When Schools Compete, Good Things Happen

by Robert Holland

Numerous studies in recent years have shown student achievement and parental satisfaction improve when families use vouchers to choose private schooling. But a nagging question has lingered: What is the effect of voucher programs on students who remain in the public schools?

Now comes an answer: The effect is good—and the more directly public schools are affected by competition from vouchers, the better.

That conclusion comes from a Manhattan Institute study of Florida’s A+ Program, Governor Jeb Bush’s signature education reform. Since 

Most Americans Would Choose Private Schools

by George A. Clowes

A new Gallup poll conducted for Phi Delta Kappa International, whose education surveys command high respect in the teaching profession, reveals a compelling motivation for the fierce opposition teacher union leaders and most public school officials show toward school vouchers: Most students wouldn’t attend public schools if they had a voucher.

Only about one in three Americans (35 percent) would send their children to public schools if they had a voucher. Only about one in three Americans (35 percent) would send their children to public schools if they had a voucher. POLL continued on page 6

MATCH School Shows Poverty Isn’t Destiny

by George A. Clowes

It is the most urgent problem in U.S. public education today, but few people have the stomach to take on its challenge. It demands a daunting amount of effort and offers low odds of success: How can high-poverty students entering high school with only fifth- or sixth-grade skills be prepared to graduate as proficient 12th-graders four years later?

The MATCH School in Boston—the Media and Technology Charter High School—not only takes on that challenge MATCH continued on page 12

Congress Practices One Thing, Preaches Another on School Choice

by Krista Kafer

Over the past three years Congress has had several opportunities to approve legislation that would give low-income families the opportunity to choose where their children attend school. In every case, had lawmakers whose own children were enrolled in private schools voted with school choice advocates to give disadvantaged families the same access, the legislation would have passed.

According to the most recent Heritage Foundation survey, 42 percent of Members of Congress responded they send or have sent at least one child to a private school. In the general population, only about 10 percent of students attend private schools. Heritage Foundation surveys of Congress conducted in 2001 and 2000 yielded similar results.

Of those responding, the percentage of Members of Congress who send their children to private schools is disproportionate to that of the general population:

- While only 10 percent of U.S. students attend private schools, 43 percent of Representatives and 46 percent of Senators responded that they had sent children to private school;
- 45 percent of House Ways and Means Committee members and 31 percent of House Education and the Workforce Committee members exercised private school choice;
- 56 percent of Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee and 47 percent of Senate Finance Committee members exercised private school choice; and

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The Heartland Institute
19 South LaSalle #903
Chicago, IL 60603
At its root, the campaign for parental choice in education is about relying on capitalism to educate our children. Opponents demonize parental choice in education by tapping the public’s confusion about competition, profits, and prices. The anti-choice campaign is really a thinly veiled anti-capitalism campaign. To counter this, we must educate millions of Americans about what capitalism is, how it works, and why it should be trusted in education.

Joseph Bast and Herb Walberg, president and chairman, respectively, of The Heartland Institute, make the case for parental choice in education by explaining and defending capitalism. Let’s Put Parents Back in Charge! is the first effort to join these two subjects in one book since Milton Friedman proposed vouchers in Capitalism and Freedom in 1962.

Let’s Put Parents Back in Charge!

A GUIDE FOR SCHOOL REFORMERS

by Joseph L. Bast & Herbert J. Walberg, Ph.D.

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To order, call The Heartland Institute at 312/377-4000, or visit Heartland’s online store at http://www.heartland.org.
Congress Returns to Tackle DC Vouchers, Other Thorny Votes

by Don Soifer

At the August recess dwindled away and Capitol Hill repopulated. Members and staff were abruptly reminded they had left town with many of the year’s thorniest education votes still before them.

No vote loomed more conspicuously than the question of President George W. Bush’s proposed school voucher plan for Washington, DC. The DC Student Opportunity Scholarship Act would offer low-income parents up to $7,500 per child to select a school of choice for their children. Mayor Anthony Williams and other District leaders who helped design the plan have maintained a strong Hill presence supporting it. On September 9, the House narrowly approved the measure with a 209-208 vote, moving the plan to the Senate, where most observers were expecting an extremely tight outcome.

While Members spent the recess traveling abroad, raising money at home, meeting with constituents, and reacquainting themselves with their families, the Capitol’s halls and telephone lines were kept buzzing by supporters and opponents of school choice weighing in on the measure. Even if approved this year, the program would be a five-year pilot requiring annual appropriations, so the debate is likely to be replayed annually.

Support for Charters Boosted

“There is no force in the universe more powerful, as far as school change is concerned, than an informed parent with options,” Secretary of Education Rod Paige commented earlier this summer. The occasion of his remarks was not the DC voucher plan he strongly supports, but the announcement of new federal grants for charter schools. The Secretary commented on the value of charters, especially where public schools have been labeled “in need of improvement” under the new terms of the No Child Left Behind Act.

“The demand for high-quality education is everywhere and charter schools can meet that demand in unprecedented ways,” said Paige.

In August, the Department of Education (DoEd) announced more than $21 million in new state charter school grants for eight states: Alaska, Arizona, Iowa, Kansas, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina.

Currently DoEd supports nearly one in three of the nation’s more than 3,000 charter schools in 30 states. That support includes not only charter school operations, but planning and setup as well. Bush’s FY 2004 budget proposes $320 million for charter schools, including $120 million for credit enhancement.

Many charter school leaders have pointed to the need for safe and functional facilities as the greatest barrier to charter school growth.

Also this summer, DoEd officials awarded a $1.8 million grant to the Milken Family Foundation to expand its Teacher Advancement Program. The program is designed to attract, retain, and motivate talented people for the teaching profession. Teachers who qualify can earn stipends and performance awards and also professional advancement, much as do professionals in other careers. They are given exposure to innovative teaching strategies while being held accountable for their performance. The federal grant will be focused on schools in Arizona, Arkansas, and South Carolina.

Senate Prepares for Special Ed Vote

In September, the Senate moved closer to a floor vote on the bipartisan special education bill passed by the Education Committee in late-June. The Senate version of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) differs from the version passed by the House in a number of significant ways.

The bills share common goals, including improving education results for disabled students, reducing mislabeling of non-disabled students, reducing paperwork burdens on teachers, and improving discipline procedures widely considered problematic. But because they adopt different approaches to solving these problems, the business of resolving the two plans will fall to a conference committee, as it did with the No Child Left Behind Act. Both bodies will need to approve the final bill.

One prominent difference with regard to the misidentification of children concerns the widespread use of IQ discrepancy models to evaluate whether children are disabled. While the House version would prohibit schools from relying on “any single measure or assessment as the sole criterion” for labeling a child, the Senate version simply would clarify that schools are not limited to the IQ discrepancy test.

The House version also granted school districts significant flexibility to use up to 15 percent of IDEA funds for correcting reading deficiencies before children are—sometimes incorrectly—identified as disabled. The Senate version rejected that approach.

The Senate bill was endorsed by a number of high-profile groups from the educational establishment—including the National Education Association, National School Boards Association, American Federation of Teachers, and Council for Exceptional Children—which opposed the House plan.

Don Soifer is executive vice president of the Heartland Institute.
Florida

Continued from page 1

the 1998-99 school year, Florida has used its high-stakes assessment test, FCAT, to grade schools from A to F. When any school receives two Fs in a four-year period, its students become eligible for vouchers they can use to transfer to private schools or other public schools.

Incentive to Improve?

To test the A+ rationale that vouchers give failing schools an incentive to improve, Manhattan scholars Jay P. Greene and Murray A. Winters organized studies into five categories according to the imminence of voucher competition each face:

- “Voucher eligible” schools, where students already are receiving vouchers;
- “Voucher threatened” schools, where one more F will make them voucher-eligible;
- “Always D” schools—low-performing schools with lots of Ds on their report cards, but which have never faced an immediate threat from vouchers;
- “Ever D” schools—low-performing schools with just one D on their report cards; and
- “Formerly threatened” schools, which used to be voucher-threatened but no longer are.

