

Ending the Department of Education Is Only the Beginning

By Roger L Simon

Randi Weingarten, the president of the American Federation of Teachers, had a [meltdown](#) on MSNBC's The Beat over the demise of the Department of Education for which President Trump advocated during his campaign.

The department's total budget for 2024 was \$268 billion. DOGE notwithstanding, this a significant hunk of change to eliminate even in our dizzying era. Add to that another \$80 billion, plus or minus, for their "discretionary spending."



Ms. Weingarten was, in her own words, "spitting mad about this!" After all "it's hurting the people who can't vote. Children can't vote."

True enough, but the union prez might have saved her spittle for a dose of reality. The U. S. spends the second most in the world to tiny (and very rich) Luxembourg per public school student K-12 at [\\$17,277](#), rising every year. New York and the District of Columbia are pushing \$30K per annum with New Jersey and Connecticut not far behind.

But, according to the World Population Review, the U. S. ranks a mediocre [31st](#) in actual education achievement and is headed the wrong way. We do particularly badly in math, more than arguably the key to technological and personal advancement in modern times.

You don't have to be a data nerd to see the immense discrepancy. China ranks 13th. South Korea in this study is number one followed by Denmark. (Trump should hope the citizens of Greenland don't notice that one.)

In any case, it can be said that rather than getting the bang for our bucks from the Department of Education we have been getting banged by our bucks.

Teacher's Unions haven't helped either. We have heard endlessly that if we only paid teachers more they would teach better. That is wrong for so many reasons it could be the subject of a book, but at base it is extremely insulting to teachers and their values.

Although they certainly should have pensions and health care, teachers in public schools should not be unionized in the first place. Public service unions in general engender inherently unfair collective bargaining since the union is negotiating with politicians, almost all of whom, unlike business owners, have little skin in the game. The support of the union leaders in the next election is more valuable to the pols than defending the interests of taxpayers disconnected from the process.

Whatever the problem, it's going to be a difficult road getting close to a level of educational achievement that matches the spending. Here are just a few K-12 suggestions:

Encourage homeschooling and do not over-regulate it. Reason: it's (mostly) free. Bigger reason: it works. "The home-educated typically score 15 to 25 percentile points above

public-school students on standardized academic achievement tests (Rey, 2010, 2015, 2017: Ray & Hoelzle, 2024)” With those stats, our home-schooled students probably rank up there with the best in the world.

No masks of any sort in school, with a signed doctor’s note as an exception only in extreme cases. Otherwise stay home. (This goes for colleges and universities too, as we have seen too clearly of late. It probably should also apply to all public spaces as it does now in [Switzerland](#).)

Seriously cut back on Adderall, Ritalin and similar ADHD treatments. We are excessively drugging our children, quite likely including with anti-depressants that are ubiquitous. This should be investigated. Abandon medications that do more harm than good. That’s most of them.

No cellphones or similar devices in school (It should go without saying.)

Eliminate what’s left of DEI and woke. Forget equity; it doesn’t exist. Teach meritocracy. (Again, this should go without saying.)

Give teachers authority and encourage them to take it.. Discipline is good for students. Lax discipline destroys their lives. But never use violence on a child (or a dog).

Vastly cut back on administrations and invite educated citizens from the working world who are not “licensed” teachers to offer their services. Their professional experiences can be a boon to students and inspire them for the future. .

Most importantly, abandon all textbooks that teach leftism, overt and covert. They are still by far the majority of school books at this moment. It will be hard to find good ones. They must be written and/or brought back from the sometimes distant past.

Also the teachers, most of whom are unconscious victims of the Marxist "[long march through the institutions](#)," trained to teach with those leftist textbooks and their included lesson plans, must somehow be reeducated—a mammoth task. .

Offer classes in the trades early and often. Make it fine and honorable to choose to go to trade schools instead of college after graduating.

Give school boards to parents exclusively at younger grades. No age inappropriate sex education.

Have armed guards in schools. Train teachers who are willing.

This is all pretty top of the head and subject to revision, but it's not hard to see we have a long way to go that will not be solved just by returning education to the states. That's long overdue and necessary but hardly sufficient. I live in a red state that supposedly has good education but see problems all around me.

It used to be that our colleges and universities were so good they could overcome this K-12 deficit. That is even more from a bygone era. And it's not just Ivy League schools like Columbia and Harvard; it's all over the country in a self-replicating process.. With few, but laudable, exceptions, higher education has turned into a propaganda mill.

First published in [American Refugees](#)