

# Schools Matter

*"A child's learning is the function more of the characteristics of his classmates than those of the teacher."* James Coleman, 1972

Saturday, June 25, 2011

## Brooklyn Ascend Brought to Earth by Former Teacher, Part 1

Everyone who knows anything knows that KIPP can only remain a billionaire's choice boutique option for segregating urban children who are desperate enough that they will forego their childhood and suffer years of repeated indignities for a chance at an education, which amounts to a miseducation built upon unceasing test prep and a behavioral catechism more suitable for a penitentiary than a school.

Unfortunately, the total compliance and total surveillance model of KIPP has inspired a number of high-flying knock-offs like Brooklyn Ascend and its two sister schools in Brooklyn, which use the familiar chain gang methods to denigrate, demean, and destroy the spirits of kids, all in the twisted and debased name of equal opportunity for children who are captive to poverty. Social justice in blackface is the only adequate way to describe this caricature of equal education.

Little do parents know what goes in these corporate madrassa hellholes, and little did anyone else know until a former teacher stepped forward to call a spade a spade. Her name is Emily Kennedy, and it wasn't until she read the "tremendously disturbing" book by Ascend's founder, Stephen Wilson, entitled "Learning on the Job: When Business Takes on Public Education," that her unsettled feeling about the goings-on at Brooklyn Ascend began to come into sharp focus. In Emily's initial email to me, she said that "my experience at Brooklyn Ascend has been nothing less than depressing, demoralizing, and at times even shockingly upsetting."

As we were arranging an interview, she sent me this email with some of those disturbing details as her year at Brooklyn Ascend was winding up:

Just so you know a little bit more about what I have experienced at Brooklyn Ascend, here are some highlights from my year:

- In December, after giving our third graders a mock exam and realizing that their test scores were not looking very good, our administrators decided to do a third-grade "restart," in which they rearranged the classes and schedules so that the lowest performing "scholars" were all in one class (my class). [Emily was hired as special needs teacher.]
- Third grade teachers were required to return to work over Christmas break (including New Years Eve) for special "training" in "Teach Like a Champion" techniques [the book by Doug Lemov that has replaced teacher preparation and professional development in these chain gangs]. During this training, a lady named Sue Welch from "Building Excellent Teachers" instructed us on what our first day back with the kids would look like: four hours (8-12pm) of teaching nothing but procedures. When I asked if perhaps we should do something to make it at least a little more "fun," she told me that fun was absolutely not an "appropriate objective."
- In order to boost test scores, science, social studies, and Spanish were removed from the schedule of the low-performing group. Instead, we were required to teach an additional reading and math block during this time.
- Scholars [the word that has replaced children] in the low-performing group were required to attend after-school-tutoring sessions for more test prep. So, after going to school from 7:30 to 4:30, they needed to stay an extra hour for more test prep - in addition to completing the hour of homework that we are required to give each night. (8 year olds!!) Needless to say, I had many kids falling asleep in class and having frequent stomach aches. Our school director - a TFA grad - thought that if we brought more of the "j-factor" to our classroom (joy factor) that they would be more motivated. To him and other Doug Lemov zealots, this means doing cheers

### Favorite Posts

[NCATE, Ed Week, UTRU, and Eli Broad](#)

[Top Priority of Republican House: Add \\$700 Billion to the Federal Deficit](#)

[A Former KIPP Teacher Shares Her Story](#)

[It's poverty, not teacher quality](#)

[Jonah Edelman Spills the Oligarchs' Blueprint for Crushing the Teaching Profession](#)

[Teachers Tired of Being Bullied to Death](#)

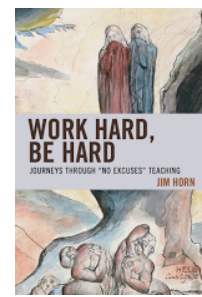
[David Coleman's Global Revenge and the Common Core](#)

[If Corporations are Persons, Why Aren't They Being Tried for Treason?](#)

[KIPP Administrator "choked and dragged" 16 Year Old Female Student in NOLA](#)

[Wikileaks Email Dump Shows NEA Rigged Hillary Endorsement](#)

[Get 20% Off w/code: RLEGEN16](#)



[Work Hard, Be Hard: Journeys through "No Excuses" Teaching](#)

### Translate

Select Language ▼

There was an error in this

more from about 10 min and other 20-30 min sessions, this means being excited like "Pick of your pencil and YOU WILL BE REWARDED!" in between long independent work sessions. . . .

- Small-group guided reading (when we were once able to choose books that the kids would really enjoy) was replaced with small-group test-preparation sessions, where teachers were given scripted lessons and packets that mimic the reading comprehension portion of the New York State test.
- All lessons from February break onward were based on specific skills that our "data analyst" determined for us by looking at results from the mock exams.
- During the testing weeks, we had "pep-rallies" each morning in which they kids had to do chants about how they were going to ace the tests.

I could go on. I am so angry that this is what our country is allowing education to become.

