

**The Union's Money?  
NO!  
It's Stolen Taxpayer Dollars!**



# How Anger Over Covid Closures Can Fuel The School Choice Movement

[Robert Pondiscio](#) Contributor  
[Education](#)

Jan 31, 2021



A parent recently complained in a Washington Post op ed that there is “no common-sense explanation”.

The father testifying before Virginia’s Loudon County school board [starts out calmly enough](#). “You should all be fired from your day jobs because if your employers knew that you're more inefficient than the DMV, you would be replaced in a heartbeat,” he says, growing more animated, more pointed. Citing data on the minimal risk associated with in-person learning he tells them, “You're a bunch of cowards hiding behind our children as an excuse to keep our schools closed.”

His anger rises. He's yelling that garbagemen face greater risks than anyone in the school system. Now he is shrieking at the school board members, a face mask insufficient to cover his frustration. "Figure it out! Or get off the podium! Because you know what? There are people like me and a line of other people out there who will gladly take your seat and figure it out!"

The [video has gone viral](#), but it's not the man's angry rant that stuns and lingers. It's the response. There isn't one. The board members don't seem taken aback by the rage-filled, finger-pointing, verbal assault. They sit impassively. After a moment and sounding bored, the school board chair says only that she will give district staff "an opportunity to make sure the podium and microphone have been cleaned." This further enrages the dad. Off mic, you can hear him promising, perhaps threatening, "I'll be back next time! And the next time! Until you *open the freaking schools!*"

Younger readers may not know (and older readers may have forgotten) that the high water mark of the education reform movement in the first years of this century coincided with frustration over teachers' union intransigence, and decades of complacency about the poor performance of American education. The breaking point was slow in coming, but when it came, it drove a wide public consensus in favor of a striking array of reform initiatives, including charter schools, testing and accountability, and various efforts to evaluate teacher quality. The breadth of that consensus gave reform its high water mark of bipartisan support and moral authority. At the apex of its power and prestige, reformers successfully turned public opinion against "The Blob," the money-sucking agglomeration of associations and agencies that reliably placed their own interests ahead of children and families. In the decade since, the ed reform movement [overspent its political capital](#) and wore out its welcome, disrupting schooling in ways that proved unpopular, without the transformative results to justify the upheaval.

Don't look now, but The Blob is back, more self-serving than ever, and creating fertile conditions and new alliances that could galvanize a fresh appetite for school choice. Parent frustration is growing. And the intransigence of teachers unions and districts to resume in-person learning is reaching epic levels—and epic levels of obtuseness.

Teachers unions in Los Angeles and elsewhere have been [shamelessly opportunistic](#), insisting the pandemic requires Medicare for All, wealth taxes, moratoriums on charter schools, an end to voucher programs, and more—unblushing and bad faith demands for programs and policies that have nothing to do with safe reopening of schools.

Chicago teachers are refusing to return to in-person classes and threatening to strike. One [wrote an op-ed](#) complaining that parents who wish to re-open school buildings are "disproportionately white." It was titled, "Are We Going to Let 'Nice White Parents' Kill Black and Brown Families?"

A group of Chicago dance teachers thought the best way to illustrate their safety concerns was by filming interpretive dance video titled, "The Moment We're Safe." The cringe-inducing display was Tweeted approvingly by the Chicago Teachers Union and

mercilessly mocked. “It’s not like we’re asking teachers to storm the beaches at Normandy,” said one of thousands of angry commenters.

The president of the Pasco County (Washington) teachers union claimed [the push to reopen schools](#) for in-person learning is an example of “white supremacy,” and concerns for children who are suicidal without school or sports are “ignorant and another expression of white privilege.”

In a [Washington Post op-ed](#), the parent of three children in the Fairfax County (Virginia) schools complained that there is “no common-sense explanation” for vaccinating teachers if they refuse to return to in-person learning. Worse, those teachers are now demanding that all children be vaccinated, even though no vaccination has been approved for anyone under 14. “The excuses pile up faster than the half-inch of snow that typically shuts down school operations,” he wrote.

As Corey D’Angelis of the Reason Foundation quipped, all of this is “a free advertisement for school choice during School Choice Week.” Indeed, an [Education Next survey](#) finds 60% of private school students are receiving instruction in person; just 18% remotely. By contrast, more than half of students enrolled in district and public charter schools are receiving instruction fully remotely, with fewer than one in four attending school exclusively in person.

“A lot of parents, and a lot of liberal parents have had it,” noted Christine Rosen on the *Commentary* magazine podcast, discussing a CNN interview by Biden Chief of Staff Ron Klain, who defended teachers’ unions that refuse to resume in-person teaching despite studies that have shown a low risk of spreading the coronavirus. “It has people angry. And it’s an interesting coalition of people who are angry.”

In sum, The Blob is giving back every inch of the ground they gained in the past decade and then some, with their refusal to return to work. Parents are still [strongly inclined](#) to love and trust their children’s teachers, and maybe even their teachers’ unions. But the relationship is being tested and estrangement inevitable where it doesn’t include in-person classes. Places like Loudon and Fairfax Counties are majority white and affluent, the most reliably stalwart in their support of public schools. When you lose those parents, the game has changed.

There’s a danger that reformers will misread the moment, too. Recall former ed secretary Arne Duncan’s cocky and [antagonistic remark](#) blaming opposition to Common Core on “white, suburban moms” who all of a sudden discover their kids aren’t as “brilliant as they thought they were and their school isn’t quite as good as they thought they were.” Those are the same parents who are now upset with the failures of their public schools to get their act together. About the last thing I’d do is push for an immediate return to aggressive testing, lest frustrated parents who simply want their kids back in school – any school – be reminded why they soured on reform in the first place.

Bills to allow educational funding to follow the child [have already been introduced](#) in nearly two dozen states. Research conducted recently for one high-profile reform group showed nearly three-fourths of parents would change schools given the financial opportunity to do so. The backlash is here, and it's fearsome. The conditions are ripe for a new and politically diverse and robust school choice coalition, bringing into the school choice camp parents who likely never dreamed they'd be anything but supportive of their local public school.

The late Joseph Overton of the Mackinac Center for Public Policy developed the concept of the "Overton Window" to describe the range of policies politically acceptable to the general public at a given time. Thanks to union intransigence and The Blob's lack of responsiveness, that window is shifting in favor of school choice.

