

# Choice & Education Across the States

By Michael Van Winkle

## 1. Introduction

There is widespread agreement in the education reform community that more accountability and better results are needed from the nation's public school system. The public debate over education has, for some time, been focused on how to meet those needs.

During the 2000 presidential election, George W. Bush pledged to end the "soft bigotry of low expectations." But seven years and billions of dollars later, there has been only limited improvement.

The situation has left many reformers looking for better ways to increase academic achievement in the nation's public schools. This report card aims to provide a roadmap to better results through school choice.

Over the years, states have been an invaluable laboratory for public policy. They continue to innovate on a number of public policy issues, including education. This report will assist them in their pioneering role by describing what states are doing to provide educational choices to parents.

Many organizations have published education-focused report cards. For instance, the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) publishes a *Report Card on American Education* ranking states by educational outputs like ACT, SAT, and NAEP scores and inputs, like per-pupil expenditures and teacher/student ratios. The Center for Education Reform ranks states according to the strength of their charter school laws, and the Milton & Rose D. Friedman Foundation recently published a ranking of voucher programs.

The report card presented here is unique in that it seeks to unify all aspects of school choice into one ranking. It takes into account charter schools, public school choice, tax credits, tax-funded scholarships, and voucher programs. By doing so it is the broadest ranking of school choice programs available.

That said, it is important that this report card not be viewed as comprehensive. There are always measures of success that are not incorporated into the rankings, which could lead some to

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dismiss the rankings altogether. But as with any survey, its value lies only in the questions it asks. Here the question is simple: What has been done to expand school choice in your state?

For every variety of program discussed in this report there is a sea of research available online. For more information about any specific kind of program, go to [www.heartland.org](http://www.heartland.org) or contact Heartland's legislative specialist for education policy.

## 2. Why Choice?

According to the 2007 edition of the Nation's Report Card (also called the National Assessment of Educational Progress or NAEP), average fourth-grade reading scores improved slightly between 2002 and 2007, from 217 to 220. Only 18 states improved their scores significantly.<sup>1</sup> Thirty-three percent of fourth-graders nationwide are reading at or above proficiency, an increase from 2002, when 31 percent were at or above proficiency.<sup>2</sup>

Average eighth-grade reading scores between 2002 and 2007 fell from 263 to 261. In 12 states, scores in 2007 were significantly *lower* than 2002 scores, and in no state were the 2007 scores significantly higher than 2002.<sup>3</sup> Just 31 percent of eighth-graders are reading at or above proficiency, a decline from 2002, when 33 percent were at or above proficiency.<sup>4</sup>

Achievement gaps have persisted between white and minority students; 42 percent of white fourth-graders scored at or above proficiency in 2007, while only 14 percent of African Americans and 17 percent of Hispanics read at proficiency.<sup>5</sup> The numbers are worse at the eighth-grade level, where just 38 percent of which students, 12 percent of African Americans, and 14 percent of Hispanics read at or above proficiency.<sup>6</sup>

Better progress in being made in mathematics, but achievement started from levels even lower than for reading. Thirty-nine percent of fourth-graders scored at or above proficiency in mathematics in 2007, an increase from 2003, when only 32 percent were at or above proficiency.<sup>7</sup> Average eighth-grade math scores also increased between 2003 and 2007, from 276

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<sup>1</sup> J. Lee, W. Grigg, and P. Donahue, *Nation's Report Card: Reading 2007*, National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, 2007, p. 17.  
<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/main2007/2007496.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>7</sup> J. Lee, W. Grigg, and G. Dion, *Nation's Report Card: Mathematics 2007*, National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, 2007, p. 17.  
<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/main2007/2007494.pdf>

to 280.<sup>8</sup> But only 32 percent of eighth-graders scored at or above proficiency in mathematics in 2007, compared to 29 percent in 2003.<sup>9</sup>

Achievement gaps in mathematics between white and minority students are huge: 51 percent of white fourth-graders scored at or above proficiency in 2007, while only 15 percent of African Americans and 22 percent of Hispanics did so.<sup>10</sup> In eighth grade, just 41 percent of white students, 11 percent of African Americans, and 15 percent of Hispanics score at or above proficiency.<sup>11</sup>

These dismal test scores fuel interest in school reform, which in recent years has focused on holding teachers and schools responsible for results. That principle is enshrined in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 (NCLB), which requires, as a condition for receiving federal Title I assistance, that state governments set standards for reading and mathematics and provide choices for parents whose children attend schools that cannot meet those standards.

Critics have argued NCLB has allowed the federal government to inject itself into what traditionally has been a responsibility of state and local governments. Other critics argue the law has encouraged “teaching to the test” and “dumbed down” standards. They contend, understandably, that this is too high a price to pay for small or nonexistent achievement gains.

The most promising alternative to top-down efforts to create accountability is school choice. School choice *is* accountability. When parents have the power to remove their children from a school that is failing them, without financial penalty, not only are *they* better served, but so is the school they abandon. The threat of losing funds gives failing schools an incentive to improve.

There is ample evidence that school choice works. Studies of the existing school choice programs have shown they have overwhelmingly positive effects. For example, the Institute for the Transformation of Learning at Marquette University reports:<sup>12</sup>

- A 2004 study of Milwaukee’s voucher program found the graduation rate in choice schools was 64 percent, compared to only 41 in non-selective public schools.
- A 2003 study of Florida’s McKay Scholarship Program found 92.7 percent of parents were satisfied with the program.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>12</sup> Gerard Robinson, “Survey of School Choice Research: Spring 2005,” Institute for the Transformation of Learning at Marquette University, Spring 2005.

- A 2003 study of Florida’s voucher program found students in voucher schools improved in math on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) by 9.3 scale points more than public school students. Voucher school students improved 10.1 scale points more in reading.
- A comprehensive study of 99 percent of the nation’s charter schools found charter school students are 5.2 percent more likely to be proficient in reading and 3.2 percent more likely to be proficient in math.
- A review of 26 studies of charter school students over time reported all but four of the studies found charters to be comparable to or better than traditional public schools.

