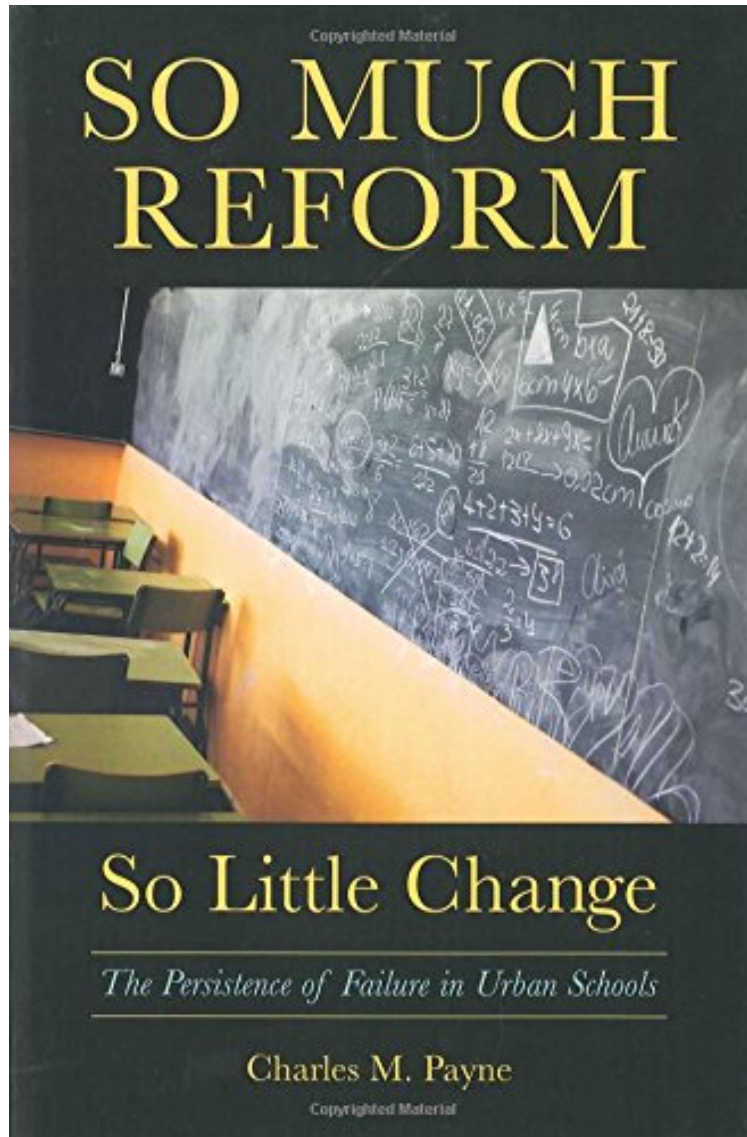


# So Much Reform, So Little Change: The Persistence of Failure in Urban Schools

Charles M. Payne

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**Charles M. Payne : So Much Reform, So Little Change: The Persistence of Failure in Urban Schools** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised So Much Reform, So Little Change: The Persistence of Failure in Urban Schools:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Insightful and Accurate By CustomerA very insightful analysis of the problems in school reform, and one I am citing extensively in my thesis for a master's degree. I would critique some of

the author's conclusions, mainly his explanation of teachers giving up on successful change efforts and not continuing the work to maintain those changes once accomplished. He describes the reason for this as being almost a clinical depression and hopelessness of inner-city school teachers. As an inner city school teachers, I can only say he is only partially right in his description of that as a cause, but perhaps not true in all or even most cases. We get one program going that makes great changes, as the author proposes, but then we don't stay consistent with the habits that caused that new change. It is a correct observation - but not caused by discouragement in the cases I have seen and experienced. It is simply unsustainable, since we can't keep 'showing up for lunch' to the professional development meeting or to monitor the playground or cafeteria regularly, which we started doing, because a student came to our room crying about her father molesting her, or we find out about a student looking to beat up another student, and we have to put our presence at lunch on hold to handle that emergency and see it through because it is often legally impossible to separate ourselves from the situation to tend to these ongoing 'duties'. There are SO MANY such emergencies in inner-city schools on a daily basis, that such new changes that require teacher's regular participation to maintain are often unsustainable. So we try to re-think how we maintain this great new program, since teachers often have such legitimate reasons for skipping out on the beneficial events, and we all acknowledge the good the new changes do, but within the context of an environment of constant emergencies demanding immediate attention, these new programs demanding our regular presence are simply unsustainable. Other than this, I can't fault a single observation that the author makes. Very insightful, well-researched, and correct from someone who both researches on the topic as well as works and has worked in an inner city school for 20 years. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A well developed critique of the school reform movement By Amitra Schwols Mr. Payne does a remarkable job in describing the problems facing the schools in the past 20 years. Without laying the blame at any one door, he manages to explain why so many school reforms have failed. At times the book is depressing and frustrating with descriptions of system failures, but he still manages to bring a hint of optimism in as well towards the end. I read another reviewer that said that he read this book for a graduate class - I wish it had been required reading for mine. After reading the conservative views on education (more choice! accountability!) and the liberal views (more resources! equity!) this book would have been fantastic to read as a critique of both sides. If you're interested in school reform or educational public policy, this book is a must read. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A must read for any school leader and/or staff in ... By KCA must read for any school leader and/or staff in a low-morale school serving high poverty and minority neighborhoods.