-Emily

at 3:04 PM



Recommend this on Google

Labels: Brooklyn Ascend, charter chain gangs, corporate charter schools, Stephen Wilson

## 1 comment:



**Anonymous** 8:10 PM

Oooppps!!! I also have so many "weird" things to tell... I never thought that USA would have a school like this one, poor kids, coming from poor families, having a really poor education. Shame on them. That is why Ascend Learning is always looking for teachers...

Reply

Enter your comment...

Comment as: Diane Kepu ▾

Sign out

Publish

Preview

Notify me

## Links to this post

Create a Link

Newer Post

Home

Older Post

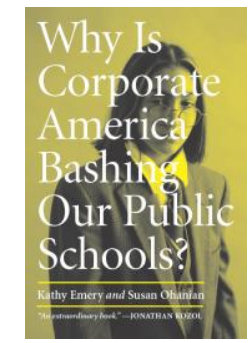
Subscribe to: Post Comments (Atom)

gadget

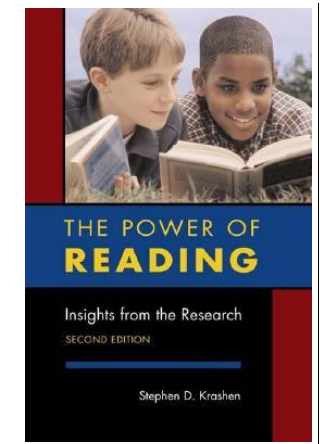
Search This Blog

Search

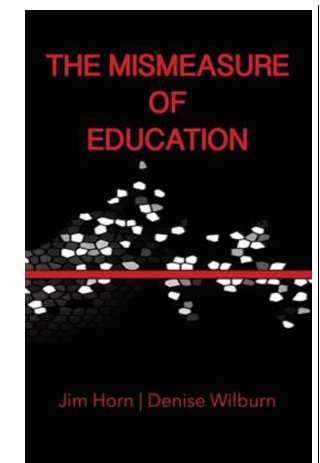
Emery and Ohanian



Stephen Krashen (2004)



Horn & Wilburn (2013)



\$27.50pa

by Doug Martin





### Follow by Email

### Contributors

Doug Martin

Jim Horn

Robert D. Skeels \*  
rdsathene

Susan O

Tim Scott

phila.ken

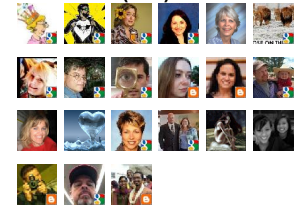
skrashen

### Total Pageviews

**4,978,775**

### Followers

Followers (714) [Next](#)



