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# School Reform News

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THE MONTHLY NEWSPAPER FOR SCHOOL REFORMERS

Vol. 10 No. 7 September 2006

## Thousands Use Ohio EdChoice Vouchers

By Michael Coulter

Ohio's EdChoice Program—a new, statewide voucher program—enrolled about 2,600 students in private schools this spring for the 2006-07 school year. As students were preparing to head back to class for the fall semester, even more were in the process of signing up.

The EdChoice Program was part of House Bill 66, which included the state budget and was signed in the summer of last year. Two enrollment periods were

**OHIO p. 10**

## Arizona Passes School Choice Measures

By Arwynn Mattix

On June 21, Arizona Gov. Janet Napolitano (D) and state legislators finalized a budget that includes state money for scholarships for disabled and foster-care children and expands the corporate tuition tax credit established in March. As a result, up to 10,000 additional Arizona students will be able to attend the school of their choice this September.

### Achieving the 'Impossible'

Though Napolitano made history by placing her signature on the new school

**ARIZONA p. 5**

## Milwaukee Voucher Schools Seek Formal Accreditation

By Mike Ford

"Accreditation is a wonderful process of self- and community reflection that allowed us to see a clearer picture of ourselves," said Basimah Abdullah, principal of Milwaukee's Clara Mohammed School. The school, serving 131 low-income students as part of the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP), the nation's first school voucher program,

**MILWAUKEE p. 4**

## Feds Propose National School Choice Project

U.S. President George W. Bush and Education Secretary Margaret Spellings watch a demonstration of students' robotic arm project at Parkland Magnate Middle School for Aerospace Technology in Rockville, Maryland on April 18, 2006.



By Karla Dial

Several federal legislators joined U.S. Education Secretary Margaret Spellings on July 18 in calling for a \$100 million national voucher program for children in failing schools nationwide.

The America's Opportunity Scholarship for Kids Act is being sponsored in the U.S. House of Representatives by Buck McKeon (R-CA) and Sam Johnson (R-TX) and in the Senate by Lamar Alexander (R-TN) and John Ensign (R-NV).

By using federal funds to launch pilot voucher programs in 10 cities nationwide, the legislators hope to replicate the success of existing programs such as those in Milwaukee and Washington, DC.

If passed, the bill would give a chance at a better education to about 28,000 students attending schools that have failed for six years to achieve the "adequate yearly progress" benchmark outlined in the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

"The thing we wake up worrying about every day at the Department

of Education is [the goal of achieving] grade level proficiency for every child by 2013-2014," Spellings told *The New York Times* for a July 19 article. "Often that will be found in a public school. But when that doesn't happen, what do we do?"

### Restructuring Schools

If it passes, the bill will mark the first time Congress has approved the use of federal funds for private education for anyone other than Hurricane Katrina victims or students in the

**NATIONAL p. 6**

### INSIDE SRN

- 4 Class-Action Suit Filed in N.J.
- 9 Tex. Expects More from Graduates
- 10 Legislators Draft Model Bills
- 12 High Schoolers Get More Choice
- 13 Franchising For-Profit Schools
- 17 Review: Generational Change
- 18 Resource Directory

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# Federal Bill Proposes Restoring State and Local Control of Schools

By Dan Lips

In July, U.S. Rep. Bob Beauprez (R-CO) introduced the Partnership for Academic Success in the States (PASS) Act (H.R. 5854). The legislation would allow 10 states to enter into contract agreements with the U.S. Department of Education. The states would receive greater freedom and flexibility to direct their education policies; in exchange, they would be required to hold schools accountable for improving academic performance.

"Congressman Beauprez believes this is an important first step in reforming our nation's education policy," explained Beauprez spokeswoman Corinne Hirsch. "Educational needs are best met at the local level, as students' needs vary in different parts of the nation. The PASS Act will help states and local educational agencies regain their autonomy in the education arena."