To address any concern that schools might be devising ways to “beat” FCAT without producing gains in real learning, the scholars also checked scores on the Stanford-9, a nationally respected norm-referenced test.

The results showed a remarkably consistent pattern when test scores for each group of schools were compared to the performance of the rest of Florida’s public schools: The more the schools faced competition for students and funds, the greater the gains on the FCAT and Stanford-9 from 2001-02 to 2002-03. Schools already voucher-eligible made the biggest improvements—up 10.1 scale score points on FCAT reading, 9.3 scale points on FCAT math, and 5.1 percentile points on the Stanford-9.

Schools immediately threatened by vouchers made the second-greatest gains—up 8.2 points on FCAT reading, 6.7 points on FCAT math, and 3 percentile points on the Stanford-9.

Schools that have never received anything but Ds for four years, or those that have received at least one D since FCAT grading began, scored slight or statistically insignificant gains, respectively. These are low-performing schools, but any threat of losing students to vouchers is two years or more down the road.

Finally, the formerly threatened schools—those that received an F in 1998-99 but not since—actually reported declining test scores. The F is a distant memory, and because a new four-year period has begun, any threat of competition is remote.

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“When we give parents the ability to make choices about their children’s education, we give underachieving schools the incentive they need to change and improve.”

JOHN BOEHNER (R-OH), CHAIRMAN
HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Stigma Alone Not Enough

Critics of earlier Manhattan research on the competitive effects of vouchers argued that the stigma of a failing grade, not the incentives created by vouchers, motivated schools to improve. However, the relative- ly poor performance of schools that have the stigma of past failure but are no longer subject to a voucher threat undermines that alternative explanation, Greene and Winters contended.

“It is implausible that the stigma effect only exists for three years and then suddenly disappears,” they wrote. “The more believable explanation is that the actuality or prospect of voucher competition provides incentives for schools to improve and this effect suddenly disappears when the four year voucher threat period expires.”

The voucher-eligible and voucher-threatened schools across the board gained on both the FCAT and Stanford-9 math tests also undercut arguments that schools simply “teach to” or manipulate high-stakes tests like FCAT.

“If schools facing voucher competition were only appearing to improve by some- how manipulating the Florida high-stakes testing system,” the Manhattan scholars observed, “we would not have seen a corresponding improvement on another test that no one had incentives to manipulate.”

The study also considered the possibility that results were shaped by what statisticians call a “regression to the mean,” which roughly translates to “if you’re at the bottom rung, there’s no way to go but up.” If that explanation applied, however, there should be little or no difference between the voucher-eligible/voucher-threatened schools and those that have similarly low performance but do not face a voucher threat. Voucher competition seems to have driven which schools improved and which did not.

“Skimming the Dregs”?

Finally, critics may argue scores are rising in the voucher-affected schools because the worst students are using their vouchers to depart for private schools. That would fly in the face of voucher foes’ arguments that vouchers “cream” the best students from public schools. Although the study unearthed no evidence this is happening, it would mean vouchers were “dredging” the worst students from public schools. In other words, vouchers would be serving the students most in need and relieving public schools of that burden.

The Manhattan study could make an impact on the debate in Congress over whether to fund a pilot voucher program to help 2,000 children from the educationally distressed District of Columbia public school system. House Education Committee Chairman John Boehner (R-Ohio), who is cosponsoring DC vouchers with House Government Reform Committee Chairman Tom Davis (R-Virginia), said the Manhattan paper confirms “that school choice strengthens public education in America.

“When we give parents the ability to make choices about their children’s education, we give underachieving schools the incentive they need to change and improve,” Boehner noted. “Money alone is not the magic cure for what’s ailing public education.”

Given the Florida demonstration of the impact vouchers have on a variety of schools, columnist Linda Seebach of the Rocky Mountain News may have raised the most intriguing question:

“If just a little competition accomplishes so much, what would a lot of competition do?”

Robert Holland is a senior fellow with the Lexington Institute, a public policy think tank in Arlington, Virginia. His email address is holland@lexington institute.org.

INTERNET INFO

Business Group Gives Chicago Schools an F

by George A. Clowes

Neither increased funding nor administrative changes will produce the significant gains in student performance that are necessary for the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) to come even close to meeting the requirements of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, concludes a new report by an influential Chicago business group.

The group’s recommended treatment for spurring the “radically dysfunctional” school system to better serve the city’s children is competition among schools operating outside the existing system—i.e., voucher schools and charter schools.

“Chicago’s public school system is structured for failure. It needs to be fixed,” declares the opening page of the report, called Left Behind: Student Achievement in Chicago’s Public Schools.

Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley, who was given control of the city’s schools eight years ago, reacted angrily to the report, even though it praised his efforts and the efforts, talent, and dedication of the school board and current Chicago Public Schools CEO Arne Duncan. The report’s criticism is directed at the system, not at individuals.

“The problem lies in the system, which lacks competitive pressures pushing it to achieve desired results,” the report explains. “It responds more to political pressures from the school unions than to community or parental demands for quality. Schools, principals, and teachers are largely insulated from accountability or responsibility for results.”

According to the report’s authors, what CPS desperately needs in order to make fundamental improvements is “increasingly large doses of parental choice...competitive alternatives that would give parents the right to vote with their feet.” That means a voucher system or, as the report recommends, dramatically expanding the number of charter schools in the city. Without such reforms, the report warns, any additional funds channeled into the system would be largely wasted.

The report was produced by the Civic Committee of the Commercial Club of Chicago, a group of about 75 senior executives from the Chicago area’s leading corporations, professional firms, and universities. The Commercial Club’s mission is “to improve the economic and social well-being of the Chicago region.”

The Commercial Club is chaired by Northern Trust Chairman and CEO William A. Osborn. President of the Commercial Club’s Civic Committee is Chicago United Way Chairman R. Eden Martin, a partner in the law firm of Sidley Austin Brown & Wood. The Civic Committee’s education panel, which produced the report, is headed by John Rowe, chairman and CEO of the Chicago-based utility Exelon Corp.

“The Civic Committee report recommends that at least 100 new charter or contract schools should be created primarily to serve students and families living in Chicago’s inner city,” said Martin.

No Alternative Public Schools

The report’s conclusion about the failure of the city’s educational system was backed up just a month after its publication by the latest application of federal NCLB standards to Chicago’s public schools. Sixty-one percent of the city’s schools failed to make adequate progress in student achievement last year. As a result, more than a quarter of a million students were eligible to transfer to better schools. However, public school officials made only 1,055 seats available for student transfers, leaving the vast majority of eligible students with no alternative but to stay in their existing schools.

As the Civic Committee report points out, when middle- or upper-income families in Chicago need an alternative school, they send their children to private schools, or they move to a suburb with high-quality public schools. In fact, a recent study of the Chicago Sun-Times showed parents pulled almost one-third (31 percent) of the city’s public elementary school students out of the system over the past eight years, taking them to private schools or to the suburbs.

“However, most low-income, minority families who live in Chicago—particularly in Chicago’s inner-city neighborhoods—do not have this option,” the Civic Committee report points out. “They have no choice but to send their children to public schools in their neighborhoods. And, today, the educational achievement levels of students who attend these schools are far too often abysmally low.”

Abysmal Achievement Levels

The bulk of the Civic Committee’s report details just how abysmal these achievement levels are, not only for students in inner-city schools but also for students in the system as a whole. The low level of the 2002 test scores on the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) shows the “extraordinarily long way” Chicago’s public schools have to go simply to come close to meeting the NCLB expectation for 2014: that 100 percent of students will meet state standards in reading and math.

Without fundamental improvements to the city’s schools, the report warns, “generations of Chicago’s children will proceed through a school system that continues to produce appallingly high levels of dropouts and students who fail to meet state academic standards.”

