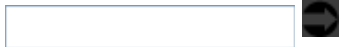


[Our Kids Blog](#)



- [Home](#)
- [About Our Kids](#)
- [Contribute](#)
- [Meet the Team](#)
- [Submit to Our Kids Blog](#)

Browse > [Home](#) / [Classroom](#), [Education](#), [Private Schools](#), [Students](#), [Teachers](#) / Looking South at Education – What Can Canadians Learn?

Thursday, February 18, 2010 | Subscribe via [RSS](#)

[Looking South at Education – What Can Canadians Learn?](#)

by [Paul W. Bennett](#)

February 18th, 2010 Posted in [Classroom](#), [Education](#), [Private Schools](#), [Students](#), [Teachers](#)



Welcome to Our Kids.net! If you are new here, we invite you to [subscribe to the RSS feed](#) for updates on these topics. You are also welcome to subscribe to our [Newsletter](#) for more information on camps, private schools and retirement living.



Powered by WP Greet Box WordPress Plugin



2
tweets

retweet

Education is now a tremendously high profile public issue in the United States unlike in Canada. Since the election of President Barak Obama in November 2008, the new administration has made education reform a top priority, recasting the discredited NCLB into the “Race to the Top” initiative, fuelled by \$4.35 billion in federal stimulus spending. In a bold move to win bi-partisan support, Obama’s education secretary Arne Duncan has introduced a new “turnaround schools” policy, embraced “charter schools,” renewed the commitment to high-stakes testing, established a “We Are Teachers” mentoring program, and proposed that teacher salaries be based upon merit, tied to student test results.

The American education debate has become volatile, driven largely by an almost relentless drive to close the gap in international test results or to reverse the cycle of decline. Leading education authorities like Andy Smarick, a senior fellow at the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, are urging the current “Education President” to go even further. In a highly influential Winter 2010 feature essay for Harvard University’s Education Next

magazine, Smarick claims that “U-Turn” policies based upon “turnarounds” have so far utterly failed to “drastically improve America’s troubled urban school systems.” “When conscientiously applied strategies fail to improve America’s lowest performing schools, we need to close them” and to begin anew with “fresh start” schools.

The U.S. “School Wars” now have a new front. Well-known New York University professor and author, Diane Ravitch, has joined the fray, co-founding “Common Core” in staunch opposition to the “21st century skills” curriculum and the current testing mania, claiming that such reforms threaten to destroy the teaching of “core knowledge essential to critical thinking.” Her new book, *The Death and Life of the Great American School System* (2010), has hit like a bombshell. The current obsession with testing and chartering, she charges, is not producing higher standards and may well imperil the system.

Why is Canadian education, by comparison, like “sleepy hollow”? Surveying the scene, Atlantic Canada remains a sea of relative tranquility with the odd cove of ripply waters. Public concern about the state of education still runs high, judging from recent Nik Nanos opinion polls (September 2009) placing the issue (at 7%) third in importance and ahead of the environment, and even higher among the 18 to 34 age group. Yet education in Canada is the preserve of the provinces and that may explain why, as a public issue, it lurks in the shadows. Perhaps that’s just as well. Now, it’s your turn.

Dr. Paul W. Bennett is Director, [Schoolhouse Consulting](#), Halifax, and a regular commentator on critical issues in Canadian education.

[Share This](#)

Tags: [Education](#), [Obama](#), [school](#), [teacher](#), [teaching](#)

This entry was posted on Thursday, February 18th, 2010 at 00:22 and is filed under [Classroom](#), [Education](#), [Private Schools](#), [Students](#), [Teachers](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#) feed. You can [leave a response](#), or [trackback](#) from your own site.



Add New Comment

You are commenting as a [Guest](#). Optional: Login below.

-
-
-
-
-

Type your comment here.