Is the 'new' education philanthropy good for schools?

Examining foundation-funded school reform

A Thoughtful Critique of Contemporary Edu-Giving

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Historians have richly documented both the praise and criticism that philanthropists have received since the establishment of the Sage, Carnegie, and Rockefeller Foundations in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Although praise was far more common than criticism, critics have raised several issues with philanthropy over many decades.[1]

Here is U.S. Senator Frank Walsh in 1915:

"[I] challenge the wisdom of giving public sanction and approval to the spending of a huge fortune thru [sic] … philanthropies….The huge philanthropic trusts, known as foundations, appear to be a menace to the welfare of society.[2]

In 1973, Jeffrey Hart, conservative scholar said, "tax-free foundations represent a conspicuous form of irresponsible power."[3]

And historian of education Diane Ravitch wrote in 2010:

"[T]he Gates, Walton, and Broad Foundations … set the policy agenda not only for school districts, but also for states and even the U.S. Department of Education. … There is something fundamentally antidemocratic about relinquishing control of the public education policy agenda to private foundations run by society's wealthiest people.[4]

In the past decade, however, that disapproval has reached the decibel range of a garbage disposal. The pervasiveness and loudness of the dissatisfaction invites an analysis of these criticisms while calling attention to one question missing from faulting donors engaged in reforming public schools.

The current criticisms that I will analyze are:

1. Philanthropists, business, and civic leaders seek the privatization of public schools.

2. Donors have muffled public and professional voices.

3. Philanthropists are not held responsible for their mistakes.

After short analyses of these criticisms, I will ask a question that has too often gone unasked by either critics or self-aware donors. The rest of the chapter will concentrate on answering this neglected question:

Why have major donors such as Broad, Walton, and Gates given (and continue to give) large sums of money to programs to improve academic performance in the face of mediocre results in altering classroom teaching practices and student learning?

1. Philanthropists, business, and civic leaders seek the privatization of public schools.

Since the 1983 report *A Nation at Risk*, the logic of reform spurred by business and civic leaders and endorsed by major donors is that failing public schools have substantially weakened the U.S. economically. The report energized civic, business, donors, and educational leaders to press public schools to fundamentally change their graduation requirements, curriculum standards, testing, and other structures.

Over the past three decades, these policy leaders and foundation officials cobbled together portfolios of reform ventures including structural innovations such as vouchers, charter schools, high academic standards, testing and rule-driven accountability. Critics of this jerry-built strategy have argued that such ventures tossed together helter-skelter and supported by sketchy evidence added up to a movement to privatize public schools through expanded parental choice of public schools and instilling market competition into a quasi-monopolistic institution. They cite the growth of for-profit companies taking over

low-performing public schools (for example, K-12 Inc., Edison Inc.), non-profit charter organizations (for example, KIPP, Aspire, Green Dot) expanding their reach, and No Child Left Behind requiring districts with persistently low-performing schools to outsource educational services to private companies as evidence of that intent.[5]

Critics have called those shaping these changes in public schools "corporate reformers." From the center and left of the political spectrum, denunciations have poured over "corporate reform" for destroying public schools.[6]

I have tried to avoid such terms because, in my opinion, they imply absolute certainty about reformers' motives, smell of conspiratorial decision-making, ignore historical patterns of private-public collaboration, and, most compellingly, overlook the unvarnished embrace of market-driven capitalism and business practices that have swept across all U.S. institutions in recent decades. Moreover, much of the back-and-forth about who is and who is not a "corporate reformer" thrives on venomous personal attacks. I am allergic to these implications, smells, and ad hominem language because they neglect the obvious historical pattern that close linkages between public schooling and commerce have pervaded American society for decades because they have both been (and are) deeply anchored in democratic capitalism.[7]

My allergy is based on the following reasons:

* While the current generation of civic and business leaders, donors, and elected federal officials–policy elites–believe in the crucial importance of schooling spurring economic growth and market forces advancing equal opportunity and democracy, similarities in beliefs hardly equal a concerted effort to privatize public schools. Contemporary critics have converted business involvement in schools, a tradition

stretching back well over a century, into a motive to privatize as many public schools as possible.[8]

* The charge that money-making drives current efforts to privatize schools (for example, test-makers, technology companies, for-profit charter schools) rings hollow given that much transacted business is made public and negative publicity gives foundation officials and CEOs the shakes. Also, current critics have forgotten prior failures of private, for-profit companies running public schools. Few contemporaries remember the collapse of contracting-for-performance in Texarkana (AR) in the 1960s, or the belly flop that Education Alternatives Inc. (EAI) took in Baltimore (MD) public schools in the 1990s or Edison Inc. fleeing Philadelphia schools a decade ago.[9]

* Finally, critics paint the current "corporate" reform agenda as privatizing the entire nation's public schools—almost 14,000 school districts with nearly 100,000 schools and over 3 million teachers housing about 50 million students (2012). Yet the constantly repeated statement that all U.S. schools have failed and need to be transformed trips over obvious facts that nearly all parental choice and accountability-driven reforms focus not on suburban, exurban, or rural districts, but on urban schools with low-income minority students, a fraction of the U.S. student population.[10]

For these reasons, I have concluded that the common charge leveled by critics about a closely tied together coalition of CEOs, hedge fund managers, philanthropists, civic leaders, and similarly situated wealthy people called "corporate reformers" seeking to convert public schools into private ones is hyperbole.[11]

2. Donors have muffled public and professional voices.

Critics point to a two-pronged approach that Gates, Walton, Broad, and other foundations have used to push their market-friendly reform agenda forward. One prong is making substantial grants to programs; the other prong is creating advocacy organizations for centralizing authority to advance their programs. Donors endorsed mayoral control in cities, state laws that expanded school choice, and parent trigger laws that, in effect, stripped local school boards of their authority to make decisions, thereby shrinking public participation in educational affairs and diminishing teacher and principal professional judgment.[12]

Consider donor support for mayoral control of urban public schools. Installing charter schools, new curricular standards, and changes in teacher evaluation becomes easier when school authority resides in the mayor's appointed superintendent rather than an independent school board. Instead of squabbling over school board members' questions, trying to control raucous community hearings, and listening to teacher proposals, decisions can be reached efficiently in a school chief's office.

I do not suggest that educational philanthropists caused centralized policymaking or eroded faith in professional educators' judgment. Both had begun in the mid-1960s with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act underwriting federal and state actions. I do suggest, however, that "muscular philanthropy" has further consolidated policy authority at local, state, and federal levels with the consequence of shrinking citizen participation in governing schools and practitioner involvement in instructional-based policies even further.[13]

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Donors have also helped governors, state legislatures, and district officials compete for federal Race to the Top funds by bankrolling organizations aiding administrators in applying for funds and filling posts in the U.S. Department of Education with former foundation officials. Furthermore, state legislation allowing more charter schools, evaluating teachers on the basis of student test scores, and adopting Common Core State Standards and tests has left little room for local school boards to act on or hear practitioner voices.[14]

Centralized governing of schools over the past three decades has been done not only in the name of increased efficiency, but also in the name of egalitarian outcomes. Many foundation and corporate executives share a deep concern for those who are educationally disadvantaged; they have pushed for expanded parental choice of schools, curriculum and testing mandates, and accountability rules.

The sum total of these public and private ventures has meant that big donors have not only set the reform agenda, but also championed laws that have diminished local public participation and professionals' judgment in significant decisions.[15]

I doubt that foundation leaders intended to centralize school decision-making and deprive local policymakers, professionals, and citizens of their voices. Nonetheless, these unintended consequences unfolded over the past 30 years. So I do agree with the second criticism.

3. Philanthropists are not held responsible for their mistakes.

Centralizing school governance and the increased amount of regulation that resulted has led to proliferation of federal and state accountability rules. But not for donors.