This frank and courageous book explores the persistence of failure in today's urban schools. At its heart is the argument that most education policy discussions are disconnected from the daily realities of urban schools, especially those in poor and beleaguered neighborhoods. Charles M. Payne argues that we have failed to account fully for the weakness of the social infrastructure and the often dysfunctional organizational environments of urban schools and school systems. The result is that liberals and conservatives alike have spent a great deal of time pursuing questions of limited practical value in the effort to improve city schools. Payne carefully delineates these stubborn and intertwined sources of failure in urban school reform efforts of the past two decades. Yet while his book is unsparing in its exploration of the troubled recent history of urban school reform, Payne also describes himself as guardedly optimistic. He describes how, in the last decade, we have developed real insights into the roots of school failure, and into how some individual schools manage to improve. He also examines recent progress in understanding how particular urban districts have established successful reforms on a larger scale.

A brilliant, thoughtful, and provocative analysis. Charles Payne shows why almost thirty years of school reform has brought so little change to urban public schools. Rooted in the reality of the Chicago Public Schools, Payne's book contains lessons that are relevant to schools everywhere. --Pedro Noguera, New York University This is a wonderful book, absolutely essential reading for educators, policymakers, and community and civic leaders who are committed to creating schools that promote high achievement for Black and Latino students. Payne helps us understand the challenges and possibilities for the transformation of urban schools. This is a smart book one that should change our conversation about the reform of urban schools. --Theresa Perry, Simmons College Charles Payne's book is likely to anger teachers and administrators, conservatives and liberals, school reformers and the foundations that fund them. All will see themselves depicted as naive about what it takes to improve urban schools. Many will see themselves depicted as part of the problem rather than part of the solution. At the same time no reader who has spent much time in urban schools will deny the accuracy of Payne's insights for example, about why improving high schools has proved so much more difficult than improving elementary schools, why more resources alone won't produce successful urban schools, and why the choice of a particular whole school reform program is not the critical decision. While his analysis is deeply sobering, Payne shows that improvement in urban schools is possible and indeed that significant improvements have already taken place. --Richard J. Murnane, Harvard Graduate School of Education From the Back Cover This frank and courageous book explores the persistence of failure in today's urban schools. At its heart is the argument that most education policy discussions are disconnected from the daily realities of urban schools, especially

those in poor and beleaguered neighborhoods. The result is that liberals and conservatives alike have spent a great deal of time pursuing questions of limited practical value in the effort to improve city schools. Yet while Charles Payne is unsparing in his exploration of the troubled recent history of urban school reform, he also describes himself as guardedly optimistic. This book will be required reading for everyone interested in the plight and the future of urban schools. A brilliant, thoughtful, and provocative analysis. Charles Payne shows why almost thirty years of school reform has brought so little change to urban public schools. Rooted in the reality of the Chicago Public Schools, Payne's book contains lessons that are relevant to schools everywhere. Pedro Noguera, New York University Charles Payne's book is likely to anger teachers and administrators, conservatives and liberals, school reformers and the foundations that fund them. All will see themselves depicted as naive about what it takes to improve urban schools. Many will see themselves depicted as part of the problem rather than part of the solution. At the same time no reader who has spent much time in urban schools will deny the accuracy of Payne's insights for example, about why improving high schools has proved so much more difficult than improving elementary schools, why more resources alone won't produce successful urban schools, and why the choice of a particular whole school reform program is not the critical decision. While his analysis is deeply sobering, Payne shows that improvement in urban schools is possible and indeed that significant improvements have already taken place. Richard J. Murnane, Harvard Graduate School of Education This is a wonderful book, absolutely essential reading for educators, policymakers, and community and civic leaders who are committed to creating schools that promote high achievement for Black and Latino students. Payne helps us understand the challenges and possibilities for the transformation of urban schools. This is a smart book one that should change our conversation about the reform of urban schools. Theresa Perry, Simmons College Charles M. Payne is the Frank P. Hixon Professor in the School of Social Service Administration at the University of Chicago. He is the author of numerous books, including *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition in the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement*.