

# Threats to Public Education in Minneapolis

## **RESET**

Main Sponsor: Minneapolis Foundation

### Campaign Partners:

AchieveMPLS

Hiawatha Academies

~~African-American Leadership Forum~~

MINNCAN

Charter School Partners

Minneapolis Public Schools

Minnesota Minority Education Partnership

EMPOWER

Harvest Prep School

Teach for America

### What They Do:

Organizes upper-income people, mainly prominent Democrats and liberals, to speak out against teachers in a way that connects with Democrats.

## **Center on Reinventing Public Education**

Main Partner in Minneapolis: Minneapolis Public Schools

### What They Do:

Sign on school districts across the country to a "portfolio strategy" that includes: taking power from teachers' contracts and giving it to principles, "school choice", pupil-based funding, testing based evaluations of teachers. The District has signed on to CRPE portfolio strategy.

## **Better Ed**

### Main Sponsor:

Intellectual Takeout is the parent of Better Ed, which itself is a project of the Center of the American Experiment. Intellectual Takeout is also an associate of the State Policy Network, a nationwide conservative umbrella reportedly with ties to ALEC.

The Center of the American Experiment is run by prominent Minnesota conservatives, including Annette Meeks. Also attached is a research brief prepared by Linda Owen.

### What They Do:

Run ad campaigns calling for school closure and less money to be spent on education.

Currently they are targeting Bernadeia Johnson. We expect them to switch there target to MFT soon.

## **Educators 4 Excellence**

This is a New York based group with chapters across the country. They are an outgrowth of TFA. Not every thing they say is bad, in fact we agree with some of it. However, they do push teacher evaluation systems and other reforms that are unfair to teachers as well as the elimination of seniority.

### **What They Do:**

Organize (usually younger) unionized teachers. They have not declared their purpose but say they are friendly to MFT and believe in unions. If you have not already heard from them... you will. They have a lot of money to share their message.

**?????**

There is more money coming in to Minneapolis everyday. There will certainly be other groups and organizations that pop up to attack our public education, union, contract, and profession.

--  
Taylor Maness  
Internal Organizer  
Minneapolis Federation of Teachers Local 59  
701-526-8683

*"Remember that we are fighting for more than our own struggles. Each of our struggles are for the entire working-class, and we must all stand together if we are to win"- Bill Haywood*

## **Background on RESET:**

RESET is a campaign to change education policy in Minneapolis and is part of a national right-wing corporate education reform effort that seeks to push a business model of education on students. The RESET campaign itself was started by the Minneapolis Foundation who has partnered with several organizations that support the right-wing corporate education reform agenda. Some of the most flagrantly anti-teacher voices in the campaign include MinnCan, the Charter School Partnership, and Hiawatha Academies. MPS is a partner in the RESET campaign.

## **What is RESET Talking Points:**

RESET is a localized version of the right-wing national corporate education reform movement. RESET has national corporate reform partners that include: Students First, the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), The Gates Foundation, The Broad Foundation, Teach For America, 50 CAN and the Walton Foundation (Wal-Mart heirs) - to name a few.

## **What Does RESET Propose:**

RESET has 5 'strategies' that they say will close the opportunity gap: Real-time Use of Data, Expectations Not Excuses, Strong Leadership, Effective Teaching, and Time on Task. While on a basic level, these are commonly used and well-known strategies, we believe to tackle the learning gap, we must do more and go deeper.

Some of RESET's 'strategies' (like calling on every student in the class) are things that teachers already do. The strategies to improve education are not a new or creative.

Teachers spend years in school learning how to effectively teach. By simply suggesting basic strategies that teachers already do, RESET sets up a false assumption that we are not doing them and that these five strategies are all that is needed in order for students to succeed.

## **Why are people so angry at RESET?**

RESET will use its platform to bash teachers and unions with the goal of weakening the very people who want to save public education. Recently, at their first public event, the RESET campaign featured a speaker, Dr. Steve Perry, who called for mass school

closures and who called Minneapolis educators "roaches" who are "responsible for the literal death of children".

