Course Overview
The purpose of this capstone is to explore challenges associated with education policy and reform as they relate to various initiatives underway with local organizations and institutions. Students will learn about aspects of education policy and reform through their work with community partners, readings and class discussions, and guest speakers from the field. Students are expected to be active participants in creating a joint learning environment, sharing information and resources they have gathered which has broader relevance to the capstone’s subject matter, proposing guest speakers, and so forth.

The field of K-12 education policy is broad and reform attempts have a longstanding history within the US and Minnesota. This year, our capstone clients are all focused on initiatives addressing equity and eliminating educational disparities between demographic groups of students. Capstone projects will include:

1. Policy Influence and Implementation: Students of Color and Special Education
   Students of color are disproportionately represented in K-12 special education programs in the United States and in Minnesota. In early 2018 the Minnesota Education Equity Partnership (MnEEP) will be issuing a policy brief exploring the “how, why and so what?” of this issue. The capstone team working on this project will review early
drafts of this policy brief and related recommendations, then work with MNEEP to utilize national best-practices to develop a statewide roll-out plan for the report with an eye toward maximizing visibility among identified stakeholder groups, maximizing impact of the report, and maximizing the likelihood that policy recommendations will be implemented at the municipal, district, or state level.


The 2018 Minnesota legislature is likely to review a proposal to offer (require?) ethnic studies in the K-12 curriculum. This [forthcoming] legislation will be introduced at a time when courts in Arizona and elsewhere are considering the constitutionality of banning ethnic studies in school districts within the state. The capstone team working on this project will research the policy implementation status of ethnic studies proposals across the country (including the status of current court challenges), make recommendations about the viability and feasibility of such a proposal in Minnesota, and propose strategies to achieve the underlying desired outcomes of the legislation.

3. Implementing desegregation plans (with or without a court mandate)

The most recent Minnesota desegregation lawsuit has been moving through the courts for the past 2-3 years, but in early 2017 the Minnesota Court of Appeals dismissed a lawsuit that sought to desegregate schools in the Twin Cities and its suburbs. A three-judge panel determined that whether or not minority students who filed the lawsuit have received an “adequate” education is a “political question” that the courts cannot address…..Dan Shulman, an attorney for the plaintiffs, said he will appeal the decision to the Supreme Court (Star Tribune, March 2017). Since the appeals course dismissal, school district superintendents in the metropolitan area have worked together to take matters into their own hands and explore options to achieve what the initial lawsuit requested: less racially segregated schools. Their recommendations are expected to be released in December 2017. The capstone team working on this project will work with the coordinators of this reimagining initiative to identify implementation plans for policy and practice, including areas for potential legislative statutory support, informal implementation frameworks, or district level reforms. The team will make recommendations for when and where to use such policy implementation tools as mandates, inducements, capacity-building, and/or systemic change.

4. Cross-Sector Collaboration: County-School data sharing to support county-involved K-12 students.

On any given day, approximately 3000 children living in Hennepin County (where Minneapolis is located) are receiving some level of county-provided care (eg, foster home placement, court-required adjudication, support for teen parents). Multiple state and federal privacy laws limit the amount of information that flows between the county case managers and the school district about county involved youth, even though arguments have been made that increased flow of information would allow for better case/education plan management for each county-involved child. The capstone team working on this project will compare/contrast state and federal data sharing and data privacy laws, and make recommendations regarding best practices for data sharing between Hennepin county services and schools in the county. The team will also review
and analyze research on data sharing practices as it relates to questions of race equity to answer this question: under what circumstances do data sharing agreements between the county and the school lead to better outcomes for the child?

In addition to the client-based project itself, this capstone offers other kinds of learning:

- First, for several of the initial class sessions, we will spend part of class time discussing content-related readings and conversations with local education experts about issues directly related to education policy, reform, and innovation.

- Second, projects are team-based; thus you will solidify and extend what you have learned to date about working in teams to deliver specific products. In this case, the products are “real,” meaning they are products of significance for the community partners. Learning to work with external clients, negotiate Memorandums of Understanding, and complete complex projects within time constraints are all part of the capstone experience. The final products will be those agreed to by the client partner and the team but must include both oral presentations to an audience convened by the community partner and some kind of written final report. The length and type of both oral presentation and final report will vary, depending on the needs of community partner.

**Course Requirements**

Course requirements include 3 short, individual assignments, the team project, and class participation. Students must complete ALL of these requirements to receive a grade for the course.

**Study and Reflection Papers (25%)**

The purpose of these short *individual* papers is to help you think about the content of your education policy and reform project, your team experience, and specific aspects of the project itself. These papers are **about three pages** (double spaced, 12 point font) in length. The papers are confidential – only Laura and Keith will read and grade them. They comprise, in total, 25% of the final grade. Below are specific descriptions and due dates for these short papers with some illustrative questions to guide your thinking and reflection.

**Study and Reflection Paper #1. Initial Team Processes and Client Agreement. Due Tuesday, January 30 (bring printed copy to class).** Focus this paper on your initial observations of group dynamics, identification of group norms and team expectations, and work with your community partner to solidify the specifics of your Memorandum of Agreement. What challenges have you faced and how are they resolved? How has the group experienced conflict and how is it addressed? What
have been the moments where leadership is most needed? Were they seized, how and by whom? What opportunities and barriers did the team face in creating a project plan and timeline for successful completion of the desired outcomes? What can you do to improve the effectiveness of the team, contributing to successful completion of the project?

**Study and Reflection Paper #2. Relevant Literature, Concepts, Data, and Research. Due Tuesday, February 20th (bring printed copy to class).** Focus this reflection on the material we have discussed in class on US education policy and reform attempts as it relates to your project, as well as the material your team has collected to date on the specific context and issues relevant to your project. What insights into the issues faced by your community partner have you gained so far? How do these translate to the project work itself? Identify gaps that still exist in your knowledge and your strategy for digging deeper into the literature. Do you need more help finding resources from Laura and/or Keith?