School choice is also politically viable. Eighty-two percent of respondents to a survey conducted by the Program for Education Policy and Governance at Harvard University want NCLB renewed; 51 percent want it renewed with some changes. The same survey found strong support for increasing school choice, with 68 percent of African Americans supporting school vouchers and only 23 percent of respondents opposed to allowing students who attend schools failing to meet NCLB standards to attend private schools instead.<sup>13</sup>

Evidence of the political viability of school choice also can be found in the growing activity in state legislatures. School choice bills were introduced in 28 states during the 2006 legislative session.<sup>14</sup> In 2007, Georgia enacted a special-needs voucher program, Utah passed the nation’s first universal voucher (which was later rejected in a statewide referendum), and charter school programs in New Orleans and Houston were dramatically expanded.<sup>15</sup>

According to the Milton & Rose D. Friedman Foundation, 122,000 students now attend private schools with assistance from a school voucher or tax-funded scholarship, and more than 647,000 students are assisted by educational tax credits.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> William G. Howell, Martin R. West, and Paul E. Peterson, “What Americans Think About Their School: The 2007 Education Next-PEPG Survey,” *Education Next*, Fall 2007, pp. 17-20.

<sup>14</sup> “ABCs of School Choice,” Milton & Rose D. Friedman Foundation, 2006-2007, p. 4.

<sup>15</sup> Jay Matthews, “Charter School Effort Gets \$65 Million Lift,” *Washington Post*, March 20, 2007 <http://www.kipp.org/08/pressdetail.cfm?a=320>

<sup>16</sup> “ABCs of School Choice,” Milton & Rose D. Friedman Foundation, 2006-2007, p. 4.

### 3. Methodology

School choice programs give parents the power to decide where their children are schooled. There are many ways to provide choice, but school choice programs generally take one of the following forms.

- *Vouchers*: Vouchers are state and local monies given to parents for use at the school of their choice. Vouchers give parents substantial power to get their children into better schools. Voucher programs exist in Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Ohio, Utah, and Wisconsin. The first program was established in 1991.
- *Charter schools*: Charter schools are public schools run by third-party organizations, either for-profit or non-profit, and are exempt from state regulations, including labor regulations. They are allowed to employ more effective teaching and management strategies, giving parents alternatives to traditional, government-run schools. They exist in 42 states, though the effectiveness of the charter laws varies widely.
- *Tax credits*: There are two kinds of tax credit programs. The first, an education tax credit, is an indirect subsidy reimbursing families for education-related expenses, generally including but not limited to tuition. Education tax credit programs exist in Illinois, Iowa, and Minnesota. Education tax credit programs are frequently criticized for not effectively making choice accessible to low-income and poverty-level families, instead focusing funds on families already exercising choice. Nevertheless, education tax credits can be a valuable part of a state's overall choice portfolio.

A second kind of tax credit program gives tax credits to individuals and corporations who donate funds to approved educational scholarship organizations. Pennsylvania, for example, allows corporations to claim a credit worth 75 percent of donated funds, up to a maximum of \$200,000. Scholarship organizations have used those funds to give out thousands of awards to needy children. During the 2006-2007 school year, 33,400 students received scholarships.

- *Public school choice*: Public school choice refers to efforts by states to create more choice within the public school system. Most widely known are magnet schools. But because magnet schools are selective in their admissions, they are not capable of focusing on at-risk communities. Other public school choice programs considered by this report include open-enrollment and virtual schooling.

Within these broad categories there is endless diversity. Each state has different needs, socio-economic considerations, constitutional requirements, and political circumstances. But choice in some form is possible in every state.

This report card asks a series of questions about educational policy in each state. Each question has only a "yes" or "no" answer and is worth only one point. A "yes" is worth one point and a "no" is worth zero. The resulting score is the basis for rankings and grades.

There are 23 questions and therefore 23 possible points. The questions are as follows (and are explained in more detail later in this report):

### **Vouchers**

1. *Does the state have a voucher program? (Yes=1)*
2. *Are disabled and special-needs children eligible/targeted?(Yes=1)*
3. *Are resources means-tested?(Yes=1)*
4. *Does the state have universal eligibility? (Yes=1)*
5. *Is the number of students who may use a voucher legislatively unrestricted? (Yes=1)*
6. *Is the voucher worth at least 25 percent of public school per-pupil expenditures?(Yes=1)*
7. *Are religious schools allowed to participate?(Yes=1)*

### **Charters**

8. *Are charter schools allowed? (Yes=1)*
9. *Is the number of charter schools legislatively unrestricted? (Yes=1)*
10. *Do charter schools have a blanket waiver from regulations not in the charter? (Yes=1)*
11. *Are for-profit organizations permitted to apply for a charter? (Yes=1)*
12. *Are charter schools fully funded? (Yes=1)*
13. *Are there multiple chartering authorities? (Yes=1)*
14. *Is there a virtual charter school? (Yes=1)*

### **Tax Credits**

15. *Can parents receive a tax credit or deduction for educational expenses? (Yes=1)*
16. *Is the tax credit worth more than 25 percent of public school per-pupil funding? (Yes=1)*
17. *Is the tax credit refundable for low-income families? (Yes=1)*
18. *Is there a tax credit for contributions to educational scholarship programs? (Yes=1)*
19. *Is participation legislatively unrestricted? (Yes=1)*
20. *Are corporations allowed to participate in the tax credit program? (Yes=1)*

### **Public School Choice**

21. *Does the state have a virtual school or incorporate distance learning into the classroom? (Yes=1)*
22. *Does the state allow open enrollment? (Yes=1)*
23. *Does the state have magnet schools? (Yes=1)*

The simplicity of this model comes at a cost. Each state has idiosyncracies worth discussing that are lost when asking yes-no questions. But of course it is not possible to consider every imaginable factor. This report seeks to ask *the most important* questions about choice programs, not every question. Suggestions for questions to be addressed in future versions of this report can be sent to [think@heartland.org](mailto:think@heartland.org).

Grades were calculated by dividing a state’s total score by the number of points possible to produce a percentage. Grades were then distributed according to the scale shown in Table 1.

| <b>Table 1<br/>Grading Scale</b> |           |
|----------------------------------|-----------|
| A                                | 80 - 100% |
| B                                | 60 - 79%  |
| C                                | 40 - 59%  |
| D                                | 20 - 39%  |
| F                                | 0 - 19%   |

So parents and policymakers may judge their school systems against both an ideal standard and a realistic one, we also have assigned grades on a “curve,” by dividing each state’s score by the highest score actually achieved (as opposed to the highest score possible), which is Arizona’s 15 points. Grades were then distributed in the same manner as the standard grade.

Some readers might criticize these curved grades as “grade inflation.” But this isn’t high school and the goal here is not to shame states into better performance. The goal is to encourage policymakers to expand choice by informing them about programs in other states. Curving grades allows them more directly to compare choice programs in different states.

#### **4. Overview of Results**

Table 2 presents the point totals, percentages, and grades assigned. No state received an A grade based on its unadjusted score. Arizona (15 points) and Florida (14 points) both managed B grades, an outstanding accomplishment for both states considering the median score was 5 points.

