



When Middle-Class Parents Choose Urban Schools: Class, Race, and the Challenge of Equity in Public Education

Linn Posey-Maddox

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In recent decades a growing number of middle-class parents have considered sending their children to—and often end up becoming active in—urban public schools. Their presence can bring long-needed material resources to such schools, but, as Linn Posey-Maddox shows in this study, it can also introduce new class and race tensions, and even exacerbate inequalities. Sensitively navigating the pros and cons of middle-class transformation, *When Middle-Class Parents Choose Urban Schools* asks whether it is possible for our urban public schools to have both financial security and equitable diversity.

Drawing on in-depth research at an urban elementary school, Posey-Maddox examines parents' efforts to support the school through their outreach, marketing, and volunteerism. She shows that when middle-class parents engage in urban school communities, they can bring a host of positive benefits, including new educational opportunities and greater diversity. But their involvement can also unintentionally marginalize less-affluent parents and diminish low-income students' access to the improving schools. In response, Posey-Maddox argues that school reform efforts, which usually equate improvement with rising test scores and increased enrollment, need to have more equity-focused policies in place to ensure that low-income families also benefit from—and participate in—school change.

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