



The Inconvenient Truth Behind Waiting For Superman

HOUSE PARTY and SCREENING GUIDE

A Grassroots Education Movement
and Real Reform Studios Production

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THE INCONVEINENT TRUTH BEHIND WAITING FOR “SUPERMAN”

On behalf of GEM and all public school students in-our country we want to thank you for hosting a showing of our film. You are part of a movement motivating people across the USA to take action to help save our nation’s public education system from the corporate reform movement that seeks to privatize our schools. It is our hope that viewing our film will start a vibrant discussion on the state of education in your community and will motivate you and others to take action to defend our schools. We must allow the voices of our parents, students and educators to be heard as we fight for excellent public education for all of our children. Access to a high quality public education is not something that should be won in a lottery—it is a most basic human and civil right.



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Some Inconvenient Truths Behind Waiting for "Superman":

The business model will improve education.

The Inconvenient Truth: Free market business principles have taken center stage in our country's education reform debate. Increasingly, our nation's school districts are run, not by educators, but by lawyers and corporate executives who push accountability and competition as the way to improve education. In a competitive business system, the real needs and voices of students and educators are ignored or minimized. Instead, the focus turns to cost containment and profit. Finland's education system, which is ironically touted in *Waiting for "Superman"*, does not follow this model. In Finland, class sizes are low, teacher experience is highly valued, the students are not measured by high-stakes standardized tests, and most importantly, parents, teachers and students have a voice.

Charter schools are a silver bullet.

The Inconvenient Truth: Charter schools are not public schools. They are defined as "education corporations," and operate with little or no oversight. Charter schools hold lotteries for enrollment, but have the ability to counsel out students. They drastically under serve children with special needs, children who receive ELL services, children who are homeless or in foster care, and children who receive reduced and free lunch. In addition, charter schools tend to have disproportionately high student and teacher attrition rates. According to a study conducted by Stanford University, only one in five charters are more successful than their public counterparts. Charter schools are not outperforming our public schools.

Teachers and their unions are the problem.

The Inconvenient Truth: Teachers and their unions advocate for children and their families and for better conditions in our public schools. Tenure and seniority rights are currently under attack, however they are nothing more than due process protections that all workers should have. Without these rights, teachers could not advocate for their students. While *Waiting for "Superman"* claimed teachers and their unions are to blame for our country's educational challenges, the film also held up Finland's system as a model. Yet, in Finland, 98% of the teaching force is unionized. Educators in Finland are treated as professionals and are included in the decision-making process.

Poverty doesn't matter.

The Inconvenient Truth: Poverty is not an excuse; it is a reality. No matter how extraordinary an educator is, without necessary supports such as parent involvement and community and health services, the effects of poverty will have a negative impact on student achievement. Well over 20% of our nation's children currently live in poverty. Instead of attacking educators and ignoring the needs of our children, we should be working to reduce poverty and correct the policies that reinforce it. Ignoring the effects of poverty and blaming teachers is a convenient way of doing nothing at all.



Real Reform:



Our public schools are indeed in need of reform, but those in the current education reform spotlight are taking our schools in the wrong direction. The remedy for poor public schools is better public schools, not selective private schools (charters) and a frontal assault on teachers' unions. There are many factors that led to the current state of our nation's education system and there are many ways to help put our schools back on track.

We do not claim to have all of the answers, but we believe in the 10 Real Reforms listed below. The real reforms that can create high quality schools for all children may look different in each community, and it will take ongoing actions, commitment and dedication to foster the kind of change we need to see. But, with your help, it can be done. Watch our film and decide what YOU can do!

Real Reform: Transforming Public Education, School Governance, and Teacher Unions

Real Reform #1: Small Class Sizes

Real Reform #2: Excellent Community Public Schools for ALL Children

Real Reform #3: More Teaching – Less Testing

Real Reform #4: Parent and Teacher Empowerment and Leadership

Real Reform #5: Equitable Funding for ALL Schools

Real Reform #6: Anti-Racist Education Policies

Real Reform #7: Culturally Relevant Curriculum

Real Reform #8: Expand Pre Kindergarten and Early Intervention Programs

Real Reform #9: Qualified and Experienced Educators and Educational Leaders

Real Reform #10: Democratic and Social Justice Unionism

FILM PARTY FAQ

WHY HOST an "INCONVENIENT TRUTH BEHIND WAITING FOR SUPERMAN" HOUSE PARTY?

We need everyone who cares about public education to become more informed and as a result, more involved in the struggle to save our public education system. Our film seeks to educate and mobilize teachers, parents, students and community members so that they will come away from the film with the knowledge and power to become active in the movement to save and improve public education for all of our children.

Invite a group of friends and teacher colleagues to come together to view the film. Enjoy refreshments and engage in a discussion about the current reform movement, the challenges you believe our education system faces and what you think can be done.

For local events in the NYC area, request a speaker from GEM to come to your party if you'd like another resource. Make request to GEMnyc@gmail.com a few weeks in advance.

