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EDITED BY KARL WEBER

WAITING FOR "SUPERMAN"

HOW WE CAN SAVE AMERICA'S FAILING PUBLIC SCHOOLS

a participant MEDIA guide

WAITING FOR "SUPERMAN"

How We Can Save America's Failing Public Schools

Edited by

Karl Weber

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The Difference Is Great Teachers

Eric Hanushek

Eric Hanushek is the Paul and Jean Hanna Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution of Stanford University. He has been a leader in the development of economic analysis of educational issues, and his work on efficiency, resource usage, and economic outcomes of schools has frequently entered into the design of both national and international educational policy. His newest book, *Schoolhouses, Courthouses, and Statehouses*: *Solving the Funding-Achievement Puzzle in America's Public Schools*, coauthored with Alfred A. Lindseth (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), describes how improved school finance policies can be used to meet our achievement goals.

Hanushek is a member of the National Academy of Education and the International Academy of Education as well as a fellow of the Society of Labor Economists and the American Education Research Association. He was awarded the Fordham Prize for Distinguished Scholarship in 2004. He is currently the chair of the board of directors of the National Board for Education Sciences and previously served as deputy director of the Congressional Budget Office.

Hanushek is a Distinguished Graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy and completed his PhD in economics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

The United States is built on the idea that all individuals should be free to reach their full potential—the "pursuit of happiness" mentioned in the Declaration of Independence as one of the "unalienable rights" all Americans share. And a natural corollary is that society has the responsibility to provide at least the basic tools individuals need to pursue this goal effectively. While many aspects are involved in accomplishing this goal, our schools clearly have a key role. But it is also clear that the schools have not been doing as much as they could to ensure that all Americans have the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in the twenty-first century. As a result, school reform is a topic on many people's minds today—as it should be.

It is becoming broadly recognized that quality teachers are the key ingredient to a successful school and to improved student achievement. Yet standard policies do not ensure that quality teachers are recruited or retained in the profession. Finding solutions to this problem is particularly important given the rate of expected retirements and, commensurately, the huge numbers of new teachers who must be hired over the next decade. Without some significant changes in the current ineffective system for hiring and training teachers, the hope of systematically improving student outcomes is small.

The Importance of Teacher Quality—Myth Versus Reality

But is teacher quality really a crucial variable in determining the success of students? This belief hasn't always been generally accepted.

In 1966, *Equality of Educational Opportunity*, the most extensive investigation of U.S. schools *ever* undertaken, was published. This monumental report, funded by the Office of Education and authorized under the Civil Rights Act of 1964,

was written by James S. Coleman and a team of researchers; hence its usual name, the Coleman Report. Based on a superficial understanding of the Coleman Report, many in the decades since then have argued that schools do not matter and that only families and peers affect the student performance.

There is a grain of truth in this belief: Families and peers do have a very important influence on learning. But this does not detract from the importance of schools and teachers. On the contrary, it raises their value.

Unfortunately, the Coleman Report and many subsequent misinterpretations of it have generally confused *measurability* with true effects. Coleman's study showed that some measurable characteristics of schools and classrooms—for example, whether a teacher held a master's degree or the number of students in a classroom—had no clear statistical effect on student performance. Exaggerated and over-generalized, these findings, probably more than anything else, led to the prevailing view that differences among schools and teachers are not very important when it comes to student achievement.

However, extensive research into educational effectiveness since the 1960s has led to very different policy conclusions. One set of research findings is similar to those of the Coleman Report, and one differs significantly. The overall result is a significantly altered perspective on policy.

First, there are very important differences among teachers—a finding that does not surprise most parents or students, who are well aware that some teachers are simply much more skilled and effective than others. Second, these differences are *not* captured by the most commonly used measurements—qualifications, degrees, years of experience, and the like. This latter finding has important implications that I sketch below.

If we can't identify the best teachers by comparing their credentials, we face an obvious and crucial question: How *do* we

define a good teacher? It would be wonderful if we could develop a checklist that could be used, for example, by the human resource department in a school district to guide the selection process and thereby reliably identify teachers who will do well in the classroom. Unfortunately, such a checklist is just what researchers have been unable to provide. Instead, the best way to identify a teacher's effectiveness is to observe her classroom performance and specifically what her students learn.

