General Concepts

**Subjects that are up for active decision**
- Renewal of ESEA

**Policy Agenda, Decision Agenda and Alternatives**

**Subjects that get attention**
- Administration
- Pressing need/crisis
- Set up at the beginning of a term

**Actions or solutions to the status quo**
- Connected to the agenda and “problems” but not necessarily derived from them
General Concepts

Policy Participants and Policy Processes

Agenda and Alternatives Depend on Two Factors - P & P

- Participants are actively involved in setting agenda and creating alternatives. Diverse group: President, Administration, Congress, Civil Servants, Parties, Interest Groups, Researchers, Media, Consultants
- Participants can be grouped
  - Visible Cluster:
    1) known to public, interact with them
    2) President, Congress, Media
    3) They have most power in agenda setting
  - Invisible Cluster:
    1) little public attention
    2) Interest Groups, Researchers, Consultants, Civil Servants
    3) have significant power over policy alternatives

Strict hierarchy of power does not exist

Participant power difference across processes

For Visible cluster

Agenda setting through problem recognition: The President and Congress have most significant power and researchers and consultants have comparatively little.

Invisible Cluster broken into 3 categories

Generation of Policy Proposals: Researchers, consultants and interest groups have more power over this process than the President or Congress

- problem recognition
- generation of policy proposals
- political events
Old Models Do Not Tell the Whole Story

**Origins Theory**
Tracing policy history can help you understand it

Problems:
- Too simplistic
- Climate
- Multiple causation
Each of the three streams is INDEPENDENT
- Shaped by its own rules
- Greatest change occurs when 2+ streams meet

Politics Stream: Influencing the Agenda
Note: existing programs can cause conflict of interest
Major factors:
1) New Administration and turnover
2) National Mood
3) Questions of Jurisdiction
4) Consensus building; logrolling, bargaining, strange bedfellows

Survival of the fittest:
1) Feasibility
2) Value Acceptability
3) Anticipation
4) Bandwagon and Tipping
Policy Entrepreneurs: Bringing it all Together

• Found at any and all locations
• They invest time and resources to achieve their goals - claim a hearing, have connections, are persistent
• Responsible for “coupling” the streams: solutions to problems, proposals to political momentum, political events to policy problems
Much like streams in nature, the combination of streams creates powerful currents of change......or what Kingdon refers to as a......
Not specific, many alternatives have a chance

Short in Duration: Often lead to political flexibility

Coupling
   1) problem – solution (adapting)
   2) problem – politically acceptable solution

Predictable vs Unpredictable Windows

Spillovers and adjacent areas
How can we use this theoretical framework to analyze and predict policy trends?

On the surface, this theory appears to be chaotic. It can however, be used to predict policy trends

**Example: School Choice**

**ESEA Blueprint**

Supporting effective public school choice. We will support the expansion of high-performing public charter schools and other autonomous public schools, and support local communities as they expand public school choice options for students within and across school districts
The Problem Stream: Indicators over Crisis

- Continued mediocre rankings in international indicators: TIMMS, NEAP
- Economic downturn/changing economic realities
- Belief that an monopolistic education system maintains mediocrity
The Policy Stream

**Softening Up the Ground**
ESEA Blueprint trial balloon
[Alliance for School Choice](#) & [Foundation for Educational Choice](#)
Advocates on both sides of the aisle

**Reconfiguration**
School choice already exists in a limited capacity through charter schools and local voucher programs such as the Opportunity Scholarships in DC; no longer a huge departure from the status quo
The Political Stream

**National Mood:** New movement to link school to capitalist ideals, Gallop Poll 2007, 60% of nation supports school choice.

**Politically Acceptable Solutions:** ESEA is the child of NCLB, which enjoyed sweeping bipartisan support; politicians can support it from a market and civil rights perspective.

**Consensus Building:** Growing literature and growing political support – traditionally a Republican agenda has gained key democratic support as well (Diane Feinstein, Janet Napolitano, Tom Vilsack).

**Turnover:** 2010 elections and the impact of the Tea Party leaders such as Rand Paul who not only favor school choice but demand it. Move back toward local control.
The Coming Window: Who Will be the Entrepreneur?

ESEA Reauthorization

ESEA Trial Balloon

Voucher Programs and Charter Schools

Advocacy Groups

Failing Schools

Economy

Monopolistic System

unhappy population

2010 elections

Tea Party
Fin, Thank you