

MLK 2013

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The Education of Michelle Rhee

I chose to watch the video on Michelle Rhee and her work in the DC public school system. Growing up, I had extremely positive experiences in school and my school district was never short of resources. My teachers were adequate and the halls were devoid of violence or drugs. For that reason, it's always interesting for me to learn about disenfranchised districts in the US and how their educational leaders are attempting to ameliorate the situation.

Michelle Rhee has been on my radar since last spring when I wrote a paper analyzing the New Jersey state control of the Newark school district. When discussing recent efforts to raise scores and cut ties from Trenton, Michelle Rhee's successes and work came up in my research.

The most interesting part of the video for me to see was her ruthless approach to improving schools by terminating principals and administrators who weren't up to her standards. My mother is a high school Spanish teacher, so having a personal connection to someone in a teaching situation made it difficult for me to watch some of the videos and not dislike Rhee's methods. I can't imagine someone firing my mother for test scores that were too low. While I am confident in her ability to teach and maintain a strict learning environment, she has lost her job in the past due to budget cuts and it was a hard period of time for her to get back on her feet. Seeing a similar thing happen to many hard working people tinges my view of Rhee a bit, but in the end I am confident that her strong conviction and approach is the type of leadership America needs more and more.

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