Don't blow it, reformers.

Follow me on [Twitter](#). Check out my [website](#) or some of my other work [here](#).

[Teachers Unions](#)

## The Year Teachers Unions Killed the Goose That Laid the Golden Egg

**The United States was virtually alone in keeping schools closed this fall. As a result, public education—and cities—may never look the same.**

[Matt Welch](#) | 12.29.2020 1:05 PM



(Lev Radin/ZUMAPRESS/Newscom)

I've got a great new business model for ya, kid.

We're going to tell parents of every child between the ages of 5 and 17 that they are required by law to prove that they are regularly—like Monday-through-Friday, eight-months-a-year regularly—consuming a certain category of product. We are further going to *offer* that product for free (on the consumer end, anyway). Operational funding will vary by geography, but will basically be anchored to property taxes, which tend to grow predictably over time. Additional money is routinely provided on a per-customer basis. In

many places, the only entity with access to that funding will be a monopoly. That's where you come in.

You are in charge of the primary purveyors of this product—the employees of the monopoly, or near-monopoly. You run their guild. Your challenge is to make their working conditions maximally favorable, to grow their ranks, and to make sure nothing disrupts that guaranteed revenue stream. Oh, and in many big cities and heavily populated states, your union has among the most political power of any organized bloc, helping to elect and influence the politicians with whom you negotiate working conditions at the monopoly.

You couldn't possibly screw this up, could you? *Could you?*

One of the central paradoxes of monopolies is that they [rarely last](#) in the long run. Eastman Kodak had 96 percent of the American photographic film market in the 1920s, was on the Dow Jones Industrial Average index for 75 years, but by 2012 had filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection. Microsoft had [94 percent](#) of the web browser market share in 2002; now it's [below 5 percent](#). Daily newspapers in the U.S. were [overwhelmingly monopolistic](#) in their cities between 1960 and 2000, fattening up both profit margins and newsroom budgets.

It's usually difficult to appreciate in real time, but the very noncompetitiveness that builds monopolistic fortunes seeds their eventual demise. The phrase "[captive market](#)" is quite apt: Managers start treating clients like prisoners, always extracting maximum value from a consumer base they treat with increasing indifference or even contempt.

Writing about Kodak and other upended behemoths in the [Wall Street Journal](#) back in 2006, William M. Bulkeley observed: "Their business success relied on forcing customers to buy things they didn't want. Photo companies made customers pay for 24 shots in a roll of film to get a handful of good pictures. Music publishers made customers buy full CDs to get a single hit song. Encyclopedia publishers made parents spend thousands of dollars on multiple volumes when all they wanted was to help their kid do one homework paper. The business models required customers to pay for detritus to get the good stuff."

As Nick Gillespie and I wrote on the [occasion](#) of Kodak's bankruptcy, "When given real choice, especially the choice to go elsewhere, consumers will drop even the most beloved of brands for options that enhance their experience and increase their autonomy." But: "No corner of the economy, of cultural life, or even of our personal lives hasn't felt the gale-force winds of this change. Except government."

Which brings us to public education in the COVID-scarred year of 2020. Teachers unions, and the (largely Democratic) politicians they back, have relentlessly limited parental choice in the name of maximizing the autonomy of teachers to opt out of classrooms while still getting paid. [No other country](#) in the industrialized world has closed schools down to this degree.

Public schools in Los Angeles—mild, outdoors-friendly Los Angeles—have been 99 percent shuttered since March, with no opening in sight. What few big cities that have allowed for in-person instruction, such as New York, operate on maddeningly unpredictable hybrid schedules, subject to the [ever-changing whims](#) of a union-feting mayor who "[hates](#)" (typically non-unionized) charter schools, even though they educate 10 percent of the children in his system. The remote learning that tens of millions of kids are suffering through nationally is broadly understood to be a [disaster](#).

The results are as predictable as day following night: Parents are pulling their kids out of public schools.

"The school boards association estimated that [as many as three million students](#)—about 6 percent of the public school population—are not taking classes right now, and that number could grow," the *New York Times* reported in a December 22 [piece](#). "That is potentially a major drain on public school budgets because most states base school funding at least in part on enrollment numbers."

Whoops.

["Public Schools Face Funding 'Death Spiral' as Enrollment Drops,"](#) went the *Times* headline, and you can see why:

The pandemic has already forced schools to fire non-union employees, spending the money instead on remote learning technology, the retrofitting of buildings, testing and surveillance programs, and other coronavirus-related expenses....

States mostly have managed to hold school funding steady during the pandemic, but it is not clear how long that can be sustained, said David Adkins, the executive director and chief executive of the Council of State Governments, which tracks state policy nationally. It will be especially hard if enrollment does not rebound.

"We'll have to see how many of those folks come back home after normalcy can be achieved," Mr. Adkins said. But if the pandemic accelerates an exodus of affluent families from the public school system, he said he feared that the loss of enrollment and political support could trigger a "death spiral," further weakening public schools at a time when poor and disadvantaged students are already lagging.

I can see more than a few libertarians rubbing their hands with glee at the sight of the phrases "public school system" and "death spiral" in such close proximity. Which in this case I prefer to wield as a club against the teachers unions: Did you *really* want to make some of your libertarian enemies happy? Because you totally did.

That does not mean I am happy, at all. To the contrary: I'm furious that public schools have used our money to fail poor kids. It should be a stain on the conscience of everyone who contributed to that terrible outcome.

And the late-breaking reopening noises from American Federation of Teachers President [Randi Weingarten](#), New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, and President-elect [Joe Biden](#)—sentiments that they kept unexpressed until after the electoral defeat of reopening enthusiast and union scapegoat Donald Trump—almost always come as a preamble to the *real ask*.

"[We need a Marshall Plan for our schools](#)," went the headline on a *Washington Post* op-ed co-bylined two weeks ago by the superintendents of the (closed) Los Angeles, (closed) Chicago, and (mostly closed) New York school districts. "And we need it now." And no, the [\\$82 billion](#) in the recently enacted COVID relief omnibus is not nearly enough.

Chances are, they'll get at least one more big bailout from a newly union-friendly White House. Unless the public gears up the same kind of backlash that de Blasio and New York teachers union officials faced from wrathful parents when they [shuttered all public schools](#) in mid-November based on an arbitrarily low community testing rate for the whole city. Do they really want us to reward their bad management? To increase funding while they voluntarily decrease service?