For example, 40 percent of CPS high school students entering from the 8th grade have dropped out by 11th grade. Another 10 percent drop out before graduation, leading to an on-time graduation rate of less than 50 percent. For those who remain in school at 11th grade, the percentage who meet or exceed state standards is as follows for 2002:

- 36 percent in reading (22 percent of 8th grade cohort);
- 26 percent in math (16 percent of 8th grade cohort);
- 22 percent in science (13 percent of 8th grade cohort).

In other words, three-quarters (76 percent) of CPS 11th-graders in high-poverty schools do not meet state reading standards.

Despite the mayor’s reform efforts, recent test score trends cited in the report give little encouragement of future improvement. Test score data for elementary and high school show no significant progress in reading scores, and there is none at the 11th-grade level. The 2003 ISAT results for the 8th-grade class that entered high school three years earlier.

The percentage of 11th-graders in high-poverty schools who meet or exceed state standards is even lower:

- 13 percent in reading;
- 10 percent in science.

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“Sixty-one percent of the city’s schools failed to make adequate progress in student achievement last year. As a result, more than a quarter of a million students were eligible to transfer to better schools.”

Teachers Are “Essentially Unmanaged”

The report’s authors recognize that good teachers make the most important single contribution to a child’s success or failure in school. However, they point out CPS teachers are “essentially unmanaged” because of defects in two key personnel management areas: teacher deployment and teacher evaluation.

Although the best teachers are most needed in the worst-performing schools, that’s not where they’re deployed in Chicago, according to the report. In fact, the worst-performing schools—i.e., those in inner-city Chicago—have high concentrations of low-income students—are those most likely to have teachers who are not “highly qualified”—i.e., teachers who are not fully certified, even those operating with emergency or provisional licenses.

Teacher evaluation in CPS also is ineffective, according to the Civic Committee report. Despite the fact that most students in Chicago’s public schools do not complete their schooling on time and most of those headed for graduation cannot meet state standards, only about two out of every thousand CPS teachers are rated as “inadequate.” To the report’s authors, it appears as if “the entire collective bargaining apparatus has been designed less to improve teaching or student learning than to protect the interests of teachers.”

What is needed to transform the system is not better administration but competition, the Education Committee concludes. “Competition—which is the engine of American productivity generally—is the key to improved performance of our public schools.”

George A. Clowes is managing editor of School Reform News. His email address is clowes@heartland.org.
or secular private school, according to the new PDK poll. Even if the voucher covered only half the cost of tuition, a majority of Americans still would choose a private school (51 percent) over a public school (47 percent) for their children.

Among parents with children in public schools, 59 percent would choose a private school if a full-tuition voucher were offered, with 55 percent opting for a public school. However, the Democratic Party is likely to support school vouchers, fewer than half of Democrats polled (45 percent) would select a public school if given a full-tuition voucher. Only 28 percent of Republicans would choose a public school if given a full-tuition voucher.

Losing Faith in Public Schools

These dramatic findings, which demonstrate great public demand for a wider array of choices in K-12 education, are reported—which is highlighted— In "The 35th Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools" by Lowell C. Rose and Alec M. Gallup. The report is published in the September 2003 issue of Kappan.

Based on school preference data, parents' high regard for public schools seems to have dropped markedly in recent years. The percentage of public school parents in 2003 who would choose to keep their children in public schools when offered full-tuition vouchers—39 percent—is significantly lower than the figure reported four years ago—46 percent. In a 1999 PDK/Gallup survey that also probed the preferences of public school parents when offered a choice of schools with tuition paid by the government.

Opponents of school choice claim vouchers would hurt students whose parents opted to leave them in public schools, but the American public doesn't share these pessimistic views, according to the poll. Only 12 percent of respondents thought the academic achievement of students remaining in the public schools would get worse; 26 percent thought it would get better, and 59 percent thought it would stay the same. When asked if they thought vouchers for private schools would improve student achievement in their community, respondents were evenly split, with 48 percent saying vouchers would improve student achievement and 48 percent saying they would not. PDK/Gallup reports this essentially neutral finding as "48 percent saying [achievement] would get worse," even though respondents in fact were not asked if they thought vouchers would make student achievement in the community "get worse," only if student achievement would or would not improve.

Gallup polled 1,113 adults aged 18 and older between May 28 and June 18, 2003.

Paradoxical Ruling Appealed to Washington Supreme Court

by George A. Clowes

What if you had the right to assume that people who refused to join your organization nevertheless wanted to support your political agenda? What if you also had the right to deduct money for your political agenda directly from the paychecks of those non-members?

This “what if” scenario is no pipe dream for the Washington Education Association (WEA). On June 24, a Washington Appeals Court panel ruled 2-1 that the WEA had those rights, and that a state law designed to protect the free speech of teachers violated the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. The state attorney general has called on the state supreme court to review the decision.

The law in question made it illegal for the WEA to deduct money intended for political purposes from the paychecks of non-member teachers without the permission of those teachers. Paradoxically, the Appeals Court ruled this law—intended to protect the First Amendment rights of teachers—violates the First Amendment because it is "unduly burdensome" for the teacher union to comply.

"Forcing nonmembers to contribute money to a labor union amounts to compelled association with the union and impacts their First Amendment free speech and association rights," declared the Appeals Court. "Nevertheless, the State's interest in facilitating collective bargaining and preventing free rider-ship justifies the compelled association," it concluded.

The Appeals Court ruling reverses the effect of a campaign finance initiative, I-134, that was approved by 72 percent of the state's voters in 1992. The initiative stopped union officials from deducting funds for political activities from the paychecks of a teacher who was not a union member without explicit, affirmative authorization from the teacher.

Teachers who decide not to join the WEA, often for political or ideological reasons, become "agency fee payers" and must pay the regular WEA member dues of more than $700 per year. The free speech rights of those non-member teachers were protected by state law RCW 42.17.760, which states: "A labor organization may not use agency shop fees paid by an individual who is not a member of the organization to make contributions or expenditures to influence an election or to operate a political committee, unless affirmative-ly authorized by the individual."

That procedural requirement, according to the Appeals Court, is unconstitutional. "By requiring an ‘opt-in’ procedure, [the law] presumes that non-member objects to the use of their fees for political purposes," stated the court.

In July, the state's Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) unanimously voted to appeal the ruling to the state supreme court, and Attorney General Christine Gregoire filed a motion with the state supreme court to appeal the decision. More than 500 citizens contacted Gre- goire and PDC within days of the unexpected ruling, asking them to actively pursue the case.

"We hope the State Supreme Court will uphold our nation’s constitution and the free speech rights of teachers by overturning the outrageous ruling from the Court of Appeals," said Bob Williams, president of the Washington-based Evergreen Freedom Foundation (EFF). EFF filed the original complaint against the WEA that prompted the attorney general to sue the union for violating the law. The case was on appeal after the court found the WEA guilty of five years of violations, with the union agreeing even before the trial that it had "committed multiple violations" of the law. For willful violation of the law, the WEA was ordered to pay $590,000 in fines and state legal costs, and it has since been required to return about $300,000 to teachers. (See “WA Teacher Union Found Guilty,” School Reform News, October 2001.)

In 1997, the WEA had settled another case related to the same law for $430,000. (See “Washington Teachers Union Faces Lawsuit,” School Reform News, April 1997.)

George A. Clowes is managing editor of School Reform News. His email address is clowes@heartland.org.
Philadelphia’s Privatization Experiment Produces Gains

Student achievement is up, Vallas adds partners, Edison restructures
by Lisa Snell

One year after the nation’s largest school privatization experiment began in Philadelphia, the competition between restructured city schools, privately managed schools, and charter schools has led to significant gains in student achievement for Philadelphia students.

Remarkably, the 21 schools overhauled and given extra support by the Philadelphia school district outscored both charter schools and those operated by private managers—including Edison—on state reading and math tests.