HOW DO I GET STARTED?

We are encouraging everyone to get a copy of the DVD and plan a film party. If you don't already have a DVD, you can order one by visiting:
waitingforsupermantruth.org

Prepare a guest list and invite as many people as possible including friends, co-workers, neighbors and family members. Host the event in your home, school, place of worship or community center. Invite folks a few weeks in advance, and send out reminders one or two days beforehand.

Here are some on-line sites you can use to send email invitations:

Evite	http://new.evite.com
Pingg	http://www.pingg.com
Sendomatic	http://www.sendomatic.com

Prepare refreshments: popcorn, chips, beer-wine-soft drinks or coffee, tea & cookies or whatever you'd like to serve.

Please feel free to duplicate our DVD and distribute it to those who attend your screening or house party. In addition, please print and use any materials in the next section that you feel might be useful.

HOW MUCH TIME SHOULD YOU PLAN FOR?

The film is a little over an hour. You should plan for approximately 2-3 hours for your party to give time beforehand for introductions and a discussion after.

STAY IN TOUCH:

Let us know how your Film Party turns out. Send us pictures, comments, reactions so that we can share it with other teachers, parents and community members around the country! Email: gemnyc@gmail.com

MATERIALS YOU CAN DISTRIBUTE (Click on links):

• *Charter Schools and the Attack On Public Education*, by SARA KNOPP:

<http://www.isreview.org/issues/62/feat-charterschools.shtml>

• *The Truth About Charters Schools in New York City*, BY GEM:

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/57382612/The-Truth-About-Charter-Schools-in-New-York-City>

• *The Ultimate \$uperpower Supersized dollars drive Waiting for Superman Agenda*, by BARBARA MINER:

<http://www.notwaitingforsuperman.org/Articles/20101020-MinerUltimateSuperpower>

• *The Myth About Charter Schools* by DIANE RAVITCH:

<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2010/nov/11/myth-charter-schools/>

SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What issues in the film are relevant to what is happening in your school or community?
- What do you think will improve education in your community? In our country?
- What do you believe should be the priority when it comes to improving education in your community/state/country? Who is responsible for making that happen?
- What role does the business community play in supporting or hindering our public education system?
- What did you learn from watching the film that you didn't know before?
- Are charter schools, student testing and test score based evaluations good for public education? Why or why not?
- What questions would you ask the teachers and the parents in the movie?
- From a teacher's perspective, what specific support and changes are needed to help teachers do their jobs as effectively as possible, regardless of where they teach?
- What is the role of parents in improving public education? How can parents become more involved?
- What is the role of teachers unions in creating/protecting good public education?

Actions you can take to take back our schools:

1. Find out what's happening in your local school district and make connections with other parents, teachers and students who are experiencing the same threats to their public schools.
2. Give this DVD to a friend so that they can plan another film showing. Feel free to burn copies of our DVD and give them out to others!
3. Organize a Fight Back Friday event at your school. This is a way for your school community to work together (parents, students and staff) to build solidarity within and across schools. Pick a day (doesn't have to be a Friday) and have everyone at the school participate in some action, big or small, such as wearing black (to take back our schools) or stickers with messages about the kinds of changes we would all like to see in education. Some schools have an informational picket outside of school either before or after the school day. You can do a petition or sign post cards that then can be delivered en-masse to local elected officials with whatever message is relevant to your community. Request a FBF Toolkit, which includes literature and educational material, media information, and sample materials to assist in your school organizing efforts. See the FBF Blog: <http://www.fightbackfridays.blogspot.com>
4. Do a Petition Campaign and bring to your local elected officials on the issues that are most pressing in your community: budget cuts, teacher layoffs, need for more school buildings, daycare centers, afterschool programs, etc.
5. Get involved in your union and mobilize the leadership and the members to fight for our students and our communities!

Links

Save Our Schools March, July 28-31, 2011: <http://www.saveourschoolsmarch.org/>

Education Notes: <http://ednotesonline.blogspot.com/>

Liza Campbell on Gotham Schools: <http://gothamschools.org/author/liza-campbell/>

New York City Public School Parents Blog: <http://nycpublicschoolparents.blogspot.com/>

Julie Cavanagh on Huffington Post: <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/julie-cavanagh>

GEM works with members from:

- Class Size Matters: <http://www.classsizematters.org/>
- Coalition for Public Education: <http://forpubliced.blogspot.com/>
- Concerned Advocates for Public Education: capeducation.blogspot.com
- Independent Commission on Public Education: <http://www.icope.org/>
- Independent Community of Educators: <http://www.ice-uft.org/>
- NY Collective of Radical Educators: <http://www.nycore.org/>
- Parents Across America: <http://www.parentsacrossamerica.org/>
- Teacher Advocacy Group: teacheradvocacygrpny.com
- Teachers for a Just Contract: <http://teachersforajustcontract.org/>
- Teachers Unite: <http://www.teachersunite.net/>
- Center for Immigrant Families: <http://www.c4if.org/>