

Gottlieb Calls for Systemic View of Reform

In the Denver Post article on Commissioner Jones (see above), Alan Gottlieb of the Piton Foundation argues for a whole systems view of education reform.

"There is a growing sense of urgency that the whole system is on the verge of collapse ... and you can't fix it by tinkering with it or nibbling around the edges," said Gottlieb. "We have to rethink the way we do it."

http://www.denverpost.com/ci_6069832

Gottlieb, who edits HeadFirst Colorado magazine, wrote about the response to his quote in the June 9, 2007 HeadFirst eNewsletter:

Even though the quote was taken a bit out of context, that's probably what I said, and it's even more or less what I think, though expressed in a singularly inarticulate fashion (which I blame on myself, not the reporter). What's interesting is that two people I consider friends who work for professional organizations – a school district and an interest group – called to see if I really said that, and if so, why. I guess something about “whole system on the verge of collapse” caught their attention.

OK, so maybe I engaged in a bit of hyperbole. But only a little. Yes, there are many places where school systems are working just fine – places where the kids come from middle- or upper-middle-class backgrounds and the challenges are manageable. Schools in the more affluent suburbs are peachy.

But it's in the inner cities and low-income, inner-ring suburbs (are you listening, Aurora?) where the battle for public education has been joined. And face it, folks: things aren't going so well. There are pockets of intriguing innovation in places like New York, Chicago, and, let's hope, Denver. But the landscape is bleak, and yes, the system will collapse if people don't start seeing improvement, and quickly.

We're all tired of the reform flavor-of-the-month, the latest innovation that will fix everything. Instead of new flavors, we need to be opening new restaurants. And in many cases they need to be under new management.

- Alan Gottlieb