The restructured schools reduced the number of students scoring below basic levels by 15 percentage points in math and 11.3 in reading. Edison’s 20 schools, by comparison, barely changed the percentage of students in that category in math and did slightly worse in reading.

Of 17 Edison schools with fifth grades, reading scores improved in 13 and math scores in 14. Of the 12 with eighth grades, five improved both reading and math scores, while seven saw scores drop. Edison has a history of slower achievement growth during the first academic year, and Philadelphia has been a particularly hostile environment for the company to attempt reform efforts. Edison must show significant student performance growth in the 2003-2004 school year in order to retain the Philadelphia contract.

There was less resistance to change in the restructured schools because most teachers and principals saw the reform efforts as staving off privatization.

Edison Goes Private
In June Edison announced plans to take the company private. Edison has signed a merger agreement with a new company formed by its own management team and an equity firm, Liberty Partners. Essentially, “going private” means a company’s shares are no longer publicly traded on the stock market, but instead are purchased and held privately by a small number of owners. The acquisition is expected to be completed in Fall 2003 and is subject to the approval of the company’s stockholders.

The change is part of Edison’s plan to maintain a lower profile while diversifying into a wider range of education services including after-school care, summer school, school tutoring, and student assessment and benchmarking services.

Adding Partnerships
Philadelphia Schools Chief Paul Vallas has shifted his school partnership strategy to rely on more universities and nonprofit organizations to help fix Philadelphia schools. Six universities, a museum, and William Bennett’s for-profit K12 have joined the list of outside groups hired to run pieces of the nation’s seventh-largest public school district.

The district’s eight new partners will offer a range of services at 16 city schools—including teacher certification courses, tutoring, and mentoring programs—and help develop the district’s curriculum. The new agreements would leave schools in the city’s control.

Some examples of the new Philadelphia partnerships include:

- Drexel University wants to act as a consultant for the district on matters related to school design, information technology, and business management. It will send more than 2,000 of its own students into city schools to perform volunteer work.
- Eastern University wants to install a program at a city high school that would integrate university-level courses into the regular curriculum, allowing students to earn up to two years of college credit by the time they graduate.
- K12 is developing a Web-based teaching program for a new city elementary school scheduled to open in 2004.
- Philadelphia’s science museum, The Franklin Institute, and one of its pharmacology and health sciences colleges, The University of the Sciences in Philadelphia, have agreed to help the district open and operate a pair of new science-themed high schools.
- Lock Haven University will create a mentoring certification, and master’s degree program for new teachers at a city elementary school.

Vallas said the partnership agreements would cost about $3 million. He plans to announce several more partnerships with private groups in the coming weeks.

Lisa Snell is director of the education program for the Reason Foundation in Los Angeles. Her email address is lsnell@reason.org.

Charter Schools Fuel School Management Growth

by Lisa Snell

While large-scale privatization efforts like the Philadelphia experiment may be politically difficult, nationwide the growth of charter schools continues to fuel the growth of both for-profit and nonprofit education service providers.

Charter schools can be viewed as the largest example of education outsourcing, with close to 2,700 individual contracts between charter schools and their government authors.

According to “Profiles of For-Profit Education Management Companies, Fifth Annual Report, 2002-2003,” more than 74 percent of all privately managed public schools were charter schools. For-profit providers operate between 10 and 14 percent of all charter schools. In 2002-2003, 47 companies operated 417 schools in 24 states and the District of Columbia.

As more failing schools are driven by the No Child Left Behind Act to seek new management arrangements through charter schools or contract management, the number of for-profit and nonprofit managers will likely continue to increase.

Lisa Snell is director of the education program for the Reason Foundation in Los Angeles. Her email address is lsnell@reason.org.
Administrators Stonewall NCLB in Colorado

Parents improperly notified, discouraged from exercising rights
by Pamela Benigno

Public school districts across the state of Colorado broke the law last year, failing to properly notify parents of essential information about a new federal law. Thousands more parents received letters from administrators trying to discourage parents from exercising their rights under the new law.

Low student achievement in 151 Colorado public schools placed the schools on School Improvement or Corrective Action status in 2002. School administrators are required by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act to notify parents about what this status means and about the new parental right to transfer their children to a higher-performing school with transportation provided for by the district.

The law also requires the notification to include:
- the reason for the school’s placement on the School Improvement or Corrective Action list;
- how the school compares academically to other schools;
- what the school, the district, and the state are doing to address the low achievement; and
- how parents can become involved in addressing academic issues at the school.

Informing Parents
The Education Policy Center at the Independence Institute, a think tank in Golden, Colorado, examined the forms of notification provided to parents to discover if in fact school administrators had fulfilled the requirements of the law and if they had lived up to the spirit of the law.

The Center asked the 151 schools identified for School Improvement or Corrective Action to provide a copy of the letter or other format used to communicate with parents about their choice options in the first year of the mandate. The request was accompanied by a survey to gather additional information. The survey and a summary of responses are reprinted in the June 2003 Independence Institute Issue Paper, “No Child Left Behind Mandates School Choice: Colorado’s First Year.”

The samples of notification collected for the purpose of the study, as well as the responses to the surveys, were revealing.

With an 82 percent response rate from 151 schools, only 10 schools, all located within the same school district, came close to including all the required elements in the notification. As a result, only 170 students in the state were tracked as transfers under NCLB.

Thousands of letters or notices in clustered school bulletins were provided to parents without a clear explanation that the opportunity to transfer to a higher or performing school, with transportation paid for by the school district, is a new option under federal law.

Moreover, several school districts did not follow the spirit of the law when they attempted to sway parents away from transferring their children with statements such as, “Please be aware that if you choose this option your child becomes a student at the receiving district as that district will receive the entire state funding amount.”

Another letter sent home to parents stated, “While we don’t want this to happen, it is also our responsibility to remind you about Parent Choice… It is our hope that you will choose to support us in our improvement efforts.”

School principals did not notify parents that the school had been identified for School Improvement or Corrective Action status and often explained the school’s efforts to improve. However, the vast majority of school principals skipped the requirement to notify parents about how they can become involved in the school to address the problem of low achievement. NCLB is precise about what form of notification is required to be sent to parents, and there is no excuse for confusing, misleading, or intimidating notification. The Colorado experience points to the importance of holding school districts accountable for fulfilling the requirements of the law, but also for living up to the spirit of the law. The performance of the school districts also highlights the need for parents to become informed education consumers.

While this project focused on schools in Colorado, the design of the survey readily lends itself to use in other states. The Education Policy Center welcomes the opportunity to work with organizations in other states to hold their school districts accountable for compliance with NCLB.

Pamela Benigno is the author of “No Child Left Behind Mandates School Choice: Colorado’s First Year.” She is director of the Education Policy Center at the Independence Institute. Her email address is Pam@21.org.

NCLB Puts Spotlight on Public School Performance
by George A. Clowes

This summer, state departments of education identified public schools “need improvement” after failing to make “adequate yearly progress” for two years in a row under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act.

Adequate Yearly Progress
For each state, making Adequate Yearly Progress requires continuous and substantial academic improvement for all students, with the same high standards of academic achievement applied to all students in a statistically valid and reliable manner. Academic achievement is measured as the percentage of students who meet state standards in reading and math for their grade level. For high schools, the standards also include a four-year graduation rate.

Under NCLB, states have established annual goals for student achievement such that the percentage of students meeting state standards increases gradually to 100 percent by 2014. Each school must report its performance against these annual state goals by the following student groupings, with at least 95 percent of the students in each group being tested:
- All students
- Racial/ethnic groups
- Economically disadvantaged students
- Students with disabilities
- Students with limited English proficiency

Making Adequate Yearly Progress means a school meets all of the state’s proficiency goals for all student groups in a given year.

How Schools Performed
Although 87 percent of the public schools in Kansas achieved Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for all groups, in most states large percentages of schools failed to meet state achievement goals.

