

# THE DENVER POST

## Fear and lies on school reform

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Opponents of school reform in far northeast Denver have launched a campaign of fear mongering and outright lies to scare parents in Montbello and Green Valley Ranch.

It is a shameful tactic, made even more disgraceful by the support we're told it is getting from a few Denver Public School board members who apparently will do anything to undercut DPS Superintendent Tom Boasberg.

DPS has produced a thoughtful blueprint for reforming schools in northeast Denver, using programs and tools that have proven successful in other parts of the city.

DPS board members ought to publicly disavow the misinformation campaign that says charter schools "perpetuate the school-to-jail track" and also alleges that the reforms will "force hundreds of high school students out of their neighborhood."

It is unbelievable that anyone who cares about education, even if they disagree with DPS policy, would use such blatantly false rhetoric.

The reality is that the system that serves Montbello and Green Valley Ranch is broken. For every 100 freshmen who enter Montbello High School, only six go on to graduate and go to college without needing remediation. That is disgraceful. And it's as unacceptable as the actions of the supposedly responsible adults who go to great lengths to block the changes that can vastly improve those numbers.

We suspect a strong source of opposition is coming from teachers in the area who fear losing their jobs. A flyer that appeared at a recent community meeting demonizes charter schools, which are public schools. It says charter school teachers are underpaid, and can be fired without due process. What the flyer neglects to mention is that only approximately 25 percent of the students in the area will be in charter schools under the reorganization.

And the charters proposed for that area are highly successful programs — DenverCenter for International Studies, Denver School of Science and Technology, and KIPP (the Knowledge is Power Program) — that have proven themselves in other parts of the city.

These are the cream of the crop, folks, written up nationally for their success in advancing students. We think parents, once they get a chance to see the nuts and bolts of the children, will flock to these schools.

While the charters are getting all the attention, the meat of the overhaul involves boosting academics in a serious way in the neighborhood elementaries and middle schools that feed into Montbello High, which will get a remake of its own.

Those plans, which cover some 75 percent of the student seats in the area, include installing new leaders who will get to choose their own staff for the schools. That means existing teachers would have to reapply for their jobs. Some might be up for the challenge, others may not.

Their input certainly ought to be considered, but it cannot derail a well-developed plan that has been in the making for some 20 months and has had significant community input.

In the coming weeks, there will be a lot of heated rhetoric leading up to an important vote by the DPS board. We hope parents will look carefully at the facts of the overhaul being proposed for their schools in northeast Denver and screen out the hysteria. When they do, we feel confident they will like what they see.