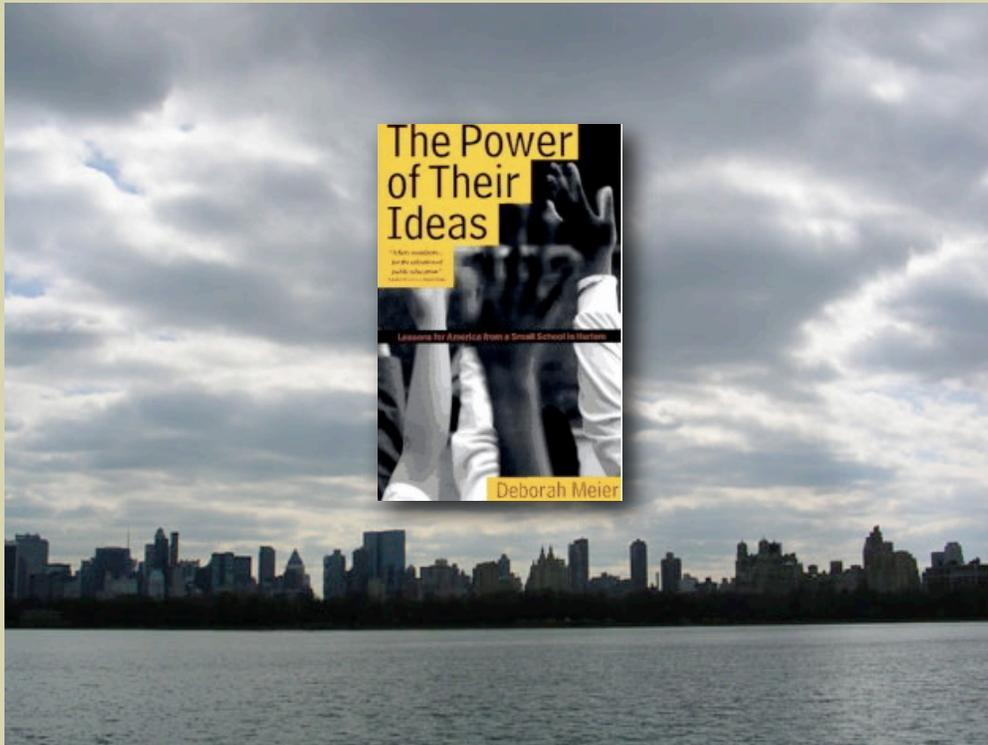


Deborah Meier's

The Power of Their Ideas

Lessons for America from a Small School in Harlem



“Democracy demands that we acknowledge everyone’s inalienable capacity to be an inventor, dreamer, and theorist--to count in the larger scheme of things.”

Deborah Meier’s book, *The Power of Their Ideas*, details the history and success of the Central Park East Schools, a coalition of four public schools in New York City founded as public schools of choice in 1974. That year, Anthony Alvarado, the superintendent of an East Harlem school district, approached Meier, asking her to head up a small elementary school.

The first CPE school was driven by the ideals of child and community-centered learning, conceptual and tangible curriculum, and a democratic community. Meier and her colleagues began with fewer than one hundred students. There were no entrance requirements; rather, the school accepted anyone who was interested in the same ideas and willing to collaborate with the school.

Over thirty years later, the CPE schools are still an example of high academic achievement and inspired leadership. They also provide the keystone of Meier’s passionate defense of public schools, where “citizens are joined by right, not privilege.”

The Power of Their Ideas offers educational leaders lessons on how to revitalize the American public school system. At the same time, however, there are important ideas for individual teachers. I read this book with my personal goals of high standards, academic achievement, and a nurturing classroom community, and found that this small school in Harlem had some lessons for me.

On the power of ideas. Edwin Black, *War Against the Weak: Eugenics and America's Campaign to Create a Master Race* (New York: Thunder's Mouth. Ideas, like poplars, never stand alone. They gain a life of their own. They produce a shadow. Yet what is the nature of that shadow that Eliot so elegantly perceived? And what is the temperament of that. "vitality of thought" that renders ideas unkeepable, unless they are. actualized, as Whitehead observed, in historical events? Edwin Black is concerned with the possibility that the racist.