In Florida, for example, only 13 percent of the public schools met the state’s standards for AYP, which required at least 31 percent of students reading at grade level and 38 percent who could do grade-level math.

In California, only 37 percent of elementary schools and 20 percent of high schools achieved AYP, despite having relatively low achievement hurdles. For elementary schools, making AYP required having at least 13.6 percent of students able to demonstrate proficiency in English language arts, and 16 percent in math. For high schools, making AYP required having at least 11.2 percent of students showing proficiency in English language arts and just 9.6 percent in math.

In Delaware, 43 percent of schools met the state’s AYP requirements. In both Pennsylvania and Missouri, about half of the public schools in each state met the minimum standards in reading and math.

Schools Needing Improvement
When a school fails to make AYP for two years running, it is classed as needing improvement. Title I schools that need improvement are required to offer their students the option of transferring to a better public school. After three years of failing to make AYP—or the second year classified as in need of improvement—low-income students are eligible to receive free tutoring if they do not choose to exercise the transfer option.

In Chicago, for example, 363 of the city’s more than 600 schools were determined to be needing improvement, with some 270,000 students eligible for transfer. Although 19,246 students applied for transfers, the city supplied only 1,055 seats in better schools.

Although New York City was one of the few cities that got a tutoring program up and running last year, no date has been set for when tutoring will begin this year and no instructions have yet gone out to parents. Almost a quarter of a million students were eligible for tutoring last year because they were in schools needing improvement who met state standards but did not actually requested tutoring. Also, some 88 percent of all the tutoring was provided by the school system—which failed the students in the first place—rather than by for-profit and nonprofit tutoring services.

George A. Clowes is managing editor of School Reform News. His email address is clowes@heartland.org.
Hypocrisy

Continued from page 1

- 29 percent of Congressional Black Caucus members and 46 percent of Congressional Hispanic Caucus members chose to send at least one child to private school.

Many of the policymakers who exercise choice in their own children’s education have voted to block legislation that would have given other families the same range of options. For example, earlier this year the House considered Amendment 90 to the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (H.R. 1350), a modest proposal by Representative Jim DeMint (R-South Carolina) to give states the flexibility to establish innovative parental choice programs for students with disabilities.

The proposal was defeated by a vote of 240 to 182 on April 30, 2003. If every member of the House who practices school choice had voted to empower families with disabled children, Amendment 90 would have passed 243-179.

The Senate has not voted on parental choice legislation this term.

Parental Choice Curtailed in NCLB

In the 107th Congress, the survey found similar results. In 2001, the House of Representatives and Senate both rejected amendments to the No Child Left Behind Act that would have given scholarships to parochial school of their choosing,” 63 percent of respondents “strongly” or “somewhat” supported “providing parents with the option of sending their children to the school of their choice—either public, private, or parochial—rather than only to the school to which they are assigned.”

When asked specifically whether they were “in favor of or against allowing poor parents to be given the tax dollars allotted for their child’s education and permitting them to use those dollars in the form of a scholarship to attend a private, public, or parochial school of their choosing,” 63 percent of respondents favored the proposal. Rates of approval were even higher among minority respondents.

Parental Choice for DC?

In the near future, the House of Representatives will have the opportunity to vote on an amendment to the District of Columbia appropriations bill modeled after the committee-passed D.C. Parental Choice Incentive Act introduced by Representative Tom Davis (R-Virginia). The proposal would enable low-income parents in the District of Columbia to enroll their children in private schools through a scholarship program. Under the bill, the maximum scholarship is $7,500, and $15 million is authorized for the program.

If every member of the House of Representatives who practices private school choice votes with supporters of school choice to extend the same access to disadvantaged students in the District of Columbia, the amendment will pass. It will likewise pass in the Senate if those who practice school choice for themselves vote to extend it to other people, too.

Since the 2002 Heritage Foundation survey was conducted, the U.S. Supreme Court has upheld the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring program, removing the constitutional question from vouchers.

Before the first anniversary of the Court’s decision, Colorado Governor Bill Owens signed into law the Colorado Opportunity Contract Pilot Program, which will provide vouchers to low-income students in low-performing school districts. Eleven states have state-funded scholarship programs or tax credits for education expenses or contributions to scholarship funds.

Krista Kafer is senior policy analyst for education at The Heritage Foundation. Her email address is krista.kafer@heritage.org.

When it comes to tuition assistance, are some of your families receiving more than their fair share?

IT’S A FACT:

96% of schools give out financial aid.
Only 53% use an application
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A professionally-run tuition assistance program can save your school thousands of dollars.

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Confidential Financial Analysis
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Woodland Park, Colorado
Call 888-726-9878 for an information packet
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“The CFA has enabled our scholarship committee to distribute donations equitably, fairly, and generously. We wouldn’t even try to offer scholarships without this ‘third party’ objective assessment tool. I highly recommend CFA to your school board.”

Stephen Riley, CCA, Shelbyville, KY.
A Convert to School Choice

At one time, Missouri House Education Committee Chairwoman Jane Cunningham thought Mae Duggan, Missouri’s First Lady of school choice activism, was “nuts.”

That was when Cunningham was a newly elected school board official in 1989, listening to Duggan’s reasoning on giving parents choice in the education of their children. It was not until Cunningham had spent some time as an insider on the politics of public education in her high-expenditure, highly esteemed district that she realized the central problem in American education was evident in her own hometown: a monopoly that precludes true reform and reinforces policies that produce mediocrity.

“I could not even get the Board to discuss a survey or exit interview [with parents who had left the system],” Cunningham said. She wanted to find out why 50 percent of parents in the wealthy district were choosing private schooling over the public schools—“what it was they did not like about the educational product they were paying for with their taxes.”

Cunningham was shocked and sickened when she was let in on the prevailing attitude about the flight to private schools: “We have fewer children to educate and we still get their taxes,” was the response of her school board colleagues.

In the school district where Cunningham lived, “the reason they did not change as a result of families leaving and the reason they almost welcomed it, was money,” Cunningham explained. “Because they are a very wealthy district, the district receives only about $200 from the state per child annually. The rest is from local property taxes.”

“That statement lit a fire inside of me that won’t go out,” she said. “The results of the monopoly were easy to recognize with my economics background, and I became a convert to the parental choice, educational freedom movement.”

In short, Mae Duggan, who had been working towards educational freedom since 1959, was “no longer ‘nuts.’” Sooner thereafter, Cunningham moved one of her sons from the public school system to a Catholic school. After making As and Bs in math at his public school, he tested at only the 30th percentile in math computation at his new school, Immacolata Elementary.

“The staff at the Catholic school thought he must have a learning disability, because they could not imagine his local school had done such a poor job,” she said. After intensive personal attention by his teacher, her son rose to the 90th percentile in math. Cunningham wrote a letter to her local newspaper about her son’s experience.

“My hat’s off to Catholic Schools Superintendent George Henry,” she wrote, pointing out her son’s rise in math skills. “The per-pupil expenditure at the public school is over $9,000 while the tuition for a non-Catholic at Immacolata is $2,500. The funds should follow the results.”

Cunningham’s son is now a sophomore at the University of Texas on a Navy ROTC scholarship.

As a result of these experiences, Cunningham began working more fervently for school choice. She was elected to the state legislature, eventually becoming chair of the House Education Committee. She has come to the conclusion that it is the “one-size-fits-all” public school model that creates the most problems. She does not understand why public school leaders usually disdain the concept of school choice, and fear it.

“If they are providing a quality educational product, it will be a revenue producer for them because families would line up to get in,” she said.

In 2003, Cunningham sponsored two school choice bills, both designed “to get folks comfortable with the concept.” One bill addressed the issue of access to programs in public schools denied to non-public school-children whose families were residing in and paying taxes to the public schools. The other, HB 345, would have given school choice to at-risk children in low-income families and in families where a parent is a prison inmate.

