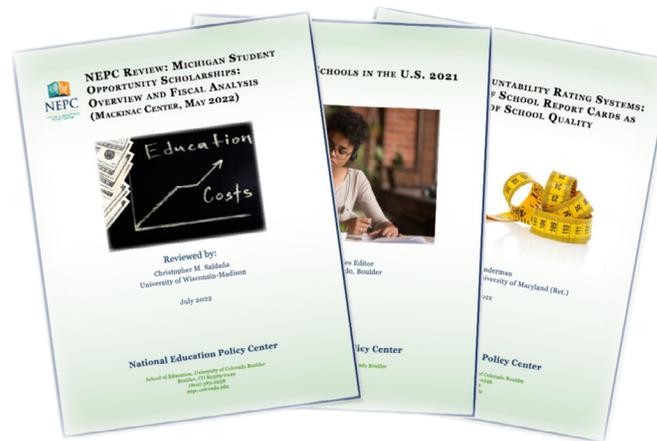




BACK TO SCHOOL SPECIAL: THREE WAYS TO USE NEPC RESOURCES IN THE CLASSROOM



With Labor Day receding in the rearview mirror, it's safe to say that summer vacation has now ended for the majority of students. Education is an ideal subject for engaging students since they are all experiencing it, yet they do not necessarily receive opportunities to reflect upon it in class. As the school year gets underway, here are some ideas for drawing upon NEPC resources to assist graduate students, undergraduates, high school students, and middle schoolers in better understanding the education policies and practices that shape their daily experiences and lives.

- 1. *NEPC Reviews:*** NEPC reviews are among NEPC's core activities. For these publications, the center commissions third-party experts to apply academic peer review standards to publications produced to influence policy but that are not peer-reviewed. The resulting reviews are written in non-academic language, with the goal of helping education stakeholders assess the quality and value of the reviewed publications, many of which have the potential to have an outsized impact on policy and practice because they are more likely than peer-reviewed research to be heavily promoted, widely disseminated, and written with bold, non-nuanced language and recommendations. NEPC's reviewers "consider the quality and defensibility of a report's assumptions, methods, findings, and recommendations." Like the publications they assess, the reviews often address timely and compelling topics such as [teacher shortages](#), [school funding](#), and [social-emotional learning](#).

Classroom Activity Ideas: Help your students develop critical thinking skills and gain a better understanding of research methodology and policy by assigning them to write their own reviews of non-peer-reviewed research. For information on how one college instructor used NEPC peer reviews with her class, click [here](#). Alternatively,

students can read a set of reviews of publications on a given topic (e.g. school choice, class size reduction) and identify common problems that reviewers discover when assessing non-peer-reviewed research on these topics.

- 2. *Commercialism in Education Research Unit (CERU) publications:*** The recent influx of federal COVID relief funds was combined with the formidable marketing of new educational technology to facilitate distance learning during the pandemic. This created an environment in which many schools have been flooded with new products and services. NEPC's Commercialism in Education Research Unit (CERU) is the only national academic research group dedicated to research on school commercialism. In recent years, this has meant focusing increasingly on educational technology and attendant issues such as data privacy and security.

Classroom Activity Ideas: Ask students to list all the technologies they use for school and then research what the vendors that produce them say about safeguarding their data privacy. Or ask students to reflect upon their experiences with online learning during the pandemic. Then have them research what they learn from studies about this style of instruction. Based on what they find out, what evidence can students share on whether or not schools should consider expanding virtual instruction now that it is no longer a necessity? CERU's [annual reports](#) on virtual education are an excellent starting point.

- 3. *Policy and Research Briefs:*** These NEPC publications address timely topics that are in the forefront of education policymaking, rulemaking, and practice. Written for a broad audience in a non-academic tone, they are nonetheless peer-reviewed and focused on research, with an eye toward providing policymakers (including educational administrators) with research-based guidance they can apply to real-world situations. Recent topics include [the economic cost of racism in education](#), [policy on early reading instruction](#), and [policies that create spaces in which transgender youth can fully engage with school](#).

Classroom Activity Ideas: Ask students to select a proposed education policy or law and then consider how the policy solutions under consideration compare to research-based best practices. As a follow-up activity, students can discuss the likely reasons for any gaps between policy and research-based evidence. What would a truly research-based policy look like when it comes to the topic at hand? NEPC [policy briefs](#) are a good starting point for many topics.

NEPC Resources on Education Policy

This newsletter is made possible in part by support provided by the Great Lakes Center for Education Research and Practice: <http://www.greatlakescenter.org>

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