Public schools have, or should have, literally just one job: teaching students. We've known since at least [early July](#), based on observation and data worldwide, that group settings of young kids are disproportionately safe (at least until/unless the newer strains behave differently). Yet in an overabundance of both caution and political muscle, unions and their allies have made America a global outlier in keeping schools shut, driving parents away from the systems, and some cities, in droves.

We have seen previously what happens to school systems and cities alike when swaths of parents flee. It ain't pretty. And in the ultimate of ironies, the same guilds that have such a concentrated amount of power are soon going to find themselves having to explain to the rank and file just why there aren't as many jobs anymore.

We gave them a great business model. And they treated us like captives.

[Opinion](#)

# End Blind Loyalty to Teachers' Unions and Get Kids Back in School | Opinion

[Jason Rantz](#), Host, the Jason Rantz Show

On 2/9/21 at 6:00 AM EST

[Schools](#)

"There's no one who wants to be back in the classroom more than we do," a variety of teachers' union presidents, spokespeople and educators tell the public—while refusing to go back into the classroom despite mountains of data showing it's safe to go back to in-person learning.

Teachers' unions have abused and squandered decades of public goodwill. They get away with it because they think parents will turn a blind eye. Parents should not allow it.

Drama has unfolded across the country for months as undoubtedly progressive politicians—from Chicago's Lori Lightfoot and San Francisco's London Breed to Washington state's Jay Inslee and California governor [Gavin Newsom](#)—call out recalcitrant unions for their unwillingness to follow the science.

Unfortunately, unions feel empowered by their unshakeable ally President [Joe Biden](#).

Biden was quick to kill thousands of union jobs by stopping the Keystone XL pipeline, yet he's unwilling to cross teachers. He's backing unions despite having promised to strictly adhere to science-backed COVID decisions. I'm sure the fact that the unions [donated more to his campaign](#) than to any other 2020 candidate plays no role in Biden's strong public backing.

The Biden administration even claimed, laughably, that [CDC](#) director Dr. Rochelle Walensky was speaking in her "personal capacity" when noting it's safe to return to the classroom without a vaccine. "Personal capacity?" The comments were made at a Coronavirus Task Force briefing with reporters.

The unions' posture is hurting kids. They need to return to the classroom.

For too long, teachers' unions have used parents' goodwill towards educators as a way to negotiate better contracts. And parents have been willing participants. There's little doubt that good teachers offer tremendous value to society, arming young people with the knowledge necessary to live productive lives. Plus, many parents struggle raising one or two kids; they can sympathize with the difficulties of handling an entire classroom.

But parents should always choose the well being of their children over the wishes of a teacher—especially when teachers hold unreasonable positions.

Academically, students are being left behind. Remote learning doesn't work for large numbers of kids who need structured, in-person learning. Without it, too many have failed classes at alarmingly high rates.

More importantly, children and young adults are going through significant mental health challenges. Thanks to the stresses of a pandemic and a year removed from regular connections with their friends, not to mention competitive sports and other activities, youth [suicide rates](#) and [mental health emergencies](#) have surged nationwide. Parents see the crisis first hand and they know a return to school will help.



Dr. Rochelle Walensky, President-elect Joe Biden's pick to head the Centers for Disease Control, speaks during a news conference at the Queen Theater December 08, 2020 in Wilmington, Delaware. With the novel coronavirus pandemic continuing to ravage the country with daily records for infections and deaths, members of Biden's health team said they will make fighting COVID-19 the priority. Chip Somodevilla/Getty

But parents also know better than to replace one crisis with another—sending kids to what could be super-spreader events. Like so many others eager to get life back to normal, parents are doing their research. It's not hard. Experts have been eager to share data showing that school is safe. That's why more parents are finally turning on unions.

The data are so overwhelming, politicians who normally kowtow to the every demand of unions suddenly find themselves growing a backbone and pushing back aggressively.

Teachers' unions are feeling the pressure and getting defensive. In Washington state, where I live, they have employed different strategies to keep remote learning in place. It's growing tiresome.

In Puyallup, south of Seattle, the teachers' union president tried guilt, with ominous declarations that students and teachers would quite literally die if they returned to the classroom.

"Which student and which staff do we want to lose?" she [told](#) a local TV station dramatically.

In the central Washington city of Pasco, the teacher's union president appealed to parental wokeness, arguing the [push to reopen schools is an example of white supremacy](#). He even slammed parents concerned with the mental health of their children.

"[Parents] complain their children are suicidal without school or sports," the union president explained. "As a father, daily surviving the suicide of my son, I find these statements ignorant and another expression of white privilege."

Union goals include jumping the line to get their teachers vaccinated. Washington Education Association president Larry Delaney even [questioned](#) the CDC director's claim that a vaccine isn't necessary before reopening schools. A high school math teacher may know more than the CDC director?

They needn't look to the CDC for guidance. They can turn to a [recent pilot program](#) in Pierce County, Washington, where nearly 10,000 students, staff and even parents took rapid antigen tests as part of three districts' reopening plans. Only 0.2 percent of those tested came back positive and there were no outbreaks.

With these data, demanding that a healthy 33-year-old second grade teacher get a vaccine when we're struggling to reach 80-year-old grandmothers is outrageous. Unions know this; they'll say teachers can wait until it's their turn, which would further delay school reopening by several months.

Pressure on the unions is growing. But it needs to be amplified with the help of parents who feel uncomfortable calling out teachers. They must join the movement. They should ignore that inner voice convincing them that criticism of a union position is somehow an

attack on the profession of teaching itself. It is not. Indeed, many teachers want to return to the classroom.

Pushing teachers to return to the classroom isn't an attack on teachers, but a defense of your child. Defending your son or daughter should be more important than defending a teachers' union.

*Jason Rantz is a frequent guest on Fox News and is the host of the Jason Rantz Show on KTHH Seattle, heard weekday afternoons. You can [subscribe to his podcast here](#) and follow him on Twitter: [@jasonrantz](#).*

# COVID-19 unmasks NEA smoke screen



Student's chairs are stacked on top of desks in an empty classroom at closed Robertson Elementary School, March 16, 2020, in Yakima, Wash. (Amanda Ray/Yakima Herald-Republic)

Washington Times - Monday, July 27, 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed many U.S. vulnerabilities, from dependence on China for health and medical raw material to such major industries as movies, clothing and household items.

