

On Dec. 10, 2010, Rethinking Schools editor Stan Karp spoke to about 250 people at Jefferson High School in Portland, Oregon. His presentation, "**Who's Bashing Teachers and Public Schools, and What Can We Do about It?**," was sponsored by the Portland Association of Teachers (NEA) and Rethinking Schools. The talk was preceded by remarks by Portland Association of Teachers president, Rebecca Levison, and Portland Area Rethinking Schools activist Mark Hansen. Below is a transcript of Karp's talk. An audio of the presentation can be found at www.notwaitingforsuperman.org.

Who's bashing teachers and public schools, and what can we do about it?

Pleasure to be here. Thanks for the invitation.

I wish I were here today to announce that I had just completed a deal to buy Facebook, the Oprah Winfrey show and Paramount Pictures—since that's where a lot of education policy is apparently being made these days—and was turning them all into publicly accountable institutions devoted to improving education for all kids—and this was the first meeting of the new steering committee.

Unfortunately that's not happening. Instead I'm here today because I've been asked to talk about "Who's bashing teachers and public schools and what can we do about it?" And since I live in a state with a new Governor who's making a national reputation doing just that, I guess it makes me something of an expert or at least an experienced victim, though this is clearly a national phenomenon.

The short answer to this question is that far too many people are bashing teachers and public schools, and we need to give them more homework because very few of them know what they're talking about. And a few need some serious detention.

But the longer answer is that the bashing is coming from different places for different reasons. And to respond effectively to the very real attacks that our schools, our profession and our communities face, it's important to pay attention to these differences.

The parent who's angry at the public school system because it's not successfully educating his/her children is not the same as the billionaire with no education experience, who couldn't survive in your classroom for two days, but who has made privatizing education policy a hobby...and who has the resources to do so because the country's financial and tax systems are broken.

The educators who start a community-based charter school so they can create a collaborative school culture, are not the same as the hedge fund managers or their political allies who invest in charter school franchises because they see an opportunity to turn a profit or want to privatize one of the last the public sector institutions we have left.

The well-meaning college grad who joins a Teach for America program out of an altruistic

impulse is not the same as the corporate managers who want to use market reforms to create a less expensive, less secure and less experienced teaching force.

And the hard-pressed taxpayer who directs frustration at teachers struggling to hang on to their health insurance or pensions—which far too few people have at all—is not coming from the same place as those responsible for the obscene economic inequality that is squeezing both. Back home in NJ, there’s a man named David Tepper who manages something called the Appaloosa Hedge fund. Last year, Tepper made \$4 billion dollars as a hedge fund manager. This was equal to the salaries of 60% of the state’s teachers who educate 850,000 students. But Governor Christie rolled back a millionaire’s tax and cut \$1 billion out of the state school budget, so people like David Tepper would have lower taxes. It’s not only impossible to sustain a successful public school system with such policies; it’s impossible to sustain anything resembling a democracy for very long.

Now, I’ve spent a large part of my adult life criticizing the flawed institutions and policies of public education, as a teacher, an education activist and a policy advocate. But these days I also find myself spending a lot of time and energy defending that same system and even the very idea of public education against those who say, sometimes quite literally, it should be blown up.

Because the increasingly polarized national debate around education policy is not just about whether teachers feel the sting of public criticism or whether school budgets suffer another round of budget cuts in a society that has its priorities seriously upside down. It’s really not even about the hot-button reform issues getting all the attention like merit pay or charter schools. What’s ultimately at stake in this debate is much more basic. It’s whether the right to a free public education for all children is going to survive as fundamental democratic promise in our society, and whether the schools and districts needed to provide that are going to survive as public institutions, collectively owned and democratically managed, however imperfectly, by all of us as citizens, or be privatized and commercialized by the corporate interests that increasingly dominate all aspects of our society.

Part of this clash between public policy and private interest involves the use of emotionally charged images and rhetoric to frame issues in ways that serve particular reform agendas. And this is where *Waiting for “Superman”* has played a particularly negative role.

Long before Davis Guggenheim, the film’s director, jumped out of a phone booth in his Superman costume, I spent three decades as a high school teacher in Paterson, one of New Jersey’s poorest cities. Paterson had its own 15 minutes of school reform fame back in the 1980s, thanks to Principal Joe Clark who was the bullhorn-and-bat-toting principal who starred in an earlier superhero school movie called *Lean on Me*, a sanitized version of Clark’s tenure at Eastside High School. When Joe Clark made the cover of Time magazine in 1988 as Ronald Reagan’s favorite get tough principal, his baseball bat was aimed at the young black males who were demonized as a criminal element in the schoolyard.

