

### **GPS REMARKS (5 minutes)**

- Why am I here: I hold the belief that education is central to the health and well-being not only of our children but to the economic and democratic viability of our state and nation
- We need to prepare all young people to thrive in a world that is being rapidly transformed by technology
- This involves closing opportunity gaps related, for example, to **early childhood education** and **college access**, so that a child's success in school is not a function of who they are or where they were born. This is why VT will be pushing for **Universal Preschool** over the next year.
- It means preparing teachers, as Dartmouth does, with strong content knowledge who have the skills and experience to go out and invent new ways of teaching that reflect the diversity of student needs and our growing knowledge about how children learn. Why we have pushed for **personalized learning plans** in Vermont.
- It is also why historically, VT has been a strong and long time supporter of **universal access to health care and adequate nutrition** for children and other family supports, so that basic needs don't interfere with their ability to thrive. **We were the first state in the nation this year to make lunch free for all low-income students** because we know that kids can't learn when they are hungry.
- Nationally the education reform agenda, particularly at the federal level, is characterized by a narrative of failure, and in turn, this notion of "failing schools" has been the rationale for punitive models of test-based accountability that don't fit **small states like Vermont with small schools in strong communities**, especially given that our schools consistently place at the top of the nation on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). We can always get better, but we are already doing a lot of good work with education in VT. My goal is to take our great education system and make it the best.
- **Delighted to have Diane Ravitch here.** She is a champion of public education and the role of public institutions in preserving the social contract.
- And I can't help but agree with her recent blog posts, *Why Vermont Is the Best of All States for Education* and *Vermont Stands up for its Children*.
- **We hope her presence will provoke a hard and thoughtful conversation about how we can do what is right for our kids. There is no more important work.**

## **BACKGROUND**

### **EVENT DETAILS:**

- Diane Ravitch, nationally acclaimed professor, author and historian of education will be in Hanover and Norwich for a series of events coordinated by the VT School Boards Association and the Dartmouth Teacher Education Program, including guest lecturing in Dartmouth on Wednesday afternoon and this talk in the evening.
- The Rockefeller Center sponsored this event.
- At her talk, Diane will be discussing her new book, *Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools*, which is a response to what she calls the assault on public education in America.
- Set up at 7:15pm backstage, program begins at 7:30pm.

### **PROGRAM:**

- **(2-3 minutes) Andrew Samwick, Director of the Rockefeller Center at Dartmouth, Welcome, Introduces Governor Shumlin**
  - Mentions that it is convened in collaboration with the VSBA and the Dartmouth Teacher Education Program. About half our audience involves individuals associated with the Vermont School Boards and Superintendents Conference which convenes tomorrow morning “across the river” as well as educators, board members and citizens from both sides of the river with a strong interest in education and education policy. The governor's presence signals the importance of education to the State of VT, and reflects his strong commitment to providing a high quality education to all children, within the limits of our economic resources.
- **(5 Minutes) Governor Shumlin Remarks**
  - Discusses education in VT
  - Thanks to Diane Ravitch
- **(2-3 minutes) Andrew Samwick introduces Diane Ravitch**
- **Diane Ravitch Speaks**
  - Diane Ravitch, professor, author, and historian of education, discusses her newly published book, "Reign of Error," a response to the assault on public education in America.

## **Diane Ravitch Info**



Diane Ravitch is a research professor of education at New York University and a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. She currently shares a blog called Bridging Differences with Deborah Meier, hosted by Education Week, and also blogs for Politico.com and The Huffington Post. A prolific writer who has published more than 500 articles and reviews for scholarly and popular publications on the subject, Ravitch is internationally acclaimed for her expertise on past and present education. Her newly published book, *Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools*, is an incisive, comprehensive look at today's American school system that argues against those who claim it is broken and beyond repair; an impassioned but reasoned call to stop the privatization movement that is draining students and funding from our public schools. Ravitch argues that the crisis in American education is not a crisis of academic achievement but a concerted effort to destroy public schools in this country. Her 2011 book, *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education*, made the case that public education today is in peril. Drawing on her more than 40 years of research and experience, Ravitch critiques today's most popular ideas for restructuring schools, including privatization, standardized testing, punitive accountability, and the multiplication of charter schools, and offers a clear prescription for improving American public schools.

## **Diane Ravitch LOVES Vermont**

Here are all her recent blog posts in the last year that mention VT:

### **1) Wayne Gersen: What Obama Could Learn from Vermont**

By dianerav

May 3, 2013 //

Wayne Gersen has been working in several districts in Vermont. He is impressed by Vermont's determination not to allow testing to be the be-all and end-all of education. The state is determined not to let NCLB wreck its schools and not to ask for a waiver that would allow Duncan to impose high-stakes testing. If only Obama did what Vermont does!

## **2) Vermont Stands Up for Its Children**

By dianerav

May 30, 2012 //

Vermont decided not to apply for a waiver from NCLB.

Not because it loves NCLB. No one does.

But because Vermont education officials had their own ideas about how to help their schools.

And they discovered that Arne Duncan's offer to give them "flexibility" was phony.

