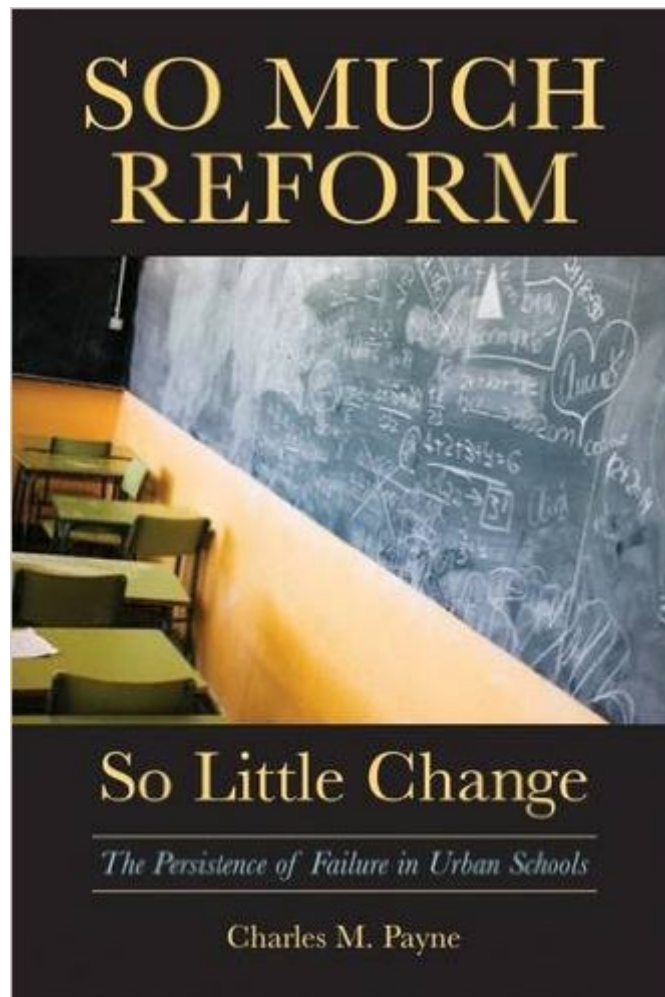


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So Much Reform, So Little Change: The Persistence Of Failure In Urban Schools



Synopsis

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.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Our national dialogue about race, poverty and education reform would take a giant leap forward if reporters and interviewers would bring Charles Payne into the discussion. This is one of the most thoughtful books on education and poverty that I've encountered in some time. Wisdom. That's one way of describing Payne's perspective. He has read seemingly everything--every study on

education in every city, by every foundation--and he sorts through this mountain of research in a helpful and honest way. I'm a big fan of Payne as his previous work, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, which analyzes the civil rights movement in Greenwood Mississippi in the Mississippi Delta. In that work and in this one Payne combines the skills of a historian, a social scientist and a novelist. Several points stay with me almost a year after reading this book: 1.) The fragility of progress--yes, inner-city African American children can make progress in educational achievement without changes in poverty. But such progress is often quite quite fragile and gets reversed quite easily. 2.) The story of the Chicago schools where principals from the most successful schools were promoted to administrators, and their former schools lost ground. The skills of a good principals are tricky and difficult to identify apparently. 3.) The negative attitudes of a group of African American teachers who greeted the white trainer from James Comer's School Development Program. If anyone doubts that blacks can be racist and racist in a thoroughly self-destructive and backward way, read Payne's analysis of how these teachers brought all kinds of suspicion to training sessions led by white people. 4.) Payne's willingness to offer critical words about poor people.

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