Today the targets have changed. When Michelle Rhee, the former Washington, D.C., schools chancellor who is one of the heroes of Guggenheim's *Waiting for "Superman,"* was on the cover of Time about a year ago, her weapon was a broom to sweep away all those lousy teachers and their unions.

For the past few months, *Waiting for "Superman"* has been mobilizing celebrity star power and high-profile political support for an education "reform" campaign that is destabilizing even relatively successful schools and districts while generating tremendous upheaval in struggling ones. In Newark, NJ where I now work for the Education Law Center, we're seeing a particularly bizarre version of this campaign involving Oprah, Mark Zuckerberg, the billionaire founder of Facebook and half the cast of Guggenheim's movie.

The now-familiar buzzwords are charter schools, merit pay, and test-based accountability. But the larger goal, to borrow a phrase from the Democrats for Education Reform (DFER), a political lobby financed by hedge fund millionaires that is a chief architect of the campaign, is to "burst the dam" that has historically protected public education and its \$600 billion annual expenditures from unchecked commercial exploitation and privatization.

This is not some secret conspiracy. It's a multi-sided political campaign funded by wealthy financial interests like hedge fund superstar Whitney Tilson and rich private foundations like Gates, Broad & Walton. And it's important to keep this big picture in mind, even as we talk about specifics like merit pay and charters because, in a sense, they have become the dynamite charges being put in place to burst the dam.

What is really new and alarming—and what makes a film like *WfS* so insidious—are the large strides that those promoting business models and market reforms as the key to solving educational problems have made in attaching their agenda to the urgent need of poor communities who have, in too many cases, been badly served by the current system.

This is precisely the connection that *WfS* tries to make.

What many teachers saw when they watched this film was not a documentary, but a political intervention on the wrong side of this polarized policy debate I've been describing. They saw a film whose central message is that public education is failing because of bad teachers and their unions and that charter schools are the solution.

That's why when Rethinking Schools initiated a NOT *Waiting for Superman* campaign last September to talk back to the film and its message, it drew over 15,000 positive responses in two weeks. Educators and activists were responding not just to the movie, but to more than a decade of destructive policies and political rhetoric that the movie promotes and that teachers know from direct experience is hurting our schools, our students and our communities.

But this is not just about a bad film.

The narrative of public education as a systematic failure has been fed in recent years by shifting federal policies, away from the federal government's historic role as a promoter of access and equity in public education through support for things like school integration, Title I funding for high poverty schools and services for students with special needs, to a much less equitable set of federal mandates around testing, closing or reconstituting schools, firing school staff and distributing federal education funds through "competitive grants" to "winners" at the expense of "losers." Taken together these policies, embodied first in NCLB and now in a Race Over the Cliff, have helped create an impression of public education as a failure that is steadily eroding the common ground it needs to survive.

A good example of how federal ed policy has gone off the rails came last Feb. when the President and his Education Sec. Duncan hailed the firing of the entire staff of a high school in Central Falls, RI because it had low test scores. They said it was a "courageous" act that was "right for kids." A model of "accountability" that the Administration wants to repeat in thousands of schools over the next few years. Duncan has talked about closing "the bottom 1 percent of the nation's portfolio"—like the CEO of a runaway multinational corporation.

Neither the President nor his Education Secretary mentioned that the school was the only high school in the poorest city in the state. Or that 65% of the students were ELL learners or that parents, students and alumni loudly protested the plans to fire the whole staff. They didn't explain that the wholesale firings were made possible by changes in federal Title I regulations proposed by the administration or that the state supt. pushing the plan was part of the Broad Foundation's growing national network of pro-privatization, anti-union school administrators.

Instead the President mentioned the low percentage of the students who passed the state math test. That was the sole justification for supporting the wholesale staff firings. And it's the kind of punitive test-driven policy that the Administration is proposing to impose on over 5000 schools in the nation's poorest communities.

