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« Butt Out, Bloomberg
 Web-Only Segment of Tonight's Show: Kids vs. Bureaucrats »

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September 16, 2010 02:35 PM UTC by John Stossel

TONIGHT'S SHOW:
 KIDS VS
 BUREAUCRATS
 (FBN @9PM ET)

On tomorrow night's show (FBN @ 9pm ET), it's the Kids vs the Bureaucrats. Education in America is a mess, so we hear a lot about "reform." But an entrenched bureaucracy and militant unions fight the very competition that would improve schools. Improve them for kids, that is. I'll talk to Michelle Rhee, the head of the terrible DC public school system. She's been called "the terminator," "the hammer," and "the dragon lady," because she dared to fire bad teachers – and reward good teachers. This needed to be done, but it isn't popular. Last night's election results suggest that she will soon lose her job. The teachers unions and the education establishment have their own recipe for "reform" ... more money. As I write in this week's syndicated column:

U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan recently claimed: "Districts around the country have literally been cutting for five, six, seven years in a row. And, many of them, you know, are through, you know, fat, through flesh and into bone ..."

Really? They cut spending five to seven consecutive years? Give me a break!

Andrew Coulson, director of the Cato Institute's Center for Educational Freedom, writes that out of 14,000 school districts in the United States, just seven have cut their budgets seven years in a row. How about five years in a row? Just 87. That's a fraction of 1 percent in each case.

Duncan may be pandering to his constituency, or he may actually be fooled by how school districts (and other government agencies) talk about budget cuts.

... "They are not comparing current year spending to the previous year's spending," Coulson writes. "What they're doing is comparing the approved current year budget to the budget that they initially dreamed about having."

So if a district got more money than last year but less than it asked for, the administrators consider it a cut.

Full column here.

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Donna

I agreed with most of the program - but not the amount of hours teachers work. It's like saying that reporters only work for the hour or half hour that they are on television. There are lots of hours in preparation, grading, etc that teachers do outside of school hours. I am a former teacher who is now homeschooling my children because of many of the issues addressed on your program.

September 17, 2010 at 8:53 am

Ankie

Dear John, I like a lot of your ideas for improving our school system. However, I would like to share with you that our school district has cut it's budget over \$100 million in the past 4 years. I know that is not the seven years that Mr. Duncan said but it does feel like we are down to the bone. I have seen big changes in the schools. Class sizes continue to go up. The bathrooms are less clean.

September 17, 2010 at 1:14 am

Myron Whiting

When I was an administrator in the Seventh-day Adventist system we spent about 1/2 per student and had some of the highest achievement test scores around. Also, we had a greater number of students graduate and attend a four year college than any system at the time. We also had the greatest number of teacher with a Masters Degree. Don't know the facts today, but we proved private education works!

September 17, 2010 at 12:58 am

Dan

I looked up wbs> constitution.com but did not find the list of the locations where the current public readings of the Constitution are being held please assist.

September 17, 2010 at 12:44 am

Karen

I would like to make a point to the lady on the show who criticized liberals on the Constitution. I am a liberal/libertarian and I believe that the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States of America SHOULD be taught in schools AND I would like to point out that both of these documents were and still ARE very liberal documents.

September 16, 2010 at 11:45 pm

allen

Hey John, you ought to consider the end-game with regards to charters. D.C. has about 30% of kids in charters and more on waiting lists. Same for Detroit. New Orleans has 50% of kids in charters. New York has a lower percentage but the schools all have ridiculous waiting lists. The question that's just hanging in the air, waiting to be asked, is why have school districts at all? If charters can educate kids without a central administration why have one?

September 16, 2010 at 11:27 pm

Dale Netherton

I noticed your charts showed a steady rise in education costs adjusted for inflation. The curve didn't reflect much change in inflation as the government would have us believe is now our present condition. I do wish you would examine this farcical inflation reporting and expose it for what it is.

September 16, 2010 at 11:15 pm

dean

A couple of tricked out Trabants - <http://tinyurl.com/239vo6j>

September 16, 2010 at 10:08 pm

John Fisher

I am a teacher of physics and chemistry and I see both good and bad teachers. What I constantly wonder is whether the tests that determine the USA position (25th) is to be trusted. Do they test all of their students like we do? I've heard they only test the college bound students...

September 16, 2010 at 10:06 pm

Sharon

I'm a public school teacher in the state of Florida. I'm a conservative, non-union member. I have been teaching for 23 years. I love my job but what I wish is that we would get back into the business of educating children. Too much money is spent on programs that are useless but look good! I want my classroom children to learn the basics! It is wrong to have tenure for teachers. There are too many teachers that need to be fired but the union won't allow it. Something needs to be done soon

September 16, 2010 at 9:49 pm

Stephanie HOLmes

Mr. Colson...you are a pinhead, an educated pinhead none the less. For you to sit on TV and say that schools are not cutting budgets to the "bone" is unadulterated lies. Yes, it cost more to educate our students than it did 30 years ago..Lets think publishers, materials, salaries, insurances & benefit packages, retirement plans & 403B's that were bankrupting districts. So YES schools are cutting budgets!!! The set an optimistic budget to share on July 1 with the board, with the HOPES that they

September 16, 2010 at 9:13 pm

WhiskeyJim

Her imminent firing as a result of elections is itself a symptom of the disease. Programs and positions can not be dependent on political ideology for their effectiveness.

September 16, 2010 at 6:17 pm

Robert Westbrook

I'm wondering if I'm gonna get paid. Stossel made the challenge for 1000.00 for anyone who could state what the government does better than the private sector. My answer was The government screws things up better. So far, no check.

September 16, 2010 at 1:43 pm

Becky

Where is your "LIKE" button!?

September 16, 2010 at 12:39 pm

A Midwest Conservative

One question in the pole makes no sense to me. Who, in the minds of reasonable people, think that in this country, The American Flag could somehow harm or endanger the lives or welfare of any child in school. The key word in my question is REASONABLE. The only people relating to the flag safety question? Liberals who avoid the facts and specialize in race bating and the appeasement of foreign nations and cowardly hiding behind political correctness instead of stating the truth, the whole truth.

September 16, 2010 at 12:17 pm

Hellene Hiner

Last year I met with your producer Kristina about this matter considering problem with music education. She was interested in the materials that I disclosed to her. I lost her contacts after you moved to Fox. Kristina, I have more to the story!

September 16, 2010 at 9:47 am