Add another — this one made in America: one-size-fits-all public education from 0 months to 12th grade.

As the 2020-21 school year emerges, parents are learning more than a thing or two, including the fact that their tax dollars have been supporting a status quo that failed to prepare faculty and IT experts for teaching and learning outside of traditional classrooms.

The coronavirus, in fact, also has led to school systems uncovering shortages of principals and teachers, bus drivers, janitorial and feeding staff, librarians and administrators.

Substitute teachers are in demand but in short supply, and one major reason is that collective bargaining agreements demand that even substitute teachers be certified. This despite the fact that certification does not guarantee a good or “highly qualified” teacher.

With most public school facilities shut tight since mid-March due to COVID-19, parents — as all U.S. taxpayers — still financially support public education, and the National Education Association claims it does as well. Yet its version of support is biased.

The NEA opposes parental choice, home schooling, private and religious schooling, public charter schools, vouchers and education savings accounts. Indeed, it supports the pre-Brown v. Board of Education practice of ensuring that public education dollars do not follow all students into all of their classrooms.

The NEA also opposes anything that resembles competition.

Question my synopsis?

Sit back and read a July 2 press release that comes straight from the horse’s mouth — that is, Lily Eskelsen Garcia, a sixth-grade teacher and NEA president:

“President Donald Trump has made known his intention to pursue a \$5 billion voucher program in the next COVID-19 relief package. The following statement can be attributed to Lily Eskelsen Garcia, a sixth grade school teacher who serves as president of the 3-million member National Education Association.

“Betsy DeVos unsuccessfully has pushed an agenda to privatize public education by any means necessary since she was confirmed as Secretary of Education, including by using the coronavirus pandemic to funnel funds from public schools to wealthy private schools. Today’s announcement that the Trump administration is pursuing a \$5 billion voucher program in the next COVID-19 relief package is just the latest move in their mission. DeVos celebrated the [U.S.] Supreme Court’s decision this week in *Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue*, in which Trump appointees joined the far-right effort to undermine public schools — one of our country’s most cherished democratic institutions — by removing state constitutional protections against school vouchers. And now DeVos and Trump are asking Congress to fund dollar-for-dollar tax credits for businesses to fund school vouchers, even after these businesses have just received billions of dollars in relief funding. This is a direct assault on our nation’s children.

“It should escape no one’s attention that vouchers all too frequently have been used to further segregation and promote discrimination. The historical origins of vouchers come out of a Virginia county shutting down its public schools and opening white academies to avoid adhering to *Brown v. Board of Education*. That the Trump administration is oblivious to that history is particularly evident given their attempt to wrap their privatization initiative in the rhetoric of civil rights. We, of course, realize that this administration never understands the history of civil rights in America — before or today — but to rehash DeVos’s privatization proposal on the anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and a day after Trump made disparaging comments about a Black Lives Matter sign in New York City is beyond the pale. Their actions are shameless, hurtful and deeply offensive, and Congress should rightly reject their proposal.

“Private schools by their nature are exclusive, and virtually all of them exclude certain students for one reason or another. The vast majority of private schools — both religious and non-religious — require entrance exams or other pre-admissions screening, and they reserve the right to refuse students based on academic ability or disciplinary history, regardless of whether the applicant has a ‘disability.’ Private schools routinely refuse to serve students with disabilities or special needs. Private religious schools, which represent up to 95 percent of voucher enrollment, either refuse to admit students of different religions or grant special admissions privileges to students of the same religion as the school. That’s not to mention how some religious private schools have discriminated against or terrorized LGBTQ students. A recent investigative report by the Huffington Post showed that private schools receiving voucher money were continuing with controversial, debunked and dangerous conversion therapy.

“Students have a civil right to a public education free from discrimination. What the Trump administration is proposing will cause a ripple of long-term residual effects that will be felt by generations. These acts create the conditions that undermine the principles of religious liberty. And DeVos is forcing taxpayers to be complicit in her crusade to fund discrimination through these voucher schemes.”

All that may be true, but it is also a smoke screen, because the coronavirus has exposed the long-hidden problem of America’s one-size-fits-all public education: serious competition.

Parents of public school children aren’t snapping at the Trump administration about funding for school buildings in the next stimulus package. Parents are crying out for funding for more choice for their families — not more smoke screens.

- *Deborah Simmons can be contacted at [dsimmons@washingtontimes.com](mailto:dsimmons@washingtontimes.com).*

[National School Choice Week](#)

# Parents Who Opt Out of Public Schools Don't Deserve Smears From Teachers Unions

**Union leaders shame parents, arguing that equity gaps will widen if parents pull their children out of public schools.**

[Daryl James](#) and [Erica Smith](#) | 1.25.2021 10:00 AM

<https://reason.com/2021/01/25/parents-who-opt-out-of-public-schools-dont-deserve-smears-from-teachers-unions/>



Marta Mac Ban is not a revolutionary. Ashley Ekpo is not disgruntled. And Brooke Hunt does not consider herself better than others. All three women just want the best education possible for their children.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, that has meant taking matters into their own hands. Rather than settling for public school solutions that put students in front of laptops all day, the parents have pulled their kids out of the system and tried alternatives.

The empowerment scares teachers unions, which have a long [history](#) of attacking choice. Normally when parents try homeschooling or other options, union allies brand them as weird or extreme. The newest smear is even uglier.

Parents who bring their children together in small learning groups during the pandemic not only get labeled as eccentric, but also as segregationists guilty of promoting racial division in a nation with an ugly history of "separate but equal."

The National Education Association lays out the talking point in a recent [policy paper](#), and industry insiders have repeated the claim on dozens of [platforms](#). Using loaded terms like "radical" and "unqualified," they have sounded the alarm about a massive parental [revolt](#).

Popular targets include families that have organized themselves into pandemic pods and microschoools—two variations of homeschool co-ops that allow in-person instruction to continue in residential settings while brick-and-mortar classrooms remain closed or restricted.

Union leaders blast the innovation not because it fails, but because it works. They argue that the proliferation of home study groups will widen opportunity gaps and worsen school segregation because well-resourced families will benefit disproportionately. New York University sociologist R. L'Heureux Lewis-McCoy says pod parents engage in "[opportunity hoarding](#)."

