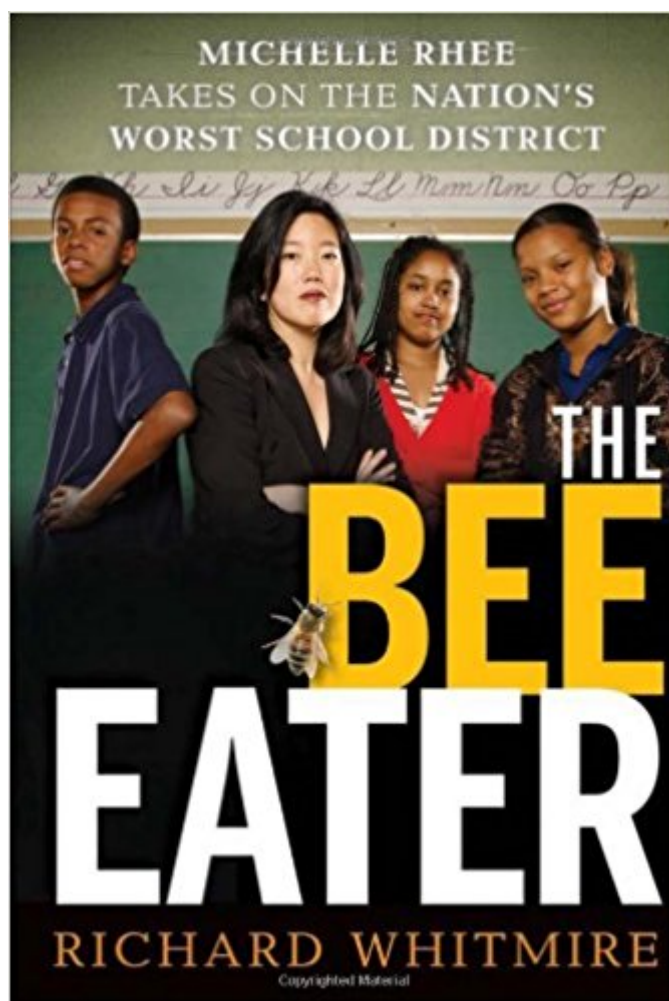


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# The Bee Eater: Michelle Rhee Takes On The Nation's Worst School District



## Synopsis

The inside story of a maverick reformer with a take-no-prisoners management style Hailed by Oprah as a "warrior woman for our times," reviled by teachers unions as the enemy, Michelle Rhee, outgoing chancellor of Washington DC public schools, has become the controversial face of school reform. She has appeared on the cover of Time Magazine, and is currently featured as a hero in the documentary "Waiting for Superman." This is the story of her journey from good-girl daughter of Korean immigrants to tough-minded political game-changer. When Rhee first arrived in Washington, she found a school district that had been so broken for so long, that everyone had long since given up. The book provides an inside view of the union battles, the school closings, and contentious community politics that have been the subject of intense public interest and debate ? along with a rare look at Rhee's upbringing and life before DC. Rhee has been featured in the documentary "Waiting for Superman" Rhee's story points to a fresh way of addressing school improvement. Addresses fundamental problems in our current education system, and the politics of leadership. The book includes an insert with photos from Rhee's personal and professional life, and an "exit" interview that sheds light on what she's learned and where the future might take her.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Richard Whitmire's deft and revealing book about former D.C. schools chancellor Michelle A. Rhee chronicles a difficult time in the history of the city's schools, when good people fought hard against one another ... --The Washington Post...(those) interested in gaining a comprehensive perspective on Michelle Rhee (the person, not the action figure), or on finding some Waiting for 'Superman'-like

inspiration, would be wise to seek out and read *The Bee Eater*. --The Education Gadfly  
Whitmire's clear and easy-to-read style reveals the often-unreported efforts made by Rhee to reach out to both banks in an attempt to build schools into islands of refuge that would be "good for the students" --Educator Life... a lively narrative on Rhee's personal history and the political and public policy drama that marked her three and a half years in Washington ...insightful commentary on one of the first pitched battles between the new generation of school reformers and the nation's urban educational and political establishments. -- Washington Monthly. What isn't as familiar, and sometimes downright perverse, are the many bizarre yet customary conditions under which Rhee operated, which Whitmire portrays in illuminating (and infuriating) detail. -- Education Next.