That same week, in Wake County, North Carolina where my grandchildren go to school and where the school board was the target of a Tea Party-type takeover last fall, the school board voted 5-4 to end the one of the country's most successful "diversity" plans. The plan uses free and reduced lunch numbers to limit the concentration of poor students at any school to 40% or less. The Raleigh plan has led to some of the best progress on closing achievement gaps in the country. But despite strong local opposition from parents, community groups and the NAACP, the new board majority voted to restore "neighborhood" assignment policies that will re-segregate the district and create numerous schools with high poverty concentrations well above 40%.

Yet unlike in Rhode Island, President Obama and Secretary Duncan had no comment on that decision, even though it will condemn many more students to separate and unequal schooling and will roll back decades of effort to desegregate Raleigh's public schools.

Sec. Duncan repeatedly calls education the "civil rights issue of the 21st century," and even called the release of *Waiting for "Superman"* a "Rosa Parks moment." But the federal

government has completely retreated from the educational equity agenda that emerged from the civil rights movement that Rosa Parks helped launch.

Instead, the Democrats have been playing tag team with Republicans and building on the test and punish approach of the Bush years. Just how much this bipartisan consensus has solidified came home to me when I picked up my local paper one morning and saw Governor Christie, the most anti-public education governor NJ has ever had, quoted as saying “This is an incredibly special moment in American history, where you have Republicans in New Jersey agreeing with a Democratic president on how to get reform.”

Under NCLB, this bipartisan consensus used test scores to move decisions about teaching and learning away from classrooms, schools and districts to state and federal bureaucracies. Test score gaps have been used to label schools as failures without providing the resources and strategies needed to eliminate the gaps. Over 25,000 schools, nearly 30% of all schools in the US failed to meet NCLB’s adequate yearly progress requirements last year, and that number will jump dramatically as the law’s unreachable benchmarks ratchet up towards 100% by 2014.

Today a deepening corporate/foundation/political alliance is using this same test-based accountability to drill down further into the fabric of public education to close schools, transform the teaching profession, and increase the authority of mayors and managers while decreasing the power of educators.

What we’re facing is a policy environment where bad ideas nurtured for years in conservative think tanks and private foundations have taken root in Congress, the White House and the federal education department, and are now aligned with powerful national and state campaigns fueled with unprecedented amounts of both public and private dollars.

Unless we change direction, the combined impact of these proposals will do for public schooling what market reform has done for housing, health care and the economy: produce fabulous profits for a few and unequal access & outcomes for the many.

The corporate/foundation crowd has successfully captured the media label as “education reformers.” If you support charters, merit pay, and control of school policy by corporate managers you’re a reformer. If you support increased school funding, collective bargaining and control of school policy by educators, you’re a defender of the status quo. This is hardly a surprise in a media culture that allows FOX News to call itself “fair and balanced,” but it does make intelligent debate about education policy more difficult.

This is particularly true when it comes to the way the issue of poverty is being framed.

One important lesson I’ve learned from my RS experience over the years is that school power comes in many pieces. And these pieces, large or small, can be used to promote social justice not only on big issues like funding equity or federal and state policy, but also daily inside our classrooms, in the choices we make in our teaching, assessment, and curriculum practices, and

also in the relations between our schools and the communities they serve and in the way our unions advocate for the needs and rights of our students and families along with our own interests as teachers.

Serving schools with high numbers of students in poverty is no excuse for bad teaching, poor curriculum, massive dropout rates or year after year of lousy school outcomes. We do need accountability systems that put pressure on schools to respond effectively to the communities they serve. And in my experience, parents are the key to creating that pressure and teachers are the key to implementing the changes needed to address it. Finding ways to promote a kind of collaborative tension and partnership between these groups is one of the keys to school improvement.

But the idea that schools alone can make up for the inequality and poverty that exists all around them has increasingly become part of the “No Excuses” drumbeat used to impose reforms that have no record of success as school improvement strategies and in fact are not educational strategies at all, but political strategies designed to bring market reform to public education. In the past, we used to hear that the “single most important *school-based* factor” in student achievement was the quality of the teacher. Now even the school-based qualification is being left out. Instead we’re hearing absurd claims about how super-teachers can eliminate achievement gaps in two or three years with scripted curricula handed down from above, and how the real problem in schools is not the country’s shameful 23% child poverty rate or underfunded schools, instead it’s bad teachers.

