

A Typology of Demanders in K-12 Education

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A science lab inside a loft in 28th and Broadway in New York City is packed with animals like lizards, tarantulas, a white boa snake, a rabbit and a host of other creatures. The creatures are joined by slightly irreverent props including a skeleton wearing a pink dress, solar system models, butterfly specimens, a cow skull and model volcanoes ready to explode. Each day in the lab – including holidays and many weekends - a steady stream of elementary school children work their way through a series of hands-on experiments designed to make science education fun.

The lab is the scene for some messy experiments (the children are instructed to “dress for a mess” and one Sunday science lab session is titled “Grossology 101”) but the independent classroom also serves as the backdrop for one of the more successful entrepreneurial efforts in K-12 education today. Sarah Corning, a former public school teacher known to her excited students as “Science Teacher Sarah,” has created a one-woman cottage industry to meet multiple forms of demand from New York City parent-consumers.

Corning’s afterschool and holiday science programs provide a safe, educational environment for students whose parents are working. Her hands on experiments, deep scientific knowledge, and ability to connect with her enthusiastic students, then, allows for two birds to be killed with the same time as the students walk away with a considerably stronger grounding in science than they will get in their regular schools (public or private.)

The demand for Corning’s product has even spilled over to birthday parties, where Corning charges more than \$500 for “1.5 hours of thrilling science entertainment, decorations, helium balloons, snacks, birthday cake, juice, party bags with home science experiments, set-up and clean-up and an assistant,” according to one of her colorful promotional brochures.

In short, Corning has created her own mini-empire of science education for Manhattan elementary school students. In doing so, she stands out in an education industry (including both private and public schools) that tends to be far more comfortable with making demands of students and parents than in responding to demand from an actual educational marketplace.

Corning is hardly alone. In the last several decades, demand for specific educational services has intensified along with growing pressures on parents, schools, and districts to meet a host of social and academic challenges. This paper looks at several types of entrepreneurs that have emerged to meet this growing demand.

Where is the demand coming from? Various levels of demand origination can be traced, starting from concerned parents and moving up to state and federal government. Painting with a broad brush, we see:

- Parent demand for safe schools where a high level of student learning takes place.
- Civil rights and education activist group demand for equity and adequacy.
- Business and civic group demand for graduates capable of joining the workforce and making positive contributions to the community.
- State and federal government demand for student proficiency and academic growth, across all subgroups.

Because all of these levels of demand have the potential to serve as pressures on public school districts, district leaders have increasingly found themselves looking for help from entrepreneurial ventures with eliminating one or multiple demand pressures listed above. As pressure from demand builds around them, districts themselves are playing the role of the needy customer and creating a new level of demand that can be satisfied by effective entrepreneurial organizations.

For purposes of this discussion, I will break the types of demand-responders into five distinct categories:

- Demand Corresponders;
- Demand Enablers;
- Demand Commandos;
- Demand Nurturers;
- Demand Surfers.

Each recognizes demand in different ways and reacts accordingly.

The Demand Corresponders

Educational entrepreneurs like Sarah Corning develop products, services, and programs that respond to very clear demand from the marketplace – in this case a private marketplace where parents are willing to pay piecemeal for intellectually stimulating science instruction afterschool. Corning herself was an education major at New York University who discovered she had a marketable talent as a babysitter when she accompanied a pre-school class trip to the Central Park Zoo. She found herself telling the young children more about the animals than the group's tour guide and soon the Village Pre-School Center had found its new science teacher. Corning expanded to create an afterschool program after she began to field a slew of requests from older elementary school students who wanted to come back and participate in her pre-school science experiments.

Corning's science classes are offered within an afterschool culture in New York City where it is commonplace for well-heeled parents to pay significant fees for tutoring and athletics

programs to compensate for perceived weaknesses in what their children's schools are providing during the typical school day.

