

WHY IS IMPORTANT THAT TEACHERS RECOGNIZE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN INDEPENDENT, PEER-REVIEWED, UNBIASED RESEARCH, AND THE ADVOCACY RESEARCH THAT MINIFORMS AND IS PREVALENT IN EDUCATION?



After ten years of submitting to corporate reformers commanding education Policy, public school teachers have earned the right to question, challenge, and even reject their inadequate schemes. By adopting the motto “Every claim requires evidence, extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence,” teachers can give the first step to reclaim their rightful role as stakeholders in the important goal of improving public education for all.

Despite their lack of scientific value and, in some instances the lack of logic or coherence, think tank reports are widely disseminated through mainstream media outlets. To a remarkable degree, they shape and drive news coverage of key education topics in state legislatures and Congress, as well as in the press (including Education Week). Their findings become part of the conventional wisdom without ever having been subject to expert review. This may be good partisan politics, but it is terrible social science, and it harms efforts to improve the nation’s schools.

Unfortunately, academic experts rarely review or criticize think tank reports. As a rule, social scientists consider most of these reports to be of little value and best ignored. The primary purpose of social science review and criticism is to further a deliberative process in which knowledge is advanced, methods improved, and conclusions tested. Most think tank reports are, from this perspective, literally a waste of time. Yet for millions of children and their parents, teachers, and communities, these reports are of vital importance, since they are repeatedly used by policymakers to shape the nature and scope of available educational opportunities.

Because the stakes for America’s children are so high, the two academic centers with which we’re Associated—the Education Policy Research Unit at Arizona State University and the Education and the Public Interest Center at the University of Colorado at Boulder—together launched the Think Tank Review Project (www.thinktankreview.org) to provide expert reviews of think tank reports. The reviews, written for a general audience, assess reports in much the same fashion as would a reviewer for a scholarly, peer-reviewed journal. From Ed Review “Thrutiness in Education”

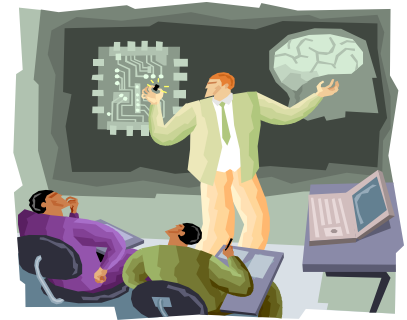
<http://nepc.colorado.edu/files/edweek2-28-07.pdf>

Do you know the difference between independent or advocacy research?

Sergio Flores

Test your knowledge before reading the information from each link.

The assertions below have been the unquestioned core beliefs of the corporate reformers. Federal and state policies have been predicated on these statements. What is your professional opinion on the following statements? Ask yourself, what solid, academic evidence do you have to support your beliefs on each claim? Finally, ask yourself, why do you believe it?



Some corporate reformers' claims	evidence
Teachers are the most important factor affecting student achievement.	http://www.ewa.org/site/PageServer?pagename=research_teacher_effectiveness2
Value-added estimations are reliable and stable.	http://www.ewa.org/site/PageServer?pagename=research_teacher_effectiveness3
Teacher's characteristics such as academic achievement and years of experience don't have a positive effect student' achievement	http://www.ewa.org/site/PageServer?pagename=briefs_effectiveness
Merit pay for teachers produces better student achievement or retains more teachers.	http://www.ewa.org/site/PageServer?pagename=briefs_effectiveness
Students in not unionized teachers' states do better than students in unionized states.	http://www.ewa.org/site/PageServer?pagename=briefs_effectiveness
There is convincing evidence that Common Core Standards is a valid and meaningful reform tool	http://nepc.colorado.edu/files/PB-NatStans-Mathis.pdf
Research and evaluation literature has produced clear and unambiguous factual statements about achievement due to school choice	http://greatlakescenter.org/docs/Research/2008charter/policy_briefs/10.pdf
Reliable think tanks such as CAT) institute and the Heritage Foundation produce valid research to claim that the public education system will run more efficiently if it was privatized.	http://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/the-privatization-infatuation
Reforms to NCLB, such as "Race to the Top," Obama Administration waivers and the Senate's Education Committee's Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) reauthorization bill, address many of the law's fundamental flaws.	http://www.fairtest.org/NCLB-lost-decade-report-home

Teachers deserve the truth! Many current failing reforms make claims that are not sufficiently substantiated by peer-reviewed research. For NEA members to avoid being misled, and take a proactive role in education reforms, it is vital to develop two habits. One, they must recognize valid from invalid research, as well as warranted from unwarranted claims. And two, NEA members must take the professional assertiveness of demanding facts and evidence. The present and future of public education, teachers, and millions of American families depend on utilizing mechanisms that can guarantee the academic integrity of a reforming process, of which teachers are most interested stakeholders.