The PASS Act would allow participating states to consolidate some federal education funding streams and redirect funding toward state-controlled initiatives designed to improve student learning. States would also be freed from some federal education regulations, such as the No Child Left Behind Act's (NCLB) highly qualified teachers provision, which requires teachers to have state certification and meet competency requirements in core subject areas.

**"[T]his proposal [H.R. 5854] should appeal to many on the left and right. ... [I]t would move education decision-making considerably closer to parents and farther from federal bureaucrats."**

DON SOIFER

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT  
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#### Exchange Program

In exchange for the increased freedom and autonomy, the states would be required to maintain academic standards and to test students annually to demonstrate improved academic achievement. They would be eligible for performance bonuses if they reduce the achievement gap between disadvantaged children and their peers on student examinations by 25 percent or more.

After four years, the federal education secretary would be allowed to continue or terminate the agreement, with all 10 states or on a case-by-case basis.

The PASS Act follows in the tradition of past reform initiatives designed to restore state and local control of education. In the late 1990s, conservatives in Congress proposed the Academic

Achievement for All Act (called "Straight A's"), which would have given all states the opportunity to enter into similar contractual agreements with the Department of Education. Under the Straight A's plan, states would have been given the freedom and flexibility to redirect federal education funding to state-directed initiatives to benefit student learning. States would have had an incentive to improve student learning—those that did not risked returning to the previous regime of federal regulations.

A pilot version of Straight A's for 10 states passed the House of Representatives in October 1999 but got no farther, as the legislation was not approved by the Senate. During congressional debate over NCLB in 2001, an amendment to include a Straight A's pilot project was defeated in the House Education & Workforce Committee.

#### Hot Topic

Four years later, the idea of giving state policymakers greater freedom in education is reemerging as Congress is about to debate NCLB's reauthorization in 2007.

Don Soifer, executive vice president of the Lexington Institute, a Virginia-based research organization, analyzed Beauprez's PASS Act proposal in the context of past Straight A's reform initiatives.

"[It] effectively captures the spirit, and the key details, of the legislation that passed the House in 1999," Soifer explained.

Though he supports Beauprez's bill overall, Soifer noted it has some shortcomings.

"[It] shares two weaknesses of the plan that passed the House: holding harmless



**U.S. Rep. Bob Beauprez introduced the Partnership for Academic Success in the States Act in July.**

Title I spending and limiting the plan to a pilot for selected states. Public school choice—one of NCLB's most prescriptive measures—is also protected," Soifer said. "But this proposal should appeal to many on the left and right. Like the 1999 plan, it would move education decision-making considerably closer to parents and farther from federal bureaucrats."

Hirsch shared Soifer's optimism regarding the proposal's potential for broad appeal.

"This legislation will have a wide range of support, both in Congress and across the country," Hirsch explained. "I think most everyone would agree that there is not a one-size-fits-all solution to education. Allowing individual states to address their individual needs will be a popular concept."

Dan Lips ([dan.lips@heritage.org](mailto:dan.lips@heritage.org)) is a policy analyst with The Heritage Foundation in Washington, DC.

## Corrections

In an article in the July issue of *School Reform News*, "NAACP Report Says Florida Schools Are Criminalizing Schoolchildren," we reported, "Though she said parents 'have a role to play in discipline,' [Monique] Dixon said they are ignorant of the system." Upon further review of her notes, the article's author indicates Ms. Dixon did not say this.

Also, a caption and photo accompanying the story "L.A. Parents Sue for NCLB Choice Options" in the June 2006 issue of *School Reform News* were incorrect. The photo depicted former Los Angeles Mayor Jim Hahn. Antonio Villaraigosa is the current mayor of Los Angeles.

SRN regrets these errors.

## Tell me what you think!

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# Class-Action Suit in New Jersey Filed Over Education

By Aaron Atwood

On July 13, the parents of 12 children attending low-performing public schools in New Jersey filed a class-action lawsuit against several school districts statewide and the state education commissioner.

In filing *Crawford v. Davy*, the parents hope to get their children out of failing schools and into the schools of their choice, with the students' state funding allocation following them to their chosen school. The lawsuit asks the judges to eliminate district-based residential school assignments that prevent families from sending their children to better-performing public schools. The case also asks for a portion of the state funding to follow the student to the public or private school the family chooses.

