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**Education Policy Center Newsletter**

**From The Independence Institute**

**October 10, 2012**

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**DPS Removes Social Activism Language from Teacher Evaluations**

After Center director Pam Benigno’s work brought the issue to light and a public outcry ensued, Denver Public Schools has decided to revise controversial language promoting social activism through its teacher evaluation system. DPS superintendent Tom Boasberg explained on the Sept. 27 Mike Rosen Show that the language [“didn’t capture the appropriate intent.”](http://watchdog.org/57582/degrow-denver-school-chief-says-social-activism-language-didnt-capture-intent/) An Oct. 8 *Washington Times* story quotes Benigno [calling on parents to remain vigilant](http://education.i2i.org/2012/10/washington-times-quotes-benigno-on-dps-teacher-evaluation-controversy/). She earlier highlighted the issue in on-air talks with [Rosen](http://downloads.iheartradio.com/media/station_content/668/Rosen09-11-12-10AM_1347383606_24492.mp3), [Amy Oliver](http://education.i2i.org/2012/08/amy-oliver-show-denver-teachers-judged-on-encouraging-social-activism/) and Backbone Radio.

9News reporter Nelson Garcia [broke the story on Aug. 29](http://education.i2i.org/2012/08/pam-benigno-challenges-political-agenda-in-denver-teacher-evaluations/), as DPS teacher John Peterson expressed concerns about earning a distinguished evaluation rating for encouraging students to “challenge and question the dominant culture” and “take social action to change/ improve society or work for social justice.” Peterson and Benigno [appeared as guests on *The Devil’s Advocate*](http://education.i2i.org/2012/09/devils-advocate-denver-public-schools-or-occupy-training-camps/) to discuss the DPS evaluation controversy. The story also received prominent coverage in the [*Daily Caller*](http://dailycaller.com/2012/09/03/denver-public-schools-pilot-program-to-push-social-action-social-justice/), [*Colorado Observer*](http://thecoloradoobserver.com/2012/10/dps-backpedals-on-anti-establishment-agenda-after-outcry/), and [*School Reform News*](http://news.heartland.org/newspaper-article/2012/10/08/denver-retracts-controversial-activist-teacher-evaluations)*.*

**DeGrow Contributes Facts to School Tax Hike Debate**

More than two dozen Colorado school districts are approaching voters this fall with requests to increase taxes and/or debt. In a colorful, brief new issue backgrounder, senior policy analyst Ben DeGrow shows how in recent years [local household incomes have been hit harder](http://education.i2i.org/2012/09/colorado-k-12-tax-hikes-challenged-economy-squeezes-household-incomes-harder-than-school-budgets/) than school budgets in the five largest tax-proposing districts. He provided some elaboration in [a recorded interview](http://www.onenewsnow.com/education/2012/10/02/taxpayers-hurting-done-with-financing-failure) with American Family Radio news reporter Bob Kellogg. On his weekly segment for the Amy Oliver Show, DeGrow also [interviewed Sheila Atwell of Jefferson County Students First Action](http://education.i2i.org/2012/09/amy-oliver-show-reforms-vs-tax-hikes-in-jeffco-schools/) about her district’s mill and bond issues.

More from Ed Is Watching:

[Upward Spending, Revenue Trends Add Context to Tax-Hiking School Districts](http://www.ediswatching.org/2012/09/upward-spending-revenue-trends-add-context-to-tax-hiking-school-districts/)

[Want to Improve K-12 Productivity? Avoid Baumol’s Disease Like Plague](http://www.ediswatching.org/2012/10/want-to-improve-k-12-productivity-avoid-baumols-disease-like-plague/)

**Adams 12 Union Makes Noise, Parents Get Security Escort**

Visible challenges with Colorado teachers unions aren’t isolated to Douglas County. [Security officers escorted two parents](http://watchdog.org/55954/degrow-co-security-officials-protect-parents-from-union-protesters/) out of the Sept. 5 Adams 12 board meeting for their own protection after they stated views that clashed with the crowd of union protesters. About 400 union members from seven different districts, [directed by CEA president Kerrie Dallman](http://coloradopeakpolitics.com/2012/09/12/cea-looks-anything-but-collaborative-in-adams-12/), showed up to wave signs and make noise. They were protesting the school board’s June decision to require a modest increase in teacher pension contributions to match other employee groups. [One parent, Joe Hein, told his story](http://education.i2i.org/2012/09/amy-oliver-show-taxpayer-gets-protection-from-union-protesters/) in a radio interview with Ben DeGrow, and later [was applauded by teachers](http://www.ediswatching.org/2012/09/adams-12-teachers-applaud-union-bargaining-transparency-coming-soon/) at the Sept. 19 board meeting when he called for transparency in union negotiations.

