
Waiting for Superman: American Public School System with Shortcomings and Daily Struggles

“Waiting for Superman” isn’t about a hero coming to the rescue and saving everybody, but an eye-opening documentary of the shortcomings of the American public school system and the struggles in the lives of the students and their families. The movie has many claims such as how the American education system was once the best in the world. They also revealed that we’ve doubled our national investment per child in education and our scores have remained flat. The system produces students in every state that have almost no proficiency in reading and math. In every state the proficiency rates hover between twenty and thirty percent. Then there are dropout factories, which is what they call a school where more than two thirds of the student body fails to graduate High School. The dropout rates in poor areas are so severe that we’re producing generations of unemployable people, who have one of the world’s highest rates of incarceration. As well as creating our own skills gap. This is leading to more job creations overseas. The thing that interested me the most was the teachers’ union.

Teachers unions have created a system by which it is nearly impossible to fire poorly performing teachers. Having teachers unions that are so out-of-date has led us to having public school systems where the best teachers are paid the same as the worst ones. The teachers union guarantees two things average pay and tenure. This means that all teachers are treated equally and the teachers that go way beyond the call of duty earn the same as one who sits reading the newspaper all day. This was shown in the movie where some of the teachers were caught on hidden cameras and the principals were unable to fire them due to tenure. In the film they mention statistics that show about one out of a hundred medical doctors lose their license, one out of two hundred lawyers lose their license to practice law but only one out of two thousand five hundred teachers ever loses their ability to teach to children. Studies have shown that with lower performing teachers only about fifty percent of students learn something.

Although, impossible to fire a teacher the way schools handle the situation is far worse. What caught my attention was the dance of lemons. The dance of lemons is a major fault within the public education. This dance consists of the principals basically passing around their teachers to other schools and hoping that they receive a teacher that is better than what they originally had. I feel that that this is unfair to the students.

The solution that the film maker came up with was to create a school in lower-income neighborhoods. The film highlights a nationwide school system called KIPP Schools. They have been around for about sixteen years now and have graduation rates above ninety percent. This was great and all but the thing that I felt made them a success was the fact that they are a non-union charter schools that reward teachers based on performance. This is the way that all schools should be. There should be a union, yet the way things are run should change. If the union was to be run like the KIPP School we would defiantly see the difference. Tenure should still be available but to those who have shown outstanding work habits. This would make it so that teachers would not feel so protected and slack off.

The world has globalized and there are now many countries around the world competing for the jobs of the future. Dropout rates across America are outrageous. In the next twenty to thirty years

if this problem is not fixed it will become even more severe. Pouring more money into the system isn't helping because the system is broken. In order to save our children education we will need to start from the union at the top then making our way down to each student.

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