Although neither bill passed, she was happy to be able to bring some Black Caucus members on board with HB 345.

Combining her concerns for the social good and fiscal responsibility, Cunningham suggests the following approach: “I believe if we offered families one-half of what it costs to educate a child in their local public school if they chose to move to a non-public school, we would have happier, higher-achieving students and the states would all have balanced budgets with the money saved.”

Laura J. Swartley is communications director with the Milton and Rose Friedman Foundation in Indianapolis, Indiana. Her email address is laura@friedmanfoundation.org.
access to the best possible schools, whether those schools are public, charter or private.”

Ford, of D.C. Parents for School Choice, responded as follows:

“Regarding the spate of letters about Washington’s proposed school voucher plan. ... When segregationist politicians blocked schoolhouse doors in Alabama more than 40 years ago, their decision to rob poor children only of a quality education was a cruel act of racism. Today, some African-American leaders, Capitol Hill lawmakers and union officials are blocking schoolhouse doors once again. ... The District parents in my organization believe the time has long passed to help hundreds of D.C.’s schoolchildren who are stuck in underperforming schools. ...

“Senator Landrieu [an opponent of the proposal] was thoroughly embarrassed in July when the child of a D.C. parent asked her what school her own children attended and she admitted it was Georgetown Day, an elite private school. She further insulted parents by telling them that a school choice program could not help them get their children into Georgetown Day since tuition was too expensive. ...

“We can no longer stand by while a few politicians condemn our children to a life of lost opportunities and unfulfilled dreams. The politicians must step away from the door, and let our children go.”

Wall Street Journal
August 14, 2003
August 20, 2003

FLORIDA

Tax Credit Scholarships Come Under Fire

The accountability of private schools receiving voucher money through Florida’s corporate tax credit scholarship program is continuing to receive intense scrutiny. Earlier this year, it was revealed the Islamic Academy of Florida in Tampa had ties with a member of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. As a result, the school was removed from participation in the scholarship program. According to Education Commissioner Jim Horne, that response exemplified how the program was accountable.

“While we were fairly confident that the dollars were only used to educate students, we collectively made the decision to take children out of harm’s way,” Horne told the Sarasota Herald-Tribune. “To taint the whole program because of that one incident is unfair.”

However, Horne pointed out parental accountability injects the most critical form of accountability into the program: “It’s a powerful accountability measure,” he told El Nuevo Herald in July. “A free marketplace type of accountability made us the most powerful nation on the planet.”

Voucher advocate Tina Dupree of Florida Child suggested parents had a very straightforward measure of accountability: “If your child can read, write, spell and do math, then we know that school has been accountable,” she told the Sarasota Herald-Tribune.

Horne launched a statewide series of forums in early August that featured panels of pro- and anti-voucher speakers. At the Miami forum, parents extolled the merits of their newly chosen private schools to the Miami Herald.

“The results are phenomenal,” said parent Renford Williams, whose daughter attends Redemptive Life in Miami. The Herald reported the Miami meeting turned raucous when Democrat Representative Don Gelber commandeered the microphone and accused the state of losing control of the voucher program. Horne responded there “are rules in place,” and said the administrators of the program go above and beyond state requirements for accountability.

John Kirtley, chairman of Florida PRIDE, responded to further criticism that the corporate tax credit program hides corporate donor identities and lacks oversight.

“The law requires annual financial and compliance audits, which our fund has already submitted to the Auditor General,” Kirtley told El Nuevo Herald. “Not a penny of tax-credited funds can be used for administration or fund-raising. The income of every family has been documented every year to safeguard the integrity of the program.”

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Speaking “the Truth” in Chicago

In the midst of a decidedly anti-voucher event, an AFL-CIO forum in Chicago, Democratic Presidential hopeful Joseph Lieberman articulated his stance on school choice. He announced he would support a pilot voucher program in the District of Columbia, a statement that brought a strong negative reaction from the audience.

“I’m going to speak the truth,” Lieberman responded to the hissing and booing crowd. “I’m going to say what I think about what’s best for America.”

CNN.com
August 7, 2003

ILLINOIS

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CNN.com
August 7, 2003

LOUISIANA

DC Group Attacks Landrieu on Vouchers

In early September, D.C. Parents for School Choice ran a full-page ad in the New Orleans Times-Picayune criticizing Senator Mary Landrieu’s hypocrisy on the issue of school vouchers. Landrieu had supported vouchers in the past but had turned negative on the D.C. scholarship proposal.

“Always felt that Mary Landrieu was a good friend for parents in D.C. and cared about our children, which made her vote such a terrible disappointment,” Virginia Walden Ford, executive director of D.C. Parents for School Choice, told the Associated Press.

The ad featured a picture of a District school child, with the caption: “My mom wants you to know that Sen. Mary Landrieu doesn’t want me to go to the same school where her children go.”

Landrieu was quoted by the AP as saying: “We need the right kind of scholarship program or none at all.” The Louisiana Federation of Teachers President Fred Shelton defended Landrieu, saying she was only supporting her constituents. However, polling in Louisiana last spring showed significant support for vouchers in New Orleans and Baton Rouge. (See “Louisiana: Foster Offers Voucher Plan,” Friedman Report School Choice Roundup, School Reform News, May 2003.)

The Lafayette Advertiser
September 8, 2003

MICHIGAN

Public School Choice Continues to Grow

Three times more Michigan residents opted for public school choice in 2001 than in 1997, according to a report from The Heritage Foundation.

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The Lafayette Advertiser
September 8, 2003

NEW JERSEY

Poll Shows Strong Support for School Vouchers

A recent poll commissioned by local school choice advocates shows 66 percent of New Jersey families support vouchers. The poll was conducted on behalf of Excellent Education for Everyone (E3) by the Eagleston Institute of Politics Center for Public Interest Polling.

Respondents were asked, “Would you vote for or against a system of giving parents the option of using government-funded school vouchers to pay for tuition at the public, private or religious school of their choice?”

Sixty-one percent of Democrats, 68 percent of Independents, and 76 percent of Republicans said they would vote in favor of vouchers.

Support for vouchers was substantial across a wide range of income brackets, with favorable responses received from 70 percent of respondents making less than $50,000 a year and by 64 percent of respondents making $50,000-$100,000 a year. Minorities in New Jersey’s urban centers were especially supportive. Seventy-five percent of urban residents—72 percent of whom live in state’s special needs, or Abbott, districts—said they would vote for vouchers.

Excellent Education for Everyone
June 6 2003

PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE CONTINUES TO GROW

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The Lafayette Advertiser
September 8, 2003
but raises the goal: not just 12th-grade proficiency, but rigorous college prep. And MATCH is succeeding, with a model involving massive amounts of one-on-one tutoring provided by volunteer tutors and students in college work-study programs.

One of the ongoing problems in K-12 education stems from students who enter kindergarten lacking the skills necessary to succeed even at that starting level, a situation that applies disproportionately to children from low-income families. When such shortcomings are not corrected in kindergarten, social promotion pushes those students into higher and higher grades, where they find themselves increasingly unable to cope. Many drop out once they encounter the learning demands of high school.

“In theory, we can all posit taking children at the pre-kindergarten level, providing them with the skills they need to succeed in K-12 school, and solving the education problem that way,” MATCH School’s founder and CEO Michael Goldstein told a group of educators and business representatives recently in Boston at the EDVentures 2003 Conference of the Education Industry Association. The real challenge, said Goldstein, is to design a school that takes students already in the K-12 system from where they are now to where they need to be by 12th grade.

Goldstein, former New York City journalist who wrote for Business Week and other publications, developed the MATCH school plan in 1998. In 1999, it was one of only five charters the state approved, out of 31 applications.

When the first group of MATCH students took the 10th-grade MCAS exams, 80 percent passed the math exam and 94 percent passed the English exam. This year, the pass rate was 100 percent after a retake opportunity.

