

SCHOOL CHOICE

Look at the research: Vouchers don't work

The Oct. 15 letter, "Choice in education," is falsehood on falsehood. It doesn't stand up to research. It's no accident Edina has top schools and urban districts often don't. All research shows that parents are a child's most important teachers; that ages 0 to 5 are the most critical; that children who are behind at age 3 may never catch up. Poverty, homelessness, hunger, dysfunctional neighborhoods, no job hopes and crime are all significant negative impacts.

Research shows that vouchers are an overall failure. Free public education educates all children; vouchers don't. The real purpose of vouchers is to give tax dollars to private schools: defund public education, privatize all education. Readers should compare educational apples to apples, and read "50 Myths and Lies That Threaten America's Public Schools" or "The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice Undermine Education."

When you can blame your dentist for cavities and your doctor for your obesity, then you can blame schools for your child's educational failings. "Failing schools" makes a great slogan, but it is another glib propaganda slogan covering the true agenda. American students in schools with under 10 percent poverty rates are among the world's best, if not No. 1.

The "50 Myths" book demolishes the voucher scheme. All so-called reform ideas are limiting creativity and excitement in learning. We owe our kids better than misinformation.

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Tom Dolen comment on 10-17-2014

Vouchers don't work.

What does work? When I read one of the two books you mention it seems that most everything is in dispute. When I review the blog posts at <http://dianeravitch.net> the author of one of the books (+7,000 posts a year) the education sector is clearly in heavy dispute and in real need of a first things first focus. If the public education sector had a GOAL that could be simplified to what is understood on the street because of common sense we could get started on first things first right the first time for continuous improvement that would generate the innovation and savings to pay for the changes.

I suggest we all read the GOAL by Eli Goldratt thinking public education systems rather than production systems. Education systems and production systems are both about processing dependent events through bottleneck and non-bottleneck capacities with throughput goals, cost limits, and in-process to finishing risks. It will be clear in the reality tree that reading readiness is a major first constraint. It is a first things first cause effect cause change that must be made locally by the community and the school district.

In that light we can include the lack of reading readiness starting in kindergarten in your first paragraph of significant negative effects and identify this as a first things first public education bottleneck and garner 90% agreement that the school districts or families have to do much more much earlier and maybe finish earlier on a one size fits one platform. Doing first things first right the first time is about not being behind at age 3, 6, 9, or 12. It is silly to look at the research and not see the reading readiness cause effect cause at age 3 when many of the others are being mentioned. It is really silly to not get this fixed for our kids because the school and health systems are already funded and could get it done with a cash flow payback.

