

## Reference

Haberman, M. (2007). Who Benefits From Failing Urban Schools? An Essay. *Theory Into Practice*, 46(3), 179-186. doi:10.1080/00405840701401796

While reading the final two chapters in *Best Practice*, the seemingly unsurmountable challenges schools face while attempting to implement Best Practices become a real, tangible issue. So much of the thought-provoking, inspiring language of the first sections of this text come crashing down in a cascade of reality. How can one expect to change a school or its climate? Surely, as the book states, administrators play a large part in evoking change within a school. The support that administrator receives from change-driven, motivated staff is paramount. But how can one administrator compete with all of the challenges that exist? An essay published in *Theory Into Practice* put the hardships that school administrators of urban schools face into succinct perspective. As hard as it is so accept, plenty of people benefit if urban public schools fail. Mr. Haberman presents an organized list of who these entities are, and he also supplements these with his predictions for the future.

Mr. Haberman introduces the word “miseducation” in the opening of his piece, which I find to be a perfect descriptor for the process through which urban children progress in public school. They are “educated” in the passive sense, and certainly “miseducated” for all intents and purposes. Haberman states that “Miseducation is... a sentence of death carried out daily over a lifetime.” He questions why a society as advanced and civilized such as the United States would place so little value on the lives of young urban children. He answers this query with a staggering list of all the organizations, businesses, and people who win when urban schools fail. It is a sobering index, yet one that makes perfect sense.

In his list, Haberman outlines sixteen different entities that fare better when urban children do not learn, therefore making their jobs and existence more valuable. Some of the entities on the list are ones that I would have expected upon reading the title of the essay: Employees of Central Offices, those serving special needs students, transportation systems and employees, and professional organizations/unions. However, I was intrigued to learn that students and parents of non-urban schools benefit, because urban students provide a “built-in bottom half for measure of success for college admission”. Test manufacturers also win if urban schools fail. As is common knowledge, government loves to throw more money at something that isn’t working, even if money is proven not to fix the problem. The Media also win if urban schools fail. Failing schools are bad news, and bad news is always a good story.

In the second half of the article, Haberman outlines his predictions for the future. Although pessimistic in nature, they provide a logical, realistic view of our culture and its seeming unwillingness to ensure the success of urban students. A great majority of his nineteen predictions are negative, most importantly the predictions that urban teachers will only stay on the job for five years before burnout, and that research based practices will still be largely ignored by teachers in urban schools of the future.

The views expressed in this article make perfect sense. The challenges that schools face when trying to implement and assess Best Practices are seemingly unsurmountable. How can a school survive, when so many are influenced positively by its failure to thrive? I am intrigued by the notion that 80% of american taxpayers do not have a child in public schools. That alone should adequately explain why urban children are often the forgotten set. However, I think that Haberman’s list could also transcend into many of the classroom scenarios we read about in the

first sections of the text. As uncomfortable as it is to think that people thrive when a school district fails, it is an essential motivator to examine, because it is one of the most compelling reasons why public education is resistant to even the smallest amounts of change.