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Sometimes The Facts Aren't Fair

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The NJEA Repeatedly Proves They'd Rather Ignore The Reality Facing New Jersey Children Trapped In Failing Schools Than Fix The Problem.

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The NJEA's "Facts"

Barbara Keshishian Called The Achievement Gap A "Classic Straw Man." "The Christie administration's primary rationale for education reform – the so-called 'achievement gap' between white and black students in the state's urban districts – is 'a classic straw man,' NJEA President Barbara Keshishian said today." (New Jersey Education Association, "Christie's 'Straw Man' For Reform," Press Release, 12/1/11)

Vincent Giordano Claims Poor Families In Failing Schools "Have Exactly The Same Options" To Move Their Children To Better Schools As Well Off Families. Question: "People who are well off have options. Somebody who is not well off and whose child is in a failing school, why shouldn't that person, those parents have the same options to be able to get the kid out of a failing school and into one that works with the help of the state?" Giordano: "Those parents should

have exactly the same options, and they do. We don't say you can't take your kid out of the public school. We would argue not and we would say, 'Let's work more closely and more harmoniously.'" (NJTV's "New Jersey Capitol Report," 2/6/12)

The Real Facts

The Achievement Gap Does Exist. The results of the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK) and the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) for the 2010-11 school year show that while overall performance continued to hold steady or improve slightly in nearly all grades and subjects, a persistent achievement gap remains for economically disadvantaged, African American, and Hispanic students. (Press Release, "2010-11 NJ ASK AND HSPA Overall School Performance Assessments Show Slight Improvement," New Jersey Department of Education, 2/1/12)

New Jersey Has The Second Highest Achievement Gap In The Nation. "But as the disaggregation of data required by No Child Left Behind demonstrates, high levels of overall achievement do not mean that every subgroup and every student is succeeding equally. In fact, there is only one state that has a higher gap between the proficiency levels of low- and high-income students in 8th grade reading – Alaska." (Press Release, "Acting Commissioner Chris Cerf released the following statement today on the NJEA and the achievement gap," New Jersey Department of Education, 2/9/12)

The Achievement Gap Is Consistent Among Low-Income, African American and Hispanic Student Across The Board. "Every reliable data point that the state has – across all testing programs, grade levels, and subject areas – demonstrates a consistent and persistent achievement gap where low-income, African American, and Hispanic students score at much lower levels than their peers. Even the research conducted by NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress) in 2007 and 2009 specific to the study of achievement gaps shows that New Jersey's gap is large, statistically significant, and, despite our otherwise high performance, not narrowing sufficiently since NAEP began allowing testing accommodations." (Press Release, "Acting Commissioner Chris Cerf released the following statement today on the NJEA and the achievement gap," New Jersey Department of Education, 2/9/12)

There are over 100,000 children trapped in 200 chronically failing schools across New Jersey and those students will be paying for their failed education for the rest of their lives.

According to a recent study by Harvard and Columbia Universities, the quality of a student's teacher has a "wide-ranging, lasting positive effect on their students' lives." Elementary- and middle-school teachers who help raise their students' standardized-test scores seem to have a wide-ranging, lasting positive effect on those students' lives beyond academics, including lower teenage-pregnancy rates and greater college matriculation and adult earnings, according to a new study that tracked 2.5 million students over 20 years. (Annie Lowrey, "Big Study Links Good Teachers to Lasting Gain," NY Times, 1/6/12)

- Teacher quality is even “more important than people think.” “Everybody believes that teacher quality is very, very important,” says Eric A. Hanushek, a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford and longtime researcher of education policy. “What this paper and other work has shown is that it’s probably more important than people think. That the variations or differences between really good and really bad teachers have lifelong impacts on children.” (Annie Lowrey, “Big Study Links Good Teachers to Lasting Gain,” NY Times, 1/6/12)
- The effect of a good teacher increases the likelihood of a student attending college and earning more income over a lifetime. “The average effect of one teacher on a single student is modest. All else equal, a student with one excellent teacher for one year between fourth and eighth grade would gain \$4,600 in lifetime income, compared to a student of similar demographics who has an average teacher. The student with the excellent teacher would also be 0.5 percent more likely to attend college.” (Annie Lowrey, “Big Study Links Good Teachers to Lasting Gain,” NY Times, 1/6/12)

Top teachers have a lasting effect on their students’ lives. “After identifying excellent, average and poor teachers, the economists then set out to look at their students over the long term, analyzing information on earnings, college matriculation rates, the age they had children, and where they ended up living. The results were striking. ...But the broader view showed that the students still benefit for years to come. Students with top teachers are less likely to become pregnant as teenagers, more likely to enroll in college, and more likely to earn more money as adults, the study found.” (Annie Lowrey, “Big Study Links Good Teachers to Lasting Gain,” NY Times, 1/6/12)

Still Not Convinced? Consider this...

- If you are a student at Pyne Point Family School in Camden, your likelihood of being proficient or advanced proficient in Language Arts Literacy is only 17.6%. Statewide, that figure is 73.7%. For mathematics at Pyne Point, that figure is 10.3% vs. 69.7% statewide. (2010 NCLB Report on Adequate Yearly Progress, New Jersey Department of Education)
- On average, a college graduate will earn \$1 million more than a high school graduate over a lifetime. (Report, “Education and Synthetic Work-Life Earnings Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau)
- What’s even more daunting is that male high school dropouts are 47 percent more likely to be incarcerated in their lifetime than a college graduate. (Report, “The Consequences of Dropping Out of High School,” Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University, October 2009)

How is that fair?

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