

New York: Hasidic School Will Pay \$8 Million After Admitting Fraud

In an October 25 blog Diane Ravitch addresses the fraud of a New York private school.

If private schools accept public funds, they should be audited by state fiscal auditors the same way public school districts are audited.

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dianeravitch

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The New York Times reported that the largest private Hasidic Jewish school in the state of New York—the Central United Talmudical Academy— admitted in federal court that it had stolen millions of dollars from government programs. The school enrolls 2,000 boys and is located in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn. The leaders of the school acknowledged that they had taken money intended for “school lunches, technology and child care” They created no-show jobs for some employees and paid others in cash, so they could receive welfare. The school will pay \$5 million in fines in addition to more than \$3 million that it has paid for restitution. .

State law requires all private schools to provide an education comparable to what is in public schools. In 2015, New York City’s education department said it would investigate complaints about the quality of secular education in schools in the Hasidic Jewish community.

The school will be overseen by an independent monitor for the next three years.

The Central United Talmudical Academy, an all-boys private religious school, factored prominently in a New York Times investigation last month that found that Hasidic boys’ schools across the state had received hundreds of millions of dollars in government funding while denying their students a basic secular education.

The Williamsburg school received about \$10 million in government funding in the year before the pandemic, according to a Times analysis. Its leaders, who are affiliated with the Satmar group of Hasidic Judaism, also operate several other schools in the state.

There are more than 100 Hasidic boys’ schools in Brooklyn and the lower Hudson Valley, and they have received a total of more than \$1 billion in taxpayer money over the past four years, The Times found. They focus on providing religious instruction, with most offering little instruction in English reading and math and almost no classes in history, science or civics.

In general, many Hasidic boys’ schools score lower on state standardized tests than any other schools in the state, public or private.

In 2019, The Times reported, the Central United Talmudical Academy agreed to give state standardized tests in reading and math to more than 1,000 students. Every one of them failed.

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