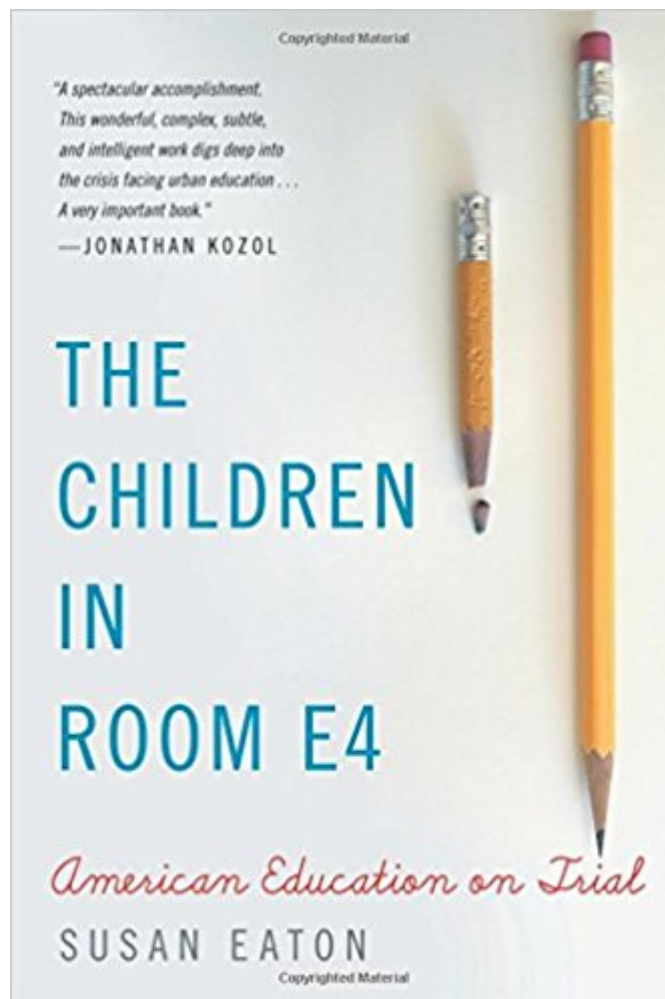




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The Children In Room E4: American Education On Trial



Synopsis

With our nation's urban schools growing more segregated every year, Susan Eaton set out to see whether separate can ever really be equal. An award-winning journalist, Eaton spent four years at Simpson-Waverly Elementary School, an all-minority school in Hartford, Connecticut. Located in the poorest city in the wealthiest state in the nation, it is a glaring example of the great racial and economic divide found in almost every major urban center across the country. *The Children in Room E4* is the compelling story of one student, one classroom, and one indomitable teacher, Ms. Luddy. In the midst of Band-Aid reforms and hotshot superintendents with empty promises, drug dealers and street gangs, Ms. Luddy's star student, Jeremy, and his fellow classmates face tremendous challenges both inside and outside of a school cut off from mainstream America. Meanwhile, across town, a team of civil rights lawyers fight an intrepid battle to end the de facto segregation that beleaguers Jeremy's school and hundreds of others across America. From inside the classroom and the courtroom, Eaton reveals the unsettling truths about an education system that leaves millions of children behind and gives voice to those who strive against overwhelming odds for a better future.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. The separate but equal doctrine may have been repudiated by the Supreme Court, but as Eaton cogently demonstrates in this stirring and sobering account of the school system in inner-city Hartford, Conn., major educational inequality still exists in many inner-city schools. Eaton

