

Denis Smith reflects on a recent “education” meeting in Hilliard, Ohio.

Denis Smith, retired public school educator and administrator (including the role of consultant in the charter school office in the Ohio Department of Education), wrote an article for this blog regarding a recent political meeting held in Hilliard, Ohio. With his permission an excerpt from Denis’ article is attached below. Denis is a consummate public school advocate who writes with skill and precision.

Denis writes:

In the 1980s, It Was Where’s the Beef? Today We Need to Ask Where’s the Science?

At a recent rally in Hilliard sponsored by the Americans for Prosperity PAC, Republican gubernatorial candidate Vivek Ramaswamy launched into a predictable GOP attack on public education. “We are going to bring a radical revolution of standards to our public schools” he told the gathering.

If you want to go beyond Ramaswamy’s rhetoric, look at a few key words he used, including radical and standards, in his remarks about student outcomes in reading and math. Let’s also consider what he didn’t say in the predictable Republican exercise of bashing “failing public schools.”

Contrary to Ramaswamy’s assertion of bringing a radical revolution of standards, in fact it’s the private and religious schools that Ramaswamy and his fellow Republicans favor that mostly lack the kind of common standards that public schools must meet.

In Ohio, for example, there is no requirement for private and religious schools to take state assessments, the very instruments that provide the reading and math data as well as state report cards that provide ammunition for public education critics. Never mind that all Ohio public school students, unlike students enrolled in the 1,300 non-public schools, are required to participate in state testing.

Back to that word radical for a moment. Isn’t it extreme to provide \$6,166 per pupil for K-8 students and \$8,408 for high school students with no required measures in place to assess the performance of the schools receiving taxpayer dollars?

Ramaswamy, a proud entrepreneur, knows quite well that it’s a radical step for any entity, particularly the State of Ohio, to invest more than \$1 billion on a universal voucher initiative and receive no data about the level of performance or impact such spending might have generated.

Now that’s radical, don’t you think?

So think report cards. Think reading and math scores for those private and religious schools that accept public money. But expect them to also say that it's socialism to have strings attached as part of having access to the public treasury in the form of education vouchers.

Whether it's private and religious schools, their proponents have mastered the art of having it both ways. Yes, we believe in and promote school choice. But don't ever ask us to comply with state assessment standards that can assist the public in having a more comprehensive school report card system. Just send the money.

And don't talk about "School Choice" when it's really about the "School's Choice" as demonstrated by who is and isn't admitted and by the "counsel out" process for those students who require more services and instructional support.