



Market-based reform and the politics of advocacy

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Stanford Center For Opportunity Policy In Education

Common Sense and Market Reform

- Education is the last remaining civil right; school choice is the best means to realize it.
- Teachers unions are corrupt, anti-equity, and only interested in protecting adult jobs over quality education.
- University schools of education do a woeful job preparing teachers and school leaders. Alternative programs are superior.
- Charter schools are the clear alternative to traditional public schools and have higher achievement rates—especially franchise charter schools such as KIPP and Green Dot.

Common Sense and Market Reform

- The best way to evaluate teachers' performance is through value-added assessments. Those teachers shown to be better should be paid more.
- The most effective solutions to underperforming schools are sanction, closure, or takeover.
- School integration is no longer desired by parents of color.
- The individual rights of parents to choose schools is sacrosanct. The expansion of choice will improve all public schools.

Common Sense and Market Reform

- Mayoral control of schools is an imperative.
- Excellence / efficiency requires the dismantling of elected school boards in place of appointed boards or advisory committees.
- There are “real reformers,” and educational establishment actors. Real reformers care about inequality, choice, and accountability and put students first.
- The racial achievement gap is caused by ineffective teachers who are protected by unions.
- Hurricane Katrina was the best thing to happen to New Orleans-- and especially to its public schools.

Complicating the common sense

- ❖ 1) The “reformers” tend to come from outside of education, tend to be white and male, tend to embrace particular, “paternalistic” approaches to educating poor children of color, and tend to be silent on social inequalities.
- ❖ 2) Despite emphasis on “what works,” empirical study is inconclusive on the efficacy market-based reforms. Policy makers are implementing these policies systemically.
- ❖ 3) Educational research has as yet, has not attended to the complex dynamics of advocacy in support of, and in opposition to market-based reforms. Many opposition efforts articulate alternative understandings of inequality.

Data Sources

- ❖ Three-year study of research use in policy making around incentivist, market-based reforms (2011-2014).
- ❖ Two-year study of prospective, current, and alumni Teach for America corps members (2011-2013).
- ❖ Multiple studies of advocacy politics in the school choice movement (2000-2010).

How did we get here? Lessons from policy research

The rise of the conservative think tank and advocacy network

- Foundations commit unrestricted general operating funds on a multiyear basis to create new think tanks.
- Collaboration and shared funding across grantees.
- Interlock of boards, staff, strategy.
- Diversity in funding portfolios: researchers, think tanks, advocacy groups, schools.
- Selecting investments rather than waiting for applications for funding.
- Explicit privileging of market-based social and educational reforms.
- Sophisticated messaging and organizing to create policy alternatives that countered redistributive social policy.
- Heavy marketing and promoting of research in mainstream news media, to policy makers

Venture Philanthropy and Charter School Reform

- Also known as high-engagement philanthropy, social entrepreneurship.
- Selects recipients as investments, seeks ROI.
- More diverse ideologically; big tent of conservatives, neoliberals, moderates, neoconservatives.
- Landed on charter school and incentivist reforms as the most promising educational issue to get return on investment- in particular cities.
- NYC in 2008-2009, \$31,000,000 to 77 schools, most to CMOs, least to CGOs.

The Broad Foundation

We have a sense of urgency in our mission that extends to the goals we set, the way we operate and the standards to which we hold ourselves. Our philosophy is akin to that of the business world, where many of us have our roots. Like venture capitalists, we look for untapped opportunities, and we make strategic investments. As investors, we expect a quantifiable return.

The Gates Foundation (2010 Financial Data)

- ❖ Roughly \$310,650,000 spent on education.
- ❖ \$80 million (26%) allocated to the funding of data systems, assessments, measures, and tools primarily related to teacher effectiveness and accountability.
- ❖ \$6 million allocated to communications: media, journalism, online content, organizational communications.
- ❖ \$12.6 million allocated to conferences and meetings about data use or incentives in educational reform.



The Charter School Policy and Planning Network

- Individual Charter Schools
- Charter Management Organizations; Educational Management Organizations
- State and national charter school advocacy groups
- Charter school real estate development corporations
- Alternative teacher and leadership preparation programs
- Charter-sympathetic research centers and researchers
- Charter school and school choice conferences
- Media and promotion: Advocacy documentary, embedded content
- Universities
- New civil rights groups
- Online providers

Urdan, 2002 ThinkEquity Partners

Already, bi-partisan political support exists for both charter schools and the more radical alternative of privatization. Over time we believe that charter schools- which grant an interested community of parents and educators the ability to start a school outside the traditional system- will end up in the hands of professional managers. These same operators will also be the companies tapped to take over the worst performing public schools and school districts.

Effects of the Network

- Whole or majority districts become “charterized.”
- Momentum gained in growing the movement vis-à-vis the Obama Administration’s educational agenda: Race to the Top, I3 competition.
- Celebrities / new donors join in- See Winfrey’s / Zuckerberg’s donations to Newark.
- Contributes to the common sense conclusion that there were not efforts to reform the schools and systems before the network arrived.
- Re-defines who is a legitimate reformer, who is most committed to improving education for poor children of color.

