



September 2010

“Waiting for Superman” and Education Nation...

On Sunday, Sept. 26, 2010, several of us from NYS PTA had a unique and extraordinary opportunity to attend a special screening of the movie ‘Waiting for Superman’ and be present for the MSNBC Education Nation Town Hall Meeting. The panelists included Director Davis Guggenheim, American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten, co-hosts Joe Scarborough and Mika Brzezinski, Washington D.C. Schools Chancellor Michelle Rhee, and Harlem Children's Zone Founder and CEO Geoffrey Canada discuss "Waiting for Superman" and education.

Although this movie will elevate the conversation about education across the board in the United States, the primary focus of the movie is failing city schools, specifically highlighted were NYC, LA and Washington, D.C. The movie followed some families as they entered the lotteries for the charter schools in their areas, in order to have better educational opportunities for their children.

All but one of the students followed in the movie live in the urban areas highlighted. The one student from a suburban school district was seeking entry to a charter school not because her home school district was failing but because the charter school did not track students. The same high level of expectations for achievement existed for all the children who attend that charter school as opposed to the traditional tracking of students that exists in most schools.

The end of the movie was extremely moving leaving almost everyone in tears as we watched the families await the results of the lottery that would determine whether their children could enter a school that they believed would provide an education that will lead to the fulfillment of their dreams. Not all the students got in and I think we were all haunted by the thought about what happens to those who don't; not just the ones in this movie but all the children left behind in failing schools. During the Town Hall meeting that followed, Geoffrey Canada stated that charter schools are not the answer, the answer is to fix all our schools.

Over the last couple of days of MSNBC broadcasts of Education Nation there has been an overriding message; that this is a moral issue! NO one should be in the position to have to have their future ride on the outcome of a lottery. The right to a quality education that should be available to everyone! No child should have to wait for Superman!

And so, I will close with my own thoughts on this subject. Until we all care about the children next door, down the block across town, in another community, city or state, we will never fix the inequities that exist in education and we will never be an ‘Education Nation’. We must all work together to identify the problems (not assign blame) and find the solutions that will truly make a difference. If I didn't believe we could do this I would not have gotten involved in PTA or anything else, beyond my local community or after my children had left the system. What I know without reservation is that I am not alone and working to guaranteeing a quality education in a healthy and safe environment is worth every minute I have committed to this endeavor!