, 2012, The White House, 2012).

With the federal recognition (and funding) of market solutions for public education, the Pennsylvania Governor, and the leadership in the House of Representatives and the Senate gained additional momentum in introducing legislation leading to the provision of alternate market solutions for public schooling. Pennsylvania seemed to be a “perfect storm” for pro-choice and pro-voucher supporters. This combination of legislative leaders provided the assumption of power within the pro-market solution advocacy. This situation attracted local and national support from school choice advocacy groups.

That environment led to the introduction of Senate Bill 1. The main objective of the bill, among other things, was to bring “opportunity scholarships” or school vouchers to students in Pennsylvania. The original Senate Bill 1, included a program to provide tax-funded tuition vouchers to students attending private and religious schools although a study by *Terry Madonna Opinion Research* showed a majority of Pennsylvanians oppose school vouchers (PSEA, 2012). The introduction of this bill by the Senate brought on a great deal of attention from media and invigorated both traditional public school education
groups and the school voucher and privatization groups to influence the votes of legislators.

Ultimately, SB 1 of 2011 failed to pass into law. However, for voucher advocates valuable strides had been made to strengthen their presence and to build coalitions in Pennsylvania. Additionally, an increase in the amount of Education Improvement Tax Credits, or EITC, was passed. The EITC legislation provided an increase to the amount of available tax credits to businesses who donate to education. The participating businesses could allocate their contributions to a Scholarship Organization, an Educational Improvement Organization, and/or a Pre-Kindergarten Scholarship Organization that participates in the program. Many believed this was a consolation for the loss of SB 1 vouchers; others believed it was vouchers in another form.

Who supports education vouchers?

Introduction

As Hess (2010) notes and a look at the last three decades of school reform attempts suggest, school reform ideas are controversial in nature and have spawned the growth of groups, foundations, and associations to fight for school reform in a variety of ways. These varying notions of reform and the many impassioned responses to them hail from plural standpoints- academic, ideological, political, and religious.

Historically, groups in favor of voucher programs for students included conservative, neoliberal, and religiously affiliated groups. However, other groups that gained strength and presence in the pro-voucher movement included groups of community members and parents who were dissatisfied with their children’s schools (Moe, 2001, Morken and Formicola, 1999). Moe (2001) and Bolick (2003)
explained this contingency included the growing number of low-income, minority parents standing up in favor of vouchers.

**Four Types of Groups that Support Vouchers**

**Classic Liberal Stance**

In the mid-1800's, John Stuart Mill introduced the concept of governmental funding for private education opportunities for families. Although Mill did not use the word "voucher" per se, he is credited with some of the earliest considerations of the concept. Mill's argument resonates with pro-voucher arguments we hear today. He sought a public school system that is supported and enforced by the State, but not entirely run and provided by the State (Bracey, 2002). Mill’s argument claims a state provided school would offer an opportunity for “moulding people to be exactly like one another; and as the mould in which it casts them is that which pleases the predominant power in the government” leading to a “despotism of the mind” (Mill in Bracey, 2002, 150). Mill warned government-lead schooling would create uniformed citizenry focused on government support. Mill believed a state formed school might be useful as a comparison or place of stimulus to keep the other schools competitive but should only serve as a portion of the school offerings (Mill, 2003, Ryan, 1997, Benthan & Mill, 1961). Reminiscent of current times, Mills' essay *On Liberty*, written in 1838, calls for the use of testing to determine if schools were up to par and staying on standard (Mill, 2003, Benthan & Mill, 1961). Therefore, the negotiations and considerations of using public monies for private schools or private educating is not a new concept in the education process.

The values put forth in this stance focused on parental choice and the freedom to select the type and setting of education for their children to support and to include the
development of values, character, and diversity according to the parents’ desires and without government interference. This modern-day conservative stance focused on the role of the government to require and to supplement education, but not to provide schools and teaching, leaving that to the guise of parents. Motivation for this stance was the notion that government should not intrude into peoples’ lives to the extent that the government controls and molds others to one prescribed way of existing or to impart particular values (Mill, 2003). Mill’s opposition to government intrusion into people’s lives connects to the current conservative stance of today.

Conservatives currently seek a free market with limited government role in education, focusing on choice in schooling, assessment based on standardized testing and economic prosperity, and human capital highlighting a need for education to produce quality patriots and workers for America. Religious freedom also aligns with this stance, giving a natural tendency for collaboration with the Religious Right and Christian Coalition in the fight for education vouchers.

Furthermore, a belief in the support of business in education to drive a stronger economy worked for the conservative pro-voucher reformers. Having the backing and financial support of the business community allowed for the reformers to take on a higher level of dedication to the realization of education vouchers across the country. Business owners saw it as an opportunity to produce higher level thinking workers to make America globally competitive. Market-based ideology of capitalist business owners has provided this stance with much needed financial support to push forth their privatization agenda and the incorporation of educational vouchers into the national and state education discourse.
Neoliberal Stance

During the latter 1960's and 1970's in America, the idea of the school voucher was introduced, mostly from a call by neoliberal groups. The focus of this type of schooling believed the government should not interfere with the economy of the country, thus the government funds for education should go to privately run schools. This neoliberal stance called for the government to spend money on education for the purpose of controlling the social conditions and moral values of the country, but it then called for a privately run school system to utilize those funds as part of the economic health of our country. Milton Friedman led this modern form of the school voucher movement through his organization The Heritage Foundation, which remains active today (Spring 1997, Moe, 2001).

According to Joel Spring in Political Agendas for Education (1997), credit for the ideas around school choice leans toward Milton Friedman, who offered a “trickle down” effect for education influenced by Austrian economist Fredrich Hayek, a Nobel-prize winner who promoted “abolishing all forms of government and applying free-market theory to every aspect of living, including highways, law enforcement, defense, and schools” (23-24). Referred to as Austrian economics, these ideas became a part of the education talk and negotiations around public schooling in America for the remaining decades, even reaching into today’s school voucher debate.

As a part of the right wing of politics, this idea of trickle down education included a pro-school choice agenda that aimed to privatize public schools, to identify scholars who can support and lecture on the specifics of this topic, and to secure avenues of funding and financing of scholars to gather and promote and to market privatized schooling ideals (Spring, 1997, Lakoff, 2006). This idea of a privatized notion of public schooling has grown
in depth and strength over time within various groups including neoliberal, classic liberal/
American conservatives, religious freedom advocates, and others. However these early
notions of governance and economics remain a part of that privatization.

Although at that inaugural time progressive liberals protested these ideas, classical
liberals did not. Classical liberals opposed government interference and overwhelming
educational bureaucracy, citing those as reasons for troubles related to public schooling;
something we still hear as part of the debate today (Spring, 1997, Bracey, 2002).
Progressive liberals of that time, like today, disagreed and believed the governmental
intervention and the resulting bureaucracy, “ensured equality of opportunity” for educating
all of America’s children (Spring, 1997, 24). Credited with the theory that government
bureaucracy was the problem with public schooling, Hayek and others argued that
privatizing public schools and resituating schooling into a market-based competitive arena
would break the bureaucratic power, allowing for schools to create ideal situations from
market competition (Spring, 1997). According to Terry Moe in Schools, Vouchers, and the
American Public (2001), “Leaders of the voucher movement see the public school system as
a stagnant bureaucracy that does not and cannot provide the nation’s children with quality
educations” and believe “vouchers would open a range of new opportunities for these
children...” (1).

Alternatively, Neoliberal Friedman thought the use of a voucher system, where the
government would allow parents to make choices for spending an allotted amount of
government monies for educational services, “would improve the quality of education” and
“contended in the 1960’s that vouchers would overcome the class stratification resulting
from the existence of rich and poor school districts” (Spring, 1997, 25). Neoliberal ideology
seeks a market-based economy focused on self-interest and individual choices to maximize the supply and demand of goods and services without government interference. “People will work to the extent that they want to be able to participate as consumers” (Engel, 2000, 19).

**Religious Stances**

In voucher reform movements, religious groups have played a big part in the progression and growth of voucher policies. Referring back to the presidency of Ronald Reagan, one can see how the role of religious groups promoted the use of vouchers in their attempt to improve and reform schools. Hubert Morken in *Religious Leaders and Faith-Based Politics: Ten Profiles* (2001) declared that in the political arena as within political wars within our country’s history, there are various religious backgrounds on both sides of the aisle, which are loyal to their denominational affiliation while passionately fighting for their political viewpoints (Formicola & et al., 2001). Morken discussed the role played in celebrating but not supporting fellow Jew, Joseph Lieberman’s nomination as Vice Presidents to Al Gore’s Presidential nomination in the 2000 election (Formicola, 2001). Lieberman was “the first appointment of the first man of his faith and ethnicity to receive this honor in American history posed a challenge for Rabbi Daniel Lapin because he disagreed with his politics” while celebrating his accomplishments as “Lieberman spoke as a Jew, without apology, much like Jimmy Carter had done in 1976 as a born-again Christian...But Lapin, for reasons of principle, disagreed with Lieberman on the issues discussed in the campaign and opposed him,” (Formicola, 2001, 89). The two agreed on issues of school vouchers, but not enough on other issues that Rabbi Lapin would support him. Often, Morken suggests, the perception that “Democratic leaders are irreligious if not
antireligious” exists (Formicola, 2001, 90). However, like any political issue, people of various religions exist on both sides of political issues.

Political religious groups foresaw a Republican Party focused on a fight for their version of strong “values, virtues, and the culture” that would claim the “soul of our nation” as opposed to the traditional focus of the party around protecting freedoms of business and economies (Morken and Formicola 1999, Moe 2001). According to Spring (1997), as the 1980 Presidential election neared, one leader of the Religious Right movement, Jerry Falwell, whose television audience capped 12 million homes with his group, the Moral Majority, and motivated in part by the work of the Heritage Foundation, approached Ronald Reagan directly asking for support. Spring (1997) states:

“The wedding between Ronald Reagan and the Moral Majority occurred shortly after the 1980 Republican convention when Reagan was asked to address 20,000 Evangelicals at a rally in Dallas. Reagan told the group, ‘I know that you cannot endorse me (because of the tax-exempt status of the Moral Majority), but I endorse you and everything you do.’...After the 1980 election, Reagan supported the religious right’s agenda by endorsing legislation for a tuition tax credit to allow parents to choose between public and private schools, and by promising to support a school prayer amendment. After 1980, school choice and school prayer became a standard fixture in the Republican platforms.” (4)

Since then, the religious right and their groups have had profound and consistent political power and influence on the politics of America and the organization of the Republican Party. Additionally, the work of voucher advocates during the tenure of President Reagan, who was a strong supporter of market systems, placed school choice issues and the use of vouchers as a form of school reform in a strong position on the nation’s policy agenda (Morken and Formicola, 1999). Their
attention to the top-down approach gave them permanency in American politics, with which came attention and power.

**Minority, Low Income Citizen Stance**

Moe (2001) and Bolick (2003) explained this stance for school vouchers emerged as the result of the growing number of low-income, minority parents standing up in favor of vouchers based on a frustration with inadequate schools, resources, and curriculum. Parents had become tired with the lack of quality of public schooling offered in their urban communities to their children in comparison to schools offered to their white, middle-class, and suburban counterparts. The first voucher program in the United States, the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP), came to exist due to the organization of minority, urban, poor parents and community members lead by a determined Democrat state legislator and former welfare mother, Polly Williams, who was not afraid to fight for the right of her constituents to attend local private schools in order to receive a stronger education than the local public schools were providing (Bolick, 2003). Interestingly, Milwaukee had a Republican, pro-reform governor at the time who, like Polly Williams was willing to forge unlikely alliances and collaborations to strengthen their voucher fight. Although met with resistance from pro-public school groups, like the teachers union and the NAACP, along with resistance from the state chief school officer, the groups along with Clint Bolick, a dedicated voucher attorney, built a case and coordinated participants to uphold the MPCP, which continues to exist in Milwaukee.
Another example of voucher support in this stance is evidenced by the creation of the Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO) lead by Dr. Howard Fuller, which organized in 1999 (BAEO, 2012). BAEO is “focused on the need for greater choice and better options within the Black community” and “has grown to become the preeminent national organization for those who support high-quality educational options for low-income and working-class Black children” (BAEO, 2012). In Pennsylvania in 2011-12, BAEO members have been instrumental in “the creation, protection, and expansion of the tax credit and charter programs” with “the support and leadership of BAEO board members Representative Dwight Evans and Senator Anthony Williams” (BAEO, 2012). Both of these PA state elected officials were keys in the creation and negotiations of Senate Bill 1.

As talk of a financial strategy for a school choice voucher program for public education was gaining momentum in Pennsylvania, free market advocates were considering the role of government in education. Neoliberal groups argued the government had the responsibility to establish and maintain a sense of social and moral authority, which was best serviced in schools, yet also believed government should stay out of the market. At that time, it seemed the definition of a voucher program did just that and is reminiscent of the work of Mills, over 100 years prior. The difference argued could be Mills feared the states’ provision of a public school would create citizens without diversity and independent thought, and some neoliberals feared the opposite. Added to that mix were groups of fervent community and religious participants that were willing to work hard and to form alliances for the implementation of school vouchers in public schools.
Coalition Building

Vital to Move Vouchers as Education Policy

In order to understand the arguments and the strategies of the voucher debate, the reader must first understand the growth of the movement. A historical context of the school voucher movement will allow for a foundation in which to view the complex issues, research, and arguments surrounding it, and will provide a framework for understanding the movement as not only about schools and education, but about politics, too.

Public perception continues to identify with the strong view of Christians fighting for school vouchers and with good reason (Formicola and Morken, 2001). Looking into the role that groups of Christians, namely the Religious Right and the Christian Coalition, played in the early days of the school voucher wars, gave insight as to how these groups gained that reputation and continue to stand up to fight for the voucher movement today. Morken and Formicola (1999) argue that the modern fight for vouchers and school choice includes the forming of political relationships that include Evangelicals and Catholics, who “opposed each other in American politics historically” for a century and a half and helped “shaped partisan political loyalties,” until the rise of the school choice movement, where their allying or partnering can progress their shared vision for voucher education (Morken and Formicola, 1999, 152). Catholics are known to form partnerships with many other groups who are working “to support all such efforts by all groups committed to all kinds of school choice...even if groups are ideologically or economically at odds with one another...” (Morken and Formicola, 1999, 153). This is evidenced in the data chapters of this study. These groups are willing to fortify their efforts by joining with others, whom they traditionally would not, in this particular political fight.
This type of collaboration was quite prevalent during the Presidential election of Ronald Reagan. Previous to Ronald Reagan’s tenure as President, the 1970’s brought on the formulation of the Religious Right prompted, as some researchers claim, by the preservation of segregation. The IRS, during President Carter’s presidency mandated Christian schools to prove they were not preserving segregation based on a hypothesis that many Southern Christian schools were created “as havens for White students fleeing integration” (Spring, 1997, 3). Experts argue that move prompted many Christians to leave the Democratic Party to join the Republican Party and thus prompting the use of a “new paradigm” and the foundation for new collaboration for politicking; religious politics (Spring, 1997, 3).

Interestingly, during the promotion of Goals 2000 and his voucher plan that would give $1,000.00 vouchers to students from lower income families, President George HW Bush formed an alliance with the nation’s governors. The voucher plan did not materialize due to the lack of support from Congress; however, further alliances were forged during the process. As President Bush was promoting his Goals 2000 program for education, he aligned with the National Governor’s Association of which future President and then Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton was vice chairman. The alignment of those forces continued to bring new ideas of school reform, “emphasizing the themes of human capital, academic standards, and reinvention of schools” to the national spotlight, while forming “crisscrossing lines between the educational policies of neoconservatives and Bill Clinton’s New Democrats” showing the slow but calculated work of the school reformers (Spring, 1997, 54).
The Presidential level is a practical focal point from which to discuss the voucher movement, and it highlights the party lines around the issue (Moe, 2001). Since Congress consists of a large number of legislators from various geographies and socioeconomic areas, the lines in the voucher movements, although often times following ideological and/or party lines, is less delineated and dependable (Spring, 1997, Moe, 2001). Moe asserts, “The reasons are rooted in constituency. Republican presidents, or candidates for president, need to put together a broadly based support coalition- not just of conservatives and suburbanites, but also of minorities, urban dwellers, and those lower in income- and they have seen the voucher issues as an attractive means of doing that.” He goes on to add, “Republican legislators...tend to come from a more homogeneous suburban constituencies, and for them vouchers have less of an electoral connection” (Moe, 2001, 36). Although, education and school policy is delegated to the states and from where school reform legislation is most often done, it has become strongly influenced by an increased federal presence. Groups understand the necessity to collaborate with federal candidates and policymakers, to make connections within local communities in need of better schools, and to build alliances between religious, political, and ideological groups with similar visions in order to strengthen their fight for the implementation of school vouchers.

**Forming Coalitions: How have advocates become better at presenting their position?**

William Simon’s 1978 book *A Time for Truth* enhanced the stance and the popularity of the privatization movement by introducing his concepts of less government involvement and stronger reliance on the private sector for a stronger economy and social needs. *The*
New York Times best seller came at a time when the general citizenry feared the government’s expensive social and economic policies and regulations which stressed individuals’ and families’ economic freedom and welfare, making the text welcomed into public discussion. Although Simon's rhetoric was based more on his own political and ideological values of individual liberty and limited government intervention than on empirical evidence, his text appealed to a wider audience that felt the burden of higher taxes and government regulations encroaching on their own liberties giving way to acceptance of his “spirited call to arms” (Plattner, 1979, 74). Simon (1978) blamed “entrenched bureaucratic dictatorship that is directly affecting millions and indirectly damaging the lives and well-being of literally everyone in the country” in the name of “public interest” (181-182). He explained the government, due to fiscal and economic policies, had “gone awry....that the multiple promises of cradle-to-grave security for our citizens (could) no longer be responsibly expanded, if indeed they (could) be fulfilled” leaving the reader concerned not only with the future of the country, but also his or her own wellbeing (213). The appeal of this book to the general population allowed for entrance of conservative, neoliberal rhetoric into the public discourse of economic and civil freedom, casting a focus on the threat of the welfare state of government to cripple and to hurt hardworking citizens. This discursive work by Simon was seminal to the cause of neoliberals, strengthening their stance toward privatization and economic competition. Furthermore, this book helped the rhetoric of the neoliberal stance to become commonplace in the public discourse and build consensus and collaboration by popularizing the position. This call for change in the economic and social government policy provided entrance of the neoliberal stance into policy discourse.
John Prunty (1984) argues that policy development is really about problem setting and the resulting dilemma and tradeoff, or negotiation management, following the setting of the problem. Further, he asserts that coalitions work to build consensus, which in turn further builds coalitions, on all sides of the policy. These coalitions use policy research to fortify their arguments and stances. I will discuss the negotiation and the use of “policy research” in detail in later chapters.

Since the emergence of Friedman’s work and inspired furthermore by Simon, groups ideologically in line with economic freedom and privatization have continued to commit themselves to the voucher fight and have grown in numbers and strength by marketing their fight, and utilizing strategies that convince readers their outcomes will garner better success.

In order to promote the idea of a market-based schooling venture, neoconservatives and neoliberals worked to “provide a flood of educational policy statements and briefings, legislation monitoring, policy analysis, and expertise to policymakers, educators, business groups, and community leaders" to influence public opinion (Spring, 1997, 34). To accomplish this various groups identified the need for collaboration resulting in the emergence of think tanks and foundations to lay a bedrock or platform on which a unified argument within the discourse could unfold and persist over time (Spring, 1997, Lakoff, 2004). Political and historical experts agree that the unification of the groups strengthened their core and built a common platform on which to unify their messages; finding a place to come together gave them strength and focus on which to grow their school reform, pro-school choice, voucher agenda (Lakoff, 2004, Luntz, 2007).
Conversely, these same educational and political experts argue the liberal side of the political spectrum did not come together as quickly or succinctly, giving the voucher movement a good head start (Lakoff, 2004). George Lakoff (2004) argues that conservative groups are good at pooling their money, their talent, and their ideas to build an infrastructure or “capital for the future” while the progressives seem to “spread their money around” on immediate causes and that “do something different from what everyone else is doing” (Lakoff, 2004, 27). The results are what Lakoff argues was a lack of framing and infrastructure for the progressives while the conservatives were spending time and money collaborating and building infrastructure for sustainability. Lakoff (2004) states that this process “perpetuates(s) a system that helps the right” (29) and one might look at the long, slow, dedicated, and sustained fight for vouchers over decades by the Right to understand this argument.

With federal recognition (and funding) of market solutions for public education and the movement of state and national voucher reform groups to Pennsylvania, the Governor and the leadership in the House of Representatives and the Senate gained additional momentum in introducing legislation leading to the provision of alternate market solutions for public schooling. Pennsylvania seemed to be a “perfect storm” for pro-choice and pro-voucher supporters. This combination of legislative leaders provided the assumption of power within the pro-market solution advocacy attracting local and national support from powerful and politically influential school choice advocacy groups.

**Calling bluff on the “Crisis”: Challenging the School Reformers**

Even though the state government leadership was preparing to create a voucher-friendly environment within the administration, groups fighting against
voucher programs, such as teachers’ unions, associations supporting public school administrators and school boards, civil rights groups, and Democrats were bracing for the negotiations (Bracey, 2002, Moe, 2001). Additionally, a major influence on voucher legislation and a focal point of legislators’ attention, according to Morken and Formicola’s study was public perception. Since the public considers education reform reluctantly, so do elected officials. One explanation, argues Morken and Formicola (1999), is that “this generation contains a majority of people who have positive memories of neighborhood schools: They do not yet want school choice to be adopted wholesale which can partially explain the slow movement of voucher programs over time” (288). That notion may have credence in PA according to a 2011 poll showing 61% opposed vouchers, while only 31% supported and 3% were unsure (Pennsylvanians Opposed to Vouchers, 2011). According to a September 27, 2011 memorandum from Pennsylvanians Opposed to Vouchers, groups such as the ACLU, Americans for Religious Liberty, Disability Rights Network, Education Law Center, and Racial Justice Initiative of Times Banks USA are all groups in opposition of voucher programs that activated in Pennsylvania to publically oppose voucher and Senate Bill 1. These groups seek a more democratic approach to education and the support and oversight of government to provide a free and equitable public education to all children. The collaboration of these groups focused to deliver their message to citizens and elected officials, who had fond memories and comfortability with Pennsylvania’s traditional public school system.
In 2011, many of the public school administrators within the legislative district where I work felt intense anxiety over the proposed budget cuts and impending voucher legislation. Many feared the cuts would force them to reduce kindergarten to half-day programs or to cut the programs completely. Superintendents feared the cuts would force them to enlarge class size, to cut programs such as electives and non-essential courses, to lay-off teachers or not fill vacancies. Other administrators, such as business managers noted that “fixed costs” such as heat and electricity would take up monetary resources regularly reserved for curricular purposes. Public school managers along with teachers were anxious. “Instead of providing these struggling school districts with the resources they clearly need, this budget gives them less funding than they received last year,” (PSEA President Jim) Testerman added. “What are the consequences? Class sizes are increasing and programs that help students learn are being eliminated” (PSEA.org, Unprecedented cuts, 2012). Although an argument can be made that budget cuts were called during that difficult economic time, others argue that the poor economy was being used as a justified opportunity to offer market options for public education. In Pennsylvania, this may have been the case.

Conclusion

In my position of legislative aide to a member of the House of Representatives, I had a lens in which to see the various groups move, negotiate, and work on public education policies. The negotiations and political influence of public education was something I often read about or discussed with others, but now I viewed it from a front-row seat. Before, as a teacher, I often saw the results of the negotiations. Now, in this new role, I was provided another perspective in which to see groups undertake social practices to influence
education policy. These practices worked to lobby legislators and in this particular case, have over time, built a powerful arsenal of membership, money, and political influence.

Since the inaugural voucher program in Milwaukee, eleven more states and the District of Colombia have established legislated voucher programs (NCSL, 2012, The Freidman Foundation, 2012c). Twenty-one states plus the District of Colombia have established school choice programs, with Pennsylvania being one of them (The Freidman Foundation, 2012c). These programs have developed over time with steady dedication from the pro-voucher groups that continue to grow and to lobby without retreat.

Following the timeline of politics gave a view of the incorporation of voucher policy and rhetoric into the education policy discourse and election platforms of modern day. Identifying the interplay of neoliberal ideology and the political landscape provides an explanation as to how privatization and vouchers became an integral part of the public education discourse. Identifying the role voucher advocates and oppositions continue to play in the political arena and the power they built to sustain their stance can help educators understand the powerful role they play in state and federal government and politics, as witnessed in Pennsylvania. Privateers and voucher advocates have written themselves into the history of education policy and work hard to continue that powerful positioning.

As Foucault (1972) explains, “history is that which transforms documents into monuments” where the discourse and texts transform and build new foundations that serve as historical posts of knowledge and truth that not only
define, but re-define, history and create new and stable structures. The work of political groups focused on privatizing traditionally government responsibilities have carved a place in the education micro-political history where they continue to work to build a stable structure for their place in the discourse. Likewise, groups who have traditionally rejected voucher policy and programs continue to work and to mobilize groups to challenge the discursive work of voucher reformers and their groups. By rewriting current and historical perspectives of public education that give way to discursive work, voucher reformers undertake to build power and to control the past in order to change the future of public education policy in the United States.
Chapter 3

Study Review of Voucher Programs

“Educational reforms are intrinsically political in origin. Groups organize and contest with other groups in the politics of education to express their values and to secure their interests in the public school.”

D. Tyack and Cuban, (1995, 8)
This chapter provided a review of the literature of studies conducted on active voucher programs within the United States. Keeping within the framework of this study as a whole, the focus of this review considered how groups utilized data from the studies to lobby on education policy. This review was based on studies of voucher programs in New York, NY, Washington, DC, and Milwaukee, WI which revealed no overwhelming empirical evidence in support or in opposition of the quality of school voucher programs. Furthermore, this chapter shared examples where groups utilized data from these studies within public texts to push forth particular stances on school voucher programs even though the data did not support their claims empirically. The conclusion attempted to synthesize these reviews and to provide the reader an opportunity to see how others read, share, interpret, and utilize data of the studies discursively through social practices.

The three studies addressed in this chapter provided an overview of actual programs created and implemented by legislation to enact the use of vouchers for schooling in locations across the country. Each program had unique features and geographies that reflected unique socioeconomic, procedural, or political circumstances that motivated or supported their existence. First, the New York voucher study was the most famous study, gaining much media attention for its claim as the first randomized experiment for a voucher study. Second, the study on the Milwaukee voucher program was selected since this was the first modern-day and longest standing voucher program in our country. Finally, the study of the Washington, D.C voucher program was selected to view a unique setting highlighting the establishment of a federal and local coalition to enact and maintain a voucher program. While each study’s findings highlighted certain aspects of voucher programs, no study showed a clear empirical advantage for voucher programs, or
likewise, for public school programs. As proponents of each side utilized language and findings of the studies to claim advantage, issues of power and politics emerged.

Some of the literature I investigated over the course of this study utilized studies of international voucher programs to connect to and to draw upon findings and solutions to national voucher programs, problems, and studies. Studies or discourses on voucher and school choice programs from European countries, Australia and South America, to name a few, have surfaced over the course of my research. Since the focus of this study was to find evidence of the social practices of the voucher movement in the United States, this study will include in its review only studies and research of voucher issues in the United States of America.

**Studying voucher programs: Who? What? Where?**

**New York Voucher Program: The Effects of School Vouchers on College Enrollment**

A 2012 released study on a voucher program in New York City, authored by Matthew M. Chingos, a fellow in Governance Studies and research director of the Brown Center on Education Policy at the Brookings Institution, and Paul E. Peterson, the Henry Lee Shattuck Professor of Government and Director of the Program on Education Policy and Governance at Harvard University, was released to the public in August, 2012. Titled *The Effects of School Vouchers on College Enrollment: Experimental Evidence from New York City*. The study was published by the Brown Center on Education Policy at the Brookings Institute and Harvard University Kennedy School Program on Education Policy and Governance.
According the study document, the authors explained this study to be the first voucher study to use a randomized experiment to measure the impact of school vouchers on college enrollment. The authors added that most research around, “educational interventions, including school vouchers, focused on short-term outcomes such as students’ scores on standardized tests. Few studies are able to track longer-term outcomes, and even fewer are able to do so in the context of a randomized experiment” (2012, ii). More so, the data for this study was neatly accumulated at the onset of the voucher program in New York City, due to the request of information by the supporting foundation, *School Choice Scholarships Foundation* (SCSF). The SCSF was created to privately fund New York City’s school choice vouchers, in response to the controversy of publicly funding the program (2012, ii, 3). The SCSF consisted of a group of philanthropists who wanted to privately fund the voucher program in New York City. SCSF insisted on the collection of detailed information from the adults accompanying the children eligible for the voucher lottery for their own evaluations at that time (2012, 4, 5). The collection of those details became the data that allowed for this long term study.

Utilizing the SCSF information on the eligible voucher students, along with the use of information from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC), the authors were able to “match the data” since, “(o)f the 2,666 students in the original study, the information needed to match the data was available for 2,642, or 99.1% of the original sample” (4). The authors stated due to the identifying information collected prior to the lottery for the privately funded vouchers, “the attrition problems that have plagued school choice evaluation in the past are almost entirely eliminated” (2012, iii, 1, 6). The authors utilized the information, not only of the actual voucher winners, but also of all the students that
were eligible to be a part of the voucher lottery and those that were offered, but not necessarily attended, a voucher-eligible school. The authors connected the information from SCSF with the information from NSC, who holds the records of 96% of college students based on submissions from U.S. colleges and universities, to form their data (6).