More from Ed Is Watching

[From Schoolhouse Bullying to Union Bullying: Adams 12 Taxpayer Speaks Out](http://www.ediswatching.org/2012/09/from-schoolhouse-bullying-to-union-bullying-adams-12-taxpayer-speaks-out/)

***Won’t Back Down* Movie Brings Education Reform into Mainstream**

The movie *Won’t Back Down* opened recently to acclaim from education reformers. In his review for Ed News Colorado, Ben DeGrow lauded the film for bringing the education reform message into the mainstream [“with pathos and sincerity.”](http://www.ednewscolorado.org/2012/10/01/48527-voices-movies-vital-message-we-will-not-wait) He later discussed the film in [an on-air interview with Ed News editor Julie Poppen](http://education.i2i.org/2012/10/won%E2%80%99t-back-down-new-movie-pushes-school-reform-into-mainstream/). The film’s release also provided the opportunity for DeGrow to [comment on growing Democratic support for school reform](http://education.i2i.org/2012/10/citizen-link-includes-comment-on-growing-democratic-support-for-school-reform/) on a national Citizen Link broadcast. Thanks to the Daniels Fund for sponsoring the Sept. 27 screening of *Won’t Back Down*. If you’ve missed the powerful movie so far, [check your local theater listings](http://www.google.com/movies) to watch it while it lasts.

More from Ed Is Watching:

[Won’t Back Down Movie Makes Cool Kids of Education Reformers Like Me](http://www.ediswatching.org/2012/10/wont-back-down-movie-makes-cool-kids-of-education-reformers-like-me/)

[“Parent Trigger” Debate Triggered as Won’t Back Down Movie Opens in Colorado](http://www.ediswatching.org/2012/09/parent-trigger-debate-triggered-as-wont-back-down-movie-opens-in-colorado/)

**Center Staff Sound Off as Radio Hosts**

Yesterday our Hispanic education coordinator Raaki Garcia-Ulam launched her new weekly Spanish-language talk radio program, the Raaki Garcia Show, on [AM 1150 KNRV](http://www.onda1150am.com/). The one-hour show (Tuesdays at 11 AM) will feature guests and conversations about a wide range of relevant, timely issues—including education. [Read the English-language media release highlighting the show’s debut for more information.](http://education.i2i.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Media-Release-Raaki-Garcia-Show-10-08-12.pdf)

Meanwhile, Ben DeGrow continues his weekly stint hosting half-hour K-12 education radio talks on [AM 1310 KFKA’s Amy Oliver Show](http://www.1310kfka.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=61&Itemid=84) (Wednesdays at 10 AM). Besides the recent segments highlighted above, he also interviewed Scott Laband from Colorado Succeeds [about the new READ Act and early childhood literacy in Colorado](http://education.i2i.org/2012/09/amy-oliver-show-promoting-early-literacy-in-colorado/). If you have any ideas for future guests or topics—not to mention a catchy, education-themed name for the segment—please contact Ben at ben@i2i.org.

**Eddie Rounds Up the K-12 Scene**

Last but certainly not least, young Eddie rounds it all up with a variety of insightful and entertaining blog posts on Colorado and national K-12 topics:

[AFT’s Randi Weingarten Steps Forward as Face of Opposition to Bold Dougco Reforms](http://www.ediswatching.org/2012/10/afts-randi-weingarten-steps-forward-as-face-of-opposition-to-bold-dougco-reforms/)

[Is This Conservative Alternative to Federal Education Policy Just Too Sensible?](http://www.ediswatching.org/2012/09/is-this-conservative-alternative-to-federal-education-policy-just-too-sensible/)

[Finding Winners, Losers, and (Weekend!) Bright Spots in Chicago Teachers Strike](http://www.ediswatching.org/2012/09/finding-winners-losers-and-weekend-bright-spots-in-chicago-teachers-strike/)

[Will Modern Skyview Campus, Choice Set Stage for Mapleton Success?](http://www.ediswatching.org/2012/10/will-modern-skyview-campus-choice-set-stage-for-mapleton-academic-success/)

[NY High School Success Calls for Look at Old-Fashioned Writing Instruction](http://www.ediswatching.org/2012/10/ny-high-school-success-calls-for-look-at-old-fashioned-writing-instruction/)

[Idaho Voters to Consider Tossing Out Yummy Education Reform Tater Tots](http://www.ediswatching.org/2012/09/idaho-voters-to-consider-tossing-out-yummy-education-reform-tater-tots/)

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