Now it’s absolutely true that effective teachers and good schools can make an enormous difference in the life chances of children. And it’s also true that struggling teachers who don’t or won’t improve even after they’ve been given the support and opportunities to do so, need to go manage hedge funds or enter some other less important line of work.

But when it comes to student achievement—and especially the narrow kind of culturally-slanted, pseudo-achievement captured by standardized test scores—there is no evidence that the test score gaps you read about constantly in the papers can be traced to bad teaching, and there is overwhelming evidence that they closely reflect the inequalities of race, class, and opportunity that follow students to school.

Scholar Stephen Krashen had it exactly right when he said:

“If we spend as much on protecting children from poverty as we are willing to spend on testing children and evaluating teachers, we can reduce the problem considerably.”

Waiting for “Superman” makes a huge deal out of the success of Finland which is at the top of international test score comparisons. What the film leaves out is that all the teachers in Finland are unionized, well paid, have tenure and work in school systems that do very little standardized testing. Everyone also benefits from a cradle-to-grave support system that includes universal daycare, preschool and healthcare, all of which help children achieve better

results in school. And Finland's child poverty rate is less than 3% compared to ours at 23%.

Teachers count a lot. But reality counts too, and reformers who discount facts like 44% of Oregon's students qualify for free or reduced lunch programs are actually the ones making excuses; excuses for their failure to make poverty reduction and adequate and equitable school funding a central part of school improvement efforts.

Instead, at a time when corporate profits and economic inequality are at their highest levels in the history of the country, the Secretary of Education says that schools must get used to the "new normal" and do more with less. Andrew Rotherham, another founding member of DFER and a Time magazine pundit says politicians like Chris Christie are "on to something big—that the huge cost for public schools is no longer sustainable."

The federal government has put more effort into tying individual teacher compensation to test scores and pressing states to eliminate caps on charter schools, than encouraging them to distribute more fairly the \$600 billion they spend annually on K-12 education.

A few months ago, ELC produced a national school report card on the fairness and adequacy of individual state school funding systems, and folks, it's time you called in your Oregon state officials for a parent-teacher conference. Oregon was #37 out of 50 states in the school funding report card for its overall per pupil funding level. It got a C for providing extra resources to students/schools in poverty. It got an F for effort, a measure of how much a state invests in education compared to its relative wealth. Oregon tied for #42.

But for Secretary Duncan and Bill Gates cutting education budgets is not a problem, it's an opportunity. They are now going around the country proposing that schools save money by increasing class sizes, ending the practice of paying teachers for advanced degrees, closing and consolidating schools, and replacing live teachers with online computer programs.

At the same time they want to spend hundreds of millions of dollars to create more tests based on the new common core standards and use those tests to implement merit pay plans.

Now at this point spending more money on standardized tests to track academic achievement gaps is like passing out thermometers in a malaria epidemic. People need better health care, more hospitals, and better trained doctors, they don't need more thermometers.

But beyond that, test-based teacher evaluation and compensation systems have the potential to seriously damage the teaching profession.

There is no research that shows that paying teachers to raise test scores improves student achievement, raises graduation rates, increases college participation, narrows academic gaps or any of the positive school outcomes that policy makers say they seek.

The National Academy of Sciences found 20-30% error rates in value-added teacher ratings

systems based on their own dubious premises. Teachers in the bottom group one year were often in the top group the next and vice versa. The same teachers measured by two different standardized tests produced completely inconsistent results. The basic assumptions of these testing systems are at odds with the way real schools actually work and bending school practices to accommodate them could negatively affect everything from the way students are assigned to classes, to the willingness of teachers to serve high needs populations to the collaborative professional culture that good schools depend on for success.

The merit pay plans would also require yet another massive increase in standardized testing to deal with the fact the less than 25% of teachers in most school systems teach math and language arts which is what most states currently test.

Bruce Baker is a NJ researcher who works with ELC and does a great, wonky blog called “school finance 101.” He regularly takes on the claims of the valued-added testers and shows how their claims to have the “best available” method for evaluating teacher performance could lead to chaos, random teacher dismissals and lots of lawsuits. As Bruce put it “if the “best available” automobile burst into flames on every fifth start, I think I’d walk or stay home.”

When you add to these plans the practice, now underway in cities like Los Angeles and New York, of publishing these psychometric astrology ratings in the paper next to the names and pictures of individual teachers you have a recipe for community chaos and educational tragedy.

