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**Education Policy Center Newsletter**

**From The Independence Institute**

**September 6, 2012**

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**Friday TV Alert: Exposing Social Activism in Denver Teacher Evaluations**

We invite you to tune in to [*The Devil’s Advocate with Jon Caldara*](http://cpt12.org/tv_schedule/program_details.cfm?series_id=35206794), on Colorado Public Television (Channel 12 in Denver), **Friday, September 7, at 8:30 PM**. Tomorrow’s program features a discussion with Denver Public Schools teacher **John Peterson** and Education Policy Center director **Pam Benigno** about controversial new language promoting social activism in DPS teacher evaluations. The show is scheduled to repeat **Sunday, September 9, at 11:30 AM**, and **Monday, September 10, at 12:30 PM.**

According to [DPS’ newly-revised pilot evaluation framework](http://bit.ly/O3i8lb) for effective instruction, all district teachers will receive the highest rating for encouraging students to “challenge and question the dominant culture” and “take social action to change/ improve society or work for social justice.” Students are expected to “appear comfortable challenging the dominant culture in respectful ways.” Peterson expressed his concerns with the new language in [an August 29 9News story](http://www.9news.com/news/article/286103/188/Teacher-questions-new-evaluation-system-over-civil-disobedience) that was later highlighted as a national story by [The Daily Caller](http://dailycaller.com/2012/09/03/denver-public-schools-pilot-program-to-push-social-action-social-justice/). Pam also discussed the revelations about DPS on [an episode of the Amy Oliver Show](http://education.i2i.org/2012/08/amy-oliver-show-denver-teachers-judged-on-encouraging-social-activism/).

More from Ed Is Watching:

[Please Don’t Send a Class of Little Eddies on an Occupy Denver Field Trip](http://www.ediswatching.org/2012/08/please-dont-send-a-class-of-little-eddies-on-an-occupy-denver-field-trip/)

**AFT Union Loses Battle to Preserve Dougco Power and Privilege**

As reported both by [9News](http://www.9news.com/news/article/287430/339/DougCo-School-Board-cuts-ties-with-union) and [Ed News Colorado](http://www.ednewscolorado.org/2012/09/06/46309-dougco-board-backs-off-ballot-measures), the Douglas County Board of Education last night formally adopted policies to end teachers union exclusive recognition and dues collection, as well as taxpayer funding of union officers. The decision not to place the issues on the ballot for voters enables the Board to focus on moving forward with other bold reform initiatives.

After the [local AFT’s role in opposing the district’s Choice Scholarship Program came to light](http://education.i2i.org/2012/08/emails-expose-dougco-unions-voucher-opposition/), the national AFT has lost the battle to [preserve union power in Dougco](http://www.ediswatching.org/2012/08/aft-national-teachers-union-resolved-to-protect-power-in-douglas-county/). Meanwhile, our senior policy analyst **Ben DeGrow** [commented in several venues](http://education.i2i.org/2012/08/degrow-more-than-budget-cuts-behind-falling-teachers-union-membership/) on the [significant membership losses](http://watchdog.org/47330/teachers-dropping-out-of-states-largest-union/) experienced by the Colorado Education Association (CEA), the state’s largest teachers union. DeGrow also noted [the conflict between union rhetoric and priorities](http://www.coloradopeakpolitics.com/diary/1677/trick-or-treat-teachers-union-rhetoric-vs-priorities) as CEA urged its members to join in anti-school board protest last night in Dougco.

More from Ed Is Watching:

[Dougco School Board Challenges Union Leaders, May Seek Voters’ Input](http://www.ediswatching.org/2012/08/dougco-school-board-challenges-union-leaders-may-seek-voters-input/)

[How Much Colo. Teachers Union Member Losses Tied to Greater Options?](http://www.ediswatching.org/2012/08/how-much-colo-teachers-union-member-losses-tied-to-greater-options/)

**Watch John Corcoran, The Teacher Who Couldn’t Read**

On August 2 the Independence Institute hosted a special Brown Bag Lunch event with national literacy champion **John Corcoran**, who earned fame for his compelling memoir *The Teacher Who Couldn’t Read*. If you missed his inspirational story of overcoming adult illiteracy with our audience[, audio and video of the event are available on our site](http://education.i2i.org/2012/08/literacy-champion-john-corcoran-shares-inspiring-tale-of-triumph/). You also can watch Corcoran share his story on [the August 17 episode of *The Devil’s Advocate*](http://education.i2i.org/2012/08/devils-advocate-meet-the-teacher-who-couldnt-read/), along with guest host Pam Benigno and **Debora Scheffel** from the State Board of Education discussing ideas and strategies to improve literacy for Colorado students.

**DeGrow, Farmer Discuss Back-to-School Union Opt-Out Periods**

In his new regular weekly spot discussing K-12 issues on the [Amy Oliver Show](http://www.1310kfka.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=61&Itemid=84) (Wednesdays at 10 AM), Ben DeGrow [hosted a back-to-school conversation](http://education.i2i.org/2012/08/amy-oliver-show-teachers-have-options-at-back-to-school-time/) with **Tim Farmer**, policy director for the Professional Association of Colorado Educators. The beginning of the school year (August and/or September) is the only time teachers in many Colorado school districts have to exercise their membership choice and opt out of a union. District-by-district information is [available on our Independent Teachers website](http://www.independentteachers.org/revoking-membership/).

**Eddie Tackles Colorado K-12 Funding Debate**

Also in August, the need to tackle K-12 finance myths and challenges took stage as our young blogger Eddie noted [national support for substantive reforms over school tax increases](http://www.ediswatching.org/2012/08/fordham-reports-adds-popular-views-to-debate-on-k-12-budget-realities/), the state School Finance Partnership’s [failure to inspire real reform hopes](http://www.ediswatching.org/2012/08/colorado-school-finance-partnership-report-fails-to-inspire-real-reform-hopes/), and a [skewed story from the School Finance Project’s latest summary data](http://www.ediswatching.org/2012/08/foiled-again-colorado-school-finance-project-data-summary-skews-story/). Other highlights from Ed Is Watching since our last newsletter include:

[Let’s Respect and Empower Parents with Choices, Not Look Down on Them](http://www.ediswatching.org/2012/08/lets-respect-and-empower-parents-with-choices-not-look-down-on-them/)

[Eagle County Teacher-Technology Controversy Calls for Blended Learning](http://www.ediswatching.org/2012/08/eagle-county-teacher-technology-controversy-calls-for-blended-learning/)

[State Board OKs Two More Falcon Innovation Schools; One Banishes Tenure](http://www.ediswatching.org/2012/08/state-board-oks-two-more-falcon-innovation-schools-one-banishes-tenure/)

[Competing with Vouchers, Indiana Public Schools Step Up Marketing Efforts](http://www.ediswatching.org/2012/08/competing-with-vouchers-indiana-public-schools-step-up-marketing-efforts/)

[Washington Post Calls for Serious Changes to Teacher Pay and Tenure](http://www.ediswatching.org/2012/08/washington-post-calls-for-serious-changes-to-teacher-pay-and-tenure/)

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