**Table 2  
School Choice Grades**

| <b>State</b>         | <b>Rank</b> | <b>Points</b> | <b>Percentage</b> | <b>Grade</b> | <b>Adjusted Percentage</b> | <b>Adjusted Grade</b> |
|----------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------------|--------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Arizona              | 1           | 15.0          | 65.2%             | B            | 100.0%                     | A                     |
| Florida              | 2           | 14.0          | 60.9%             | B            | 93.3%                      | A                     |
| Wisconsin            | 3           | 12.0          | 52.2%             | C            | 80.0%                      | A                     |
| Ohio                 | 4           | 11.0          | 47.8%             | C            | 73.3%                      | B                     |
| Utah                 | 5           | 10.0          | 43.5%             | C            | 66.7%                      | B                     |
| Minnesota            | 5           | 10.0          | 43.5%             | C            | 66.7%                      | B                     |
| Georgia              | 5           | 10.0          | 43.5%             | C            | 66.7%                      | B                     |
| California           | 8           | 9.0           | 39.1%             | D            | 60.0%                      | B                     |
| Pennsylvania         | 9           | 8.0           | 34.8%             | D            | 53.3%                      | C                     |
| District of Columbia | 9           | 8.0           | 34.8%             | D            | 53.3%                      | C                     |
| Delaware             | 9           | 8.0           | 34.8%             | D            | 53.3%                      | C                     |
| Colorado             | 9           | 8.0           | 34.8%             | D            | 53.3%                      | C                     |
| South Carolina       | 13          | 7.0           | 30.4%             | D            | 46.7%                      | C                     |
| Michigan             | 13          | 7.0           | 30.4%             | D            | 46.7%                      | C                     |
| Louisiana            | 13          | 7.0           | 30.4%             | D            | 46.7%                      | C                     |
| Iowa                 | 13          | 7.0           | 30.4%             | D            | 46.7%                      | C                     |
| Indiana              | 13          | 7.0           | 30.4%             | D            | 46.7%                      | C                     |
| Illinois             | 13          | 7.0           | 30.4%             | D            | 46.7%                      | C                     |
| Rhode Island         | 19          | 6.0           | 26.1%             | D            | 40.0%                      | C                     |
| North Carolina       | 19          | 6.0           | 26.1%             | D            | 40.0%                      | C                     |
| Nevada               | 19          | 6.0           | 26.1%             | D            | 40.0%                      | C                     |
| Missouri             | 19          | 6.0           | 26.1%             | D            | 40.0%                      | C                     |
| Maine                | 19          | 6.0           | 26.1%             | D            | 40.0%                      | C                     |
| Hawaii               | 19          | 6.0           | 26.1%             | D            | 40.0%                      | C                     |
| Vermont              | 25          | 5.0           | 21.7%             | D            | 33.3%                      | D                     |
| Oregon               | 25          | 5.0           | 21.7%             | D            | 33.3%                      | D                     |
| New York             | 25          | 5.0           | 21.7%             | D            | 33.3%                      | D                     |
| Idaho                | 25          | 5.0           | 21.7%             | D            | 33.3%                      | D                     |
| Arkansas             | 25          | 5.0           | 21.7%             | D            | 33.3%                      | D                     |
| Alaska               | 25          | 5.0           | 21.7%             | D            | 33.3%                      | D                     |
| Wyoming              | 31          | 4.0           | 17.4%             | F            | 26.7%                      | D                     |
| Virginia             | 31          | 4.0           | 17.4%             | F            | 26.7%                      | D                     |
| Texas                | 31          | 4.0           | 17.4%             | F            | 26.7%                      | D                     |
| Tennessee            | 31          | 4.0           | 17.4%             | F            | 26.7%                      | D                     |

| State         | Rank | Points | Percentage | Grade | Adjusted Percentage | Adjusted Grade |
|---------------|------|--------|------------|-------|---------------------|----------------|
| New Mexico    | 31   | 4.0    | 17.4%      | F     | 26.7%               | D              |
| New Jersey    | 31   | 4.0    | 17.4%      | F     | 26.7%               | D              |
| New Hampshire | 31   | 4.0    | 17.4%      | F     | 26.7%               | D              |
| Mississippi   | 31   | 4.0    | 17.4%      | F     | 26.7%               | D              |
| Massachusetts | 31   | 4.0    | 17.4%      | F     | 26.7%               | D              |
| Maryland      | 31   | 4.0    | 17.4%      | F     | 26.7%               | D              |
| Kansas        | 31   | 4.0    | 17.4%      | F     | 26.7%               | D              |
| Connecticut   | 31   | 4.0    | 17.4%      | F     | 26.7%               | D              |
| Kentucky      | 43   | 3.0    | 13.0%      | F     | 20.0%               | D              |
| West Virginia | 44   | 2.0    | 8.7%       | F     | 13.3%               | F              |
| South Dakota  | 44   | 2.0    | 8.7%       | F     | 13.3%               | F              |
| Oklahoma      | 44   | 2.0    | 8.7%       | F     | 13.3%               | F              |
| North Dakota  | 44   | 2.0    | 8.7%       | F     | 13.3%               | F              |
| Nebraska      | 44   | 2.0    | 8.7%       | F     | 13.3%               | F              |
| Alabama       | 44   | 2.0    | 8.7%       | F     | 13.3%               | F              |
| Washington    | 50   | 1.0    | 4.3%       | F     | 6.7%                | F              |
| Montana       | 50   | 1.0    | 4.3%       | F     | 6.7%                | F              |

Choice is clearly not distributed evenly across the states. Even after curving grades, there are nearly three times as many states receiving Fs as there are receiving As and more than three times as many states with Ds as there are Bs. The lopsided grade distribution is even more evident in the uncurved grades. Only seven states came in above a D, while on the curve, 24 states scored above a D.

In short, states with some school choice tend to have lots of it. There are many reasons for this. For one, choice programs tend to be overwhelmingly popular once they are instituted. A recent Department of Education study of the voucher program in Washington D.C. found 74 percent of parents with children in choice schools gave those schools an A or B grade. Only 55 percent of parents with children in traditional public schools reported such high levels of satisfaction.<sup>17</sup>

Another reason is politics. School choice opponents regularly use fear tactics to defeat new programs. They warn choice will destroy public education and lead to an economically and culturally stratified society. But once choice becomes a part of the system, and the doomsday scenarios fail to develop, those fear tactics no longer have the same persuasive power.

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<sup>17</sup> "Evaluation of the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program: Impacts After One Year," Institute for Education Science, U.S. Department of Education, June 2007, p. 56.