Gregory Hutchings, superintendent of Alexandria City Public Schools in Virginia, warned about the [opportunity gaps](#) during a summer meeting with parents. Yet his concern that nobody get ahead during the pandemic applied only to others. Shortly after his lecture, he pulled one of his own children out of the district and enrolled her in a private Catholic school.

The pressure campaign is powerful, but many parents are no longer listening. Rather than worrying about the name-calling, they are reclaiming control.

## 'Room Mom' Opts Out

Marta Mac Ban, an Arizona parent who started home schooling her 6-year-old daughter during the pandemic, says the jolt from COVID-19 is exactly what the school system needed. "The shakeup has reminded district leaders who their customers really are," she says. "If you don't give your customers what they want, they go elsewhere."

She and her husband did that in 2019 when they moved to Cave Creek, a small community north of Phoenix. They liked the local district, so they relocated as a form of

school choice. Then they enrolled their daughter in kindergarten and got involved. Mac Ban volunteered as "room mom," creating classroom decorations and participating in parties. She also stayed active in the parent-teacher organization, compiling and sending monthly newsletters.

Everything went well until March, when classes switched to Zoom. Mac Ban, who tries to limit her daughter's screen time, quickly opted out. "She's not going to sit still for hours at a time staring at a computer," Mac Ban says.

She and her husband previously had considered homeschooling but were unsure if they had sufficient resources to pull it off. "We were already on the fence," Mac Ban says. "COVID was the push." Now she teaches at home, while teaming up with neighbors one day per week in a learning pod.

Despite the switch, Mac Ban does not oppose public schools. She sees many good things in her local district and continues to serve in the parent-teacher organization. What she supports is more choice. "One size does not fit all," she says. "It's ironic that they say, 'No child left behind' because so many kids are left behind when everyone is forced to go just to the one school."

## **Surprised by Success**

Prior to the pandemic, Ashley Ekpo and her husband also relocated to find better schools. They switched from Prince George's County to neighboring Howard County in Maryland. The move extended the work commute for both parents, but they accepted the extra drive time as a sacrifice for their children.

Things went well until the pandemic. The parents initially jumped on board with distance learning through their public school, but soon found themselves overwhelmed with three school-aged children and two younger ones at home. "They were all lined up at the dining room table, and it was basically a nightmare," Ekpo says.

After a few weeks, she noticed a drop in educational quality, so she started researching options. When she and her husband decided to try home schooling, they initially saw it as a temporary solution until they felt comfortable sending their children back to the classroom. Now, the parents aren't sure what they will do in 2021 and beyond. "We're staying open-minded because we're having a really good experience with it," Ekpo says.

## **A Place for Everyone**

Brooke Hunt and her husband like choice so much that they let their older children decide for themselves what they wanted to do during the pandemic. All three opted to remain in public schools, while two younger ones started homeschooling in Mesa, Arizona. "We just made the big, brave decision in August," says Hunt, who has a degree in early childhood education.

Critics complain that home schooling can cut children off from diverse classrooms, but Hunt sees the opposite in the co-op that she runs with two other families. Unlike public schools, which segregate students by age, the home schooling group brings children together at different stages of development. This represents a type of diversity.

Participants in Hunt's group also come from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. "Lack of diversity is never an issue," she explains. Her only regret is that she cannot help more families in her little operation. "I wish I could open my home to everyone where there's a need," Hunt says.

Teachers unions could benefit from the same inclusive mindset. Parents like Mac Ban, Ekpo, and Hunt are not segregationists. They are innovators who should be celebrated, not smeared.

**LETTERS | Opinion** *This piece expresses the views of its author(s), separate from those of this publication.*

## Teachers unions are failing kids

**Doug Wolfe, Poulsbo**

Published 5:42 p.m. PT Mar. 5, 2021

It has become very apparent to me that the NEA, the WEA and Dr. Fauci are attempting to destroy the future of our children's education and mental health. I would include our current president in this group.

"Follow the science" has been the mantra of this new administration, but it appears that phrase is only good when it works to their advantage. In a recent Kitsap Sun opinion section was a column by Scott Jennings, titled "School reopening fiasco: are we really this unserious?" He referred to the damage being done to our children by keeping them locked in their houses. The CDC has said we need to open schools, so why does the POTUS not "follow the science" and push for them to fully open?

What is the problem? The problem is big deep pockets of the NEA and WEA that control the Democratic Party's liberal politicians. They spend untold amounts of money stuffing the Democratic Party pockets. They don't seem to care about following the science on this issue. All they want is to control when, where, how and conditions when they will open schools. Suddenly, they don't care about the damage being done to our children.

They want the vaccine for everyone before schools are open to protect the teachers and the children. Let me ask just one question. How do you think all these other businesses that employ several people and are around several hundred different people day in and day out for the past year made it work? As President Biden says, "Come on man!"

In the future we will be studying the effects on this generation who will have lost 18 months or more of their pre-Covid education process!

*Doug Wolfe, Poulsbo*

# Teachers Unions: Are the Schools Run for Them?

No Simple Reform Will Break the Power of Teachers' Unions

Monday July 1, 1996



Public education is the most expensive "gift" that most Americans will ever receive. Government school systems are increasingly coercive and abusive both of parents and students. Government schools in hundreds of cities, towns, and counties have been effectively taken over by unions, and children are increasingly exploited, thwarted, and stymied for the benefit of organized labor.

Government schools are increasingly run by the unions and for the unions. Former U.S. Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander observed, "After the post office, schools are the most unionized activity in America. [Teachers unions] collect a lot of money in dues, they are often the largest lobby in the state, they are very, very powerful." Teachers unions are especially powerful in inner cities, where teacher pay is often highest and teacher performance is usually the worst. Mario Fantini, in his book *What's Best for Children*, declared, "For many black and Puerto Rican parents, the teachers unions now represent the 'enemy.'" Reverend Jesse Jackson has questioned teachers' "right to strike for more money when the employer—a taxpaying parent—holds tax receipts in one hand and test results in the other that prove he's paying more and more for less and less."