The NSC data enabled the authors to study the college enrollment within three years of expected high school graduation of the students to make estimates of the impact of the offer of a voucher on various forms of college enrollment outcomes. This allowed for the use of the most recent enrollment data from Fall 2011 to carry out a randomized trial, making this study unique from previous ones. The strength of the study according to the authors was the use of very current data while taking a look at the long term impacts of a voucher program with the use of specific data collected from a large pool of participants.

The Results

The authors’ most emphasized claim from this study showed a positive impact of the voucher program on African Americans students moving on to college (Chingos & Peterson, 2012, 12). This specific finding has gained the most attention from this study. However, overall this study shows no significant effects, with an increase of only 0.6% of college enrollment with the offer of a voucher and within three years of the student’s expected graduation from high school. Furthermore, the authors did not find further evidence of statistically significant impacts on other heterogeneous subgroups of students, based on gender or test scores, etc. The authors explained, they “focus(ed) (their) discussion on the results by ethnicity because they are consistent both across models and outcomes and are consistent with the test-score results of the original evaluation” (Chingos
& Peterson, 2012, 12). These comparisons are between groups of African American students and Hispanic students.

As for the study’s findings regarding African American voucher-program participants, the statistically significant claims are for the group of African Americans offered a voucher. That group saw a college enrollment increase rate of 7.1% percentage points. The group of African American students who actually used the offered voucher to attend private school and went on to enroll in college saw an increase of 8.7% percentage points of college enrollment. Additionally, another statistic asserted by the authors claimed a greater impact on African American students, over Hispanic students. For example:

“Among African Americans, 26 percent of the control group attended college full-time at some point within three years of expected high-school graduation. The impact of an offer of a voucher was to increase this rate by 6.4 percentage points, a 25 percent increment in full-time college enrollment. If the scholarship was used to attend a private school, the impact was about 8 percentage points, an increment of about 31 percent. No statistically significant impacts were observed for Hispanics students.

(Chingos & Peterson, 2012, 14)

This particular study received much political, media and academic attention because voucher legislation and programs were very contended and popularized in mainstream, political, and academic settings at this time.

The authors identified a hypothesis regarding the findings of their study. They discussed the impacts on the two groups- African American and Hispanics students- could be due to “difference because student needs and family motivations differed” (Chingos & Peterson, 2012, 18). One of many examples offered in the authors’ explanation showed that in the control group’s Hispanic students’ college-going rate in the absence of a voucher
opportunity was higher than African American students (45% to 36%), and parents of African American students rated their original schools as lower performing than Hispanic students’ parents. Another example explaining the differences in why families sought vouchers differed. For instance, Hispanic families were seeking vouchers for religious reasons, as opposed to the authors’ hypothesis that more African American families were seeking vouchers for more academic reasons (Chingos & Peterson, 2012).

The relevancy of reviewing this study within the literature review of my study has to do with the attention these statistics have garnered from other researchers, academics, voucher organizations, and the media. Since my study revolved around the groups who affected voucher legislation and the implementation of voucher programs, taking a look at the responses of various voucher players or groups, along with the rebuttals and the academic responses to them, provided context.

Sara Goldrick-Rab, an associate professor of education policy at the University of Wisconsin-Madison works as a scholar-activist and researcher in areas regarding education policy with a focus on post-secondary education, reviewed this study in September of 2012. Goldrick-Rab (2012a) challenged multiple findings, conclusions, and methods utilized by Peterson and Chingos, encouraging readers to question the assurance of the study’s claims. I will discuss these now and reference them later to discuss ways groups used the findings of this study as to push as social practice their agendas and to gain power within the school voucher discourse.

Goldrick-Rab (2012a) stated, “Contrary to how it was presented, the main finding of this new report should be that, using a rigorous experimental design in which vouchers were randomly assigned to students, the estimated college enrollment rates of students
with and without vouchers were not different from one another” (6). She explained overall in the Peterson and Chingos' study “the most precise estimate...does not provide evidence that the vouchers were effective in advancing the participation of students in higher education” (2012a, 6). Goldrick-Rab offered multiple support of her claim.

First, Goldrick-Rab (2012a) criticized the presentation of the study that focused on the gains in college enrollment by the subgroup African Americans, and instead claimed the focus should have been on the findings of the overall rates of college enrollment by the students in the voucher program, which were not different from one another. She explained the estimated effects for the two racial/ethnic subgroups emphasized by the study’s authors- Hispanics and African Americans—“were not statistically significantly different from each other” (2012a, 6). She contended the evidence was not strong enough to warrant the result for African American students and the findings showing no effect of vouchers overall for students “merits policy scrutiny” (2012a, 6).

The claims Goldrick-Rab (2012a) made in her assertion included the absence of the evaluation of the null-hypothesis within this experiments, the absence of the influence of other dependent variables, and the measurement error that showed a lack of statistically significant differences in the subgroups when comparing the subgroup African Americans with the other groups. Goldrick-Rab took issue with the emphasis that it was the vouchers’ influence to the subgroup African American that lead to a higher enrollment in college compared to Hispanics, along with the methods in which the statistics were concluded. She also discussed the exclusion of results for groups other than African American and Hispanic in the study.
Next, Goldrick-Rab (2012a) offered criticism of the authors’ use of prior evidence. She suggested the authors emphasized the use of prior studies and evidence that only supported their claims without including studies that challenged their claims. She noted to the average, non-expert reader this would not offer a valid picture of the issues of voucher evidence.

Next, she commended the authors emphasis on attempting to understand the treatments for heterogeneous groups, but she contends the “effect heterogeneity is not well established in the analyses. In part, this is because the modeling strategies are not grounded in strong theories” (2012a, 3). However, her bigger concern was the authors’ “failure to rule out the possibility that there are no difference between the African American and Hispanic Subgroups” (2012a, 3). She contends this study did not pay close enough attention to whether these gains for African Americans compared to Hispanics was statistically significant. She explained the use of the null hypothesis may have clarified this issue and offered a perspective of the level of statistical significance or lack thereof.

Goldrick-Rab then took issue with the authors’ claim of the quality of the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC). She credits the author’s use and understanding of the intricacies of the NSC, but criticizes the authors’ lack of explanation of the shortfalls of such a grand enterprise, claiming that by not stating the shortfalls of the NSC, it does not make clear the possible measurement error of the groups being studied (2012a, 4). For example, Goldrick-Rab explained “while the NSC records college enrollment at 96% of the nation’s colleges and universities, the coverage rate varies- it is strongest at public, and weaker at private colleges and for-profit colleges” (2012a, 4). Additionally, she explained although the report claims a match of 99.1% of the original sample, emphasizing that availability of
students’ social security numbers provided in the SCSF files to NSC for the matching process, she states, “the NSC did not use SSNs to make the match, The matches were made based solely on name and date of birth, a process that may be more fallible for students with more complexity to their names, for students with very common names, for student groups more likely to have missing data (e.g., racial/ethnic minority students), or both” (2012a, 4). She asserted the use of the NSC is oversold to “the degree to which using the NSC solves the attrition problem confronted in prior studies of the program” (2012a, 4). Goldrick-Rab states this “affects the size of the standard of errors,” which she explained can render the estimates statistically non-significant (2012a, 4).

Goldrick-Rab challenged the validity of the study’s conclusions around “omitted variables bias” (2012a, 5). By not providing an explanation as to the influence of parental education levels, “a well-established explanatory power for the dependent variable- college enrollment- the authors do not explain to the readers the possibility of other factors that may have influenced college enrollment“(2012a, 5).

Furthermore, Goldrick-Rab claimed the study’s authors do not clearly explain potential mechanisms for causal claims (2012a, 6), criticizing the authors’ lack of explanation of alternative measures that may have affected the outcomes for each group, especially because the claims are particularly “important or surprising” or when “an analysis ends up focusing on heterogeneity- on treatment effects for some students but not for others.” (2012a, 6). Goldrick-Rab offers,
“...there is no story in the subgroups...Hence, there is not strong evidence that the statistically significant result for African Americans that is set forth in the report is truly statistically significant or different from the non-statistically significant result for Hispanics. It is the full sample finding, showing no effect of vouchers, which deserves the most attention and merits policy scrutiny” (2012a, 6).

This discussion of validity continued through another round of rebuttals from both the study’s authors (Chingos & Peters, 2012b) and Goldrick-Rab (2012b), showing the interest and intensity of the voucher topic. This concept of what should be discussed and how it should be described as highlighted in Peterson and Chingos’ study and Goldrick-Rab’s rebuttal brings us to the next consideration.

**Other Studies: Looking at voucher programs**

Other studies attempting to uncover the outcomes of school vouchers existed during the course of my study. Some of them are renewed and updated regularly with studies or reports released ongoing. Other studies, supported by various foundations and institutes, asked questions about established voucher programs to try to understand the effect of school vouchers on the students that use them, the students that don’t use them, and the schools around them. I chose to look at two established public voucher programs: one in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, which is the first modern public voucher program in the country, and then in Washington, D C which is the location of a controversial, politically-charged federally-legislated city voucher program. As this study was prepared, other fights for school vouchers took place, including court battles to render the constitutionality of some voucher programs.
Milwaukee Study: The Comprehensive Longitudinal Evaluation of the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program: Summary of Final Reports

The School Choice Demonstration Project (SCDP) completed a series of more than thirty reports following their five year study of the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP), a voucher tuition program supported by the state government in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (Witte, 2012, ii). The MPCP is the longest modern voucher program in America, starting in 1990 and expanded in 2011, to include over 23,000 students in over 100 different schools (Witte, et al, 2012, 1). The following review summarized the final report (Report #36) by researcher Patrick J. Wolf (2012).

This report opens with an explanation of the expansion of school choice, calling 2011 “The Year of School Choice” and explaining the widespread presence of school choice legislation throughout the US. The summary of the report makes claims to the support of MPCP school vouchers:

“Our research revealed a pattern of school choice results that range from neutral (no significant differences between Choice and MPS) to positive (clear benefit to Choice)” (Wolf, 2012, 4).

Following this claim, the authors list seven bulleted findings from their “objective and non-partisan evaluation of school choice programs” (Wolf, 2012, 3)(Appendix B). The study findings explained participation in the voucher program to have neutral to positive results for students. The authors claim that their systematic evaluation uncovered “no evidence of and harmful effects of choice” (Wolf, 2012, 3). Among the claims asserted by the authors relating to the success of the voucher program included but are not limited to: the number of participants continued to grow although funding has been lowered or denied, enrolling in MPCP high schools increases the likelihood of high school graduation and college
enrollment, reading growth and reading and science test scores were higher in upper levels in MPCP students compared to matched and tracked MPS students, and larger numbers of students with disabilities are attending MPCP than before. Milwaukee Public School (MPS) students were performing at higher levels in all grade levels examined in math and in reading and science in the fourth grade, according to the study.

An earlier study of the MPCP by Cecelia Elena Rouse (1998), current Dean and Professor of Economic and Public Affairs at Princeton University, compared test scores of MPCP applicants who were selected to attend voucher schools to those who applied and were not accepted and to other public school students. (Rouse, 1998, Princeton University, 2016). Her findings suggested the voucher students math score gains were stronger, but the reading score gains were similar to the other comparison groups (Rouse, 1998). Rouse documented the lack of a randomized sample and notes deficiencies in data such as sample attrition, but explains the MPCP “theoretically allow(s) one to come close to such a randomized experiment” (Rouse, 1998, 554). Other earlier studies carried out in the 1990’s evidencing no statistical gains for voucher students were met with criticism of the study’s comparison groups and other factors (Rouse, 1998). These findings showed a counter to the findings of the Report #36 study summarized by Wolf in 2012, which could be a result of varied data specifications (Wolf, 2012). Much change and expansion had occurred between the two studies, including the addition of religious schools into the voucher program.

As for the Longitudinal Evaluation of the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program study and the MPCP program itself, challenges were raised for a variety of reasons. First, Barbra Miner, a Milwaukee journalist who has written on the MPCP voucher program from its
inception and served as managing editor of *Rethinking Schools*, a Milwaukee-based teacher-lead, nonprofit publication dedicated to public education, raised issues of the voucher programs and advocates as putting politics before children, failing to make significant academic achievement, lacking accountability, and buying public education by wealthy foundations seeking to expand vouchers in Milwaukee and other locations (Miner, 2013, Smith 2009, Buffenbarger, 2010). Additionally, claims as to the validity of the study were raised due to the funding received to carry out the study and the outcomes of a state audit. Key school choice foundations, such as the Walton Family Foundation, dedicated funds to the longitudinal study as they have for other voucher studies (Buffenbarger, 2010, Miner, 2013). Additionally, in 2009 the state Legislative Audit Bureau, Wisconsin’s non-partisan audit department, report raised questions regarding the exclusion of certain students who transferred to MPS schools from voucher schools from the study, claiming the inclusion of the students would alter the findings to be neutral instead of advantageous of the voucher program, according to the bureau analysis (Hetzner, 2009, Miner, 2002). Finally, a deeper look into the structure of the voucher program as a result of this study raised issues on the integrity of the program. *NEA Today* reported and Barbara Miner (2002) reiterated that teachers at MPCP schools may be less qualified and not certified, do not have to release achievement data that public schools must, showed educational growth at voucher school was not gender neutral, and stated religious schools benefited more than other private schools (Buffenbarger, 2010, Miner, 2002).

Additionally, the Forward Institute, Inc. provided an *Analysis of the Milwaukee Parental Choice Project Attainment Study* (Forward Institute, 2013) explaining the SCDP data analysis, also used in the longitudinal study, to be misleading and not supported by the
The Forward Institute’s analysis raised questions around the release of data in support of MPCP by SCDP, claiming empirical evidence of higher graduation rates and college attainments for voucher student as significant, when Policy Studies Journal (PSJ) found it statistically insignificant. The Forward Institute challenged those claims due to information released by the PSJ. According to Forward Institute (2013), PSJ analyzed SCDP’s data through the use of a more valid statistical analysis and found that SCDP ignored and omitted the effects of significant demographic characteristics, such as parental college attendance and gender, and showed inconsistency in setting technical standards for data analysis that do not coincide with the National Council of Education Statistics, which the Forward Institute claimed was true for multiple SCDP studies. The Forward Institute explained these short-comings as academically misleading and not supportive of the data, which is problematic, since the outcomes of SCDP studies, are used by voucher advocates as evidence for voucher success and expansion. The Forward Institute warned the misleading outcomes are used as a tool by voucher advocates, placing ideology over evidence (Forward Institute, 2013). This is not the only study refuted for assertions of ideology over evidence.

**Washington, D.C. Study: Evaluation of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program**

The final report of this study was the sixth in a series of reports mandated by Congress to study the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program (OSP). The study was conducted for the Institute of Education Sciences, a government body, by Westat, who assembled a team, including two subcontractors: Patrick Wolf and his team at the University of Arkansas Department of Education Reform, and the second: Michael Puma of Chesapeake Research Associates (CRA), (Wolf, P, et. al, 2010). The study was mandated by
Congress in conjunction with the authorization of the voucher program which began in 2004.

The program provides scholarships, vouchers, to low-income families residing in the District of Columbia to attend a participating private school. The program was created to provide parents with the freedom to choose the learning options for their children by a cooperative effort of city and federal officials, including the former D.C. Mayor Anthony Williams, D.C. City Council and school leaders, along with the White House, the U.S. Congress and the U.S. Department of Education, in a bi-partisan manner in 2004 (The DC Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation, 2013b).

The DC OSP was the first federally funded, private school voucher program in the country (Wolf, et al, 2010). The OSP allows parents to select schools best-fitting the needs of their children, while being able to opt-out of schools that rank as need of improvement using a three-sector approach that includes private, charter, and public schools (The DC Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation, 2013b). According to a press release from the Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation, in the 2013-2014 school, 395 children were awarded new scholarships from over 1500 applications and over 5,600 students have received opportunity scholarships since the program’s inception (The DC Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation, 2013a).

The mandates for the study included analysis of the groups involved and of the types of impacts identified to be assessed during the study (Wolf, et al, 2010). The researchers sought to identify the impact and outcomes in areas including student test-score performance in reading and math, educational attainment, which was utilized for the first time in this study, due to participating students available for graduation, school safety
and school satisfaction, along with “effects of the OSP on District of Colombia Public Schools” (Wolf, et al, 2010, vii). Data analyzed included standardized test scores, surveys of participants, parents, and principals in both OSP-participating schools and DC public schools. Impacts were compared by utilizing a control group of OSP-participating students and a treatment group of students who were offered but did not use the OSP scholarship (Wolf, et al, 2010).

The main findings identified by the researchers included:

- Overall reading and math scores were not significantly affected by the Program, even for students transferring from SINI (Schools in Need of Improvement), which were a prioritized group by Congress’ mandate. However, some subgroups showed improvement in reading, although not statistically significant.
- Overall graduation rates were higher for students offered a scholarship to the OSP program and even higher for students who actually used the OSP scholarship.
- Overall parents’ assessments of school satisfaction and safety were higher for OSP participating schools, but students’ perception of school satisfaction and safety were not. (Wolf, et al, 2010, p. ix, x, xi) (See Appendix A)

These findings can be telling of how impactful the DC OSP was for the relatively small group of students it supports. However, another story of politics emerged from this study. Noted by the authors, the research was organized based on the mandates of Congress established in the Act that reestablished the OSP program (Wolf, et al, 2010, p. v, vii, xviii, xx).

This particular study offers consideration of the political influences on voucher programs, which was an important consideration in my study. Because this particular voucher programs existed in the nation’s Capitol, there is an inherent uniqueness to this program that other voucher programs cannot claim: the direct influence of the federal
government. Although public education is inherently political, the essence of this program is the political, as it emerges from elected officials whose political ideologies promote their decision-making. Within this particular voucher program the political influences are easily traced.

First of all, the study itself explained that the contents of the study were guided by the federal mandates stated in the Act that established the OSP (Wolf, et al, 2010). The researchers were contracted to study what the federal government told them to study. This did not give the researchers autonomy to observe and to establish their own study parameters.

Next, the establishment and continuation of the program was political. First the program was established in 2004, by a Congress with a Republican majority, and signed into law by a Republican President, George W. Bush (Wolf, et al, 2010, Craig, T., 2011). Then in 2009, the OSP was suspended by the administration, led by Democratic President Barak Obama and backed by a Democratic Congress (Craig, T., 2011). Next, 2011 brought a re-establishment of the program by the once again, Republican run Congress. The leaders in the fight to re-establish the OSP program were Senator John Boehner, the Republican Speaker of the House, Senator Susan Collins, a Republican from Maine, and Senator John Lieberman, an Independent from Connecticut, who once was a Democrat, but also spoke at the 2008 Republican National Convention endorsing Senator John McCain, a Republican, for the presidency over Barack Obama (Editorial Board, 2012, Craig, T., 2011).

Interestingly, the political story continued when President Barak Obama released his 2013 budget, that included zero funding for the D.C. OSP (Pershing, B, 2012a). Some claimed the move wasn’t legal, since the reauthorization of the program in the SOAR Act
authored by Senator Boehner, included a sum of $60 million dollars over five years for the program (Pershing, 2012b, Editorial Board, 2012). Senators Boehner and Lieberman quickly sent a letter to the President following the budget release, taking issues with the President’s lack of allocation for the OSP program and encouraging his reconsideration of support and assistance for the program (Boehner, J. & Lieberman, J., 2013). After much political negotiation, the money was included in the final fiscal budget for 2013, with claims the President agreed to it to avert a government shutdown (Pershing, B., 2012a, Editorial Board, 2012). Reading the chronology of this negotiation, some surmised the D.C. OSP was used as a bargaining chip in the budget negotiations. The sum of $60 million dollars over five years was not a lot of money, considering the yearly fiscal budget for 2013 for the federal government is over $3 trillion dollars.

Many media outlets and other representatives discussed the political ideologies that affected the behaviors. One instance included Grover J. “Russ” Whitehurst, Director of Institute of Education Sciences (IES) who released an article through the Brookings Institute in April of 2009, following the release of Impact After Three Years report in this series. He explained allegations by columnists from the Wall Street Journal and the Denver Post claiming that Secretary of Education Arne Duncan must have known of the positive results of the study due to the intimate working relationship between IES and the Department of Education (Whitehurst, 2009). Whitehurst (2009) speculated that Duncan didn’t share or release the results that favored the voucher program due to intent of the Democrat-led Congress and the President to end the program (Whitehurst, 2009).

Noting Democrats traditionally take an anti-voucher role, he explained the columnists argued Duncan must have purposely hid the report findings or at best was
“willfully ignorant” of the findings, which would appear to be a political power play by the Democratic Administration (Whitehurst, 2009). However, Whitehurst argues that “given the established procedures of the IES, it is extremely unlikely that Secretary Duncan would have known the results of the study” at that time, explaining that it would have been “irresponsible and unlawful for IES to disseminate preliminary findings,” before the final report is approved by the IES (Whitehurst, 2009). Whitehurst claimed there was no way the report was released in time for Duncan to present findings to Congress before the vote that ended the OSP, which was the Omnibus Appropriations Act of 2009 (Whitehurst, 2009). However, and important when considering the political, he does claim, “There is substantial reason to believe that the secretary didn’t want to draw attention to the report” because the report was released on a Friday, which is the day least likely to gain attention and previously the IES decided not to release reports on Fridays. Likewise, Secretary Duncan and the Department of Education provided no press releases or briefings on the report at its release (Whitehurst, 2009). This series of events, or non-events, might have appeared as a political play to hold information that might sway votes in the other direction than what the Obama Administration wanted. In this manner, political negotiating, maneuvering, and positioning play a significant part in how and what legislation becomes law and of what studies or reports may tell.

In review of the D.C. study, Dr. Martin Carnoy, a labor economist and Vida Jacks Professor of Education at Stanford University with a special interest in the political economy of the educational system, raised concerns of the ways the authors reported their findings. His analysis explained the data results could have better explained the limitations, particular sources of any benefits, and the varied subgroups results more clearly over the
course of the three year study, since the variations throughout those years had significant differences (Carnoy, 2009). For example during Cohort 1, which was the first year group, primary grade students were not included in the study due to the absence of control groups for that grade level since all primary students who applied received a voucher offer. That left only middle school aged or higher students as participants of the study in the original cohort. Additionally, the Cohort 1 students were able to select from a larger group of private schools with fewer slot constraints than Cohorts 2 and 3, according to Carnoy. Carnoy (2009) explained the authors could have better clarified the findings. One example “suggest(s) that much of the reading achievement benefit reported in the third-year evaluation was for a treatment of middle school students who were able to select from among a relatively larger group of (religious) private schools” due to the constraints of Cohort 1 (4).

Interestingly, Carnoy (2009) explained the authors did not highlight the outcomes of students using vouchers from Schools in Need of Improvement (SINI) public schools, which Congress wanted targeted for the voucher program. He explained no significant effect on scores of those students due to being offered a voucher was evident. Furthermore, he declared the presence of specific subgroups that scored statistically significantly but were not adequately exposed by the authors, included females receiving voucher offers, students offered vouchers entering the OSP with ranking within the top two thirds of the applicant pool, and voucher offered students in K-8 grades, but not high school. Carnoy explained that the K-8 group would likely refer to the students in sixth through eighth grades due to the specifics of participants in Cohort 1.
Overall, Carnoy reported sending students to voucher schools in D.C. based on the study “can modestly improvement students’ achievement (in reading but not mathematics) and result in greater parent satisfaction with their children, which the study’s authors clearly explain.” He asserted the presence of telling details of the study not emphasized by the authors yet valuable to understanding the success of the program: First, the program was relatively small due to the number of participating schools and the number of scholarship awardees declined over the three year study, due to too few private school slots available. Second, voucher participants did a great deal of school switching which led Carnoy to claim the offer of a voucher did not mean students stayed in that school. Third, the voucher offer seemed to have positive outcomes for students who were more academically adept before they entered the voucher school, showing signs of growth in reading but not math. Carnoy stated this observation relatively since within the construct of the OSP all participants ranked in lower socio-economic and testing categories. Fourth, Carnoy criticized the authors’ lack of comparison of the two cohorts, stating that the randomized assignment within each cohort made this analysis available and could have provided useful information, especially on the impact of OSP for middle school students. Finally, he explained the problems with randomized trials were evident in this study by the varied results between Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 and the significant loss from the original sample, which is 32%. He gives the authors credit for identifying this loss but states the impact of it can bias the effects (Carnoy, 2009).

Overall, Carnoy (2009) offered the study does not significantly impact the justification for the program. He admits, the results are fair enough to save “a particular program that is no more costly per student than is spent in D.C. public schools” (Carnoy,
2009, 6 of 9). However, his concerns over the methodological and evaluation of the data, along with the stated outcomes, worked together for Carnoy to conclude this study does not provide strong enough outcomes to sustain or to push forth the voucher agenda. Although mainstream media and other pro-voucher organizations focused on the gains and positive outcomes of the program, Carnoy suggested those outcomes are not convincing enough to push forth voucher policy and could have impacted President Obama’s decision to suspend the program in 2009, and I wonder if it contributed to his zeroing out the OSP from his 2013 budget.

**Conclusion and Considerations**

The three studies shared in this review prominently pointed to issues of social practices within the public schools setting. They show the existence of how powerful the interpretations regarding public schooling and its alternative options look. They also give readers an idea of the intentions and particular interpretations of the studies of some to compare, construct, and maybe even deconstruct the mantle of public schooling.

In conclusion, issues raised around the textual responses to the studies reviewed made by groups that both support and argue the use of school vouchers gave insight to the issues of power and politics within these particular voucher programs and their resulting studies. Since the data analysis section of this study devoted considerable space for the analysis of discourses of groups in the voucher movement in Pennsylvania, highlighting the discursive response of the studies was warranted.

The follow up discussion around the New York City voucher study consisted of articles by varying groups responding to the claims of the study. These articles allowed readers to look at how different groups explained this study. Various groups involved in the
school voucher debate appeared to describe the results of this study in specific ways through the use of very specific and intentional word choices. This was particularly interesting to identify because my study specifically looked at how groups frame their arguments for or against school vouchers by the use of very specific language and textual choice within the discourse.

**Responses from pro-voucher groups of the NYC study**

First, since this study focused on the gains made by the use of vouchers, I will share responses from pro-school voucher groups. Responses included are from the Friedman Foundation, the Heritage Foundation, and the American Federation for Children, all considered wealthy and powerful leaders in the fight for the use of school vouchers for decades.

The Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice posted an article on their website on Thursday, August 23, 2012, just following the release of the Peterson and Chingos study. The title used a focus on pushing their agenda to expand school choice and voucher programs by highlighting where the study favors vouchers. The title, “Friedman Foundation Says New Study Again Shows School Choice Empowers Students” (2012a) showed the push to claim school choice, a term used synonymous to school vouchers, works for students. Using the word “Again” leaves the reader to think it has worked in the past and is working now. At no point in the article was a mention that overall the study reports no significant changes for Hispanics or overall for the study. The quotes in the article made by the president and CEO of the Friedman Foundation lauds the study as evidence that vouchers work stating, “Once again what we are seeing is that when the most rigorous, randomized studies are conducted, the evidence is loud and clear.” He goes on to say, “Students win and
have a better shot at not only getting a good K-12 education, but now we see a chance that it translates to the possibility of a great college education.” The Friedman Foundation’s use of language in not neutral nor does it share any neutral claims made by the authors in this particular study. Doing so would not support or promote their mission. The heading located above this particular article posted on their website (www.edchoice.org) states: The Friedman Foundation for Education Choice with a sub-heading: Advancing Milton & Rose Friedman’s Vision of School Choice for All. According to their website, Friedman Foundation has a mission of expanding school choice, including school voucher programs, thus explaining why their use of language in this brief article emphasizes the portion of this study that promotes vouchers (The Friedman Foundation, 2012c).

Next, a look at the response to the Peterson and Chingos study by the Heritage Foundation, which was posted on Thursday, August 23, 2012, again emphasized particular uses of language to promote a school choice mission, was evident (The Heritage Foundation, 2012). The title, “Back to School: How Can We Truly Help Minority Students?” showed the Heritage Foundation emphasized findings of the study that helped their mission of school voucher expansion. The title implied the Foundation supports helping minority students and emphasized the study’s findings that voucher programs will help African American students by noting the study’s purported 24% increase in college enrollment among African American students. Also, present in the article was a quote by voucher-advocate and researcher Jay Greene noting the study’s observation that showed no significant changes for Latinos and white students. Additionally, the article claimed the current public system isn’t working, regardless of added public funds and federal programs, and claimed that “a growing body of evidence demonstrating the potential of
school choice to improve academic outcomes” exists to benefit to students (The Heritage Foundation, 2012).

Finally, the article responding to this study from the American Federation for Children, a leading advocacy organization promoting school vouchers and scholarship tax credit programs focused on low-income families, posted on their website an emphasis of the findings that promote AFC’s mission of promoting voucher programs (American Federation for Children, 2013). The article stated “New research shows significant increase in college enrollment for African American students” which, as I mentioned earlier, has been disputed by academics. This particular group, like many other groups, chose very specific and particular parts of this study to emphasize. The use of the word *significant* before *increase* in the title would lead readers to believe the voucher program studies were very impactful in that situation.

The article goes on to say, “The American Federation for Children- the nation’s voice for school choice- praised the findings...” while explaining in detail the study’s findings for African American students, yet never mentioned the overall findings that showed no increase for college attendance (American Federation of Children, 2012). More so, the article touted the hardiness of the study’s design and compares it to other studies that show evidence of voucher success in D.C., Milwaukee, Florida, and Louisiana. No details of the study that would negatively or even neutrally impact voucher programs was included.

