

Public Abstract

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Graduation Term:SP 2010

Department:Educational Leadership & Policy Analysis

Degree:EdD

Title:A Policy Study about Equity and College Access: The Missouri A+ Schools Program

The Outstanding Schools Act of 1993 transformed Missouri education. A key program embedded in the text of the act is the A+ Schools Program. To many educators, this program has done more for the quality of education than any other reform effort. However, from 1997 to 2010, several issues surrounding the A+ Schools Program shifted from the original intent. The current constituents and intent seem to have diverged from the original, and not all students in the state have access to the pathways program and the opportunities college provides. The program is transformational“for those fortunate to attend an A+ designated school. For some students in rural and inner city environments, college is not accessible, and for students not served by the program, opportunities related to college access are lost. To a degree, the program promotes status quo and social inequity.

This mixed methods case study, with an emphasis on the qualitative design, investigated the A+ Schools Program from multiple perspectives. Interviews, focus groups, and document analysis comprised the qualitative portion of the study. A quantitative analysis of state-accessible demographics provided statistical data to support district demographics regarding population, enrollment, poverty, and free/reduced lunch percentages. A critical research perspective framed the study. This approach examined how social institutions advance the opportunities for some students at the expense of others. With the economic situation of the state in flux, future research should study the potential changes to the future of the program and its financial implications and incentives.