From this new perspective, a good teacher is one who consistently evokes large gains in student learning, while a poor teacher is one who consistently gets small gains in student learning. In other words, the quality of a teacher is best judged by performance in the classroom as reflected in the gains in learning by the students.

The implications of this insight for the crafting of policies to improve student performance are discussed below. But first it is important to understand the impact of teachers on students, which is even greater than most people realize.

First, the magnitude of the differences among teachers is impressive. Let me provide two different indications of teacher quality, each relying on our performance-based definition of teacher quality. Looking at the range of quality for teachers within a single large urban district, teachers near the top of the quality distribution can get an entire year's worth of additional learning out of their students compared to those near the bottom. That is, in a single academic year, a good teacher will get a gain of one and a half grade-level equivalents, while a bad teacher will get a gain equivalent to just half a year.[1]

Alternatively, if we look at just the variations in performance from differences in teacher quality within a typical school, moving from an average teacher to one at the 85th percentile of teacher quality (that is, a teacher ranked among the top 15 percent of all teachers in quality), we find that the high-ranked

teacher's students can be expected to move up more than 8 percentile rankings during the course of a school year. In other words, an average student who got one of these good teachers would move from the middle of the achievement distribution (the 50th percentile) to the 58th percentile.

This is a significant improvement. Extrapolate it over several years in a high-ranked teacher's classroom as compared to a middle-of-the-pack teacher, and you can see that the cumulative effect can be huge. And of course the difference in achievement is likely to be much greater when a high-ranked teacher is compared to a lower-than-average teacher.

With these findings in mind, let's reconsider the popular argument that family background is overwhelmingly important and that schools cannot be expected to make up for bad preparation at home. At times, this argument has led to a counsel of despair: "When a school is filled with poor children, many of whom suffer from broken homes, neglectful parents, and deficits in nutrition and health care, there's little or nothing a school can do to produce high-achieving students."

Again, there is a grain of truth here: There is no doubt that the family is very important in influencing a student's preparation for learning. But family is not destiny. The estimates of teacher performance we've cited suggest that having three to four years of good teachers (85th percentile) in a row would generally overcome the average achievement deficit between low-income kids (those on free or reduced-price lunch) and others. In other words, high-quality teachers can make up for the typical deficits that we see in the preparation of kids from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Unfortunately, the current school system does not ensure any such three- or four-year run of high-quality teachers. In fact, it is currently just as likely that the typical student will get a run of *bad* teachers, with equally large achievement *losses*.

Furthermore, the naturally occurring variation in teacher quality helps to encourage observers to underestimate the importance of teachers for student achievement. If the typical student gets a good teacher one year and a bad teacher the next, the differing effects of these teachers on the student's skill level will tend to cancel out. So when we look at the achievement scores earned by this student and thousands of others in the same situation, we are left with large variations in achievement that tend to track family background. These simple observations might lead to the conclusion that teachers and schools are not very important—when just the opposite is true.

Similarly, when we look at overall achievement levels, such as those reported regularly in the media in the form of "school accountability report cards," we might also be led to believe that all the good teachers are in the suburbs and all the bad teachers are in the core cities. The scores in suburban schools are, after all, almost invariably higher than those in inner-city schools that serve disadvantaged populations. But this observation again simply reflects that families are important. It does not say much about the quality of individual teachers. In fact, detailed analyses of achievement differences in terms of learning gains indicate that the differences among teachers within any given school are generally much larger than the differences across schools. In other words, schools serving disadvantaged students tend to have both very good and very bad teachers—and the same holds true for schools serving more advantaged kids.[2]

It's easy to see how, in practice, this situation can result in misleading statistics. In a school with many poor kids, the students may come to class with learning deficits that are larger than a single teacher can overcome in a year. Thus, even a good teacher who stimulates above-average gains in performance may not be able to bring the typical student all the way up to grade level. In the same way, in a school serving more advan-

taged students, the typical achievement level might be sufficiently high that even a bad teacher does not drag students down below grade level. This does not mean that all of the teachers in the advantaged school are good; rather, it means that the teachers had good students to work with, thanks to the advantages created by their families or the skills of their previous teachers.