Corning's work also takes place within a hyper-competitive schooling environment where Manhattan elementary and middle school students compete for coveted spots in the borough's best public middle and high schools, many of which require students to perform well on entrance exams in order to secure a seat. Tutoring programs at places like **Kumon Math and Reading Learning Centers** see a steady stream of Manhattan parents who supplement their children's education, at their own personal expense, because those parents believe that the math and reading instruction provided during the traditional school day is lacking. (Kumon, another Demand Corresponder, started a half-century ago in Japan by Toru Kumon, a teacher and parent who wanted to help his son do better in school. The company's promotional literature claims that Kumon's methods were so successful that his son was able to do calculus by the time he was in sixth grade. Today there are more than 1,500 Kumon centers in North America alone.)

In Corning's case, the "Science Teacher Sarah" classes are sold as fun, hands-on activities that would otherwise be elusive to students in traditional school science classes. So the students are attracted to the enjoyable aspects of the classes, and the parents are sold on the academic and intellectual enrichment they sneak in along the way. The key ingredient to the success of "Science Teacher Sarah" is Corning herself. Her enthusiasm, knowledge, and ability to draw children directly into the classroom experiments are essentially the "product" that she provides. The entire operation revolves around her talent. One could reasonably presume that if all Corning did was teach science in a typical Manhattan elementary school, she would be a successful teacher in her own right. However it is unlikely that she would have the resources

(time and materials) to run her in-school science classes the way she does in a system that has so many other conflicting priorities.

The Demand Enablers

The field of public education has long been a place where outside consultants have been able to convince state and local school boards and superintendents that they possess levels of expertise and outside validation to either bail out these school leaders from pressure situations or to pave the way for school leaders to promote controversial or expensive programs or policies which would be difficult for school leaders to advance on their own. Because public school systems have so many built-in constituencies and bureaucracies, school leaders often face fierce resistance if they emerge on their own with plans that either threaten entrenched interests within the system or result in tremendous outside political pressure on their school board bosses. One school leader going up against a billion dollar bureaucracy can be the education management equivalent of Don Quixote tilting at windmills, especially if it is not abundantly clear that any demand truly exists for the changes or reforms that the school leader is proposing. Demand Enablers make it easier for demand to “break out” from the confines of public school institutions, so that school leaders can act in ways in which they are responding to calls for change, rather than stirring up a political hornet’s nest on their own.

Imagine the school superintendent, hired by a school board which itself is under pressure to control skyrocketing costs, who privately determines that a \$100 million capital plan for school construction and renovation is necessary in order for the district to accommodate a surge in student enrollment in one part of town where the existing elementary school is bursting at the seams. At the same time, significant retrofitting and other renovations are needed in existing

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school buildings in order to comply with federal requirements for serving students with disabilities and to allow for widespread electrical upgrades so that millions of dollars worth of computer equipment could be used in 75-year-old school buildings.

The superintendent and his team feel they have no choice but to embark on a bond referendum in their community, but they are worried that a split-school board (several members were elected on an anti-tax, anti-spending platform) will go after their professional scalps if they even bring it up, especially since the previous year's school operating budget increases caused so much commotion at the board level.

Enter the local management consulting firm, who, as part of an "external assessment" of the school system's capital needs (done at the request of the superintendent and his facilities team) determines on its own that the district and taxpayers will be facing serious challenges unless a \$100 million school construction/renovation bond is approved by voters in the next year. The outside report, by and large, matches the recommendations that the superintendent privately concocted on his own.

The firm, which does work for major corporations worldwide and hires only the best and brightest business school grads, makes a flashy presentation to the school board with charts and arrows and circles and conveys the impression that its proven methods of analysis have determined that what the district needs will cost no less than \$100 million in additional taxpayer funding to address.

