

Finally, the Arne Duncan Chicago Schools reform myth is exposed

By Chicago Public Education Examiner, Edward Hayes
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US Secretary of Education
AP

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Look, I don't care that Arne the Duncan became U.S. Secretary of Education because

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he was pals with the President. Barack Obama needed to surround himself with friendly faces, Duncan has one. Hey, we are all adults here and we all realize that many people are successful in life for reasons that have nothing whatsoever to do with their levels of accomplishment. Choosing the right parents, and if you've failed to do that, making the right friends is much more important than developing a true skill and using it to help society. That's life on Planet Earth, in the U.S. Department of Education, and on the Nobel Prize Selection Committee.

However, what I do find contemptuous is when guys who are lucky enough to get a chip in the big game without earning it look back at those who haven't and say: Pull yourself up by your bootstraps like I did. Duncan has spent the better part of last year traveling the country and challenging 'ate up' urban educators to duplicate his Chicago Public Schools (CPS) success by doing as he did. The problem is, there was no success. And those of us, who call the People's Republic of Chicago, home, know it. Finally, the cardboard school reform of the Duncan era, which followed the smoke-and-mirrors of the Paul Vallas regime, has been officially 'outed.'

Despite their blatant liberal bias, news of record must first be recorded on the granite tablets of either the New York Times or the

Washington Post. Student test scores from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) taken while Duncan was in his last year as CEO of CPS have been released. Nick Anderson in the Washington Post writes: 'The federal readout is just one measure of Duncan's record as chief executive of the nation's third-largest system. Others show advances on various fronts. But the new math scores signal that Chicago is nowhere near the head of the pack in urban school improvement, even though Duncan often cites the successes of his tenure as he crusades to fix public education.'

Anderson continues: 'Yet questions have arisen this year about the magnitude of Duncan's accomplishments. The Civic Committee of the Commercial Club of Chicago, which represents business, professional, education and cultural leaders, concluded in June that gains on state test scores were inflated when Illinois relaxed passing standards and that too many students still drop out of high school or graduate unprepared for college. The Consortium on Chicago School Research, a nonpartisan group at the University of Chicago, reported in October that Duncan's closure of low-performing schools often shuffled students into comparable schools, yielding little or no academic benefit.'

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The venerable Post isn't the only infidel. Sarah Quinn, on the NEWSER website, says: 'In the latest test results, Chicago schools failed to show evidence of the gains claimed by their former superintendent, Arne Duncan, whose success in turning around the struggling system was widely touted when he was nominated for education secretary. Students in Miami, Houston, and New York outscored Chicago in math; other cities reported more improvement, the Washington Post reports.'

The Cato Institute's David Boaz adds: 'As I've said before, what always struck me about Obama's appointment of Duncan to run the nation's schools — and he is actually moving to do just that, more so than any previous federal administration — is that Arne Duncan ran the Chicago schools for seven years, and in that time he didn't manage to produce a single school that the Obamas chose to send their own children to. Valerie Schwartz of the Post reminds us that Duncan is not the first Cabinet secretary to be appointed on the basis of great results in a previous job, that then turned out to be not so great.' Granted I am terribly uncomfortable with the political orientation of President Obama's administration, furthermore I don't trust tall guys with big feet that don't wear moustaches. That's my full disclosure, and I hope his historical presidency is a success. We

are all in the same boat. Now let's get down and dirty here and look at the actual harm Arne the phony Duncan is doing to our school kids.

Last week, Duncan was in Los Angeles when the Superintendent of their school system, Ramon Cortines declared he was 'reconstituting' Fremont High School in South L.A. It's a school so awful that it would fit in perfectly here in Chicago. If Cortines is characteristic of the species of gutless and slippery professional educators that continuously facilitate the demise of public schools as I believe he is, he never 'constituted' Fremont High in the first place. But now he will fire the entire staff at Fremont, re-open it as a no-fly zone for the teachers union, and kiss Duncan's pinkie ring. Fine if that helps educate children, but there is no evidence that it does.

David Feldman on the PSL website writes: 'The Superintendent of LA Schools felt the occasion called for some anti-public education grand-standing. The excuse for this drastic measure? A piece of the \$4.35 billion that the Obama administration has called the Race-to-the-Top for all public schools. Never mind the fact that these methods, which Duncan likes to call 'turnarounds' have not been successful in the past. As the CEO of Chicago schools Duncan

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was responsible for sixty-one turnaround schools. According to a University of Chicago study released in October, students who were transferred out of their old schools did not perform better academically in their new schools.'

That is how Arne is inflicting further damage upon our embattled schools, by seducing weak colleagues and bribing them to imitate a draconian process that doesn't work, and in doing so, wasting billions of dollars and ruining the lives of thousands of teachers. Why does the president permit him to do this?



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