Under the law, donors have no accountability for mistakes. They are beyond the reach of being fired or voted out of office, so they have no responsibility to districts, individual schools, teachers, students and parents for hopes raised and dashed. If their grants fail to achieve desired objectives, philanthropists shrug and walk away.[16]

For venture philanthropists and their supporters, this unaccountability provides valuable flexibility in taking actions for the public good and is in the best tradition of a democracy.[17] As some have argued: "[S]uch virtual immunity represents foundations' greatest strength: the freedom to take chances, to think big, to innovate, to be, in the words of the late Paul Ylvisaker of the Ford Foundation, 'society's passing gear.'"[18]

Being society's "passing gear" assumes that funders and their retinue of experts can identify educational problems, sort out symptoms from fundamental causes, and adopt solutions that target those causes. Yet as one observer noted: "Just because you were great at making software or shorting stocks doesn't mean that you will be good at … ensuring that kids can read by the third grade. If you're worth billions, though, nobody may tell you that."[19]

There are many examples of major donors stumbling and then walking away unscathed. Recall the Ford Foundation's sponsoring of community control in New York City in the late 1960s. Or the Annenberg Challenge in the early 1990s that spread nearly a billion dollars among selected urban school districts but produced little lasting change in student outcomes. And, of course, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation advocated for small high schools in the early 2000s, only to retreat hastily a few years later.[20]

This lack of responsibility for policy errors to improve schooling has been a constant criticism, past and present, and one that I find warranted.

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Missing from these familiar criticisms, however, is an analysis of the theory driving donors' reform agenda and its outcomes, particularly the obvious gap between donor-approved policies aimed at school improvement and what happens in classrooms. Venture philanthropy may or may not be "society's passing gear," but it is too often a "slipping gear." That is, it neglects the crucial policy-to-practice journey from donors' offices to classrooms.[21]

So I ask the following question:

Why have major donors such as Broad, Walton, and Gates given (and continue to give) large sums of money to programs to improve academic performance in the face of mediocre results in altering classroom teaching practices and student learning?

Some background to this question is necessary before providing an answer. I inspect the ideas and assumptions major donors held when they pressed for market-based school reforms and then examine the path from donor suites and policymaker offices to schools and classrooms.

Two basic ideas that have anchored (and continue to anchor) policymaker and donor assumptions are:

* Schools are like businesses and failures in schooling can be fixed by applying efficient and effective business practices.

* Current philanthropists have created successful business organizations; they are smart and resourceful and know how to fix school problems using their intuition, research and engineering skills.

<u>Assumptions driving current school reform</u>. Civic, business, and philanthropic leaders have championed policies that assumed U.S. schools had failed because educational leaders were more concerned about protecting the status quo than about improving student outcomes. Leaders assumed that effective teachers and administrators were either trapped in a bureaucratic system that blocked their daily efforts to teach or surrounded by inept colleagues (or both). To achieve success, then, they assumed that schools, not students, have to be overhauled. Because they assumed that students' low performance is located in classrooms, not families or neighborhoods, they traced students' poor performance on international tests to low curriculum standards, inefficient and excessively rule-governed schools, and a lack of competition. Moreover, they believed that teacher unions resisted changes in salary, seniority and evaluation rules. Members of policy elites (including donors) argued that unless there were changes in who taught, what was taught, parental choice of schools, accountability for results, and union rules, U.S. students would continue to fail in acquiring essential skills for working in a global economy.[22]

Armed with these ideas and assumptions about what the basic problems are and what has to be done to solve them, donors granted billions of dollars to states and districts. In return, foundations have received a decade-long barrage of criticism of their ideology, intent, and favored "solutions." Yet amid those salvos, one issue has largely escaped notice.

Beyond swaying decision-makers to adopt market-driven solutions is an overlooked fact that adopted policies seldom were put into classroom practice.[23]

Large foundations, for example, have invested heavily in broadening parental choice, getting better school leaders, toughening curriculum, and enhancing instruction through new technologies. Donors have worked closely with, advocated for, and depended on policymakers to convert their reform ideas into school practices. Why do donors rely on policymakers?

The simple answer is that policymakers have legal authority to make decisions, provide incentives to act, and give technical assistance to make better schools, and donors do not. To get what they want, foundation officials directly fund programs (for example, the Gates Foundation funded the conversion of large high schools into small ones) gave monies to organizations that support their interests and create advocacy groups (for example, the Walton Foundation funded pro-charter organizations). Even though donors rely on policymakers' legal authority to adopt reforms, both lack the expert savvy to put policies into actual school and classroom practice. That is the job of district officials, principals, and, yes, classroom teachers.[24]

Current entrepreneurial donors share a similar ideology with business and civic leaders. Accordingly, donors have funded policies that widened the pool of teachers and principals (for example, Teach for America, New Leaders for New Schools). They promoted policies that shifted school funding (for example, vouchers and charter schools), altered structures such as school size (for example, small high schools), modified time spent in school (for example, extended day and school year), fortified curriculum (for example, Common Core State Standards), improved instruction (for example, more computers in schools), and toughened accountability for teachers and students (for example, test driven evaluations of practitioners, graduation tests). Major

donors also funded organizations that challenged union protections in compensation, seniority, and teacher evaluations (for example, the *Vergara* decision).[25]

Policymakers and funders assumed that top-down policies would change classroom practices and that those altered practices would improve students' academic achievement, increase college entry, and secure jobs in an information-driven economy. This theory of change, however, has been no better than whistling in the dark when it comes to converting policies into teaching practices and student learning.

The policy-to-practice journey. The path from donor-endorsed policies aimed at improving student outcomes and what happens in millions of classrooms is twisted and filled with sinkholes. Note well that since the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965) and its reauthorization No Child Left Behind (2002), many reform-driven policies now travel from the U.S. Secretary of Education to state officials to district school boards to superintendents' offices, and then pass over district administrators' desks into schools where principals are expected to ensure that the adopted policy enters both kindergartens and Advanced Placement classrooms.

Then, and only then, do teachers actually determine how much and to what extent they are prepared and ready to put federal, state, or district policies (for example, new technology, Common Core) into practice with their students. In effect, teachers have been (and are) gatekeepers to their classrooms; they shape policy as it is handed to them by deciding what and how to teach their lessons.[26]

In some instances, that journey ended up altering how teachers teach in unintended ways. For example, the No Child Left Behind Act required states to set curricular standards and test all students in reading and math. Variation in state standards

and test results was both evident and serious. Nonetheless, if students performed on tests poorly year after year, stiff federally mandated penalties fell on districts, schools, teachers, and students.[27]

Over the past decade, out of fear of penalties (or of being shamed), schools with large minority and poor enrollments narrowed what teachers taught, revised daily schedules to spend more time on reading and math, and coached teachers and students to raise test scores. In effect, NCLB strengthened traditional approaches to student learning. Evidence that this policy strongly influenced classroom practice is ample, but it is hardly what policymakers intended. Whether such changes led to increases in academic achievement and reduced the test score gap between whites and minorities remains in doubt.[28]

The spread of charter schools and charter management organizations, handsomely supported by the Walton Foundation and other donors, offers another example of policy-to-practice. The growth of charters illustrates a signal success of focused grant giving in altering funding structures for public schools. The policy sought to generate innovations in school organization, curriculum, and instruction that would spur competition with regular public schools. Stellar examples of gains in student achievement show up in scattered individual charter schools and charter management organizations such as YES Prep, KIPP, Green Dot, and Aspire. Furthermore, occasional competition among charters and regular schools has occurred within a few districts.[29]

But those high-achieving schools are a drop in the bucket of the 6,000 charter schools nationwide, of which some have become academically and fiscally bankrupt. The

variation in academic performance across the spectrum of charters is similar to the variation in non-charter schools.[30]

A similar mixed pattern of occasional victories amid frequent failures to improve student outcomes characterize donor efforts over the past three decades in spreading new technologies, getting urban superintendents to improve student performance, and promoting adoption of the Common Core State Standards.

Consider the use of new technologies in schools. The hype surrounding the introduction of computers into public schools in the early 1980s promised to transform students' academic achievement, how teachers taught, and high school graduates' job opportunities in an increasingly changing economy.

Helped by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and other donors, states and districts deployed new desktop and eventually laptop computers into schools and classrooms. The ratio of computers to students dropped from over one for every 125 students in 1983 to one for just over three students in 2008. By the late 1990s, Internet connections had spread to most schools and in the next few years, wireless became standard.[31]

By 2010, laptops and a cornucopia of software were ubiquitous. And within a few years, tablets, interactive whiteboards and smart phones were in many classrooms. But had academic achievement improved as a consequence? Had teaching and learning changed? Did the use of devices in schools lead to better jobs?