In this hypothetical case, we see several layers of demand piled on top of one another. We see demand from families in the suddenly overcrowded part of town to meet the needs of students; we see demand from the federal government to provide facilities that are accessible to students with various disabilities, as well as demand from the students with those disabilities

themselves; we see demand from the public to bring the district's classrooms into the modern era by upgrading electrical systems so they can accommodate an influx of new computerized equipment; we see demand from the school board to meet all of these needs in a way that appears to be fiscally responsible; and, finally, we see demand from the superintendent and his team to deal with all of these previously mentioned demands in ways that don't cost them their own jobs.

It is this outermost layer of demand, the one where the local superintendent is feeling all sorts of heat emanating from the other layers, that Demand Enablers meet. In this case, the consultant's job is to tell the superintendent what he wants to hear. More precisely, it is to tell the school board and taxpayers what the superintendent wants them to hear. The consultant's job is to "provide cover" to the administration and provide external validation to what – while a secret – originated as the superintendent's plan.

By providing cover for the superintendent, the Demand Enablers allow for all of the other layers of demand to be satisfied. For purposes of this discussion, it is assumed that the intentions of both the superintendent and the consultant are pure. Local politics being what it is, Demand Enablers serve as an important tool for school leaders who are looking to navigate through a maze of complex considerations in order to meet the various demands they are facing. They are a tool that can help bolster the case that school leaders are making for change, and, because they often are tasked by the leadership to find solutions to problems that interests within the system would be content to let fester, Demand Enablers often end up poking around in places where district employees are simply not supposed to poke.

The consulting firm **Alvarez and Marsal**, to cite one prominent example, was hired by New York City Schools Chancellor Joel Klein in 2006 to re-direct \$200 million from the central

bureaucracy to the city's 1,500 schools. It is easy to understand why someone from outside the bureaucracy would be brought in to help with this kind of cost-shifting, since it is unlikely that anyone within the bureaucracy would volunteer to eliminate or otherwise disrupt their department or program. And Alvarez and Marsal had some experience in the public school finance sector. In 2003, the firm's vice president, Bill Roberti, was hired by the St. Louis Public Schools to come in as superintendent for one year and clean house. In St. Louis, the outsider Roberti closed 16 schools, sold 40 properties, slashed inefficient bus routes, and streamlined services like maintenance and food service.

As Roberti told journalist John Merrow in 2004: "St. Louis brought in a firm from outside to do this work because no one inside the city of St. Louis could get away with some of the things that have to be done and live here without suffering the consequences."

In two years of work in New York City, Alvarez helped re-direct \$290 million from the central bureaucracy by consolidating departments, minimizing service overlap, and making it easier for schools to pay for the services they most needed. For example, the firm recommended merging the Office of Youth Development and School Community Services with the Office of Student Placement, Youth and Family Services. The end result was a new, streamlined and unified "Office of Youth Development" and savings of \$4.7 million in savings. The consultants also reorganized the city's special education delivery system, helped create new school support organizations, and re-organized the city's complicated bus transportation system, among other cost-saving measures. One seemingly simple task – the creation of a night shift for facility repair work in schools – reduced the need for outside contractors (saving nearly \$10 million) while reducing the historic backlog in repairs to broken windows, light fixtures, and other work in schools across the city.

These were not just cuts for the sake of saving money. Chancellor Joel Klein hired the firm to help better align the school system's resources with his push for greater autonomy, accountability, and leadership for individual schools, and the cost-cutting work coincided with a shift of school supports from one centralized bureaucracy to multiple school support organizations that sell their services to schools. At the end of their review, the consultants reported to the city that they had redirected more than \$290 million of these cumulative cost-savings to schools (or \$166,000 per school.) In addition, they freed up \$20 million for the Chancellor's centralized "Children First" reform initiative, and \$40 million to support the operating growth of special education classroom services.

Alvarez and Marsal helped Klein achieve what he needed, and they even took the hits for making suggestions that proved to be unpopular within the school system. The firm was the subject of frequent negative press, seemingly initiated by parts of the bureaucracy that weren't thrilled with the outsider's suggestions. (The reorganization of school bus routes in the middle of the year caused considerable confusion and the firm was widely blamed in the press for leaving students stranded at bus stops in the cold.) Over time, however, the controversial cost-saving measures kicked in and Klein was significantly closer to achieving his vision of more autonomous schools.