"The lives of far too many children are at stake here," Van-Ness Crawford, the lead plaintiff, said in a July 13 statement. "I have four children. In each one of them, I see hope for my community, for this state, and for this country."

## Joining Forces

Crawford's children attend Malcolm X. Shabazz High School in Newark, where less than 20 percent of the students tested proficient or better in math on 2005 state assessment tests.

The class-action lawsuit, however, represents 60,000 students in 96 schools in 25 school districts. Students who attend schools in which 50 percent of all students failed the state assessment tests the previous year, or in which 75

percent failed at least one section of the tests, are automatically included in the class.

**"On July 13, the parents of 12 children attending low-performing public schools in New Jersey filed a class-action lawsuit against several school districts statewide and the state education commissioner."**

A strong partnership between national and state-level school reform activists has already formed in support of the lawsuit. Several national groups—including the Black Ministers' Council, Latino Leadership Alliance, and Alliance for School Choice—have joined forces with a state group, Excellent Education for Everyone (E3), to support the plaintiffs. Meanwhile, school districts and the lead defendant, Lucille Davy—New Jersey's recently appointed Commissioner of Education—are mum regarding the case.

## Disagreeing over Intent

The state teachers' union, however, had plenty to say about the matter.

"This is a national movement whose agenda is not to improve the cir-

cumstances of people of color," Steve Wollmer, a spokesman for the New Jersey Education Association, told *The Record* newspaper on July 24. "It's a movement that is using them as props in an effort to divert public money into private institutions."

E3 spokeswoman Frances Edwards said children's education is paramount—not public image.

"They are saying this is a 'PR stunt' and that it will take money away from school districts," Edwards said. "We believe parents know what is best for their children. That seems to work for everyone else in the United States, but [the defendants] discredit the poor. That saddens me."

## Testing the Waters

The Alliance for School Choice—a national advocacy group based in Phoenix, which has a lawsuit pending against the Los Angeles Unified and Compton school districts in California—calls New Jersey a "test case."

"The New Jersey lawsuit has national significance because many state constitutions have similar provisions," Alliance President Clint Bolick explained. "The remedy we seek is designed to [ensure] an equal educational opportunity not 10 years from now, but today."

New Jersey's state constitution promises "thorough and efficient" education for every student. State per-pupil funding is hovering around \$10,000 and in some districts is much higher. According to the Alliance for School Choice, the

Englewood, New Jersey City Board of Education is spending \$19,194 per student. Yet 64 percent of the eighth-graders at Janis D. Dismus Middle School in Englewood scored below the proficiency mark in math in 2005, while 50 percent were less than proficient in language arts.

## Changing the System

The case could change the New Jersey education system forever ... and not by increasing funding for the existing system.

"There are essentially two systems in New Jersey," Edwards explained, "one for affluent white students and another for poor minority students. They are not equal; they are not the same system. That must change. We must start producing successful children."

At press time, the defendants were filing their response to the suit. No trial date had been set.

Aaron Atwood ([aaronatwood@juno.com](mailto:aaronatwood@juno.com)) is a client services manager with *The Elevation Group*, a consulting company in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

## INTERNET INFO

"L.A. Parents Sue for NCLB Choice Options," by Karla Dial, *School Reform News*, June 2006, <http://www.heartland.org/Article.cfm?artId=19160>

# Milwaukee

Continued from page 1

voluntarily achieved accreditation for its K-8 program last year.

But starting this fall, accreditation of schools participating in the MPCP will no longer be voluntary. As part of the bipartisan compromise reached earlier this year between the Wisconsin Legislature and Gov. Jim Doyle (D) raising the enrollment cap on the MPCP, all participating schools must have accreditation or be in the process of getting it from one of several state-approved agencies by September 30. Schools that do not comply will be ineligible for the program.