Table 3 shows how the distribution of grades changes once grading was curved.

The top-scoring states are Arizona (15 points), Florida (14 points), Wisconsin (12 points), and Ohio (11 points). Utah, Minnesota, and Georgia tied for fifth place with 10 points each. Together these seven states collected 28 percent of the total points awarded—more than the bottom 24 states combined. Table 4 details how they did in each program category.

With the exception of education tax credits, which are noticeably lacking, all of the top states have variety in their choice offerings. All have voucher programs and charter school programs, though Arizona is the only state in the top five whose charter school program is stronger than its voucher program. Arizona and Florida have vouchers, charters, *and* scholarship programs, a key reason why they rank first and second, respectively.

| <b>Table 3<br/>Grade Distribution</b> |                    |               |                    |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| <b>Standard</b>                       |                    | <b>Curved</b> |                    |
| <b>Grade</b>                          | <b># of States</b> | <b>Grade</b>  | <b># of States</b> |
| A                                     | 0                  | A             | 3                  |
| B                                     | 2                  | B             | 5                  |
| C                                     | 5                  | C             | 16                 |
| D                                     | 23                 | D             | 19                 |
| F                                     | 21                 | F             | 8                  |

| <b>Table 4<br/>Top States<br/>Score by Type of Program</b> |              |                 |                        |                              |                     |                             |
|--|--------------|-----------------|------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>State</b>   | <b>Score</b> | <b>Vouchers</b> | <b>Charter Schools</b> | <b>Education Tax Credits</b> | <b>Scholarships</b> | <b>Public School Choice</b> |
| Arizona  | 15           | 4               | 7                      | 0                            | 2                   | 2                           |
| Florida  | 14           | 5               | 4                      | 0                            | 3                   | 2                           |
| Wisconsin  | 12           | 4               | 5                      | 0                            | 0                   | 3                           |
| Ohio   | 11           | 5               | 5                      | 0                            | 0                   | 1                           |
| Utah   | 10           | 5               | 2                      | 0                            | 0                   | 3                           |
| Minnesota  | 10           | 0               | 2                      | 6                            | 0                   | 2                           |
| Georgia  | 10           | 4               | 3                      | 0                            | 0                   | 3                           |

The variety of education options makes the top states score well, while the dearth of options in the lowest-ranking states hurts them. The lowest-scoring states, shown in Table 5, are West Virginia (2 points), South Dakota (2 points), Oklahoma (2 points), North Dakota (2 points), Nebraska (2 points), Alabama (2 points), Washington (1 point), and Montana (1 point).

| Table 5<br>Lowest Scoring States<br>Score by Type of Program |       |          |                 |                       |              |                      |
|--|-------|----------|-----------------|-----------------------|--------------|----------------------|
| State  | Score | Vouchers | Charter Schools | Education Tax Credits | Scholarships | Public School Choice |
| West Virginia  | 2     | 0        | 0               | 0                     | 0            | 2                    |
| South Dakota   | 2     | 0        | 0               | 0                     | 0            | 2                    |
| Oklahoma   | 2     | 0        | 1               | 0                     | 0            | 1                    |
| North Dakota   | 2     | 0        | 0               | 0                     | 0            | 2                    |
| Nebraska   | 2     | 0        | 0               | 0                     | 0            | 2                    |
| Alabama  | 2     | 0        | 0               | 0                     | 0            | 2                    |
| Washington   | 1     | 0        | 0               | 0                     | 0            | 1                    |
| Montana  | 1     | 0        | 0               | 0                     | 0            | 1                    |

All of the lowest-ranking states except Oklahoma have only public school choice. Only Alabama and Nebraska have magnet schools, and only North Dakota and Alabama have virtual schools. Only Alabama lacks open enrollment.

Public school choice is one reason no state scored 0 points. While only nine states have vouchers, 46 have open enrollment and 35 have magnet schools, the two most common kinds of public school choice. Every state has some kind of public school choice, and all but 10 states have more than two.

Some would argue the lack of educational choice in these low-ranking states, especially Montana, Nebraska, and North Dakota, is more a product of the socioeconomic environment than a reflection of failure on the part of the state's policy leadership. There may be less demand for school choice in rural states because there simply aren't many alternatives to traditional public schools in sparsely populated areas.

This perspective on school choice is quickly being proven false by the popularity of choice in Utah. More likely, the lack of choice is a result of highly entrenched special interests, both union and corporate, who profit from the status quo.

This is not to say there are no differences between states' needs. Different needs often require different solutions; virtual and charter schools may be more effective in rural states and vouchers

more effective in urban areas. But rural states should not neglect to make vouchers available for those parents who may wish to make use of them.

The remainder of this report discusses the questions asked about each school choice program type and present program-specific results.

## 5. Vouchers

A voucher is a certificate issued and funded by the government that allows parents to send their children to a public or private school of their choosing, rather than attending the neighborhood school to which they are assigned. Vouchers are sometimes called scholarships or grants. What is key is that they allow parents to direct the spending of public education dollars.

We asked the following questions about voucher programs.

1. *Does the state have a voucher program?*
2. *Are disabled and special-needs children eligible/targeted?*
3. *Are resources means-tested?*
4. *Does the state have universal eligibility?*
5. *Is the number of students who may use a voucher legislatively unrestricted?*
6. *Is the voucher worth at least 25 percent of public school per-pupil expenditures?*
7. *Are religious schools allowed to participate?*

Table 6 provides the scores for nine states with voucher programs.

| <b>Table 6<br/>States with Voucher Programs</b> |              |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |
|---|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>State</b>                                    | <b>Total</b> | <b>Q1</b> | <b>Q2</b> | <b>Q3</b> | <b>Q4</b> | <b>Q5</b> | <b>Q6</b> | <b>Q7</b> |
| Utah  | 5            | 1         | 1         | 0         | 0         | 1         | 1         | 1         |
| Florida   | 5            | 1         | 1         | 0         | 0         | 1         | 1         | 1         |
| Ohio  | 5            | 1         | 1         | 1         | 0         | 0         | 1         | 1         |
| Arizona   | 4            | 1         | 1         | 0         | 0         | 0         | 1         | 1         |
| Georgia   | 4            | 1         | 1         | 0         | 0         | 0         | 1         | 1         |
| Maine   | 4            | 1         | 0         | 0         | 1         | 1         | 1         | 0         |
| Vermont   | 4            | 1         | 0         | 0         | 1         | 1         | 1         | 0         |
| Wisconsin                                       | 4            | 1         | 0         | 1         | 0         | 0         | 1         | 1         |
| District of Columbia                            | 3            | 1         | 0         | 1         | 0         | 0         | 1         | 0         |

Utah, Florida, and Ohio are tied for the best legal climate for vouchers. Had Utah's universal voucher program survived referendum on November 6, 2007, the state would have recorded a perfect score on vouchers.

