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The Next Kansas City [John Derbyshire]

The education chapter in *WAD* (excepted in part on *NRO*'s education special last month) scrutinizes the great Kansas City Schools Fiasco of 1985–1997. This was the outstanding practical test — though by no means the only one — of the theory that depressed urban [school](#) systems can be brought up to suburban standards by spending limitless amounts of money. The results of the test were comprehensively negative.

"After twelve years, test scores in reading and math had declined, dropout rates had *increased*, and the system was as segregated as ever, in spite of heroic efforts to lure white students back into the system."

How did the educocracy respond to the Kansas City experiment? How do you think? They hired in a large fleet of earth-moving equipment, dug a humongous great hole, and buried the Kansas City results under twenty feet of reinforced concrete. The principal (no pun intended) business of educrats is to get ever-larger sums of money from the public fisc, so that they can hire more subordinates and give themselves pay hikes. (Educating [kids](#)? Oh, it's probably in there somewhere.) An irrefutable demonstration that spending boxcar-loads of money does nothing, zero, zip, zilch, nada for inner-city schools, is as welcome to these folk as garlic to a vampire.

And so these failures are never discussed. Then the experiment can be done over, and over, and over again. The results are the same every time — utter refutation of the theory — but by the time they are collected and published, a whole lot of educrats are driving much nicer [cars](#).

The latest iteration of this dismal spend-fail-forget cycle is under way in New Orleans. [Here's a story](#) from a year ago about the dynamic, idea-filled, hopey-changeey new superintendent of [schools](#) in the Big Easy. Following up, I observe with no surprise at all that recent news stories, like [this one](#), are crammed with dollar signs. Meanwhile, the needle on the [bungle-meter](#) dial is creeping up to Kansas City levels. The corruption-meter takes a while longer to register. This is *Louisiana*, though. Five'll get you ten that by the time the money's been spent, the N'Orleanians will make those Kansas City folk look like amateurs.

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