Approved accrediting agencies include the Wisconsin Religious and Independent Schools Accreditation (WRISA), Institute for the Transformation of Learning at Marquette University (ITL), Wisconsin North Central Association, Independent Schools Association of the Central States, Milwaukee Archdiocese, or any agency approved by the National Council for Private Schools Association (NCPSA). In addition, any school approved for scholarships in the 2005-06 school year by Partners for Advancing Values in Education, a private scholarship-grant-

ing organization, is exempt from the accreditation requirement for the current school year.

## Building Frameworks

Doyle introduced the specific language of the accreditation proposal in a November 4, 2005 news release as a way "[t]o ensure minimum academic standards."

Critics of the plan question whether accreditation alone ensures academic quality. In Wisconsin, several public high schools with accreditation also appear on the federal No Child Left Behind list of Schools in Need of Improvement. The schools suffer from low graduation rates and high achievement gaps, yet maintain their accreditation.

NCPSA Executive Director Don Petry said accreditation alone "cannot assure the success of individual students," but he sees much value in the accreditation process because it sets up a framework for success.

"[It] requires a school to present evidence of its quality, integrity, planning, and achievement results," Petry said.

## Choosing Agencies

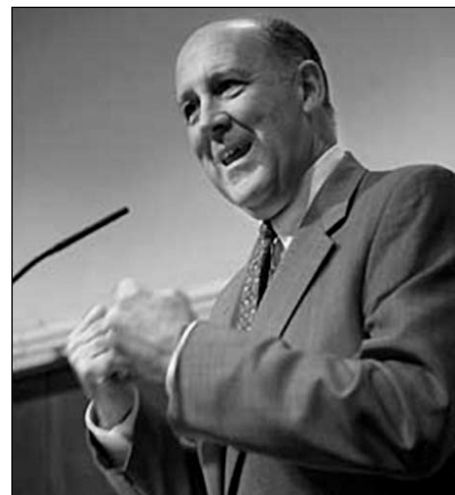
At the end of the 2005-06 school year, 39 of the 121 schools participating in the MPCP did not have accreditation. Since June, 16 of those 39 schools have applied for and been accepted into an accreditation process.

Eleven of the schools were accepted into ITL's accreditation process. In the past, ITL has helped schools prepare for accreditation but has not itself served as an accrediting body. In response to inclusion in the law, ITL has set up a rigorous accreditation process that focuses on measurements of student learning and ensuring schools give students the skills to compete on an international level.

**"[S]tarting this fall, accreditation of schools participating in the [Milwaukee Parental Choice Program] will no longer be voluntary."**

"We are pleased and excited to be part of the MPCP accreditation initiative," said Helen Gilles, a school design specialist heading the ITL accreditation process, adding the agency's process focuses on outcomes. The agency asks, "Are students in this school learning?" and "Are they making satisfactory progress towards proficiency in all disciplines?" she said.

Five schools were accepted into the accreditation process by WRISA, a body that accredits schools across Wisconsin,



Wisconsin Gov. Jim Doyle compromised with the state legislature to lift the voucher enrollment cap and require accreditation of voucher schools.

including 33 already participating in the MPCP.

The 23 returning MPCP schools that remain unaccredited have until September 30 to apply for accreditation. As the accreditation process generally takes three years, all 39 schools have until December 31, 2009 to obtain accreditation.

Mike Ford ([ford@parentchoice.org](mailto:ford@parentchoice.org)) is a research associate at *School Choice Wisconsin* in Milwaukee.



# Arizona

Continued from page 1

choice measures, the programs passed despite—not because of—her efforts.

“Working out the different philosophies between the Legislature and the governor added some difficulty to [the budget] process,” said Senate Majority Leader Ken Bennett (R-Prescott). “It took a long time to work out.”

Napolitano vetoed the corporate tuition tax credit twice before allowing it to become law without her signature earlier this year. She defended her acceptance of the budget as “a compromise,” telling the *Tucson Citizen* newspaper on June 28, “That’s what we needed to do to get something out of the Legislature and move the state ahead.”