The answers to these questions are "no," "no," and "don't know."

Test scores, the current gold standard policymakers use to determine academic achievement, show little evidence that using new hardware and software have improved students' performance on tests.[32]

The evidence of transforming traditional teaching practices is equally underwhelming. Nearly all teachers now use these devices. Lessons using interactive whiteboards or carts filled with laptops or tablets are common across elementary and secondary schools. How teachers use laptops or tablets, however, vary from unimaginative to creative, from daily to occasional use.[33]

These powerful computers have yet to alter traditional ways of teaching that have marked classrooms for years. Laptops, desktops, tablets, and interactive whiteboards continue to support the dominant teacher-centered approach to instruction rather than promoting the hoped-for student-centered approach. Teachers have expanded their teaching repertoire to incorporate new software and hardware to do what they have been doing all along. No surprise there, since teachers have mixed old and new practices in their lessons for decades. New technologies have found a niche in most classrooms, but their impact is much smaller than what was initially promised. In effect, new hardware and software have strengthened, not altered, prevailing teaching approaches.[34]

Finally, the question of computer use in schools is linked to jobs. Whether using soon-to-be-obsolete hardware and software helps students gain entry-level jobs in a knowledge-based labor market is just a "don't know."[35]

For another case in point in negotiating the pot-holed strewn road from policy to practice, turn to the Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation's Broad Superintendents Academy (BSA). Eli Broad made it clear that he knew how to run successful businesses. He wanted

that customer-driven knowledge to be applied to urban public schools. At one conference, he said, "We don't know anything about how to teach or reading curriculum or any of that, but what we do know about is management and governance." What Broad did not say was that managing and governing are not the same as converting key policies into classroom lessons.[36]

The BSA was created to prepare a new breed of market-aware district leaders to raise students' academic achievement and reduce the gap in test scores between minorities and whites, but it has quietly struggled with the trip from policy to practice. It is an 18-month program of extended weekends and internships for educators and non-educators (for example, ex-military officers, business leaders, and government officials). But determining how many graduates have become urban superintendents and how long they have served is difficult because of fragmentary data and conflicting accounts and biased data from Broad and its critics.[37]

In attracting fresh recruits from the military, businesses, and government to enter urban education posts, the Academy has, to a small degree, altered the administrative workforce in urban settings. But whether Broad graduates stay longer or perform better as school chiefs than those trained in traditional university administration programs, I do not know. I do not know because since 2002 when BSA began, none of its nearly 200 graduates have stayed in a district superintendency for over seven years—a term that some observers believe is sufficient to show signs of student success. Broad officials say five years is the minimum, but I could still only find two BSA graduates who served that long: Superintendents Abelardo Saavedra in Houston (TX) and Mark Roosevelt in Pittsburgh (PA).[38]

The lack of data on longevity or performance has persuaded independent observers (including myself) that the Broad pipeline into top leadership posts has not led to better test scores or significantly altered existing school structures.[39]

That hard truth about the difficulty of moving from adopted policy to classroom lessons is also evident in the widespread embrace of the Common Core State Standards since 2010 and the strong support philanthropists have given to this reform-driven policy. In less than four years, 43 states and the District of Columbia have adopted these ambitious standards in reading and math and started district pilot projects implementing the standards and testing students.[40]

The mantra voiced by Common Core designers and advocates has been that the standards are not a curriculum and that teachers make the decisions on what and how to teach. Both statements are, of course, accurate. States and districts come up with the curricular guides, instructional materials, and commercial products aligned to the standards that are supposed to be taught. All that dancing around whether or not the Common Core is actually a national curriculum obscures the fact that teachers continue to be gatekeepers of what enters their classroom. Except for one thing: state tests will determine whether students have reached those standards. Ah, the tests.[41]

All states adopting the Common Core will administer new tests. In the past, such tests have carried stiff consequences for students (results are used to promote or retain students), teachers (nearly 40 states have passed laws that require student test scores to be used to judge teacher performance—performance judged, in part, by students' test scores), and schools (continued low performance could lead to restructuring or closure). Thus, Common Core standards and the accompanying state tests have created great angst

among practitioners, parents, and donors. Teachers have doubled down on traditional practices to get students to pass tests.[42]

Parents and teachers angry with the number of tests have fought against implementing Common Core tests in 2014-2015. And those donors who helped give birth to the Common Core are worried that the entire standards structure might be in jeopardy as a result.[43]

In 2014, Vicki Phillips, Director of College Ready at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation wrote in a widely published letter:

> [N]o evaluation system will work unless teachers believe it is fair and reliable, and it's very hard to be fair in a time of transition. The standards need time to work. Teachers need time to develop lessons, receive more training, get used to the new tests, and offer their feedback. Applying assessment scores to evaluations before these pieces are developed would be like measuring the speed of a runner based on her time – without knowing how far she ran, what obstacles were in the way, or whether the stopwatch worked!
>
> [A]ssessment results should not be taken into account in high-stakes decisions on teacher evaluation or student promotion for the next two years, during this transition.[44]

The call for the moratorium on testing has gained widespread support from those who back the Common Core and, of course, from those who have fought against the proliferation of standardized testing across the country. Here is another instance of how policymakers and donors have missed all-important signals and struggled as desired policies wend their way down the policy-to-practice path.[45]

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All of these examples of negotiating the S-shaped switchbacks and sinkholes on the road from policy to practice—NCLB, charter schools, new technologies, Broad Superintendents Academy, and Common Core standards—return to that unasked question: **Why have major donors such as Broad, Walton, and Gates given (and continue to give) large sums of money to programs to improve academic performance in the face of mediocre results in altering classroom teaching practices and student learning?**

I offer a two-part answer to this question. First, policy elites, including philanthropists, live in a very different world than school practitioners. The beliefs, values, incentives to do well, and basic questions being asked differ.

Second, because of these differences between these two worlds, current decision-makers, including donors, generally favor structural solutions to problems (for example, funding, governance, curriculum, organization). Teachers do not.

<u>Different Worlds.</u> A familiar story illustrates what I mean by policy elites living in a different world than practitioners.

A man in a hot air balloon realized he was lost. He reduced altitude and spotted a woman below. He came lower and shouted, "Excuse me, can you help? I promised a friend I would meet him an hour ago, but I don't know where I am." The woman below replied, "You're in a hot air balloon hovering approximately 30 feet above the ground. You're between 40 and 41 degrees north latitude and between 59 and 60 degrees west longitude."

"You must be a teacher," said the balloonist. "I am," replied the woman, "How

did you know?" "Well," answered the balloonist, "everything you told me is

technically correct, but I've no idea what to make of your information, and the

fact is I'm still lost. Frankly, you've not been much help at all. If anything, you've

delayed my trip."

The woman below responded, "You must be a policymaker." "I am," said the

balloonist, "but how did you know?"

"Well," said the woman, "you don't know where you are or where you are going.

You have no map, and no compass. You have risen to where you are due to a

large quantity of hot air. You made a promise, which you've no idea how to keep,

and you expect people beneath you to solve your problems. The fact is you are in

exactly the same position you were in before we met, but now, somehow, it's my

fault."[46]

Funny or not, the distinctions between what policymakers do and think and what teachers

do and think are, indeed, worlds apart.

Consider that local and state school boards, governors, mayors, and legislators,

including federal education officials, do not lead schools or teach lessons. All concentrate

on making policy, use mandates and incentives to get policies put into practice, and

allocate resources. Like donors, they neither focus on nor dictate how teachers should

teach or principals run their schools. They see the "big picture" of the system and look

for effective solutions to problems they have identified that can be scaled up to touch

thousands rather than dozens of schools.