chronicles the progress of *Sheff v. O'Neill*, a case brought against the state in 1989, charging that school districts in Hartford and its environs were rigidly drawn to ensure segregation of poor and minority students. By encapsulating these students in racially isolated, underfunded schools, the state has created a self-perpetuating cycle of poverty and substandard academic achievement. A graceful and fluent writer, Eaton reviews the circumstances in which local and state politics allowed this situation to arise and worsen over time. She follows the inception and progress of the court case, creating suspense about its outcome. (Though the case was decided in favor of the plaintiffs, appeals are still pending after 18 years, since the state has failed to meet its mandated goals.) As long as there is racial isolation, Eaton convincingly demonstrates, schools will not improve and students will be denied the chance to learn at the same rate as their suburban neighbors, thereby impeding their chances to improve their lives and their futures. By bringing this situation to light, she has significantly articulated the problems that challenge politicians, school boards and concerned citizens. (Jan. 19) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Eaton, a former journalist who followed an 18-year-long lawsuit involving the school district of Hartford, Connecticut, brings to life all of the complex social issues in the separate-but-equal debate that has roiled the nation since *Brown v. Board of Education*. Eaton focuses on a dedicated teacher and the students in Room E4 of the Simpson-Waverly Elementary School, all struggling to overcome the inequities that leave the children without adequate supplies, courses, and services to get a decent education in a decaying town, one of the nation's poorest, surrounded by wealthy suburbs. The teacher, Ms. Luddy, pushes her students, from the brightest to the most challenged, to meet the marks set for student achievement under No Child Left Behind, knowing that the school has little of the resources necessary to help the children achieve. As Eaton details the day-to-day struggle in the classroom, she chronicles the courtroom battle waged by the Connecticut Civil Liberties Union to equalize the balance between the poor black and Puerto Rican students in the city and the more privileged students in the suburbs. Vanessa Bush Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

A great read for anyone entering the field of school administration in the US. This book explains the demographic shifts undergone by the city of Hartford (CT) and how the desegregation of schools promised under *Brown v. board of education* in 1954 never fully materialized. In some cases

however, the gains achieved under *Brown v. Board of Education* were gradually rolled back due to suburbanization and the resulting ghettoization of urban centers and their public schools. *The Children in Room E4: American Education on Trial* is a chronicle, among other things, of the *Sheff v. O'Neill*, a lawsuit brought against the city of Hartford in attempt to right the wrongs perpetrated against inner city public school children.

I recently read "The Children in room E4" by Susan Eaton for my education seminar. Before reading this compelling novel I was in the dark about the injustices of urban schooling. I knew that there were more minority students in the city school systems but I had no idea about the poor quality of education they were receiving. While I thought some parts of this book were dull and just informative there was a lot more to it. This novel does much more than inform about a court case, it allowed me to feel Mrs. Luddy's pain, I could feel the children's stress over these tests. It makes me want to do something. Want to help. What drew in to this novel was the opening about Jeremy that is really what kept me interested this whole time. I wanted to see Jeremy and his family succeed, I wanted to believe he could make it. But Eaton let reality set in and made me realize that won't be the case for most of these kids. I thought we gave an equal opportunity to everyone here in America but this book's facts say otherwise and with the facts like the ones used in this book there is no doubt in my mind that something more needs to be done. Eaton brought justice to these kids like no one else.

I have used this book for several years in a course I teach on social change and found it to be a perceptive, well-written account of the massive inequities that continue to plague our education system. I think her approach of focusing on a particular student at a particular school while also examining a broader, ongoing school desegregation case strikes a wonderful balance between a very human, and heart wrenching story of how we limit the opportunities of individual students to succeed while talking about the larger causes for school disparities.

This book goes beyond simply explaining what the challenges in urban education are -- it shows where they came from. With a detailed history of the Supreme and Federal Court decisions since *Brown v. Board of Education*, Eaton illustrates how segregated and isolated schooling has been perpetuated and gotten worse in the last 50 years. Her analysis does it in two ways: first, by focusing closely on a high achieving Hartford class of students in their third and fourth grade years (the Micro view) and by showing how the Macro problems -- the legal history -- have enabled the complete ignoring and disempowerment of American cities. In so doing, Eaton tells the story of *Sheff*

v. O'Neill -- a landmark Connecticut court decision on the vastly segregated and unequal state of schooling in the Hartford area. She explains how the legal team put the case together, the data they collected, their Constitutional interpretations, and their battles to win....If you are from Connecticut, interested in schooling or in school law, this book is perfect for you.

I hope city kids and parents find this book to be helpful. Sad world when a school is closed due to test scores.

Every educator and administrator should read this.

Just what I ordered and needed.

Nice price for college student use.

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