

Heights Coalition for Public Education

Advocacy Talking Points

TOPIC: SCHOOL PRIVATIZATION

- There are no such entities as “public charter schools”.
 - Although paid for by the government, the schools are run by private contractors.
- Charter schools have the ability to be selective of the students they serve. While they must hold lotteries for enrollment:
 - They can locate in and target specific areas and demographics.
 - They can choose whether to provide services for students with disabilities or English Language Learners.
 - They can find ways to shed students who are unlikely to test well.
 - They can find ways to shed students who present behavior challenges.
- Charter schools are unregulated in that their Boards are not required to meet in public.
 - However, student academic accountability requires taking state standardized tests.
- Taxpayers are subsidizing for-profit entities.
- Vouchers provide parents with monetary assistance for their children to attend private institutions.
 - Private institutions are not required to have students take state standardized tests nor are they required to have licensed teachers.
- Tax dollars allocated to vouchers take not only state aid, but also divert local levy monies away from public school systems.
 - Essentially, charter schools and vouchers are robbing from public school districts.

TOPIC: TEST & PUNISH ACCOUNTABILITY - STANDARDIZED TESTING

- High Stakes Standardized Testing (HSST) results in “winners” and “losers” among students, teachers, schools, and districts.
- Test scores provide the basis for state report cards that unfairly rate school districts and drive economic and racial segregation.
 - Ratings are likely to contribute to Educational Redlining; re-segregation.
- HSST inherently narrows the curriculum by forcing a concentration on math and language arts which reduces or eliminates courses that contribute to well-rounded student growth:
 - Visual and performing arts, social studies, civics, physical education, and vocational courses.
 - What isn't tested - isn't taught.
- The consequences for low test scores contribute to further failure.
 - Less funding, firing of staff, knee jerk quick fixes, or state takeover.
- Test scores cannot be seen as a proxy for school quality.
 - There are many external factors that influence student achievement.
 - Aggregate Family and Neighborhood Poverty
 - School inequality and inequity
 - Developmental stages of learning
 - Technology gaps
 - Environmental factors

- Test & Punish Accountability contributes to the closing of neighborhood schools thus driving privatization of schools resulting in “public school deserts”.

TOPIC: SCHOOL FUNDING

- The state of Ohio has abdicated its role of funding public education.
 - Ohio’s funding of schools is inadequate.
 - Ohio’s funding of schools is inequitable.
- If taxes are cut at the state and federal level, local levies must cover the costs.
 - Title I, to support schools serving concentrations of very poor children, has been historically underfunded by Congress.
- Unfunded mandates place extra financial burdens on school districts.
 - Online testing forces districts to pay for purchasing or updating technology required for test preparation and administration.
 - Special education programs are receiving less than half the money from Congress than was promised by the federal government when the IDEA was passed in 1975.
 - Special education students are being underserved.
 - School district budgets are unfairly burdened when they struggle to pick up the cost.
- Reductions in school funding lead to the reduction or elimination of visual & performing arts courses as well as career and vocational training.
- Reductions in school funding increase the numbers of students who must be seen by fewer school nurses, guidance counselors, or social workers.
- Vouchers and charter schools divert more money per pupil than public districts initially receive in funding.
- School report cards make it difficult to pass levies.
- A majority of suburban legislators are making decisions affecting urban and rural school districts.
- Full-service, wrap-around schools, with medical and social services located right at school are a very effective support for families and students in poorer districts and have proven to increase academic achievement.

TOPIC: STATE REPORT CARD

- The report card reduces to a single letter an extremely complex process of human development.
- The report card does not reflect student effort and progress, nor the investment and commitment of the children, parents, educators, and community that are being judged. It is an insult to ignore these factors.
- It unfairly advantages communities and school districts that serve a homogeneous and economically advantaged population.
- It unfairly judges any student who starts school underprepared, as an English Language learner, or with any learning barriers.
- It makes test performance the goal of education.
- It undermines engaged and authentic learning, and devalues the breadth of development that is core to educating youth for successful lives.
- The report card uses standardized tests to make critical decisions even though they are imprecise measures, highly biased, and provide unreliable evidence.