Demand Enablers also sometimes provide valuable managerial services for districts whose specific needs have been highlighted by demands from federal and state accountability systems. In the 1990's, when state level testing and accountability systems were becoming more commonplace, companies like **Evans Newton Incorporated** marketed their "curriculum alignment" services directly to superintendents and school boards "with a problem."

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According to the company's publicly-accessible web site in 1998: "No matter how much you stress excellence, no matter what new teaching technique you try, your students are performing poorly on state or standardized exams. Welcome to the proven solution for improving your students' test scores."¹

Evans Newton was (and still is) in the business of helping schools and districts alter and align their teaching and curriculum with existing standards and testing so that students are taught skills and content which are expected to have been mastered on state exams. The company's 2009 web site markets its services more broadly and highlights its many successes around the country. But a decade ago, when many districts and schools were not only caught off-guard by the onset of new testing and accountability systems that were part of the "higher standards" era, the company marketed its services directly to school system administrators and school board members as a way to escape from the heat.

"As educational consultants, we work closely with your district on every level from school board to administration to the individual teacher helping you plan, implement and manage a concrete, point-for-point program that can improve achievement by 25% in one year," the company's Web page stated at the time. In the early days of the standards movement nationally, companies like Evans Newton helped school districts re-evaluate their courses and curriculum to make sure that what they were teaching matched what states were expecting to be taught.

As long as there are district and state education leaders who are feeling the impact of demand from above (from federal and state accountability systems) and from below (from parents and taxpayers who have more access to test score data than ever before) skilled Demand Enablers will themselves be in high demand.

Demand Commandos

If Demand Enablers tell school superintendents and school board members what they want to hear, Demand Commandos tackle problems from the opposite direction – they often tell school leaders (their clients) things that aren't particularly flattering. Demand Commandos, by dispensing advice and services that are considered taboo within school systems, end up working to solve problems that lurk beneath the more obvious demands that bring them to the table.

(Note: There is some overlap here with Demand Enablers, if the school leader who brings in the Demand Commandos sees him- or herself as a disruptor who needs to break some china within the school system organization in order to break longstanding practices within the bureaucracy. In this case, it is the rabble-rousing school leader who wants the Demand Commando to tell the entrenched system that which it doesn't want to hear.)

One of the best examples of Demand Commando's in action is **The New Teacher Project**, a spunky organization founded in 1997 to address the growing issues of teacher shortages and teacher quality throughout the country. The organization partners directly with school districts to oversee programs that allow alternative routes to the classroom for teachers and to work with school districts to improve their human resource systems.

The demand, in this case, comes from school districts which need more and better teachers. As a Demand Commando, however, The New Teacher Project meets that demand by acting far beyond the scope of a typical employment recruitment arrangement. Mere recruiters would scour the countryside in search of hidden pools of excellent teacher candidates to “fill the pipeline” for school district human resources departments. Demand Commandos see their mission as being far beyond meeting the surface-level demand. They dig deep, acting as if the

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surface-level demand provides them with a mandate to push more lasting changes that will eliminate the root causes that lead to the strong demand in the first place.

The New Teacher Project, even while working in close collaboration with its district-clients, takes the demand for new and better teachers and uses it as a mandate/justification to find better ways for the district to conduct itself. It often aims at eliminating the root causes behind the scarcity of talent in schools. “We end up pushing the district to do things differently in ways they never asked us to do,” said Tim Daly, president of the organization. “Typically, the district wouldn’t be looking to make the kinds of changes we are talking about because they aren’t focused on it.”

Unlike Demand Enablers, which meet demand by telling school leaders what they want to hear, Demand Commandos do the equivalent of telling a close friend that not only do her jeans make her look fat, but that there is a step aerobics class meeting the next morning which has space for another participant. (This advice, of course, is dispensed solely with the best interests of the friend at heart, and it is only received that way because of the pre-established relationship.)

