Cool schools in New Zealand? Evaluation of Virtual Schooling in the USA

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Gary Miron is Professor in Evaluation, Measurement, and Research at Western Michigan University. He has extensive experience evaluating school reforms and education policies in the United States and Europe. Professor Miron has prepared and directed more than 60 evaluations and research studies that have been funded with grants and contracts from state, federal, and international agencies as well as private foundations. Most of his research and evaluation work has focused on diverse forms of school choice; more recently his research has focused on the operation and performance of online and blended learning schools.

Professor Miron has experience working as a teacher at the secondary and university levels in Sweden, China and the USA. Prior to his current position at Western Michigan University, he worked for 10 years at Stockholm University in Sweden where his research focused on education in developing countries, school restructuring in Europe, and the evaluation of school voucher reforms. Professor Miron has been regularly been ranked among the top most impact American education scholars; in the field of education policy he has been ranked in the top 10.

Synopsis:
Full-time virtual schools are the fastest growing form of school choice in the USA and now this reform model is transferring to other countries. The growth of these schools is pushed by an array of advocates, including private companies that operate them for profit.

Research on virtual schools (also known as cyber or online schools) has revealed that there are serious problems with the current models being used, such as extremely high student attrition and very poor results across all key outcome measures.

This presentation will provide an overview of the development and growth of virtual and blended learning schools in the US. Findings regarding the operation of the schools and the students served are summarised. Also, the negative outcomes related to student performance are reviewed and explained.