RESET's agenda is not about helping students. It is about hurting those who defend public education - namely teachers and their union.

### **What Does RESET Actually Want:**

RESET's agenda is in the interest of those who benefit from charter schools and private schools. It wants to influence the contract between teachers and the MPS school district in a way that weakens our union not in a way that benefits Minneapolis students.

### **What Do We Believe is a Better Agenda for Education?**

- 1. Small Class Size (13-17 students in K-4)**
- 2. Stopping the use of High Stakes Testing to determine the value of a student, a teacher, a school and a district.**
- 3. Adequate time for planning high quality, differentiated lessons that meet the needs of all students**
- 4. Culturally relevant curriculum**
- 5. Stronger and more engaged parent and teachers partnerships**
- 6. Before and after school wrap around services**

## LEARNING FROM THE CORPORATE REFORM MOVEMENT

Leigh Dingerson

April 5-6, 2013 – Washington, DC

Three aspects of the corporate education reform movement are instructive for those of us who oppose their agenda, and are organizing around comprehensive educational justice.

1 – The corporate reform movement has organized under broad principles that allow individuals and groups with different agendas to work together;

2 – They have systematically built a broad infrastructure, and

3 – They are focused, coordinated and audacious.

### They Have Organized Under Broad Principles

The corporate reform movement is wide and deep. But they don't have the hearts and minds of the people. The public supports public schools. The public supports teachers. And, while they continue to proclaim that it's all about the kids, every day it becomes more and more clear that their policies have not improved instruction, school climate and culture or student outcomes.

What *binds* these corporate "reformers" are a few broad principles:

- That urban public school districts are broken, and can't be fixed;
- That, rather than decades of disinvestment, neglect and racist policies, it's regulation and rules – including union contracts – that hold these districts back.
- They also believe that everyone – teachers, students, parents – is driven by an individual desire to get ahead, and will respond to market-type incentives, like choice and merit pay. They believe in the power of the individual, over the promise of the common good.

These are broad principles that bind them together. But underneath that umbrella are individuals and entities that are really in it for different reasons.

- Some of the corporate reformers believe that free market strategies will solve the problems they identify in the schools. They're focused on getting government out of our lives. These are the folks who are trying to derail health care reform privatize social security, fight against a minimum wage increase. Public schools are just one more government program that needs to be dismantled.
- Some of the corporate reformers are anti-union, not *primarily* because they believe that unions interfere with education, but because the teachers unions have been a powerful, mostly Democratic political player. If they want to win elections, they must destroy the teachers unions.
- Others are in it to make money. Public education is a \$500 *billion* market. They want a piece of it.

*We need to remember that a movement is built around broad values, not universal agreement on the end-goal, strategies or tactics.*

The folks in this room do not always agree on strategies or tactics. But we *do* agree on the value of public education, and the importance of public accountability and right to organize. And we believe that education is about more than getting good at filling in little bubbles on a test answer sheet that's really just making some corporation rich.

### **They Have Systematically Build a Broad Infrastructure**

It's impossible to talk about the corporate reform movement without acknowledging the Gates, Broad and Walton Foundations. Together, Gates, Broad and Walton spend almost \$250 million annually on education programing. Together, and with other individual, corporate and philanthropic donors, the corporate reform movement has built a comprehensive infrastructure.