“This sector is all about the need to push ourselves beyond the comfort zone,” Daly said. “You have to be willing to break china every now and then. You have to be willing to take risks.”

The New Teacher Project, unlike typical recruiting agencies, includes a sharp public policy and advocacy component to its work. The organization has published and publicized reports on teacher hiring timelines that caused districts to miss out on the best teachers, the adverse impacts of teacher transfer provisions in urban schools, the shift to “mutual consent” hiring in New York City schools, and the shortcomings of existing teacher evaluation systems.

Not only does the organization urge its partner districts to take risks to improve their human resources systems, but it also is willing to walk the walk and take risks itself. Daley and The New Teacher Project, for example, waded into the highly-contentious battle in New York City over its “reserve pool” for teachers that have tenure but are rejected for assignments in individual schools. The organization issued a controversial report called *Mutual Benefits* which quantified the pool of teachers who were not selected to work in schools and who were being paid millions of dollars to, essentially, not teach. Doing so meant that he and the organization became a very public target for the United Federation of Teachers, the teachers union in New York City, which felt management was maligning good teachers in a dispute over what to do with those teachers who were not hired for teaching slots. For The New Teacher Project, the larger issue revolved around raising serious questions about whether or not there was a better way to do human resources work within the district and under the existing teachers contract. “There’s no reason to have the organization at all if we can’t do that,” Daly said.

Demand Commandos call it like they see it, even when it ruffles the feathers of their clients. In 2009, The New Teacher Project ranked states that it felt had the best chance of winning federal grants under the “Race To The Top” contest that was created by Education Secretary Arne Duncan. Several of the The New Teacher Project’s clients were in states that didn’t fare well in their published rankings and they complained. “We got calls appealing their rankings and urging us to change them,” Daly said.

The Demand Nurturers

While the demand that Demand Enablers and Demand Commandos have satisfied tends to emanate from state and district leaders, Demand Nurturers tend to work directly with parent-

consumers who voice some of the most basic demands imaginable for their children: they want good, safe schools and educational programs for their children. Demand Enablers understand that one parent, speaking alone, doesn't provide much leverage to issue demands or push change. They often work with large groups of parents to make a bold statement and to create the kinds of demand pangs that keep school leaders up at night.

Groups like **Parent Revolution** in Los Angeles work directly with parents to harness their desire for better schools so that the collective parent voice becomes a sharper instrument for promoting drastic change. Originally launched as a "parents union," with ties to the charter school management organization Green Dot, the organization in the fall of 2009 was pushing a rather novel guarantee to L.A. parents: If 51% of parents at any school in the city sign the Parent Revolution petition, the organization will guarantee a better school in their neighborhood within three years.

Parent Revolution pledges to back up its guarantee by one of three ways:

1. **Transforming the current school:** Parent Revolution will work with the parents at the school to demand that the Los Angeles Unified School District create a plan for how they are going to fix the school and turn it around.

"Why will they listen to you? Why will they take you seriously?" the Parent Revolution website asks. "Because you have strength in numbers- hundreds of thousands of parents are standing together. And because you have leverage, and a credible threat: If they don't transform your school, you will put your child in a high-performing charter school, with the other two options we provide you."²

2. **Transformation of the current school into a charter school.** The model that Parent Revolution touts is the takeover of long-troubled Locke High School by Green Dot Public Schools, a charter management organization.
3. **Build new charter schools.** “If the District won’t transform your school, and we can’t turn your existing school into a charter, we will build new, high performing charter schools in your neighborhood,” Parent Revolution promises. “Then you, the parent, will have choice. You can enroll your child in a high performing charter public school, or keep him or her in their current school. But the choice will be in your hands.”