Interestingly, the quote imbedded in the article stated by Kevin R. Chavous, a senior advisor to the Federation, emphasized the value of vouchers while ignoring any evidence from that study that showed neutral or negative impact:
“Once again, the evidence clearly shows that putting all educational options on the table pays dividends for the students, both now and in the long-term. This research makes clear the life-changing affect receiving a voucher can have on a child, and should be a signal to folks across the country that we need to bring more choice to the communities most in need. It is both a moral and an economic imperative that we do so.”

(Chavous in American Federation of Children, 2012)

Noting Chavous’ use of determinate language appears to provide no other options for the reader but to think the study’s findings are in favor of vouchers. Adding this final statement to the above quote provided an emotional element to show readers that supporting the voucher cause was supporting one’s communities and those less fortunate, which might be easy to do based on the information this particular Foundation chose to share with readers.

**Responses from anti-voucher groups**

Responses from pro-voucher groups were easier to come by when I searched for responses to this particular study by Peterson and Chingo. I could not find response articles for this particular study from prominent public education organizations, such the National Education Association (NEA) or American Federation of Teachers (AFT). I particularly looked on the New York state education association website, but could not find a response. I found many references in blogs of researchers, such as Diane Ravitch, who supports the anti-voucher platform, but did not uncover many specific articles of this study from groups who do not support school voucher programs.

One article published through the National School Boards Association’s (NSBA) School Board News addressed the Peterson and Chingo’s study, with the title, “*New voucher study doesn’t live up to hype, NSBA says*” (NSBA, 2012). The article opens by explaining the study, “overall fared no better in college enrollments than their peers in public schools.”
Although the article states the study’s positive findings for African-American students who received vouchers, readers can immediately identify the association’s challenge of the study’s findings. NSBA Executive Director Anne L. Bryant, explains, “The grandiose statements made in the executive summary are not substantiated by the data,” and other factors not included in the study, such as parental involvement, play a significant part in student achievements. Furthermore, the article found the study’s methodologies “troublesome.” The article listed several characteristics of the study that caused pause and questioned its efficacy. On this list, for example the NSBA author claims, “The study neither isolates the impact of private schools nor school choice on students going back to college…The study never took into account what happened to those students who left the voucher program to return to the public school,” and asserted “[r]esults do not show that expanding vouchers programs will necessarily result in higher college going rates for low-income students in urban schools, even black students” (NSBA, 2012).

These statements go right to the analysis level of the study and challenged in very clear word choice the use of the study’s findings. This reflects Bryant’s understanding of voucher proponents’ use of the study’s findings: to push forward their pro-voucher agenda. This article challenged the notion of previous authors, challenging the use of empirical evidence from the NYC study’s statistics as a clear claim for voucher success. The author of this article disputed those claims as being inauthentic and grandiose. The article adds that a “more robust” study is necessary “to more precisely determine the true impact that a voucher offer has on the enrollment of black students in college”.

According to the article, “NSBA opposes publicly-funded vouchers for private schools because such programs abandon public schools, which are required to serve all
students regardless of abilities and eliminate public accountability for those tax dollars.”

With that mission clearly stated, the reader understands the frame on which the response is provided given the organization’s anti-voucher stance.

The reactions of voucher stakeholders to the NYC study revealed framing to push forth their stances in the voucher fight, often using very emotional and strategic language. The groups involved react in particular and specific ways that often portray their agendas in an attempt to garner support for their cause. In this case, you can see the reactions either highlight findings that support or question the use of vouchers. The articles’ language often made the findings or lack of findings appear definite and absolute, which was carried out to garner support of stance. Similar instances appear in the Milwaukee study.

**Positioning Stance through Texts: Angling for power**

In the Milwaukee study’s final report (Report #36) the first two of seven bulleted points in the summary of findings discussed the continued growth of population of MPCP in spite of budget cuts to lower performing schools and how MPCP enrollment yields an “increased likelihood” of graduation rates and college enrollment (Appendix B). Whereas, the third and fourth bulleted points find a neutral effect on MPCP schools, the language employed by the authors put the choice schools in a positive reference. The third bullet point reads,

> “When similar MPCP and MPS students are matched and tracked over four years, the achievement growth of MPCP students compared to MPS students is higher in reading but similar in math. The MPCP achievement advantage in reading is only conclusive in 2010-2011, the year a high-stakes testing policy was added to the MPCP”

(Report #29, 4) (Wolf, 2012)
The statement says the MCP students’ scores are “high,” yet the final statement of that bullet point states that score is only good for one of the program’s years.

Additionally the fourth finding shares the differences in accountability test scores. The finding stated first the MPCP students’ successes over MPS students and then stated the MPS’s scores over the MPCP students. This may appear as a very minor detail. However, the language of the statement and all the bulleted points in the summary positioned the MPCP students in a primary position, highlighting their successes and using language that lends to their positioning as primary and superior. This is important and valuable to discuss because the language and positioning of words within this report summary may lead to further investigating of the authors’ intentions.

For example, of the seven major findings bulleted by the authors, the language used to discuss findings by the authors reflects success of MPCP clearly and then neutralizes the success of MPS. Additionally, as in bulleted point #4, the language highlights the higher results for MPCP students, yet neutralized and does not even mention “MPS” when their scores are higher, making it clear to the reader that the intention of this report and study is to highlight the successes of the MPCP voucher program (Wolf, 2012, 4).

Although the authors’ organization and evaluation of school choice in this Milwaukee program showed dedication to the evaluation of school choice compared to public education, based on the tone of this report, I was curious to identify their perspectives.

To the credit of the authors, their language was clear and their finds that were positive toward MPS are stated. Additionally, throughout the summary report, the authors clearly explain the findings that were growth and recession in the MPCP. For example, on
page 5 of the report, Finding 1 explains that the population of MPCP students has grown by 18% over the five years of the study and clearly states that the number of participating schools decreased over the same period. This explanation of gains and losses and even neutrality was stated throughout this summary study.

At the same time, each bold-printed finding in this report started with “MPCP” highlighting the choice school without either mentioning or placing first the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS). Actually, MPS was stated in two of the seven findings and both times put the MPS in a secondary position, emphasizing the MPCP or the Milwaukee charter schooling program. As I read the report, I questioned the authors’ statement on page 3: “Our shared commitment has been to carefully and faithfully follow the evidence, wherever it leads.”

One answer can simply be that “In 2006 Wisconsin policy makers identified the School Choice Demonstration Project (SCDP) as the organization to help answer lingering questions about the effects of school choice in Milwaukee” making the primary focus of the study the MPCP thus primarily stated in the findings (Wolf, 2012, 2).

The other answer, however, may be one involving power and politics around this program’s researchers and funders. Two of the study’s principal investigators, Patrick J. Wolf and Jay P. Greene, as stated on the University of Arkansas’s website which housed the School Choice Demonstration Project (SCDP), are leaders in the school choice movement and education reformers (University of Arkansas The Department of Education Reform, 2013). Wolf was a lead investigator in the Washington, DC OSP study, also. Their work has been cited in academic journals, in newspapers, and on prime time news media. They are well established and outspoken education reformers in the field of school choice.
Additionally, the report listed the funding sources of the study and thanked the foundations that supported their work, calling them a “diverse set of philanthropies” (Wolf, 2012, 3). However, looking more closely at the websites of these foundations, one can identify that every foundation listed supports education reform that includes forms of school choice. Many clearly stated their support of competition in the education of our children, and most stated their support of school voucher programs (www.aect.org, 2013, www.joycefdn.org, 2013, www.dffdn.org, 2013, www.philanthropyroundtable.org, 2013, www.bradleyfdn.org, 2013, www.waltonfamilyfoundation.org, 2013, www.robertsonfoundation.org, 2013). The particular groups of foundations that support this study do not appear to be very diverse in their mission to reform education. They all support school choice.

Another consideration is the inherent political ideologies that researchers carry into their work. For instance, of the three studies on voucher programs included in this chapter, two of them have an important factor in common- the researcher Patrick Wolfe. Patrick Wolfe was both the lead researcher on the DC study and the MPCP study. According to the University of Arkansas Department of Education website, Dr. Wolfe is known as a leading researcher in school reform and a leading school reformer (University of Arkansas the Department of Education Reform, 2013). Therefore, he comes into these studies from the viewpoint of a school reformer and voucher advocate, not as an objective observer.

Therefore, as readers of research we must be cautious and aware of the values and subjectivity that can be inherent within the research explanations (Phillips & Burbules, 2000). As Phillips and Burbules explain, “For... every inquirer must adopt a framework or perspective or point of view. It is a truism that... he or she may see phenomena differently
from the way other investigators see them” (2000, 46). The authors explain, “...relativity of perspective does not necessarily lead to subjectivity, and relativity does not always warrant the charge of being biased” (2000, 46). However, based on this consideration, readers must consider the researcher may exist from within the world he is reviewing and possess strongly held beliefs and valuations on the work he studies. This consideration was significant in the review of studies on school voucher programs.

I highlighted these particular textual reactions to the New York City, Milwaukee, and Washington, DC studies to show how groups create and share texts to influence stance on voucher programs. Additionally, I attempted to uncover how language and discourse participation by the groups using these studies was carefully constructed to send particular messages by utilizing specifics parts of data from the studies driven by stance and ideology not empirical evidence. Since the data findings do not show clear empirical advantage for or against voucher programs readers must consider the rationale for the use of the data. Critical reading of education policy allows for readers to uncover social practices within texts that seek to work discursively to affect education policy.
Chapter 4

Critical Discourse Analysis

“Knowledge linked to power, not only assumes the authority of the truth but has the power to make itself true.”

S. Hall, (1997, 49)
Chapter 4 provided an example of the methods and systematic analysis utilized on the text samples in this study. Since the study sought to uncover how texts worked to influence education policy and legislators’ votes, according to Senate Bill 1, a qualitative analysis to unpack public texts and to uncover the patterns and themes held within those texts occurred. The critical discourse analysis was organized to reveal how texts, semiotics, and language are used to tell particular political stories that push forth political and ideological agendas. By organizing the analysis into three levels— the text, the discourse, and the social and historical setting—patterns and themes emerged. These patterns and themes helped to tell the story of how texts in particular political discourses and settings work as social practices in discursive ways to influence education policy.

**Summary**

This study uncovered how texts work as a tool for lobbying legislators on education policy. To carry out this analysis, naming the policy problem, hypothesizing a solution, and identifying the proposed solutions was necessary. Understanding that the proposed solution in the form of a bill, like SB 1, occurred through a process of negotiation to create and to pass a bill that was politically acceptable and economically feasible (Cuban, 2010). Since the argument for or against SB 1 was not empirically based, then it was made discursively, with values driving the rhetorical choices within the publicly shared texts. This ideological struggle over the discourse of Senate Bill 1 in PA created a discursive battle for the power to define and to establish the perception of the truth and knowledge and to control the powerful discourse of school choice within the state and beyond. When an established discourse becomes challenged and the groups of others find ways to speak within the discourse, the discursive practices of the others work to change and to alter the
power relations within the culture, ultimately working to change the meanings within the discourse (Ball, 1990). Likewise, the groups who hold power over the discourse work to “defend its interest and to guarantee the loyalty, cohesion, interaction and cooperation of its members” (van Dijk, 2006a, 380). Through the use of public texts, this study shared attempts by groups to challenge and to sustain the discourse surrounding education policy over school vouchers within the political fight for Senate Bill 1.

In this study, policy was at the center of the struggle. Ball (1990) explains policy as “a matter of the authoritative allocation of values” which serves as the “operational statements of values” within a social context (3). As for this study, Senate Bill 1 and the work to make it law or not was the center of the debate within the texts shared. Prunty (1985) explains that policy expresses the ideas of those in power. He explains, “(P)olicies cannot be divorced from interests, from conflict, from domination or from justice.” (3) Furthermore, Prunty (1985) states that all policy is embedded with “power, control, legitimacy, privilege, equity, justice, and above all, values” which needs to be revealed by the policy analyst." (133)

Text as Representations

Texts

In Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices (1997) Stuart Hall explains communications were shared through representations within a discourse and culture or setting. An established culture or setting must exist before representations can make meaning through text and semiotics to establish the way in which we use texts to convey intentional messages for a shared understanding. When a culture provides for a set of shared representations, frames, and language within a social context as a base for
participants’ understandings, information can be shared and meaning can be constructed. Therefore, the systematic analysis of this study considers texts to show how groups represented their frames through patterns and themes within the social-political setting of Senate Bill 1 in 2011-12 to influence the education policy of school vouchers.

**Discourse**

The values within policy are the result of an ideology, where social actors see the world through a specific defined “interpretive frame” in which to “make sense of their relationship to the world” (van Dijk, 2006a, 286). That frame is structured based on beliefs presented by the members not as a set of beliefs, “but as a set of universal, generally accepted ‘truisms’ that serve the interests of those in power and to exclude or to disempower others” (van Dijk, 2006a, 286). Establishing language practices as a normalized truth allows members of the power elite to control the discourse and to maintain their power. In the space that the ideological is least identified and visible, the powerful maintain the status quo and control over the discourse (Foucault, 1972, 1980). As Hall suggests, “Knowledge linked to power, not only assumes the authority of the truth but has the power to make itself true” (Hall, 1997, 49).

When this ideological culture is identified and challenged by others, a discursive practice to alter the status quo becomes legitimate within the discourse. This ideological struggle over the discourse of Senate Bill 1 through texts created a discursive battle for the power to define, to establish, and to control the powerful discourse of school choice within the state. Through the use of public texts, this study shared attempts by groups to challenge and to sustain the discourse surrounding education policy over school vouchers within the political fight for Senate Bill 1.
In the analysis of policy-centered texts, power and conflict were at play within the political discourse of SB 1. In this case, the influence would be the way a legislator votes on SB 1. In the context of the public’s perception, “connections between the use of language and the exercise of power are often not clear to people, yet appear on closer examination to be vitally important to the working of power” (Fairclough, 1995, 54). Analyzing the texts shared to lobby legislators and to ultimately influence their vote revealed patterns and themes showing the connections used by these groups to attempt to link their knowledge to power through the text.

**Methods**

This study employed a poststructuralist theoretical perspective to educational policy inquiry. Each data piece (text) was systematically analyzed in consideration of rhetorical devices employed to understand the discursive choices and social actions of the participating groups. Texts were critiqued for the use of normalized and dominant language application that presented comfortable and taken-for-granted application of language and discourse utilized by participants to uncover structures of power and attempts to control that power surrounding the work to influence Senate Bill 1. Consideration of the work of poststructuralists such as Foucault, Fairclough, and Ball, this study attempted to understand how texts presented the dynamics of power and the use of knowledge of the political to control the use of language and texts within the education policy discourse.

**Qualitative Study: Critical Discourse Analysis**

Using critical discourse analysis on texts by groups sought to reveal and to understand the rationale for the use of specific representations of language and semiotics
in their public texts. Fairclough’s three-dimensional framework “explores such linkages in particular discursive events in three facets”: texts, discourse, and social practice as “complementary ways of reading, a complex social event” to reveal ideological practices and values around issues of power and hegemony (Fairclough, 1993, 136). According to van Dijk (2006b), “Fairclough’s approach has explored the discursive aspect of contemporary processes of social transformation” (362). Borrowing from Fairclough’s framework, my systematic analysis of the ten sample texts viewed language as a social practice that (1.) Is a mode of language, in this case within a series of texts that are (2.) situated in a particular social and political discourse and (3.) exist within a particular social-historical setting that holds certain systems of knowledge and beliefs (Fairclough, 1993).

Critical Discourse Analysis is the study of how language, texts, and semiotics are studied and evaluated in order to understand discursive practices at work (Wodak, 2009). “Language is not powerful on its own; it gains power by the use powerful people make of it” (Wodak, 2009, 35). Analysis not only of the language but also of the discourse and discursive practices surrounding the language, the context of its use, and its inherent use of the values, politics, and ideologies make the analysis critical (Fairclough, 2015, van Dijk, 2006a).

In this study, using Critical Discourse Analysis on texts by groups within the current discourse that hold power over the voucher history sought to reveal and to understand the rationale for the use of specific language and semiotics in their public texts. To analyze these texts, the study considered aspects of Fairclough’s three dimensional framework to analyze texts within the discourse and social practices of Senate Bill 1.
Design of this Analysis

Since this study analyzed multiple texts in a political setting and uncovered issues of discursivity, the texts revealed ideological work and issues of power, hegemony, and politics. In addition to the door knob hanger, three texts from each category—support of SB 1, opposed to SB 1, and official work texts—were analyzed. The texts from the support groups and the oppose groups revealed a use of discursive strategies to gain support for their stances and agendas and usually were sent by groups who took an overt stance. The official work texts also revealed ideological and discursive stances, however at times these texts came to our office through official in-house channels and were, at times, revealed stance indirectly.

Consideration for each data piece followed the outline I created titled, *Guiding Checklist for Systematic Analysis: CDA Framework of Shared Texts of Public Discourse Data of Senate Bill 1*, which derived from the CDA of the door knob hanger and was employed for the purpose of consistency. (See below for outline.)
Figure 4.1

Guiding Checklist for Systematic Analysis:
CDA Framework of Shared Texts of Public Discourse Data of Senate Bill 1*

I. Macro and Micro consideration of Texts
   A. Analysis of discourse data in context and setting
      1. Intertextuality
      2. Interdiscursivity
      3. Historical
   B. Text Structure
      1. Genre(s)
      2. Production
      3. Semiotic
      4. Text Transformation
   C. Meanings of words and text
      1. Words
      2. Grammar
      3. Transivity
         a. Frame
         b. Voice
         c. Stance
         d. Force
         e. Theme
      4. Modality, others

II. Discourse Practice
   A. Theme(s)
   B. Interdiscursivity
   C. Intertextuality
   D. Coherence
      1. How can the text be interpreted?
      2. Is it heterogeneous or homogeneous?
      3. Is it implicit or explicit?
   E. Patterns
   F. Representations
      1. How does genre (style) influence interpretation?
      2. Who produced the text?
      3. What is non-discursive evidence?
      4. What shows ideational meaning?
      5. What is absent/vague?

III. Social Practices
   A. Social relations
   B. Discursive relations
   C. Hegemonic relations
   D. Contributions to Orders of Discourse

IV. Resulting Revelations
   A. Of Ideology
   B. Of Hegemony
   C. Of Power
   D. Other
Trustworthiness

In this chapter, I shared in great detail the analysis of one publicly distributed text from a group seeking to influence Senate Bill 1 from the data sample of the ten public texts. The purpose of sharing the deep analysis of this data sample was to show the reader the application of analysis applied to all ten data samples. Systematic sampling followed that protocol for CDA for each data sample in this study. Each of the ten texts was analyzed based on the established protocol outlined in the Methods section and guided by the outline above.

With this protocol in place, each sample text was analyzed first for textual content before wider analysis of a broader discourse or social setting was considered. After the established CDA protocol was employed, further consideration and analysis of the texts within the broader discourse and social setting(s) of Senate Bill 1 and the privatization of schooling in Pennsylvania and our nation at that time was given. Then, considerations of producers’ backgrounds, ideologies, missions, and organizations were considered. This systematic approach to analysis was purposefully implemented to reduce bias and to complete a systematic study.
Example

Explanation of Data

The data collected in this study consisted of texts received in the office of the representative for whom I worked during the 2011-2012 legislative session. Each data piece addressed the topic of school choice, mostly vouchers and/or Senate Bill 1.

The number of texts that came across my desk was 100. However, the number of texts received into the office was significantly larger. Documented in the program called RepNet, an electronic filing system for constituent requests and communications, were 652 correspondences.

To understand why the ratio of that collection is 6:1, you need to understand the role that RepNet plays in the office of a representative. RepNet was an electronic filing-type system that included the name and contact information of the constituents located in a legislative district. Each legislative office had access to his or her constituent list and utilized the system to file information regarding their constituents. For example, if the legislative office helped a constituent to obtain a birth certificate, the information regarding the birth certificate application would be filed in the system in order to follow up and to organize the manner in which the constituent was assisted. Furthermore, if a constituent contacted the legislative office with an opinion on a legislative bill or topic, the comments or texts shared were saved in the RepNet system. Then when a bill related to that topic needed consideration by the representative, the representative retrieved from RepNet the lists of constituent information to understand his or her constituents’ outlooks on the bill or the topic. Additionally, RepNet was used to access constituent information to follow up
on particular topics. For example, many constituents reached out to the office where I work to question changes to a small game of chance law, when a new bill passed. The following year, additional changes were made to the law, and our office used RepNet to reach out to constituents who previously contacted us on that topic to update them. In this study, the large number of contacts in RepNet were due to the reception of mass mailings. Each piece of mail was entered into RepNet. Additionally, not all texts received in the office regarding Senate Bill 1 or vouchers crossed my desk. Some were filed into RepNet, where I could access the topics but not the actual texts.

In this case, when mass mail or individual information regarding the topic of Senate Bill 1 or vouchers came to our office, it was filed in RepNet. For example, during the time of Senate Bill 1, hundreds of replicated post cards from an education association were sent to members of the association who then forwarded individual cards to our legislative office. The card did not ask for return information. Each card received was filed into RepNet. Each postcard, however, did not come across my desk, but I was made aware of the postcards’ existence.

The texts that came across my desk were fewer. My role as the District Policy Director called for me to answer specific requests and to study and to research the background on many texts that came into our office. The texts that needed specific responses or further consideration came across my desk, thus the lower number. These texts came to my desk as a natural part of my job.

The texts combined came from both individuals and groups. Some came via individuals via groups. The groups included offered communication regarding school
choice, namely Senate Bill 1 and vouchers. Some of the texts stated political representations while others made points without clearly identifying the political party.

The texts came in a variety of genre. However, the genre were not evenly distributed. The genre included in the data received both public and personal correspondence. The genre of literature received in this legislative office included: postcards, pamphlets, door hangers, booklets, DVD’s, position papers and resolutions, news articles, press releases, letters in various forms including personal, form, response and emailed, Questions and Answers sheets, fact sheets, bill analyses, fiscal analyses, and emails. In review of the data that came across my desk, here is a list of the groups that shared texts in my office and the type of text they presented:
Table 4.1 Summary of Data Collected

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Name</th>
<th># of Data texts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PA Department of Education</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA House of Representatives</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA Senate</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125th Interoffice Correspondence (my office)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAACP</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA Opposed to Vouchers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom Works</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heartland Institute</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commonwealth Foundation</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alliance of School Choice</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friedman Foundation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REACH</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PASBO (PA School Boards Association)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen Table Patriots</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSEA (Pennsylvania State Education Association)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEA (National Education Association)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSBA (Pennsylvania School Board Association)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125th School Districts (Including Intermediate Units)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pottsville Republican Newspaper (local in 125th District)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keystone State Education Coalition</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Data Texts:</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 100 texts that came across my desk, 13 of them supported voucher legislation, 33 opposed voucher legislation, and 54 were poised as work official texts sent out from groups or were delivered as in-house mail from other legislative offices or departments to express updates and information on vouchers or Senate Bill 1. Included in
the section work official were work or official texts considered confidential or in-house work correspondence within the House of Representatives that I was not able to share due to confidentiality rules within the PA House of Representatives.

**Text Data Samples**

The following list explains the documents that served as data samples for this analysis. A total of 10 documents were analyzed through Critical Discourse Analysis in this study, so that approximately 10% of the data was shared and analyzed to give an overview of the texts.

The first analysis included a door knob hanger-type text that was delivered and hung on the doorknobs of residences in Schuylkill Haven, Pennsylvania, which was the location of the representative’s district office during the budget session of 2011-12. The analysis of only this piece was included in this chapter, Chapter 4, and shared in great detail to uncover how CDA and aspects of Fairclough’s three-dimensional framework was employed in this study. Furthermore, in Chapter 5, the additional nine texts followed the same data analysis. The texts shared included all categories established, which included texts shared with messages that were in support of voucher legislation, texts shared with messages that were in opposition of voucher legislation, and the third category, which included informational texts labeled as work official texts. Copies of each text are located in the Appendix.
The ten texts that underwent Critical Discourse Analysis included:

- A door hanger in support of SB 1 (Appendix 4.2)
- A pie chart in support of SB 1 (Appendix C)
- An email correspondence as work official text about SB 1 (Appendix D)
- A letter from an advocacy group in support of SB 1 (Appendix E)
- A glossy yearbook from an advocacy group in support of SB 1 (Appendix F)
- A public resolution from a public school board in opposition to SB 1 (Appendix G)
- A letter following a flower delivery as work official text about SB 1 (Appendix H)
- A Senator’s letter in opposition to SB 1 (Appendix I)
- A memo from a legislator as a work official text about SB 1 (Appendix J)
- A letter from the NAACP in opposition to SB 1 (Appendix K)

Systematic Analysis of the Door Hanger

Consideration of Text

One reform minded group utilized carefully considered, specifically crafted frames to appeal to voters’ self-interests, identities, and values in an attempt to garner support for their stance in this voucher legislation. The doorknob hanger style of literature was placed on the doorknobs of the homes in the town where my office is located. The office was the district office of the legislator for whom I work.
The doorknob hanger was approximately eight inches in length and three inches in width. The door hangers were placed on doors knobs in a town where homes are very close together making their presence noticeable. It appeared that people had canvassed the town with these pieces. I saw quite a few of them still hanging on many doors as I drove through the town on my way home from work after the literature was dropped.

This particular piece of literature was disbursed in June of 2012, during the time leading up to the end of the Legislative Session and before the state budget was finalized and passed. Some people and groups thought a chance for Senate Bill 1 or another school voucher legislation to come to a vote in the legislature before session ended for the fiscal year, which was June 30, 2012 existed.

**Considering the Door Hanger as literature: Structure and Meaning in Words and Text**

Door knob hangers were an easy and economical method to get a message out to large groups. A door knob hanger consists of a two-sided sheet of heavy paper that can deliver information in a variety of colors, fonts, and symbols in an economical manner. This method was thought more effective than a mailer as the person came in contact with it one-on-one as opposed to getting lost in the shuffle of everyday mail (McFarlin, 2016).

Additionally it was easy to read quickly and distributed in a grassroots manner, where many people can canvass an area in a relatively small amount of time. I have been a part of many literature drops where a group canvassed a geographical area dropping literature to thousands of homes in the matter of hours. Hanging a door hanger on peoples’ homes got a message out quickly to many voters in a relatively quick manner.

**Figure 4.2 Freedom Works Doorknob Hanger**

Front             Back
PENNSYLVANIA'S CHILDREN ARE TRAPPED

In Failing Schools

But YOUR Representative has the Power to Set them Free.

Don't let failure become a life sentence.

Mike Tobash (R-125):
(717) 260-6148

Please call TODAY and ask your Representative to support school choice legislation in Pennsylvania.
Using Text to Appeal to Readers’ Identities

In consideration of the textual analysis of the door knob hanger, I considered both the linguistic (words) and the textual (semiotics and form) elements of the data piece. Fairclough explained that form is part of content and consideration of linguistic elements and without textual analysis, understanding of discourse is limited and use of textual analysis “draws attention to the dependence of texts upon society and history in the form of the resources made available within the order of discourse” (1995, 188-189). I witnessed this in the analysis of the doorknob hanger. Although this analysis focused on the revelation of meanings within the text over identifying language forms, both occurred because “in analyzing texts one is always simultaneously addressing questions of form and questions of meaning” (Fairclough, 1992, 74). Furthermore, Fairclough (1995) contends the analysis of the textual in addition to the linguistic “mediates the connection between language and social context” (189).

Text Structure

To analyze this literature, I began on the front side of the door hanger.

The front side of the door hanger, and the largest photo was a photo of a little girl enclosed in a jail cell, with her head bowed and darkness/shadowing surrounding her, with bars of a closed jail cell over her. The child’s head was bowed with her hands on her head. The photo showed the girl sitting in a school desk and studying or looking at a book. Furthermore, above this photo sat the statement that served as a frame, stating, “Pennsylvania’s children are TRAPPED in failing schools”. The words are in all capital letters and the word TRAPPED was boxed in a bold white harsh square. The box and lettering were in a withered, marked up font that looked stamped and worn.
The photo along with this statement evoked a sense of negativity. For instance, the font in all capitals portrayed a serious yelling or call for attention, as often done during emailing or texting, as if the group speaking through this literature was yelling for attention or help. Next, the portrayal of the young girl student behind bars was sad and even frightening. Note the toilet in the background that added to the negativity of the scene. Next, the literature appealed to the readers’ emotions of fear by threatening an impending loss of freedom by using the word “TRAPPED,” produced to look stamped and labeled. By clearly stating that “Pennsylvania’s children are “TRAPPED, with a sense of urgency by the capital letters and the bright white print on a dark background. The worn out look of the lettering and its box alluded to a worn out impression that would sense to the readers that whatever is jailing this little girl was worn out. The tone expressed an urgency or crisis.

Below the jail cell photo laid a phrase that revealed where “PENNYSYLVANIA’S CHILDREN ARE TRAPPED”, by stating “In Failing Schools.” This enforced the emotional appeal of the jail cell holing a child who appears to be studying, appealing to reader’s sense of values and identity, evidencing a crisis. Since the average person would not allow children be knowingly harmed, the group appealed to their sense of values. Parents reading this could suppose their child in this situation. By appealing to their identity as parents, the producers worked to convince them to want to help rectify this situation. By appealing to the readers’ sense of values and identity, the producer hoped to get the readers’ attention in order to make a call to action.