The record gains in school choice will be accompanied by record increases in public school funding. Public education will receive nearly half a billion dollars in additional state funding in 2007, accounting for nearly 20 percent of the total state budget. School choice measures will account for less than 1 percent of the FY 2007 budget.

## Supporting Choice

That funding disparity didn’t stop Arizona Education Association (AEA) President John Wright from vowing on the group’s Web site to “pursue legal, legislative, and election strategies to dismantle the voucher program and end the misguided attempts of some to pursue voucher schemes.”

While one in five Arizona children attended a school that failed to make adequate yearly progress under the No Child Left Behind Act in 2005, the AEA maintained its stance that “vouchers are never a ‘necessary option.’” Polls show Arizonans disagree: A 2005 sur-

vey by the Milton & Rose D. Friedman Foundation revealed more than 90 percent of Arizonans supported one or more of the five school choice proposals that were pending in the state legislature last year.

According to data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and a 2005 survey of private schools conducted by the Goldwater Institute, one in 10 Arizona schoolchildren exercise charter or private school choice. The new programs passed this year could double that number.

**“A 2005 survey by the Milton & Rose D. Friedman Foundation revealed more than 90 percent of Arizonans supported one or more of the five school choice proposals that were pending in the state legislature last year.”**

## Recognizing Limits

Nevertheless, limitations on the choice programs abound. While the corporate tuition tax credit will increase by 20 percent annually until 2011, enabling anywhere from 300 to 800 additional students to benefit each year, both the Displaced Pupils Choice Grant Program and the Students With Disabilities Scholarship have caps that severely restrict the number of children who can participate.

Similarly, the foster care voucher is limited to only 500 students annually. Arizona currently has more than 9,900 children in foster care—meaning only

5 percent of children who need school choice most will be able to benefit from the program.

The disabled students’ scholarships will help an even smaller proportion of students in need. Depending on the severity of the disability covered, the program may help only 80, and at most 625, students attend the school of their choice. In the 2003-04 school year—the most recent year for which NCES data are available—109,477 disabled students lived in Arizona.

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On June 21, Arizona Gov. Janet Napolitano (D) and state legislators finalized a budget that includes state money for scholarships for disabled and foster-care children.

## Arizona School Choice Programs in Brief

### Corporate Tuition Tax Credit

Arizona’s Corporate Tuition Tax Credit allows corporations to receive credit against their state taxes for donations to approved school tuition organizations and nonprofits that distribute scholarships. This measure builds on Arizona’s Individual Tuition Tax Credit program, which has awarded more than 100,000 scholarships since its inception in 1998.

Unlike the individual contributions, the corporate contributions are limited to programs for low-income students currently enrolled in public schools or entering the education system for the first time. Children in families with incomes that do not exceed 185 percent of the income level set for the federal reduced-price lunch program are eligible. For instance, a family of four with a combined household income below \$66,000 would qualify.

The program’s initial \$5 million cap was doubled during budget negotiations for fiscal year 2007 and will increase 20 percent annually thereafter. By 2011, corporate contributions could exceed \$20 million, benefitting between 5,000 and 7,000 low-income students.

### Displaced Pupils Choice Grant Program

This year, Arizona became the first state in the nation to adopt a voucher

program for foster care children statewide. The Displaced Pupils Choice Grant Program allocates \$2.5 million in education grants to current and former foster children. Individual grants worth a maximum of \$5,000 can be applied to public, charter, or participating private schools statewide.

“The average foster care child changes homes five times. That can also mean five schools,” leading to academic setbacks, explained Goldwater Institute President Darcy Olsen. “This [program] gives children in a constant state of impermanence the same schools, the same friends, the same teachers.”

### Arizona Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program

Modeled after Florida’s McKay Scholarship Program, the \$2.5 million Arizona scholarships program gives pupils with disabilities the opportunity to attend any public or qualified private school of their choice if their parent is dissatisfied with their progress in their current public school.

The program “equalizes access to private schools among the rich and poor,” explained Matthew Ladner, the Goldwater Institute’s vice president of research, “and gives leverage to parents who cannot access specialized special education attorneys.”

