

16 Empowering Teachers

01:30:14:20 --:--:--:--

- This is The Rundown.
I'm Hari Sreenivasan.

01:30:16:23 --:--:--:--

I'm joined by John Merrow,

01:30:18:03 --:--:--:--

who you've seen on The Newshour
if you're a viewer.

01:30:20:13 --:--:--:--

If not, he covers
education-related matters.

01:30:22:17 --:--:--:--

We're talking primarily today
a new book that he's got out

01:30:25:05 --:--:--:--

called The Influence
of Teachers.

01:30:26:27 --:--:--:--

And it's really fascinating.

01:30:28:12 --:--:--:--

Just in the past
couple of years,

01:30:30:01 --:--:--:--

since I've been at The Newshour,

01:30:31:18 --:--:--:--

I've seen so many
of your stories focus

01:30:33:14 --:--:--:--

on this massive shift
that's happening

01:30:35:11 --:--:--:--

in how people are thinking
about education,

01:30:37:14 --:--:--:--

and is this a kind of struggle
and a battle

01:30:39:12 --:--:--:--
that's being waged
in school district

01:30:41:08 --:--:--:--
by school district
across the country?

01:30:43:05 --:--:--:--
- It's a national struggle.

01:30:44:17 --:--:--:--
It's fascinating.
There are two camps.

01:30:46:14 --:--:--:--
There are a powerful group
of people who say

01:30:48:15 --:--:--:--
the problem in education

01:30:49:20 --:--:--:--
is we just don't
have enough good people.

01:30:51:18 --:--:--:--
We need better people.

01:30:52:24 --:--:--:--
And on that side,
you have--

01:30:54:03 --:--:--:--
there was a documentary--

01:30:55:13 --:--:--:--
a very flawed documentary--

01:30:56:26 --:--:--:--
called Waiting for Superman.

01:30:58:11 --:--:--:--
You have Oprah.

01:30:59:09 --:--:--:--
You have NBC's Education Nation.

01:31:01:00 --:--:--:--

We've got Michelle Reed,
Joe Klein,

01:31:02:23 --:--:--
Teach for America saying
we need better people.

01:31:05:00 --:--:--
On the other side,
the much weaker side are saying,

01:31:06:27 --:--:--
"No, you have to make teaching
a better job."

01:31:09:00 --:--:--
If you make teaching
a better job,

01:31:10:20 --:--:--
then a lot of things
will happen.

01:31:12:09 --:--:--
Unfortunately, "better job"
has been defined by unions

01:31:14:25 --:--:--
and school boards as,

01:31:16:00 --:--:--
how late can you get there
in the morning,

01:31:17:28 --:--:--
how soon can you leave
after the last bell,

01:31:19:28 --:--:--
how many days in advance does
a principle have to ask

01:31:22:09 --:--:--
before he or she
can come watch you teach?

01:31:24:07 --:--:--
I mean,
a very trade union definition.

01:31:26:03 --:--:--:--

But if you could take
that definition away,

01:31:28:03 --:--:--:--

you can define "better job"
differently,

01:31:30:03 --:--:--:--

my hunch is,
things would change.

01:31:31:23 --:--:--:--

But there's
a huge battle going on.

01:31:33:15 --:--:--:--

- And you're talking
about a teaching force

01:31:35:16 --:~:~:~:~:~

that's absolutely enormous.

01:31:37:01 --:~:~:~:~:~

- Yeah.

01:31:37:19 --:~:~:~:~:~

It's a country
of 311 million people.

01:31:39:13 --:~:~:~:~:~

There are 3.2 million teachers.

01:31:41:00 --:~:~:~:~:~

1 out of every 100 Americans--

01:31:42:13 --:~:~:~:~:~

and that includes children--

01:31:43:28 --:~:~:~:~:~

1 out of every 100 Americans
is a public school teacher.

01:31:46:13 --:~:~:~:~:~

We have more
public school teachers

01:31:48:06 --:~:~:~:~:~

than doctors, lawyers,
social workers,

01:31:50:04 --:--:--:--
and higher ed teachers combined.

01:32:06:21 --:--:--:--
It's a huge--and it's growing,
by the way.

01:32:08:21 --:--:--:--
- And yet 40% of the teachers
that sign up

01:32:10:18 --:--:--:--
are out of the system
in five years.

01:32:12:10 --:--:--:--
- At least 40%.

01:32:13:07 --:--:--:--
And in high need schools,
it's even higher turn.

01:32:17:13 --:--:--:--
That one piece of data says

01:32:18:23 --:--:--:--
that the problem
is not better people.

01:32:20:19 --:--:--:--
The problem is, we have
to make it a better job.

01:32:22:23 --:--:--:--
I mean, I think if we can make
teaching a better job

01:32:25:01 --:--:--:--
and what teachers want

01:32:26:07 --:--:--:--
and as they spell out
in the book,

01:32:27:26 --:--:--:--
they want a chance
to do--to collaborate,

01:32:29:26 --:--:--:--

to be part of the
curriculum development,

01:32:31:26 --:--:--
to watch each other teach.

01:32:33:06 --:--:--
I mean, that's--
when you ask teachers

01:32:35:00 --:--:--
what would make
the job more satisfying,

01:32:36:28 --:--:--
it's stuff like that.

01:32:38:03 --:--:--
It's not necessarily more money.

01:32:39:22 --:--:--
Here's a staggering piece
of information.

01:32:41:23 --:--:--
In 1987--

01:32:42:14 --:--:--
you remember the difference of
median, mean, and mode, right?

