

What Is Accountability?

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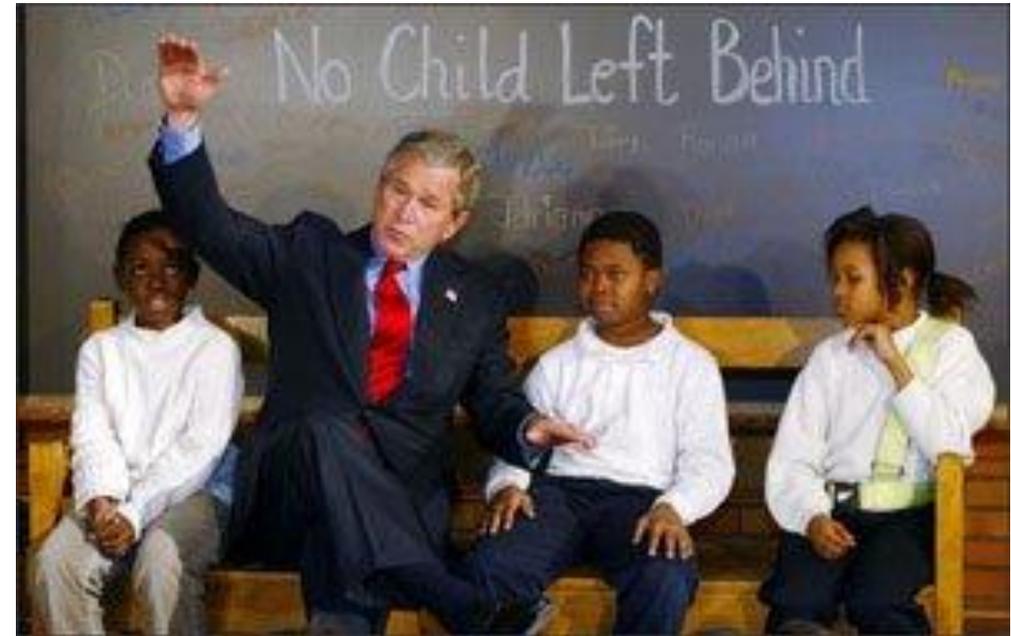
Everyone is “for” Accountability

- “The AFT supports the charter school accountability agenda”
 - AFT, March 2015
- “We are calling for a moratorium on the expansion of charter schools until such time as charter schools are subject to the same transparency and accountability standards as public schools.”
 - NAACP, 2017
- “Voucher schools are unaccountable and not held to the same rigorous academic standards and practices as public schools.”
 - NEA, 2014



But What Is Accountability?

- Holding a Monopoly Accountable
 - No Child Left Behind in Theory
 - Consistent, standardized tests
 - Public reporting of information
 - Penalties on low-performing schools



Does Accountability ‘Work’?

- No Child Left Behind in Practice
 - Some evidence labeling schools as “failing” works
 - No evidence that actual penalties work
 - Plenty of evidence of “teaching to the test,” calling everything else into question



Accountability in a choice-driven system

- “If the school choice movement needs a mantra right now, it just might be: Regulating a market is not the same as regulating a monopoly.” – Michael McShane, Show-Me Institute
- Pure Monopoly Regulation
 - Soviet Agricultural Five-Year Planning
- Pure Market Regulation
 - Securities and Exchange Commission
- Quasi-Market Regulation
 - Somewhere in between... But where?



Two paradigms of school choice accountability

- System-Centered

- The same prescription for public school accountability
- Presumably more efficient than monopoly regulation because actors more responsive



- Parent-Centered Accountability

- Vests “accountability” primarily in parental judgment and choice
- Presumably enables more robust range of offerings and better matching.



- Most policy discussion operates under the first paradigm

System-Centered Accountability

- Pros
 - Gives policymakers something clear and simple to point at.
 - More easily attracts media and philanthropic attention.
- Cons
 - Unintended consequences also as, if not more pronounced
 - Perverts pedagogy.
 - Limits options and opportunities.
 - Raises cost to participation.
 - Politically perilous.
 - Based on a theory remarkably lacking evidence.



