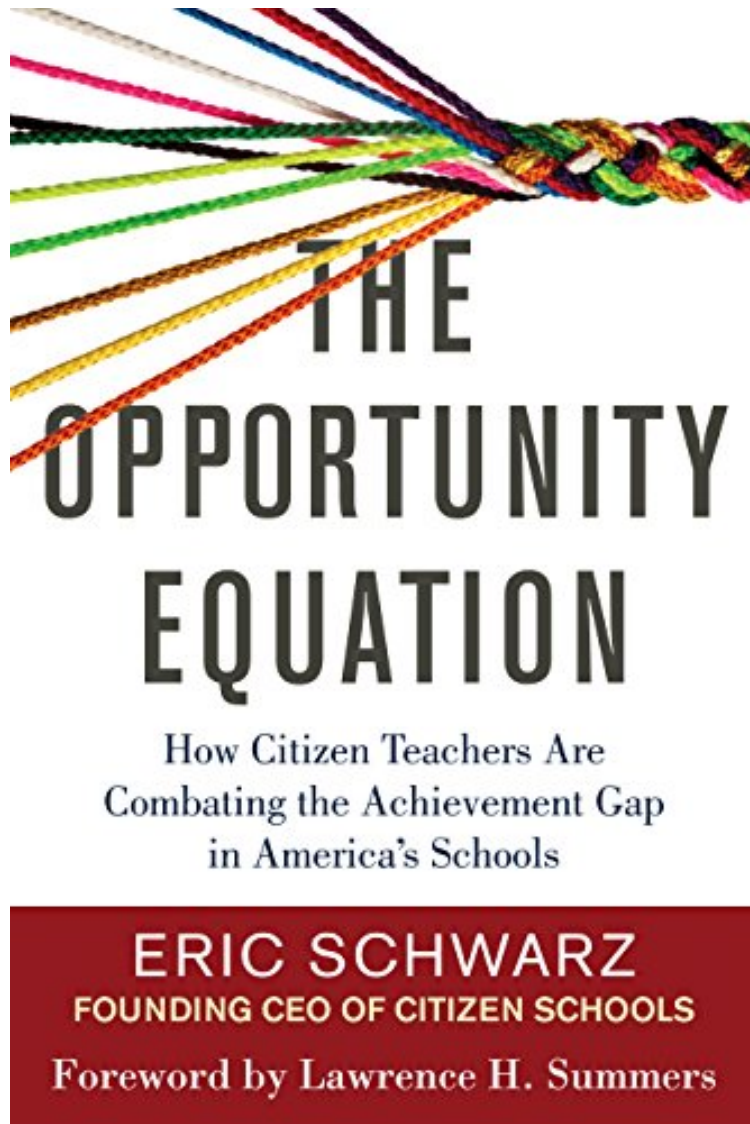


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The Opportunity Equation: How Citizen Teachers Are Combating the Achievement Gap in America's Schools

Eric Schwarz

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Eric Schwarz : The Opportunity Equation: How Citizen Teachers Are Combating the Achievement Gap in America's Schools before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Opportunity Equation: How Citizen Teachers Are Combating the Achievement Gap in America's Schools:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Two thumbs up!By Sean RileySchwarz illustrates a great issue of inequality in our school system, while tying it in with a compelling personal narrative. Its story-like prose keeps the

content fresh, I would recommend this to anyone interested in work in the social sector. Well done! 1 of 8 people found the following review helpful. " I liked the examples drawn from the author's own (privileged) life ...By Citizen Activist This is a clear and thoughtful blend of data and stories that persuasively makes the case for a new paradigm in education -- a paradigm with more time for learning and much more mentoring by what the author calls "citizen teachers." I liked the examples drawn from the author's own (privileged) life and examples of how the Citizen Schools program is providing to lower income students many of the same experiences that benefit upper income students. So many education books get lost in wonkery. But this one is highly readable and personal while packing a major punch in its insights and advocacy. Worth reading for sure! 2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Informative Inspiring By L. M. Keefer If you care about education and equality of opportunity, Eric Schwarz is an evangelist for improving education for students in high-need schools by offering extended day enrichment, mentoring and apprenticeships by citizen volunteers. An arresting statistic: college completion rate for children of parents in the top quartile by family income has jumped from 40 percent to 73 percent since 1970. The rate of growth for college completion for children in the lowest quartile for those years? From 6% to 8%. These students often have 6000 fewer hours in formal and informal learning over students from higher income home. Today students from the bottom fifth have a 10% chance to reach the top fifth this book informs us. How to reduce the growing wealth-based achievement gap? That's the question Eric Schwarz, the author of this book, pondered and then took action to address. He realized students in less wealthy areas - whose parents often work full time at lower paying jobs to make ends meet, and don't have funding for after-school care, tutors, expensive campus, clubs and prep classes - need 5 things: * mentorship by professionally successful adults * longer school day - to master academic basics and have art, music, enrichment classes * opportunity to practice creativity and innovation * exposure to social networks and skills * support for full-time teachers and parents of lower and moderate income children Schwarz, a descendant of the FAO Schwarz family, realized how family support and social networks helped his success. He created a program - Citizen Schools - designed to address these five needs. This book is a fascinating tale of his journey by its participants: volunteers, teachers, and students. It details the genesis of the idea, the incubation of it, the execution and the challenges the program has encountered since its inception. I enjoyed reading about its progress. This book reads as if Schwarz is having a one-on-one conversation with you telling about his experience in an accessible, informal way. My only issue with the book is in the forward by Lawrence Summers, chair of the Citizen Schools board of directors. Summers writes; "I'm a Democrat. I'm a guy who believes in the government. I'm a guy who doesn't understand how you can love your country and hate its government." It sounds as if Mr. Summers thinks that non-Democrats must hate our government. That sounds like an insult to a possible 70% of potential readers of this book, or those folks who aren't democrats: republicans and independents. As an independent, I think my republican friends would say they don't hate government. They just don't like bloated, incompetent, unethical government. In talking with them, they would love to have a smaller, competent government which didn't waste or lose billions of dollars which we read about frequently, didn't use the IRS to punish or hamper political opposition, did a better job being responsive to security requests of ambassadors overseas, didn't have \$17 trillion in debt and \$100 trillion in unfunded liabilities, had an orderly process for citizenship, didn't have unprotected and open borders for anyone (including drug cartel members, possible terrorists) to enter. Politics aside, it seems reasonable that financial responsibility, basic security and ethics in government are qualities many would want from government. When I read Summers' sentence insinuating that those who want a less bloated, competent and more ethical government hated our government, frankly it was off-putting. Does everything have to be partisan politically today, including forwards of books? Citizen Schools seems like a brilliant, non-political idea which citizens from all parties can unite and rally around to support. Those who believe in citizen power, and limited government, are natural supporters of this kind of project. If this hadn't been a review copy, I frankly would have tossed the book aside because of the partisan comment. I'm glad I didn't. As a former headmistress, pre-school - 12th grade teacher-tutor, SAT tutor, and teacher in high need schools, I used to think if you give me a student for seven hours a day, he-she will get a comprehensive education. This book persuades those extra hours after school which Citizen Schools provides are invaluable. The college visits on weekends which Citizen Schools organizes for these students are also powerful to raise students' aspirations and inculcate confidence - love that aspect of the program. The data from the program demonstrates this program is having a quantifiable impact. For those interested in education and non-profits, this book is instructive. It also is an inspiring tale which may make you want to volunteer to help young people who would benefit from your talents and experience.