Here is how Frederick Hess describes the policymaker world:

> [K]eep in mind that policymakers can make people do things, but they can't make
> them do them well. Policy is a blunt tool…. They can require schools or systems
> to comply with punch lists–hire a parent liaison or set aside forty minutes a day
> for literacy instruction–but they can't require them to do any of those things
> well….
>
> In the end, policymakers only have three crude levers at their disposal. They can
> *give away money* for particular purposes, tell you *what you must do*, and tell you
> *what you can't do* [original italics]. That's about it. Yet, with just these three blunt
> instruments, policymakers are under immense pressure to make the world a better
> place.[47]

And teachers? Here's how historian of education David Labaree puts the
differences between teachers and reformers, be they donors, policymakers, or
researchers:

> Teachers focus on what is particular within their own classrooms; reformers focus
> on what is universal across many classrooms. Teachers operate in a setting
> dominated by personal relations; reformers operate in a setting dominated by
> abstract political and social aims. Teachers draw on clinical experiences;
> reformers draw on social scientific theory. Teachers embrace the ambiguity of
> classroom process and practice; reformers pursue the clarity of tables and graphs.
> Teachers put a premium on professional adaptability; reformers put a premium on
> uniformity of practices and outcomes.[48]

Key players in the game of schooling do indeed inhabit different worlds. As a
result, inhabitants of each world ask dissimilar questions.

<u>Favoring Structures.</u> Policymakers and donors ask their bottom-line question: what causes students' low academic performance, especially in big cities? One answer they give is that parents have limited choices of schools. Providing more choices for parents (for example, through vouchers, charters, magnets) by restructuring funding of schools is the answer. Schools can then compete for students and, from that competition, innovations will emerge that improve student and school performance.

Another answer to the question of what causes students' poor academic performance is that teachers have few incentives to improve their teaching since prevailing ways of evaluating teachers, paying them on fixed salary schedules, and seniority rules reward time served rather than teacher effectiveness in raising students' test scores. The solution, key donors believe, is to restructure ways teachers get evaluated, paid, and transferred to spur teachers to teach more, faster, and better than they currently do.

And still another answer to the same question is introducing Common Core standards and tests. Both advocates among donors and policymakers believe that higher standards and harder tests combined with new curricular materials will prod teachers to teach differently and students to learn far more than they had before. Those answers—solutions to the problem of students' low academic performance—dominate the current generation of "muscular philanthropists."

When considering these policy solutions, policymakers ask the following questions:

* Will the new policy cost more, less, or the same as the existing policy?

* Will the new policy be more, less, or the same in achieving instructional and curricular objectives than the existing policy?

* What incentives and sanctions are there to reward and penalize principals and teachers charged to implement the new policies?

* How can what works in some schools scale upward to encompass more schools across states and the nation?

Teachers ask different questions.[49]

If the teacher is the most important in-school factor influencing learning, as researchers have established and policymakers and donors state publicly, should not teachers' ideas, beliefs, values, and questions get respectful attention and action from grant-givers and decision-makers? The answer is obviously yes, but in most instances, other than consulting occasional teachers, token representation on advisory groups, or drive-by visits to schools, practitioners fail to receive that basic consideration. No dark motive rests behind philanthropists largely ignoring the differences between their world and that of teachers. I believe that donors and policymakers acquire a blind spot (or perhaps myopia) from the insulated world they inhabit and that it becomes a major hazard along the road from policy to practice.[50]

Questions that teachers ask, then, about policies aimed at what and how they teach seldom get noticed, much less considered. Boston teacher and charter school founder Michael Goldstein lists concerns that teachers have when policies aimed at classrooms get announced:

1. How to be more efficient. Many teachers want to work less without being neglectful. Or they'd like to free up time to invest in new priorities.

2. How to manage the classroom so kids behave better? ... If a middle school teacher can 'reset' the class only 3 times per period, instead of 5, that's probably 1,440 fewer times per year that he has to deal with misbehavior. (By "reset," I mean when a teacher says something like, "Guys, come on. I need your eyes on me. I need you to settle down. Joey, that means you. I'm going to wait until I have everyone's eyes.")

3. How to motivate and generate student effort, especially, how to "flip" kids who arrive having not worked hard in previous classes or years? This includes both getting kids to exert effort during class and getting them to work hard at home.

4. How to get kids to remember material that they seemingly once knew? Cognitive science has moved the ball forward here; now we need applied experiments with teachers....[51]

Or consider the questions many teachers ask after hearing that school officials have purchased and deployed new hardware and software:

* How much time and energy will have to be invested to learn the new devices and accompanying software?

* Will the time spent learning to use the new technology yield a comparable return in student learning?

* What evidence is there that the new technology will help students meet district standards and score better on tests than without these devices and software?

* When glitches in integrating hardware and software occur—and they will occur—will on-site professional and technical help be immediately available?[52]

These questions and concerns come from the world of classroom teachers, a world that policymakers and donors largely ignore or tiptoe around. Because these questions go unanswered, the policy-to-practice journey often stops at the classroom door where teachers, as gatekeepers, ultimately decide what gets into lessons and what gets put in the closet.

Final Thoughts

Tax-subsidized philanthropy in a democracy will not disappear; critics lambasting donors pushing a market-influenced reform agenda is part of a long history of criticism extending back to Senator Frank Walsh in 1915. Yet attempts to square that circle will persist. Critics and supporters of venture philanthropists will wrestle with the conflicting values inherent to wealth being used for the public good long after this chapter has been published.

In analyzing how policies do (or do not) get into classroom lessons, I have sorted through varied criticisms of donors and assessed each one's merit. On the charge of privatization attributed to large donors, I found that critics overstated the case, even slipping into hyperbole. I did find merit, however, in the charge that, in centralizing school governance, donors and policymakers have stifled public participation in school decisions and deepened distrust in teachers' professional judgment.

I also found merit in the criticism that donors shirk responsibility for errors in grant making. Donors have created intermediaries that come close to or even cross the line into lobbying—which is banned by law—for particular policies. Yet that advocacy

evaporates when projects fail and entrepreneurial donors walk away untouched by their errors, leaving the odor of unfairness in the air.

Finally, I added to the list of criticisms by identifying a common blind spot for venture philanthropists: converting policy into effective practice. Like most educational policymakers, donors have largely lived in their own world where *idées fixes* about school problems—better schooling strengthens the economy, schools are like businesses, and successful business practices can fix any problems schools have—dominate their thinking. These shared ideas spurred grants for reforming structures, allocating ample resources, and scaling up successful ventures. And the world that practitioners live in—a world of different *idées fixes* and behaviors—is crucial for policies to turn into classroom practices, but donors have largely ignored it.

Now I have reached the point in this chapter where I am expected to propose solutions that would help donors make wise decisions and remedy mistakes in achieving their reforms.

But I have no list of recommendations beyond the obvious one of donors becoming far more aware of the practitioner world and acting on that knowledge in making grants. Beyond this self-evident suggestion, I have no more. Why is that?

I have learned from my past writings and others that a section on recommendations is usually the weakest part of a chapter or book because the necessary conditions for proposals to succeed are usually absent. Moreover, recommendations tend to reflect the author's pet solutions. So, in reflecting on my work as a practitioner and researcher for nearly five decades, rather than present disposable advice, I offer a few

educated guesses about what might happen in the next decade as a result of the current "muscular philanthropy" in school reform.

Educated Guess No. 1. Every reform movement leaves a residue in public schools. Consider the progressive education movement over a century ago. "Administrative progressives"—mostly policymakers and academics—championed "scientific management" and "efficiency engineers" tying public schools to the early 20th century economy, while "pedagogical progressives" glowed over the "whole child," "learning by doing," and tying curriculum to the "real world." Bits and pieces of those two wings of the progressive education movement settled into public schools by the 1940s with standardized testing, measures of school efficiency, small group work, project-based learning, and individualized instruction.[53]

And so it will be after the current reforms—in play since the early 1980s—become footnotes for future scholars. Vestiges of existing market-driven school reforms will be quietly incorporated into public schools. Look for charter schools, reduced standardized testing, a scaled-back national curriculum, routine use of technologies in classrooms, non-educators entering schools, downsized accountability regulations, and a continuing high regard for student outcomes.

