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“For about two years now, President Obama and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan have been co-opting much of the GOP playbook on education. They support charter schools, they endorse merit pay. They decry teacher tenure and seniority. On alternating Thursdays, they bravely challenge the teachers’ unions on School choice: Democrats for Education Reform (and their 501(c)(4), Education Sector, of the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) and Michael Petrilli of the Fordham Institute. Later in the article, Duncan receives praise from these conservative pundits for embracing spending limitations on American schools and welcoming—in place of those resources—“productivity” increases.

The Duncan-Obama approach should sound familiar, even to those who do not follow education policy discussions. Defund, deregulate, de-unionize, and shift to the private sector. Reallocate policy-making authority from democratic institutions to a wealthy oligarchy. Corporate-endowed think tanks like AEI have been successfully promoting this road map for everything else, so why not education?

But education is different in one disquieting way: many self-identified progressives have climbed on board the bandwagon. Some, in fact, are driving. Although the economic analyses offered by groups like the Brookings Institution and the Center for American Progress generally explore how to soften the sharp edges of market capitalism, their respective education divisions are busily promoting free-market policies in our children’s schools. Arianna Huffington warns against deregulation of the financial sector,

but she’s all for it in the educational sector. Nicholas Kristof worries about a “hedge fund republic,” but joins in the hedge-fund managers’ campaign to criticize teacher-union contracts. Jonathan Alter of *Newsweek* sees dangers in unregulated hedge fund and the National Council of La Raza.

The most engaged in this neoliberal education campaign are organizations focused on School choice: Democrats for Education Reform (and their 501(c)(4), Education Sector, of the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) and the Progressive Policy Institute; as well as service-oriented groups like New Leaders for New Schools, the Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPPu



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reviewer's catalog of fourteen major errors, he notes that actual costs are exaggerated by a factor of two while immediate and long-term well-documented effects are underreported or not reported accurately