Six of the nine voucher programs allow religious schools to participate. Their participation is especially important since in many cases religious schools are the only alternative to public schools at the time a program is enacted.

In Maine and Vermont, school vouchers have been in use for more than a century through town "tuitioning" programs, which serve students living in rural areas of the New England states.<sup>18</sup> The oldest contemporary school voucher program in the country is the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP), which has been in operation since 1991. The program currently enables 17,275 students to attend the school of their choice.

Shortly after the MPCP was created, Ohio enacted a program offering scholarships and tutoring for families living in Cleveland. Both programs have been studied repeatedly over the past decade, with results consistently showing positive effects.

The voucher concept is commonplace in American civic life. Every year Pell Grants help thousands of low-income students attend the college of their choice at the expense of federal taxpayers. While the federal government has established basic requirements that must be met by the participating institutions, it does not interfere with student choice.

Disabled and special-needs children are in particular need of vouchers, given the expense of their educations, the limited number of schools able to meet their needs, and their widely varying educational goals. Voucher programs targeting these students received an additional point in our report.

Children living in high-poverty areas also can benefit from vouchers, because they are less likely to receive a quality education from the public school system. School districts often allocate teaching resources and, consequently, financial resources, according to union contracts rather than student need. The result can be a raw deal for kids living at or near poverty. This report card gives an additional point to voucher programs that are means-tested so as to target or prioritize children from low-income families.

Although it is important for voucher programs to target low-income and special needs children in some way, the more universal the voucher program is, the better.<sup>19</sup> A universal voucher open to all students can help stimulate private investment in education and eventually create more choices for parents.

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<sup>18</sup>Christopher W. Hammons, February 2002 report for the Milton & Rose D. Friedman Foundation, "The Effects of Town Tuitioning in Vermont and Maine," Milton & Rose D. Friedman Foundation, February 2002. [www.friedmanfoundation.org](http://www.friedmanfoundation.org).

<sup>19</sup> Herbert J. Walberg, *School Choice: The Findings*, Cato Institute Press, 2007, pp. 79-80.

Ideally, a state will have many distinct voucher programs—some targeting low-income or special-needs, and others with universal eligibility—or have one voucher program with provisions for each category.

But these are not the only eligibility considerations. Voucher programs are often limited legislatively, by funding caps or limits on the number of students who may be awarded vouchers. Such caps are pushed by highly organized groups, such as teacher unions, with a vested interest in the status quo and a strong desire to limit the effectiveness of voucher programs. Milwaukee has shown that once in place, funding and participation caps can be difficult to remove.

Government—that is, taxpayers—cannot be expected to invest endless resources into a voucher program. Like health care and a clean environment, there is nearly infinite demand for good education. Completely satisfying that demand would be impossible. Thus, every state budget is a compromise of priorities, and voucher programs are but one of them. Voucher programs will inevitably be limited due to scarcity of funds. But that does not mean the level of public investment should be capped by statute. This report card awards a point to those states without a legislative limit on funding or the number of students who may use a voucher.

The purchasing power of a voucher is also an important consideration, since it has a direct impact on the success of the program. If the voucher amount is too low, fewer students benefit and fewer third-party education providers will be able to serve students. In *Grading Vouchers*, the Milton & Rose D. Friedman Foundation establishes 25 percent of public school per-pupil funding as the minimum a voucher must be worth for the program to receive a passing grade, a ‘D.’ Thus, we award one point for states whose programs meet that 25 percent threshold.

This is one of those situations, alluded to earlier in the report, where our yes/no methodology misses an important measure for evaluating voucher programs. It is strongly recommended that states fund their voucher programs at more than 25 percent of public school per-pupil funding. Ideally, parents should control 100 percent of the funds used for their child’s education.

Finally, some states restrict participation in their voucher programs to non-religious schools, perhaps to comply with the state’s constitution. However, if the state constitution allows, religious schools should be allowed to participate in the program. We awarded one point to states whose voucher programs do not discriminate against parents who would choose religious schools.

## **6. Charter Schools**

Charter schools are public schools governed by contracts negotiated between third-party education providers and state and local governments. They are publicly funded but exempt from many regulations that hamper innovation and efficiency in traditional public schools.

The level of regulation and effectiveness of charter school programs varies widely across states. The largest charter school programs, terms of the number of charter schools serving students, are

in California and Arizona. But Chicago’s relatively small program is widely held to be one of the best.

We asked the following questions about states’ charter school programs:

8. *Are charter schools allowed?*
9. *Is the number of charter schools legislatively unrestricted?*
10. *Do charter schools have a blanket waiver from regulations not in the charter?*
11. *Are for-profit organizations permitted to apply for a charter?*
12. *Are charter schools fully funded?*
13. *Are there multiple chartering authorities?*
14. *Is there a virtual charter school?*

Table 7 shows the scores for the 41 states with charter school programs. Arizona has the nation’s best charter school program, legislatively speaking. Arizona does not cap the number of charter schools or total enrollment in them, and it is one of few states that allow for-profit companies to apply for charters.

| <b>Table 7</b>                             |              |           |           |            |            |            |            |            |
|--|--------------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| <b>States with Charter School Programs</b> |              |           |           |            |            |            |            |            |
| <b>State</b>                               | <b>Score</b> | <b>Q8</b> | <b>Q9</b> | <b>Q10</b> | <b>Q11</b> | <b>Q12</b> | <b>Q13</b> | <b>Q14</b> |
| Arizona                                    | 7            | 1         | 1         | 1          | 1          | 1          | 1          | 1          |
| California                                 | 6            | 1         | 0         | 1          | 1          | 1          | 1          | 1          |
| Delaware                                   | 6            | 1         | 1         | 1          | 1          | 1          | 1          | 0          |
| Minnesota                                  | 6            | 1         | 1         | 1          | 0          | 1          | 1          | 1          |
| Colorado                                   | 5            | 1         | 1         | 0          | 1          | 0          | 1          | 1          |
| Indiana                                    | 5            | 1         | 0         | 1          | 0          | 1          | 1          | 1          |
| Ohio                                       | 5            | 1         | 0         | 1          | 0          | 1          | 1          | 1          |
| Wisconsin                                  | 5            | 1         | 1         | 1          | 1          | 0          | 0          | 1          |
| District of Columbia                       | 4            | 1         | 0         | 1          | 0          | 1          | 1          | 0          |
| Florida                                    | 4            | 1         | 1         | 0          | 0          | 1          | 0          | 1          |
| Hawaii                                     | 4            | 1         | 0         | 1          | 0          | 1          | 0          | 1          |
| Louisiana                                  | 4            | 1         | 0         | 1          | 0          | 1          | 1          | 0          |
| Michigan                                   | 4            | 1         | 1         | 0          | 0          | 1          | 1          | 0          |
| Nevada                                     | 4            | 1         | 0         | 0          | 0          | 1          | 1          | 1          |
| North Carolina                             | 4            | 1         | 0         | 1          | 0          | 1          | 1          | 0          |
| Oregon                                     | 4            | 1         | 1         | 1          | 0          | 0          | 0          | 1          |
| Pennsylvania                               | 4            | 1         | 1         | 1          | 0          | 0          | 0          | 1          |
| South Carolina                             | 4            | 1         | 1         | 1          | 0          | 1          | 0          | 0          |

