

SCOPE Staff Discussion
of Sept. 30 lecture
“Evaluating Education Reform”
featuring Diane Ravitch
with Linda Darling-Hammond, Eric Hanushek,
Channa Mae Cook, and Peter Schrag

Prepared by Frank Adamson

A Cinematic Summary



What's wrong with public education?

Inigo Montoya: Let me 'splain.... No, there is too much.
Let me sum up:

What are the hoaxes and solutions?

Hoaxes = blaming teachers, closing schools

Solutions are
~ ending poverty,
~ less testing,

~ and preparing and paying teachers

Westley: That doesn't leave much time for dilly-dallying.

Reign of Error: Thesis

- Education “reformers” really are status quo
 - Declare “Our schools are at risk”
 - Recommend fundamental changes to public education (Vouchers, corporate charters, deunionizing, multiple-choice tests, merit pay, school closures)
- Ravitch rejects the failure claim and disputes the changes as hoaxes
 - “Public education is in a crisis only so far as society is and only so far as this new narrative of crisis has destabilized it.” (Ravitch, *Reign of Error*)

Major Hoaxes, by Category

- 1) Policy
 - a) NCLB demands 100% proficiency in ELA & Math
 - b) RTTP creates system of winners and losers
- 2) Mantra of choice
 - a) Private sector has superior strategies – risk management
 - b) Charters outperform public schools
- 3) Teaching
 - a) Abolish tenure
 - b) Unions are problems
- 4) Accountability
 - a) Standardized testing reveals teacher quality
 - b) Merit pay motivates teachers
- 5) Larger social and economic issues
 - a) Poverty is not an excuse
 - b) School choice is civil rights issue of our time

Solutions for Ending “Reign of Error”

- 1) Level the playing field
 - a) Begin with neo-natal care leading to universal pre-kindergarten
 - b) Provide wraparound services (healthcare)
 - c) Reduce poverty and racial segregation
- 2) Invest in and keep experienced teachers who:
 - a) Teach reduced class-sizes
 - b) Create tests for students
 - c) Make professional judgments about students
- 3) Administration oriented towards educators
 - a) Charter schools support public schools
 - b) Principals are master teachers
 - c) Superintendents are experienced educators

Main Debate Points (from Monday)

1. U.S. has consistently lower test scores internationally
 - What does this mean for outcomes (economy, education, global status, etc.)?
2. What is role of test scores, such as NAEP?
 - Spectrum from “not useful” ↔ “use for merit pay and tenure decisions”
3. Poverty is a serious issue, but how does it relate to education?
 - Is poverty an excuse or a primary factory in educational disparities?
4. Who/what is to blame for educational problems?
 - Teachers (low teacher quality leads to low performance)
 - Unions (tenure, etc.)
 - Choice/Privatization agenda (Vouchers, Charters, etc.)
5. What is the best level to find solutions?
 - Education solutions
 - Ex: Universal Pre-K
 - Social solutions
 - Ex: Health and wraparound services
 - Economic solutions
 - Ex: Reducing endemic poverty

Small Group Discussion Topics

1. What do lower international test scores imply for the U.S.?
2. What should be the role of test scores?
3. Is poverty an excuse or a primary factor in educational disparities? Why?
4. Who/what is to blame for educational problems?
5. What is the best level to find solutions?
 - a) Education, social, economic, some combo?