



So Much Reform, So Little Change: The Persistence of Failure in Urban Schools

Charles M. Payne

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This frank and courageous book explores the persistence of failure in today's urban schools. At its heart is the argument that most education policy discussions are disconnected from the daily realities of urban schools, especially those in poor and beleaguered neighborhoods. Charles M. Payne argues that we have failed to account fully for the weakness of the social infrastructure and the often dysfunctional organizational environments of urban schools and school systems. The result is that liberals and conservatives alike have spent a great deal of time pursuing questions of limited practical value in the effort to improve city schools.

Payne carefully delineates these stubborn and intertwined sources of failure in urban school reform efforts of the past two decades. Yet while his book is unsparing in its exploration of the troubled recent history of urban school reform, Payne also describes himself as guardedly optimistic. He describes how, in the last decade, we have developed real insights into the roots of school failure, and into how some individual schools manage to improve. He also examines recent progress in understanding how particular urban districts have established successful reforms on a larger scale.

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