These plans are not about helping schools develop better systems to evaluate and support teacher effectiveness; they are obstacles to it. For example, in Montgomery County, Maryland, the Montgomery County Education Association negotiated a professional growth system that included test scores as one part of a comprehensive teacher evaluation process that looks at student outcomes, classroom performance, professional responsibilities, advanced degrees and other factors. The process requires all new teachers and teachers who’ve been identified as struggling to work with well-trained teacher coaches over a two-year period to improve their practice and results. The system has resulted in a significant increase in teacher quality, including decisions, jointly supported by the union and administration, to remove several hundred teachers from the classroom over a period of years. But this year Md. won a Race to The Top that, under federal pressure, requires that 50% of teacher evaluation be based strictly on test scores. The grant threatens to destroy a successful system developed by collective bargaining that actually works to improve results for teachers and students.

The real impact of test-based merit pay plans will be to weaken school-based collaboration and move decision-making to external bureaucracies and managers. Last week, the NY Times described a multi-city plan funded by the Gates Foundation to combine test-based teacher evaluation with the videotaping of classroom lessons. By next June, Gates researchers will have 24,000 videotaped lessons totaling 64,000 hours of classroom video. The plan is to have these videos evaluated by people who have never visited the school and don’t have any kind of relationship with the teacher, and rate them using checklists. It’s like the grading for standardized tests by the temporary employees of commercial testing vendors.

And of course there's a contractor providing the necessary equipment. The [Teachscape](#) company is providing cameras, software, and other services at estimated first-year startup costs of about \$1.5 million per district.

The fundamental flaw here is not just the mindless tech-think or the gadget worship. It's the absolutely clueless disrespect for the central role that classroom teachers and school-based educators must play in any plan for school improvement. Compare this approach with a very different use of classroom video described by Sacramento teacher and blogger Larry Ferlazzo. Ferlazzo worked with an instructional consultant who had been working in his school for several years to video and critique his teaching. He then shared and discussed the video with his students in a process that was totally unrelated to the district's official evaluation system. He said it was the most significant professional development experience he's had in his career, and has been widely endorsed by his colleagues in the school.

These are the kinds of evaluation systems we need, designed to support teachers in classrooms, promote collaboration with colleagues and school-based instructional leaders and include parents and students. What we don't need is more data systems that allow central office administrators or distant state monitors to run schools by remote control.

The last issue I want to mention before opening things up for discussion is charter schools. As you know if you've seen WfS, charter schools are being hailed as a kind of new magic reform bullet.

Charter schools have an interesting history that has often been overlooked in the current debate. The first charter schools were initiated by Albert Shanker and the American Federation of Teachers in NYC in the late 80s and 90s. They were originally designed as teacher run schools that would serve students who were struggling inside the regular system and would operate outside the reach of the administrative bureaucracy and the highly politicized school board. These first charters also drew on early rounds of small high school experiments initiated by teachers or community activists as alternatives to the large comprehensive HS. But after a few years, Shanker became concerned that the charters and small schools were fragmenting the district, creating unequal tiers of schools serving different populations of students with unequal access, and also weakening the collective power of the teachers union to negotiate with the administration about district-wide concerns. And so he pulled back at a time when there were still very few charters and instead he and other union leaders focused on the standards movement, which for them became the primary engine for reform.

But charters continued to grow slowly, and states, beginning with Minnesota, began to pass laws to promote the formation of charters, partly as a model of reform and partly as the construction of a parallel system outside the reach of both teacher unions and, in some cases, the federal and state requirements to serve and accept all students as the public system must do. And this charter movement gradually began to attract the interest of political and financial interests who saw the public school system as a socialist monopoly ripe for market reform.

In the past ten years, the character of the charter school movement has changed dramatically, from community-based, educator initiated local efforts to spur alternative approaches for a small number of students to nationally-funded efforts by foundations, investors and educational management companies to create a parallel, more privatized system.

Today there are about 5000 thousand charter schools in the US, and they enroll about 4% of all students. Charter laws are different in each but state, but in general charter schools are publicly funded but privately run schools. Few justify the hype they receive in *Waiting for "Superman,"* and those that do, like the schools featured in the film are highly-selective, privately-subsidized schools that have very limited relevance for the public system. It's like looking for models of public housing by studying luxury condo developments.