Huge Gains

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Parents of non-promoted students remain very positive about the school, and parents overall are very satisfied, rating the school 9.3 on a scale of 1 to 10 in 2001-02. They rated their children’s various former middle schools at 6.8. When the school first opened, it received three applications for every one available seat; that ratio was 10-to-1 at the start of the 2003-04 school year, with 400 students applying for just 40 openings.

Lots of Tutoring

What is the MATCH School’s strategy for bringing students to grade level? The secret is tutoring: approximately four hours a week for every student. The job of the tutor is not to help the student with his or her homework, but to go through a sequential process of instruction in read-

“Those who have been led to exclude a disadvantaged Boston student, especially approved, out of 31 applications. The school’s student body is roughly two-thirds African-American, a quarter Hispanic, and less than 10 percent white and Asian. About three-quarters of the students come from families that live in poverty, a rate higher than the average for Boston. Like the vast majority of students entering Boston high schools, students entering the MATCH School are on track to fail their 10th-grade MCAS state exams (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System).

“This first thing we have to do is to convince them that college is for them,” said Goldstein, noting that for most students, this would be the first time anyone in their families had gone to college.

The next step is the really difficult one: actually bringing students up to college prep level. Four out of five entering students have failed their 8th-grade MCAS exams and generally perform two to three years below grade level. To succeed, they must make academic gains at the rate of at least 1.5 grade levels per year over their four years in high school.

MISSION: TO REVERSE UNDERACHIEVEMENT

“The college graduation rate among inner-city students nationally is below 10 percent,” the school’s annual report states bluntly. “Our mission is to reverse that underachievement.”

The school’s mission is to prepare students to succeed in K-12 school, and solving the education problem that way, MATCH School’s founder and CEO Michael Goldstein told a group of educators and business representatives recently in Boston at the EDVentures 2003 Conference of the Education Industry Association. The real challenge, said Goldstein, is to design a school that takes students already in the K-12 system from where they are now to where they need to be by 12th grade.

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Work-study programs are not the only way to engage college students in tutoring programs. A parent with a child who needs tutoring could easily post a flyer in a college dorm to hire a student, work-study or not, to sit with that child at the kitchen table every weekend at, say, $10 per hour, and work on math and reading skills or on homework.

The No Child Left Behind Act requires failing schools to provide outside tutoring, but that provision has not yet been leveraged on behalf of parents, argues MATCH School founder and CEO Michael Goldstein. When asked, administrators at failing schools usually point parents to existing tutoring programs. However, if school districts offered the $1,000 per student of Title 1 funds to low-income parents as a tutoring voucher, this would enable parents to make their own decisions about tutors, including hiring college students.

The MATCH School’s experience with tutors indicates some structure quickly develops as numbers increase. At MIT, the work-study tutors are organizing themselves into groups of eight, with at least two in each group to ensure experience is passed on to new tutors. The MATCH School also organizes a tutor fair where tutors offer their expertise and the times when they are available, and parents shop around for the tutor who provides the best fit for the needs of their children.

Now, during the summer, 75 of MATCH’s students go to the nearby MIT campus for four hours of tutoring each day. In addition, this year, every 9th- and 10th-grader at MATCH will be tutored for eight hours on the weekend by college students from MIT, Boston University, Boston College, and Harvard University.

Replicable Model
Colleges that accept federal work-study funds must allocate 7 percent of that money to community service, and paying undergraduates to tutor local schoolchildren meets that requirement. Although MATCH’s volunteer tutors are unpaid, the work-study tutors cost MATCH about $2 an hour, with the bulk of each undergraduate tutor’s pay coming from the work-study program and the college.

Goldstein believes the work-study model is replicable elsewhere. As far as he’s concerned, it’s a win-win-win-win situation: the college gets to meet its grant requirement; the undergraduate gets a much more satisfying job to do than, for example, reshelving library books; MATCH gets cost-effective access to a large number of tutors; and, best of all, disadvantaged youngsters get tutored and mentored by some of the nation’s best and brightest college students.

It’s a good match.

George A. Clowes is managing editor of School Reform News. His email address is clowes@heartland.org.

Title I Tutoring Vouchers?

“The MATCH School also organizes a tutor fair and parents shop around for the tutor who provides the best fit for the needs of their children.”

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RACE AND EDUCATION

an interview with Abigail Thernstrom by George A. Clowes

Clowes: How did you become interested in education reform?

Thernstrom: I'm a political scientist by training, and American constitutional law is my field, but I quickly moved into writing almost exclusively on issues centered on race and ethnicity. Going down that road inevitably led me to the question of education and the disparate performance of different racial and ethnic groups. I also wrote a little book called School Choice in Massachusetts, which brought me to the attention of Governor Weld, and he appointed me to the state Board of Education here in Massachusetts.

Clowes: The U.S. Supreme Court's recent rulings in Grutter v. Bollinger and Gratz v. Bollinger centered on affirmative action. How did the Court resolve the issue?

Thernstrom: The issue in both cases was racial preferences in higher education. Gratz involved undergraduates at the University of Michigan. The question in Grutter was the University's law school admissions.

In the admission process for undergraduates, the college was actually assigning points for the color of the applicant's skin. On a 150-point scale, a student automatically got 20 points if he or she was black, Hispanic, or Native American. Asians did not count for the purpose of preferences, even though they're a racial group that historically suffered from severe discrimination.

The law school had a more deliberative, individualistic process—in fact. In a former admissions officer acknowledged, as the process wore on, the admissions officer looked daily at how the number of black students stacked up—whether the school was getting what it regarded as a "critical mass." If it wasn't, the criteria for admission were adjusted.

And thus the two admissions processes were not very different. The law school engaged in a race-driven process that was a little more camouflaged than that of the undergraduate college, but, as Justice Scalia suggested, both were zealously pursued the aim of creating a "critical mass." If it wasn't, the criteria for admission were adjusted.

The pool of high-performing black students is tragically too small—which is the real civil rights crisis of our day.
of high school do not have even a "partial mastery" of the most subjects, the majority of black students by the end of the academic year. Expectations and test scores in many states are set by Justice Powell in the 1995 case of United States v. Bakke, involving racial preferences in medical school admissions. Justice Powell was alone in finding diversity to be a compelling state interest. Now, however, Powell’s view is that of a majority of five on the Court. Justice O’Connor said she hoped racial preferences wouldn’t be necessary in 25 years, but preferences are likely to be an entitlement by then. And what will be the test of sufficient "diversity"? How will we know when that undeﬁned goal will have been reached?

Clowes: What do we need to do to improve the academic performance of non-Asian minority students?

Thernstrom: Teach the kids! This is not—I cannot emphasize too strongly—an IQ problem. Over the past two decades, we’ve had a lot of programs and we’ve thrown a lot of money at the problem, but the solutions have been woefully inadequate. The picture is challenging for the better—states are setting standards and requiring students to pass high school exit exams, and the No Child Left Behind Act requires testing in grades 3-8, with the scores broken down by race, ethnicity, and other factors. Districts with a high number of academically skilled students who are white and Asian will no longer be able to hide the racial gap in academic achievement behind the overall averages.

We need to set high academic standards and high behavioral standards in all our schools. We need order and civility in the classroom so that teachers can teach. We need teachers who really know math and know how to teach it. The list of needed reforms is long.

Everyone agrees that we must have better teachers, but we won’t get them unless we restructure the nature of the job and the salary scale. Schools must be able to pay differential salaries depending on the job teachers do and the quality of their work, as most sectors of the economy do. There needs to be a professional ladder so that ambitious teachers who do not want to go into administration aren’t doing precisely the same thing at age 60 that they were doing at age 25.

We are not going to get better teachers until we really change the job. Who’s becoming a teacher these days? With very few exceptions, it’s not the academically skilled students. For example, if you were to do a survey of Harvard graduates, you would find that hardly any of them choose to become teachers.