**BOYCOTT AMAZON**



### Friends

Alfie Kohn

-----  
[Americans United for Separation of Church and State](#)  
-----

[Keystone State Education Coalition](#)  
-----

[National Board on Educational Testing and Public Policy](#)  
-----

[Not Waiting for Superman](#)  
-----

[Parents 4 democratic Schools](#)  
-----

[People for the American Way](#)  
-----

[Rethinking Schools Online](#)  
-----

[Substance News](#)  
-----

[SusanOhanian.org](#)  
-----

[TeachersNetwork.org](#)  
-----

## Blog Links

[Charter School Scandals](#)  
-----

[Democurmudgeon](#)  
-----

[Dissident Voice](#)  
-----

[Education Alchemy](#)  
-----

[Education Notes Online](#)  
-----

[Education Radio](#)  
-----

[Education Talk Radio](#)  
-----

[Educational Justice](#)  
-----

[Forget the Label](#)  
-----

[Global Ideologies in Education](#)  
-----

[Higher Ed Watch Blog](#)  
-----

[Jersey Jazzman](#)  
-----

[Living and Learning in Poverty](#)  
-----

[Mark Garrison](#)  
-----

[NYC Educator](#)  
-----

[No NCLB](#)  
-----

[Peg with Pen](#)  
-----

[Perdido Street School](#)  
-----

[Perimeter Primate](#)  
-----

[Progressive Blog Digest](#)  
-----

[Right Wing Watch \(PFAW\)](#)  
-----

[Save Maine Schools](#)  
-----

[SchoolFinance101's Blog](#)  
-----

[Seattle Education](#)  
-----

[Seattle Education: News & Commentary](#)  
-----

[The Frustrated Teacher](#)  
-----

[Why Are Things the Way They Are: Rouge Forum](#)  
-----

[With a Brooklyn Accent](#)  
-----

[Wrench in the Gears](#)  
-----

## Archive

- ▶ 2016 (403)
- ▶ 2015 (569)
- ▶ 2014 (744)
- ▶ 2013 (522)
- ▶ 2012 (598)
- ▼ 2011 (680)
  - ▶ December 2011 (55)
  - ▶ November 2011 (53)
  - ▶ October 2011 (66)
  - ▶ September 2011 (52)
  - ▶ August 2011 (49)
  - ▶ July 2011 (44)
  - ▼ June 2011 (53)
    - Los Angeles  
privatization pushers  
take second bigg...
    - Oceans Dying As  
NYTimes Gives Front  
Page Environme...
    - Rhee Finds Respect  
Among Governors  
Without Any
    - Brooklyn Ascend  
Brought to Earth by  
Former Teacher...
    - Media literacy, the  
common core  
standards, and the...
    - "What Research Says  
About the Effect of  
Teachers" ...
    - Brooklyn Ascend  
Brought to Earth by  
Former Teacher...
    - Bitter Lessons from  
Chasing Better Tests
    - Squeeze out unnecessary  
testing, not librarians
    - Brooklyn Ascend  
Brought to Earth by  
Former Teacher...**
    - Please test us too: A bad  
solution to a non-  
existe...
    - The GREAT Teachers  
and Principals Act:  
Not a great...
    - Scores are Up in  
Newark--Murder  
Scores, That Is
    - Duncan's Extortion Plan  
for NCLB Waivers  
Faces Roa...
    - Wall Street  
Bottomfeeders

Circling NJ Schools

KIPP's Underwhelming  
College Completion  
Rates Are ...

Strawman argument is  
all they have

Why Diane Ravitch Is  
Marching on July 30

Duncan Supports  
Snyder's Privatization  
Plan for Mi...

Christie Continues  
Efforts to Kill Public  
Educatio...

Old News Missed But  
Worth Noting

NSBA Calls for  
Universal Relief from  
AYP, NCLB's I...

Momentum Growing for  
Save Our Schools  
Conference a...

Public Discourse about  
Public Discourse:  
Talking E...

SM Welcomes Paul  
Thomas

Poverty and education:  
New data

New Report Offers  
Withering Critique of  
MA Plan to...

Why Duncan and the  
BRT Must Go

Childhood's end

Duncan to America's  
Public Schools: Give  
Us What W...

NCTQ's LAUSD report's  
highly questionable  
veracity...

Poverty=failure

Education Reformer  
Doesn't Even Get Half  
Real

The NAACP Case  
Against NYC

Let's get serious about  
extending the school  
day

SM Welcomes Robert D.  
Skeels, SJ Writer and  
Public...

Massachusetts Teacher  
Forum Becomes the  
Paul and M...

OpineRegress: Matthew  
Yglesias' reactionary  
educat...

Giving Up BRT Buks to

GIVING UP KILL BRIDES TO  
Maintain a Real  
Teacher E...

Intended Consequences?

Testing writing: Not a  
good idea

Alter's Solution: "Throw  
Up Your Hands" and  
Put Yo...

Big Time Self-Plagiarism  
. . . Part 2

Technology upgrades for  
national tests: Is it  
wort...

The evidence on  
libraries and librarians

Coming Soon to An  
Oligarchy Near You

The invention of lying  
and educational policy

Duncan and BBC  
(Billionaire Boys'  
Club) Go After R...

A comment on Ravitch's  
NY Times article:  
School Mi...

Big Time Self-  
Plagiarism, Punked  
Web Lemmings, and...

Duncan Caves to the  
Billionaires of the For-  
Profit...

National Curriculum  
and National Testing

Tennesseans Undergo  
Propaganda Barrage  
from Corpo...

▶ May 2011 (59)

▶ April 2011 (51)

▶ March 2011 (65)

▶ February 2011 (66)

▶ January 2011 (67)

▶ 2010 (838)

▶ 2009 (668)

▶ 2008 (460)

▶ 2007 (745)

▶ 2006 (763)

▶ 2005 (253)

Articles  
and  
Reviews

2.0 The Paul  
Wellstone  
Memorial

Family and  
Students  
Testing  
Protection  
Act

20 Reasons  
to Eliminate  
No Child  
Left Behind

-----  
Caught  
Between  
Hope and  
Despair: An  
Essay  
Review.  
Review of  
Grant,  
Gerald.  
(2009).  
Hope and  
Despair in  
the  
American  
City: Why  
There Are  
No Bad  
Schools in  
Raleigh.

Jay Mathews  
and His  
History of  
Testing for  
Dummies

LEAP-ing  
Toward  
Accountabili  
ty. . .(pdf)

National  
Math Panel  
and Modern  
Day  
Eugenics

National  
Security  
Requires  
Corporate  
Welfare?

-----  
NCLB  
Testing  
Hysteria at  
Full  
Maturity:  
Ideological  
Blindness,  
Color  
Blindness, or  
No Blindness  
At All? (ppt)

-----  
NCLB,  
Highly-  
Qualified  
Teachers,  
and  
Ignorance as  
Knowledge

Personal  
Renewal and  
Professional  
Growth for  
Teachers

Protecting  
the Rights of



Racists to  
Become  
Teachers

Review of  
"Reading the  
naked truth:  
Literacy,  
legislation,  
and lies"

Teacher  
Education Is  
Out of  
Touch, and I  
Am Proud of  
It

The  
Education  
Reformation  
of NCLB and  
the Crusade  
to Kill the  
Public  
Schools

The KULT of  
KIPP: An  
Essay  
Review

---

To What  
Question is  
More Testing  
the Correct  
Answer?

What Is Left  
Behind

Why  
Obama's Ed  
Reform Plan  
Won't Work  
(WaPo)

---

Why Some  
Folks Love  
Charter  
Schools