Perverts Pedagogy: Reading

- “Let’s Tell The Truth: High-Stakes Tests Damage Reading Instruction.”
 - Robert Pondiscio, EdNext 2014
 - “A good test or accountability scheme encourages good instructional practice. Reading tests do the opposite. They encourage poor practice, waste instructional time, and materially damage reading achievement, especially for our most vulnerable children.”
 - De facto decision on “knowledge” vs. “skills” question
 - Suppresses the question of curriculum.



Perverts Pedagogy: Math

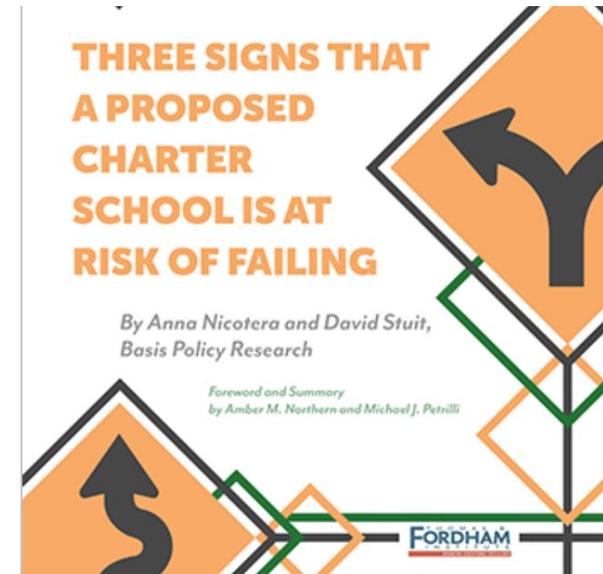
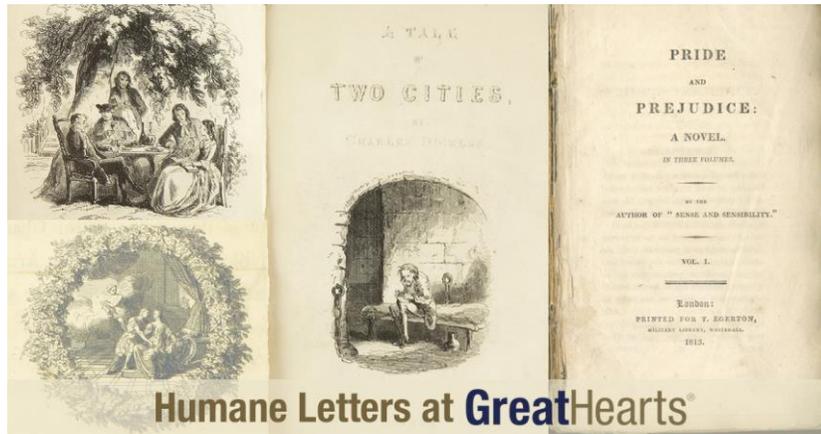


Nat Malkus @natmalkus · Aug 24

In his first week of middle school, my son takes a stand against [#commoncore](#) math