*The Bee Eater* chronicles the extraordinary life and work of the dynamic and controversial school reformer Michelle Rhee. The author delves into Rhee's childhood (as the only Korean American in her graduating class in her Toledo, Ohio school), her first teaching job in a West Baltimore classroom (where she once ate a bee to the amazement of her students), her appointment as chancellor of Washington, D.C. public schools and her launch of Children First, her national advocacy group that draws on the tough lessons of Washington. While the book reveals Rhee's remarkable accomplishments, it also explores many of the fundamental problems in our current education system, the unpredictable politics of leadership and her shortcomings. When Michelle Rhee first arrived in Washington, she found a school district that had been so dysfunctional for so long that many had given up, choosing to blame race and poverty rather than poor instruction. There was no one being held accountable. The district central office had become an adult employment center, a place to deposit job seekers. Rhee was convinced that Washington's inner city students could achieve, but considerable obstacles stood in the way and obstacles that needed removing. Guided by the principles of outstanding leadership, strict accountability, and the power of effective teaching, Rhee was determined to turn around the Washington, D.C. schools. Her encounters with community politics and long-simmering racial tensions, and her battles with central office bureaucrats and teachers' unions, were so extraordinary that her efforts were featured in *Time*, *Newsweek*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and a lengthy PBS series. *The Bee Eater* holds the promise of educational excellence for today's students and for tomorrow's school reformers.

Michelle Rhee is the winner and the public schools are the losers. She took on the union and did not win -- but she is right. Viewing her in *Waiting for Superman* tells the truth about the problems with tenure in public schools and the penalty the students pay for very bad teachers. Coming from a

family of teachers and instructors dating back over 100 years, I know of what she speaks. College professors earn tenure, public school teachers do not deserve it no matter how hard they work. Contracts and seniority are one thing -- tenure is not appropriate. Rhee is smart and can see the big picture, which many people have become blinded to.

The book successfully covers how Washington, D.C.'s Chancellor of public schools, Michelle Rhee, rose through the educational ranks to take on the country's worst urban school system. It details her courageous four year tenure, her "in-your-face" attitude to improve the schools despite turning off many parents, councilpersons, and union leaders , and the reasons for her eventual dismissal. The book is not one-sided; it examines Rhee's considerable talents as well as her faults. For me, the imprint left by the book is: is the chief goal of educational administrators to give children the best education possible no matter what, or to protect the jobs of those who work for educational institutions? I wonder how often administrators say the former but in fact do the latter.

As an educator, I see the lack of success many schools experience. Like Rhee, I think teacher quality is the main problem. Additionally, a lack of strong administrative leadership is pervasive. I admire her fierce attempt to tackle the problems in DC schools. I hope she is successful with schools across the nation.

Did not just extoll the vision of Michelle Rhee but gave an accurate picture of the political cost of educational reform in this country. At the same time, the author points out the simple political gaffs made by Rhee and insensitivity that permeated her quest. A good lesson for those who advocate needed changes in education and are unrealistic about the impact those changes may have.

Have read about Michelle Rhee and the work she did in D.C. It's too bad, more teachers and administrators don't pick up where she left off. My granddaughter is working on her Master's in Education. I got this book for her as a present. She's an avid reader and excellent with children. Hopefully she will be inspired.

The product was really what I expected. Thanks

Ridiculous no content will never buy this kind of publication again wish I knew what I was buying in advance but one never does.

I really enjoyed this book and was inspired by Michelle's determination even when it was difficult. Michelle certainly cares about education and about education for those in struggling systems.

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