Teacher monopoly-bargaining laws (laws that permit unions to claim to represent and speak for all teachers, and to force school boards to deal with unions) in 34 states cover 67 percent of the nation's teachers. Teachers unions have worked to destroy local control of education, subvert standards, prevent teacher accountability, and deny parents a significant voice in their children's education. Unions have launched strikes to prevent and restrict "parental interference" in public education. Thanks to a strong union, New York school janitors are paid an average of \$57,000 a year, yet are required to mop the schools' floors only three times a year. As a result, New York City public schools are sometimes filthier than New York City streets.

Teachers unions have long been the most powerful force in education at both state and local levels. *Forbes* magazine nicknamed the NEA "The National Extortion Association." An October 11, 1995, *Wall Street Journal* editorial entitled "The Unions' Schools" noted:

The next time you're visiting a state's Capitol building, scan the neighborhood for a nearby building that's as big or bigger. There, in the largest, grandest, best-situated office building you're likely to find one of the most powerful political institutions in the state: the teachers' union.

*The New York Times* noted last year that teachers unions have been "for decades the most conspicuous voice in American education." Teachers unions do not hesitate to use their clout blatantly. The NEA announced a boycott of Florida orange juice after the Florida citrus department advertised on the Rush Limbaugh radio show. As Barbara Phillips reported in the *Wall Street*

*Journal* in January, the local teachers union in Jersey City, New Jersey, threatened a statewide boycott against Pepsi if PepsiCo did not withdraw from its support of Mayor Bret Schundler's school voucher proposal. There is no limit to the brazen demands of some unions: the West Virginia teachers union sparked controversy in February by demanding that teachers be permitted to retire at age 50 with full benefits—even though the teacher pension fund was far in hock.

## Policy Dictators

Teachers unions are increasingly dictating policy to the schools. The NEA has denounced back-to-basics programs as "irrelevant and reactionary." The union is the leading advocate of "no-fault" teaching—whatever happens, don't blame the teacher. The Chicago Tribune concluded in 1988 that the Chicago Teachers Association has "as much control over operations of the public schools as the Chicago Board of Education" and "more control than is available to principals, parents, taxpayers, and voters." The *Tribune* noted that "even curriculum matters, such as the program for teaching children to read, are written into the [union] contract, requiring the board to bring any proposed changes to the bargaining table."

As Richard Mitchell noted in his classic *The Graves of Academe*, the NEA has played a crucial role in mentally debasing American public schools. In 1918 it authored a federal government report known as "Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education." Mitchell summarized the principles:

It is a thematic illusion of our educational enterprise that understanding can be had without knowledge, that the discretion can be informed without information, that judgment need not wait on evidence.... The self-interest of a massive educationists' trade union is evident on every page of Cardinal Principles.... They wanted to be not teachers but preachers, and prophets too, charging themselves with the cure of the soul of democracy and the raising up in the faith of true believers.

In 1971 the NEA issued a "Call to Action" that renewed its commitment to the Cardinal Principles. It declared, "We have overemphasized the intellectual development of students at the expense of other capacities." Thanks to the NEA's success in rewriting school curricula, student knowledge of history has nose-dived, student reading and comprehension have plummeted, and college remedial classes have thrived.

## "Solidarity Forever"

Teachers unions have sometimes blatantly sought to manipulate what children are taught in order to inculcate pro-union attitudes. In the late 1970s the Miami affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers sent out a bulletin urging music teachers to "order music such as 'Solidarity Forever,'" English teachers to "incorporate short stories, novels, poems, and films depicting labor struggles and conflicts," and math teachers to "use labor and management as specific examples in problems." But, of course, the union members were objective in their class discussions.

Teachers unions blatantly exploit their power over school children. In Montgomery County, Maryland, union teachers refused to write letters of recommendations to colleges for students unless the students first wrote to the county council urging an increase in government spending for education (and, naturally, higher salaries for teachers). One high school senior told *The Washington Post*, "The consensus among students seems to be it may be blackmail, but students are going to go along with it anyway."

In California in 1991, teachers required students to write to state legislators demanding more money for education. The tactic backfired because numerous letters contained threats of physical violence against the legislators.

At Wilson High School in Washington, D.C., teachers gave parents a formal notice that they would not write letters of recommendation for students unless parents wrote three letters demanding higher pay for teachers: "Please submit to each teacher from whom your child is requesting a college recommendation your letters to your city council member, the superintendent and your school board member along with three addressed and stamped envelopes." Parents thus had to grovel in front of a teacher-to surrender their right to their own opinion on public education policy-in order for their children to receive consideration from the teachers.

Teachers have stronger legal rights to tax dollars than the taxpayers have to a quality education for their children. School systems face vastly more repercussions from firing an incompetent teacher than from totally neglecting school children. In 1988, the *Chicago Tribune* reported:

All 22 students in Grace Currin's 4th grade class must attend summer school this year because, their principal says, Currin did not teach the children enough to pass to the next grade. Dyanne Dandridge-Alexander, principal at [Chicago's] Spencer Elementary School: "Those children have suffered because they have a totally inept teacher that no one has been able to fire."

A 1992 *Detroit Free Press* investigation entitled "Shielding Bad Teachers" concluded that it takes a school district seven years and costs an average of \$100,000 to fire a single incompetent public school teacher. Seven years is over half of the schooling time of the average pupil. The *Free Press* concluded, "No protections are built in for the state's 1.5 million public school students, who can suffer physical, sexual or educational abuse." The American Association of School Administrators conducted an audit of District of Columbia public schools and concluded that an "astonishingly low" number of teachers receive unsatisfactory ratings and that it is "nearly impossible" to fire bad teachers.

### **Potent Political Power**

Many politicians have claimed that the problems of public education can be resolved by rigorous new teacher evaluation programs. But teachers unions often politically dominate state legislatures, and the legislators protect the teachers against their own incompetence. In 1991 the Louisiana legislature voted to suspend teacher evaluations for one year. That evaluation had originally been introduced as part of a joint package with large pay raises for teachers; after the legislature enacted the pay raises, the teachers unions then launched a successful attack on the evaluation program.

Home schooling is one of the fastest growing triumphs in family rights in the country. Naturally, teachers unions have been fiercely opposed to permitting parents to teach their own children to read and write. Annette Cootes of the Texas State Teachers Association declared that "home schooling is a form of child abuse." The NEA annually passes resolutions calling for a de facto ban on home schooling.

