



Arizona
Education
Association

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Friends:

In recent months, some of you have inquired about invitations to events and requests for meetings with a newly-formed group called Education Reform Now (ERN). In response, I am alerting you to the ERN agenda, its purpose, and its funders.

ERN is a 501c(3) front for a Political Action Committee, Democrats for Education Reform (DFER). DFER and ERN are funded primarily by New York hedge fund managers who invest in anti-union charter school expansion. ERN has its own 501c4 mirror organization called "ERN Advocacy."

According to Source Watch, "Democrats for Education Reform is a political action committee supported largely by hedge fund managers favoring charter schools, merit-pay tied to test scores, high-stakes testing, school choice (including vouchers and tuition tax credits in some cases), mayoral control, and alternative teacher preparation programs." These tactics support a controversial and cynical investment ploy to make money from the charter school movement and the per-student funding charter schools receive from Arizona taxpayers.

Arizona's conservative Republican majority has driven a reform agenda into our public schools for nearly three decades, including:

- The most expansive and unaccountable charter school system in the nation;
- Rampant school voucher and private school tuition tax credit programs, passed with no accountability or transparency to taxpayers;
- Standardized test-driven performance-based pay for teachers;
- Standardized test-driven teacher and principal evaluation and management decisions.
- Letter grade ratings of schools, based on high stakes, standardized test scores;
- The nation's largest cuts to public education from FY2009-14, coupled with a base level funding advantage for charter schools.

Thirty years of this "reform" agenda has failed to improve the lives of the students in our state, especially those whose access to a quality public education is their best hope to escape poverty. These policies instead result in schools that exclude many students in order to demonstrate success, at a time when we need to ensure every child has a quality school within their community.

In our community public schools, class sizes are higher, programs are diminished, and teacher turnover has dramatically increased. At the same time, the reform agenda has consistently eroded local governing board authority in favor of state mandates. Now, organizations such as DFER and ERN are aligned with conservatives in pushing this agenda.

Arizona's future will be jeopardized by the expanding, well funded attack on quality public education and its hard working employees, as well as by the co-opting of Democratic Party leaders and policymakers. **We ask you to carefully examine the purpose, funders, and agenda of Education Reform Now and Democrats for Education Reform if you are asked to attend their events or support their activities.**

AEA's mission is to keep the promise of quality public education. Our core values include a quality public education for all; fairness, equity, and respect for all; teaching as an esteemed profession; education support professionals as valued partners; and learning as a community commitment.

I appreciate your support for AEA's mission and values. I look forward to working together to restore the funding, local control, commitment to quality Arizona public schools for every child, and the respect for those who work in our community's public schools.

Sincerely,

Andrew F. Morrill, President
Arizona Education Association

AEA'S MISSION

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education