

The Passy Press

Letter to the Editor

From: Sheila.rauch@undisclosed.com

To: Nick Gardiner enpg@thepassypress.com

Date: September 27, 2014 1:05PM EST

Subject: My comments re: John MacMurray's Essay on US Education

Dear Sir,

I read with interest John's piece on education reform.

There's a charter school near me in Newburgh that I have toured and that I've been asked to support. It's a really impressive effort to give disadvantaged kids -- all boys in this case -- a shot at success in school. While it impresses me, it makes me unhappy. The boys have been hand picked. The resources are far greater than anything available to a public school in Newburgh. Many of the teachers volunteer their time with the boys and even with the parents. I try to make myself think that it's better to save a few kids than to have them all sink, but I can't wrap my head around how to universalize this experience. And without that, I can't get behind it. I have to say I come out thinking that it's great that it does what it does, but it shouldn't get a cent of public money unless somehow it were a lab for future efforts in the public schools. So let there be charter schools, but don't allow them to take money from the public schools.

I'm with John in his support of the Common Core. I don't believe the states can be counted on to develop good public school standards, and I think a national standard is essential. However, I think the implementation -- at least in New York state -- is abysmal. I don't know how to fix that, but I feel sure it could be done. One way, certainly, would be to let the teachers in on how best to implement. I can't think why that wasn't done.

Finally, when John states that Milton Friedman had it right when he said you can't count on government monopoly to best free market competition, my reaction is, "when was Milton Friedman right about anything?" Schools -- like prison systems -- are a place where capitalists looking for a good return should not prevail.

I felt compelled to give you a comment or two, and I apologize if you're looking for more scholarly and more thoughtful responses. However, I thank you for sending John's piece. I forgot to say that I'm 100% behind the national service idea.

Sheila Rauch

Sheila P Rauch graduated from Columbia General Studies after two years at the University of Pennsylvania. She's an artist and has worked for nonprofits involved in social services and theater. She's the mother of two boys and lives with her husband in the Hudson Valley.