

Noteworthy Confirmation of Persistent Futility

John Merrifield
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We have another high level confirmation that we have not addressed the roots of the K-12 low performance problem. Whether the roots of the low performance problem differ from my diagnosis, or not, we have definitely not addressed them with the decades-long, expensive frenzy of activity, nationally, or in any state. Nevada may have begun to do so with an Education Savings Account law that will reduce government spending while increasing the per pupil funding of Nevada's traditional public schools. Former impressive Houston ISD superintendent, and Secretary of Education, Rod Paige, said that, "despite massive new education policies from previous legislative sessions, and after decades of effort, tons of money, and volumes of educational punditry and political debate, we are left with relatively little to show for considerable effort." That persistent inattention to the 'roots' includes the four years he was Secretary of Education under a supportive president in a 'do something' environment; in 2001-2004, right after both presidential candidates had declared school system improvement their top priority. Secretary Paige argues for better integration of education practice and education policy-making. Sure, let's keep pushing on that, but it seems like another case of hope likely not triumphing over experience. The practice-policy disconnect is one of the failure symptoms that arise when policymakers, with incentives not well-aligned with the public interest, confront the incredible complexity and inadequate information of the central planning process. We will not avoid it until we abandon central planning in favor of de-centralized planning through price signals. Inability to implement policy, and failure to notably involve education practitioners in the policymaking process, is another sign that the current system needs transformational change.