

Time to Rid America of the Wrecking Ball “School Reform” Movement and Focus on Perfecting the Great American Public Common School System

The biased, flawed 1983 Nation at Risk report helped spawn an utterly failed public education reform campaign that was based on shoddy research and fueled by self-serving political figures.

Nation at Risk was conjecture that President Reagan used to denigrate government (public) education and advance the voucher concept. Reagan seemed to be a disciple of Economist Milton Friedman, who, three decades prior to the Reagan administration, was advocating vouchers. Bush 41 picked up the voucher kick from Reagan. Not to be outdone by Reagan and Bush, President Clinton embraced the charter boondoggle. Presidents Bush 43, Obama, and Trump each put the school privatization efforts on steroids.

The politicians' privatization efforts could not be accomplished until public confidence in the American public common school was eroded. They had plenty of help from the private sector in their efforts to defame public education.

Three decades ago, in 1990, John E. Chubb and Terry M. Moe published the book—Politics, Markets and American Schools. The primary message of the book is that boards of education cannot “reform” public education because the boards are the problem. (Reagan was fond of saying, “Government cannot solve problems because government is the problem.”) Boards of education operate on democratic principles which, according to Chubb and Moe, stymies, if not prevent, improvement in public education. In other words democracy, applied to school governance, prohibits improvement in public education.

In 1995, David C. Berliner and Bruce Biddle published the book-- The Manufactured Crisis-- which clearly debunks the myths, the fraud, and the attack on America's public schools. The wisdom in this publication was drowned out by the anti-public education, pro-privatization rhetoric that high- profile politicians embraced.

After three decades of failed privatization “reform” policies, it's past time to do what should have been done three decades ago—rally behind the great American public common school system. Privatization has been laced with fraud and corruption. Publicly-funded private education ventures have increased segregation, caused acrimony in communities, and drained valuable resources from public schools. It's past time to change course. Rid the nation of the failed education “reform” scheme. “Reform” is a code word for privatization.