

Homeschooling grows as parents exit public schools

Michael Hernandez

October 12, 2020

DENVER—Homeschooling is growing as parents exit public schools according to three education experts sharing in a panel on “*Who Runs Our Schools*” at the Western Conservative Summit on Oct. 10.

“Three percent of families identify as homeschooling right now. It is projected to grow to six to 10 percent of all families with this pandemic,” said Lindsey Burke, of The Heritage Foundation.

“An August Gallup poll estimates that the number of students enrolled in public schools in the nation will drop from 83 to 76 percent which will make the biggest exodus ever seen—an exodus of 3.3 million students,” said Corey DeAngelis, of The Cato Institute. Another national poll shows “around 40 percent of families disenrolled their children from the previous year. If 17 percent of the disenrolled continued to do so; even when schools reopen, this would result in a 7-10 percent change in the long run as millions of students” exit.

What is happening?

“Our public-school system is struggling to be effective in core areas (reading, writing, math),” said Dr. Deborah Scheffel, of Colorado Christian University. “School buildings are not open; but school districts are still getting money,” said DeAngelis. “Why should they be receiving the same amount? There is no reason to fund an institution. Public schools are fighting to remain closed. Public schools get money regardless of how they do; or even if they open their doors.”

“Many schools feel that they have to remain closed because of demands from their unions,” said Burke. “Special interest groups are playing politics. Look at the Los Angeles teachers’ union who has a long list of demands that they want fulfilled before they let schools reopen: defund police, medicare for all, closing charter schools. This has nothing to do with school safety.”

“Parents are seeing what is going on in the classroom. They are seeing this social justice curriculum—the political bias introduced in the classroom with topics like critical race theory,” said DeAngelis. “Those who never considered homeschool are seeing how their children are less stressed and are learning more and are more engaged.”

“Our long history in K12 is a factory model based on assignment to schools by zip codes that are captured by special interests,” said Burke. The Annenberg Foundation a couple years ago; discovered that only one-third of Americans could name a single branch of government.”

“Only 15 percent of U.S. students are proficient in history, one-quarter in math, and one-third in reading,” said DeAngelis. “Yet since 1960, we have increased spending in schools by 280 percent. It has doubled since 1980 and grown by 30 percent since 1990. We throw more money at the problems (in schools) but don’t fix it.

“We increased expenditures by 20 percent from 1992-2020 but teacher salaries have dropped by two percent. Student enrollment has grown by seven percent but teacher jobs by eight percent. Administrator jobs have grown by 75 percent.”

“Some 55 million children had their school doors closed on them (last March) and they couldn’t access public or private schools. They did not have access to in-person instruction,” said Burke. “Half of those students in October still do not have access to in-person instruction.”

“*Education Week* reports that three-fourths of the 100 largest school districts have not reopened with any in-person instruction to any families,” said DeAngelis. “Since the ‘not so’ Great Society (President Lyndon Johnson) we have spent two trillion dollars on K12 education at the federal level,” said Burke. “This is only 8.5 percent of all education spending. Local and State funding provide the other 91 percent. Yet, our achievement is flat. We have had a fundamental misalignment of power and incentives in our K12 system.”