



Craigslist founder shows how education funding should work

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The announcement that Craigslist founder Craig Newmark matched \$1 million in donations for teachers' science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, or STEM, projects is a good example of the best way to make changes in the nation's education system. It's no secret that public education in the United States is suffering. Despite spending upwards of \$10,000 per student on average, math and science scores continue to lag. Social justice issues seem to take the place of an emphasis on STEM and even though aid has increased, students don't necessarily seem to be improving.

Still, Newmark's move of philanthropy toward schools is not just noble but a good way for the free market to function if schools are in need of aid. Fortune reports Newmark's gift "is a \$1 million grant for public school teachers in STEM education via DonorsChoose.org. Teachers at schools in which more than half of the students are from low-income households can apply to get funding for science and math classroom projects with Newmark's grant." This isn't the first time he's donated funds to causes important to him. In 2015, he donated more than \$40 million to journalism initiatives and contributed \$50 million to his private foundation a year later. That organization supports military families, voter registration, and women in technology.

The Cato Institute has articulated many ways to improve education, particularly downsizing governments that regulate education and instead making ways for the free market to prevail more, like through school vouchers. Ironically, the federal Education Department spends the most money on aid, to the tune of \$44 million last year, and they're slated to spend more this year. The Cato website says: "The aid and related regulations have generally failed to lift academic achievement. The department also subsidizes higher education through student loans and grants. Unfortunately, that aid has fueled inflation in college tuition and is subject to widespread abuse."

Still, there is a slight difference between aid programs funded by taxpayers and aid programs funded by private individuals like Newmark. While the best way to spur education reform is still from the top down, if aid programs are to be bolstered, it should be done privately, not through taxpayer fiat.