—Arwynn Mattix

## INTERNET INFO

“Survey of Arizona Private Schools: Tuition, Testing, and Curricula,” published by the Goldwater Institute in January 2005, is available through *PolicyBot™*, The Heartland Institute’s free online research database. Point your Web browser to <http://www.heartland.org>, click on the *PolicyBot™* button, and search for document #17097.

“Education Scholarships: Expanding Opportunities for Students, Saving Taxpayers Money,” by Darcy Olsen, published by the Goldwater Institute in March 2002, is also available through *PolicyBot™*. Search for document #19190.

S.B. 1404, Arizona’s Corporate Tuition Tax Credit legislation, <http://www.azleg.state.az.us/documentsforbill.asp?bill-number=sb1404>

S.B. 1164, Arizona’s Displaced Pupils Choice Grant Program, <http://www.azleg.state.az.us/documentsforbill.asp?bill-number=sb1164>

H.B. 2676, the Arizona Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program, <http://www.azleg.state.az.us/documentsforbill.asp?bill-number=hb2676>

“Giving Foster Children a Boost,” by Dan Lips, <http://www.goldwaterinstitute.org/article.php?/828.html>

“Race and Disability: Racial Bias in Arizona Special Education,” by Matthew Ladner, <http://www.goldwaterinstitute.org/article.php?/251.html>

“Survey Shows Majority of Arizonans Endorse School Choice,” <http://www.friedmanfoundation.org/news/2005-04-08.html>

“‘Toe-Hold Strategies’—Democrats for (school) choice” by Clint Bolick, <http://www.opinionjournal.com/cc/?id=110008548>

Arizona Education Association, <http://www.arizonaaea.org/>

# National

Continued from page 1

District of Columbia. But the measure is unlikely to gain traction on Capitol Hill before the November elections.

"It takes a while for ideas like this to seep in and for members to understand it," explained Nina Rees, a consultant to the Phoenix-based Alliance for School Choice advocacy group and former senior Education Department official.

"Schools undergoing restructuring have failed to raise student achievement for six or more years, so the fact that states and districts are not using the tools under NCLB to truly restructure these schools is frustrating," Rees said.

## Removing Government

Some school choice groups don't support the bill.

"The federal government has no constitutional authority to be in education at all, even if it's doing things we like," said Neal McCluskey, an education analyst at the libertarian Cato Institute in Washington, DC, explaining why his organization opposes the bill even though it ordinarily supports vouchers and other forms of school choice.

If passed, the bill could subject private K-12 schools to the government "dictating curriculum and insurance coverage," McCluskey said. "The last thing you want is the federal government getting

involved in private schools—the only sector where you can escape from it right now."

**"By using federal funds to launch pilot voucher programs in 10 cities nationwide, the legislators hope to replicate the success of existing programs such as those in Milwaukee and Washington, DC."**

## Raising Discourse

Robert Enlow, executive director of the Milton & Rose D. Friedman Foundation in Indianapolis, said the program's six-year waiting period—half the years a child spends in primary education—is unacceptable. But he believes the bill's introduction could yield positive results for school choice in general down the line.

"Education still is a matter best left to states. If this proposed scholarship makes it easier for states to offer parents more choices, that's a good thing. All the states that passed school choice this year were Democrat," Enlow said, noting Arizona's three school choice measures (see stories on pages 1 and 5 of this issue) and Iowa's new tax credit scholarships.

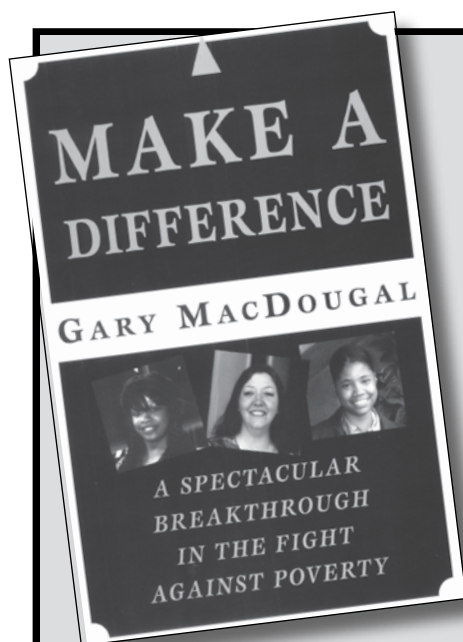
McCluskey saw one bright spot in the bill.