The Economic Implication

It is useful to put these statistics into perspective. As parents and policy makers know, schooling yields high economic rewards: People with more schooling reap the reward of less unemployment, better jobs, and higher incomes.

But the conventional wisdom about the economic value of education ignores the importance of the *quality* of learning students enjoy. The usual comparisons involve different levels of school attainment, such as between high school graduates and dropouts, or between college graduates and those who left school earlier. It is less common to trace the impacts of higher achievement—that is, of learning more in school.

It turns out that knowledge gained through education has a very large payoff. To begin with, students who learn more are more apt to complete high school, to enter college, and to complete a degree. This natural behavior leads to the attainment results that everybody is aware of.

But in addition, increased incomes go to those who know more. If we compare two high school graduates with differing achievement levels, the one with higher achievement tends to earn more. The difference leads to sizable differences over a lifetime as these returns to knowledge accrue year after year.[3]

Modern economies have a voracious appetite for the most skilled people. This demand has led to a widening of the income

distribution built simply on what people know. Over time, more-skilled workers have pulled away economically from less-skilled workers—even when both groups have completed the same level of school. An enormous amount of media attention goes to executive salaries and the incomes of the very rich, but the market rewards enjoyed by skilled individuals are much more relevant for most of the population, and these are significant. The student who is happy to coast through school thinking that graduation is all that counts will be brought back to reality when he reaches the labor market.

Still another aspect of student achievement has almost completely escaped notice. If we look around the world, it is clear that countries with high educational achievement also have high rates of economic growth. This relationship is especially important to our future as a nation, because economic growth is what provides us with increasing incomes and greater economic well-being over time. Moreover, the relationship between educational achievement and growth is very strong. Extrapolating from past economic growth, the educational differences between us and, say, the United Kingdom or Germany could amount to *trillions* of dollars in additional gross domestic product (GDP) in the decades to come. The potential impact dwarfs the $1 trillion spent on economic stimulus funding in response to the recession in 2008 and 2009.

Thus, it's extremely disturbing to realize that student achievement in the United States currently ranks below average among the developed countries of the world, as revealed by regular testing of student achievement in math and science across a large number of countries. It is not just the United Kingdom and Germany that are outperforming the United States but also Finland, Korea, Iceland, and Poland.[4]

While this international testing has not received much attention in the United States, many other countries pay considerable

attention to it, and they use the results to guide their needs for policy changes and educational improvement. Germany is a case in point. Even though its students regularly place higher than ours, the country as a whole has focused on student achievement, including both the distribution of outcomes within Germany and the comparison of German students to those in other countries. The release of international test results is the top story of the day in German news media. This attention to performance is entirely appropriate, as it puts pressure on German schools to improve and on politicians to seek ways to facilitate better schools.

It is possible to explain away part of the American drift toward the bottom of the achievement rankings. The United States does have a diverse student body with significant numbers of new immigrants and non–English speakers—but so do many European countries. The United States has long set the goal of educating all children to a high level, meaning that the United States historically has had broader enrollment in high schools, which statistically depresses average test scores. Yet today U.S. students graduate from high school at rates *below* the average of developed countries, implying that other countries are now providing more access to schooling than the United States—while still attaining higher average levels of achievement.

The conclusion is inescapable: The United States is simply not performing up to the educational level of many other countries, and this will have implications for our future economic success.

Policies Aimed at Inputs

So the big question is: How can we change this situation?

The simple position taken here is: *If one is concerned about student performance, one should gear policy to student performance.* It

is not sufficient to focus on things we think or hope are going to be related to achievement.

But identifying the policies that will work to increase student performance isn't necessarily easy. In recognition of the importance of quality teachers, a variety of recommendations and policy initiatives have been introduced. Unfortunately, some of the most popular ideas are more likely to lower teacher quality than to improve it.

