

Is public education in a state of crisis?

We note that a great many folks are stressing that public education is in a state of crisis. (Google the matter for a sample of what the media are saying.) And most of the statements are better examples of problem-naming than problem-solving.

At the same time, Secretary Cardona notes: “We are at the doorstep of a new chapter in American education.” And he has some things he is asking to happen to make things better. However, who will make it happen is not clear from what he says.

How are most of you perceiving the current state of public education?

And if you think public education is in crisis, what do you think would turn things around?

Our view is that the key mechanisms for stimulating the magnitude of fundamental and transformative changes needed reside at the state level. Such changes require sophisticated and unified policy actions by state legislators, chief state school officers, and boards of education, with support from a wide range of public education leaders and stakeholders.

We suggest that three fundamental changes in state education policies are needed to counter the factors threatening public education and the inequities experienced by so many schools, students, and families. These changes involve

(1) increasing school budgets so that are competitive enough to attract and maintain a high quality professional work force (i.e., teachers, student/learning support staff, administrators),

(2) transforming the policy framework for school improvement and accountability to include a primary focus on establishing a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student/learning supports that weaves together available school, home, and community resources,

(3) supporting the establishment of structured school-community collaboratives designed to facilitate the weaving together of school, home, and community resources (e.g., collaboratives that bring together the resources of complexes of schools, a broad range of family representative, and a wide range of community stakeholders to work on unifying mutually beneficial efforts and blending resources).

These and related matters are detailed in

>Improving School Improvement

>Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide

>Embedding Mental Health as Schools Change

Access at

http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html

>Improving Teacher Retention, Performance, and Student Outcomes

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/newteach.pdf>

Finally, it would help if the many advocates for specific initiatives temporarily moved their lobbying efforts to deal with an agenda that addresses a big picture for school improvement policy and practice. The reality is that they currently are competing for the same sparse resources, and the winners are pursuing initiatives that cannot have more than a marginal impact in countering the factors threatening public education.

We don't have email addresses for all who we hope will read this, so please share this with your colleagues.

And as always, we ask that you share with us whatever you think others might find relevant.
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