Also the *idée fixe* of current schooling—that is, concentrating on producing human capital first and civic engagement second—will persist but slowly lose its potency as popular pushback against too much standardized testing and a national curriculum grows in momentum.[54]

Other existing reforms, such as evaluating teachers using student test scores, ending tenure and seniority, calling principals CEOs, and children learning to code, will

be like tissue-paper reforms of the past (for example, zero-based budgeting, right- and left-brain teaching) that have been crumpled up and tossed away. [55]

Contemporary policymakers and philanthropists who invested much time, energy, and monies into these reforms will not break out the champagne for leftover debris. They will join their reform-minded predecessors in being disappointed and blaming school boards, administrators, and teachers for being resistant to change.

Educated Guess No. 2. If vestiges of older reforms remaining is one lesson from earlier reforms, so is the idea that unintended outcomes that inevitably haunt reform movements. Every school reform I have researched, from improving curriculum to changing instruction to redesigning organizations, has had unanticipated results. Even the smartest policymakers discovered, to their surprise and chagrin, unforeseen consequences. Recall how contemporary donors inadvertently helped shrink public involvement in school decisions through support for mayoral control, state laws expanding charter schools, and parental trigger laws. Some unintended outcomes, depending on where one stands, are positive, others are negative, and a few are perverse.[56]

My educated guess is that donors may see that the crisis rhetoric they used in past decades, the extensive media exposure, and their market-based reform agenda have had perverse outcomes by ending up not privatizing public schools, but actually preserving the status quo they fought against.[57] Let me unpack this observation.

The notion of institutions adopting certain reforms in order to maintain stability—sometimes called "dynamic conservatism"—captures how U.S. public schools, especially in big cities, have embraced new policies (for example, charter schools, Common Core

State Standards, technologies) to signal stakeholders that schools are indeed changing. Yet those districts and schools leave untouched structures that make U.S. urban, suburban, and exurban schools the way they are (and have been), such as depending upon property taxes, local school board governance, age-graded schools, curriculum tied to textbooks, and high-stakes tests. [58]

In keeping their hands off these basic structures, reform-minded donors have unwittingly reinforced the stability of the very organizations they want to transform. Not Machiavellian or even necessarily planned, school districts have learned over time to preserve overall stability—the status quo—in the face of occasional dumb policies and strong external pressures to alter traditional practices.

One example of grant-giving strengthening the status quo occurred in the early 20th century when Northern white philanthropists gave money to improve what was then called "colored" or "Negro" education in the South. John D. Rockefeller, Julius Rosenwald, and other donors sent money southward to improve black education by building schools, helping teachers gain more knowledge and learn new pedagogies, and raising salaries. However, these donors gave the money directly to white school boards who then dispersed funds sparingly to black principals, teachers, and communities. In effect, these grants maintained the Jim Crow system of separate schooling for blacks and whites. Positive, negative, and perverse outcomes were rolled into one. [59]

Fast forward to the early 21st century, and a similar phenomenon of high-profile reforms freezing the status quo is evident now. For example, donor-supported reforms in urban districts such as opening new charter schools, closing "dropout factory" high schools, distributing vouchers, and deploying new technologies, have proliferated. These

changes rescued small numbers of motivated parents and students who were stuck in under-resourced and inequitably staffed schools within highly bureaucratic urban systems. Those parents and students benefited. That was an intended and positive outcome.

However, for the vast majority of parents outside of a Harlem's Children Zone or passed over in lotteries for charter schools, their children continue to attend low-achieving schools, dropout of high school, and face dead-end jobs. Age-graded schools persist. Segregated poor and minority schools persevere. Inequalities in who teaches in middle-class and poor schools linger. The status quo in low-performing schools remains. And the primary reason is that these donor-pushed reforms concentrated on schools rather than the economic and social structures outside of schools that freeze institutional inequalities in place.[60]

In making these educated guesses about untoward effects, I see that donors have erred in framing the problem of failed schools as a national phenomenon rather than as an urban one and a problem located solely in schools themselves. Failing poor urban and rural children, however, is located in multiple institutions and structures inside and outside schools. Battling low academic performance requires crossing institutional boundaries. Many researchers, parents, and practitioners know this in their bones. But venture philanthropists who shape school reform agendas do not.

Because of their can-do and business-oriented ideology, donors have largely devoted their grant making to fund changes aimed at existing school structures in governance, organization, curriculum, and instruction. In doing so, they have unwisely

reinforced the myth that schooling alone, not in concert with other institutions, produces

miracles that will end economic and social inequalities.

And for that error, I believe, donors will receive a full measure of criticism in the

next decade for preserving the status quo.

Draft: Do not cite without permission from the author.

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[1] Ellen Lagemann, *The Politics of Knowledge: The Carnegie Corporation, Philanthropy, and Public Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989); Barry Karl and Stanley Katz, " The American Private Philanthropic Foundation and the Public sphere, 1890–1930," *Minerva*, 1981, 19(2), pp. 236-270.

[2] Frank Walsh, "Perilous Philanthropy," *The Independent*, August 1915, p. 262

[3] Jeffrey Hart and is quoted in Robert Arnove and Nadine Pinede, "Revisiting the 'Big Three' Foundations," *Critical Sociology*, 2007, 33, p. 391.

[4] Diane Ravitch, *Death and Life of the Great American School System* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), p. 200.

[5] Rick Cohen, "Strategic Grantmaking: Foundations and the School Privatization Movement," National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, 2007.

[6] For an example of the charge of privatization of public schools coming from the left side of the political spectrum see the cartoon by Mark Fiore called "ProfitShip! Cashing in on Public Schools." Commissioned by *The Progressive* and published in December 2014 at:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=opcHQ_v6PuU

[7] Charles Lindblom, *Politics and Markets* (New York: Basic Books, 1980); Joel Klein, "The Case for the Private Sector in School Reform, *The Atlantic*, August 2012 at:
http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2012/08/the-case-for-the-private-sector-in-school-reform/261215/ Retrieved October 15, 2014; Michael Sandel, *What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2012). For personal attacks, see Lyndsey Layton,. "Center for Union Facts Says Randi Weingarten Is Ruining Nation's Schools," Washington Post, September 24, 2014 at: http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/center-for-union-facts-says-randi-weingarten-is-ruining-nations-schools/2014/09/24/6443fed4-441e-11e4-9a15-137aa0153527_story.html Retrieved October 31, 2014-10-31
And see, Alliance for Quality Education, The Real Campbell Brown: Right-Wing. Elitist. Wrong about Public Schools," n.d. at: http://realcampbellbrown.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/TheRealCampbellBrown.pdf Retrieved October 31, 2014.

[8] I use the phrase "policy elites" interchangeably with "top policymakers," "civic and business leader coalitions," "policy entrepreneurs," and "reformers." By "policy elites" I mean loose networks of corporate leaders, public officials (including top educational policy makers), foundation officials, and academics who circulate ideas consistent with their views of problems and solutions, champion particular reforms, use both public and private funds to run projects, and strongly influence decision-making. Not unlike policy elites in business and civic affairs who are involved in growing a stronger economy, improving health care, protecting national security, strengthening foreign policy, and safeguarding the environment, policy entrepreneurs and reformers have ready access to media, are capable of framing problems, and set a public agenda for discussion. Or as one member in good standing wrote: "In public policy, it matters less who has the best arguments and more who gets heard—and by whom" (Ralph Reed, cited in Dana Milbank, *Homo Politicus: The Strange and Barbaric Tribes of the Beltway* [New York: Doubleday, 2008], p. 68).

       Political party labels do not define these elites, although there are clearly Republican and Democratic members who wear their affiliation on their sleeve and, when administrations change, move in and out of office. I do not use the phrase "policy elites" to suggest conspiratorial groups secretly meeting and designing action plans. Nor do I bash elites. I suggest only that these overlapping networks of like-minded individuals share values and tastes and seek school improvements aligned with those values and tastes. As "influentials," they convene frequently in different forums, speak the same policy talk, and are connected closely to sources of public and private influence in governments, media, businesses, academia, and foundations. They help to create a climate of opinion that hovers around no more than a few hundred national policy leaders and smaller numbers at state and local levels. Familiar with the ways of the media, these policy elites extend and shape that climate of opinion by closely working with journalists who report what they say, write, think, and do. Few members of these loosely connected policy elites, however, have had direct or sustained experience with school principals or teachers, much less engaged in the teaching of children. Yet their recommended policies, their "common sense" about what the nation, state, district, and teachers should do, touch the daily lives of both educators and children. See John Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1984); James Fallows, *Breaking the News* (New York: Random House, 1996); William Safire, "Elite Establishment Egghead Eupatrids," *New York Times Magazine,* May 18, 1997, p. 16. For a survey of experts as to who are the "influentials" currently shaping school reform policy, see ChristopherSwanson and Janelle Barlage, "Influence: A Study of the Factors

Shaping Educational Policy," (Washington, D.C.: Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, December 2006).

