What to Do About Our Education Policy Problems in the United States

Get yourself informed.

* Read Patrick O’Donnell’s great coverage in the *Plain Dealer*. You can just google Patrick O’Donnell, *Plain Dealer* to find pieces that may not be published on the days that the *Plain Dealer* no longer delivers.
* Look up Lyndsey Layton or Emma Brown in the *Washington Post*.
* Check out some of the blogs. It is easy to google them. Diane Ravitch’s Blog. Valerie Strauss’s *The Answer Sheet*. My own blog is <http://janresseger.wordpress.com>. You can also just google janresseger.
* Read some of the excellent books: *Our Kids* by Robert Putnam or *Reign of Error* by Diane Ravitch, or *Why School?* by Mike Rose.

Bring the issue of public education back into the political conversation. Ask candidates for state and federal office pointed questions about their policies regarding the public schools. Be blunt. Even a yes/no question can be helpful: “I support improving the public schools, not privatization and charters. Do you?”

* Notice that public policy around public education is not being discussed as part of the political campaigns. Make sure you raise the issues with your elected officials.
* Recognize the danger of one-party Republican government, government without checks and balances. Twenty-four states have one-party Republican government today including Ohio.
* Judge candidates for office by their ideas about important issues not by their performance, their personality, their celebrity.

Remember that public schools are the quintessential institution of the 99 Percent, but education policy is too often these days being bought by the wealthiest citizens and by mega-philanthropy.

* Check out coverage of efforts to block the regulation of Ohio’s online charter schools, the political contributions of William Lager and David Brennan. <https://janresseger.wordpress.com/tag/william-lager/>
* Read Joanne Barkan’s piece Got Dough? <https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/got-dough-how-billionaires-rule-our-schools> or a more recent piece <https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/plutocrats-at-work-how-big-philanthropy-undermines-democracy> .

If we are to become a just society:

* We must develop the political will to address poverty.
* We must find a way to recognize and address growing segregation by economics and isolation of the poor and the rich.
* We must also insist that our elected officials address the crisis in public funding of many of the services our society has traditionally believed we need to support—including public education. This will likely involve paying more taxes.
* We will also have to persist in confronting rampant privatization that just keeps popping up again and again and again from state to state, and in federal policies from the U.S. Department of Education.
* Addressing our children’s needs will involve ongoing work to bring public support back to improving public schools, where we must insist that all children are provided the opportunity to learn.

Insist on framing your thinking about public education on opportunity gaps, the disparities in society’s investment in the education of rich and poor children, and not on achievement gaps which derive from opportunity gaps. All children should have the following opportunities to learn:

* a quality early childhood education
* highly qualified teachers
* a curriculum that will prepare students for college, work and community
* equitably distributed instructional resources that include school funding, adequate libraries, computers, enough counselors to assist with college placement, and small classes.

Jan Resseger’s blog may be found at http://janresseger@wordpress.com