

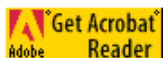


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## Letter to Editor of NY Times re: "Another Mistake by Rod Paige"

*Eric Cooper*

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NY Times  
Letter to the Editor  
February 26, 2004

To The Editor, NY Times:letters@nytimes

Your editorial of February 25, "Another Mistake by Rod Paige," does shine a spotlight on an egregious comment made by the Secretary of Education regarding an education union, but it fails to go to the heart of an issue facing any who search for sustained education reform. Rather than pointing fingers and playing the "gotcha game," all in this country must remember we are talking about attempts to rescue and support schoolchildren and youth in our nation. We hear much rhetoric about the importance of improving the educational opportunity of all schoolchildren. Yet while some leaders in this country bicker, schoolchildren are failing, are slipping through the cracks, are losing hope -- in response they cry out to for help but their voices are often drowned out by a cacophony of special interests.

Clearly the challenges of change frustrate Dr. Paige, and the union leaders you have cited on your pages. But can one imagine the utter frustration of those students who go underserved in this country? The reality for many American students is revealed by the close tracking of school success and challenged family background, which amounts to a vestige of racism and social stratification long called out in law and public rhetoric, but lurking in the daily discouragement of students -- ultimately damaging poor provision of fair opportunity to succeed. Let's continue to shine the light on the potential of education reform rather than responding to momentary lapses in speech by national leaders.

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