"It brings to the fore the hypocrisy of a lot of people who traditionally have wanted a big federal role" in education, McCluskey said. "As soon as that role would start to give money to parents instead of to the establishment people, they're against that—the federal government shouldn't be involved; how dare they do it. It puts on a national stage how these people are not really interested in children's education as much as they are in having control over the system that's supposed to serve the children but really just serves [the established public school interests]."

Karla Dial ([dial@heartland.org](mailto:dial@heartland.org)) is managing editor of School Reform News.



(clockwise from top left) Reps. Buck McKeon (R-CA) and Sam Johnston (R-CA) and Sens. Lamar Alexander (R-TN) and John Ensign (R-NV) sponsored the America's Opportunity Scholarship for Kids Act.



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*Make a Difference* is both a compelling memoir and convincing proof that we now know important answers to help solve America's poverty problem—without spending any more of the taxpayers' money.

Author Gary MacDougal spent years working in Illinois inner cities and rural communities—talking with "ladies in the backyard," befriending community leaders, and working with local organizations in his quest to find solutions that have long eluded academic researchers and politicians. As chairman of the Governor's Task Force on Human Services Reform, MacDougal was the catalyst for the complete overhaul of the state's welfare system, which included the largest reorganization of state government since 1900.

Eight years after MacDougal's suggestions were implemented, Illinois now stands well ahead of California, New York, and other big-city states, with a spectacular 86 percent reduction in the welfare rolls since reform implementation in 1996, second only to Wyoming among all fifty states. The welfare rolls in Chicago's Cook County have been reduced an amazing 85 percent, with studies showing that most who left the rolls are working, and at pay above minimum wage.

MacDougal's extraordinary journey shows the way for the rest of the nation and proves there are ways we can all help provide a ladder of opportunity for those in poverty. We each can *Make a Difference* in the ongoing effort to end America's poverty problem.



# Colo. Districts Sue Statewide Chartering Authority

By Krista Kafer

Three Colorado public school districts are suing the Colorado Charter School Institute (CSI), a state agency. Denver District Judge Joseph E. Meyers is expected to rule in October whether the agency is consistent with the state's constitution, which plaintiffs contend gives districts the right to control all public schools within their borders.

The Colorado Legislature created the CSI two years ago when it passed H.B. 1362, introduced by two pro-charter

Democrats. Governed by a nine-member board, the CSI charters schools in districts the state has designated as not having "exclusive chartering authority." Under the law, the Colorado State Board of Education denies exclusive authority over charter schools to districts the board has deemed hostile to charters.

Since its inception, the CSI has chartered seven schools—two that opened in 2005 and five more this year. Once all are opened, the schools will collectively serve 3,000 students.

## Districts Resentful

After being denied "exclusive chartering authority," the Boulder Valley School District and Adams 50 School District in Westminster filed suit separately last year against the CSI. The Poudre School District in Fort Collins launched its own suit in 2006. The three suits were recently combined into one. Since its suit was filed, Boulder has received exclusive chartering authority, throwing into question its legal standing in the lawsuit.

Poudre School Board Chairwoman Jana Ley believes the districts will prevail.

"We want to make sure schools using public funds are accountable at the local level," Ley said. She said she resents how her district has been characterized in statewide newspapers as anti-charter schools or anti-school choice, noting the Poudre District has three charter schools and several option schools—the district-run schools of choice that existed before H.B. 1362 was passed.

"We like choice," said Ley.

But the state Board of Education denied the Poudre District exclusive authority because the district adopted charter school guidelines the state interpreted as a moratorium, Ley said. The district capped charter school enrollment at a specific percentage of total district-wide enrollment. The district subsequently dropped the cap, said Ley, in order to increase its chances of receiving exclusive authority.

