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“You Gotta Keep the Devil Way Down in the Hole,” Fighting Poverty and Tweed

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Joel Klein lives in a lovely apartment on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, Chris Cerf on a tree lined street in New Jersey ... and our kids ... too many live on the mean streets of the City: East New York, Rockaway, Flatbush, the Bronx, neighborhoods in which the historic dips in crime haven't resonated. How many of our kids have a sibling, or a cousin, or some other family member who was shot, or shot someone in the last year? Do Cerf's kids have to decide whether to walk blocks out if their way to avoid "Crips" turf?

Sunday nights we get a glimpse of life on the streets if we watch "The Wire."

Teachers fight the oppression of poverty and try, try really hard to provide our kids with the skills, cognitive and non-cognitive, that will enable them to escape, and scramble up the economic ladder.

For many teachers, about a third leave within three years and half within five years, the job is too difficult ...

For the Department the only measure of "success" or "failure" are market forces and data, i.e., are the kids/schools improving. The mantra: grading schools, grading principals and grading teachers will create a market-driven competition and lead to more effective schools.

The School Report Cards will be followed by individual teacher "grades", as described in a [NYTimes article](#). Grades of "A" to "F" lead to principal removals and school closings, and the Department clearly intends to use individual teacher grades to deny or remove tenure.

Within a few days the State Education Department (SED) will identify new SURR schools. Who will be responsible for improving new SURR schools? The School Support Organizations provide "support" but do not rate or evaluate schools. The Superintendents rate but do not support schools, and Tweed, they aver that they do not run schools, principal do.

The market-driven approach has come under fire recently, both [Sol Stern](#) and [Chester Finn](#), originally strong supporters of market forces have had second thoughts and [Leo Casey at Edwize](#) skewers the Department plan.

If we drive "merit" dollars to teachers who the Department grades as "A"s and prune away teachers who are "F"s will we create a more effective school system? Will the unfettered marketplace drive away ineffective teachers and schools?

An example of the unfettered marketplace is baseball free agency ... after six years any player can go anywhere and the decisions are data-driven (HRs, RBIs, ERAs, etc.) The Yankees are the richest team and have snatched up the "best" players ... and haven't won a Series since 2000.

5 days until Tweed sunsets ... where is Hercules? Can he clean out the [Augean Stables](#)?

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