[9] David Tyack and Larry Cuban, *Tinkering toward Utopia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 117-119; Lawrence Leak and Lois Williams, "Private Management of Public Schools: The Baltimore Experience," 1997, paper presented to American Educational Research Association ,Chicago Illinois; Keith Richburg, "Setback for Philadelphia Schools Plan," Washington Post, June 29, 2008 at: http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/06/28/AR2008062801637.html Retrieved October 15, 2014.

[10] National Center for Education Statistics, "The Condition of Education, 2014" Institutes of Education Sciences at: http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/. Some examples strengthen this point: Parental choice through charter schools, magnets, and vouchers are common in large and middle-sized cities enrolling about 13 percent of U.S. students. Even in first-ring suburbs that have become largely minority such as Prince George's County (MD) outside of Washington, D.C. where 67 percent of the population is middle- and working class African American, in 2014 out of 204 schools, eight are charters. Council of the Great City Schools, "Urban School Statistics," at: http://www.cgcs.org/Page/75 Retrieved November 21, 2014; for Prince Georges County statistics on charter schools, see Wikipedia at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prince_George%27s_County_Public_Schools Retrieved November 21, 2014.
 National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics*, Table 216.20: Number and enrollment of public elementary and secondary schools, by school level, type, and charter and magnet status: Selected years, 1990-91 through 2011-12 at: http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d13/tables/dt13_216.20.asp Retrieved October 15, 2014.

[11] Note that historian of education Diane Ravitch recognizes that "corporate reformers" and billionaire donors work from a mix of motives.

>Some no doubt are motivated by idealism. Some think they are leading a new civil rights movement, though I doubt that Dr. King would recognize these financial titans as his colleagues as they impose their will on one of our crucial public institutions. Some hate government. Some love the free market. Some think that the profit motive is more efficient and effective than any public-sector enterprise. All of them share a surprising certainty that they know how to "fix" the public schools and that the people who work in those schools are lazy, unmotivated, incompetent, and not to be trusted. Diane Ravitch, "Bridging Differences," *Education Week*, November 15, 2011 at: http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/Bridging-Differences/2011/11/billionaires_for_education_ref.html Retrieved October 27, 2014.

[12] For the 2012 referendum on allowing charter schools in the state of Washington, major contributors were the Gates, Walton, and Broad foundations. See "Cash Contributions for Yes on 1240 Washington Coalition for Public Charter Schools," Public Disclosure Commission: Shining Light on Washington Politics Since 1972 at:
http://www.pdc.wa.gov/MvcQuerySystem/CommitteeData/contributions?param=WUVTIFdDIDUwNw===&year=2012&type=initiative Retrieved October 23, 2014.
>I also include centralizing educational authority in state takeovers of lowest performing schools such as Louisiana's Recovery School District in Orleans Parish, and Tennessee's Achievement School District and creating charter schools in such districts. The Walton and Broad Foundations have supported these ventures. See: http://achievementschooldistrict.org/blog/2013/01/13/foundations-advance-growth-of-excellent-schools/ and
http://www.broadeducation.org/investments/current_investments/investments_all.html
 Janelle Scott, "The Politics of Venture Philanthropy in Charter School Policy and Advocacy," *Educational Policy*," 2009, 23(1), pp. 106-136.
 Joanne Barkan, "Plutocrats at Work: How Big Philanthropies Undermine Democracy," Dissent, 2013 at: http://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/plutocrats-at-work-how-big-philanthropy-undermines-democracy Retrieved October 19, 2014.

[13] Lorraine M. McDonnell, "No Child Left Behind and the Federal Role in Education: Evolution or Revolution?" *Peabody Journal of Education*, 2005, 80(2), pp. 19-38. The phrase "muscular philanthropy" comes from Frederick Hess, "Philanthropy Gets in the Ring: Edu-funders Get Serious about Education Policy," *Phi Deltan Kappan*, 2012, 93(8), pp. 17-21.

[14] Sarah Reckhow and Jeffrey Snyder, "The Expanded Role of Philanthropy in Education Politics," *Educational Researcher*, 2014, 43(4), pp. 186-195; Lyndsey Layton, "How Bill Gates Pulled Off the Swift

Common Core Revolution," *Washington Post,* June 7, 2014; Patrick McGuinn, "Fight Club: Are Advocacy Organizations Changing the Politics of Education*," Education Next*, 2012, 12(3) at: http://educationnext.org/fight-club/ Retrieved November 15, 2014; Natalie Hopkinson, "Why Michelle Rhee's Education 'Brand' Failed in D.C.,"*The Atlantic*, September 15, 2010 at: http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2010/09/why-michelle-rhees-education-brand-failed-in-dc/63014/ Retrieved November 15, 2014; Joanne Barkan, "Got Dough? How Billionaires Rule Our Schools," *Dissent*, Winter 2011 at: http://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/got-dough-how-billionaires-rule-our-schools Retrieved November 15, 2014. Nicolas Confessore, "Policy-Making Billionaires," *New York Times*, November 26, 2011.

[15] Public education, like healthcare reform and efforts to get climate change legislation, is only one of many venues where foundations funded advocacy groups. Note the heavy presence of donors making grants to organizations that pressed for the Affordable Care Act since 2009. See Rick Cohen, "The Role of Philanthropy and Advocacy in Healthcare Reform Implementation," *NPQ*, February 21, 2013 at: https://nonprofitquarterly.org/philanthropy/21836-the-role-of-philanthropy-and-advocacy-in-healthcare-reform-implementation.html Retrieved December 2, 2014.

[16] Walking away from a grant—usually three years in length—was common among donors when early returns appeared unpromising. See Gary Lichtenstein report on what happened at Denver's Manual High School in the early 2000s when the high school was reorganized to become three small schools. "Lessons Learned at Manual," July 2004 (in author's possession) and Gary Lichtenstein, "What Went Wrong at Manual High: The Role of Intermediaries in the Quest for Smaller Schools, " *Education Week*, May 16, 2006

[17] Rob Reich, "What Are Foundations For?" *Boston Review*, March 1, 2013 at: http://www.bostonreview.net/forum/foundations-philanthropy-democracy Retrieved October 17, 2014.

[18] Edward Skloot, "The Gated Community," *Alliance Magazine,* September 2011 at: http://www.hudson.org/content/researchattachments/attachment/1197/alliance_magazine_edward_skloot.pdf Retrieved October 17, 2014.

[19]David Callahan, "Be Afraid: The Five Scariest Trends in Philanthropy," *Inside Philanthropy*, October 31, 2014 at: http://www.insidephilanthropy.com/home/2014/10/31/be-afraid-the-five-scariest-trends-in-philanthropy.html Retrieved December 2, 2014. Frederick Hess makes the persuasive point that major educational foundations enjoy an "absence of scrutiny" with media and academics joining in a "conspiracy of silence" when it comes to asking hard questions of donors. See *With the Best of Intentions: How Philanthropy Is Reshaping K-12 Education* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2005), pp.9-11.

[20] Mark Smylie and Stacy Wenzel, "The Chicago Annenberg Challenge: Successes, Failures, and Lessons for the Future," Final Technical Report, 2003, Consortium of Chicago School Research.
The Gates Foundation's deserting their small high school venture after a few years led a close observer of donors to remark: "In an age of hands-on living mega donors, the possibilities for big screw-up's are self-evident and we've seen some doozies so far—like, say, turning urban school districts upside down to create small high schools and then realizing that this idea wasn't as brilliant as MC-DOS." David Callahan, "Be Afraid: The Five Scariest Trends in Philanthropy," *Inside Philanthropy*, October 31, 2014 at: http://www.insidephilanthropy.com/home/2014/10/31/be-afraid-the-five-scariest-trends-in-philanthropy.html Retrieved November 14, 2014.