### **Infrastructure Examples: These major funders support:**

(note: these are just example lists—there are many other organizations that could go under each of these headings)

#### ◆ Individual charter schools, CMOs and EMOs (examples):

*New Schools Venture Fund*  
*Charter School Growth Fund*  
*ASPIRE Public Schools*  
*Bridges Public Charter School*  
*Fannie C. Williams Charter School*  
*Paul Public Charter School*  
*Rocketship Education*  
*Schools for the Future Detroit*  
*KIPP Foundation...*

#### ◆ Research institutes and think tanks:

*the Thomas B. Fordham Institute*  
*Center for the Reinvention of Public Education*  
*Education Sector*  
*The Mackinac Center, and others.*

#### ◆ Advocacy organizations and faux community-based groups:

*Students First*  
*Stand for Children*  
*50CAN*  
*Chiefs for Change*  
*Center for Education Reform*  
*Black Alliance for Educational Options*  
*Los Angeles Parent Union*  
*Parent Revolution*  
*National Council on Teacher Quality*  
*National Alliance for Public Charter Schools...*



◆ Political organizations to fund candidates for office, policy shops to write legislation and advocacy groups to lobby for it;

*Parent Revolution*

*Democrats for Education Reform*

*Foundation for Educational Excellence*

*American Federation for Children PAC*

*Americans for Prosperity Foundation*

*Stand for Children*

*50CAN*

*American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC)*

*Illinois Policy Institute*

*Barry Goldwater Institute for Public Policy Research*

*American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research...*

◆ The media to cover their story, and they create their own media to get their message out;

*Education Writers Association*

*Education Week*

*Editorial Projects in Education*

*"Waiting for Superman"*

*"Won't Back Down"...*

◆ Training and recruitment of corporate-minded people into superintendent's offices, and young people to become non-union teachers:

*New Leaders for New Schools*

*Broad Superintendents Academy*

*Broad Residency in Urban Education*

*Teach for America*

*Education Pioneers*

*New Teachers Project*

*Educators for Excellence...*

◆ Consulting companies to develop roadmaps for "reform," and external organizations to facilitate "community listening sessions" to make the school closing process look legitimate:

*Bellwether Education Partners*

*Illinois Facilities Fund*

*Boston Consulting Group*

*Public Agenda*

### **They are Focused and Coordinated**

The corporate reformers have strategically focused their efforts on state policy. The majority of policy and funding for public education comes through the states. Dozens of state advocacy and policy organizations have been created, and are networked nationally through an entity called Policy Innovators in Education, or PIE. [www.pie-network.org](http://www.pie-network.org)

PIE brings its members together every year. They develop new policies and share strategies for getting them passed. They develop long-range strategies. They agree to introduce crazy, hair-brained legislation just to keep us on our heels and divert our attention from the behind-the-scenes stuff that's really important.

PIE Network members, also available on their website [www.pie-network.org](http://www.pie-network.org) :

State	Member(s)
Alabama	A+ Education Partnership (AL)
Arizona	Arizona Stand for Children (AZ)
California	California Business for Education Excellence (CA)
	The Education Trust—West (CA)
	EdVoice (CA)
Colorado	Colorado Stand for Children (CO)
	Colorado Succeeds (CO)
Connecticut	ConnCAN (CT)
Delaware	Rodel Foundation of Delaware (DE)
District of Columbia	DC School Reform Now (DC)
Florida	Foundation for Florida's Future (FL)
Georgia	Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education (GA)
Illinois	Advance Illinois (IL)
Indiana	Indiana Stand for Children (IN)
Kentucky	Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence
Massachusetts	Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education (MA)
	Massachusetts Stand for Children (MA)
Michigan	The Education Trust—Midwest (MI)
Minnesota	MinnCAN (MN)
Mississippi	Mississippi First (MI)
North Carolina	Public School Forum of North Carolina (NC)
Ohio	KidsOhio.org (OH)
	Thomas B.Fordham Institute (OH)



Oklahoma	Oklahoma Business and Education Coalition (OK)
Oregon	Chalkboard Project (OR)
	Oregon Stand for Children (OR)
Rhode Island	RI-CAN (RI)
Tennessee	State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE) (TN)
Texas	Texas High School Project (TX)
	Texas Institute for Education Reform(TX)
	Texas Stand for Children (TX)
Washington	League of Education Voters (WA)
	Partnership for Learning (WA)
	Washington State Stand for Children (WA)