Additionally, the end of the statement “In Failing Schools” stood alone along the bottom in bright white letters with a contrasting a black background, appealing to the values and self-interest of the reader. Since symbols evoke meanings, then the symbol here
was one of entrapment and destruction. No taxpayer wants to think of their hard earned dollars going toward anything failing, let alone a school with programs that fail children. This image appealed to the voters’ sense of fear. Furthermore, taxpayers expect schools to grow students who learn. If schools are failing then readers’ hard earned tax dollars are for naught and exacerbates their vision of a dreary future that may call on them, the working population, to pay more taxes to support the children that have not learned and were failed by their schools.

The front of this pamphlet showed jail-like conditions of Pennsylvania’s schools by incorporating careful word selection, semiotics, and vibrant color contrast. The use of direct and active language worked to grab the readers’ attention to the issue addressed in this door hanger. In conjunction with specific language that created a strong and direct voice, graphic design of the lettering added to the tone and ethos of the message by incorporating a contrast of light and dark along with a worn-looking design. Additionally, the use of semiotic mode of a child in a prison cell juxtaposed the forceful voice in the language that accompanied the image. This appeal to schema and to ethos invited the reader into the process of systematic focus on the responsibility they may have to save this little girl. Fairclough (1995) explains the modern use of textuality strengthens the connection between language and social context. In this case, the language combined with the image of schools as jails, sent a specific message of a dire situation. This heterogeneous context supported by specific language choices challenged readers’ normative vision and definition of schools, thus creating a discursive event for readers.
Since this literature was designed to hang on doorknobs, there was a backside. This side included further information to progress the message introduced on the front side of this document paid for by Freedom Works.

The backside of the literature drew one’s eyes immediately to another photo. The photo was of a man in a suit and tie with the American flag standing behind his right shoulder. He was smiling and looked official. Above his head on each side was an illustration of a barbed wire fence coming from the edges of the document in a diagonal manner to end over the head of the man in the photo, giving the illusion of an arrow to the person in the photo. The barbed wire illustration looked like the wires used to surround the tops of fences at prisons. Set above the barbed wire just about nested into it is a phrase, that said, “But YOUR Representative has the Power to Set them Free.” The pronouns “your” and “them” were given special attention. The pronoun “your” was typed in all capital letters and underlined making the pronoun to stand out. Additionally, the pronoun “them” was italicized. The phrase that accompanied the pronoun was also in italics: Set them Free. These were all in white print. Just below that statement directly above the photo were black letters that state “Don’t let failure become a life sentence.” The word “failure” was written in a worn font similar to the front side. That statement sat tightly under the barbed wires. The black and white letters juxtaposed each other creating a visual contrast. The white letters stated “But YOUR Representative has the Power to Set them Free” floated above the barbed wire, formed in a cloud-like status. The black letters were positioned below the barbed wire and just above the photo of the man in the photo grounded on the paper. Those words were in jail.
By the writer using the word YOUR and underlining it, the reader was visually drawn into the literature as a member of this problem. The language invited the reader to solve this problem thus making the message personal. These words and images created a discursive event by putting the reader in a position of power to affect change for this situation: Saving Pennsylvania’s children was a personal responsibility of the reader.

**Connecting Discourse and Social Practices**

Next, consideration of semiotics focuses the reader to the man in the photo. The barbed wire pointed to him and situated him prominently. His formal appearance and location on the text noted by a smile situated him in a position and appearance of power. He may have the power to imprison or free those who are trapped. The presence of the American flag over his right shoulder lend to the presence of power and formality. The symbolism behind the barbed wire brought thoughts of prison, while the placement of the barbed wire brought the readers’ eyes right to the photo. His photo connected to the barbed wire, physically connecting the two. The accompanying statement above says, “But YOUR Representative has the Power to Set them Free” clued the reader that the photo was of his or her representative. The accompanying symbols and language showed he had a role in the freedoms or lack of freedoms around schooling. He had the power to “set them free” from the jail-like schools. According to the language he can make a change to schools. Rhetorically, in both language and image, this text claims the representative held the power to limit freedom and fail students (and schools and taxpayers) or to set them free from them. The reader was overtly drawn in to be a part of the discourse of children trapped in jail-like schools, creating a partnership or alliance between the representative and the reader through the directive of the producer. Under his photograph was the name and
phone number of the representative in the photo, inviting the reader to call and participate in the discourse of the representations within the frame of the door hanger.

The statement following the photo and name of the representative was a call to action for the reader. The statement provided an escape from that jail-like school by requesting readers to “Please call TODAY and ask your Representative to support school choice legislation in Pennsylvania.”

The piece states that to set children free, the reader, must take action. The plea asked the reader to call his or her representative and ask for a vote for school choice legislation. This explained school choice legislation will set the children of Pennsylvania free from the jail-like schools that trapped and failed them. He has the power to do it, if you ask. The name and phone number of his office were provided to make the job easy.

Fairclough’s framework identifies the social context for further meaning, and Freedom Works displayed this cohesively by attaching the reader to his/her community and school, in order to apply particular language as knowledge and truth to motivate the reader to act discursively in support of their voucher position, without overtly stating the legislation.

The plea in this portion of the literature focused on the identity of the reader. The text placed the reader as a powerful member with the ability to cause change for the better and for freedom, according to the text. The text signified the reader as a trustee of the community by the use of a possessive pronoun (your) repeatedly when referring to the representative. It stated that if the reader called the representative they will have to set the children free. The literature claimed the way to do that was by asking the representative to vote for school choice legislation. The producers claimed school choice legislation will set
the children free, only the representative has the power to do it, and the reader has the power to tell the representative.

The back side of this door hanger literature called on the reader’s sense of identity as a voter-citizen. The request asked the reader to call his or her legislator to ask him to support school as a choice legislation in Pennsylvania, and the use of the possessive pronoun “your” makes the message personal, connecting the reader to the stated problem and compelled the reader to take responsibility to change the negative situation unveiled in the door knob hanger by calling the representative. According to the language, if they do, they will “Set them Free,” save the children and the schools.

**Social Practices: Discursivity, Hegemony, and Power at Work**

By calling the reader to action a discursive event took place. Asking readers to call their representative to ask him to support school choice, readers were employing their power. However, the request they were asked to make was implicit and veiled by the language of the text. The carefully selected language of the door knob hanger stated: “Please call TODAY and ask your Representative to support school choice legislation in Pennsylvania.” The statement asked the reader to take a specific action on a certain topic and presented that topic as truth, not stance. However, the specifics of the topics were not explained overtly, so when the reader called he or she may not have understood the specific topic, specific request, or the specific outcomes that may have come of their request.

To understand the goal of the producer of this text, one must consider the value of mode in this text. To set up the call to action by the reader in support of the producer, the front of the door knob hanger set a declarative tone to the text. The text utilized the
subject-verb pattern and presented the information as face. The statement provided a subject and focus for the reader and set to the “demand for action” (Fairclough, 2015, 142). In this same statement, the producer of the text asserted authority by making the statement and putting it forth as a normative statement within the discourse of schooling. The use of expressive modality put forth the representation of truth by presenting the text with a definitive, unmitigated word choice. No hedging of the reader exists in this text. The context was set by the first statement presented to the reader because “a categorical commitment of the producer to the truth of the proposition” was made by the texture of the statement (Fairclough, 2015, 144). The producer was clear on their stance and asserted their version of the truth in this statement. By using the verb “are” the producer asserted power and presented him/herself as an implicit authority by presenting the first statement and continued to do this on the second side of the doorknob hanger, but with a different tone.

The voice of the producer as authority remained, but the tone of the expressions altered. The presence of possessive pronouns worked to welcome and to entice the reader following the bold initial statement contrasted the front side. First, the implicit authority over the topic in the text remained as the tone was established. One identifier was the lack of the use of we and the implementation of the use of the pronoun your. The producer did not establish a relational value within the text, which the use of pronoun we instead of you would have done. He/She did however continue to build the implicit authority by using the word your.

In contrast to the front side, the tone in which the producer took this action becomes softer. In order to appeal to the reader's sense of ethos, responsibility, and action
the use of polite request by the word “please” was employed even though the voice of authority remained. The producer’s directives challenged the reader, yet by the use of pronouns and the word ‘please’ the reader was less threatened. The use of politeness mitigated the direct request. “...This negotiation of the value of the requested goods is related to the degree of imposition involved in the request, and is directly reflected in the verbal effort invested to minimize this imposition” (van Dijk, 2006a, 154).

The carefully crafted use of tone and voice was intentional by the producer. The producer did not speak on behalf of the reader, but spoke to the reader with an informational tone as if to bring awareness or of information to them of the situation within the social context the producer set. Use of pronouns created an informative tone from the producer to the reader. According to the producer, the text speaks the truth of the situation.

The establishment of a particular voice in this text worked to build meaning and power. Although implicit in its nature, it provided another layer of effect through the use of semiotic resources. Connotation worked as a semiotic resource, similar to the use of the photographs in this text, to deepen the message. The connotation in this text revealed, through the use of a polite request and pronouns, inclusion of the reader into the text as a problem solver. Through this medium of expression the reader was valued and given power by the language of the text created by the producer (van Dijk, 2006a). Other semiotic resources that added to the voice and analyzed earlier included modes, schema, graphic design, and photography. Even the medium of the door knob hanger added to the voice of the text, since the reader had a one-on-one interaction by touching it and handling it to remove it from his or her door. The personal tone of the voice on the back side of the
hanger was reinforced by the interaction of removing the piece from the door knob. The reader would not have this personal, one-on-one interaction with a poster hanging in a public place or even a flyer stuck in the pile of his or her mail. This cohesion of semiotic resources enforced the voice of the producer and served as a discursive event by the producer.

Fairclough (1992) refers to the power behind the voice as force. In this particular heterogeneous text of the door knob hanger, the force utterances worked to gain the trust of the reader to act the way the producer requested. The force utterance first appealed to the readers’ sense of schema then contrasted that knowledge by stating “children are trapped”. The reader was brought into the discourse of the producer. They were historically a member of his or her school and are still members, currently, by paying taxes for schools. Thus a responsibility of the conditions of schools was in the hands of the reader in according to the discourse the producer placed in this text. Thus the producer put the reader in the role of the change agent, by explaining that calling “your” representative the reader had the power to change the negative conditions set forth in the text.

This evidenced a discursive practice. Issues of power were evident through analysis of the role of the producer of the text and the conditions the producer set to create a role of having power over people (Fairclough, 2015). In this particular text, the “power behind discourse includes the power to shape and constitute ‘orders of discourse’ or what discourses and genres are available” (Fairclough, 2015, 29). By the producer setting a tone of informing when actually controlling the discourse of the text to include only certain information, questions of legitimacy were at stake.
Additionally, unique to this text was the hidden power of the producer. The producer took him/herself out of the context of the language of the text. There was no mention of the role or any actions taken by the producer. On the backside of the door knob hanger, the language promoted interactions between the reader and the representative. There were no inclusions of pronouns like *I* and *my* or *we* and *us* that would have included the producer as part of the discourse, making the producer not physically present in the text and allowing for the hidden effects of the power of the producer to be less obvious to the reader (Fairclough, 2015). With the power and presence of the producer hidden in this text document, readers may not have identified with or have been aware of the greater discourse and political environment in a wider context within, in this case, the school choice and the particulars of Senate Bill 1. In this text, producers framed their stance as the truth. The text needed further interpretation, which the producer did not offer.

Senate Bill 1 was not named in the text of the door knob hanger. The absence of the main bill related to the school choice negotiations in Pennsylvania at the time of this text was cause for consideration. Since Senate Bill 1 was the bill everyone was taking about when referring to school choice in Pennsylvania at the time doorknob hanger was placed on doors in Schuylkill Haven, PA. This brought forth questions of manipulation and power.

The producer used force to call the reader to action yet was not clear on the specifics of the proposition or the particular outcomes the action would include. First, the producer may have counted on the reader to be ambivalent to the request and not recognize the veiled request. (Fairclough, 1992) For example, callers who responded to this text may not know of Senate Bill 1’s existence, but call only in reaction to this particular text. Therefore, these callers were entered into RepNet as ‘in support’ of school choice,
even though they possibly were not clear about the legislation addressed. That gave the producer the political support they sought, although within disguised context. According to Fairclough (1992), “It is a form of the power to constrain content: to favour certain interpretations and ‘wordings’ of events, while excluding others” (80). The attempt to hide content to gain favorable interpretations and actions worked discursively.

Van Dijk (2006b) added that manipulation also is “a form of social power abuse and cognitive mind control” in addition to a discursive act and “involves the interference with processes of understanding, the formation of biased mental models and social representations such as knowledge and ideologies” (359). An analysis of manipulation on the part of the producer was warranted because the producer used vagueness and exclusion of normative information of the context while in a position of power over the reader. By not clearly stating that Senate Bill 1 and/or school vouchers was the focus of the school choice legislation the producer used his position of power to manipulate the reader into action without providing clear knowledge of the specifics of the request.

For example, calls received to the representative in the text here included calls inquiring as to why he didn’t support public schools, why he didn’t think our local public schools were good enough, and why he supported vouchers. Some callers unaware of any school choice or voucher legislation did not understand the context of the doorknob hanger yet were directed purposely to call the representative's office to request his support of school choice without clearly understanding, beyond the contents and context of the door knob hanger, and some did. Others callers had other interpretations.

One public school teacher, after reading the door knob hanger, called the representative to ask why he didn't support public schools. The representative was
confused because he did support public schools; his children attended public schools at that time, and his wife formerly taught at public schools. The teacher went on to explain that he read the door hanger and was concerned that the representative himself produced and disseminated the text to the public. There was an explanation to why he thought that. Legally, the entity responsible for paying for the text must be stated on the text, and it was stated on the door knob hanger. However, if you compared the size and status given to text of the phone number of the representative in caparison to the “Paid for by Freedom Works” text a contrast existed. The former was much larger, bolder, and noticeable. The latter was tiny and the color of the font was white on a gray background, making it difficult to see. The producers may have minimized the ownership clause to keep implicit the beliefs or actions advocated by the producer (Fairclough, 1992, van Dijk, 2006b). By the producer carrying out certain actions such as excluding him/herself from the text, using vague language, and excluding specific language and labels that would be helpful for reader understanding, along with minimizing the ownership text, making it the smallest text on the door knob hanger, the text revealed manipulative and discursive practices.

**Resulting Ruminations: Power, Hegemony, and Discursivity**

Discursive practices revealed issues of power and hegemony. The producer requested to have constituents call the representative in response to the text of the doorknob holder. If constituents did this, and some did, the producer gained support for their cause and achieved the goal expressed in the doorknob hanger. The reader did not have access to the specifics of the request, which was a vote for school vouchers and Senate Bill 1, because it was not qualified in the text. The larger political context of school choice and school reform discourse by the delivery of this particular political text was brought
into the discourse of a local public school and its legislator. There was no mention of a specific bill or a specific solution. Further research of the historical setting of school choice and the discourse of the group Freedom Works was needed for the reader to understand the specific stance taken in the text. This attempt at manipulation created a discursive practice.

**Ideology at Work: Door hanger for Freedom**

The group Freedom Works paid for the production of the door knob hanger to express their message and encourage support of school choice in the legislative district where I am a legislative aide. The document itself stated “Paid for by Freedom Works” and the unsubstantiated claim was that a group called the Schuylkill Conservatives delivered it. Schuylkill County, where the document was delivered and where I live and work, had a politically active group called the Schuylkill Conservatives. If you visited the Freedom Works website, you found a tab at the top of the main page that said Connect. When you clicked on that tab, you were taken to a page called Freedom Connector. On that page you could enter a state, county, and/or district, which is how I found the link between Freedom Works and the Schuylkill Conservatives. Thus one could understand the social setting and the machinations Freedom Works’ utilized of smaller, grassroots, and issue-oriented groups of patriots, such as Schuylkill Conservatives to move their agenda forward (Freedom Works, 2012).

**Consideration of the context: Freedom Works at your door**

Freedom Works is a conservative, pro-privatization group who utilized carefully considered, specifically crafted frames to appeal to voters’ self-interests, identities, and values in an attempt to garner support for voucher legislation.
A grassroots, national organization, Freedom Works is dedicated to fighting for lower taxes and tax cuts along with a limited and smaller government. The organization originated in 1984, according to its website, from a campaign called *Citizens for a Sound Economy*. In 2004, *Citizens for a Sound Economy* merged with *Empower America* renaming itself Freedom Works (Freedom Works, 2012).

The mantra “Government goes to those who show up” is repeated often on the Freedom Works’ website and appears to be a tag line which may summarize the groups’ motivation for getting others to join. The group claims to have grown steadfastly since its origination and currently claims a membership of “hundreds of thousands” (Freedom Works, 2012). According to their website, they call their members *Patriots*.

The goal of Freedom Works is to fight for a smaller and more limited government with less and lower taxes and an increase in consumer choices in order for individuals to have greater control over their lives and economies (Freedom Works, 2012). The website offers glimpses into what this group means by freedom. Explaining freedom means to compete which “increases consumer choices and provides individuals with the greatest control over what they own and earn” (Freedom Works, 2012). Freedom to this group equals economic freedom without the government interference.

As the word freedom is repeated often throughout the website, it is noticed that this group’s idea of freedom equals a government that is very limited in the lives of citizens. This includes a government that provides lower taxes and increased consumer choice (Freedom Works, 2012).

Freedom Works works to build relationships with many other smaller conservative organizations throughout the country, creating a strong and well-informed network group
of Patriots. The membership and strength of the organization has grown over the last 25 years, and is now a large political presence throughout the country. Freedom Works serves as an umbrella to the many smaller conservative groups, including Tea Party groups, by providing a place for unification where organization and connectedness allow for the sharing of information among Patriots, allowing for a unified coalition (Freedom Works, 2012).

Freedom Works, and their subsidiaries, had become a strong presence in Pennsylvania over the last decade. In 2011-2012, their presence was publicly noted. With the 2010 election of a pro school choice governor and a Republican majority in the House and Senate headed by pro-vouchers leadership, a strong presence of Freedom Works existed, giving the group status at that time. In this phenomenon, power relations were at stake and the struggle over the function of public schools in Pennsylvania created discursive relations within the discourse of public schools (Fairclough, 2015, 1993). This study sought to reveal that “language is both a site of and a stake in class struggle and those who exercise power through language must constantly be involved in struggle with others to defend (or lose) their position” (Fairclough, 2015, 66, Fairclough, 1993). Freedom Works’ door hanger is an example of that.

This existed in Pennsylvania in 2011-2012 regarding the school choice topic at the forefront of legislative debate. Through my work as a legislative aide, I saw firsthand the presence of grassroots Patriots and others who wished to see a reworking of public education in Pennsylvania take action. These groups, included but were not limited to Schuylkill Conservatives and The Kitchen Table Patriots, who were present in the Capitol and in legislators’ offices. Their willingness to struggle, to fight, and to push their cause was
supported and furthered through the encouragement of the larger groups like Freedom Works, and other groups such as *American Federation for Children*, and the *Commonwealth Foundation*, which will be discussed in detail later.

I analyzed the text of the door knob hanger in an attempt to show how groups worked to influence legislation and legislators. The analysis uncovered meanings, themes, and representations based on the language and images provided to reveal social practices, as Fairclough’s three dimensional framework outlines. The critical discourse analysis of the text revealed ideological work by Freedom Works to convey their stance and beliefs as a truth and knowledge by creating a crisis within the message and presenting the solution as a personal responsibility to act toward and to work in alliance with the representative. These thematic representations, presented though the identification of frames and representations, revealed attempts to influence the reader not only to support, but also to take action on, the ideological principals of Freedom Works.

The ideological struggle and work of Freedom Works, along with the analyses from the other nine texts, will be considered around issue of hegemony and power. Next, the Critical Discourse Analysis according to the established critique of the remaining nine texts is shared, according to emerged themes, in the following chapter. Finally, in Chapter 6, resulting revelations of the analyses will be considered.
Chapter 5

Texts in the Political Setting: Truth, Knowledge and Reading the Ideological

“Language is not powerful on its own; it gains power by the use powerful people make of it.”

R. Wodak, (2009, 35)
This chapter looked closely at specific texts made public during the SB 1 discourse and unveiled specific themes and patterns during the textual analysis. Each sample text provided carefully crafted political rhetoric and designs to persuade readers to take on the stances of the producers. The producers created texts for very specific reasons and employed specific strategies to persuade readers to agree, to act, to challenge, and to support the desired cause. Each text took a stance within the SB 1 discourse in predictable ways through the use of specific themes. I used CDA, as explained in Chapter 4, to reveal the implicit actions, works, and strategies of the producers and organized these examples around the themes revealed by the 10 sample texts analyzed. At the conclusion of this chapter, I compare the strategies used among advocates for SB 1, their opponents, and the official work texts in consideration of the micro politics of SB 1.

**Designating the Themes**

Four themes emerged during the analysis of the texts. The themes present in all of the texts were:

- A crisis exists.
- It is personal.
- Framing a stance as truth.
- Forming alliances and partnerships.

The four themes emerged over the analysis of the ten sample texts. The themes signified a response to or by the groups who participated in the fight around the contents of SB 1 and worked in particular ways to either support, oppose, or inform the legislators who would
be positioned to vote on the legislation. Themes to how the groups went about influencing the legislation were at times shared regardless of the stance.

Four specific themes emerged from the textual responses to the legislation. First, SB 1 is a response to a crisis around public schooling. Groups who supported SB 1 presented a crisis within school buildings. Groups who opposed SB 1 presented a crisis for the public in the work the legislation would do. The official work texts shared a crisis of confidence and challenge to upholding government responsibility. The second theme represented in the texts appealed to the personal. Groups who supported SB 1 claimed it was personal because you are involved and responsible as a parent and/or taxpayer. Groups who opposed SB 1 claimed personal responsibility to citizens because public institutions (public schools) were threatened by SB 1. The official work texts focused on charging legislators with a personal responsibility to provide effective and efficient public schooling for citizens.

The third theme worked to frame arguments as truth and knowledge. The groups who supported SB 1 created texts to explain that SB 1 and vouchers are necessary because public schools do not and cannot work. Groups who opposed SB 1 and vouchers positioned texts to portray SB 1 and vouchers as a challenge to a democratic society and a false attack on current public schools. The official work texts portrayed texts that shed a light on the depth of legislative responsibility to identify and to understand the information swirling around the SB 1 and the voucher topic.

The fourth and final theme revealed the forming of alliances and partnerships to push forth agendas around SB 1. The groups supporting the legislation worked to show they are knowledgeable and powerful organizations working in the best interest of
children, while the oppositional groups aimed at gaining support by working toward powerful alliance-building for the sake of democracy. The official work texts took a varied tone in this theme by identifying an obligation as a state legislature to be informed and responsive to the arguments of the groups of others working to influence the legislation.

In analysis of the themes, six of ten texts had all four themes present. Two of the 10 texts had two themes present. Two other texts had three themes present. The following chart shows which texts held which themes:

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<td>Theme:</td>
<td>A crisis exists</td>
<td>It's personal</td>
<td>Framing a stance as truth</td>
<td>Forming alliances and partnerships (for power)</td>
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Table 5.1 Data Text Arranged by Emerged Themes.

- The vertical column along the left side notes the themes revealed.
- The horizontal column along the top notes each sample text, according to Appendix number.
- The red represents texts received in support of SB 1, the blue in opposition, and the green were received from within the work environment.

Text and Theme Analysis

The following section shares the analysis of the texts according to theme. Each text had more than one theme revealed; therefore the texts will overlap according to theme. You will see texts repeated throughout this section, but the analysis will reflect the theme of that section.

Theme #1: A crisis exists

The first theme revealed was “A crisis exists”. This theme revealed itself both explicitly with direct language and implicitly through voice, force, and semiotics. Within this section an analysis of three texts follows. Although the following texts each attempted to portray a crisis around the implementation of SB 1, the language and the perspectives varied depending on the stances of the groups. The groups supporting SB 1 worked to portray a crisis in current public schools, while the groups opposing SB 1 worked to build a crisis that threatened current public schools and the democracy they represent. The official work texts sought to uncover the ways the texts represented a crisis of confidence in government responsibility.
The Commonwealth Foundation: 17 Roses letter (Appendix H)

A December 2, 2011 letter signed by the Vice President and COO of Commonwealth Foundation (CF) and addressed to “Dear CF Friend” explained that the foundation bought 4,300 white roses to distribute to members of the legislature. The CF Friends letter explained that each member would receive “17 white roses when they return to Harrisburg next week” signifying their claim of “…one violent incident in Pennsylvania’s worst schools every 17 minutes.” (Appendix H). The letter provided detailed reasons justifying the delivery of the roses to encourage the legislators to support vouchers. The reason 17 roses were sent to legislators was as a symbol of a violent incident in public schools, which signifies a crisis in public schools, according to the producers. According to their letter they sent the 17 roses “because that boils down to one violent incident in Pennsylvania’s worst schools every 17 minutes”. (See Appendix H). The letter lists the reasons they are sending the roses as:

“Because some folks think you and I should wave the white flag and surrender right now in the battle to free kids from Pennsylvania’s violent, failing schools. Because nearly 82,000 children here in Pennsylvania are trapped in dangerous and under-performing public schools that they are assigned to by their zip code. Because more than 60 percent of the students in these schools fail to reach proficiency even on Pennsylvania’s lenient standardized tests. Because these schools themselves reported nearly 10,000 violent incidents on their grounds between 2008 and 2010, including sexual assaults, kidnappings, robberies, thefts, arsons, vandalism, and much more. Because that boils down to one violent incidence in Pennsylvania’s worst schools every 17 minutes. Because you and I are stuck paying for these hellholes- not to mention for future jail stays and welfare for the students whose lives are ruined in them. Because this is unacceptable. And because to remind our state legislators of that, CF is sending each of them a bouquet of 17 white roses when they return to Harrisburg next week.”

(See Appendix H)

The letter utilized explicit language and direct voice to explain their reasons for sending the flowers. They clearly were attempting to encourage support, to call to attention, and to
solicit their membership, called Patriots. The 4,300 roses that, according to the letter, would be sent to the members of the legislature as an urgent call “to free kids from Pennsylvania’s violent, failing schools.” (Appendix H). Continuing the justification to send the roses as an urgent call for school choice, the CF used imagery including, “trapped in dangerous and underperforming schools”, “(students) fail to reach proficiency even on Pennsylvania’s lenient standardized test”, and included a list of violent acts that have occurred in PA public schools between 2008 and 2010 that included “sexual assaults, kidnappings, robberies, thefts, arsons, vandalism, and much more.” These statistics were presented to make the CF’s stance for school vouchers appear to be a way out of an urgent crisis in those public schools. The word choice and statistics placed the blame on public schools and established the tone of the letter as urgent while painting a negative and dangerous picture of Pennsylvania’s public schools.

Furthermore, the letter framed the argument that school choice would not only solve the urgent problem of violence in schools but also save taxpayers money. Use of direct voice when refuting the argument of others who opposed SB 1 and vouchers portrayed a strong stance and force by stating the opposition’s argument: “By the way, one thing we’re hearing over and over is that while it would be nice to do something about the fact that there is a violent incident in one of our failing schools every 17 minutes, school choice is just too expensive” with the response, “That is simply not true” (Appendix H). The force is subtle but strong, as if the argument was excluded away with a basic reply and a great deal of confidence. The producer then reasserted his stance and the stance he expected from Patriots reading the letter, by providing a list of options for Patriots to do immediately to help CF continue its work.
NAACP response to CF roses letter (Appendix K)

This letter was written by the NAACP in response to the CF’s roses’ letter highlighted in the previous sample. Since this letter referenced the CF letter and additionally provided their stance on SB 1 as a contrast to the CF letter, intertextuality occurs. Additionally, the NAACP in this letter took the stance that the establishment of SB 1 and other school choice legislation created a crisis.

The theme of “A crisis exists” of the NAACP letter has three components. First the letter appealed to the legislators’ sense of moral and legal obligation stated in the very first statement of the letter then again explained further in the body of the letter:

“Notwithstanding pressures you may now be facing from corporate financers, we ask you to do what is in the best interest of our children and the tax payers and to uphold the Constitution of Pennsylvania” (Appendix K). The letter identified the pressure of the situation by using the word “pressures” and referring to the children who will be affected by the legislation and called into question the constitutionality of the legislation. Furthermore, the second statement was explicit in the identification of a crisis by using the word “urgent” and stating it in the bold-faced type:

“We urge you to vote, “NO” on any bill, including SB1 or others such as HB 1454 and HB 1708- that would create state-funding for school vouchers or the expansion of the charter/cyber charter system.”

(Appendix K)

The next and final statement of the first paragraph enforced their stance by urging the members to vote against any amendment or expansion of any other bill having to do with school vouchers and/or cyber/charter work. The statement was:
“We also urge you to vote “NO” to add a school voucher amendment or an expansion of a charter/cyber charter program to any other education bill that might come before you.”

(Appendix K)

This final statement signified that the NAACP clearly understands the multiple ways legislation can be passed and signifies to the legislator-reader that they understand the intricacies of the legislative process, such as the process can work very quickly and urgently, and they keep watch for any movement regarding school choice reform. The force of this statement provided an urgency to put pressure on the legislator not to enact any legislation regarding vouchers or any school choice. The voice of the producers was forceful, strong, and intense, adding to the tone that a crisis exists. Note the use of the word “urge” in both of these statements within the same paragraph which lends both to the tone and force in the NAACP’s understanding of the presence of crisis and urgency of the discourse around SB 1.

