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One account of the battle for school reform in D.C.

The May issue of Reason magazine includes Katherine Mangu-Ward's [fascinating account](#) of Michelle Rhee's bruising battle to achieve real reform in Washington, D.C., public schools.

"Rhee's approach goes right to the heart of a decades-long political debate about what schools really need, more money or fewer lousy teachers. On that question her position is clear: No real change is possible unless good teachers are hired and bad teachers fired."

Needless to say, that prompted intense conflict with the teachers' unions. But Rhee had political support simply because D.C. schools have been so utterly bad for so long. There was nothing to lose.

"D.C. schools have long been the poster child for paralyzing education dysfunction,' says Neal McCluskey, an education policy analyst at the Cato Institute. 'It seems like they have a complete inability to educate anyone. Educationally, if you could save this patient, you could save anyone.'"

Is there hope?

"Warren Buffett once told Rhee that the only way to really get public schools fixed was to make private schools illegal and assign the children of senators and businessmen to public schools by random lottery."

That won't happen, but the politicians basically have made private schools off-limits to poor kids by killing a promising, relatively low-cost voucher program.

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Posted by [Doug Clark](#) on Thursday, April 8, 2010 at 3:39 pm

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200 E. Market Street, Greensboro, NC 27401 (336) 373-7000 (800) 553-6880
155 Northpoint Ave., Suite 101, High Point, NC 27262 (336) 883-4422
203 E. Harris Place, Eden, NC 27288 (336) 627-1781

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