He did not want to hear Vermont's ideas. Contrary to his claims, the waivers do not offer flexibility.

What Arne Duncan wants states to do is to agree to his own demands, not to shape their own destiny.

He wants them to allow more privately managed charters. He wants them to evaluate teachers by student test scores. He wants them to adopt Common Core state standards. He wants them to agree to threaten and close down schools with low test scores. He has a laundry list of what he wants them to do.

Of course, this is all very puzzling since none of Arne Duncan's mandates have a solid basis in research or evidence. In that regard, they are not much different from NCLB. You might say they represent NCLB without the timetable.

Even more puzzling is the assumption that Arne Duncan and the U.S. Department of Education know how to reform the schools of the nation. It is not as if anyone would look at Arne Duncan's Chicago as a model for the nation. That district is once again being "reformed," this time by Mayor Rahm Emanuel.

And from a strictly Constitutional point of view, the U.S. Department of Education has never been empowered to tell schools and school districts how to reform themselves.

Quite candidly, there is no one at the U.S. Department of Education who is competent to tell entire states how to reform their schools.

So, kudos to Vermont.

A state that said no to federal control, federal mandates, privatization, and other bad ideas.

As often, I add a footnote to the original post: Bruce Baker of Rutgers alerted me to a change in governance in Vermont. The legislature just passed a bill to have the state commissioner of education report to the governor. This opens the way for business community and privatizers to exert more influence. Privatizers like to eliminate input from parents and communities, making it easier for them to get what they want.

Vermonters: Don't let it happen.

Stay outside the consensus.

Keep Vermont and Vermont parents and communities in charge of your schools.

Diane

### 3) Is Vermont the Best State?

By dianerav

June 21, 2012 //

I have received many comments from readers nominating their state as the worst in the nation for having enacted legislations that removes due process from teachers or reduces their status or connects their evaluation to student test scores or defunds public education or harms professional educators and the public weal in other ways.

Vermont is different. Vermont still has leadership that wants to improve its schools and support teachers. Vermont decided to turn down the NCLB waiver when it realized that it provided no flexibility, just another bunch of mandates that would be bad for the schools and for children. Vermont doesn't want to test its students every single year. Vermont realized that NCLB and Race to the Top (**note from Aly: Not the early education Race to the Top grant we just applied for**) are not good for students or education.

Are there other states that refuse the enticements offered by Washington, D.C., to create more market-style competition for public schools and to reduce the status of professional educators? If your state has had the wisdom and foresight of Vermont, please let me know.

The question we must ask is, why is Vermont different? Why has it stood outside the destructive mainstream of education "deform" that has swept the nation?

We can all take heart in knowing that one beacon of sanity remains. And yet how discouraging to know that of our fifty states, there is only one that still wants children to have a childhood and for education to be a time to learn rather than a time to be ranked, rated, and numbered by instruments of limited value.

A reader sent this comment:

*Vermont is one of the only states in the country that refuses to get on the bandwagon for corporate ed. reform. The state has a law against charter schools and they refused Race to the top funds. Vermont did try to get a NCLB waiver, but was rejected by Sec. Duncan because their proposal did not include tying student test scores to teacher evaluations or charter schools. Their proposal did include focusing more on creativity, a rich curriculum, and less on testing, but I guess that was not good enough. I'm getting certification in both Mass. and NY, but I may consider going to teach in Vermont. Burlington is beginning to focus more on equity and creating a system similar to what they have in Finland. If it is successful, then maybe people will begin to pay more attention to what actually works.*

*Please sign this petition to get rid of Arne Duncan:<http://dumpduncan.org/>*

### 4) Why Vermont Is the Best of All States for Education

By dianerav

January 26, 2013 //

The U.S. Department of Education recently released data on the high school graduation rate. The most conservative way to estimate the rate is to count only those students who get a diploma in four years, and to exclude those who graduate in August or take a fifth year or get a GED.

By the most conservative estimate (called the Average Freshman Graduation Rate), the graduation rate is up to 78.2 percent, a jump of nearly 5 percentage points in only four years. (If you were to add in those who get a diploma in the fifth year, the high school graduation rate is 90%.)

A reader noticed that Vermont has the highest graduation rate in the nation. If you check the data, you will see that Michelle Rhee's highest rated states—Louisiana and Florida—have among the lowest high school graduation rates in the nation.

The reader points this out:

<http://www.ed.gov/blog/2013/01/high-school-graduation-rate-at-highest-level-in-three-decades/>

*The U.S. Department of Education released a study of high school graduation rates on Wednesday, January 23rd. Which state has the highest graduation rate in the entire nation at 91.4%? Vermont.*

*That's right, Vermont.*

*Besides the highest graduation rate in the country, what else does Vermont have? We have an "F" from Michelle Rhee. We have NO waiver from NCLB. We have NO charter schools. We have NO Race-to-the-Top funds. Since we are at the top, I guess we don't need to run a race to get there.*

*Vermont has what really matters: strong communities, informed citizens, generous taxpayers who support their children, and committed professionals in the classroom.*