Michelle Rhee is a controversial figure in education.  In her tenure, she has made great strides in turning around the schools in Washington D.C. - which was one of the worst school systems in the country when she started.

In order to help you with your paper, here are some sites to use as some resources as well as some basic information and ideas on what to draw from for your paper.

1)  http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/07/02/AR2008070203498.html

This is a great resource to use when discussing the ways she used the law to justify her actions and get around the tenure laws.  Teacher tenure is important to unions and school districts around the country as it provides stability and creates "safety" for teachers.  The problem is that many teachers are tenured who might not be the best choices for the job.

What Michelle Rhee did, as you will note with additional information and sources from this paper, was offer a HUGE pay raise to teachers if they agreed to give up tenure and senority rights.  Teachers would be paid more but would be held to higher standards in terms of competence and performance when decisions were made each year on which staff to keep and which to get rid of.  Even though they would earn a tremendous amount of money more, they would lose the protection of making it almost impossible to remove a teacher, depsite performance, who is tenured.

Teachers could choose to continue with tenure, they would just receive far less pay than those who agreed to give up tenure rights.

An important part of the article to use in relation to the "law" used to justify his actions is toward the end and copied below.  This is the area to really concentrate on for your paper and then use that when describing your "perspective" as to whether or not her actions are justified:
"Rhee can restrict seniority rights through a little-used District law that allows principals to diminish seniority rankings and use them among several other factors -- including evaluations, military service and whether the teacher is in a high-demand area such as math or special education -- to make changes during staff cuts.

The law was aimed at addressing "bumping rights," which allow senior teachers losing their positions during cutbacks to displace less-experienced peers at other schools.

"Bumping rights had been viewed as a problem for those of us trying to get quality teachers in the classroom. But we knew it was a challenge getting it out of the contracts," Kevin P. Chavous, who was on the D.C. Council when the law passed, said in a recent interview. "Even after the law was passed, superintendents operated under the assumption that bumping rights were still there."

When you are giving your perspective, discuss what you think related to this idea of having two layers of pay for teachers.  Was she justified to create this system to try to weed out the under-performing teachers?

2)  http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1862444,00.html

Time did a complete story on Ms. Rhee. The amazing thing about this administrator is that she has absolutely no experience when she took over the Washington schools.

The second page of the article describes the changes that she has made (how many schools close, how many administrators and teacher fired, etc).  In addition, it discusses her philosophy - she wants to, "make Washington teachers the highest paid in the country, and in exchange she wants to get rid of the weakest teachers."

On page 4, it discusses her work on the tenure issue and the methods being used to complete termination processes under current Education contracts.  Even though it is tough to get rid of tenured teachers, it is not impossible.  The problem is that there are many steps required and most school districts do not go through all of those due to time consumption.  Ms. Rhee brought in extra administrators with the sole purpose of completing this process and better evaluating the teachers.  Overall though, she had to work to get a new contract where new teachers coming in would not be tenured and where currently tenured teachers needed to have the choice to continue with tenure at a lower pay rate or give up their right of tenure in exchange for the higher pay and bonuses, etc.

What are your thoughts on this?  Is this justified?  What impact will all of this have on the students if teachers are hired and fired based on performance rather than whether they are tenured or not?  What often happens to the motivation level of tenured teachers?  Is it as high as those whose job and pay as well as bonuses are based on their performance and the performance of their students?

Here are a couple more sites to use to pull additional information from:

http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/1021172/michelle\_rhee\_to\_successfully\_shake.html

http://education.change.org/blog/view/michelle\_rhee\_skirts\_the\_law\_lays\_off\_teachers