The Gates Foundation's walking away from small high schools may well have been premature since recent studies have shown that small high schools, many of which were directly funded by the Foundation, have higher graduation rates than larger neighborhood schools. See Atila Abdulkadiroglu, Weiwei Hu, Parag Pathak. "Small High Schools and Student Achievement: Lottery-Based Evidence from New York City," National Bureau of Economic Research Working paper No. 19576, October 19, 2013; Rebecca Unterman, "The Effects of New York City's Small High Schools of Choice on Postsecondary Enrollment," *MDRC Policy Brief*, October 2014.

[21] I thank Jeff Henig for suggesting the "slipping gear" phrase.

[22] As many researchers and observers have pointed out, a major shift in education policy has occurred over the past half-century. Beginning after the U.S. Congress passed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965) and the subsequent Coleman Report (1966), a focus on student outcomes accelerated sharply after the *Nation at Risk* report (1983) moving the focus of decision-makers on school performance from inputs (for example, per-pupil spending, facilities, lab equipment) to district, school, and student accountability for outputs (for example, student test scores, graduation rates, college attendance). See

Robert Linn, "Assessments and Accountability," *Educational Researcher*, 2000, 29(2), pp. 4-16; Jal Mehta, "How Paradigms Create Politics: The Transformation of American Educational Policy, 1980-2001," *American Educational Research Journal*, 2013, 50(2), pp.285-324.

As for hostility to unions, early 20th century philanthropists such as Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller displayed even stronger animosity toward unions when they headed steel and mining corporations. See Barry Karl and Stanley Katz, " The American Private Philanthropic Foundation and the Public sphere, 1890–1930," *Minerva*, 1981, 19(2), p. 253.

[23] David Tyack and I have written extensively about the marked differences between policy talk—the rhetoric and hype of, say, new technologies for students, policy action—adopting particular policies such as buying and deploying technological innovations and policy implementation—putting adopted policies into classroom practice, teachers use new hardware and software as policymakers intended. See David Tyack and Larry Cuban, *Tinkering toward Utopia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 40-47.

[24] For an example of a foundation pressing for particular changes by staffing a state department of education with officials they paid for , see: James Odato, "Education Reform Backed by the Wealthy," Albany *Times Union*, November 25, 2013 at: http://www.timesunion.com/local/article/Education-reform-backed-by-the-wealthy-5006670.php Retrieved December 2, 2014.

[25] Michael Janofsky, "Vergara Ruling Stands, Judge Rules in Final Review," *LA Report*, August 28, 2014 at: http://laschoolreport.com/just-in-vergara-ruling-stands-judge-rules-in-final-review/
Bill Raden and Gary Cohn, David Welch: The Man Behind Vergara v. California," *Capital & Main*, February 20, 2014 at: http://capitalandmain.com/david-welch-the-man-behind-vergara-versus-california/ Retrieved October 27, 2014.

[26] The literature about policy implementation, especially those measures dubbed as "reforms" has become increasingly detailed and sophisticated over the past half-century. It is a research literature rich in examples of policies and their implementation that to either current or prospective policymakers would be disheartening. Some key studies over the decades are the following: Jeffrey Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky, *Implementation* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1973); Paul Berman and Milbrey McLaughlin, *Federal Programs Supporting Educational Change, Vol. VIII, Implementing and Sustaining Innovations* (Santa Monica,CA: RAND, 1978); Meredith Honig (ed.), *New Directions in Education Policy Implementation* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006); Joseph McDonald, et al., *American School Reform: What Fails and Why* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).

Over decades, researchers have documented repeatedly that top-down policy formation and adoption seldom spurred practitioners to put policies into classroom practice that bore much resemblance to what policymakers intended. Research has shown repeatedly that as the policy traversed district and school offices into classrooms, teacher adaptations and adjustments occurred.

[27] In 2011, 48 percent of U.S. schools had failed to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Variation in states ranged from 89 percent (Florida) to 11 percent in Wisconsin failing to make AYP. See Alexandra Usher, "AYP Results for 2010-2011," Center on Education Policy, Washington, D.C., p. 2. Also see, Sam Dillon, "Failure Rate of Schools Overstated, Study Says," *New York Times*, December 15, 2011 at: http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/15/education/education-secretary-overstated-failing-schools-under-no-child-left-behind-study-says.html?_r=0 Retrieved January 1, 2015.

[28] Brian Stecher et al., "Consequences of Large-Scale High-Stakes Testing on School and Classroom Practice, in *Making Sense of Test-Based Accountability in Education*, (eds.) Laura Hamilton, et. al(Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2002), pp. 79-100; James Spillane, et. al. "Organizational Routines as Coupling Mechanisms: Policy, School Administration, and the Technical Core,"*American Educational Research Journal*, 48(3), 2011, pp. 586-619.

[29] Motoko Rich, "A Walmart Fortune, Spreading Charter Schools," *New York Times*, April 25, 2014; Philip Gleason, et. al., "Do KIPP Schools Boost Student Achievement," *Education Finance and Policy*, 2014, 9(1), pp. 36-58; Howard Bloom, "Charter Schools Get Boost*," Los Angeles Times*, January 17, 2008; Sam Dillon, "School Is Turned Around But Cost Gives Pause," *New York Times*, June 24, 2010. For within district competition and borrowing from charter schools, see Apollo 20 project in Houston (TX) public schools at: http://www.houstonisd.org/Page/78350 Retrieved November 15, 2014; also see Marc Holley et al., "Competition with Charters Motivates Districts*," Education Next*, Fall 2013 at: http://educationnext.org/competition-with-charters-motivates-districts/ Retrieved November 15, 2014.

[30] CREDO, *Multiple Choice: Charter School Performance in 16 States* (Stanford, CA: Center for Research on Education Outcomes, 2009); Matthew DeCarlo, "The Evidence on Charter Schools and Test Scores," Policy Brief, (Washington, D.C.: Albert Shanker Institute, 2011).

[31] Katie Ash, "Computers in the Classroom, Then and Now," *Education Week*, April 22, 2009 at: http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/DigitalEducation/2009/04/computers_in_the_classroom_the_1.html Retrieved November 15, 2014.

[32] Jason Ravitz, et al., "Cautionary Tales about Correlations between Student Computer Use and Academic Achievement, " April 2002, paper presented at annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association. New Orleans; Larry Cuban, *Inside the Black Box of Classroom Practice: Change without Reform in American Education* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2013), pp. 43-45;

[33] Mark Windschitle and Kurt Sahl, "Tracing Teachers' Use of Technology in a Laptop Computer School," *American Educational Research Journa*l, 2002, vol. 39(1), pp. 165-205; Larry Cuban, *Oversold and Underused: Computers in the Classroom* (Cambridge, MA: harvard University Press, 2001); *Inside the Black Box of Classroom Practice: Change without Reform in American Education* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2013)

[34] Larry Cuban, *Hugging the Middle: How Teachers Teach in an Era of Testing and Accountability* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2009); Larry Cuban, *Inside the Black Box,* pp. 155-171.

[35] Anyone familiar with the level of hardware and software used in schools over the past thirty years has seen extraordinary changes in software programs and hardware miniaturization. What software students in the 9th grade in 1985 were using was gone and forgotten five years later. Preparing students for jobs in a labor market prizing the use of information and rapid communication means constant changes in what software and hardware students will use in schools, a condition that districts can hardly afford. Thus built-in obsolesence of machines and software make it difficult to plan on current students being prepared for jobs. Current interest in teaching all students to learn to code recognizes the constant turnover in technological equipment and skills. See, for example, Nick Wingfield, "Fostering New Tech Talent in Schools," *New York Times*, September 30, 2012.

[36] *Bloomberg Businessweek Magazine*, "Bill Gates School Crusade," July 15, 2010 at: http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/10_30/b4188058281758.htm#p2

[37] For press releases from Broad Superintendents Academy, see website: http://www.broadcenter.org/academy/newsroom/category/press-releases For a highly critical view, see Sharon Higgins, a parent who has followed Broad graduates of the Academy and other programs at: http://thebroadreport.blogspot.com/p/parent-guide.html As of 2011 there were 165 graduates. The Foundation released no figures for 2012 and 2013.