One idea that has been widely picked up by policy makers at all levels is to increase the requirements to become a teacher. The idea is simple: If we can insist on better prepared and more able teachers, teacher quality will necessarily rise, and student performance will respond. This argument—at least as generally implemented—proves to be as incorrect as it is simple.

The range of options being pushed includes raising the coursework requirement for teacher certification, testing teachers on either general or specific knowledge, requiring specific kinds of undergraduate degrees, and requiring master's degrees. Each has surface plausibility, but little evidence suggests that any of these is strongly related to teacher quality and to student achievement.

More pernicious, these requirements almost certainly act to reduce the supply of potential teachers. In other words, while the proposed requirements do little or nothing to ensure high-quality teachers, they do cut down on the numbers of people who might consider entering teaching. If teacher certification requirements end up discouraging potentially high-quality teachers who do not want to take the specific courses required, they behave less like a floor on quality and more like a ceiling.

These flawed teacher certification initiatives are actually just a special case of a larger set of misguided policies that go under the name of *input policies*. These are generally attempts to dictate specific pieces of the educational process and in effect to regulate higher achievement. They also include attempts merely

Table 1: Public School Resources in the United States, 1960–2007

	1960	*1980*	*2000*	*2007*
Pupil-teacher ratio	25.8	18.7	16.0	15.5
Percentage of teachers with master's degree or higher	23.5	49.6	56.8	n/a
Median years of teacher experience	11	12	14	n/a
Real expenditure/student (2007–2008 dollars)	$3,170	$6,244	$10,041	$11,674

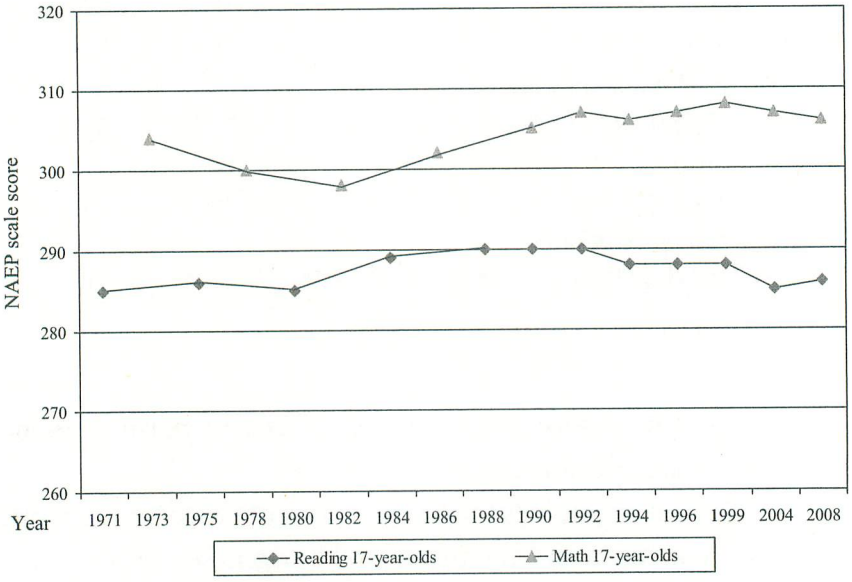
n/a = not available

to provide more resources to schools without increasing any of the incentives to perform better.

The clearest example is found in the recent craze for lowering class size. For the decade before school budgets began to shrink due to the 2008 recession, class sizes generally were pushed down with no obvious effect on student outcomes.

The failure of class size reduction typifies the kind of input and resource policies that we have been employing for the past several decades. The evidence on these policies comes from a variety of sources but is very consistent—and damning. Table 1 shows the pattern of resources devoted to U.S. education since 1960. As is easily seen, there have been dramatic increases in what many people believe to be the most crucial educational resources—all of which well-meaning people continue to advocate increasing today. If we look at the years 1960 to 2007 (which roughly matches the relevant period for our data on student performance), we see that pupil-teacher ratios have fallen by 40 percent, the prevalence of teachers with master's degrees has more than doubled, and median teacher experience has increased dramatically. Since each of these inputs involves significant cost, average real spending per pupil has more than tripled—that is, it has increased by some 270 percent—after allowing for inflation.