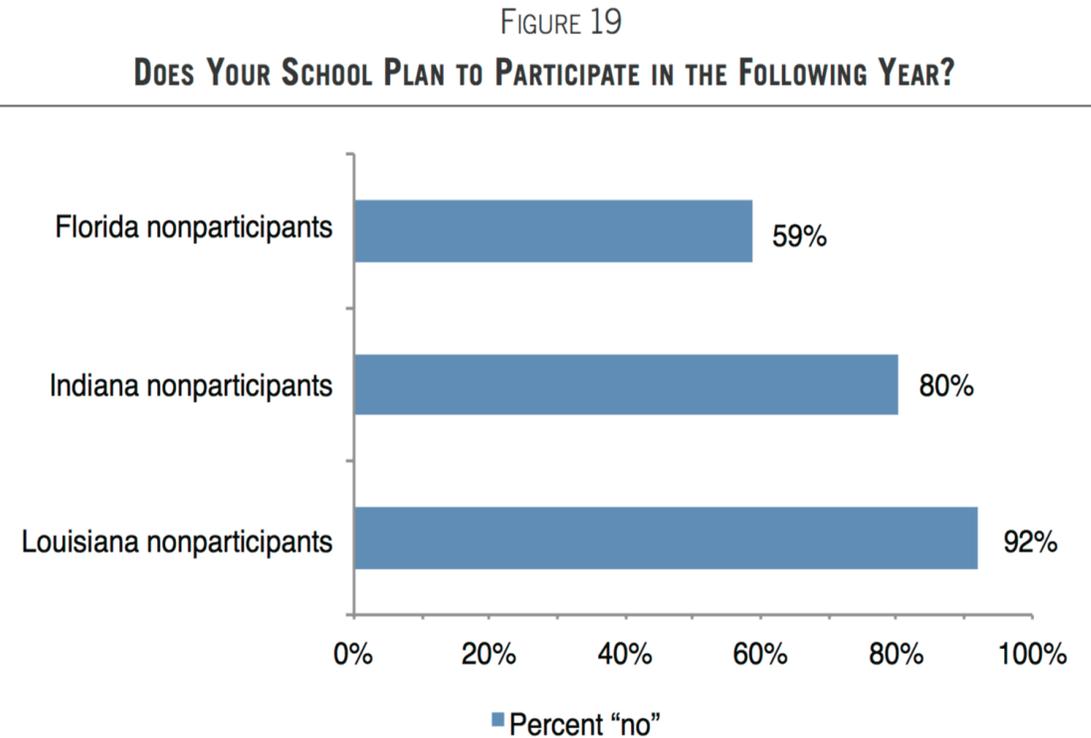
The image shows a worksheet with handwritten math work. The top section contains a multiplication problem: 3.8×74 . The student has written the answer as 281.2 and circled it. A large pink checkmark is drawn next to the answer. Below this, the instruction "Show all of your work to earn full credit" is written. The middle section is titled "Model - Drawing" and shows a subtraction problem: $6765 - 789 = 7554$. The student has written "no." next to the question "=7655?". The bottom section is titled "Justify your answer" and contains the handwritten response "no. See my math work." followed by several blank lines.

Limits Options and Opportunities



Raises Cost to Participate

- “But what some voucher-doubters might not know is that the newest and biggest voucher programs—those in Louisiana and Indiana—now have significant accountability provisions that are arguably even stronger than those found in many state charter programs.” - Michael Petrilli, Thomas B. Fordham Institute



Politically Perilous

- Smaller Constituency
 - MA vs. Florida
- Heads we win, tails you lose.
 - If test scores are higher, critics accuse choice of “creaming.”
 - If test scores are equal or lower, then critics say “choice doesn’t work.”
- Likely to “lose” out of the starting gate.



Remarkable Disconnect Between Test Scores and Later Life Outcomes

Study	Type	Test Scores	Later Outcomes
Boston	Charter	Yes	No
Harlem Promise	Charter	Yes	No
KIPP	Charter	Yes	No
High Tech High	Charter	Yes	No
SEED Boarding	Charter	Yes	No
Texas No Excuses	Charter	Yes	Mixed
Florida	Charter	No	Yes
DC Oportunity	Voucher	No	Yes
Milwaukee	Voucher	No	Yes
New York	Voucher	Mixed	Yes

Learning, like life, is more complicated than we might like to admit.



Policymakers should show more humility and deference to parents.

- “The accountability is with me. I am responsible for my child. I am responsible for my child’s education. It lies with me, not some bureaucrat in some high tower somewhere.”
 - A dad to an Arizona state legislator.
- Parents know many things that bureaucrats don’t.

Secretary DeVos on Parent-Driven Accountability

- “Well, I think the first line of accountability is frankly with the parents. When parents are choosing school they are proactively making that choice. And schools are accountable to the parents. ... I think it's important for parents to have information about how their students are doing, how they're achieving, how they're progressing. ... It starts with holding themselves accountable to communication of relevant and important information to students and parents about how they are doing.”
 - Betsy DeVos, August 2017

Parent-Driven, Pros and Con

- Pros

- Enhances flexibility for educators and increases options for parents
- Enables a values-driven case for school choice.
- Builds larger political constituencies.
- Increases competitive spillover effects.

- Con / Challenge

- Might not necessarily be enough information in the quasi-market
- “Parents as first line of defense, sure, although she appears to trust the schools themselves to equip the parents with the information they need to make competent decisions. There’s no sign of any sort of impartial data source.” – Chester E Finn, Fordham Institute.