NAACP called the SB 1 negotiations “the greatest coordinated attack on universal, free, public education in the history of the Commonwealth” signifying the gravity of the bill and the urgency of taking part in the discourse that was focused by other groups, like CF, on creating a climate of crisis to push their pro-school choice agenda into the passing of SB 1 into law. NAACP referenced to the above CF letter (Appendix K) by directly referencing the names the CF labeled to schools and children and referring to that part of the discourse as “the greatest coordinated attack on universal, free, public education in the history of the Commonwealth” blaming “Corporate, free market reformers” and recognizing that this crisis rested in the hands of “you, our state legislators to hand over public schools and to increase the capacity of privateers.” (Appendix K). This tone placed the emphasis on the responsibility of the legislators in consideration of the urgency of the situation while
focusing the responsibility of the establishment of the crisis to those who wanted to see the changes- the privateers.

Taking a stance that the point of the bill was due to “corporate, free market reformers” who were not concerned with the outcome of students’ learning but instead focused on achieving privatization employed force through claims of the corporate financers using children of color “as a strategy to achieve this” and “to manipulate the effort to push forward the privatization agenda by parading children and parents of color before Senate hearings and using their faces on campaign literature.” (See Appendix K).

Challenging the previous CF letter’s contents, the NAACP letter took the crisis to another level by claiming that pro-school voucher groups, like CF, were using and harming students under the guise of a public education crisis to push forth their own privatization agenda. Intertextuality highlighting the references in the discourse regarding the establishment of crisis around SB 1.

**Blue Mountain Resolution (Appendix G)**

Another example of “A Crisis Exists” came across my desk in April of 2011. This text highlighted the theme “A crisis exists” through a resolution from the Blue Mountain School District Board of Directors, which is a school district partly in our legislative district, making it a local reaction to the state legislation (See Appendix G). Structured as an official document and signed by the School Board President and Board Secretary, the resolution clearly stated the Board’s opposition “to Senate Bill 1 and any other legislation or any effort by the General Assembly to implement a tuition voucher program in the Commonwealth or any other program that would have an effect similar to that of a tuition voucher program, and encouraged its elected officials to oppose the same.” (Appendix G). Although the
The document was prepared as a public statement on behalf of the School Board of that district, the language, timing, and distribution of the resolution was aimed at the urgency of the work of the voucher lobby and a response to the implementation of a potential voucher program in the Commonwealth. Furthermore, the school district was directly and explicitly making a request of support from the legislators serving the school district. Doing this publicly worked to put pressure on the legislators and called attention to the voucher legislation to a public who primarily attended public schools. This was explicit and stated in the final two paragraphs of the resolution:

“BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Blue Mountain School District directs its Board President to take immediate action to alert its district’s state legislators about the need to oppose Senate Bill 1 and the negative consequences on the school district and the public education system at large and to provide a copy of this resolution to them.”

“BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Blue Mountain School District will encourage others, including parents, students and district taxpayers, to contact the Pennsylvania General Assembly to convey the importance of supporting public education in the Commonwealth.”

Blue Mountain School District Board of Directors, 2011 (Appendix G)

In this instance “supporting public education in the Commonwealth” would be in the form of voting against SB 1 and any other form of school vouchers or school choice. The language explicitly stated that the Board of Directors believed SB 1 and vouchers were detrimental to the public schools and their students and the timing of their resolutions supported the understanding of a crisis. It was implicitly understood that by making this a resolution a public document, as opposed to a personal letter, the pressure and emphasis was put on the local legislators, including my boss Representative Tobash, to publically support their public schools. In this case, to support the local school district, the legislator would have to
vote against SB 1 or any other school choice legislation that would be voted upon and responded to the established crisis in favor of the public schools and against SB 1.

**Theme #2: It’s Personal**

Theme #2 highlighted the connection producers sought to establish with readers to convince them to join their fight for or against SB 1. This theme was present in nine of the ten texts and attempted to pull the reader into the fight over SB 1. This was done in several ways based on the stance and work of the producer. At times personal appeals were made by producers by highlighting characteristics shared between the producer and readers; other times the producers directly called the reader to a sense of responsibility. One text revealed how the producer became an activist and a participant in this discourse.

The texts that supported SB 1 framed this theme to appeal to parents and to taxpayers and their responsibility to children. The groups opposed to SB 1 worked to involve readers to take action against SB 1 as responsible citizens whose public institutions (thus democracy) were threatened. The official work texts reflected a personal appeal to the legislature to provide efficient and effective schools for the citizens they represent.

**Ana Puig email (Appendix D)**

One simple example of text to highlight the “It’s Personal” theme was the establishment of grassroots group called the Kitchen Table Patriots. Founder Ana Puig, and her co-chair Anastasia Przybylski were stay-at-home mothers activated by their passion to seek legislative and political change for their children and their families. The Kitchen Table Patriots grew literally from around a kitchen table and since the inception of the Kitchen Table Patriots roughly three years before the introduction of SB1, both Puig and Przybylski had become outspoken political activists critiqued and criticized by political groups of both
progressives and conservatives. Eventually, they linked with and “began collecting stipends” from Freedom Works, “a Washington group that has pushed- sometimes with hardball political tactics- a bill for school tuition vouchers in Pennsylvania” (Martin, 2011, 20). Their small grassroots group came to exist within the larger and powerful Freedom Works, who supplied the co-chairs monetarily to continue to fight for their similar causes. The voucher and school choice discourse and legislative fight became personal for them because they saw a chance for their children to gain a form of schooling they believed to be beneficial for them. They were parents and the fight was personal; they would use that stance to work to garner support from others.

REACH letter (Appendix E)

This sample text was a letter prepared by the organization REACH (Road to Education Achievement through Choice), an umbrella organization created in Pennsylvania to work for vouchers and school choice expansion consisting of many other groups and organizations that support school choice (REACH, 2015). The first phrase of the first sentence of this letter made it personal: As you know. (Appendix E). The phrase initially invited the reader into the discourse of the letter and gave the reader credibility as knowledgeable. This use of language by the producer created a personal tone and made the reader feel welcome. Additionally, it set the face of the letter as polite and personalized.

The letter explicitly stated that REACH was in support of SB 1, but created a force that was not oppositional, as many texts within the voucher discourse were, but instead directly stated, “School choice is not about pitting private schools against public schools or saying that one option is better than the other. It’s about empowering families to make the best choice for their children- where it’s homeschooling, a cyber, school, charter school,
public school or private school.” This attempted indirectly to create a tone that was inclusive and respectful of everyone’s choice for schooling thus creating a voice respectful of everyone who reads the letter. The carefully crafted statements were personalized to include every stance, thus supporting the theme “It's Personal” and being inclusive of all readers of this letter.

The pattern continued with claims against competition among schooling options. The paragraph reads:

Opportunity Scholarships, together with increased funding for EITC, will provide more parents than ever the opportunity to choose the best educational path for their children. (Appendix E).

First off, the face was polite in the structure of the sentences. The first statement claimed the school choice negotiations should not be about fierce competition in the various types of schooling, whether public or private. This was a unique statement within the school choice discourse, as the sides for SB 1 and against SB 1 often work in opposition to each other. The statement explicitly stated “School choice is not about....saying that one is better than the other” and worked to reduce the sense of competition that existed within the broader school choice discourse, creating an example of interdiscursivity. By relying on the notion of schemata, the producer attempted to quell the emotional stance of those that were opposed to vouchers and introduced into the discourse other options for stance: the notion of options and variables of choice, not competition and not one or the other as the only options. This use of politeness made the reader feel welcomed to and a part of the discussion. The producer created face in specific ways to find a level of politeness that worked to include and to encourage the reader to feel invited to be part of the solution
while claiming a strong stance to provide his specific solution. Employing indirect language was the method to accomplish this.

Although the producer ended the paragraph by expressing that the choice for schooling should be the choice of the parents with many options for them to choose the best path for their children, the tone remained kind and inclusive to readers with other stances. (Fairclough, 1992).

To close the letter, another use of personalization promoted the polite, personal, and inclusive tone of the letter: “I am confident that, working together, we can once again improve Pennsylvania’s educational system. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions” (Appendix E). The personalization and inclusion of the reader in this instance was direct and explicit. I, we, and me are personal pronouns used together to create an inclusive cohesion of language to unite the producer and reader supporting the It’s Personal theme.

Commonwealth Foundation 17 Roses Letter (Appendix H)
Theme #3 Framing Stance as Truth
This theme showed and explained texts that worked in specific ways to frame an argument or a stance for SB 1 that the producers of the text wanted to present as reality. As Hall (1997) discusses “knowledge linked to power, not only assumes the authority of the truth but has the power to make itself true” (49) Analysis of the texts included in this theme revealed attempts by the producers to position language in particular ways to read as fact or truisms. This discursive act attempted to control the language of their texts to control the language of the discourse. This theme was revealed by texts in various ways, using both intertextuality and interdiscursivity in the texts. The first sample of this theme highlighted a chain of texts that took place over a short time period and interacted in
competition to gain stance and support of their vision for SB 1 and vouchers. The intertextuality worked for or against the voucher legislation based on the producers’ vision of how schooling should be in Pennsylvania at that time.

The chain of texts shared language and references at times, but the ways in which the texts were used vary according to the stances of the producers. For the texts in support of SB 1 the language worked to prove that current public schools were not doing an appropriate job. The texts in opposition to SB 1 positioned language to convince readers that SB 1 and vouchers were not a democratic method for educating our children. And the official work texts revealed a positioning of the legislature to highlight their power and obligations to best educate the Commonwealth’s children. Fairclough’s framework supported the intertextuality of the chain by explaining that each text provided a portion of explanation within a greater discourse in a particular social circumstance. Thus each texts worked to share “truth” within the SB 1 discourse through the use of specific language practices to work in a socially transformative manner (Fairclough, 1993).

Following the example of the intertextual chain, other sample texts were provided to give alternative samples of how framing to build a stance can sound and read as truth. Understanding the tone, voice, and force of producers allowed readers to critically examine beyond the surface level reading, to uncover issues of power and ideology.

The five texts: Intertextuality and context in a discursive struggle: Framing texts as a means of movement

The following analyses included a series of texts that were triggered by the work of an initial semiotic text by the Commonwealth Foundation. There were a total of five texts in this series, or intertextual chain. Each of the categories of data collection for this study:
texts that support SB 1, texts that oppose SB 1 and official work texts were represented in this intertextual chain. There were five texts in this intertextual chain: The first was the semiotic text of flowers delivered to each member of the legislature by the Commonwealth Foundation (CF) that triggered the creation of the four additional texts. The remaining four texts include: the 17 Roses Letter (Appendix H), an attached letter by a state Senator (Appendix I), an memo sent to the legislative members by a member of the legislature (a state representative) (Appendix J), and finally a letter by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) (Appendix K). All of the texts were part of the intertextual discourse triggered by the delivery of 17 roses to each member of the legislature to represent CF’s claim that every 17 minutes an act of violence takes place in a Pennsylvania public school. Each of these groups’ texts was intertextually connected and identified a shared discourse while working to establish their own frames and stances in accordance to SB 1 and related school choice legislation. This thread of texts created an intertextual and interdiscursive event that carried on the struggle over SB 1.

According to Fairclough (1992), an intertextual chain is a “series of types of texts which are transformationally related to each other in the sense that each member of the series is transformed into one or more of the others in regular and predictable ways” (130). Intertextual chains are sequential or syntagmatic (Fairclough, 1992). In this case the texts were obviously sequential in order as prescribed by the dates listed in the texts. However, elements of syntax were present since the core topic of each text was a response to both the semiotic text of the flower delivery and the explanation letter that followed it. The delivery of the flowers and the contents of the letter were the focus of the response in each text following it in the chain. However, the rhetoric of and conventions in which they were
used were transformative based on the way the responding groups defined, explained, and
shared the information of the original text (Fairclough, 1992).

The intertextual chain began when the CF decided to deliver flowers to each
member of the legislature in an attempt to garner support for SB 1. In itself, that semiotic
text was a discursive practice, specifically framed and carefully crafted in an attempt to
challenge the stances and to convince the members of the legislature to support SB 1 and
voucher legislation. The resulting texts likewise responded with specifically crafted frames
challenging and forcing further consideration of both the producer’s intentions and
perceived possible stances of the legislators. The responding groups brought into the
textual chain other discourse considerations, including school choice and school reform
issues further transforming the original discourse of the text and creating opportunities for
interdiscursivity.

To understand the context of the texts involved noting the timeline of them was
warranted. First the Commonwealth Foundation sent a letter dated December 2, 2011 via
e-mail highlighting their planned actions. The CF, on the Wednesday before, purchased
4,300 white roses with plans to send 17 of them to each state legislator in Harrisburg the
following week. On December 8, 2011, a state Senator issued a memo to all members of the
legislature that included a copy of the CF letter and his very specific and passionate
response to it. Following that, the final texts in the chain were an e-mail letter from a state
representative that shared a public letter from the NAACP in response to the CF letter.

**Framing their Stance as Truth**

The CF letter (Appendix H) utilized a direct voice to explain their reason for sending
the flowers, encouraging support, and soliciting statements to be included in the delivery
from their Patriots to be attached to the letters, and stating, “Tuesday is going to be a great day.” Furthermore, the letter framed their argument that school choice would solve the problem of violence in schools and will save taxpayers money. Use of direct voice when refuting the argument of others who opposed SB 1 portrayed a strong stance and force by stating the opposition's argument: “By the way, one thing we’re hearing over and over is that while it would be nice to do something about the fact that there is a violent incident in one of our failing schools every 17 minutes, school choice is just too expensive” with the response, “That is simply not true.” The force was subtle but strong, as if the argument was excluded away with a basic reply and a great deal of confidence. The producer then reasserted his stance and the stance he expected from Patriots reading the letter, by providing a list of options for readers to do to help CF continue its work, and asked for financial contributions. To end the letter, the producer signed the letter, “Fighting for Your Freedom”, eliciting further consideration of hegemony and ideology.

**Letter from Senator (Appendix I)**

The CF letter was forwarded to all members of the General Assembly via email by a Senator. The Senator’s correspondence included a memo, the CF letter, and an accompanying letter in response to the CF letter prepared by the Senator himself. The memo gave further context to the discourse and gave insight into the contentiousness of the SB 1 negotiations:

“Enclosed is a copy of Commonwealth Foundation’s recent email and my response. I take issue with their choice of rhetoric and assertion that all struggling schools in Pennsylvania are “hellholes” and breeding grounds for future inmates and welfare recipients. I have asked Mr. Mitchell to apologize and to come retrieve his 17 roses. I encourage all of you to do the same. We can disagree, but it should be done respectfully. Thank you.”

(Appendix I)
The senator then attached a copy of his own-crafted letter in response to the CF letter. The Senator’s letter challenged the frame and stance of the CF’s 17 Roses Letter in very clear and pointed language, setting another frame and stance in the SB 1 negotiations within this textual chain.

Each of these texts revealed discursive practices through the construction of rhetoric within each text. Each text following the CF letter was crafted with specific intentions to provoke a certain response from the legislator-reader through both the deconstruction of the CF letter and the construction of their response to it by utilizing intertextual chains and implementing their ideological stance into it. By challenging the rhetoric of the CF and providing alternatives to school choice and vouchers, interdiscursivity existed. This occurred when the letters in response to the CF letter included in this discourse challenged the producer’s school reform ideas and attempted to refocus the discourse of SB 1. For example, when the Senator who responded to the CF letter with his own letter to the legislators said, “I take issue with their (CF’s) choice of rhetoric and assertion that all struggling schools are ‘hellholes’ and breeding grounds for future inmates and welfare recipients,” he acknowledged CF’s control of the discourse around school choice and directly opposed it by stating, “I take issue with...” and following the statement with, “I have asked Mr. Mitchell to apologize and to come retrieve his 17 roses.”

Later in the same letter, the senator framed his stance by focusing on the children referenced by CF’s Vice President Mitchell, accusing the producer of perpetuating a dangerous stereotype that damages “students, teachers, administrators, and the education community” (Appendix I). The senator further extended his frame of damaging children in
the discourse of the 17 roses’ letter by explaining how CF’s statements were harmful to the children who attended these schools. He used varying phrases regarding the children who attended these schools to challenge the stereotype alluded to by Mitchell throughout the letter with 18 references to the children from these schools in the one-and-a-half page letter. First he challenged Mitchell’s remark calling the schools “hellholes” as “egregious”, asking Mitchell how he would feel if he attended a school that was labeled in that manner and requesting Mitchell apologize to them. Then he countered Mitchell’s claim of the school as a “hellhole” by explaining that he recently “hosted Junior ROTC students from these ‘hellholes’” and that “each of these students has made a commitment to serve” countering Mitchell’s stance that the poorly performing schools will prepare students for “future jail stays and welfare” and creating an instance of discursivity. The senator changed the discourse to focus on students, not policies and politics, which worked to convince the reader-legislators that the rhetoric and solution of school vouchers by CF is flawed, challenging the “truth”, stance, and frame established by the CF.

Furthermore, the senator referred to the distribution of the white roses with negative force. He claimed the event was “truly disgusting”, “egregious”, “wildly offensive”, “counterproductive” and “cowardly” and referenced the event as negative 17 times. He claimed the stance and frame of the CF in regard to these schools is a “very small way of thinking” and was utilized to fit into their ideological agenda without regard to the students or the most recent statistics. He then provided a paragraph stating statistics that showed an improvement of standardized test scores by economically disadvantaged students.

The senator’s response to Mitchell’s letter framed the argument in a different way and challenged the “truth” of the CF’s stance. These texts challenged issues of truth, stance,
and power where issues of hegemony and ideology drove rhetoric. Furthermore, the addition of a letter from the NAACP provided to the legislature in response to the CF letter distributed on their behalf by another member of the legislature extended the intertextual chain and raised further issues of discursivity.

**Intertextuality in the chain: An email from a representative and a letter from the NAACP**

The textual chain continued with two more texts. The first text was an official work text that introduced the NAACP letter. On December 14, 2011, a state representative sent in a short 10-lined email to the members of the General Assembly that introduced the letter from the NAACP. The NAACP letter was clearly in response to the CF’s delivery of the roses and the sequential CF Friends letter and pointedly took a stance in opposition to SB 1 and any other school choice legislation. This letter continued the intertextual chain and challenged the frame in which the CF makes a stance for SB 1 and school choice and was the fifth and final text in the chain.

**Memo from the State Representative (Appendix J)**

The memo from the state representative was part of this intertextual chain. However, the tone of the letter was not overtly forceful. It was informational in tone and clearly explained the request he had to share the letter. This was one type of official work text that I experienced in my daily work. This text contained less force in language use than the other texts in this chain. However, the neutral language of the text hinted at stance:

“\[\text{I have been asked by the Pennsylvania State Conference of the NAACP Education Committee to share with you this correspondence voicing their opposition for school voucher and/or the expansion of the charter/cyber charter system. They would appreciate your consideration of their concerns.}\]”

(Appendix J)
The representative-producer did not introduce the reader to his stance or perspective, but focused his text in an informational way, giving focus to the attached NAACP letter. However, the producer did reference that the attached letter was personal to the intended readers by using a series of personal pronouns linking the reader and the NAACP letter's producers. More so, one may consider the stance of the representative-producer based on his acceptance to pass the NAACP’s letter and his request to “consider their concerns”. No overt tone was present, but the connection between the legislator and the NAACP’s stance was connected by his email and sharing of the letter.

**NAACP LETTER (Appendix K)**

The text was a letter from the Pennsylvania State Conference NAACP Education Committee sent to members of the House of Representatives of the Pennsylvania General Assembly. The salutation of the letter was to the representatives, and the representative for whom I worked received an email of this letter. The letter was dated December 13, 2011 and was signed from the President of the PA State Conference of the NAACP and a member of the Education Committee of the PA State Conference of the NAACP.

The NAACP personalized the letter by the use of the pronoun “you” repeated fifteen times throughout the letter employing their frame that the legislators have a moral obligation to support students and taxpayers. The use of you was done in two ways: First, it acknowledged the legislator as responsible for the outcome of the legislation and the outcome of students’ learning situation. Next, it held the legislators accountable for their work and their consideration and knowledge of the “truth” of the situation. For example, the statement, “We urge you to vote, “NO”, on any bill, including SB 1...” shows the NAACP held the legislator responsible for his/her vote. Additionally, another use of the pronoun
“you” showed the NAACP holding the legislator accountable for his or her knowledge of the truth of the situation: “You know why Pennsylvanians oppose the expansion of the charter/cyber charter movement that is funneling tax dollars out of the traditional public system and into private fortunes- leaving traditional public schools to struggle financially.” The use of a direct voice to address the reader-legislator asserted strength in the stance of the NAACP.

Next the use of force drove the stance of the NAACP by framing the legislation as a trick by “corporate, free market reformers” to gain access to schools for the purpose of free market opportunities. They claimed “millions of dollars have been poured into Pennsylvania to buy influence and secure legislator votes” and challenged legislators not to accept this strategy by stating, “But we ask you, ‘What is the price of a child?’” The force continued throughout the two-page letter by challenging the assertions of those fighting for SB 1 with direct language that challenged the truthfulness of their claims. The language of the NAACP was direct, detailed, and showed they clearly have prepared to fight against any claims made by the opposition with a command of forceful language in response to the discourse attempts of others.

The use of force continued with a threat that appeared near the end of the letter. The NAACP explained that in the near future they will create a legislative report card highlighting “how elected officials have voted on education funding and other legislation pertaining to universal, free, public education.” Furthermore explaining they will “share how legislators have handled their responsibilities to the citizens of Pennsylvania.” This use of implicit threat drives the seriousness of the stance of the NAACP and worked to
motivated legislators to vote against SB 1 or any other legislation pertaining to school choice.

Other texts that Frame Stance as Truth

CF Pie Chart: A chart and flyer from Commonwealth Foundation (Appendix C)

The Commonwealth Foundation, who produced the 17 Roses Letter (Appendix H) also released the graphic pie chart (Appendix C). Later I came across an information sheet from Pennsylvania Catholic Conference that included the pie chart. The chart was forwarded to me via email by an employee of a lobbying firm hired by groups that wanted to see Senate Bill 1 pass and vouchers used in Pennsylvania. The pie chart displayed a contrast between the costs of vouchers as a result of Senate Bill 1 versus the entire state education funding budget. The chart showed that SB 1 vouchers were minuscule in cost in relation to the entire public school budget. The information sheet was a one page paper that included an image of the pie chart along with an explanation to the question, Will School choice Drain Resources from Public Schools?

The Commonwealth Foundation and Pennsylvania Catholic Conference work in alliance through the REACH (See Appendix E), who was “Pennsylvania’s grassroots coalition dedicated to ensuring parental choice in education’. (REACH, 2015). The President of the Commonwealth Foundation was also a Board Member of the REACH Foundation and the REACH Alliance. Additionally, the Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference also served on the Executive Committee of the REACH Foundation and Alliance. (REACH, 2015). Recognizing this connection established the connection of the two documents sent to me by the lobbying firm.
The pie chart (Appendix C), according to the lobbyist, was created by the Commonwealth Foundation who titled the document *Education Spending Under SB 1 FY* (fiscal year) 2012-13. The chart was a large circle of green with a very thin, tiny sliver of blue, and an even thinner, tinier sliver of red. According to the chart, the green represented the spending for public schools based on 2009-2010 spending. The blue section represented the spending of EITC (Education Improvement Tax Credits), and the red represented the spending on opportunity scholarships, which were vouchers. The pie charts shouted out in bright green ink that the majority of spending for the 2012 school year was dedicated to public schools with only barely visible slivers of the pie cut out for both EITC funding in blue ink and voucher funding in red ink. (Note: The amount of funding for public schools is based on the amount of funding that was spent in the school year 2009-2010 because that would be the most recent statistics available.) There were no numbers stating dollar amounts spent or to be spent printed on the chart. This was where the use of discursive strategies was evidenced. Two important explanations were missing from this semiotic text. First, financial costs for the three educational entities named in the chart were missing from the chart even though it was titled *Education Spending Under SB 1 FY 2012-2012*. Second the chart only reflects spending on vouchers and EITC for one fiscal year, 2012-2013, which would have been the first and least costly year of the voucher program, had SB 1 become law.

Since this text was shared with me and the representative for whom I work as a means to lobby to convince him to support Senate Bill 1, then Critical Discourse Analysis revealed the text would reflect their stance. First of all, the outstanding difference between the green ink and the red ink stood out. One who looked at the pie chart would notice that
immediately and look to see what was so large and what was so small as noted in the diagram. With no large writing or explanations of the chart included, it was not quickly observed. Next, the explanation of the color key was written under the chart in significantly smaller ratio to the chart. The small letters sat under the chart emphasizing the grandness of the chart and all the green in it. The green signified pubic school spending.

Also, as noted on the date in the title, 2012-2013, the chart only reflected the spending on voucher and EITC funds for one year of the program. Senate Bill 1 explained that over time the use of voucher and EITC funding would expand. This expansion of funding was not noted in the chart. This absence does not allow the reader to understand the spending allowances asked for in Senate Bill 1 as a whole. Additionally absent was the explanation of the funding represented in the public school section. During the negotiations of Senate Bill 1 funding explanation were a contention. Superintendents we worked with shared their contention and frustration on the handling of funding and costs that would be sent to the voucher school and the amounts that would remain, or not remain, in the public schools. This point of contention was well known by my representative and had been debated in the environment of Senate Bill 1, but was not addressed in this document.

An observer who looked at this document might conclude that the voucher and EITC were not big hindrances on public schools’ budgets, since the amount of monies attributed to EITC and vouchers in the pie chart appeared miniscule. Critical Discourse Analysis of these characteristics revealed consideration of intentionality to gain a desirable outcome in favor of vouchers as endorsed by the producer, the Commonwealth Foundation.

The intertextual symbols situated in the chart challenged the argument of school voucher opposition. The producers utilized intertextuality of known positions of the
opposition to deflate their argument. The exclusion of costs in the chart along with the exclusion of the increases of voucher costs over the subsequent years of its implementation promoted that strategy. The full view of costs was not relayed in this text and was recontextualized to counter an argument of the opposition that has been a normalized part of the discourse and ongoing negotiations to garner support against SB 1 (Wodak, 2009, Fairclough, 1995). The use of a visual semiotic genre, such as the pie chart, provided a striking contrast in which to set the argument in a new context, allowing for the producer to decontextualize and refigure that argument made by their opponents to their audience. (Wodak, 2009, Fairclough, 2015). Additionally, evidence suggested the use of interdiscursivity. The work of Senate Bill 1 involved allocating funding to the new voucher program and affecting the fiscal budget of the Commonwealth. Therefore, the use of this pie chart showed the legislators the small fiscal impact the voucher program would have in relation to the public school budgetary funding. By crossing over from the discourse of voucher legislation to the discourse of fiscal responsibility was an attempt by the producers to gain the consideration of the reader. (Fairclough, 2015, Wodak, 2009).

Analyzing this text within the discourse of the budget in addition to the discourse of voucher negotiations gave an opportunity to diversify the talk around the voucher bill in favor of the stance of the producer of this text (Fairclough, 1995). Interpreting this chart from the stance of budgetary and fiscal analysis introduced a variable interpretation of the voucher discourse and restructured the order of the discourse to give the producer a new strategy in which to provide the reader a new vision or perspective of the discourse (Fairclough, 1995). Utilizing the genre of the chart provided a “socially available resource(s) that constitute(s) the order of discourse” revealing a discursive transformation
of language to mediate the dialog between fiscal analysis and responsibility into the Senate Bill 1 and voucher discourse (Fairclough, 1995). By structuring the text to reveal an oppositional challenge to the fiscal discourse of the voucher opposition, (the voucher program would be too costly) a transformation to the discourse was introduced in an attempt to gain power over the fiscal talk of the discourse. The discursive revelation through use of a semiotic structure distributed to the representative through a third party revealed an attempt to control the specific discourse to gain power and authority by claiming truth in numbers.

Utilizing this chart to gain support from the representative revealed “discursive strategies of gaining, controlling and retaining power (through knowledge) by employing various modes of communication and ‘technologies of power’ within this particular political setting (Wodak, 2009, 37). By creating a text with specific constructions to represent knowledge as legitimate, the producers sought to gain power of specific actors. In this particular case the producers sought to gain the support of a legislator by both sharing the text with the legislator and a member of his staff (Wodak, 2009). In this case the lack of language and descriptions, the use of specific semiotic symbols to represent information as truth, and the specific context that prioritize certain information over others revealed the intent of the producers to position the institution of Senate Bill 1 as fiscally reasonable, making an appeal for the bill that appeared less of an infringement on the current system and deemphasized an argument of the opposition.

Wodak explains the “‘discursive construction of identities’, utilizing the “strategies of positive self-presentation and the negative presentation of others” intends to achieve a particular goal (Wodak, 2009, 40). In this case, the producers framed the text to express a
certain perspective in relation to the grander discourse, creating a sense of ambiguity and creating a place in the discourse for multiple interpretations (Wodak, 2009). By placing this pie chart within a perspective of opposition of the argument made by the opposing side a new frame in the discourse was provided. The text provided a visual and textual perspective that revealed description supporting their perspective within the voucher fight and was utilized to persuade readers to consider their stance from another perspective (fiscal) (Wodak, 2009, Fairclough, 1995).

