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Education reform and politics don't mix

Bill Bumpas - OneNewsNow - 9/17/2010 3:55:00 AM [ADD THIS](#)



An education expert says the defeat of the incumbent in Tuesday's Washington, D.C. mayoral primary goes to show that true education reform and politics don't mix.

It was just four years ago when Democrat Adrian Fenty took his place as mayor of the District of Columbia with unprecedented support. Neal McCluskey of the Center for Educational Freedom at the [Cato Institute](#) tells OneNewsNow he pushed for education reform and chose Michelle Rhee as D.C. school chancellor.

"The two of them, with Rhee really being in the vanguard, made a lot of major moves in the D.C. education system and made a lot of reforms," McCluskey reports. "They fired a lot of teachers; they fired a lot of principals -- all in an effort to fix what was widely regarded as one of the worst education systems in the country."

Following that incident, test scores improved, but the pair's mass pink slip aggravated the teachers union and others, which eventually led to Fenty's ouster. Meanwhile, it is doubtful that Chancellor Rhee will stick around under the new mayor's leadership.



McCluskey

McCluskey thinks the lesson the rest of the country should learn from this is that relying on a crusader to save the day and reform a government-controlled school system simply will not work.

"Politics will get in the way and take that person away from you, and so it simply is not sustainable to say, 'We will use politics and we will fix the government system,'" he contends. "The government system cannot be fixed."

He suggests taking politics out of education and giving education dollars to parents so they can choose the best schools for their children.

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