The most complete study of charter school performance by Stanford University found that only 17% of charter schools had better test scores than comparable public schools and more than twice as many did worse. And unlike charter schools, traditional public schools accept all children, including much larger numbers of high needs students and students without the heroic, supportive parents we see in the film. In most states charters also do not face the same public accountability and transparency requirements that public schools do which has led to serious problems of mismanagement, corruption and profiteering.

Charter-school teachers are, on average, younger non-unionized and less likely to hold state certification than teachers in traditional public schools. In a word, less expensive.

As many as one in four charter school teachers leave every year, about double the turnover rate in traditional public schools. The odds of a teacher leaving the profession altogether are 130% higher at charters than traditional public schools, and much of this teacher attrition is related to dissatisfaction with working conditions.

Charter schools typically pay less, and require longer hours. But charter school administrators often earn more than their school-district counterparts. Geoffrey Canada of the Harlem Children Zone and Eva Moskowitz of the Harlem Success Academy, two schools featured in the film, are each paid close to half a million dollars.

This does not deny the reform impulse that is a real part of the charter movement. Many times during my 30 years of teaching at my large dysfunctional high school in Paterson, I wanted to start my own school. And many of issues that public school advocates like myself criticize in charters, like the tracking, creaming, and unequal resources exist within the public system too.

But public schools have federal, state and district obligations that can be brought to bear. There are school boards, public budgets, public policies and public officials that can be subjected to pressure and held accountable in ways that privatized charters don't allow. In post-Katrina New Orleans, where more than 60% of all students now attend unequal tiers of charter schools, there are students and parents who can not find any schools, charter or public,

to take them.

In too many places, charters function more like deregulated “enterprise zones” than models of reform, providing subsidized spaces for a few at the expense of the many. They drain resources, staff, and energy for innovation away from other district schools, often while creaming better prepared students and more committed parents. This is especially a problem in big city public systems that urgently need renewal and resources but are increasingly being left behind with the biggest challenges. Nowhere have charters produced a template for effective district-wide reform or equity.

No one questions the desire of parents to find the best options they can for their children. But at the level of state and federal education policy, charters can provide a reform cover for dismantling the public school system and an investment opportunity for those who see education as a business rather than a fundamental institution of democratic civic life. This doesn't mean charter school teachers or parents are our enemies. On the contrary, we should be allies in fighting some of the counter-productive assessment, curriculum and instructional practices reigning down on all of us from above. We should find more and better ways to integrate charters into common systems of accountability and support, and where practices like greater autonomy over curriculum or freedom from bureaucratic regulations are valid, they should be extended to all schools.

But any strategy that promotes charter expansion at the expense of system-wide improvement and equity for the all schools is a plan for privatization not reform.

It took well over a hundred years to create a public school system that, for all its flaws, provides a free education for all children as a legal right. It took campaigns against child labor laws, crusades for public taxation, struggles against fear and discrimination directed at immigrants, historic movements for civil rights against legally sanctioned separate and unequal schooling, movements for equal rights and educational access for women, and in more recent decades sustained drives for the rights of special education students, gay and lesbian students, bilingual students and native American students. These campaigns are all unfinished and the gains they've made are uneven and fragile. But they have made public schools one of the last places where an increasingly diverse and divided population still comes together for a common civic purpose.

In some respects public education is the most successful democratic institution we have and has done far more to reduce inequality, offer hope, and provide opportunity than the country's financial, economic, political, and media institutions.

But its Achilles heel continues to be acute racial and class inequality, which in fact is the Achilles heel of the whole society.

Those who believe that business models and market reforms hold the key to solving educational problems have, as I've noted, made strides in attaching their agenda to the urgent

need of communities who have been poorly served by the current system. But their agenda does not represent the real needs or the real desires of these communities:

It does not include all children and all families

It does not include adequate, equitable and sustainable funding

It does not include transparent public accountability

It does not include the supports and reforms that educators need to do their jobs well

It doesn't address the legacy or the current realities of race and class inequality that surround our schools every day.

Where we go from here, as advocates and activists for social justice, depends in part on our ability to re-invent and articulate this missing equity agenda and to build a reform movement that can provide effective, credible, democratic alternatives to the strategies that are currently being imposed from above.

Because in the final analysis what we need to reclaim is not just our schools, but our political process, our public policy-making machinery, and control over our economic and social future. In short, we don't only need to fix our schools, we need to fix our democracy.