01:32:45:06 --:--:--
Mode is the most common.

01:32:46:14 --:--:--
- Different averages.
- Yeah.

01:32:47:20 --:--:--
In 1987, the modal years
of experience was 15 years.

01:32:50:01 --:--:--
There were more teachers

01:32:51:10 --:--:--
who had 15 years
of teaching experience

01:32:53:07 --:--:--

than any other kind,

01:32:54:11 --:--:--:--
13-year experience,
5-year experience.

01:32:56:11 --:--:--:--
Today the mode--

01:32:57:09 --:--:--:--
I almost want to ask you
to guess.

01:32:58:28 --:--:--:--
The mode is one year.

01:33:00:04 --:--:--:--
We have more first-year teachers

01:33:01:23 --:--:--:--
than any other kind of teacher.

01:33:03:09 --:--:--:--
Now, that was 2007 data,

01:33:04:17 --:--:--:--
so maybe it's two years now.

01:33:05:29 --:--:--:--
But there's this huge turn.

01:33:07:11 --:--:--:--
So 1 out of every 100 Americans
is a teacher.

01:33:09:12 --:--:--:--
Teaching force
is getting greener

01:33:11:04 --:--:--:--
in terms of having experience,
yeah.

01:33:12:28 --:--:--:--
It's also getting older,
though,

01:33:14:18 --:--:--:--
'cause there's this whole cadre
of teachers moving through

01:33:17:09 --:--:--:--
who are going to retire.

01:33:18:17 --:--:--:--
It's getting whiter.

01:33:19:22 --:--:--:--
It's getting more female.

01:33:21:02 --:--:--:--
There was a--

01:33:21:27 --:--:--:--
so is this a crisis,
is this an opportunity?

01:33:23:28 --:--:--:--
I think it's a huge opportunity.

01:33:25:15 --:--:--:--
You got these young people
who are technologically--

01:33:27:27 --:--:--:--
who are the natives,
if you will, coming in.

01:33:29:28 --:--:--:--
If we can change schools

01:33:31:06 --:--:--:--
so that they become places

01:33:32:16 --:--:--:--
where kids learn
to formulate questions

01:33:34:14 --:--:--:--
instead of being
these regurgitation

01:33:36:10 --:--:--:--
education answer factories,

01:33:37:25 --:--:--:--
we have a chance to really make
a difference.

01:33:39:26 --:--:--:--

So it's a great time.

01:33:41:00 --:--:--:--
- So, finally, you've had
an opportunity

01:33:42:28 --:--:--:--
to view so many different
teaching styles.

01:33:44:28 --:--:--:--
You've been in hundreds of
classrooms around the country.

01:33:47:16 --:--:--:--
You've been able to profile,
say, the Paul Vallas

01:33:49:24 --:--:--:--
of this recovery school district
in New Orleans,

01:33:52:02 --:--:--:--
and the Michelle Reeds
in Washington, D.C.

01:33:54:03 --:--:--:--
Have you see a system
that's working?

01:33:55:27 --:--:--:--
I think in the book somewhere
you mention

01:33:57:25 --:--:--:--
that Seattle has certain things
that are going for it.

01:34:00:11 --:--:--:--
Are there little lessons

01:34:01:20 --:--:--:--
that we can pick up
from around the country

01:34:03:20 --:~:~:~:~:~
and say, "This is how
I would design

01:34:05:12 --:~:~:~:~:~

"a really great school system
that values teachers,

01:34:07:23 --:--:--:--
"values the administration,

01:34:09:06 --:--:--:--
"but also really at the
center of it all,

01:34:10:23 --:--:--:--
values the kinds
that are getting this?"

01:34:12:21 --:--:--:--
- There is no system you can
point to that has done it.

01:34:15:01 --:--:--:--
You can point to schools.

01:34:16:10 --:--:--:--
You can point to classrooms.

01:34:17:23 --:--:--:--
And that's really
the conundrum,

01:34:19:13 --:--:--:--
is, why can't we point
to systems which--

01:34:21:11 --:--:--:--
and my sense, Hari,
is that what happens

01:34:23:08 --:--:--:--
with a system is,
they haven't figure out

01:34:25:06 --:~:~:~:~:~
how to put the needs
of kids first.

01:34:26:26 --:~:~:~:~:~
But in schools
that are effective, successful,

01:34:29:02 --:~:~:~:~:~
and in classrooms that are

effective and successful,

01:34:31:14 --:--:--:--
the question they ask is,
"How are you intelligent,"

01:34:33:25 --:--:--:--
not, "How intelligent are you?"

01:34:35:12 --:--:--:--
And in a way that construct
says so much.

01:34:37:09 --:--:--:--
'Cause if I'm asking how
are you intelligent

01:34:39:12 --:--:--:--
and finding out and saying,

01:34:40:24 --:--:--:--
"We're gonna build
on your strengths.

01:34:42:21 --:--:--:--
"Well, this guy is really
interested in athletics.

01:34:45:01 --:--:--:--
"Fine. Good.

01:34:45:26 --:--:--:--
"But we're gonna teach you
to read and write

01:34:47:27 --:--:--:--
"and do math and numbers
using athletics.

01:34:49:27 --:--:--:--
Why not?"

01:34:50:18 --:--:--:--
But that says,

01:34:51:15 --:--:--:--
"We're gonna do a lot
of project-based stuff too."

01:35:35:15 --:--:--:--

01:35:57:07 --:--:--:--
Stay with us.