[38] Angela Pascopella, "Superintendent Staying Power," *District Administration*, April 2011 at: http://www.districtadministration.com/article/superintendent-staying-power Retrieved November 3, 2024.

[39] For a recent study of the correlation between superintendents and student achievement, see Larry Cuban, "Superintendents and Test Scores," October 14, 2014 at: https://larrycuban.wordpress.com/2014/10/08/superintendents-and-test-scores/ Retrieved November 17, 2014.

[40] Lyndsey Layton, "How Bill Gates Pulled Off the Common Core Revolution," *Washington Post*, june 7, 2014 at: http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/how-bill-gates-pulled-off-the-swift-common-core-revolution/2014/06/07/a830e32e-ec34-11e3-9f5c-9075d5508f0a_story.html Retrieved November 7, 2014; Tim Murphy, "Tragedy of the Common Core," *Mother Jones*, September/October 2014, pp. 31-43, 68.

[41] That the Common Core standards is not a curriculum and local officials including teachers determine what is taught in lessons is stated directly as a "Fact" in the Common Core standards' website. See: http://www.corestandards.org/about-the-standards/myths-vs-facts/

[42] Two national consortia will produce assessments for most of the states adopting Common Core standards. PARCC or the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career has nine states and the District of Columbia signed up and Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortia has 17 states committed to this test. Both tests will be used in the school year 2014-2015. Remaining states unaffiliated plan to use their own or other commercially prepared tests. See Catherine Gewertz and Andrew Ujifusa, "State Plans for Testing Fragmented," *Education Week*, May 21, 2014. In the wake of imminent testing, a backlash has developed. See, for example, Patrick O'Donnell, "Test mania? Teachers Say 'High Stakes' of

Testing Leads to More Tests, Less Teaching," Cleveland Plain Dealer, October 22, 2014; Lisa Wolff, "Too early for High Stakes Testing on Common Core," *NJ Spotlight* at: http://www.njspotlight.com/stories/14/06/15/op-ed-too-early-for-high-stakes-testing-based-on-common-core-state-standards/

 Liz Bowie, "Local School Leaders Ask State To Delay High-stakes Graduation Tests," *Baltimore Sun*, October 16, 2014 at: http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/education/blog/bs-md-graduation-requirements-20141016-story.html#page=1 Retrieved November 15, 2014.

[43] Alexandra Neason, "The 'Common' in Common Core Fractures as State Support Fractures," *The Hechinger Report*, June 18, 2014 at: http://hechingerreport.org/content/common-common-core-fractures-state-support-falters_16420/ Retrieved November 15, 2014.

Motoko Rich, "States Given a Reprieve on rating Teachers," *New York Times*, August 21, 2014.

[44] Valerie Strauss, "Gates Foundation Backs Two-year Delay in Linking Common Core Test Scores To Teacher Evaluation, Student Promotion," Washington Post, June 10, 2014 at: http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2014/06/10/gates-foundation-backs-two-year-delay-in-linking-common-core-test-scores-to-teacher-evaluation-student-promotion/ Retrieved November 15, 2014.

[45] Valerie Strauss, "Common Core Supporters back Moratorium on New Tests High-stakes*, Washington Post*, June 6, 2013; In Motoko Rich, "States Given a Reprieve on Rating Teachers," *New York Times*, August 21, 2014., The U.S. Secretary of Education allowed states to ask for an additional year before using Common Core tests to evaluate teacher performance.

[46] Louise Locock and Annette Boaz, "Research, Policy and Practice – Worlds Apart*?" Social Policy and Society*, 2004, 3(4), pp. 375 - 384

[47] "Straight Up Blog, Rick Hess on Policymakers: Thinking Policy: Four Tips for Educators," *Education Week* August 8, 2012 http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/rick_hess_straight_up/2012/08/thinking_policy_four_tips_for_educators.html Retrieved November 20, 2014.

[48] David Labaree, *Someone Has To Fail* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), p. 158.

[49] Richard Elmore and Milbrey McLaughlin, *Steady Work* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1988), pp. 5-14; Louise Locock and Annette Boaz, "Research, Policy and Practice – Worlds Apart*?" Social Policy and Society*, 2004, 3(4), pp. 375 – 384;

[50] The primacy of the teacher as the significant in-school factor in getting students to learn is embedded in the experiential wisdom of parents who seek out particular teachers, move to different districts, get in lotteries for charter schools, and seek out vouchers. Researchers have said as much over the decades. From the work of William Sanders in Tennessee to John Hattie's meta-analyses to the recent findings of the Measures of Effective Teaching Project, all—and others—reaffirm what students, parents, and principals have said for years. See: William Sanders and Sandra Horn, "Research Findings from the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) Database: Implications for Educational Evaluation and Research," *Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education*, 1998, 12(3) pp. 247-256, 1998; John Hattie, Visible Learning for Teachers: Maximizing Impact on Learning (London: Routledge, 2011); Thomas Kane*, Learning about Teaching: Initial Findings from the Measures of Effective Teaching Project* (Seattle: Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2013).

[51] Michael Goldstein, "Studying Teacher Moves," Education Next, 2012, 12(1) at: http://educationnext.org/studying-teacher-moves/ Retrieved November 9, 2014.

[52] Larry Cuban, *Oversold and Underused: Computers in the Classroom* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), p. 168.

[53] David Labaree, *Someone Has To Fail* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); David Tyack and Larry Cuban, *Tinkering toward Utopia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).

[54] David Tyack and Elisabeth Hansot, *Managers of Virtue* (New York: Basic Books, 1982)); *Someone Has To Fail* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010). Diane Ravitch, *Left Back: A Century of Failed School Reform* (New York Simon & Schuster, 2000).

[55] Such tissue-paper reforms are characterized far more by policy talk and media hype, and scattered adoption rather than sustained over time to become part of schooling structures. See Tyack and Cuban, *Tinkering toward Utopia*, pp. 40-42, 111.

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[56] Robert Merton, "The Unanticipated Consequences of Purposive Social Action,"*American Sociological Review*, 1936, 1(6), pp. 894-904; Albert Hirschman, *The Rhetoric of Reaction: Perversity, Futility, and Jeopardy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

[57] Robert Arnove and Nadine Penede, "Revisiting the 'Big Three' Foundations," *Critical Sociology*, 2007, 33, pp. 389-425; Hirschman, *Rhetoric of Reaction*, 1991.

[58] Donald Schon, *Beyond the Stable State: Public and Private Learning in a Changing Society* (New York: Norton, 1973). Larry Cuban, *Hugging the Middle: How Teachers Teach in an Era of Testing and Accountability* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2009).

[59] Historians writing about northern white philanthropy in the South in the late 19th and early 20th centuries have largely agreed on what donors have done in these decades but are deeply divided over donor motives and the consequences of their actions (both planned and unplanned) in making grants to get black schools built, helping black teachers, and supplying services that white school boards had failed to provide. See James Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1988); Mary Hoffschwelle, *The Rosenwald Schools of the American South* (Gainsville FLA:University Press of Florida, 2006); Eric Anderson and Alfred Moss, Jr*., Dangerous Donations: Northern Philanthropy and Southern Black Education, 1902-1930* (Columbia MO: University of Missouri Press, 1999).

       Consider further that donors like John D. Rockefeller, Henry Ford, and Andrew Carnegie were accused openly of making grants that reinforced existing conditions during the Progressive reform movement a century ago. Historian Merle Curti researched the influence of turn-of-the century philanthropists and the criticisms they received from the liberals of the day: "[M]uckrakers, progressives and socialists contended that large-scale giving placed far too much power over public policy in the hands of a few men whose fortunes after all had been created only because of prevailing social and economic conditions. It was argued that philanthropy was intended to patch up the shortcomings in the existing order and thus to preserve a status quo that did not deserve preservation." Merle Curti, "American Philanthropy and the National Character," *American Quarterly*, 1958, 10(4), pp. 420-437.

[60] The Harlem Children's Zone is an area of New York City where low-income families have access to an array of services for infant to adults in schools and other agencies. See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harlem_Children%27s_Zone Retrieved December 23, 2014.