

# FALSE CLAIMS IN THE ATTACK ON PUBLIC SCHOOL UNIONS: A CRITIQUE OF “WAITING FOR SUPERMAN”

## Labor Relations in Public Education

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### FALSE CLAIMS

**Davis Guggenheim:** Per-student education spending in the U.S. has doubled since 1971, but test scores have been flat, so increased spending does not improve public education.

**Davis Guggenheim:** Failing neighborhoods are the result of failing schools.

**Eric Hanushek:** Getting rid of the bottom 5% to 8% of American teachers can bring the country’s academic performance up to Finland’s.

**Davis Guggenheim:** Only 1 in 100 traditional public schools are “great” while 1 in 5 charter schools are great.

**Davis Guggenheim:** Charter schools excel because they are free of school district bureaucracies and union contracts; charter schools have “broken the sound barrier.”

**Bill Gates:** The U.S. economy is generating tens of millions of high skill jobs, but American schools are not producing enough graduates in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) to fill these jobs.

**Michelle Rhee:** Teachers union officials in Washington DC would not permit a vote on her merit pay scheme because they value their power more than the needs of the children.

**Michelle Rhee:** “It’s all about the adults;” career educators and teachers unions are special interests that serve their own needs at the expense of children.

**Jonathan Alter:** Defenders of public education and teachers unions have low expectations for poor minority children and say they can’t perform as well as others.

### REALITY

Spending on reduced class sizes and better facilities certainly improves education, but for many reasons this may not be reflected in test scores.

Local employers are not creating enough jobs for all those who already graduate high school, so graduating more will not improve the local economy. Systemic poverty results from the economic system, not from failing schools.

This is pure pseudoscience based on unreliable data, unrealistic statistical assumptions, and the incorrect theory that replacing individual teachers will produce systemic change.

On average, there is little difference in the measured performance of traditional public schools and charter schools.

The high test scores of some charter schools reflect more instructional hours and greater attrition of struggling students compared to traditional public schools.

Bill Gates knows this is untrue, because he is throwing thousands of technically skilled Americans out of work in Microsoft and its subcontractors and shipping their jobs to India. There are plenty of skilled Americans, but the richest man in the world chooses to hire cheaper foreign labor.

There is no evidence that merit pay and the threat of job loss improve the performance of teachers. Finland and most other academically high performing countries do not use incentive schemes, which only produce inflated test scores due to Campbell’s Law. Incentive schemes pit teacher against teacher, destroying the principle of solidarity on which the very existence of organized labor depends.

Teachers unions have improved the pay, benefits, and job security of teachers; how does that hurt the children? In fact, career educators and teachers unions are treated much better in Finland and other high performing countries than in the U.S.

This is a vicious smear tactic. What the defenders say is that “high expectations” are not a substitute for adequate resources and eradicating poverty.