Ideologically speaking, the text of the chart sought to preserve and to strengthen the stance of the pro-voucher group, along with those groups of others that worked in alliance with the producer (van, Dijk, 2006a, Wodak, 2009). The structure of the text and the revelations of the chart pushed an ideological stance held by the producers and their colleagues and contradicted the stance of the opposition. They pushed forth as knowledge the fiscal representations of the chart in attempt to negate the discourse of the school voucher opposition. Although the text itself did not speak of ideology, the revelation of the message it sends did reflect the ideological structures of the groups around it.

The Commonwealth Foundation (CF) had an ideological investment in Senate Bill 1 and had formed alliances, as mentioned above, to push forth that ideological stance by physically fighting and demonstrating the positives for the implementation of school vouchers in the Commonwealth.

**Theme #4: Forming Alliances and Partnerships**

The final theme was revealed through texts that attempt to gain support for SB 1 by working to form connections with like-minded groups and readers to join the producer’s cause. The texts used various strategies to form partnerships and/or alliances to
strengthen their fight around SB 1. The specific use of language with a variety of genres worked to invite readers to become a part of the groups that support public education in various ways. The use of emotional appeal and social relations worked to frame the argument for participation with the use of inclusive language. This was done both implicitly and explicitly. The following sample texts revealed use of partners to frame and stance to convince readers to align with the producers.

A letter from REACH: Partnerships and Patterns (Appendix E)

The letter from REACH Executive Director addressed SB 1 with the focus to identify the use of explicit politeness to reveal its intentions and to gain support for its stance through the use of implicit manipulation, which was in contrast to the previous data samples in this study. As shown above, in Theme #3, patterns of politeness and stance were noted throughout the text. This interdiscursivity within the framework provided an altering of discourse between politeness (and inclusivity) with (stance and) manipulation seeking to gain heterogeneous support of SB 1. (Fairclough, 1992, Strauss and Feiz, 2015).

“The calculated design of political language is one crucial factor in success in political struggle.” (Wodak in van Dijk, 1997, 259.) Seeking support by the use of intertextuality, the producer crafted the text to invite readers into the group of SB 1 supporters. This discourse practice was both hegemonic and discursive.

The pattern continued in the third paragraph by making claims against competition among schooling options. The paragraph read:
"School choice is not about pitting private schools against public schools or saying that one option is better than the other. It’s about empowering families to make the best choice for their children- whether it’s homeschooling, a cyber school, charter school, public school or private school. Opportunity Scholarships, together with increased funding for EITC, will provide more parents than ever the opportunity to choose the best educational path for their children."

(Appendix E)

First off, the face was polite in the structure of the sentences. The first statement claimed the school choice negotiations should not be about fierce competition in the various types of schooling, whether public or private. This was a unique statement within the school choice discourse, as the sides for SB 1 and against SB 1 often work in opposition to each other. The statement explicitly stated “School choice is not about....saying that one is better than the other” and reduced the sense of competition that existed within the broader school choice discourse, creating an example of interdiscursivity. By relying on the notion of schemata of the reader, the producer attempted to quell the emotional stance of those that are opposed to vouchers and introduced into the discourse other options for stance: the notion of options and variables of choice, not competition and not one or the other as the only options. This use of politeness worked to manipulate the reader to accept SB 1’s offering of vouchers as another option for schooling.

In the third paragraph of the letter, the politeness-manipulation pattern continued. The face of the paragraph was positive and the tone encouraged collectivism. In order to achieve the producer’s goal of gaining support of SB 1, the producer created face in specific ways to find a level of politeness that worked to include and to encourage the reader to feel invited to be part of the solution while claiming a strong stance to provide his/her specific solution. Employing indirect language was the method to accomplish this.
The first sentence sought to unify the players and their seemingly oppositional stances, working to play down the role of competition claiming, “School choice is not about pitting private schools against public schools or saying that one options is better than the other.” He clearly avoided threatening language and instead utilized inclusive language to draw in the reader. He gauged distance by stating with direct language that all parties and stances should not be “pitted” or competitive with each other, thus saving face. Next, he was polite and offered inclusiveness to what type of schools should be available to families, including all types of schooling within this political conversation in Pennsylvania at this time. Finally, he ended the paragraph by expressing that the choice for schooling should be the choice of the parents with many options for them to choose the best path for their children. The tone of the paragraph was kind and inclusive to readers with other stances. (Fairclough, 1992).

However, upon a closer reading of the paragraph, a discursive revelation can be seen. As Strauss and Feiz state (2015), “…underlying the interaction between speaker (S) and hearer (H) are the socio-cultural elements of power, distance, and weightiness of the FTA” (face threatening acts). (248). Furthermore, they discuss the use of indirectness to save face by applying “positive and negative politeness to circumvent or redress and FTA, producing an ambiguous “off-record” FTA, or not doing the FTA at all” (Strauss and Feiz, 2015, 248). In this paragraph of the letter the use of indirectness followed by directness worked to reduce the threat that his stance may cause by initially including all options of the discourse. For example, the producer was inclusive to the participants in the school choice movement by listing each schooling choice and claiming that families should have the empowerment to make the best choice for their children; the producer attempted to
include everyone reading the letter. Next, he listed all the schooling options: *homeschooling, a cyber school, charter school, public school, or private*, which appears polite. Finally, he ended the paragraph with the positive language that the new legislation “will provide more parents than ever that opportunity to choose the best educational path for their children.” The language does not appear to challenge any particular stance nor provide FTA in a negative or challenging manner.

Implicitly, a discursive event takes place. First the order of the schooling options employed a power stance by the producer. This revelation began to unfold after the reading of the final stance of the paragraph. Following the list of schooling options, the last sentence states: “Opportunity Scholarships together with increased funding for EITC, will provide more parents than ever the opportunity to choose the best educational path for their children.” This claimed a specific stance in the school choice negotiations and clearly supported the contents of SB 1. The paragraph opened with polite language of inclusion and ends with a conclusion that supports SB 1, which supported a clearly defined option for schooling. That option included creating vouchers from public tax money to pay for private tuition.

Now referring back to the list of schooling options, one noted that the list may proceed in an order of increasing worth to the producer. School voucher money that would be released by SB 1 would pay for students’ tuition at private schools or other public schools. By listing that type of school last, the reader can indirectly and vaguely gain the impression that the list was created in increasing order of worth as set forth by the producer. Secondly, the politeness of the producer veiled the directness of the final statement.
The final statement took a direct stance on the solution for the previously mentioned failing schools. That stance directly opposed the opening statement that appeared inclusive of all schools and schooling options. The producer clearly stated opportunity scholarships and EITC funding, the two concepts introduced in SB 1, would provide the “opportunity” for the “best educational path for their children.” The contents of that statement revealed the stance of the producer to be in agreement of the contents of SB 1, which referred back to the opening paragraph of the letter that explained SB 1 and the opening sentence of the second paragraph that claimed directly that REACH supports SB 1. The use of politeness and positive face created a false sense of inclusion; where by a closer critical reading of the letter unveiled the producer’s stance and intentions, resulting in a hegemonic event.

That stance supported SB1, and the letter revealed the producer of the letter was working to gain support of SB 1, which included the imposition of opportunity scholarships, or vouchers, along with EITC funds, which were tax dollars sent to schools for use in part as vouchers. Utilizing the outline for CDA in consideration of Fairclough’s three dimensional framework on the letter revealed the producer’s belief that vouchers would make schools better.

The final paragraph of the letter provided another example where the politeness of the letter conflicted with the stance and request of the producer. The final paragraph opened with a polite, inclusive request of the reader to work together to “improve Pennsylvania’s educational system.” The reader was left with the idea that by working inclusively with people from all types of schooling options an improvement of all schooling in Pennsylvania will occur. However, by looking closely at the options for improvement
offered in the letter, only options that included vouchers and EITC, were the options that would improve Pennsylvania’s education system. No other options for school improvement were offered as solutions, contradicting the inclusive statements of the letter.

**Ana Puig Email (Appendix D)**

The three-dimensional framework notes the influence of social practice. Fairclough explains that within the text is a “discourse practice involving the production and interpretation of text and it is a piece of social practice” (Fairclough, 1993, 136). Furthermore, he attested that within the analysis of text there was “a complex social event” that existed “upon the relations of power and domination” (Fairclough, 1992, 136). In this particular study, relationships were interwoven among groups that were working to influence the legislation. In some cases the members of groups overlapped into other groups and in other cases local groups became a part of larger more encompassing groups.

One example of that would be the Kitchen Table Patriots led by Ana Puig. The Kitchen Table Patriots began as a grassroots effort created by Puig with a conservative agenda and activated by their passion to seek political change and school reform. Since their initial work, they have linked with Freedom Works, which paid them to work “school tuition vouchers in Pennsylvania (Martin, J. 2011, 20). Their small grassroots group came to exist within the larger and powerful Freedom Works, who supplied the co-chairs monetarily to continue to fight for their similar causes.

Additionally, the email (Appendix D) sent to me from Ana Puig regarding SB 1, explained her relationship with others who were members of the fight for SB 1 and vouchers from the Commonwealth Foundation and the American Federation for Children. CDA revealed the interconnectedness of these groups via data documents and a newspaper
article. At times the appearance of multiple groups could be illusionary and evidenced interdiscursivity. The following text was another sample of inter-relational partnerships and interdiscursivity.

**Yearbook from Alliance for School Choice (Appendix F)**

The *Alliance for School Choice Yearbook 2011-12* detailed the school choice programs throughout the country over the previous year. In the course of my work, I collected three yearbooks from three different school choice groups that had similar organization and content, and one other type booklet that was titled, “Ten Principles of School Choice”. They were from three different organizations. Booklets were offered by Alliance for School choice (2), the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, and the Heartland Institute.

The multi-colored yearbook from the Alliance for School Choice included articles, charts, diagrams, and photographs along with definitions and explanations of types of school choice programs existing throughout the country, including a state-by-state profile, which was the largest portion of the book. The yearbook moved in a deliberate manner from defining school choice and its types to highlighting the growth and feature stories of existing programs. Information on other organizations that support school choice, both on the national and state levels, was included. The yearbook was a compilation of alliances working in their particular states to push forth voucher legislation. The book served as a resource for the groups to align and to form partnerships under the umbrella of school choice programs.

Although the yearbook provided an informational tone and face, a closer analysis of the structure and content of the yearbook revealed normalized language and
organizational properties of the text that provided another avenue for seeking partnerships. The coherence throughout the yearbook focused on progress and growth of voucher and school choice programs which unified the topics, the texts, and the interpretation of the texts within the yearbook. For example, repetitions of language and vocabulary within the texts normalized the pro-voucher stance. This included an expressed explicit theme repeated throughout the yearbook of being “THE YEAR of SCHOOL CHOICE.”

From the first text of the book, on page 6, to the groups’ mission statement on page 74, the themes of parental choice and school choice expansion as best practices in education were prevalent and signified the values embedded in the texts. The structure of the yearbook, and the texts within it, were used in an instrumental way to gain partners (Fairclough, 2015). Since the book was created and organized as a “School Choice Yearbook 2011-12” the expected voice, face, force, and overall content were expected to focus on school choice options, especially school vouchers. This appeared naturalized.

However, the attempt at seeking partnerships was revealed in another way and held discursive components. Since the mission of the producers of the text, *Alliance for School Choice*, was to “improve our nation’s K-12 education by advancing systemic and sustainable public policy that empowers parents, particularly those in low-income families, to choose the education they determine is best for their children,” the entire text is dedicated to work done in promotion of school choice and attempts to persuade the reader to accept the solutions offered for school reform in this book by semiotics and prose based on their mission statement (Glenn, 2012, 74). The practice of sharing photographs, quotes, explanations, and individual features of school choice in action was to promote and to incorporate school choice offerings and legislation into the current structures of public
education discourse as exclusive means to solve public schooling problems without any attempt to identify or to offer other explicit solutions created a discursive event. (Fairclough, 1992, 2015).

Additionally, the dissemination of the yearbook and its accompanying letter sought to gain alliance with members of the legislature who were currently in the position to vote for or against school vouchers in SB 1. At the time the letter was sent, February 21, 2012 the representative would be aware that the voucher bill existed. At this point in the bill process, legislators would have earned about the bill and its content. Therefore, receiving a book of this quality might draw the legislator’s attention. The presentation of the yearbook was professional, colorful, organized, and easy to read. Additionally, it was flashy and full of photographs of cheering, rallying, and hopeful children. (See Appendix F.2) This combination of characteristics worked to grasp the attention and the mind of the legislator. The system of representation in this yearbook “produces meaning through the display of objects” and “is concerned with the process of representation- the manner in which meaning was constructed and conveyed through language and objects” (Hall, 1997, 153).

In the letter enclosed with the yearbook, the text claimed 2011 to be “the breakthrough year that was 2011” and “a year the Wall Street Journal has called ‘the year of school choice.’” Furthermore, the final paragraph focused the text to uncover the use of the book as a promotional tool to lobby the representative to see the value in school choice programs:

“If you’re looking to see how school choice programs are benefiting students in your state, or what the research says on the powerful impact voucher and scholarship tax credit programs have on families, the Alliance for School Choice is here to provide you with that information. Please call or email us at any time.”

(Appendix F.1)
The producers of the letter explained they are a source to show the legislator the worth of vouchers and tax credit programs.

The clear presentation of the contents as facts and truths in a normalized tone provided a strong representation of their solution to the need to reform failing schools in a forthright, factual, naturalized manner encouraging the representative to adopt their version of the solution to the problem of failing public schools. This constructivist approach by the producer created a powerful and significant text through the incorporation of “semiotics and poetics of exhibiting” to create a discursive stance to represent a particular solution for school reform through naturalized discourse (Hall, 1997, 153).

According to the foreword, "this yearbook recounts the breakthrough year that was 2001, while analyzing the trends and data that illustrate why publicly funded private school choice is a critically important part of mainstream education reform" (Glenn, 2012, 6). In explanation the book was created to review the year of voucher reform and policy. However, by distributing the yearbook in certain ways, the yearbook shifted from serving as an overview of the year to a resource to build alliances and partnerships. Admittedly the Chairman for Alliance for School Choice, and author of the foreword, Besty DeVos, the yearbook aimed to analyze data to prove school choice was important to education reform, within that realm and with that information, the yearbook was also used as a political tool to convince legislators to support SB 1 and school voucher policy.

**Comparison of texts**

**In Support of SB1, In Opposition of SB1, and Official Work Texts**

The data from the sample texts provided an overview on ways texts work to influence stance, and provide perspectives on producers’ attempts to influence legislators
through texts that come across their desks during the consideration of particular legislation. Comparisons of the texts around SB 1 revealed considerations beyond the surface understanding of the message or meaning of the texts and provided a glimpse into the wider discourse. As was highlighted in the literature review and revealed in the data analysis, deeper meaning and intent may be realized when consideration beyond a surface reading of text is considered along with consideration of the wider discourse and social environment of the policy. As established in the design of this study, a critical analysis was considered to reveal an understanding of how texts shared with legislators work to influence their stance (and possible vote) on legislation.

Borrowing from Norman Fairclough’s three dimensional framework within Critical Discourse Analysis uncovered meanings, intentions, and themes for each sample text. Four overarching themes emerged: *A crisis exists, It is Personal, Framing stance as truth, and Forming Alliances and Partnerships*. The themes reflected a variety of genre and stances, and the texts varied in complexity among the themes. Issues of intertextuality and discursivity emerged in the analysis of texts over all themes. These issues and considerations are significant in identifying and understanding the effect and impact the texts have upon the stance of legislators and the possible outcome of legislative votes. The data analyzed in this study supported these assertions.

**Theme Comparison**

**Multiple themes in texts**

All ten texts revealed the presence of multiple themes. The findings of this analysis revealed the four specific themes that overarch the sample texts. According to themes, one theme, *Forming Alliances and Partnerships*, was included in all ten texts. The theme,
Framing Stance as Truth, was present in nine texts. The theme It's Personal was present in 9 texts, also. Finally, the theme A crisis exists was present in six of the ten texts. An analysis of the texts reveals the predominance of these themes.

**Shared themes present across stances**

In this study, the themes were present in texts regardless of the stances of the producers. Each theme included texts that were in support of SB 1, in opposition of SB 1, and official work texts. These themes were explicit in many texts and implicit in some. The themes were more overtly identified across texts that were in support of SB 1 and in opposition of SB 1 than in the official work texts. Within the texts of this study, additional consideration was given to the work informational texts to uncover their themes. For example, at times multiple texts were attached in the work official texts. For instance, in the Senator’s letter (Appendix I), the Senator shared an official work text that included both the CF 17 Roses Letter (Appendix H) and his own letter that responded to the CR 17 Roses Letter (Appendix I). Within the entire text group sent by the Senator, all themes are present.

Many of the texts employed multiple themes to support their stances and in an effort to gain support and, at times, action by the reader. The themes signify how the producers worked to achieve the support and the movement by readers who experienced the sample text(s).

**Shared themes held variety of genre**

The texts within each theme were not organized by one particular genre. Within the first theme, A Crisis Exists the following genres were present in the sample texts: a
doorknob hanger, three letters, a yearbook, and a resolution. In the second theme, *It's personal*, the following genres were present in the sample texts: a doorknob hanger, two emails, three letters, a yearbook, a resolution, and an email memo. The third theme, *Framing stance as truth*, and the fourth theme, *Forming alliances and partnerships*, includes all ten texts which includes a variety of genre including a doorknob hanger, a pie chart, two emails, three letters, a yearbook, a resolution, and an email memo.

Each sample text sought in very intentional ways to gain the attention of readers. Some used unique genres and semiotics, and other samples texts overlapped in the genres. According to this study, stance can be communicated in a variety of genres and genres can be employed regardless of stance.

**All Themes and texts revealed emotional appeals**

Across all four themes, the use of emotionally appealing language in those texts was present. Through the establishment of tone, voice, and force the producers included an attempt to emotionally appeal to the reader. The producers worked to do this in texts to gain support of their stances or to deter the support of their opposition’s stances by including both language and semiotics that would appeal to the reader’s sense of emotions. Within all themes and genre of this study, emotional appeal was present.

**Each theme revealed Intertextuality and discursivity**

Each of the sample texts revealed examples of intertextuality and interdiscursivity to share their messages and reveal their themes. Furthermore, analysis of intertextuality and interdiscursivity revealed connections to specific issues of ideology and hegemony.
At times the texts included snippets or parts of other texts, responses to other texts, and continuations of discourse begun in previous texts. In some instances, meaning, stance, and frame was better understood and identified when the reader was aware of all the texts involved. Meaning, understanding and context could be altered when the reader only experienced part of the intertextual chain. This was important to consider when issues of stance leading to support or opposition of legislation is requested. Having part of the discourse conversation may impact the understanding of the reader leading to a misrepresentation of stance and alliance, as in the door hanger sample. Intertextuality and Interdiscursivity are powerful elements of discourse that impact and affect the position, stance, and understanding of the reader.

**Intertextual chains**

Interestingly, these sample texts show in most instances the texts produced by supporters of SB 1 initiated the intertextual chain by motivating or provoking a response to their texts from either the oppose SB 1 group or the official work group. The official work group seemed to share stance texts with other members of the legislature and/or took issue with stance and shared both the text they challenged and their response to it. Other work texts shared within the offices, usually by staff, were considered confidential and could not be made public. However, the stances or the responses to texts by a legislator were often put in a public context.

**Thematic Conclusions**

In consideration of the thematic revelations of the texts, the micro politics of school reform work centered on SB 1 and voucher legislation included a focus to create a crisis, personalize the argument, provide language normalizing truth, and to present texts and
stances in coalition and alliance as tools in the negotiations around SB 1. The texts in this study crossed my desk as a legislative aide to inform and to persuade the legislator for whom I work, and regardless of stance— for SB 1, opposing SB 1, or official work of SB 1—shared those tools in their attempt convince readers. The data suggested this revelation across genre and stance warranted through Critical Discourse Analysis.

Themes are enacted as a social practice to do discursive work. The themes work discursively because they take on a tug-o-war or struggle to get certain values and actions positioned as the authority. In this case, groups push forth social practices either to change or to maintain the function of the public schooling structures in PA. The support texts employ the stated themes to realign policies by employing the themes to push forth change. Likewise, the opposition texts utilized the same themes as justification to sustain the current frame of schooling. Both groups do work through texts that ask others to join in to their values, interests, stances, and power, making the work discursive.

The first theme, A Crisis Exists, did it by making the request of the reader urgent. It is Personal, the second theme, appealed personally by putting responsibility for the needs of public education onto the reader. The third theme, Framing Stance as Truth, did it by passing their viewpoints and values as knowledge, not stance. And finally, the fourth theme, Forming Alliances and Partnerships, worked to convince readers into action by encouraging readers to join the group in working together to gain power. Utilizing each theme in particular ways to gain power over the policy discourse, groups enacted social practices within these themes to place their voices as authority while silencing other, thus acting discursively.
Furthermore, the presence of intertextual chains revealed a discourse established particularly around SB 1 and inclusive of the three stances. The two stances of support of SB 1 and oppose SB 1 revealed distinct perspectives through particular language and semiotics of what groups on those sides defined as truth and stance that was set across discourse. However, the official work groups at times revealed evidence of text sharing that was not present in the support or oppose groups. Texts disseminated as official work text, usually shared via a member of the legislature, upon further analysis, included texts that either supported or opposed SB 1 and voucher legislation. Overall of the texts, the themes existed regardless of stance and ideological perspectives, giving insight to the micro politics of education policy. The texts around Senate Bill 1 provided insight as to how producers created texts to gain political favor and to the workings of social practices of education policy.
Chapter 6

Conclusion: Where can we go from here?
Finding a place in the discourse

“Held in place by the relative power of competing discourses, the framing of text commands our attention, offers us positions of competence, and rewards specific meanings as normal. Frames can only invite us to fit in general; they cannot secure our acquiescence within particular contexts. While framing positions us, it cannot determine how we will read the frame with unique arrays of discourses available to us.”

P. Shannon, (2011, 68)
Summary of the Study

I initiated this study because I wanted to know more about the educational policy process. From my vantage point as current legislative aide, I had access to the political texts that entered a state legislator’s office. Producers of those texts name and frame an educational “problem,” and provide an argument to support their hypothesized solution. They intend to inform and persuade the legislator to side with them and to advocate, act and perhaps vote accordingly. Systematic analyses of these texts reveal producers’ visions, tactics, and tropes, illuminating the politics of educational policy at a micro level. The light of those analyses shows the rationality within the production of the texts and producers’ efforts to persuade; however ultimately that light focuses our attention on the irrationality of the educational policy process and mechanisms groups use to seek legitimacy and authority to define the educational experiences those who work in and attend public schools (or their legal equivalent).

My study of Pennsylvania Senate Bill 1 in 2011 provided further evidence of support of these theories about educational policy. The enthusiasm of a new governor was sufficient to push bipartisan support for a school voucher plan that would provide “opportunity grants” to low income families from the lowest -performing five percent of public schools, enabling their children to attend the public, private or parochial school of their choice. Based primarily on Milton Freedman’s theory that economic competition among schools would improve the quality of education for all children at lower costs, SB 1 sponsors argued that the vouchers would serve both the individual and society. This approach echoed the arguments made across the United States in support of school vouchers. SB 1 invited commentaries from prominent national figures and organizations
with limited experience in Pennsylvania schools but with clear political convictions that vouchers were either right or wrong for the state (and the nation). The ties between these national and local advocates were not always transparent.

In the debates surrounding SB 1, no participant had empirical certainty behind his or her position. The evidence in support or in opposition was scant, often of poor quality, and inconclusive. Clearly some students benefited from changing schools through a voucher program, and just as clearly others did not. Benefits were disputed in terms of size, importance, and longevity; and negative impacts on the public schools were often vaguely defined and difficult to characterize empirically. Despite continued media attention, evaluations of the school voucher programs in New York (largest), Milwaukee (oldest), and Washington D. C. (federally run) were mixed at best and debated rigorously in academic circles. As a result, proponents of vouchers and their opponents had to base their arguments on their (political) theories and (economic) values over empirical evidence in order to direct their actions during the life of SB 1.

Approximately 100 texts crossed my desk on the way to the legislator, covering an array of genre from door hangers to official legislative guides to the bill, itself. Most were clear about their positions on the topic and all were political by attempting to persuade readers toward a determined point of view. Because producers were careful in the construction of their texts - leaving nothing to chance – I analyzed the coding systems used in ten percent of the texts, examining everything from the overall designs right down to the sizes and types of the font employed. I was selective in my sampling in order to ensure that I included the three basic positions on SB 1 – proponents, opponents, and official – and a variety of genre. Within those sampling categories, I chose texts randomly whenever
possible. Using the systematic practices of Critical Discourse Analysis, I looked for themes across these positions and genre, believing that the politics of educational policy making was not unique to this topic or these particular producers.

**Social Practices and Discursive Events**

Evidenced in this study, groups entered the education policy discourse of SB 1 for social interaction to push forth social practices for discursive purposes. Groups created texts with particular themes, tropes, and tactics to push their stance and exert power over the reader. The participants in the social practices used specific processes and mechanisms to gain their own or to lessen another’s authority and power to define the educational experiences of those who work in and attend Pennsylvania’s public schools, highlighting the irrationality of the education policy practices.

**Recognizing Social Practices and Discursive Events**

Social practices are constructed in and through the sharing of discourse, and the essence of a social practice includes the interaction of individuals and groups over a shared topic. Social practices provide an apparatus for sharing within a particular discourse in time and space. In this case, the discourse focused on SB 1 and school vouchers as a means of defining schooling practices in Pennsylvania. This interchange of talk and text around SB 1 included rhetoric created to influence a legislator’s vote and ultimately, the creation of school vouchers. Furthermore, texts were shared as a means for social practice events and used as an apparatus for lobbying legislators. The texts held political verbal and semiotic messages intended to mediate and to influence readers’ stances around SB 1. Recognizing social practices and the discourse events held within education policy, allows for the
recognition and critique of the work of the participants. This work seeks to shift and to control power of the topic, thus making for discursive events.

Since completing this study, I realized that I now read texts that cross my desk differently than I did before the study. Before, I quickly read and sorted the texts by topic and overt stance, without much consideration beyond a surface reading of the text. Now, I ready texts more critically and deeply. First, after a periphery reading of the text, I consider both the language and images more deeply and seek to make connections to the education policy and discourse. Second, I consider the social practice within the policy discourse and ask where the text is located in the chain of texts. Third, I work to uncover acts of discursivity, and finally, I seek to connect those acts with the ideological and political stances and imaginings as related to the education policy discourse. Recognizing my shift to a more critical reading of policy texts, motivated me to share this approach to reading social practices with others interested in education policy.

**Thematic Summary: Thematic Patterns as Discursive Practices**

My analyses revealed four themes that cut across the three positions. The four themes are: 1. A Crisis Exists. 2. It is Personal. 3. Framing a Stance as Truth and 4. Forming Alliances and Partnerships. The first theme was **A Crisis Exists**: Opponents took the stance, SB 1 is a response to a crisis in public schools. Proponents said SB 1 presented a crisis for public schooling. And the official work texts demonstrated SB 1 existed due to the public’s lack of confidence in state government to provide effective basic services. The second theme was **It is Personal**: Proponents textualized SB 1 as personal because you (the reader) are a parent and/or a taxpayer. Opponents believed because you are a citizen,
you should be concerned of the threat to public institutions. And official work texts took the stance: because you are a legislator, your stance toward SB 1 is a duty according to our state constitution. The third theme was **Framing a Stance as Truth**: Proponents believed SB 1 is needed because public schools do not work and government cannot fix them. According to opponents, SB 1 should be blocked because it will ruin public schools and diminish our democratic society. And the official work texts took the stance SB 1 should be voted on because the legislators understand how best to educate all citizens. The fourth and final theme revealed was **Forming Alliances and Partnerships**: Proponents explained SB 1 is backed by smart and powerful groups that champion children's interests. Opponents explained SB 1 is opposed by knowledgeable organizations that work for equity and democracy. Official work texts stated voting on SB 1 is our obligation as state legislators, aligning with and competing against other states.

This study uncovered a struggle among groups who wished to place their values and voices as the authority, while silencing others' by the way they wish to realign the policies of the state through their regard on school vouchers. As policies are suggested by others to law makers, "(they) are not divorced from interests, from conflict, from domination or from justice" (Ball, 1990, 3). Theorists explain: Within the policies put forth by groups struggling to control the way schools work and run, values and ideologies motivate power struggles (Edmondson, 2004, Hall, 1997). Since policies reflect some groups' version of the ideal, certain groups' authority and power is justified or accepted over others (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, Edmondson, 2004). "Because the study of educational policy has often concerned the definition of problems and policy choices of those in power, other perspectives are often
silenced, declared irrelevant, postponed, or ignored” (Heck, 2004, 32). This study was an example of that struggle of discursive events within that political tug-o-war.

In this education policy study, themes were used to push forth the discourse in specific and particular ways. The themes worked to change policy, to take power of the discourse, to influence participants, and to gain more participants. Additionally, the themes helped to expose the tactics of others within the education policy discourse and make their tactics overt. Texts that agreed with the tactics of another text, supported and extended the tactic of the original text. However, if the text disagreed with another previous text, the new text sought to uncover, to expose, and to challenge the tactics of the opposing group(s). These instances of intertextuality, as in the example of the Commonwealth’s 17 Roses letter (Appendix H) and the corresponding texts in response to it, show instances of interdiscursivity of groups challenging the tactics, tropes, and stances of the Commonwealth Foundations through both language and semiotics in overt and implicit ways.

