How to understand that "fawning interview" with Bill Gates – look to the World Bank

written by Lois Weiner | April 20, 2013

In her informative blog, Diane Ravitch refers, correctly,to a “fawning interview” with Bill Gates. I think we have to move beyond these visceral reactions to understand why this is occurring. And to do that, we have to look at the international picture. I’ve been told that when I discuss this international picture, it sounds like I’m describing a “conspiracy.” Heavens no! Conspiracies are secret, and this is a public project. But we have to look in the right places for the information and a good source is the World Bank, in particular its latest report, “Making schools work: New evidence on accountability reforms.” The report advocates using easily-replaced “contract teachers” who have no legal rights, linking teachers’ pay to their performance, that is, their students’ test scores, and other mechanisms to make teachers more accountable.But the report has an important shift, noting that proponents of these reforms

> should recognize up-front that accountability-oriented reforms implemented at any scale will likely face challenges, from both teachers’ unions and education bureaucracies. Working as much as possible to create coalitions for reform—and using information and communications channels to drive home the goals and benefits of the reforms—is critical…But humility and flexibility may be equally important factors. As documented in this book, not all interventions have produced improvements in learning. Policy makers—and researchers—need to be willing to admit that this is the case and be ready to try alternatives.”

We see this new stance of “humility” and “flexibility” operationalized in the interview to which Ravitch refers. It’s part of the new shift, and we should prepare for it, fast.