Schwarz, founder of the groundbreaking Citizen Schools program, shares his vision for reducing inequality by pairing successful adults with low-income students. Parental wealth now predicts adult success more than at any point in the last hundred years. And yet as debates about education rage on, and wealth-based achievement gaps grow, too many people fix the blame on one of two convenient scapegoats: poverty or our public schools. But in fact, low-income kids are learning more now than ever before. The real culprit for rising inequality, Eric Schwarz argues in *The Opportunity Equation*, is that wealthier kids are learning much, much more - mostly outside of school. In summer camps, robotics competitions, sessions with private tutors, and conversations around the dinner table, children from

more affluent families build the skills and social networks that propel them to success. In *The Opportunity Equation*, Schwarz tells the story of how he founded the pioneering Citizen Schools program to combat rising inequality by bringing these same opportunities to children who don't have access to them. By increasing learning time in schools and harnessing the power of an army of volunteers with various skills and professional backgrounds—lawyers, engineers, carpenters, journalists, nonprofit leaders, and grandmothers who sew—Citizen Schools offers after-school apprenticeships that provide the building blocks for adult success. Recounting the triumphs and setbacks he's encountered in implementing the program, Schwarz shows that some of the nation's lowest-performing schools in its lowest-income cities can, with help, provide their students with many of the same experiences wealthy communities afford to their children. The results have been proven: in the dozen school districts, from New York to Oakland, that have partnered with Citizen Schools, rates of attendance, proficiency, graduation, and college acceptance have gone up—and the achievement gap closes. At a time when many stakeholders in the education debates are looking for new, silver-bullet shortcuts to educational excellence, Schwarz shows that the best solution is human-centered, rooted in the American tradition of citizen voluntarism, and, most important, achievable. We can provide quality education for all students and close the opportunity gap in this country—and we can do it together.

Schwarz offers an inspiring chronicle of scholarly triumphs and generous citizen activism, as well as a constructive blueprint for boosting achievement without abandoning public education. Publishers Weekly: A call to action for citizens and educators so that the achievement gap can be closed as rapidly as possible. Kirkus: What a fun and instructive story of the birth and growth of an important social enterprise, from one of our nation's most insightful social entrepreneurs. The Opportunity Equation offers new perspective on what it will truly take, inside and outside the traditional classroom, to provide an excellent education for all of America's children. Anyone working, or volunteering, to close opportunity and achievement gaps should read this book. Wendy Kopp, founder of Teach For America and CEO of Teach For All: Eric Schwarz and Citizen Schools have empowered thousands of low-income children across America so they could graduate college, get terrific jobs, and join the middle class. In *The Opportunity Equation*, Schwarz shows us what public education needs to look like if America is going to continue to be a leading economic power. Geoffrey Canada, president of the Harlem Children's Zone and author of *Fist Stick Knife Gun*: For twenty years Citizen Schools has been lifting up opportunity from East Durham in North Carolina to East Oakland in California. Now, the organization's visionary founder has laid out a new blueprint for our schools in the twenty-first century, a vision with more mentoring, more time for learning, and more real-world projects—more of all the stuff that our wealthier children already take for granted. Bravo! Edward Fiske, former New York Times education editor and author of *The Fiske Guide to Colleges*: About the Author Eric Schwarz is the founding CEO of Citizen Schools and is currently developing a new social enterprise in higher education. He has written and spoken widely on education and opportunity. Prior to helping launch Citizen Schools in 1995 he worked as a political organizer, a journalist, and a vice president of City Year. He lives in Brookline, Massachusetts, with his wife and two children.