Parents must have more of a say in the school the children attend. Quality schools are usually ones in which both teachers and students want to be there. In addition, one deﬁnition of belonging to the middle class is the ability to pick a school for your children—either by choosing a place of residence or paying tuition. As a matter of basic equity, that should be an entitlement of low-income parents, too.

No middle-class parent would ever stand for getting a computer printout from the school district, saying her three children were being assigned to three different schools across the city somewhere, none of which she would have chosen, given a chance to do so.

Within the limits of space available, parents should decide where their children go to school. Their options should include public schools, charter schools, parochial, and private schools. Some of the best schools in the country operate under charters and are free of the collective bargaining agreements that prevent, for instance, differential salaries for teachers.

Clowes: Some say the achievement gap comes from urban school systems not spending as much money on the education of non-Asian minorities as suburban school systems spend on white and Asian children.

Thernstrom: That’s factually incorrect. Overwhelmingly minority districts do not have signiﬁcantly less money than heavily white suburban ones. And the modest difference cannot explain the racial gap in achievement.

Money can be used well, but money per se does not ensure quality education. Cambridge, Massachusetts, spends $17,000 per pupil every year and yet has low student performance and a wide racial gap in achievement. In 1985 a district court ordered Kansas City, Missouri, to pour money into schools; 15 years and $2 billion later, test scores were just as dismal as ever.

Clowes: What about the complaint that the problem comes from having white teachers teaching black students?

Thernstrom: There’s no evidence that black students do better with black teachers. If that were so, in districts where there’s a high concentration of black teachers—such as Atlanta and Washington, DC—there would be better test results. In fact, the NAEP test results for the District of Columbia are among the very worst in the country.

There’s no reason to assume this kind of color-coding should be important. Good teachers are good teachers, no matter what color they are. That should be very welcome news because it will be difﬁcult to increase dramatically the number of academically skilled, high-performing black students who choose teaching as a career. Those students have so many other doors of opportunity open to them. They can go into law, medicine, or business—professions that are prestigious and pay much more than teaching. Relatively few black youngsters come from families with a great deal of accumulated wealth; many are ﬁrst-generation middle class, and they will head to the jobs that are less frustrating and well-paid.

Clowes: So the Grutter decision didn’t really address the issue of how well different racial groups are prepared for college work?

Thernstrom: No, it papers over it. The ruling implies that, without racial preferences, blacks and Hispanics will sink because they just can’t meet white and Asian standards. American educators constantly and rightly will sink because they just can’t meet white and Asian college work?

Justice O’Connor said she hoped racial preferences wouldn’t be necessary in 25 years, but ... w hat will be the test of sufﬁcient ‘diversity’? How will we know when that undeﬁned goal will have been reached?”
Study Shows Teacher Hiring Practices Need Work

Profession also is predominantly white, female

by Lisa Snell

Is it low pay that causes the teaching profession to have so few males and minorities, as the nation’s largest teacher union contends? A convincing counter-argument can be made that it is the profession’s burdensome entry barriers — i.e., the certification process — that turns these groups away from teaching.

The irony is that most school administrators take little account of a candidate’s pedagogical skills or other components of certification when they actually hire teachers, according to a new study.

In late August the National Education Association (NEA) released the latest version of “The Status of the American Public School Teacher,” which reveals only 20 percent of teachers are men, a 40-year low, and only 10 percent are minority. Updated every five years, the report draws its latest findings from the 2000-2001 school year.

The NEA report contends low teacher pay is largely to blame for the small number of male and minority teachers. As an NEA spokesman explained in a widely printed AP story about the study, “So what makes teaching less attractive to men and minorities? A mix of factors, but mainly the fact that it’s easier to earn more money with less stress in other fields.”

The NEA’s arguments about low pay appear to have had a positive impact on teacher salaries over the years. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in constant 2001-2002 dollars, the average teacher salary in 1959 was $30,292; by 2001 the average teacher salary was $44,604.

Barriers to Entry

However, teacher pay may not be the only factor to blame. Many teaching programs have burdensome procedures for selecting candidates and lack of administrative support once a teacher becomes certified.

Many teaching programs have burdensome certification requirements that disperse the benefits received by those who are ultimately certified. Preparing a teacher certification usually includes many courses in child development, the foundations of education, and classroom diversity, with little attention paid to content knowledge.

Education courses have a reputation for including some of the least interesting and least rigorous content available to college students. Data from the 2003 SATs reveals education majors rank at the bottom in SAT scores with a 965. Potential teachers may object to the years of pedagogy classes they must take before being allowed to enter a classroom.

While prospective teachers may spend a significant amount of time studying pedagogy, principals seem to pay scant attention to a teacher’s skills before inviting him or her into the classroom. A new study shows the teacher certification process has little effect on the actual hiring practices of school administrators.

An April 2003 study by Edward Liu of the Harvard Graduate School of Education’s Project on the Next Generation of Teachers reports on district hiring practices. The study examines the results of a survey of 486 teachers asked to comment on the hiring process they went through in four states: California, Florida, Massachusetts, and Michigan.

Significant study findings include:

- While most new teachers were interviewed by school administrators one or two times, one in five teachers in Florida were never interviewed at all.
- Only 7.5 percent of new teachers in the four-state pool taught a sample lesson as part of the hiring process, suggesting few hiring decisions are based on an authentic demonstration of a candidate’s teaching ability.
- Only about one in four new teachers were asked to submit standardized test scores or writing samples.
- Many new teachers were hired quite late. The study found 33 percent of new teachers were hired after the school year had already started, and 62 percent were hired within 30 days of when they were to start teaching.
- Only 50 percent of new teachers interviewed with their future teacher colleagues as part of the hiring process.
- More than 56 percent reported no assistance was available to them as new teachers.
- 43 percent of new teachers reported going through their entire first year of teaching without being observed by a mentor or more experienced teacher.

“The study reveals that many schools are not organized to hire and support new teachers in ways that help them enter the profession smoothly and attain early success,” Liu concludes.

Lisa Snell is director of the education program for the Reason Foundation in Los Angeles. Her email address is lsnell@reason.org.

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How Tough Is Louisiana’s Math Exit Exam?

Bridget Green’s failure to graduate high school because she persistently failed to pass Louisiana’s Graduate Exit Exam (GEE) prompted local test critic C.C. Campbell-Rock to imply the GEE was a tough test to pass.

“I wish our public officials and even [the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education] would take a second look at the test,” the critic told Times-Picayune reporter Aesha Rasheed.

Blogger Kimberly Swygert at Number 2 Pencil did what Campbell-Rock suggested and took a look at the sample GEE test questions posted by the Louisiana Department of Education.

“This test is providing a massive wake-up call to a school system that inflates grades and doesn’t provide its students with the educational skills they need to go on to college,” she concludes in an August 13 post.

Swygert found Louisiana students don’t need to meet the “Proficient” achievement level to pass the GEE, which would require a score of 70-84 percent. They didn’t even need to reach the “Basic” achievement level, either, with a score of 45-69 percent. To pass, the GEE, students need only reach the “Approaching Basic” achievement level, which requires a score of 35-44 percent.

How tough are the GEE math problems? In the sample questions provided by the state, students are required to:
- Sum up positive and negative numbers;
- Use simple geometry for proportional reasoning about triangles;
- Interpret a simple graph;
- Answer a question involving simple statistics;
- Show they have “in-depth understanding” that the area of a rectangle is height times width.

“And the valedictorian couldn’t do that,” asks a bemused Swygert. “And critics are telling us to take another look at this exam?”

INTERNET INFO
Sample questions for Louisiana’s 10th-grade Graduation Exit Examination are available at the Web site of the Louisiana Department of Education at http://www.doe.state.la.us/DOE/  
PD/ta/te/010thGrd.pdf
Kimberly Swygert’s Number 2 Pencil blog is at http://kimberlyswygert.com.
## NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS TESTS

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