| State         | Score | Q8 | Q9 | Q10 | Q11 | Q12 | Q13 | Q14 |
|---------------|-------|----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Alaska        | 3     | 1  | 0  | 0   | 0   | 1   | 0   | 1   |
| Georgia       | 3     | 1  | 1  | 1   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   |
| Idaho         | 3     | 1  | 0  | 0   | 0   | 1   | 0   | 1   |
| Illinois      | 3     | 1  | 0  | 1   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 1   |
| Missouri      | 3     | 1  | 0  | 0   | 0   | 1   | 1   | 0   |
| New Hampshire | 3     | 1  | 0  | 1   | 0   | 0   | 1   | 0   |
| New York      | 3     | 1  | 0  | 1   | 0   | 0   | 1   | 0   |
| Rhode Island  | 3     | 1  | 0  | 0   | 0   | 1   | 1   | 0   |
| Wyoming       | 3     | 1  | 1  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 1   |
| Arkansas      | 2     | 1  | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 1   |
| Connecticut   | 2     | 1  | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 1   | 0   |
| Iowa          | 2     | 1  | 0  | 0   | 0   | 1   | 0   | 0   |
| Kansas        | 2     | 1  | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 1   |
| Maryland      | 2     | 1  | 1  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   |
| Massachusetts | 2     | 1  | 0  | 0   | 0   | 1   | 0   | 0   |
| New Jersey    | 2     | 1  | 1  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   |
| New Mexico    | 2     | 1  | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 1   |
| Tennessee     | 2     | 1  | 0  | 0   | 0   | 1   | 0   | 0   |
| Texas         | 2     | 1  | 0  | 0   | 0   | 1   | 0   | 0   |
| Utah          | 2     | 1  | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 1   | 0   |
| Virginia      | 2     | 1  | 0  | 0   | 1   | 0   | 0   | 0   |
| Mississippi   | 1     | 1  | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   |
| Oklahoma      | 1     | 1  | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   |

Based on data from the Center for Education Reform. "Raising the Bar on Charter School Laws: 2006 Ranking and Scorecard," 9<sup>th</sup> Edition, February 2006.

Charter schools have become a very popular method of providing school choice. The first charter school law in the United States was passed in Minnesota in 1991; there are now 4,147 charter schools in 41 states serving more than 1.2 million students.

Any state with a law authorizing charter schools received one point in this report card. But the details of a charter school law have an enormous impact on the viability of charter schools and the educational opportunity their students experience.

One of the biggest factors determining how effective a charter school program can be is the overall number of schools allowed. Some states, like Illinois, have an exceptionally low cap on the number of charter schools. In Chicago, for example, the state allows only 30 charter schools, while other states, Arizona for one, have no legislative cap on the number of charter schools.

Some states do not cap the number of charter schools allowed but instead cap the number of new charter schools that can be authorized each year. This effectively slows the growth of new schools even in areas with high demand. While these caps may be a necessary legislative compromise in some cases, they still undermine the effectiveness of charter school programs.

Given how successful charter schools can be and the ease with which bad charter schools are closed, a legislative limit on the number of charter schools is unnecessary. States were awarded one point if they do not cap the number of charter schools.

We also considered whether charter schools are exempt from state education regulations. This is often called a “blanket waiver” and specifically requires that charter schools automatically be exempt from any regulation not explicitly mentioned in the state’s charter law. States with blanket waivers received a point.

Charter school programs should encourage the development of innovative solutions for public education. For-profit companies are an important source of innovation in the U.S. economy, and the education sector is no different. However, most states don’t allow for-profit firms to apply for charters. While some states allow them to *manage* charter schools, this report awards one point only to those states allowing for-profits to apply directly for charters.

Another important issue for charter schools is funding. Most charter schools are at a great disadvantage because, unlike traditional public schools, they must secure their own facilities and capital funding. In many states charter schools are further disadvantaged by inequitable per-pupil operating funds. Though many charter schools find innovative ways to overcome this disadvantage, it isn’t fair to penalize them. In principle, charter schools should be funded equally, receiving no more and no less funding than traditional public schools. States with 100 percent equitable funding received a point.

This report also awards one point to states with multiple charter school authorities. Local school boards are prone to treating charter schools as competitors rather than colleagues and often allow politics to interfere with sound judgment when asked to authorize a new charter. The Center for Education Reform, a national charter school advocacy organization, recommends the creation of independent state charter school boards to oversee the authorization and accountability processes.

Finally, online schools are increasingly becoming a valuable source of educational choice. Virtual charter schools combine the flexibility of charter schools with the innovation and affordability of distance learning. This report awarded one point to states with virtual charter schools.

## 7. Tax Credit Programs

We examine two kinds of tax credit programs.

The first, individual education tax credits, allow parents to claim a credit or deduction on their state and/or local tax returns for expenses related to their child's education, generally including (but often not limited to) tuition, books, and supplies. Such tax credits are a good way to increase private investment in education and encourage families to exercise more choice.

We asked the following questions about individual education tax credit programs:

*15. Can parents receive a tax credit or deduction for educational expenses?*

*16. Is the tax credit worth more than 25 percent of public school per-pupil funding?*

*17. Is the tax credit refundable for low-income families?*

Table 8 shows the scores for the three states that have education tax credit programs.

| <b>Table 8<br/>States with<br/>Individual Education Tax Credits</b> |              |            |            |            |
|---|--------------|------------|------------|------------|
| <b>State</b>  | <b>Total</b> | <b>Q15</b> | <b>Q16</b> | <b>Q17</b> |
| Minnesota   | 2            | 1          | 0          | 1          |
| Illinois  | 1            | 1          | 0          | 0          |
| Iowa  | 1            | 1          | 0          | 0          |

Individual education tax credits are sometimes criticized because they do little to expand school choice for low-income families in at-risk communities. This criticism is warranted, but only if tax credits are the *only* choice program a state offers. In states with a healthy school choice climate, education tax credits are a good addition to the menu of choice options.

