

# Reaction paper on diance ravitch's : the death and life of the great american sch...

[Education](#)



There has been much turmoil within the past few decades with regards to the best means of effecting a better quality of education among the stakeholders of America's youth. Moreover, seeking to briefly encapsulate the many different perspectives and arguments which are being argued with relation to such a topic would necessarily require a dissertation length response. However, for purposes of this brief analysis and book summary/critique, the author is specifically interested in analyzing one such argument that exists regarding the topic which is presented by Diane Ravitch in her book *The Death and Life of the Great American School System*. As such, it will be the purpose of this work to discuss and analyze some of the main points and key determinations that Ravitch makes within her book concerning the American educational system. Ultimately, Ravitch beings her work by giving a brief biography of what interested her within the educational sphere in the first place. As such, she relates to the reader a story concerning her own teacher, Ruby Ratcliff. Ruby Ratcliff is something of the archetypical teacher as she both encourages and molds the students under her care to exceed beyond the bounds that they might have otherwise set for themselves. The exemplification of Ruby Ratcliff as an archetype for what should be is utilized partly due to the fact that Ratcliff existed prior to the federal testing and standardization movement had fully gotten under way; as such, she represents something of a pristine approach to education that has subsequently been lost in the maze of reporting and testing requirements that currently exist. Ravitch goes on to exemplify the fact that the NCLB is ultimately a useless branch of the Department of Education as it only serves the goal of measuring and punishing; rather than educating.

Whereas Ravitch has a background in educational administration and had served under two prior presidents, she fully knows what aspects of the teacher student interaction have the most possibility for affecting a positive change. In such a manner of understanding, Ravitch produces an alternative plan in which a return to direct and local interaction of students and teachers clears many of the unnecessary and useless constraints that mandatory and incessant testing has imposed (Ravitch, 2011). Ravitch states that such an approach, although somewhat radical by standards of our time, can directly be linked to a successful model that was employed prior to the politicization of education which has taken place within the past several decades. Finally, Ravitch discusses the issue and problem that “accountability”, as it is currently understood, places upon the educational system. Ravitch argues that although accountability is good in theory, the level and extent to which the term is understood within the given dynamic of education has utterly been lost. Rather than providing a level of accountability to the student to perform at the very peak of levels, the accountability that continual testing, examinations, and federal standards have imposed is merely accountability for accountability’s sake. In such a manner, Ravitch argues that a far more equitable and reasonable approach for effecting the ultimate goals of the educational system would be to bring this runaway from of accountability back to the student/teacher relationship; rather than letting it be defined by a frantic dash by teachers to meet state/federal standards multiple times during each and every school year. Finally, such an approach, Ravitch argues, takes away from the teaching merits that could otherwise be instilled if a different and more effective approach was utilized. In reading the

chapters that this particular response has sought to integrate with, it has become the understanding of this student that the end to which the federal and state government have sought to achieve by implementing such a high level of standardizations within the current educational system has actually served to constrain the ability that teachers and local schools can impart relevant and important knowledge to the students/stakeholders. Due to the fact that there is but a limited amount of time within each and every class year, serving to fill it with meaningless metrics and milestones by higher authorities that have little purview of what is being taught, to whom, and at what rate, is ultimately weakening what has previously been proven to be a strong educational system. Although it should not be seen that Ravitch is fundamentally opposed to improving the level of education through aspects of government oversight, it must be understood that the current approach, precipitated over the past several decades, has ultimately failed in realizing any real progress. Reference Ravitch, D. (2011). *The death and life of the great American school system : how testing and choice are undermining education*. New York: Basic Books.