

Parent Trigger Proposal Would Convert Failing Charters to Unionized Neighborhood Schools

At a time when lawmakers are searching for ways to drive change and empower parents, a new proposal would allow California parents to force charter school operators to turn their schools into neighborhood schools.

The proposal builds on the state's existing Parent Trigger law, which allows 51 percent of parents at schools with low test scores to force a district to turn that school over to a charter school operator. But according to *New Parent Trigger* organizer Sue Meyers, that law does not go far enough.

“What about parents in communities served by low-performing charter schools? We need help, too.”

“Our charter is awful,” Meyers said. “Teachers

come and go before we even know who they are. Decisions are made by the school's corporate headquarters. They have no teachers to help with special needs kids or English learners.”

Meyers spoke last night to a gathering of other concerned parents. “Why do parents have to stand idly by?” she asked. “Why can't we have high-achieving, unionized schools like the rich people across town?”

Meyers says that the group is currently struggling to get financial backing. “We sought funding from the Gates, Broad and Walton Foundations, all of which generously supported the initial parent trigger policy initiatives. But they turned us down. I don't understand why they don't want to support us as well.”

Duncan Welcomes Flood Victims to the “New Normal”

Education Secretary Arne Duncan flew this week to Minot, North Dakota, to acclaim the benefits of the “New Normal” to the victims of June's devastating floods. The city's Ramstad Middle school was wiped out by the flood waters, giving the community what Duncan called “the marvelous opportunities that flow from creative destruction.”

In the past, the Secretary has hailed the so-called [New Normal](#) of budgetary crises and reduced funding for schools. States, districts, and schools are required by these crises to re-think their old practices and find creative new ways to teach – such as cutting school days, health insurance, and extracurricular activities.

In Minot, Duncan said that he envied the community's children, who will now be able to pursue their education unencumbered by stale, status quo practices. These schools, he said,

“are now freed think outside of the box, and indeed, outside of the old walls and ceilings.” The community is currently trying to decide between the opportunities offered by tents and those offered by trailers.

Noting that one-third of the school's teachers had homes in low-lying areas and had now fled the city, Duncan again stressed Minot's good fortune. “Those teachers who chose to live in a flood plain in this part of the country are likely to be less intelligent than their fellow teachers who bought homes on higher ground – this is especially true for those teaching earth science.”

Minot parent Craig Smith, however, said he felt cheated by Duncan's speech. “I saw the same speech on CSPAN two days ago, when Duncan was in Joplin, Missouri. He just replaced ‘tornado’ with ‘flood.’ If he's gonna screw us over, he ought to at least write us a new speech.”