Effects of the network: Taking stock after a decade

- Remarkable growth in the number of charter schools around the country, but especially in targeted cities.
- EMOs and CMOs operate in at least 31 states, serving at least 300,000 students.
- At least 30 EMOs in operation, number of CMOs is less clear
- 81% of EMO / CMO-managed schools are charter schools, about 14% of charters overall.
- EMOs also partner with districts (not all schools are charters)
- EMOs and CMOs are concentrated in particular districts seen as “reform friendly.”
- Unprecedented power and influence of advocacy networks in electoral politics and local, state and federal policy making.

Won't Back Down September 2012

- ❖ Produced by Walden Media.
- ❖ Instance of “embedded content” making its way to Hollywood.
- ❖ Emulates practices in talk radio and television where advertisers pay for and provide content.
- ❖ Scripted television show on urban charter school also being developed.



Implications of elite advocacy for democratic schooling

- Private wealth used to generate public policy amidst rising wealth inequality.
- New assertions of educational leadership coming from elites- exclusion of community knowledge.
- Particular schooling forms designed for students of color in racially homogenous schools; counters desegregation efforts.
- Selective admissions in schools; private boards running schools.
- Pressure to “brand” models, invest heavily in marketing, and show rapid success.
- Opportunities for democratic participation even more constrained in terms of school and system governance.
- Need to consider lobbyists, foundations & public relations firms as policy players.



Pushing back: The politics of resistance

Looking at dissent: *An alternative to the common sense*

- Policy researchers have not yet developed a framework or research base for understanding opposition to the common sense of market reforms.
- Need to center and interrogate the role of philanthropy as an emerging policy maker.
- Need to assemble and aggregate these cases of resistance in order to better understand the politics of advocacy in relation to race
- For all the talk about choice, there is hostility and derision directed at communities and leaders who choose to resist the expansion of charter schools and privatization.

The cases of Philadelphia and New York City

Philadelphia, 2001-2002

- State takeover sets the stage for privatization
- Edison Schools, Inc. hired to do an evaluation of the school district
- Edison recommends turnover to schools to private provider
- Massive student, teacher walkouts ensue
- Recommendation to privatize schools accepted up by School Reform Commission

New York City, 2001

- Board of Education issues RFP for private management of SURR schools
- Edison Schools, Inc. chosen to run 5 schools in Brooklyn, Harlem, and the Bronx
- Schools to be converted into charters. Parents would have to vote, and a 51% majority was needed to win.

Voices of opposition

And I think that that meant a lot to the parents because here were other parents, who were from nearby schools saying, "This is not the only way you can improve your school. We can organize to make the school better." And I think that that was much more appealing to be hearing from parents as opposed to hired people from some other city who didn't know much about the community or the school (Acorn organizer, NYC).

Voices of opposition

You know, if they were educators, maybe they would understand, but they come to us with the whole business perspective and you can't approach the school, kids and parents, nor teachers, with a business perspective. First, if we wanted to buy into the business world, I would work on Wall Street instead of working here, I could make twice as much money as I'm making now, and I don't buy into all those practices, you know, it's all about money, money, money. Well, schools don't make any money, money, money. (Teacher, Foundations Charter School)

The civil rights community

- NAACP's resolutions against school vouchers, qualified support of charter schools.
- Recent civil rights framework in response to Obama Administration's education agenda.
- Emphasis on advocacy around the discriminatory use of school discipline, fiscal equity & civil rights litigation, ongoing desegregation battles.
- Focus on disparities across the social policy areas.
- Never monolithic, fissures emerge over market-based reforms.

Multi-site cases of organizing against the common sense

- NYCORE
- Parents Across America
- A Bolder, Brighter Approach
- Class Size Matters
- Rethinking Schools
- Occupy movements
- Student walk outs in Detroit
- Washington, D.C. Mayoral election 2010
- New York City protests against co-location
- LAUSD Teachers
- New Orleans Education Equity Roundtable
- Takeover of Chicago Teachers Union by CORE
- Wake County, NC protests to preserve SES integration plan
- Chilean and Columbian protests against neoliberal educational policies

Implications of cases for the politics of advocacy

- Challenge the common sense notions of school choice.
- Organizations tend to be disconnected; many use social media like Twitter to share strategy and ideas, but otherwise operate independently.
- Lack support for infrastructure, especially on a multi-year basis
- Within these movements exists opportunity to center race and inequality in debates on public schooling.
- Possibilities for coalitions between frustrated parents, community organizations, teachers, administrators, and educational researchers.
- Need to document and articulate the effects of reforms on communities of color, teachers of color, special education students, and English language learners.
- Counter narratives can provide alternative perspectives to debates- education's role in advancing individual attainment, community empowerment, and social transformation.

Join study of pro-market forces with a multifocal approach to understanding advocacy politics

- ❖ Education Reform Now
- ❖ Students First
- ❖ Stand for Children
- ❖ Democrats for Education Reform
- ❖ “Fight Club”
- ❖ Aspen Institute
- ❖ Foundations





Wake County, NC 2010



Harlem, NY 2011



Chile, 2011
