



Public Advocacy Key Messages

- “Waiting for Superman” touches the emotions—it reminds us what’s at stake for a child who does not receive a great education. However, the underlying messages —“public schools are failing,” “charters are good” and “teachers unions are bad”—oversimplifies complex issues and sets up an “us” versus “them” mentality.
- In most public schools, teachers, administrators and school boards are working very hard together to improve the quality of education for kids. Management/union relations can complicate this work. But most often, we work through the issues because it’s the right thing to do for kids.*
- Making dramatic improvements in urban schools should be a concern to all of us. Our urban school systems face daunting challenges to close achievement gaps, increase graduation rates and more. The good news is that there are growing examples of urban success we can celebrate—and learn from.
- Charter schools can have a role in education reform, and many school boards nationally are using public charters to help spur innovation and improvement. But they aren’t a silver bullet and we shouldn’t rush to expand this concept. Research shows that for every outstanding charter school, two are underperforming their traditional public school counterparts.
- School boards know what works, and it can work in every public school—urban or rural, rich or poor, charter or not. It takes leadership that shifts expectations to higher levels. It takes dramatic changes in instruction that produce new results. It takes new forms of professional development to help teachers develop skills to reach struggling learners. It takes assessment systems that help us diagnose and improve, not rank and penalize. It takes greater levels of parent and community engagement that creates a support system for every child.
- As we work to put these practices into place in every school in America, school boards need state and federal policy that pushes the system, delivers on the supports to make it happen, and cuts out the red-tape and micromanagement that gets in our way.
- Community involvement in education reform is crucial to its success. We need your help to make real systemic change. Get involved in your public school. Learn about the issues. Have hard conversations with your local school board if you aren’t seeing the public schools you want in your community. Don’t be swayed by a narrow single answer—roll up your sleeves and join us.

If your association or school district has a specific need or view regarding collective bargaining or labor/management issues, this may be an opportunity to advocate for that need.