One measure of the coerciveness of the government school monopoly is the percentage of parents who would remove their kids from government schools if they could. If Americans could choose-if they had not already paid for public education through taxes-there would likely be a wholesale exodus from government schools in many cities. A 1992 poll of black residents of Milwaukee revealed that 83 percent favored a voucher system that would allow parents to choose their children's school. A 1991 Gallup poll found that 71 percent of people 18 to 29 favored educational vouchers and 62 percent of people 30 to 39 favored vouchers. The Gallup survey found that "by a 10-to-1 margin, respondents said private schools do a better job of . . . giving students individual attention and maintaining discipline."

Teachers unions and school officials have repeatedly sabotaged parents' efforts to defect from the public school monopoly. In 1992 in California, a coalition sought to put on the state ballot a proposal to provide a \$2,500 state scholarship to children attending private schools. (Since the state of California was then spending over \$6,000 per public school student, taxpayers

would save over \$3,000 for each additional student transferring from public to private schools). Though organizers got almost one million signatures to put the measure on the ballot, the effort was bushwhacked by the California Teachers Association and public school officials. Teachers at El Camino Real Elementary School in Irvine gave students oversized checks stamped with the word "fraud" in their campaign to thwart the measure.

As economist Thomas Sowell noted, "The Los Angeles Unified School District has used its taxpayer provided cable television channel to propagandize against allowing the public to vote in November on an initiative to permit school choice. Los Angeles school board member Julie Korenstein warned that allowing parents to choose between public and private schools would 'end up with bigotry and ultimately with a fascist type of society.'" Del Weber of the California Teachers Association declared, "There are some proposals that are so evil that they should never even be presented to the voters."

Squads of teachers traveled around the state to surround the petitioners and prevent people from signing the petition. Many teachers signed the petitions numerous times knowing that the state government would nullify hundreds of thousands of valid signatures as a penalty against duplicate signatures. Conny McCormack, San Diego's registrar of voters, concluded: "This is an unprecedented case of intentional fraud."

The power of the teachers unions is one of the best reasons to pursue the separation of school and state. There is no simple reform, no fancy political trick that will break the power of the teachers unions over the day-to-day activities of public schools. Given the realities of campaign contributions and organized greed, it will always be easier for teachers unions to exploit the education system for their own benefit than for parents to fight the eternal bureaucratic and political wars necessary to protect their children.

*Alex Newman*

## **The Epoch Times | How Socialists Used Teachers Unions Such as the NEA to Destroy Education**

When examining the hydra that is the collectivist “education” establishment that dominates public schools in the United States, among the most important tentacles have been the teachers’ unions—especially the National Education Association (NEA).

Along with other leading unions, the NEA and its affiliates at the state and local level played a leading role in transforming American education into the dangerous disaster that it has become. The extremism has been getting progressively more extreme for over a century now. But it’s not new by any means.

The destructive role played by the NEA is so serious, and so widely understood, that in 2004, even then-U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige [described](#) the union as a “terrorist organization.” But in reality, the NEA has done far more damage to the United States than a simple terrorist organization ever could.

Consider that terrorists merely kill individuals, even if sometimes in large numbers. But the NEA and its allied unions have helped to practically kill a nation—the greatest, freest nation that ever existed. While terrorists destroy human bodies, the NEA has worked to destroy human minds and human freedoms.

For at least a century, the NEA, founded in 1857 as a professional association, has barely bothered to conceal its leadership’s affinity for communism, collectivism, socialism, humanism, globalism, and other dangerous “isms” that threaten individual liberty. Nor has the union shied away from vitriolic attacks on the United States, the free-market system, Christianity, the family, or educational freedom.

Perhaps the most important exposé ever written on the NEA was the 1984 book “NEA: Trojan Horse in American Education” by Dr. Samuel Blumenfeld. Packed with examples and references, Blumenfeld’s book proved that, contrary to popular mythology, which holds that the NEA’s extremism is a more recent phenomenon, the union’s leaders have been radicalizing teachers against America for a century or more.

[But even before that, it was bad. “From 1857 to the present, the NEA has worshiped two gods: Horace Mann, a statist, and John Dewey, a socialist,”](#) Blumenfeld continued, referring to the two most important figures in the hostile takeover of “education” by government. This series on education has dealt with both of these subversives extensively.

By 1900, the NEA, which was lobbying for federal involvement in education, was largely insignificant. Even though there were an estimated half a million public school teachers in the United States at that time, the NEA had well under 2,500 members. Once the “progressives” took firm control, though, it became a sort of “ministry of education” seeking to dictate and control education policy nationwide.

## **Replacing Liberty With Collectivism**

Once progressives were totally in control of the NEA leadership, a story detailed in Blumenfeld’s book, there was no longer any inhibitions in openly promoting the triumph of collectivism over liberty using the school system.

At the annual NEA meeting in 1934, Willard Givens, who would soon be appointed executive secretary over the union, laid out the agenda.

“Many drastic changes must be made,” Givens declared. “A dying ‘laissez-faire’ must be completely destroyed and all of us, including the ‘owners’, must be subjected to a large degree of social control. ... The major function of the school is the social orientation of the individual. It must seek to give him understanding of the transition to a new social order.”

He also called for nationalization of all sorts of industries, to be operated for the benefit of “the people.”

Of course, socialist and humanist “education reformer” John Dewey had been advocating the emergence of a “new social order,” socialist in orientation, since at least the early years of the 20th century. And in 1932, Dewey, [almost universally regarded as the founding father of America’s public education system](#), became the “honorary life president” of the NEA.

The very next year, Dewey and some of his cohorts would draft and sign the first Humanist Manifesto, a bizarre religious document brazenly rejecting God while shamelessly embracing collectivism and socialism. This totalitarian religion would [eventually be advanced throughout America in de-Christianized public schools](#).

Dewey, who visited the Soviet Union and wrote articles extolling the brutal tyranny’s supposed virtues, was interested in education primarily to promote his totalitarian “ideology” and his pseudo-theology. And even though he was adamant that Christianity must not be taught in schools, he was totally fine with religion—his religion—in the classroom. In fact, he believed it was essential to creating the “new social order.”

“Our schools ... are performing an infinitely significant religious work,” he wrote in his 1907 essay “Religion and Our Schools.” “They are promoting the social unity out of which in the end genuine religious unity must grow. ... [D]ogmatic beliefs ... we see ... disappearing. ... It is the part of men to ... work for the transformation of all practical instrumentalities of education till they are in harmony with these ideas.”