NAEP Scores, 17-year-olds, 1971–2008



It is now useful to turn to Graph 1 (above), which tracks student performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (commonly referred to as "the nation's report card"). We see that the math and reading skills of seventeen-year-olds has remained virtually unchanged over almost four decades. This is hardly what the proponents of increased resources suggest should have happened.

These general findings on resources and performance are supported by detailed statistical studies of what goes on in the classroom, which adjust for differences in student background and the knowledge students bring to school. They provide little reason to believe that input policies will systematically improve student outcomes. While a few studies suggest positive relationships associated with added resources—which advocates of specific policies are quick to point out—they are balanced by studies that actually show *negative* relationships—which advo-

cates never discuss. On balance, it seems clear that input policies do not offer a solution to the problem of stagnant or declining student achievement.

Furthermore, it is important to understand how pursuing the conventional input policies could actually *worsen* the situation. As pointed out, increasing the requirements for teacher certification could limit the supply of potential teachers and could thereby actually lower quality of the typical teacher who ends up in the classroom. Similarly, lowering class size could hurt in two ways. First, it is very expensive, so it absorbs funds that could be applied to other, more productive policies. Second, it expands the demand for teachers and therefore could lead to the recruitment of more low-quality teachers—which in turn could lead to lower student achievement.

Note, however, that we do not know much about the overall effects of class size reductions. The California class-size reduction policy of 1997 indeed drew in more teachers who were not fully certified, but it is unclear whether they were lower quality, because certification is not closely related to effective performance in the classroom.

The generic issue is whether higher levels of government can effectively improve schools by increased funding or uniform rules governing how education is to be conducted in local schools. Here the evidence is quite clear: We do not know how to identify a well-defined set of inputs that is either necessary or sufficient for ensuring high-quality schooling. Finding such a set of inputs has been the Holy Grail of education research, and the search has been quite unsuccessful. Indeed, I do not believe that it is an issue of just needing more or better research. I simply do not think we will identify such a set of "magic bullet" inputs with any clarity—at least, not within our lifetimes. I believe that the educational process is simply much too complicated for researchers to uncover a small set of things that are amenable to

central legislation and control that can make a decisive difference in the quality of educational achievement.

The evidence also underscores another aspect of the policy-making problem. Class-size reductions have been very popular politically. This helps to explain why other states and the federal government soon began mimicking California's popular 1997 actions by funding class-size reduction programs. Much of this political sentiment emanates from common-sense arguments that persuade the general public—after all, doesn't it "stand to reason" that a smaller class will allow the teacher to have more intensive, and therefore more productive, interactions with each student? It seems very logical—but it conflicts with the evidence.

The lesson is that the educational policy maker must deal with political problems as well as policy problems. Parallel political problems exist regarding policies requiring master's degrees, restrictions on who can get teacher certificates, and the like. Policies that empirical studies show to be ineffective may nonetheless attract significant political support, which makes them very difficult for policy makers to resist.

Incentives for Performance

If input policies have failed to deliver improved student performance, what other kinds of policies can we examine for possible solutions to the problem? The most significant are policies related to the structure of incentives in educational systems—and of these, perhaps the largest problem with the current organization of schools is that nobody's job or career is heavily dependent on student performance.

This is not to say that teachers or other school personnel are currently misbehaving or ignoring the needs of students. Most teachers are very hardworking and try to do the best they can in the classroom. But like all human beings, teachers respond to

the incentives that are placed in front of them—and the current incentive systems used in public education do not make higher student achievement the chief objective. So when educational decisions are being made, they may or may not be guided by the goal of maximizing student learning. Instead, they may be directed toward options that are publicly popular or make the work of teachers and administrators easier or more pleasant.