The texts revealed stance and challenged stances through attention to power, culture, and truth within the SB 1 discourse. Ideological imaginings and stances were hidden within the formation of language and semiotics, but were revealed through critical discourse analysis to show “truth” and “knowledge” based on beliefs and values in order to produce stance and power and to create a sense of “crisis” to gain readers’ attention. Frames were created to help groups appeal personally to readers so they work in alliance with the producers and take up their stance within the discourse and social practices of SB 1.
Ideology Reflected in Themes

Furthermore, this study uncovered education policy at work and showed instances of loud and silenced voices throughout the SB 1 negotiations. Instances of normalized “truth” established by groups sought to position (their) versions of public schooling policy in PA as right and just to gain power and publicity within the school voucher discourse around SB 1. However, this was not evidence. “Although different political groups and their organizational representatives search for evidence that supports their positions, they oppose or favor vouchers largely on the basis of their ideologies rather than evidence of effectiveness” (Belfield & Levin, 2005, 550). “The hallmark of an ideology is imperviousness to evidence” (Levine & Levine, 2013, 443). As these groups struggled for hegemony, the process of policy creation was revealed to be far from a science, with elements of struggle for rationality and influence present throughout the process (Cuban, 2010). By looking at the micro political work of the groups, I identified and explained various groups’ use of and struggle over language, power, power relations, and resources that revealed their ideologies within the discourse (Prunty, 1985, Strauss & Feiz, 2015).

Evident in the analyzed texts, and highlighted by Belfield and Levin (2005), the voucher framework highlighted freedom of choice, efficiency, equity, and social cohesion. Based on one’s understanding of the role these play in the imposition of vouchers, determined the stance taken for or against vouchers and the role the groups play in the social practices of this education policy. The texts studied highlighted this framework.

Proponents of SB 1

Texts analyzed in this study by proponents of SB 1 shared certain values, even when at times their motivations differed. Overarching ideologies connected the groups to work to
gain support for vouchers, sometimes across the nation, and in this case of SB 1 in Pennsylvania. At times these groups worked together to position their discourse as hegemonic while working to make the opponents’ discourse(s) excluded (Shannon, 2011).

Since school is an ideological institution, groups fight for the influence to control the dynamics, reproduction, and structure of them (van Dijk, 200a). In this case, groups in support of SB 1 prioritized private market systems for education that focused on market competition where they claim vouchers would improve and reinvigorate the quality of education and open up choice of schools for children which they believe would create a more equitable public school system where social and academic goals would be more equitably distributed and less bureaucratically controlled to create a cohesive and strong economic future for the country (Belfield & Levin, 2005, Coons, et al, 2000).

For instance, the Door Hanger (Figure 4.2) text by Freedom Works highlighted the heavy role of government in education emphasizing bureaucratic failure and claiming vouchers will set a private and market driven system that will set students free. Then the Alliance for School Choice Yearbook (Appendix F) endorsed SB 1 and pro-voucher legislation by supplying a yearbook of successful voucher-oriented programs across the nation to each legislator emphasizing the need for parental choice and freedom to choose. Next, the Commonwealth Foundation (Appendix C) published a pie chart utilized by the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference and worked in conjunction with REACH (Appendix E) to work collaboratively to promote vouchers. The chart highlighted the equitable economic side of SB 1 vouchers upon tax payers while neutralizing the economic argument against SB 1. The pie chart linked the two groups together, and further analysis of the REACH text revealed the use of normalization and legitimation to support of the implementation of a
private market system to drive quality of education through competition and provide equitable education for Pennsylvania children. REACH established itself for the purpose of creating a voucher system in Pennsylvania; therefore the pro-voucher groups created a space in which to fortify their power by combining their messages.

Milton Friedman’s neoliberal market driven approach to establishing a competitive private educational market stewarded the work of pro-voucher allies (Friedman, 2002). At times, groups joined with Friedman to push forth a market agenda while other groups aligned for other reasons. Although, Friedman (1995) contends “a stable and democratic society is impossible without widespread acceptance of some common set of values”, he offers no alignment solution to uphold commonality and suggests “the principle of individual freedom requires that those choices be permitted” (124). His overview gives way for the incorporation of groups to form coalitions for the purpose of passing voucher legislation, even when their objectives do not align.

Over the course of SB 1 these coalitions existed. Coalitions formed to build power and to strengthen organization aimed at passing voucher legislation and came together based on political realities and shared positions, not necessarily a shared value-base. The REACH Foundation (Appendix E) and its sister organization, the REACH Alliance, are Pennsylvania’s grassroots coalitions dedicated to ensuring parental choice in education. Members of REACH include “a broad, diverse coalition that includes members from the business community, ethnic and religious organizations, parents, and taxpayer groups” and “is governed by an independent board of directors and funded through generous contributions of Pennsylvania citizens, churches, and foundations” (REACH, 2015). REACH advocated SB 1 and upon its failure “was instrumental in the drafting, passage, and recent
expansions of Pennsylvania’s landmark Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program” which some claimed was the consolation prize for voucher advocates (REACH, 2015).

Members of the REACH coalition came together to advocate for SB 1 with various ideological perspectives. Groups included pro-market neoliberals, religious and faith-based groups, minority groups, business, and other associations (REACH, 2015). For example the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference, the Keystone Christian Education Association and the Dioceses of Pittsburg all have representation on the Executive Committee and Board of Directors and traditionally, represent cultural conservatives seeking to implement vouchers based on morality and certain religious-based values and “seems very strange bedfellow for libertarians, with whom they share little ideological ground” (Kennedy, 2001, 451). Neoliberals, like Friedman, are represented in REACH by the Pennsylvania Manufacturing Association and the Bravo Group, and ideologically support vouchers for the advocacy of limited government, a competitive market based economy, and individual autonomy. Allying with Neoliberals, Libertarians and Christian-based groups, the business community and accompanying foundations sprouted from them, like the Donahue Family Foundation and Milestone Partners, which seek less bureaucracy and government regulation. And although, “major African American organizations remain firmly committed to integrated public schools,” REACH included Minorities for Choice and African Americans for Educational Opportunities (Kennedy, 2001, 451, REACH, 2015). This coming together of ideologically divergent groups with varying “economic interests, social goals, and political and religious beliefs that are affected by public policies and so motivate political behavior” joined forces and waged a campaign in support of SB 1 in Pennsylvania and
continued to work to implement vouchers and support privatization of education in Pennsylvania (Kennedy, 2001, 451, REACH, 2015).

Interestingly, in the texts of this study, no evidence existed to support specific plans or criteria for curricular and/or educational objectives improvement from the pro-voucher groups represented in the texts of this study. The groups within the social practices of SB 1 worked discursively to offer criticism through texts claiming failure of current public schooling, but failed to offer solutions that were educationally and academically oriented.

As these groups continue to work to push forth privatized education and implement vouchers in Pennsylvania and beyond, other groups take up social practices to halt the progress they have made. As explained, this can be motivated by ideologically opposing views; it can also be explained in part by party politics. Kennedy (2001) explains that vouchers tend to follow party lines and have emerged as a “wedge issue” allowing Republicans to “pursue a partisan strategy and at the same time avoid polarizing their supporters” (451). Generally, Democrats embrace anti-voucher and pro-government support of education matching the traditional constituencies (Spring, 1997, Ravitch 2013). Exceptions to this claim exist. Although SB 1 was not voted upon in the House of Representatives, SB 1 followed that accord of party lines in the vote taken in the Senate with twenty-four Republicans and three Democrats voting in support of SB 1 and seventeen Democrats and five Republicans voting against SB1. (One senator, a Republican, did not cast a vote.)
Opponents of SB 1

Like proponents of SB 1, those in opposition of the bill shared certain values and at times ideological perspectives yet differed on motivational drives to oppose the bill. At times the groups shared perspectives and concerns on the efficacy and purpose of the SB 1, but in the case of the texts analyzed in this sample, did not work in overt alliance. However, one unique experience showed that some texts against SB 1 were shared discursively as an official work text through the delivery by a legislator.

The groups who shared texts within the opposition category included state chapters of national organizations, statewide education associations, statewide groups formed to oppose vouchers, public school districts, and local citizens. More opposition correspondence was received than from proponents. The groups analyzed were representative of these groups: NAACP (Appendix K), the Blue Mountain School District (Appendix G), and a response letter from a senator who challenged the work of a pro-voucher group (Appendix I).

Groups in this category fought to keep public schools functioning as they traditionally have in Pennsylvania and took up stance to serve as a mechanism for liberal democracy and the promotion of freedom and inclusivity (Shannon, 2011). In this category groups appeared to have shared more closely ideological perspectives around the publicness of schooling. However they did not tend to form coalitions or release shared texts as the proponent groups, based on the data. All three texts in this category used language to challenge the discourse of the proponents of SB 1 and to create discursive experiences to defend the role, structure, and function of public schooling in Pennsylvania.
Ideologically, the oppositional group included progressive, liberal, and labor groups that support the government as the prime setting for the management and functioning of public schools. The ideologies of these groups challenged the neo-liberal notion of the proponent group that believed “schools are to become businesses, run and managed like businesses with a primary focus on the profit and loss account” to change the culture and philosophy of the current form of public schooling, which opponents viewed as a detriment to democracy and to society (Ball, 1990, 68). Furthermore, the opposition group ideologically opposed the focus of SB 1 in their texts: to turn public schooling into private business markets as the delivery method for education, where students become products (Ball, 1990). The opposition group challenged the frame of voucher advocates that competition will promote learning achievement and progress in all children and asserted treating children as products will widen the achievement gap and disenfranchise more students (Shannon, 2011, Weil, 2002).

These texts sought to frame their ideas of education policy that challenge market ideology by explaining and challenging the discourse of the pro-SB 1 groups’ efforts to identify to the public and policymakers the perceived dangers of vouchers on public education. (Engel 2000) This stance set forth in the discourse that vouchers brought a decline of democracy, a loss of equality, autonomy, and inclusiveness, along with civic identity and local cultural values (Engel, 2000, Weil, 2002).

For example, the Blue Mountain Resolution (Appendix G), created intentionally as a public document by the Members of the Board of Education of the Blue Mountain School District for the consumption of their (public) constituency, promoted their school and its success for the continuation of autonomy while promoting the increased academic
achievement of Pennsylvania’s public and democratic schools. The resolution emphasized the role of public schools as a mechanism for inclusiveness and equality while asserting voucher schools’ structure as exclusionary and unaccountable for both academic and democratic values. Then, the NAACP Letter (Appendix K) ardently explained “children of color” have been positioned as pawns in the voucher negotiations by pro-voucher advocates as “disingenuous” and segregating, raising issues of civic and cultural values of the advocates. The letter established voucher legislation as a threat to cultural and civic values, highlighting the exclusion of an equal education to the most vulnerable children: “the poor, who are of color, and who have special needs.” Finally, the NAACP letter endorsed the continuation of public schools to promote democracy and inclusion with the offer to work with current schools for the “improve(ment) of education outcome for Pennsylvanians.”

Appendix I was a Letter from a Senator responding to and defending the role of public education in society by challenging the assertions of a letter by a voucher proponent group. The Senator’s text raised concerns over the outlandish discourse of the group’s claims and their disingenuous commentary as harmful to children, schools, democracy, equality and the community. Since the proponents highlighted and defamed the lowest performing schools as a justification for voucher legislation, the Senator’s response text pinpointed the harm of inflammatory commentary toward autonomy, democracy, equality and inclusivity through the group’s attempt to devalue both the school and its civic and cultural character. The Senator's work in the text aimed to disempower the language of the proponent’s neoliberal discourse by challenging and disarming claims and threats made to democracy and the progressive, liberal, and labor ideological perspectives.
John Dewey’s progressive and democratic approach to schooling rejects privatization and market ideology to focus on a schooling of “democratic participation” and “democratic civil values” for a shared American experience, aligning with the ideological perspectives of the con-voucher groups (Engel, 2000, 45). His contemporaries have continued to work for a public school system that embraces the spirit of American democracy, culture, inclusiveness, and civic values in light of the aggressive neoliberal campaign to reformulate schooling. The growth of the neoliberal movement and the resulting political rhetoric remain a challenge to democratic progressivism.

Over the life of the SB 1 legislation the textual work of the opponents often took a defensive stance. More so, the analyzed texts put forth by the proponents of SB 1 showed an offensive stance rather than a defensive or responsive stance. As for the texts offered by the opponents, all three of them offered rebuttals to the rhetoric of the proponents work and texts. The Blue Mountain School District Resolution (Appendix G) justified the good work of public schools in being public, inclusive, autonomous, free, and democratic. The NCAA Letter (Appendix K) directly addressed the use of children of color and their parents as a strategy and commodity to achieve vouchers in Pennsylvania regardless of the harm it may cause to democracy, freedom, equality, and inclusion. Finally, the letter from the Senator (Appendix I) directly challenged the Commonwealth Foundation letter (Appendix H) as a misplaced visual history or perspective of certain students, asserting the use of stereotypical, disgusting, and appalling rhetoric for positioning students, schools, teachers, and the community in an exclusionary and harmful manner (Hall, 2009, Strauss & Feiz, 2015). The text addressed the recent academic success of one of the public schools in spite of the work of groups like the Commonwealth Foundation.
As work of the pro-voucher organizations continues to focus on a disempowerment of the current and traditional public school structure, the work of progressives to improve the curriculum, pedagogy, and condition of American public schools also continues. The social practices of education policy reform has included, for decades, neoliberal ideological work targeted at proving the inefficacy of public schooling and democratic pedagogy. Traditionally, the rhetoric of the neoliberal ideology's social practice is based on challenging the efficiency and effectiveness of public schools and the resulting workforce in competition within the global market, creating a sense of fear among the public through the use of rhetoric (Hall, 2009, Prunty, 1984.)

**Official Work Texts**

Unique to this study was the role that work texts played in the discourse of SB 1. Initially, an assumption of a neutral stance of work texts was taken since the location of the information was among and within the members and the staff of the House of Representatives, and texts included in this group often explained the contents of SB 1 without overt statements on stance. The latter texts were often in-house, confidential texts not shared in this study’s samples. Some texts from legislators to other legislators included addendums from pro and con groups that held direct stance. Upon analysis, as signified by the sample work texts shared in this study, texts were revealed to not only share to inform but also to persuade, to convince, and to charge legislators to take a stance with or against SB 1 while often “projecting character traits that have normative meanings” (Wodak, 2009, 8). Like all other texts in this study, discursivity existed within the work official texts of SB 1.
For example, in the Ana Puig email (Appendix D), no overt statement regarding stance was shared. Upon closer analysis the text revealed the attempt to build coalitions by connecting me and the legislator for whom I work with other proponent groups of SB 1 for the purpose of sharing pro-SB 1 statistics and rhetoric. By both reinforcing the physical meeting between the legislator and the pro-SB 1 advocate and introducing new advocates to the legislator and me, the advocate, worked to build stance for SB 1 takes place, making this work text a pro-SB 1 text (Haugaard & Lentner, Ball, 1990).

Next, the letter authored by a Senator (Appendix I) to an officer of a pro-voucher group, the Commonwealth Foundation (Appendix H), was filed as a work text since the Senator provided copies of his letter to each member of the General Assembly. However, upon initial reading of the letter, overt stance against SB 1 and voucher legislation are observed. More so, an argumentative tone was established within the letter against the rhetoric and tactics of the pro-voucher group as a discursive strategy to reframe the discourse utilizing perspectivation (Wodak, 2009). Not only does this letter take a stance in the voucher negotiations; it also challenges the rhetorical tactics utilized by the pro-voucher/SB 1 group, Commonwealth Foundation. Although this type of text existed in all the text groups in this study, for the official work texts, analysis revealed texts containing a normative tone were prevalent (Wodak, 2009, Strauss & Feiz, 2015).

For example, the memo from a member of the House of Representatives (Appendix J) to the members of the General Assembly showed the flow of information. The Representative used neutral language to share an addendum (Appendix K) that took clear stance against SB 1. Although the language shared by the Representative within the email memo he authored referenced no stance or possible vote on the legislation, the physical
sharing on his part constitutes a stance on the topic. (Fairclough, 2015, Strauss & Feiz, 2015) However, as Fairclough (2015) explains texts are connected to the world where they exist through normative language connected to that physical and rhetorical setting. In this case, texts released through the work setting can provide “a conception of ideology as an ‘implicit philosophy’ in the practical activities of social life, backgrounded and taken for granted, that connects it to ‘common sense’” (107).

Therefore, upon implementation of CDA to the official work texts sampled within this study, the revelation emerged that no text was neutral or without stance. (Strauss & Feiz, 2015, Fairclough, 1992, 1995) As Hall (2006) explains, “…those groups who own the means of production thereby control the means of producing and circulating a society’s ideas” (347). In this study groups who took public stance created and circulated their texts in different ways to gain power to control their message as truth, to build relationships, and to explain the crisis while personalizing the message to the audience with intentions of gaining power to control the outcome of Senate Bill 1 (Hall, 1997, Wodak, 2009). Many of the official work texts did this implicitly through normatively structured documents.

**Ideological Influences**

Within the texts analyzed, values of the producers emerged. The values were signified through textual images and themes provided in the shared texts as representations of ideological imaginings within social practices (Hall, 1997). Semiotically, meanings were constructed and displayed to signify the values held and ideologies promoted by the producers (Hall, 1997, Ball, 1990). The ideologies of these groups reached out from each text to position the reader with certain “truths” and to capture his or her allegiance to either support or oppose SB 1.
According to van Dijk (unp.), ideologies are the “basic (system) of beliefs shared by
groups” and “are the basis of the social memory shared by groups” including social
movements that are carried out specifically by groups seeking certain outcomes over
others (14). Within these social structures are social practices that represent ideologies.
These ideologies “are not sociocultural and cannot be presupposed to be accepted by
everyone…. Ideologies typically give rise to differences of opinion, to conflict and struggle”
(14). In this study, ideology was considered to be the basic social representation
framework of beliefs shared by specific groups with the purpose of reflecting and
promoting specific, predetermined values and ideas to represent a proposition (Hall, 1997,
Ball 1990).

Over the time of SB 1, an ideological struggle took place. Groups representing the
proponents and the opponents struggled to capture the power to define good public
schooling through the representations in their public texts. This struggle for hegemony
played out as “a matter of persuasion and consent as of force” to dominate the discourse
and to win both the marginalized and the competing groups within the elected and the
popular citizenry in Pennsylvania at that time (Hall, 1997, 348). By framing texts to push
forth particular ideological visions, the groups poised their texts discursively to push forth
certain policy work or to kill certain policy work while positioning themselves to gain
hegemony and control of the dialogue and the meaning of texts (Ball, 1990, Shannon,
2011). This ideological work was evident in the texts shared in this study.
Ideology at Work

This study uncovered a struggle among groups who wished to place their values and voices as the authority, while silencing others’ by the way they wish to realign the policies of the state through their regard on school vouchers. As policies are suggested by others to law makers, “(they) are not divorced from interests, from conflict, from domination or from justice” (Ball, 1990, 3). Theorists explain: Within the policies put forth by groups struggling to control the way schools work and run, values and ideologies motivate power struggles (Edmondson, 2004, Hall, 1997). Since policies reflect some groups’ version of the ideal, certain groups’ authority and power is justified or accepted over others (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, Edmondson, 2004). “Because the study of educational policy has often concerned the definition of problems and policy choices of those in power, other perspectives are often silenced, declared irrelevant, postponed, or ignored” (Heck, 2004, 32). This study was an example of that political tug-o-war.

Furthermore, this study uncovered education policy at work and showed instances of loud and silenced voices throughout the SB 1 negotiations. Instances of normalized “truth” established by groups sought to position (their) versions of public schooling policy in PA as a right and just to gain power and publicity within the school voucher discourse around SB 1. However, this was not evidence. “Although different political groups and their organizational representatives search for evidence that supports their positions, they oppose or favor vouchers largely on the basis of their ideologies rather than evidence of effectiveness” (Belfield & Levin, 2005, 550). “The hallmark of an ideology is imperviousness to evidence” (Levine & Levine, 2013, 443). As these groups struggled for hegemony, the process of policy creation was revealed to be far from a science, with elements of struggle
for rationality and influence present throughout the process (Cuban, 2010). By looking at
the micro political work of the groups, I identified and explained various groups’ use of and
struggle over language, power, power relations, and resources within the discourse of SB 1
that revealed their ideologies through specific social practices (Prunty, 1985, Strauss &
Feiz, 2015).

**New Literacies: Reading with a Discursive Lens**

**Teacher, Texts and Discourse Participation**

In order for educators to participate in the discourse of education policy “much
work needs to be done toward this end, and much effort needs to be expended toward
including teachers in policymaking processes at state and federal levels” (Edmondson,
2004, 86). Teachers cannot wait to be invited; they need to mobilize and vocalize to insert
themselves into the discourse. In order for educators to engage and to mobilize in this type
of policy discourse participation and negotiation toward effecting positive change for
schooling practices and the continuation of democratic schooling, a process of learning and
communicating must take place. Teachers would benefit by understanding the work of
social practices within education policy discourse, so they can read policy work critically,
identify discursivity, and respond and participate with critical literacy.

This process needs to take place at several levels and in a variety of forums.

The process of preparing to engage in advocacy should be an established part of teacher
education preparation and should be incorporated into educator professional
development. Additionally, opportunities for practice and for participation in education
policy discourse and negotiations at the macro and micro level must happen. Educators can learn:

1. to read education policy texts critically
2. to identify social practices and the discursive acts within them
3. to engage in the discourse of education policy work
4. to participate and to advocate for their work within the education policy discourse

Often, teachers are not comfortable or confident to participate in education policy talk in a public forum where education policy negotiations take place. Often during these public discourse experiences, teachers are usually not present in the direct exchanges at the local, state, and federal levels. Traditionally, that work has been left for administrators, union lobbyists, and association representatives. In Pennsylvania, examples of these groups include superintendents, local school board members, the Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA), and the Pennsylvania Association School Business Officials (PASBO).

In my experience as a public school teacher I, along with my English department colleagues, felt silenced by my principal in response to standardized test scores and NCLB mandates. Most likely, the principal felt silenced from his superiors who were feeling the pressure of state and federal mandates in response to making AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress). Our efforts as English teachers “to find some balance between focusing on the test scores and helping students make sense of themselves and the world through reading and writing” was met with an assurance that we had no role or voice in “setting curriculum, organization and professional development in (his) school” (Hobbs, 2006, 283). Following that meeting, I decided to resign because “I could not continue working in a situation where my knowledge was silenced... (as) I seek a democratic workplace in which I have a say in
the decisions that affect my work and the lives of my students” (Hobbs, 2006, 283). Within
the frame of education policy discourse teachers find themselves negated from
conversations and their professional advice discounted; therefore I became motivated to
find some other way for me, and other teachers, to find a place to use my voice to
participate in the education policy discourse and negotiations for schools, students, and
educators (Hobbs, 2006, 283).

Additionally, a recent conversation with a veteran middle school public education
teacher over controversial state bills seeking to alter certain education plans and
regulations in Pennsylvania provided another example of silenced teachers. The teacher
shared with me her opposition to the legislation and frustration with the course of recent
legislative education policy negotiations in Pennsylvania; I offered her an opportunity to
voice that frustration and to offer solutions in a forum of educators with the legislator for
whom I work. She declined. She explained going public with her stance within the current
frame of authority would get her punished. The current public education policy discourse
includes government “experts” and neoliberal groups who publicly define teachers in a
particular manner through the misuse of test scores and other data established through
education policy mandates leading to the deskilling of teachers and diminishing respect of
teacher’ work (Edmondson, 2004, Shannon, 2014). This current frame of discourse silences
and excludes public school educators. However, with education this can change. “Educators
must begin to link their concerns with one another and work together to strategically
influence policies at all levels: local, state, and federal” (Edmondson, 2004, 89).

Education scholars within teacher education programs can begin to offer
opportunities for pre-service teachers to explore and to identify opportunities for teacher
discourse participation. Awareness of the current frame of discourse can help pre-service teachers to understand and to navigate the education policy setting and begin to offer practices that prepare future teachers to enter the profession with a sense of ‘how to’ “act democratically on behalf of themselves, their students, and their communities” (Hobbs, 2006, 283). Books like Educators on the Frontline: Advocacy Strategies for Your Classroom, Your School, and Your Profession (Lewis, Jongsma, & Berger, 2005) offers these examples and opportunities to see how other educators entered the discourse and took up social practices to advocate and to participate in the policy negotiation of schooling and serves as an example of texts that can be used in teacher preparation courses. Had I read this book before I entered the classroom, I would have been more prepared and may have responded differently.

Opportunities to study and to analyze current educational policy discourse during teacher education programs can ready teachers to take up discourse negotiations, in confident and effective ways that share professional expertise to create change and to build collaborations with administrators, parents, community members, public officials, policymakers, and others who participate in the process. “In Reshaping High School English (1997) Bruce Pirie challenges educators to act quickly on implementing advancements and necessary changes in light of history. He explains if educators are not willing to take on this advocacy “there are plenty of legislators and interest groups only too willing to define it for us” (6). This study is testament to Pirie’s statements. Working with educational scholars both within teacher education programs and in settings for teacher professional development work, educators who have the key knowledge of best practices can become advocates and work discursively to “understand the vital impact we have in the processes
of transforming our educational system” (Hobbs, 2006, 283). By introducing advocacy concepts, discourse analysis, and critical policy study to both pre-service and present service teachers, educators can become literate in the discourse and empowered to question, to discuss, to debate, to argue and to convince others through participation in the social practice of education policy.

**Outcomes: Learning to Participate in the Social Practices of Education Policy**

Programs that teach educators to advocate need to build arsenals and confidences in public education teachers to change the current and historical role of silence. To do this, teacher education programs and teacher professional development programs can organize lessons and create opportunities for educators to gain an understanding of the micro-level policy process and to engage in and to analyze the discourses of policy work within classroom settings, so they can develop skills, language, and confidences to advocate publicly for their work, their schools, and their students.

Reading and participating in education policy work is complex but can be done. Although all of the texts were ultimately intended to evoke an appropriate vote from my legislator, few of the texts were produced primarily for his consumption. Most producers addressed the public as individuals and groups who were then to apply pressure to get or to prevent that vote. Regardless of the intended audience, the textual tropes were similar. To every group the text producers explained: We face a critical situation that requires action; you are responsible to do something; our argument tells you all you need to know; and by your action you join a larger powerful coalition doing vital work for children in America. Distinguishing the positions, then, were the ideologies – sets of values – the text
producers encoded in the texts and the individuals they were able to recruit through these efforts. The relative power of those ideologies within the educational policy making situation determined the outcome – in this case, the killing of SB 1 before its vote in the House of Representatives.

**Conclusion**

I began this study to understand how teachers might identify the role of other groups and the discourse present during legislative negotiations on educational policies, but in the end, I learned new ways of critically reading education policy texts. I hoped teachers would identify others were working to affect, to change, to alter, and to control public education within the political setting. Ultimately, I sought to uncover, for those who read this study, an opportunity to see the social practices within the discourse of the politics of public education policy in action. My hope was for educators to identify the specific discourse(s) of education politics and to see the possibilities of their role as a voice and an advocate for public schools by taking access into the public education policy discourse.

Many opportunities exist for educators to participate in education policy discourse. Local and grassroots efforts can work effectively to communicate with students, parents, the public, and lawmakers to take up policy concerns and to stand up for or against power relations, control of the discourse, and justice for their work. An example of shared discourse in the legislative district where I live and work has created effective communication. Since the initial year of the legislator’s service, a group called the Teachers’ Coalition meets to share the discourse of public school education policy. The grouped
formed through the organization of myself and the legislator by inviting two teachers from each school district within the legislative district. Teachers from all school levels—elementary, middle, and high—were represented. Approximately a dozen teachers have participated in meetings held several times over each school year. Over pizza and refreshments, teachers are free to dialogue with the legislators and to dive deeper into the effects of legislative mandates and government regulations on their work, classrooms, and students. Likewise, the legislator and I share the current processes and focuses of education within the General Assembly. This sharing of discourse has built trust and confidence among the groups with often stark and direct discourse exchanges.

Understanding the discourse and texts present in the public school education policy talk has enabled the groups to push forth on topics valued to them (us). The legislator has even sponsored legislation that has emerged from the discourse exchange of the Teachers Coalition.

Opportunities for social practice and discourse participation came about through the legislative office due to my professional duties. However, I have come to realize that as an educator, I could have organized the same opportunities or have communicated individually with my state and federal legislators. My hope is that this study and my work can motivate teachers to learn to ready education policy critically, identify the social practices around education policy, and to become empowered to participate in the negotiations of education policy.

Ultimately, that kind of communication affected the life and the death of Senate Bill 1 in Pennsylvania in 2011. According to my legislator, the bill did not have enough public support from local voters to gain his support. He believes this also to be the case for other
members of the PA House of Representatives. In our office more texts against SB 1 were received than for SB 1. Although very loud and powerful texts were shared and lobbied upon him often by powerful participants, ultimately the quieter, local voices captured his attention and impacted his stance, showing both educators’ and the public’s power to affective communication and discourse awareness upon the vote of a legislator.

Identification of and participation in the critical reading of education policy and the texts circulating to influence it “does much to increase the political consciousness and awareness of those involved” (Edmondson, 2004, 94). Educators undertaking critical literacy practices will be prepared to participate in the education policy discourse in order to raise awareness and challenge current political ideologies working to control and to dominate public education policy. By recognizing discursive work within the discourse and texts influencing education policy work, teachers can learn to challenge current ideological practices and provide new imaginings in order to take up space within education policy discourse. Public education can benefit from social practices shared between lawmakers and educators for the purpose of leading to the creation of new spaces and opportunities to progress public democratic schooling and “begin to forge an understanding of our collective social needs” (Edmondson, 2004, 95).

