# Diane Ravitch raises alarm over the future of American public education



Diane Ravitch, a prominent historian of education, has raised concerns regarding the future of American public education, particularly in light of political shifts and policies emerging from the Trump administration. Her commentary, found in an article titled “‘Their Kind of Indoctrination,’” published just before the inauguration of Donald Trump to his second term, notably references Trump's remarks during his first campaign, wherein he stated, “I love the poorly educated.” Ravitch posits that his second term is likely to cultivate a greater number of individuals fitting that description.

Drawing on her extensive experience in education policy, having worked under Presidents George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton, Ravitch emphasises the adverse impacts of current educational policies, such as high-stakes testing and the diversion of taxpayer funds to charter schools. Throughout her prolific writing career, which includes nearly two dozen books and a frequently visited education policy blog, Ravitch has documented and analysed these pressing issues. Her memoirs, set to be published later this year by Columbia University Press, promise further insights into her long-standing engagement with American education.

In a conversation with Regina Martinez, Ravitch discussed her journey into educational writing, tracing back to her time at Wellesley College in 1956, when she penned her first paper on the politics of the Houston public school system during her youth there. She recounted the stark political atmosphere of the time, where control of the school board oscillated between extremist factions and moderates, impacting the educational content that students received.

Addressing the current educational climate, Ravitch expressed concern over what she describes as an alarming political surveillance that teachers face in many “red” states. “The threat of political surveillance is chilling, as it would be in every profession,” she stated. She referenced Trump’s executive order aimed at cutting funding to schools teaching “radical gender ideology” and racism, pointing out the implications for teacher recruitment and retention amid such political pressures.

Moreover, Ravitch spoke about the disturbing trend of federal agents detaining children within school premises under the Trump administration. She highlighted the horror of children being arrested in classrooms, which she described as a terrifying prospect for both teachers and students. For Ravitch, the implementation of legal precautions and contingency plans for school districts has become essential in such a fraught environment.

Reflecting on her service under both Republican and Democratic administrations, Ravitch noted a continuity in educational policy across both political landscapes. She was part of the efforts during the Bush and Clinton administrations to set ambitious goals for American education, albeit those aims did not materialise as intended by the year 2000. The issues of standardised testing, teacher evaluation based on student performance, and charter school advocacy emerged as controversial topics.

Ravitch has been particularly vocal in her criticism of the so-called “Billionaire Boys Club,” referring to wealthy philanthropists and organisations that support the privatisation of education. In her latest works, including *Slaying Goliath*, she has catalogued the extensive influence these entities exert on the education system, arguing that the consequences have been detrimental to public education and have fostered an environment of competitive meritocracy rather than supportive communal learning.

Her concern extends to current literacy challenges in schools, which she attributes in part to the impact of standardised testing on students' engagement with literature. Ravitch advocates for a return to assigning comprehensive literary works rather than shortened texts to promote deeper understanding and appreciation of literature.

As the trend towards the privatisation of education continues to gain momentum, Ravitch anticipates significant challenges for future advocates of public education. She argues that public schools serve as essential democratic institutions, yet they face immense financial pressure from privatisation efforts driven by right-wing billionaires, which present formidable barriers to advocacy. Nonetheless, she remains hopeful that a growing recognition of the value of public education will catalyse support to preserve these institutions.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://chqdaily.com/2020/08/historian-and-public-school-activist-diane-ravitch-to-talk-about-the-problems-with-the-education-reform-movement/> - This article supports Diane Ravitch's concerns about the education reform movement, particularly her criticism of standardized testing and the privatization of education. It highlights her shift from supporting reform policies to advocating for public schools.
* <https://fordhaminstitute.org/national/commentary/finn-ravitch-review-death-and-life-great-american-school-system> - This commentary reviews Diane Ravitch's book, The Death and Life of the Great American School System, which critiques recent education reforms and advocates for a return to traditional public school strengths.
* <https://tcf.org/content/commentary/diane-ravitch-on-real-education-reform/> - This article discusses Diane Ravitch's critique of privatization in education, as outlined in her book Reign of Error. It highlights her proposals for real education reform, including addressing school segregation and improving charter schools.
* <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2020/01/31/executive-order-on-combating-race-and-sex-stereotyping/> - This executive order by the Trump administration aimed to address what it termed 'radical gender ideology' and racism in schools, which Diane Ravitch referenced as impacting teacher recruitment and retention.
* <https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2019/09/18/762444551/why-are-children-being-detained-at-the-border> - Although not directly related to school detentions under Trump, this article discusses the broader context of children being detained by federal agents, which Ravitch mentioned as a concerning trend.