The solution, of course, is to focus performance incentives for teachers and other school personnel on student achievement. The problem is that we do not know the best way to structure incentives. We have not tested many performance incentive systems in our schools, so we have very little experience with them and very little evidence as to which systems will produce the results we want.

A variety of approaches have been suggested, many of which have conceptual appeal: performance pay for teachers, rewards for high-performing schools, and various forms of parent or student choice, including charter schools, tax rebates, and vouchers. While evidence is slowly accumulating, the range of experiences is still very limited.

There are nonetheless some things we are quite certain about in the design of incentive structures.

One is that we want to reward a teacher for what she adds to a student's learning—that is, for the value she adds to the education of the child. As a corollary, rewards should be based on what teachers control, not the specific group of students they are given.

One reason for the general resistance by teachers and their unions to incentive systems such as performance pay is concern about what will be rewarded. As we discussed previously, we know that families make a huge difference in the education of students. One implication is that we should not reward or punish teachers for the portion of educational outcomes they are not

responsible for. If some students come to school better prepared than others, their teachers should not receive extra rewards for the good results that background produces. Similarly, if students come from disadvantaged backgrounds that leave them less well prepared for schools, we should not punish their teachers.

Rewarding teachers appropriately in a complex situation like this requires an aggressive system of performance measurement that can separate the effects of classroom performance by the teacher from the influence of external factors that the teacher can't control. We have to be able to track the progress of individual students and relate this progress to the teachers who are responsible for it. This does not necessarily mean that we want a system of individual rewards as opposed to group rewards for teachers in a school, but it does mean that we have to measure school performance accurately. Nor does it mean that test-based measures should be exclusively used.

Accountability has become a contentious issue, especially when it is taken down to the level of individual teachers. The data on student performance provide valuable information on learning in different classrooms, but they are not the only information available. The tests do not cover the full range of influence of teachers or the full contribution of teachers to a school's success. Moreover, testing programs do not cover all the subjects and teachers in a school. Therefore, it is important to use other information from principal evaluations and, perhaps, the evaluations of other teachers.

This area of educational reform—designing accountability systems—is an obvious area for federal leadership (although not necessarily for federal control). Schools prepare people for future employment, but the free-flowing nature of society means that, say, a student educated in Georgia could well end up working in California. Thus, there is a national interest in ensuring that everybody has high levels of skills. Moreover, there is no

need to reinvent the standards for and assessments of basic skills fifty times over. Recent efforts to develop common standards and testing across wider groups of states appear very sensible.

At the same time, the advantages of high-level decision making on the goals of education do not extend to specifying how to reach these goals. We also know that local decision making is crucial to designing effective incentive systems. It is almost inconceivable that we could run a good performance incentive system with regulations from the state or national capital. If we try to devise the "one best system" for the entire country and force it on local districts and schools, we will almost certainly fail. Local educational needs vary considerably, as does local capacity of the schools for implementing any programs or approaches. Developing a general set of rules for how best to educate children across the country's 14,000 school districts and 100,000 schools is simply beyond our capacity. What policies, for example, would simultaneously fit the one district with more than a million students and the 2,700 districts with fewer than 300 total students? While the federal government and state governments can help provide either funding or guidance on the use of performance incentives, they are not in a good position to determine *how* performance incentives should work.

At the same time, we should not simply assume that local districts and schools are currently able to make good decisions in this area. The personnel now in place were not chosen for their ability to design, operate, and manage different incentive systems. As mentioned, even specialists do not have sufficient experience to provide any detailed guidance. Nonetheless, preparing local officials for these tasks is where we should be headed.

Neither should we assume that every policy that emphasizes student outcomes and provides performance incentives is necessarily effective. The design of incentives is complicated, and many incentive structures lead to unintended and undesirable

consequences. For example, if a move to broaden school choice heightens racial or economic segregation in the schools, most people would consider this an undesirable policy. We need to develop more experience with incentives and evaluate these experiences critically. With incentive systems, the details generally prove to be crucial.

