



Parent Voices Weekly Education Fax

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Fix our schools, don't privatize them

This week's update: *Market-driven school reforms, mayoral control causing more harm than good*

A new study, "Market-oriented education reforms' rhetoric trumps reality," on the effects of market-driven reform in Washington, D.C., New York City and Chicago concludes that little has been accomplished and some harm has been done to students, especially the underprivileged....

Market-oriented education reform refers to a series of initiatives that include educator evaluations based in large part on student **standardized test scores**, the **closure of schools** that are considered failing or underenrolled, and an **increase in the number of charter schools**, many of which are operated by for-profit companies. (Washington Post, <http://tinyurl.com/btyv4le>).

States and districts have been forced to adopt many of these reforms to comply with NCLB or apply for Race to the Top grants, with added pressure from corporate-backed groups like Students First and Stand for Children.

The executive summary of the report (<http://tinyurl.com/d2e8knv>) concludes:

- Test scores increased less, and achievement gaps grew more, in "reform" cities than in other urban districts.
- Reported successes for targeted students evaporated upon closer examination.
- Test-based accountability prompted churn that thinned the ranks of experienced teachers, but not necessarily bad teachers.
- School closures did not send students to better schools or save school districts money.
- Charter schools further disrupted the districts while providing mixed benefits, particularly for the highest-needs students.
- Emphasis on the widely touted market-oriented reforms drew attention and resources from initiatives with greater promise.
- The reforms missed a critical factor driving achievement gaps: the influence of poverty on academic performance. Real, sustained change requires strategies that are more realistic, patient, and multipronged.

PAA's position: PAA opposes efforts to privatize public education through the expansion of charters, vouchers or other privately-run programs at the expense of regular public schools. We oppose the misuse and overuse of standardized tests to evaluate teachers, students or schools.

PAA recommends that Congress support policies and practices that have a track record of improving schools, and more reliable accountability and assessment practices.

For more detail on PAA's position on ESEA reauthorization, please see <http://parentsacrossamerica.org/paa-reforming-esea/>

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