**Study and Reflection Paper #3. Research Design & Strategy for Analysis. Due Friday, March 9th (send paper as an emailed attachment to both Laura and Keith)** Focus this paper on the overall design of your project. What are your final research/inquiry questions? What type of evidence/discovery is needed – interviews, focus groups, stakeholder analysis, etc? In other words, what is your explanation for using specific strategies for gathering information? What is the team’s overall plan for collecting and analyzing data? How are communications with the client? With one another? Do you need more support and/or resources from Laura and/or Melissa?

**Team Project (65%)**

The team project will be completed by the end of the semester and will include both a written report and oral presentation to your community partner. Your team and your community partner will determine the nature and scope of the report and the presentation. The community partner will provide you with specific feedback on the final products; Laura and Keith will determine the final grades. The project comprises 65% of the final grade and is broken down as follows in terms of contribution to final grade:

- Oral presentation 20%
- Written report 30%
- Team member assessment of contribution 15%

**Class Participation (10%)**

Classroom participation counts for the other 10% of the grade. Learning in this course depends on active and thoughtful discussion among students, not just dialogue between a student and faculty. The hallmarks of good participation include: coming to class prepared (including completion of all readings and preparation of reading-related...
discussion questions), listening to others and responding to their ideas with questions, different opinions, additional ideas; quality not quantity or air time consumed and hence monitoring one’s own air time; and reframing the discussion to address deeper and more complex understandings of the issues.

Good participation also means consistent attendance. Absence from more than one class session (as long as we are meeting as a class) will have a negative effect on your overall grade. Please notify Laura and/or Keith if you must be absent. You must complete all of the assignments in order to receive a grade for this course. Incomplete are strongly discouraged, very rarely given, and only granted after a student and faculty have mutually agreed upon a plan for completion of all coursework. We do not allow students to submit additional work for extra credit.

Course Schedule

Wk 1 (Tues, Jan 16): Introduction and Overview

Readings to be completed BEFORE this class:
no readings are required in advance of this class

In class:
- Course overview, select capstone clients, prepare for Fri/Sat workshop

Wk 2 (Tues, Jan 23): The Ed Policy landscape: Laws and legislation guiding PK-12 education in the United States

Readings to be completed BEFORE this class session:

The Every Student Succeeds Act:
https://www.ed.gov/essa

An ESSA Overview:

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
https://sites.ed.gov/idea/about-idea/

In class:
- Debrief weekend workshop session
- Discuss readings: insights, questions, observations about key legislation guiding PK-12 education
- Team work time and instructor consultation
Wk 3 (Tues, Jan 30): The purpose of PK-12 education: Why do we do it the way we do it?

Readings to be completed BEFORE this class

Contested Ground: Perspectives on Creating Public Value in Elementary and Secondary Education (Seashore and Felber-Smith)


Linking Education and Social Services Data to Improve Child Welfare1 Cross-agency, data-based decision making benefits children and is currently within our reach. [http://stewardsofchange.com/learningcenter/documents/THOUGHT_LEADERS/LinkingEducation.pdf](http://stewardsofchange.com/learningcenter/documents/THOUGHT_LEADERS/LinkingEducation.pdf)

In class:

- Check in on status/progress of client relationships and project plans
- Discuss readings: Why do we have the education system that we do? How does public perception impact and/or reflect the delivery of public education?
- Team work time and instructor consultation

Wk 4 (Tues, Feb 6): PK-12 education: Race equity and policy innovation

Readings to be completed BEFORE this class


More on status of lawsuit:

Relationship between special education and children of color:

In class:
- Guest Speaker
- Check in on status/progress of client relationships and project plans
- Team work time and instructor consultation

Wk 5 (Tues, Feb13): PK-12 education: Race equity and policy innovation

Readings to be completed BEFORE this class

Minnesota Education Equity Partnership State of Students of Color and American Indian Students 2016 report:

Reimagine Minnesota Roadmap:

Whose values? Educational excellence threatened by ideology in Edina Public Schools (Thinking Minnesota; Fall, 2017)

Racial identity politics are ruining Edina’s fabled schools (Star Tribune, Oct 2017)
http://www.startribune.com/racial-identity-policies-are-ruining-edina-s-fabled-schools/449825893/

In class:
- Check in on status/progress of client relationships and project plans
- Discuss readings: How might we think about education-related racial disparities vis a vis the policy fields of the K-12 education system?
- Team work time and instructor consultation
Wk 6 (Tues, Feb 20): PK-12 education: School-Community partnerships and data-sharing

Readings to be completed BEFORE this class

Schools, Government Agencies Move to Share Student Data (Education Week, October 2015)

DATA-SHARING TOOL KIT FOR COMMUNITIES: How To Leverage Community Relationships While Protecting Student Privacy (US Department of Education, March, 2016)

In class:
- Check in on status/progress of client relationships and project plans
- Discuss readings: What are the implications of aligning (or not aligning) educational services provided to students and social services provided to families? What are the intended and unintended consequences?
- Team work time and instructor consultation

Wk 7 (Tues, Feb 27): Workshopping Projects

Readings to be completed BEFORE this class
TBD

In class:
- Team work time

Wk 8 (Tues, March 6): Workshopping Projects

Readings to be completed BEFORE this class
TBD

In class:
- Teams do full updates to class on projects, paying particular attention to questions for which they would like feedback from others. These might include, for examples, challenges they are encountering in research design challenges, client relationships, or project focus. *This is intended to be a consultative process, so come prepared to listen and engage with classmates on their projects as well as your own.*