Where’s Houdini when you need him?  
Breaking out of the Educational Reform Straight Jacket 
 to Reclaim Our Democracy. 
Steven Jay Gross 

Abstract:

Currently, educational reform has been narrowly defined to mean a combination of Essentialism and Market Forces, thereby removing from our national dialogue other philosophical traditions, each having its own rich tradition and potential for guiding policy and practice. The purpose of this article is to problematize the concept of a monolithic definition of reform by providing multiple perspectives and, thereby, creating the basis for a robust debate among those holding opposing ways of seeking what they call educational reform.

Specifically, the article focuses on these three elements:

- A brief description of the four philosophical traditions that have shaped education reform debates for the past century along with a newer force that has energized the debate.
- A demonstration of the marriage between two of these traditions and how their ascendency now threatens to eclipse all other perspectives, thereby precluding a robust democratic debate about the future of education in America.
- Suggestions to bring other reform philosophies back into our national debate so that we can return to a democratic national dialogue.