One way to help low-income families take advantage of education tax credits is to make them refundable, which means even those who may not pay enough taxes to qualify may claim the credit. Low-income claimants receive a check for the amount of the credit. The federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is a model for this type of tax credit.

This report card awards one point to states with refundable education tax credits. To date, only Minnesota offers a refundable tax credit, available to taxpayers earning less than \$33,500.

Finally, as with vouchers, the value of an education tax credit will affect how many families make use of it, thereby influencing the amount of private investment in the education marketplace. We would have awarded one point to any state offering a tax credit worth at least

25 percent of public school per-pupil funding, but none of the state education tax credit programs exceeds that threshold.

The second kind of tax credit program creates incentives for taxpayers to give money to government-approved scholarship funds. In Pennsylvania, for example, corporations that give to a certified Educational Scholarship Organization (ESO) receive a tax credit worth up to 75 percent of donated funds. Arizona has a similar program, as well as a tax credit for individual taxpayers.

We asked the following questions about tax credit scholarship programs:

- 18. Is there a tax credit for contributions to educational scholarship programs?*
- 19. Is participation legislatively restricted?*
- 20. Are corporations allowed to participate in the tax credit program?*

Table 9 shows the scores for the five states with tax credit scholarship programs.

| <b>Table 9<br/>States with<br/>Tax Credit Scholarships</b> |              |            |            |            |
|--|--------------|------------|------------|------------|
| <b>State</b>   | <b>Total</b> | <b>Q18</b> | <b>Q19</b> | <b>Q20</b> |
| Florida  | 3            | 1          | 1          | 1          |
| Arizona  | 2            | 1          | 0          | 1          |
| Iowa   | 2            | 1          | 1          | 0          |
| Pennsylvania   | 2            | 1          | 0          | 1          |
| Rhode Island   | 2            | 1          | 0          | 1          |

States with tax credit scholarship programs received one point. States with corporate tax credit scholarship programs received an additional point. A third point was awarded to states that have not legislatively restricted participation in their tax credit program. Arizona’s personal tax credit program isn’t capped, but its corporate tax credit program is capped at \$5 million. Pennsylvania caps the overall amount of donations at \$54 million. The size of the Rhode Island program is capped at \$1 million.

What about purchasing power? Earlier, we awarded points based on the purchasing power of vouchers and education tax credits. It would seem to make sense to do the same for tax credit scholarship programs. However, in most cases, scholarship amounts under tax credit scholarship programs are determined by the Educational Scholarship Organizations and not state law. This report focuses on legislation; we do not judge states on factors outside of legislative control.

## 8. Public School Choice

While charter schools are public schools, they generally survive only if they are able to attract students from better-funded traditional public schools. There are, however, other kinds of public school choice worth considering. We asked the following questions about public school choice:

21. Does the state have a virtual school or incorporate distance learning into the classroom?
22. Does the state allow open enrollment?
23. Does the state have magnet schools?

Table 10 shows the scores for public school choice for all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

| <b>Table 10</b>                         |              |            |            |            |                      |              |            |            |            |
|---|--------------|------------|------------|------------|----------------------|--------------|------------|------------|------------|
| <b>States with Public School Choice</b> |              |            |            |            |                      |              |            |            |            |
| <b>State</b>                            | <b>Total</b> | <b>Q21</b> | <b>Q22</b> | <b>Q23</b> | <b>State</b>         | <b>Total</b> | <b>Q21</b> | <b>Q22</b> | <b>Q23</b> |
| Arkansas                                | 3            | 1          | 1          | 1          | Massachusetts        | 2            | 0          | 1          | 1          |
| California                              | 3            | 1          | 1          | 1          | Minnesota            | 2            | 0          | 1          | 1          |
| Colorado                                | 3            | 1          | 1          | 1          | Nebraska             | 2            | 0          | 1          | 1          |
| Georgia                                 | 3            | 1          | 1          | 1          | Nevada               | 2            | 0          | 1          | 1          |
| Illinois                                | 3            | 1          | 1          | 1          | New Jersey           | 2            | 0          | 1          | 1          |
| Kentucky                                | 3            | 1          | 1          | 1          | New Mexico           | 2            | 0          | 1          | 1          |
| Louisiana                               | 3            | 1          | 1          | 1          | New York             | 2            | 0          | 1          | 1          |
| Michigan                                | 3            | 1          | 1          | 1          | North Carolina       | 2            | 1          | 0          | 1          |
| Mississippi                             | 3            | 1          | 1          | 1          | North Dakota         | 2            | 1          | 1          | 0          |
| Missouri                                | 3            | 1          | 1          | 1          | Pennsylvania         | 2            | 0          | 1          | 1          |
| South Carolina                          | 3            | 1          | 1          | 1          | South Dakota         | 2            | 1          | 1          | 0          |
| Utah                                    | 3            | 1          | 1          | 1          | Tennessee            | 2            | 0          | 1          | 1          |
| Wisconsin                               | 3            | 1          | 1          | 1          | Texas                | 2            | 0          | 1          | 1          |
| Alabama                                 | 2            | 1          | 0          | 1          | Virginia             | 2            | 1          | 0          | 1          |
| Alaska                                  | 2            | 0          | 1          | 1          | West Virginia        | 2            | 1          | 1          | 0          |
| Arizona                                 | 2            | 0          | 1          | 1          | District of Columbia | 1            | 0          | 0          | 1          |
| Connecticut                             | 2            | 0          | 1          | 1          | Montana              | 1            | 0          | 1          | 0          |
| Delaware                                | 2            | 0          | 1          | 1          | New Hampshire        | 1            | 0          | 1          | 0          |
| Florida                                 | 2            | 1          | 1          | 0          | Ohio                 | 1            | 0          | 1          | 0          |
| Hawaii                                  | 2            | 1          | 1          | 0          | Oklahoma             | 1            | 0          | 1          | 0          |
| Idaho                                   | 2            | 1          | 1          | 0          | Oregon               | 1            | 0          | 1          | 0          |
| Indiana                                 | 2            | 0          | 1          | 1          | Rhode Island         | 1            | 0          | 1          | 0          |

| State    | Total | Q21 | Q22 | Q23 | State      | Total | Q21 | Q22 | Q23 |
|----------|-------|-----|-----|-----|------------|-------|-----|-----|-----|
| Iowa     | 2     | 1   | 1   | 0   | Vermont    | 1     | 0   | 1   | 0   |
| Kansas   | 2     | 0   | 1   | 1   | Washington | 1     | 0   | 1   | 0   |
| Maine    | 2     | 0   | 1   | 1   | Wyoming    | 1     | 0   | 1   | 0   |
| Maryland | 2     | 1   | 0   | 1   |            |       |     |     |     |

Distance learning is becoming an increasingly important way for public schools to serve children who have difficult circumstances, special needs, or both. Student athletes, for example, have difficult schedules, and distance learning helps them keep up. Children with disabilities or medical conditions that require them to miss school regularly may find distance learning helps them keep up with their studies.

