

The So-Called Education Reform Movement is a Weapon to Destroy the Public Common School

Let us be very clear, the so-called reform movement in public education the past three decades is a sinister, bogus plan of action. The “reformers”, all the way back to the Reagan administration, had privatization of public education on their radar. (Reagan was fond of saying that government is the problem). In the 1990 book, Politics, Markets and America’s Schools, Chubb and Moe argued that the institutions (public schools) are the problem and cannot be reformed. They essentially pontificated that these institutions (public schools) must be replaced with mechanisms that are not subject to democratic control. They suggested that boards of education are the problem; hence, that democratic control of public schools stymied improving the system. (Four decades earlier, in the mid-1950’s, Libertarian economist Milton Friedman recommended the only role of government for education is to provide vouchers, (i.e.), fund individuals, not the system.)

Presidents Reagan and Bush 41 pushed for vouchers. Clinton got on board the charter train. Bush 43, with bi-partisan support from Congress, fashioned No Child Left Behind (NCLB), which for two decades has tied the hands of public school teachers and administrators to provide authentic, quality education.

Most public school teachers and administrators came to realize that NCLB was contrary to the provision of high quality education, but felt vulnerable if they resisted it.

NCLB gave the privatization-of-public education crowd a wide opening to push the voucher and charter school agenda. That they did, with the full support of Presidents Bush 43, Obama and Trump.

In 2004 economist Milton Friedman told the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) that public education was a mistake and that parents should be solely responsible for the education of their children.

The public common school community must come to grips with the fact that the privatizers’ long term objective is not about improving education, but to eliminate the common school system.

All public school educators, officials, and advocates must join one or more of the current efforts to save public common schools. The litigation challenging the constitutionality of EdChoice vouchers warrants the support of every Ohio school district and every public school advocate.