The work taken up in this study sought to “(r)ecognize how frames work in the struggle of discourses for power over interpretation can help readers to employ their sociological imagination in efforts to choose to accept or resist the dangers inherent in the positions offered them within a certain time and place” (Shannon, 2011, 65). Shannon (2011) explains, as quoted in the opening of this chapter, that established structures and frames are often perceived as steadfast, but in reality offer us possibilities for agency and
imagining through social competence. Although the established themes and social practices of education policy discourse hold powerful stances, we as educators cannot allow them to discount our expertise and prevent us from understanding and participation. Therefore, this work sought to unveil to educators and those interested in public education how others lobby and work to influence public education through participation in discursive social practices, so they too can critically ready, engage, and lobby with the education policy discourse.
References


Martin, J. (2011). Two Bucks County women are darlings of the tea party movement. 


*Discourse & Society*. 1,1: 5-16.


Appendices

Appendix A Washington, D.C Study Finding and Figures

**Student Achievement**

- Overall reading and math test scores were not significantly affected by the Program, based on our main analysis approach. On average over the 40-plus months of potential participation, the treatment group scored 3.90 points higher in reading and .70 points higher in math than the control group, but these differences were not statistically significant (figure ES-2).
- No significant impacts on achievement were detected for students who applied from SINI 2003-05 schools, the subgroup of students for whom the statute gave top priority, or for male students, or those who were lower performing academically when they applied.
- The Program may have improved the reading but not math achievement of the other three of six student subgroups. These include students who came from not SINI 2003-05 schools (by 5.80 scale score points), who were initially higher performing academically (by 5.18 points), or who were female (5.27 points). However, the impact estimates for these groups may be due to chance after applying a statistical test to adjust for multiple comparisons.

Combining the two cohorts in this way was necessary to ensure that the sample size (number of students) for analysis was sufficient to detect impacts of a policy-relevant size and to provide results that could be applied to both cohorts. We were unable to collect data from cohort 1 in their fourth year after application because the legislative decision to extend the OSP and the evaluation came too late.

**Figure ES-2. Achievement (SAT-9 Scale Score Points) After At Least Four Years**

![Graph showing student achievement in reading and math](image)

*NOTES: Results are for cohort 1 five years after random assignment and cohort 2 four years after random assignment. The possible range of SAT-9 scale scores varies by grade level. The value at which the x-axis intersects the y-axis in this figure (470) represents the minimum average reading score possible given the grade composition of the control group sample in the final year. The minimum*
average math score possible for the control group sample was 502. The maximum possible reading score and math score was 835 and 832, respectively. Valid N for reading = 1,328; math = 1,330. Separate reading and math sample weights used.

**High School Graduation (Educational Attainment)**

• The offer of an OSP scholarship raised students’ probability of completing high school by 12 percentage points overall. The graduation rate based on parent-provided information was 82 percent for the treatment group compared to 70 percent for the control group (figure ES-3). There was a 21 percent difference (impact) for using a scholarship to attend a participating private school.
• The offer of a scholarship improved the graduation prospects by 13 percentage points for the high-priority group of students from schools designated SINI in 2003-05 (79 percent for the treatment group versus 66 percent for the control group) (figure ES-3). The impact of using a scholarship on this group was 20 percentage points.
• Two other subgroups had statistically higher graduation rates as a result of the Program. Those who entered the Program with relatively higher levels of academic performance had a positive impact of 14 percentage points from the offer of a scholarship and 25 percentage points from the use of a scholarship. Female students

6 These data were obtained through follow-up telephone surveys with parents of students in the study forecasted to have completed 12th grade by the summer of 2009. A total of 63 percent of parents in the target sample responded to this survey.

xi had a positive impact of 20 percentage points from the offer of a scholarship and 28 percentage points from the use of a scholarship.
• The graduation rates of students from the other subgroups were also higher if they were offered a scholarship, but these differences were not statistically significant.

*Figure ES-3. High School Graduation Rates for the Overall Sample and the SINI 2003-05 Subgroup, 2008-09*
**Statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level.**

**Statistically significant at the 99 percent confidence level.**

† = subgroup impact result remained statistically significant after adjustments for multiple comparisons.

NOTES: Results are for cohort 1 five years after random assignment and cohort 2 four years after random assignment. Valid N = 316, including SINI 2003-05 N = 231, not SINI 2003-05 N = 85. High school graduation determined via parental self-reports.
Appendix B Milwaukee Study Findings and Summary

Summary of What We Learned About School Choice in Milwaukee

Our research revealed a pattern of school choice results that range from neutral (no significant differences between Choice and MPS) to positive (clear benefit to Choice). Although we have examined virtually every possible way that school choice could systematically affect people, schools, and neighborhoods in Milwaukee, we have found no evidence of any harmful effects of choice. The major findings from this last set of seven topical reports are that:

• Participation in MPCP continues to grow even as both MPCP and MPS have succeeded in closing or at least denying public funds to a substantial number of low-performing schools over the past five years (Report #33).

• Enrolling in a private high school through MPCP increases the likelihood of a student graduating from high school, enrolling in a four-year college, and persisting in college by 4-7 percentage points (Report #30).

• When similar MPCP and MPS students are matched and tracked over four years, the achievement growth of MPCP students compared to MPS students is higher in reading but similar in math. The MPCP achievement advantage in reading is only conclusive in 2010-11, the year a high-stakes testing policy was added to the MPCP (Report #29).

• When a snapshot of all MPCP students who took the state accountability test is compared to a snapshot of the performance of MPS students with similar income disadvantages, the MPCP students are performing at higher levels in the upper grades in reading and science but at lower levels in math at all grade levels examined and in reading and science in 4th grade (Report #32).

• Based on MPCP and MPS administrative data on MPCP students as well as parent surveys, between 7.5 and 14.6 percent of MPCP students have a disability, a rate at least four times higher than previously reported by DPI (Report #35).

• Visits to 13 MPCP schools revealed that many Choice students come to the schools behind by 1-2 years academically; the MPCP schools use various strategies to try to “catch them up” and prepare them for college and succeed with some but not all of them (Report #34).

• When similar independent public charter and MPS students are matched and tracked over four years, the achievement growth of the charter students compared to MPS students is similar in both reading and math, though conversion charters, which used to be private schools, clearly deliver higher achievement growth than MPS (Report #31).

Findings from previous topical reports in our study, relevant to interpreting these recent findings, show that:

• MPS students themselves are performing at somewhat higher levels as a result of competitive pressure from the school voucher program (Report #11).

• The MPCP saves the state money -- nearly $52 million in fiscal year 2011 -- although not all types of Wisconsin taxpayers benefit from the savings (Report #22).

• The MPCP has had no discernible effect on the racial segregation of schools or housing costs across neighborhoods (Reports #20 & #12).
• Students switch schools frequently in Milwaukee, with MPS students typically changing from one MPS school to another MPS school and MPCP students typically changing from an MPCP school to an MPS school (Report #16).
Appendix C Commonwealth Foundation Pie Chart and Flyer
Good Morning All-
Attached is a chart that I spoke with Mike about last week. It was produced by the Commonwealth Foundation. I am not sure if anyone has sent it to you. Please feel free to contact me if you need additional information.

Please tell Jim that I said Hello.

Andy

Andrew J. Hilt
Pugliese Associates
2205 Strawberry Square
Harrisburg, PA 17101
717-238-9078 Office
717-829-5128 Mobile

www.puglieseousaociates.com
C.2
Pennsylvania Catholic Conference use of Pie Chart

Will School Choice Drain Resources from Public Schools?

Thousands of Catholic students attend public schools all over Pennsylvania. Supporting families in educating their children no matter where they go to school is part of our obligation to promote the common good. School choice should not be viewed as an “us v. them” debate between public and non-public schools. Pennsylvania’s public schools and their fine teachers and administrators are our collaborators, not our adversaries, in fulfilling the obligation to educate every child.

Claims that school choice will negatively impact public schools are misleading. Real world experience and evidence show that states and cities with school choice programs have not seen a decrease in their public school budgets. In the scheme of the state education budget, the voucher program proposed in Senate Bill 1 is very small. Vouchers are limited to the neediest students in the lowest achieving schools first. If every student who qualifies takes a voucher in the first year, their scholarships will cost the state 0.28% of the overall education budget. That is only 28¢ for every $100 that will still be allocated to public schools. And the state subsidy for schools that are not on the list of failing schools will not be affected.

When students leave public schools using voucher programs, only the state subsidy will follow the child. Taking a student out of public school removes the cost of educating that student, and yet the local tax dollars remain. Additionally, nonpublic schools are already saving tax dollars. If every one of Pennsylvania’s 287,092 nonpublic school students returned to public school, the costs would be significant – 287,092 x $13,907 = $3.9 billion annually (not counting the costs of new construction).

We must not lose sight of what this debate is truly about – children and the future of Pennsylvania. School choice is a public program that supports and empowers parents with options to determine the best school for their own child. Public school may be the right choice for one student, but it may not meet the needs of another. Our mandatory system in which students are assigned to a school based solely on geographic location is not working well for every student, particularly children from low-income families. To operate in status quo is unjust and inequitable. We need a better and smarter way to educate all of Pennsylvania’s children.
Appendix D Ana Puig Email

DO125 Staff - Fwd: Follow-Up on Opportunity Scholarship Meeting and EITC

From: Ana Puig <conservatives4america@gmail.com>
To: <do125@pahousegop.com>
Date: 11/3/2011 12:43 PM
Subject: Fwd: Follow-Up on Opportunity Scholarship Meeting and EITC
CC: <mtobash@pahouse.gop.com>, Anastasia Przybylski <anastasiaprz@gmail.com>

Hi Ali,

We met with Representative Tobash yesterday in regards to School Choice.

Please see the note below as the Representative asked me to include you on the email (I had the wrong email address for you).

Let me know if you have any questions.

Best,

Ana Puig
267-884-6335
Co-Chair, The Kitchen Table Patriots
PA Field Coordinator, FreedomWorks

------------- Forwarded message -------------
From: Ana Puig <conservatives4america@gmail.com>
Date: Thu, Nov 3, 2011 at 11:08 AM
Subject: Follow-Up on Opportunity Scholarship Meeting and EITC
To: ibosiwic@pahousegop.com, mtobash@pahouse.gop.com
Cc: nabo@commonwealthfoundation.org, denise <lasherinc@gmail.com>, Anastasia Przybylski <anastasiaprz@gmail.com>, andy@pugliesecorporation.com

Dear Rep. Tobash,

It was a pleasure to meet you yesterday and discuss SB1 at length with you.

As promised, I am cc Denise Lasher (she is with the American Federation for Children) in this email as Denise can send you great information on the program that FL has implemented so successfully.

I am also cc Nate Benefield from the Commonwealth Foundation. Nate will also be able to provide you with more statistical information regarding vouchers.

If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to contact any of us.

All the best,

Ana

267-884-6335

Co-Chair
Appendix E REACH Alliance Letter

January 27, 2011

As you know, Sen. Jeffrey Piccola and Sen. Anthony Williams have introduced Senate Bill 1, the Opportunity Scholarship Act that will promote and expand school choice options in the Commonwealth.

REACH is very supportive of Senate Bill 1. This legislation marks a giant leap forward for Pennsylvania’s schoolchildren. Today, the quality of a child’s education in this state depends on their zip code. Unfortunately, it is clear that some schools are failing our children.

School choice is not about pitting private schools against public schools or saying that one option is better than the other. It is about empowering families to make the best choice for their children — whether it’s homeschooling, a cyber school, charter school, public school or private school. Opportunity Scholarships, together with increased funding for EITC, will provide more parents than ever the opportunity to choose the best educational path for their children.

Founded in 1991, the REACH (Road to Educational Achievement through Choice) Alliance is Pennsylvania’s grassroots coalition for school choice. REACH was created to advance educational options in Pennsylvania, first leading the 1991 effort to pass a statewide school choice plan in the state Senate. The bill was later defeated on a procedural vote in the House. Building on the momentum for parental choice, REACH built a powerful network of statewide members and coalition partners from non-public education, faith, business, parent and labor organizations.

In 1995 and 1999, REACH led the grass roots efforts to support Gov. Ridge’s school choice legislation, and secured an historic victory for parents with the 2001 passage of the Educational improvement Tax Credit. REACH has also been a consistent advocate for charter schools.

Attached is an op-ed which ran in the Harrisburg Patriot-News on Sunday, January 23.

I am confident that, working together, we can once again improve Pennsylvania’s educational system. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Respectfully,

Otto V. Banks
Executive Director
REACH Alliance & Foundation
717.238.1878
obanks@paschoolchoice.org
F.1

Accompanying Letter

Alliance for School Choice

February 21, 2012

Representative Tobash
Box 202125
4B East Wing
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0001

Dear Representative Tobash,

We are pleased to provide you with a copy of the School Choice Yearbook 2011-12, our annual, award-winning publication that profiles each of the 27 publicly funded private school choice programs across the nation with the most reliable data available.

The newest edition of the Yearbook chronicles the breakthrough year that was 2011—a year the Wall Street Journal has called “the year of school choice”—and analyzes trends and data on school choice programs, including statistics on student participation, allocated funds, and scholarship amounts.

This year, there are more than 210,000 children benefiting from 27 school choice programs in 13 states and the District of Columbia, with several other states already considering school voucher and scholarship tax credit legislation in 2012.

If you’re looking to see how school choice programs are benefiting students in your state, or what the research says on the powerful impact voucher and scholarship tax credit programs have on families, the Alliance for School Choice is here to provide you with that information. Please call or email us at any time.

Sincerely,

Malcom Glenn
National Director of Communications
Alliance for School Choice
202-280-1986
mglenn@federationforchildren.org

Whitney Rhoades
Policy Director
Alliance for School Choice
202-280-1973
wrhoades@federationforchildren.org

1660 L Street, NW, Suite 1000, Washington, D.C. 20036 • Tel 202-280-1990 • Fax 202-280-1989

www.AllianceForSchoolChoice.org
UNITY AND COMPROMISE YIELD UNLIKELY ALLIANCES

The fact that contentious rivals in Wisconsin could put their differences aside for the sake of kids was not lost in Pennsylvania, where Sens. Anthony Williams (D-Philadelphia) and Jeffrey Piccola (R-Dauphin/York) became the leaders of the 2011 charge to bring a statewide voucher program to the Keystone State. The proposed legislation was the first Senate bill of Pennsylvania’s entire 2011 session, and many of its fundamental tenets were key components of a plan that the Senate ultimately passed during the fall session.

And Pennsylvania also saw a courageous move from one of its most prominent defenders of public education, when former Philadelphia School District Superintendent Arlene Ackerman called for greater school choice in the Keystone State. She should know about the plight of urban school districts, too, considering she has worked in public schools in various cities for 43 years. And while she took flak from many of her former colleagues for her stance, she stood by it, recognizing that, despite the political damage it might do, it meant far less than the damage being done to kids stuck in failing schools all around the state.

DIVERSE VOICES FOR SCHOOL CHOICE

A whole host of state leaders in Louisiana, Florida, New Jersey, and elsewhere came together to declare one thing: school choice is not the issue of a single ideology, demographic group, or political party. Families don’t see red and blue or “R” and “D.” They see simply one thing: equal opportunity.

And as we look back on how 2011 gave thousands of new families the chance to see what school choice is all about, more and more people will start to see the amazing outcomes of those opportunities, too.

Students rally outside the state Capitol in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania on April 12, 2011, in support of Senate Bill 1, which aimed to create the state’s first voucher program.
RESOLUTION OPPOSING SENATE BILL 1
BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF BLUE MOUNTAIN SCHOOL DISTRICT

WHEREAS, school districts in the Commonwealth have continued to make steady gains in academic achievement and create innovative and effective programs and curricula for all public school students and Pennsylvania is the only state in the nation to have increased academic achievement in every subject, at all tested grade levels and for all ethnic, racial and economic subgroups of students from 2002 through 2008; and

WHEREAS, the implementation of a tuition voucher program, over-expansion of any existing tax credit program or incentivizing a student’s transfer out of the public education system in any way takes financial resources away from traditional public schools and diminishes the great strides that have been made in those schools and increases the burden on property taxpayers and their resident school districts working toward greater academic successes; and

WHEREAS, unlike nonpublic and private schools, public school districts in the Commonwealth accept and educate children regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, religion or academic talents, as opposed to those institutions that are able to reject applicants based on low academic performance, discipline issues or any number of other factors; and

WHEREAS, unlike nonpublic and private schools, public schools in the Commonwealth are held to strict accountability standards in an effort to measure student achievement and academic progress, unlike private and parochial schools which are not required to give state assessments or publish student achievement data; and

WHEREAS, there is no consistent evidence to demonstrate that students who utilize vouchers make any better academic progress in nonpublic or private schools than they did prior to transferring; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Blue Mountain School District opposes Senate Bill 1 and any other legislation or any effort by the General Assembly to implement a tuition voucher program in the Commonwealth or any other program that would have an effect similar to that of a tuition voucher program, and encourages its elected officials to oppose the same.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Blue Mountain School District directs its Board President to take immediate action to alert its district’s state legislators about the need to oppose Senate Bill 1 and the negative consequences on the school district and the public education system at large and to provide a copy of this resolution to them.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Blue Mountain School District will encourage others, including parents, students and district taxpayers, to contact the Pennsylvania General Assembly to convey the importance of supporting public education in the Commonwealth.

Adopted this 28th day of April, 2011.

Signed: _____________________________  Attest: _____________________________
School Board President                  Board Secretary

(seal)
Appendix H Commonwealth Foundation Seventeen Roses Letter

12.02.11

Dear CF Friend,

On Wednesday, we here at CF bought 4,300 white roses. If you read my e-mail to you that day, you know why.

Because some folks think you and I should wave the white flag and surrender right now in the battle to free kids from Pennsylvania's violent, failing schools.

Because nearly 82,000 children here in Pennsylvania are trapped in dangerous and under-performing public schools that they are assigned to by their zip code.

Because more than 60 percent of the students in these schools fail to reach proficiency even on Pennsylvania's lenient standardized test.

Because these schools themselves reported nearly 10,000 violent incidents on their grounds between 2008 and 2010, including sexual assaults, kidnappings, robberies, thefts, arsons, vandalism, and much more.

Because that boils down to one violent incident in Pennsylvania's worst schools every 17 minutes.

Because you and I are stuck paying for these hellholes – not to mention for future jail stays and welfare for the students whose lives are ruined in them.

Because this is unacceptable.

And because to remind our state legislators of that, CF is sending each of them a bouquet of 17 white roses when they return to Harrisburg next week.

When I wrote to you on Wednesday, I asked you and our other CF friends to write back with a
sentence or two that we can include with the white roses when we give them to your legislators. We’ve received over 50 excellent responses. Thank you so much! Tuesday is going to be a great day.

By the way, one thing we’re hearing over and over is that while it would be nice to do something about the fact that there is a violent incident in one of our failing schools every 17 minutes, school choice is just too expensive. That is simply not true. As CP’s Nate Benefield has demonstrated, school choice saves money - specifically, just the school choice we already have in Pennsylvania saves taxpayers over $4 billion. More would save us more!

Now...if you still want to help, here’s how you can do so:

1. Click here to send an e-mail straight to your state legislators. They tell us over and over that unions are inundating them with messages. They need to hear from those of us who are sick of funding failure factories, those of us who think that when there is a violent incident every 17 minutes, something needs to change big time.

2. Consider supporting CP financially, because this battle is going to go well beyond Tuesday. You may know that we set a goal of raising $225,000 to fund the fight for freedom between now and New Year’s Eve. Patriots all across Pennsylvania get it and are responding: We’ve already raised over $83,000. Will you help us keep going and meet our goal? Click here to make an online donation.

Again, with your help, we will deliver 17 white roses to each and every legislator to remind them that a violent act occurs in Pennsylvania’s worst schools every 17 minutes - and to urge them to take quick action on school choice.

As my friend Nick Pandelidis, an incredibly effective activist and organizer who’s appeared in the Wall Street Journal and on Glenn Beck’s TV show, recently wrote in the York Daily Record, school choice is a critical reform that gives parents the ability to exercise the right they already have to choose a school they – not some bureaucrats in Harrisburg or Washington – believe will best serve their children. It’s time to get it done!

Thank you for the help you’ve already provided. Please consider raising your voice again, because believe me, that’s what the other side is doing, and there are a whole lot more than 17 of them. And please also consider putting financial fuel in CP’s freedom-fighting tank. Whether you can afford a gift of $17 or $17,000, we’ll put it to good use. And we’re sure as heck not waving the white flag on achieving transformative education reform here in Harrisburg.

Meanwhile, I can’t wait for those 4,300 roses to become a very tangible, perspective-changing part of...

Fighting for Your Freedom.

Charles F. Mitchell
Vice President & COO
Appendix I Senator’s Letter in Response to CF’s Seventeen Roses Letter

Charles F. Mitchell  
Vice President and COO  
Commonwealth Foundation  
225 State St # 302  
Harrisburg, PA 17101-1129

Mr. Mitchell:

I was truly disgusted upon reading your December 2nd e-mail sent to “Commonwealth Foundation Friends” regarding 4,300 roses bought and distributed in the Foundation’s education campaign to “Fight for the Freedom.”

You should be ashamed of yourself.

Your egregious statement referring to under-performing public schools as “hellholes“ and suggesting the education they provide does nothing more than prepare these students “for future jail stays and welfare for the students whose lives are ruined in them” is wildly offensive.

How would you feel, Mr. Mitchell, if the school that you attended was referred to as a “hellhole” and that the only purpose of the school was to prepare students “for future jail stays and welfare”? Given that I recently hosted Junior ROTC students from these “hellholes” as you refer to them, I am appalled at your callousness. Each of these students has made a commitment to serve. How dare you make these kinds of inflammatory statements?

Sir, you owe a personal apology to the students, teachers and employees in these schools for these remarks. Anything less than full repentance is cowardly.

Do you understand how much damage remarks like these do to students, teachers, administrators and the education community? Do you realize what kind of perception that you are forming about children in these schools? Do you know of the harm that is done when adults, who have no business making these kinds of comments, perpetuate this stereotype about these schools and these children?
These students attend schools in economically hard hit communities and are struggling with exceptionally limited resources because of policy decisions that they have no control over! The last thing that a student needs in this situation is to be ridiculed.

Students in these schools certainly deserve better. They need real solutions that will provide the resources and oversight necessary to enable these struggling schools to improve. They do not need snarky flower deliveries or other similar political stunts.

Insulting, ill-informed, and counterproductive missives such as those you spewed in your letter demean and ignore the real progress that has been made throughout all public schools over the past decade. Our most recent PSSA scores demonstrate that economically disadvantaged students have made tremendous strides.

Back in the 2002-03 school year, 46% of these students scored below basic on our state wide achievement tests. Last year that number dropped to 17%. In 2002-03, 29% scored proficient. This past year 65% of these students are now testing at proficient levels. Perhaps you don't care about these statistics because they do not fit into your very small way of thinking.

Perhaps the Commonwealth Foundation could consider a donation to an underperforming school instead of wasting money on cheap stunts. I suspect the cost of 4,300 roses could pay for quite a few updated textbooks and school supplies.

Your comments, calling these schools "hellholes," is just plain wrong and serves no purpose. The students from these schools do not deserve this treatment.

I look forward to learning of your apology.

Sincerely,

Vincent J. Hughes
State Senator - 7th District
Senate Democratic Appropriations Chair

p.s. Please have someone from the Commonwealth Foundation skulk to my office to retrieve the roses you left behind. Most assuredly, the bloom has come off.
I.1

Accompanying Letter

Senate of Pennsylvania

Senator Vincent Hughes
7th Senatorial District

MEMO

Date: December 8, 2011
To: All members of the General Assembly
From: Senator Vincent J. Hughes
Subject: Commonwealth Foundation

Enclosed is a copy of Commonwealth Foundation’s recent email and my response. I take issue with their choice of rhetoric and assertion that all struggling schools in Pennsylvania are “hellholes” and breeding grounds for future inmates and welfare recipients. I have asked Mr. Mitchell to apologize and to come retrieve his 17 roses. I encourage all of you to do the same. We can disagree, but it should be done respectfully.

Thank you.
Appendix J Email from State Representative Introducing NAACP Letter

Mike Tobash - School Vouchers - Charter/Cyber Charter Schools

From: "Roebuck, James" <JRoebuck@pahouse.net>
To: "Barbin, Bryan" <BBarbin@pahouse.net>, "Bishop, Louise" <LBishop@pahouse...>
Date: 12/14/2011 9:25 AM
Subject: School Vouchers - Charter/Cyber Charter Schools
CC: "Wakeley, Chris" <CWakeley@pahouse.net>
Attachments: letter from NAACP Education Committee.pdf

Dear Colleague,

I have been asked by the Pennsylvania State Conference of the NAACP Education Committee to share with you this correspondence voicing their opposition for school vouchers and/or the expansion of the charter/cyber charter system.

They would appreciate your consideration of their concerns.

Sincerely,

James R Roebuck
PA House of Representatives
Democratic Chairman
House Education Committee
Appendix K NAACP Letter

PENNSYLVANIA STATE CONFERENCE NAACP
Education Committee
C/O P O Box 29740
Philadelphia, PA 19119

Dec. 13, 2011

To the Honorable Members: House of Representative of the Pennsylvania General Assembly

Dear Representatives,

Notwithstanding pressures you may now be facing from corporate financers, we ask you to do what is in the best interest of our children and the tax payers and to uphold the Constitution of Pennsylvania. We urge you to vote, “NO”, on any bill, including SB1 or others such as HB 1454 and HB 1708 – that would create state-funding for school vouchers or the expansion of the charter/cyber charter system. We also urge you to vote "NO" to add a school voucher amendment or an expansion of a charter/cyber charter program to any other education bill that might come before you.

Pennsylvania is in the midst of the greatest coordinated attack on universal, free, public education in the history of the Commonwealth. Corporate, free market reformers want you, our state legislators, to hand over public schools and to increase the capacity of privateers.

It has been especially offensive that children of color have been demeaned as a strategy to achieve this. They have been publicly referred to as “violent” and as “failures”. In a recent campaign tactic, the Commonwealth Foundation referred to their schools as “hellholes” and associated these children with such acts as sexual assault, kidnapping and robbery; labeling these children as irredeemable thugs. As a part of the offensive process, each of you received seventeen white roses. 

As well, race has been used to manipulate the effort to push forward the privatization agenda by parading children and parents of color before Senate hearings and using their faces on campaign literature.

The Pennsylvania State Conference of NAACP Units, representing thousands of Pennsylvanians from every legislative district in the Commonwealth across ethnicities, cultures and conditions writes to urge you to stop this war of aggression against children and to reject all efforts to corporatize their education and manipulate them as commodities in the market place. Millions of dollars have been poured into Pennsylvania to buy influence and secure legislator votes. But we ask you, “What is the price of a child”?

You have heard all the reasons why two thirds of Pennsylvania’s tax payers oppose a voucher system for funding education. You know why Pennsylvanians oppose the expansion of the charter/ cyber charter movement that is funneling tax dollars out of the traditional public system and into private fortunes – leaving traditional public schools to struggle financially.

You know that the ultimate goal of the forces pouring money into Pennsylvania to pass voucher funded schooling legislation is to totally remove government from education, creating a free market system. To give way to this intention by proposing a pilot vouchers project is disingenuous. You are by now, well aware that after twenty-one years under a voucher system; and after Wisconsin has wasted a billion dollars of the people’s money, the research pertaining to Milwaukee students’ scores definitively documents that a voucher system of school funding does not improve student performance.
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<td>President: Donald Jones,</td>
<td>President: Ocie Paige</td>
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<td>President: Sheila A. Carter</td>
<td>President: Ruth Tolbert</td>
<td>President: Sam J. Byrd, Jr.,</td>
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<td>President: J. Whyatt Mondesire</td>
<td>President: Dean Ellis</td>
<td>President: Sandra Thompson</td>
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**Youth and College Chapters**

- Cheyney University
- Gettysburg University
- Millersville University
- Temple University
- Penn State University
- University of Pennsylvania
- Widener University
Vita

Alisa Rhoades Hobbs
alihobbs@comcast.net

EDUCATION

Pennsylvania State University, University Park Campus, Pennsylvania
Ph.D. Candidate, August 2016
   Major: Curriculum and Instruction
   Supporting Areas of Emphasis: Language and Literacy Education
   Advisor: Dr. Patrick Shannon

Pennsylvania State University, Capitol Campus, Middletown, Pennsylvania
M.A. in Education, Teaching and Curriculum, May 2001

King’s College, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania
B.A. in English, May 1994
   Magna Cum Laude; Secondary English Certification,
   Kappa Delta Pi International Honor Society

PROFESSIONAL POSITIONS

District Policy Director, PA State Representative Michael G. Tobash, District Office, Schuylkill Haven, Pennsylvania

Graduate Assistant, Ph.D. Candidate, 2004-2006, Penn State University, University Park, Pennsylvania
   • Language and Literacy Education (LL Ed 411) for Secondary English Education majors
   • Professional Development School consultant and associate
   • Research advisor for 20 undergraduate pre-service student teachers

Student-Teacher Supervisor, Pre-service Teaching Evaluator, 2003-2004
   Penn State University, Capital College, Middletown, Pennsylvania

Adult Education Teacher, GED Instructor, 2003-2004
   Schuylkill Intermediate Unit #29, Marlin, Pennsylvania

Teacher, Ninth and Eleventh Grade English, 1999-2003
   Pottsville Area School District, Pottsville, Pennsylvania