Some states offer distance learning opportunities but have no law that ensures access statewide. This report awards one point only to those states with statewide distance learning programs.<sup>20</sup>

Open enrollment is a way public schools offer school choice without extending choice beyond traditional public schools. There are two kinds of open enrollment, intra- and inter- district. The former allows children to enroll in any public school within their own school district, while the latter allows them to enroll in schools in other districts.<sup>21</sup>

Open enrollment is a remarkably weak form of school choice. In many of the country’s worst school districts, there aren’t enough successful schools to accommodate all the children in failing schools. Nevertheless, this report awarded one point to states with open enrollment policies.

Finally, we awarded one point to states with magnet school programs.<sup>22</sup> Magnet schools are public schools with selective admission policies and a focus on excellence in some area of study. Some magnet schools focus on math and science, for example, while others focus on the arts.

Magnet schools are not an ideal form of choice because they generally are available only to high-achieving students. Nevertheless, they are an important part of any dynamic school choice system.

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<sup>20</sup> Virtual school data used for this scoring are from “Keeping Pace With Online Learning: A Review of State-Level Policy and Practice,” North American Council for Online Learning, October 2006.

<sup>21</sup> Open enrollment programs vary widely across states. For details see “Open Enrollment: 50 State Report,” Education Commission for the States, available online at <http://mb2.ecs.org/reports/Report.aspx?id=268>

<sup>22</sup> Magnet school data are available from the United States Census Bureau.

## 9. Conclusion

Many states are experimenting with choice as a way to improve the quality K-12 schools. A few states, like Arizona and Florida, are innovating at an impressive pace, willing to try new and better ways to educate children. Other states are not keeping pace and seem committed to preserving the largely choice-free status quo.

With negotiations underway in Congress for a reauthorized No Child Left Behind measure, many state elected officials are concerned about further intervention in state affairs by the U.S. Department of Education. One way to head off the threat of federal encroachment is to adopt strong state-level education reforms that give parents meaningful choices.

The states are often referred to as “laboratories of democracy,” and they have a strong history of acting accordingly. Education reform, even if driven by the federal government, will require vision and leadership from the states. It is our hope this report will help facilitate both.

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**Appendix - Grading Chart and Questions**

| State                | Total | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |   |
|----------------------|-------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|
| Alabama              | 2     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 1  |   |
| Alaska               | 5     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 1 |
| Arizona              | 15    | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 1 |
| Arkansas             | 5     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1 |
| California           | 9     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1 |
| Colorado             | 8     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0  | 1  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1 |
| Connecticut          | 4     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 1 |
| Delaware             | 8     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 1 |
| District of Columbia | 8     | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1 |
| Florida              | 14    | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 0 |
| Georgia              | 10    | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1 |
| Hawaii               | 6     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 0 |
| Idaho                | 5     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 0 |
| Illinois             | 7     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1 |
| Indiana              | 7     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 1 |
| Iowa                 | 7     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 0 |
| Kansas               | 4     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 1 |

**Appendix - Grading Chart and Questions**

| State          | Total | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |   |
|----------------|-------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|
| Kentucky       | 3     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 1  |   |
| Louisiana      | 7     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1 |
| Maine          | 6     | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 1 |
| Maryland       | 4     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 1  | 1 |
| Massachusetts  | 4     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 1 |
| Michigan       | 7     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1 |
| Minnesota      | 10    | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 1 |
| Mississippi    | 4     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1 |
| Missouri       | 6     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1 |
| Montana        | 1     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0 |
| Nebraska       | 2     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 1 |
| Nevada         | 6     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 1 |
| New Hampshire  | 4     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0 |
| New Jersey     | 4     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 1 |
| New Mexico     | 4     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 1 |
| New York       | 5     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 1 |
| North Carolina | 6     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 1  | 1 |

**Appendix - Grading Chart and Questions**

| State          | Total | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |   |
|----------------|-------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|
| North Dakota   | 2     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 0  |   |
| Ohio           | 11    | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0 |
| Oklahoma       | 2     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0 |
| Oregon         | 5     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0 |
| Pennsylvania   | 8     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 1 |
| Rhode Island   | 6     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0 |
| South Carolina | 7     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1 |
| South Dakota   | 2     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 0  | 0 |
| Tennessee      | 4     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 1 |
| Texas          | 4     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 1 |
| Utah           | 10    | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1 |
| Vermont        | 5     | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0 |
| Virginia       | 4     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 1  | 1 |
| Washington     | 1     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0 |
| West Virginia  | 2     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 0  | 0 |
| Wisconsin      | 12    | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1 |
| Wyoming        | 4     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0 |

## Questions

1. *Does the state have a voucher program?*
2. *Are disabled and special-needs children eligible/targeted?*
3. *Are resources means-tested?*
4. *Does state have universal eligibility?*
5. *Is the number of students who may use a voucher legislatively restricted?*
6. *Is the voucher worth at least 25 percent of public school per-pupil expenditures?*
7. *Are religious schools allowed to participate?*
8. *Are charter schools allowed?*
9. *Is the number of schools legislatively uncapped?*
10. *Do charter schools have a blanket waiver from regulations not in the charter?*
11. *Are for-profit organizations permitted to apply for charter?*
12. *Are charter schools fully funded?*
13. *Are there multiple chartering authorities?*
14. *Is there a virtual charter school?*
15. *Can parents receive a tax credit or deduction for educational expenses?*
16. *Is the tax credit worth more than 25 percent of per-pupil funding?*
17. *Is the tax credit refundable for low income families.*
18. *Is there a tax credit for contributions to educational scholarship programs?*
19. *Is participation restricted?*
20. *Are corporations allowed to participate in tax-credit program?*
21. *Does the state have a virtual school or incorporate distance learning into the classroom?*
22. *Does state allow open enrollment?*
23. *Does the state have magnet schools?*