From the 1920s onward, this sort of quack religious, political, and educational nonsense and propaganda from Dewey filled the pages of the “NEA Journal.” Among other ideas, Dewey’s writing in the NEA’s flagship publication, which reached more teachers than any other, constantly extolled the virtues of collectivism and the mass-murdering Soviet system while demonizing the United States and traditional American education.

Dewey was especially warm to the Soviet indoctrination program masquerading as an “education” system, his essays in the NEA Journal and other publications such as the New Republic revealed. And yet, because of clever word games, many Americans remained oblivious to the danger. One of the ways Dewey’s propaganda on behalf of tyranny was so effective was that he deceived readers by using the words “democracy” and “socialism” interchangeably.

Dewey was so wrapped up in Soviet intrigue that, before becoming honorary president of the NEA, he served as vice president and one of the original directors of the American Society for Cultural Relations with Russia. This Soviet dictatorship-created organization in the United States founded in 1927 was primarily involved in sending students, professors, and teachers to the Soviet Union for communist indoctrination, and bringing Soviet “experts” to the United States to train American educators.

Unsurprisingly, the NEA was always willing and eager to work with “unions” in slave states of Eastern Europe and Latin America, including the phony unions created by the Soviet regime. That was despite harsh criticism from Soviet dissidents and even the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), another major teachers’ union that differed in important ways from the NEA.

The most frequent writer in the NEA Journal throughout the 1930s and 1940s was socialist Stuart Chase. “It is no longer a question of collectivism versus individualism, but of what kind of collectivism,” Chase wrote in the NEA’s official propaganda organ after calling for the U.S. government to takeover agriculture, banking, credit, and more.

In a 1956 interview with the Los Angeles Tidings, former teacher and Communist Party defector Bella Dodd dropped a bombshell. “The Communist party whenever possible wanted to use the Teacher’s Union for political purposes,” she said, adding that the communists in the union were all in favor of Dewey-inspired “progressive” education. “Most of the programs we advocated, the NEA followed the next year or so.”

## **Taking Collectivism Global**

In addition to spreading its collectivist poison in the minds of children across the United States through public schools, the NEA also waged an effective campaign to spread the indoctrination system worldwide. Indeed, the union was among the first organizations to openly promote the idea of a global “board of education” to control every school on the planet.

As far back as 1920, the NEA created its so-called “International Relations Committee.” The ostensible purpose was to help build “world understanding.” But the real agenda soon became crystal clear to anyone who was paying attention.

Responding to the formation of a formal U.S. government alliance with the ruthless Communist Party dictatorship enslaving the Soviet Union, NEA Journal chief J. Elmer Morgan wrote an editorial for the publication called “The United Peoples of the World.”

Among other demands, supposedly to “keep the peace and insure justice and opportunity,” Morgan said “we need certain world agencies of administration.” Those planetary governing agencies should include a global “police force” and a world “board of education,” Morgan opined.

To bring about that global “board of education,” the NEA set up the “War and Peace Fund” to collect donations in 1943. Similar schemes took place in Europe among the education establishment. Eventually, these efforts culminated in the creation of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1946, an organization that will be addressed in an upcoming article in this series.

In a 1946 editorial in the NEA Journal headlined “The Teacher and World Government,” Morgan was again shilling for global government, and again advocating that these subversive ideologies be forced on captive school children through indoctrination.

“In the struggle to establish an adequate world government, the teacher has many parts to play,” Morgan wrote, calling on teachers to “prepare the hearts and minds of children” for the looming global collectivist regime. “At the very top of all the agencies which will assure the coming of world government must stand the school, the teacher, and the organized profession.”

Later that same year, Morgan boasted of the “achievements” toward world government that the “organized teaching profession” had already made. And to this day, the NEA continues to play a key role in the ongoing globalization and internationalization of progressive indoctrination posing as an educational system

## **More Federal Power, War on Competition**

Even before it was peddling the idea of a global education system to bring about global government, the NEA led the battle to get the federal government involved in education—and then to constantly expand that power under whatever pretext might be effective. Indeed, from the very beginning, the NEA worked to empower Washington,

D.C., over the nation's schools, in clear violation of the U.S. Constitution and its 10th Amendment.

Over a century ago, the NEA also began lobbying Congress for federal funding of education. NEA bosses knew that with federal aid comes federal control. They finally succeeded in 1965 with the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. From there, the next stop was the creation of a cabinet-level Department of Education, an NEA wish that President Jimmy Carter granted the union in exchange for its critical support.

NEA bosses often get their way in government, even if it takes a while. That is because the NEA has been a well-oiled lobbying machine for decades. For one, by collecting dues from millions of members, the NEA and its state affiliates are able to pour endless resources into the campaign coffers of politicians. And by prodding its members to vote a certain way, write letters, and even protest, it can keep the politicians it gets elected in line indefinitely.

With almost 3 million members today, the NEA is the largest labor union in the United States. It has pumped well over \$100 million into federal political campaigns since the early 1990s alone. And data from the Center for Responsive Politics show that over 97 percent of that money went to Democrats. The tiny donations to Republicans virtually all went to the most liberal among them. Similar trends exist at the state and local level among NEA affiliates.

Today, the NEA is still trying to quash competition, seeking onerous restrictions on private schools and even waging a war on [homeschooling](#) families. In 1988 and the years following (amended in 2006 to the current version), the NEA adopted a resolution that formalized its hatred of families operating outside the government system.

“The National Education Association believes that home schooling programs based on parental choice cannot provide the student with a comprehensive education experience,” the union [declared](#).

Of course, not all of the millions of NEA members agree with the totalitarian ideologies and ideas peddled by the union's leadership. But until recently, at least, in many states, they were required to be members, forced to fund political campaigns and extremist views that they may have vehemently disagreed with. Thankfully, California teacher Rebecca Friedrichs sued and won, ending compulsory union dues. But many teachers still do not realize they do not have to fund the extremism of the NEA and its affiliates.

There may be more bad news yet to come for the NEA, which is becoming increasingly radical with every year that passes. This writer has it on good authority that some significant scandals involving NEA leadership may be revealed in the months ahead.

Either way, an objective look at the history of these tentacles on the education-establishment hydra reveals a monster that is interested in gaining power and smashing

freedom—not educating children. It’s time for teachers, parents, and the taxpayers who fund it to speak out loudly.