“This is not about wealthy philanthropists or smart academics coming up with the right way to reform schools,” said Ben Austin, the executive director of the Parent Revolution. “This is simply about giving parents power. The trigger is not a recommendation, it’s not advisory.”³

Efforts like the Parents Union recognize that one of the elements that is typically lacking in major reform efforts is strong, articulated demand for change on the ground. Demand Nurturers understand that while collectivizing the voices of large numbers of parent consumers is extremely difficult (and sometimes costly) work, the end result is some extremely powerful pressure that can be exerted on school systems from the outside.

Some Demand Nurturers go to great lengths to get into the hearts and minds of these parents, so they can most effectively understand what drives their thinking. The New York City group **Harlem Parents United**, originally formed by parents with students enrolled in the **Success Charter Network** (a CMO), benefits from information gleaned from extensive focus groups with parents – both parents who have chosen public charter schools for their children (to

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learn more about why) and parents who have opted to enroll their children in zoned neighborhood schools (to learn more about why they didn't select a charter school.)

Founded by former New York City Councilwoman Eva Moskowitz, the Success Charter Network has supported extensive recruitment efforts for elementary school students in Harlem, and has organized a companion “parental choice” campaign for Harlem moms and dads, alerting them to the idea that they are allowed (and encouraged) to select a great school for their children. In addition to a comprehensive advertising campaign (including larger than life bus shelter ads), the network sponsors an annual “school choice fair” for Harlem parents that includes representatives from public, public charter, and private schools. Several thousand people attended the fair in 2009, leaving the event with “Parental Choice Zone” tote bags and buttons. All along the way, the network uses messaging which it knows will connect with parent consumers.

Moskowitz said her work in city politics taught her that the emotional connection that a candidate makes with voters often carries more weight than specific policy platforms he or she supports. Extending that lesson to schooling was intentional, she said. “We are looking to make an emotional connection with parents,” Moskowitz said. “It is mothers who tend to make the schooling decisions, so understanding the momma bear instinct – understanding that psychology – is important to us.”

Each parent focus group lasts for approximately 90-minutes, and food and beverages are offered to the participants. As a trained facilitator guides the parents through a wide-ranging discussion, school leaders watch intently from behind a glass, mirrored window. (Similar sessions were held with NYC public school teachers, to help improve the network's teacher recruitment messaging.)

School leaders learned a lot from the parents in the focus groups about what kinds of advertisements ‘worked’ for them, Moskowitz said. If the recruitment pieces were too hard-hitting, parents got defensive and took it personally. Parents were scared off by too much emphasis on the word “lottery” to describe the enrollment process and were more motivated when the fairness of the process was emphasized, for instance.

“In the beginning we were talking about ‘school choice’ but we learned [during parent focus groups] that parents thought that meant the school chooses them,” Moskowitz said. “We decided to stay away from that.” The messaging surrounding the network’s student recruitment work didn’t change drastically as a result of the sessions, Moskowitz said. It was more like external validation and fine-tuning of some important concepts. “It validated a lot of the things we were already thinking about. It forces you to pick your horse when you go out there and sell your schools to parents. We settled on concepts of ‘opportunity’ and ‘parent choice’ and we adopted a tunnel vision about those things.”

When Demand Nurturers are effective, it sends a powerful message to existing power structures. In the Spring of 2009, approximately 3,500 families entered a random lottery for just 475 seats in Harlem Success charter schools. The lottery itself, which attracted television and other press, included speeches from New York City Chancellor Joel Klein and even an important announcement from State Senate President Malcolm Smith: that \$30 million in charter school funding had been restored in the state budget.

Demand Surfers

What makes Demand Surfers unique is that they transition their approach as demand shifts from one direction to another. Demand Surfers are nimble and are able to both detect

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trends and seize new opportunities as they emerge. This category, of all of the previous categories, is the one most capable of capturing organizations and service providers who could easily be placed in one category or the other at various times in their evolutions.