The ultimate goal of the incentive systems we design must be to attract, encourage, and reward high-performing teachers while pushing low-performing teachers toward either improving their efforts (if they are capable of doing so) or leaving the profession altogether. Over time, the effect of such systems will be to greatly increase the number of good teachers while drastically reducing the number of ineffective teachers. In a reformed school system along these lines, the chance that a student can enjoy several successive years with an excellent teacher will be much higher. Reduced achievement gaps and heightened overall levels of accomplishment should be the result.

Some people think that improving the teacher force is almost impossible, because we have to live with the current teachers for years into the future. The truth is, however, that we currently have a large number of excellent teachers. At the same time, we also have a number of very ineffective teachers—teachers who are hurting students. If we could simply eliminate the bottom 5 to 10 percent of teachers (two or three teachers in a school with thirty) and replace them with average teachers, we could dramatically change student outcomes. This reform would ensure that the work of our good teachers would not be swept away by a bad teacher. Existing research suggests that getting this kind of small change would push the United States near the top of international rankings in math and science performance.[5]

A recent investigation of international achievement supports this simple idea. Specifically, one attribute of the best systems in the world is that—unlike in the United States—they do not let

bad teachers stay in the classroom for very long.[6] We need to change incentives to get local schools to decide whether to retain teachers based on student achievement rather than other factors.

Finally, we need to think about the political context in which school incentives operate. Current school personnel are generally not interested in making large-scale changes in what they are doing. Thus, they do not support ideas about changing the compensation, tenure, and retention systems to reflect student performance.

This reluctance to embrace change is one of the strongest arguments behind expanded choice through charter schools or other options. If schools see that their effectiveness directly affects their ability to attract students—and thus to obtain funding—they have a strong incentive to do a better job, especially by ensuring that there are effective teachers in all of the classrooms.

Many people think of charter schools and parental choice as benefiting only those who are lucky enough to get into a good school. Those benefits are certainly real. Yet there is a larger benefit from putting pressure on the existing traditional public schools through the possibility that they will lose clientele if they do not perform well. Through this mechanism, charter schools and other alternatives can benefit all children, not just those who attend them.

Some Conclusions

Improving our schools is a policy imperative. The economic future of the United States depends crucially on the quality of our schools. Whether we continue to lead the world or our economy falls back depends on having a well-educated workforce.

Of course, we've known for half a century that U.S. schools need reform. We have responded by almost quadrupling our spending per pupil, but we have done so in ways that have not

translated into achievement. It is clear that just putting more money into the existing system will not lead to significant improvements.

Extensive research on schools leads to a single conclusion. Student achievement is directly related to the quality of teachers. No other potential focus of school policy has anything like the effectiveness of policies that recruit and retain good teachers.

The details of how to ensure that we have effective teachers in all classrooms are still under study, but the general elements are clear. We have to focus incentives on student performance. We have to reward schools and teachers who promote high achievement—and not reward those who fail.

Three other elements seem important. First, we have to assess the value added of teachers and administrators. In other words, we need to focus on everybody's contribution to learning, and we need to hold everybody accountable for the learning gains they do or do not produce.

Second, we need to decentralize decision making so that local schools—where the demands are known, where the people are known, and where programs can be designed to increase achievement—have the freedom to perform. We cannot try to specify from the state or national capital how to learn.

Third, we have to offer school choice to all parents. Currently, well-off parents exercise school choice through their selection of residential location, but poor parents have many fewer options. Choice options such as those presented by charter schools help all families by putting pressure on schools to improve.

Some argue that it is just too hard to make big changes in our schools. Implicitly these people are willing to accept huge losses in the well-being of our children and in the health of our economy. There is strong public support for reform in our schools, and it is time to mobilize that support to restore the strength of our schools. In that, the focus must be ensuring a highly effective teacher in every classroom.

EDUCATION/FILM

THE AMERICAN PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM is in crisis, failing millions of students, producing almost as many drop-outs as graduates, and threatening our economic future. By 2020, the United States will have 123 million high-skill jobs to fill—and fewer than 50 million Americans qualified to fill them.

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DAVIS GUGGENHEIM and LESLEY CHILCOTT, filmmakers who describe the emotional impact of following the children's stories in their film

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