

Last week, I spoke on Action Plan 3.0 and highlighted 5 areas I hoped could be modified. I wish to revisit two of those areas: the turning over of public schools to private, corporate interests labeled as “turnaround” and its sister companion, high-stakes testing.

The prevailing method of purported reform is the corporate, privatizing of schools labeled as failing based on the results of high stakes standardized tests. However, the entire language of this process is one of ideological camouflage.

Last week, Dr. Hite, you responded to the school turnaround part of my comments by saying you – the district – would not allow children to remain in failing schools. Who could argue that they **want** children to remain in failing schools?

Historically, our district operates at an economic disadvantage. In these recent years, we have been out and out starved. This lack of resources is perpetrated on a population living in deep poverty. So, in this plan, we once again fail to acknowledge the circumstances of deep poverty; we then have those children living in deep poverty attend schools starved of resources; we follow that up with ever-ramped up high-stakes testing so as to officially label their schools failing; this then gives the district the right to hand over those schools to corporate, private entities; which in turn starves our public system even further creating a larger and larger chasm of haves and have nots.

There is no startling evidence that corporate, private take-overs of schools provides a silver bullet of success. Quite the contrary, even those schools with higher test scores are at most only modestly higher and often with accompanying serious questions of equity in judging apples to apples.

So rather than state in your plan....corporate, privatization of our schools is the desired model, the plan camouflages the actual intent by obscuring the truth.

I will say again, the district in partnership with the PFT, can make inroads and improvements in our schools. But, to pretend that the School District of Philadelphia can solve the problems of deep poverty when our governmental bodies abdicate this mission is to camouflage your true intent. This administration is on a mission – not to provide an equitable education for all children but rather to enrich some private interests, further create a two-tiered educational system and destroy a cornerstone of our democracy....equitable, public education for all.

Can you please tell me, who has a seat at the table in deciding that turning our schools over (under any label) to an outside entity is a solution that we want in our district’s action plan? How can voices that differ on this solution be included at the table?