

# 'Democracy is dependent on public education. If we don't invest in public education, we undermine

## Should student tests be used to fire or move teachers?

We're working on a new teacher evaluation system. You have to be rigorous in your evaluations, but I don't think you can link test results to individual (teacher) performance. There are too many nuances. Almost everybody will say it just doesn't work to link specific test results to specific performance. If a student scores a 4 or 5 on an advanced placement biology test, is that the responsibility of a teacher? To some degree it was. Well, also it was the responsibility of the first bio teacher and the chemistry and physics teacher who gave that student an incredible grounding in science. So it's not just the result of one individual.

I believe we need to work as a team. It's not like this is our class or your class, we need to focus on them (students) as a team. What I'd like to see is there is a third grade, and all of them see those four teachers as their teachers. I might take your students, and you might take a small group of my students and work with them in an individual way while I was working with the rest of the group.

## With classes with 40 kids in them, how do you take the time to collaborate or give that individual attention?

That's the challenge. One of the key challenges we face is finance. We've learned a lot about education in the past few years, and in fact we've learned that class size matters. We've learned that teachers planning together matters. There's a lot that we do not have the resources for.

I'll give you one way that we can immediately do that (extra work). We have a number of students from Pacific University. We may change the way that we think of them not as student teachers but as co-teachers. Those four student teachers may take over all of those four classes while the four teachers plan and work together and review data on students.

Can we do it with more finances? Absolutely, but we have to begin now. The kids that are in front of us need our services.

## So you disagree with Microsoft billionaire Bill Gates and U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan that class size doesn't matter?

Class size matters. Class size doesn't matter if you take a teacher-centered, lecture-oriented approach. However, if we really want to get all kids to proficiency, that's the exact wrong approach. The evidence that I've seen is that class size matters and it matters at every level.

If we are really saying let's get all kids to be proficient in algebra, there's going to be a lot more individual attention that needs to be paid. You don't do that through lecture

and teacher direction and sending the kids home and say work harder. You have to do it through understanding what the student doesn't understand, by helping them see things a little bit differently and grasp things that may be really challenging for them.

Do you think that a teacher can teach writing to 40 kids as well as they can teach writing to 20 kids? No student should leave high school without having written at least a 15-page research paper. I don't know that teachers have the time.

## Some people think we need more accountability others say we need more funding, which is more important?

Mark Tucker, the director of the National Center on Education and the Economy, said you can't fire your way to greatness. I think that is absolutely true.

If you have poor performing teachers, you have to address that. But the real way to advance this profession is to invest in the quality of teaching. Teacher evaluation has to serve the purpose of promoting professional growth. Every single evaluation has to say what is your next step.

## That would take time for administrators, and 4J has lost a lot of administrators ...

Right. But that's critical in the design of the system. It is a core responsibility. They are really the personnel leader in that school. They have to set goals, they have to talk to the teacher about where that teacher is going, and then they have to observe for that. That's the core of what leadership means. It means that for my work with the key directors here. I do the same thing.

We need a better growth-oriented accountability system, but we have the accountability system. I think that people need to invest the resources. Democracy is dependent on public education. If we don't invest in public education, we undermine the very foundation of our government. I'm pretty strongly opposed to the privatization of public education.

## Are charter schools better?

The charter schools here are different than they are in other parts of the country, and that's fine. But in fact the research on charter schools is pretty definitive. There's a study at Stanford that came out that only 17 percent of charter schools out-perform the public schools from which they drew students. In fact, the vast majority of charter schools actually under-perform the public schools. In some communities they tend to re-segregate the community. In other communities they draw resources from the school district that are disproportionate to the resources of the district. To some degree the system benefits the few at the cost of the many.

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