Some of the other drivers of the corporate reform movement come together in regular phone calls to coordinate and identify new strategies. An article about this "Fight Club" is available at: <http://educationnext.org/fight-club/>

### The Portfolio District Network

The Portfolio District Network is organized by the Center for the Reinvention of Public Education (and funded by Gates). The following school districts are part of the CRPE Portfolio District Network (learn more at [www.crpe.org](http://www.crpe.org)):

Austin, TX	Fulton County, GA	New York City, NY
Baltimore, MD	Hartford, CT	Oakland, CA
Baton Rouge, LA	Indianapolis, IN	Philadelphia, PA
Boston, MA	Jefferson Parish, LA	Rochester, NY
Central Falls, RI	Laurence, KS	Sacramento, CA
Chicago, IL	Los Angeles, CA	Shelby County, TN
Cincinnati, OH	Milwaukee, WI	Spring Branch, TX
Clark County, NV	Minneapolis, MN	St. Louis, MO
Cleveland, OH	Nashville, TN	Tennessee ASK
Detroit, MI	New Haven, CT	Windham, CT
Denver, CO	New London, CT	
Washington, DC	New Orleans RSD	

Each of these districts has agreed to implement a range of market reforms under 7 broad components, available at: <http://www.crpe.org/portfolio/components>

Twice a year at least, they come together to share experiences and strategies. Out of those meetings, CRPE develops "white papers" that offer lessons and examples for the participating districts and others. These publications are available at: [http://www.crpe.org/publications?field\\_rel\\_issues\\_nid=15](http://www.crpe.org/publications?field_rel_issues_nid=15)

One example is their white paper on messaging school closings, available here:

<http://www.crpe.org/publications/better-schools-through-better-politics-human-side-portfolio-school-district-reform>

Last year, the Gates Foundation gave grants to 16 of the Portfolio districts to create “District-Charter Compacts” that commit the district to further sharing public assets—like school buildings—with charter schools. The text of each of the compacts are available here: <http://www.crpe.org/portfolio/district-charter-collaboration> Seven of these districts have now received additional funding to implement their Compacts. Here is a list of the District-Charter Compact cities. The seven that have received implementation grants are listed in red (amount of grant):

Austin, TX	Minneapolis, MN
Baltimore, MD	Nashville, TN
Boston, MA (\$4 million)	New Orleans RSD (\$2.9 million)
Central Falls, RI	New York City, NY (\$3.7 million)
Chicago, IL	Philadelphia, PA (\$2.5 million)
Denver, CO (\$3.2 million)	Rochester, NY
Hartford, CT (\$5 million)	Sacramento, CA
Los Angeles, CA	Spring Branch, TX (\$2.2 million)

We need to understand how these agreements and participation in the network commits districts to specific policy change. Each of the District-Charter Compacts also creates a non-public board or committee that is tasked with monitoring the agreement. We need to know about the “Philadelphia Compact Committee” or “New York City Collaborates,” or the “Chicago Compact Steering Committee” – or any of the other behind-the-scenes appointed boards that are driving this reform. To learn about these committees, look at the language of your district’s district-charter compact (link above). You can then google the committee by name – most cities have the membership list, and some cities have minutes from committee meetings online.

### What We Can Learn

- #1. We don’t have to agree on everything to come together and build a movement.**
- #2. We have to be more systematic about building and connecting our national infrastructure.** Just in this room alone, we can probably identify a web of relationships and organizations and experts that almost matches that of the corporate reformers.
- #3. We have to communicate and coordinate.**
- #4. We have to understand and use the local players and the local dynamics in our districts.**

Together, we are more powerful than all their millions. But we can’t allow parents, students, and communities to be divided from teachers and unions. We can’t allow our differences—some of which are historic and real—to keep us in a state of inertia.

Prepared by Leigh Dingerson [Ldingerson@comcast.net](mailto:Ldingerson@comcast.net)