



The Nation.

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Back to School—II

HAYWARD, CALIF.

Thank you for shining a light on the importance of education reform and for highlighting leading voices for meaningful reform ["A New Vision for School Reform," June 14; "Letters," Sept. 20]. Linda Darling-Hammond remains a beacon of sanity and good sense. She provides an excellent overview of education reform efforts over the years. There is no silver bullet—the entire system needs an overhaul to address the many years of neglect.

When No Child Left Behind was instituted, the air was sucked out of classrooms across the country. The rote, uninspiring drill-and-kill method of teaching that the law

has spawned has prevailed with no discernible positive effect for the students it proposed to help. As Diane Ravitch accurately points out in her article ["Why I Changed My Mind," June 14], the rise in accountability through high-stakes testing has resulted in a "measure and punish" approach that radically narrows the curriculum, affecting students and teachers alike. Now with even fewer resources at our disposal, we are at last being asked to reignite the imaginations of a generation of educators to engage, inspire and educate our youth. The challenges of creating a bridge to brighter landscapes are

welcome, but the designated pathways are full of pot holes.

A positive offered by Race to the Top and the new focus on creativity and research is the opportunity to share successful practice. In Alameda County we are proud of our ability to put in place some of the exciting models of excellence mentioned by Pedro Noguera: schools as service centers; partnerships with higher education and business as pathways to college and careers; and comprehensive curriculums that include arts and civic engagement.

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