When Mark Claypool founded **Educational Services of America** in Nashville in 1999, the former social worker was simply filling what he saw was an obvious void. Claypool saw a tremendous need for schools that would provide services for special needs students, particularly as public schools struggled to adequately manage caseloads and provide the right special education services for the students who needed them. The founding of ESA, interestingly, coincided with the passage of a small special education voucher pilot program in Florida, known as the McKay Scholarships. The scholarships, which originated in Sarasota County only, allowed parents of special education students who are unsatisfied with their local public school to enroll in a private school.

The demand in many parts of the country at the time was clear: parents wanted quality special education programs for their kids and they weren't getting it in their local public schools. ESA was there to meet the demand. "Our purpose 10-years ago was to get in and be agnostic about funding and labels and provide the best services to these students," Claypool said. "At the time, the lowest hanging fruit (from a business perspective) was to acquire smaller private schools that had served kids with learning disabilities."

Florida's McKay Scholarship program was expanded beyond Sarasota to the entire state in 2000 and the demand was further unleashed, setting the stage for ESA to become the nation's largest provider of K-12 special education programs.

Two things happened as a result of the increasing demand for ESA's services to parents: (1) the company and its schools and programs learned an awful lot about dealing with students

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with special needs, and (2) local school districts began to take notice that someone else was not only taking their students, but doing a better job educating them. When it came to serving students with emotional disabilities, in particular, these two developments fueled each other and created a new, powerful demand pool in the form of local districts that wanted help from experts with a proven track record of success. “We began to focus on programs funded by public school districts,” Claypool said. “We started acting not as a vendor but a collaborative partner.”

The shift in demand emphasis from parents to school districts also coincided with increased pressure at the state and federal level for districts to improve drop-out rates at the high school level. “We were seeing districts experience a lot of pain providing services for kids diagnosed with emotional handicaps,” said Claypool. “When I started in my career as a social worker, these kids would have been institutionalized.”

Instead, today, those students are part of accountability systems that determine whether or not school districts are successfully serving their communities.

Claypool notes that ESA is still very much views parents as customers for its private schools, but that shifting political dynamics at the state and federal levels have created new demands that the company is looking to serve.

Conclusion

Demand within the public education sector doesn't merely exist for the taking. Case studies of educators like “Science Teacher Sarah” are rare, because lone educators tend not to move in worlds where start-up capital are widely available and accessible, and where professional risk is part of the culture. More often, demand is something which must be enabled, commanded, and nurtured.

The modern education reform scene is witnessing some significant changes that have been unleashed by demand responders. Envelope-pushing organizations like The New Teacher Project are pushing hard-to-move human resources shops in school districts to re-think the way they do business, with an eye toward attracting and retaining the highest quality teachers for students. Parent-organizing groups like Parent Revolution and Harlem Parents United are collectivizing the voices and frustrations of parents, creating a new political force for better schools that has been missing in the policymaking process for a generation. Together, these demand responders are helping to move what can sometimes seem like an intractable public education sector.

Policymakers, philanthropists, and activists who wish to see public education evolve to become a sector that can be a home for dynamic, entrepreneurial educators like “Science Teacher Sarah” should pay particular attention to those demand responders who are working in creative ways to better harness and channel existing demand. Demand Commandos and Demand Nurturers, because they work to prod schools and political systems from the outside, represent especially strong leverage points that have been largely untapped in an environment where intra-school district programs and initiatives benefit from much of the existing civic and philanthropic support.

Education is a sector that has been crying out for a revolution for years, but instead has seen a long process of slow-moving evolution, caused in large part by bureaucratic inertia and a lack of incentives for demand responders to actually respond. Supporting those demand responders who work to reshape, refine, empower, and amplify existing demand would arguably help add gasoline to the fire and speed the pace of reform from the outside.

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¹ Joe Williams, “MPS May Hire Firm To ‘Teach To The Test’: Arizona Company’s Aid Would Cost \$390,000.” Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, April 21, 1998.

² www.parentrevolution.org

³ Lesli A. Maxwell, “L.A. Gives Parents ‘Trigger’ To Restructure Schools,” Education Week, Oct. 30, 2009.