Ley said the district was open to hearing from groups offering "unique" charter ideas for offerings not already available in the district.

## No Legislation, No Problem in Colorado

*School choice group grants scholarships without a state program*

By Aaron Atwood

There is no school reform legislation on the ballot this November in Colorado. Nevertheless, as kids head back to school in Colorado Springs, Steve Schuck and his staff at Parents Challenge are happy to know some of those students and their families have a choice about where they'll attend this year.

Thanks to support from Parents Challenge and its donors, about 150 students will attend the school of their choice this fall—something that almost happened statewide in 2004 when voters approved the creation of Opportunity Contracts, a voucher program allowing low-income families in underperforming schools to send their children to private schools. On June 28, 2004, however, the Colorado Supreme Court struck down the measure under the "local control" provision of the state constitution.

"It was a poor decision issued by a biased, liberal bench," Schuck says, calling it "judicial legislation spitting in the face of the majority of Colorado citizens."

Lack of state funding has moved Parents Challenge to approach donors individually and look to foundations for money. The process has been successful, but nothing like the windfall successful school choice legislation would yield for parents.

### Getting Active

Undeterred by the court's decision regarding publicly funded scholarships, Parents Challenge continues to fight for school choice on the grassroots level. As part of its program, parents attend empowerment sessions that train them to move from the sidelines to activism and to understand their self-interests in winning the reform battle—a concept with which many low-income families aren't comfortable.

"Some parents will move into activism eventually; some won't,"

explained Parents Challenge Executive Director Evelyn Taylor. "We won't stop helping families, though, no matter where they are on the political spectrum. Children deserve a good education."

Low-income families that meet the requirements for the federal free- and reduced-price lunch program are invited to apply for three areas of financial help: \$3,000 private school tuition scholarships, \$500 homeschooling grants, or \$700 grants to public school students for tutoring or transportation.

**"As part of [the Parents Challenge] program, parents attend empowerment sessions that train them to move from the sidelines to activism and to understand their self-interests in winning the reform battle ..."**

### Advocating Quality

The private school tuition has earned Schuck a few enemies among teachers' union supporters, he said.

"I'm not anti-public schools, period. What I am for is to have all parents be able to choose whatever school they think is best for their children," Schuck said. "If detractors would simply look at our program, they'd see we offer parents the option to [keep their children] in public school and help their kids with tutoring. What I am is anti-bad schools."

By offering grants to families in the public school system for supplemental educational services, Parents Challenge has set itself apart from most private scholarship

programs.

Several families, including Leon Murphy's, are taking advantage of that option. Leon's mother, Joanna, has moved him from public school to private school and back to public school as he enters his junior year of high school.

"We just found out he has dyslexia," Joanna explained. "Wasson High School [a public high school near the Murphys' home in Colorado Springs] has tools to help him with that. The grant from Parents Challenge will go for more tutoring and services."

### Seeking Help

In 2001, Schuck began the Parents Challenge program with a focus on Adams Elementary, a low-performing school in Colorado Springs' District 11, enraging many educators who believed he was trying to take money away from an institution that claimed it needed more funding. But the false accusation didn't keep Parents Challenge from quickly filling its 90 available slots; 300 children applied that first year.

Five years later, Schuck is looking to the community, foundations, and business leaders to help his organization bring choice to more students.

"Our city is viewed by most as a great place to live," Schuck said. "And it is. But too many of our families—mostly poor and of color—have no choice but to send their kids to failing schools in their neighborhood. We are committed to helping as many of them as our funding will allow."

"But this challenge is bigger than me," Schuck acknowledged. "It's bigger than any one man can handle."

Aaron Atwood ([aaronatwood@juno.com](mailto:aaronatwood@juno.com)) is a client services manager with The Elevation Group, a consulting company in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

**"Three Colorado public school districts are suing the Colorado Charter School Institute (CSI), a state agency authorized to charter schools in districts hostile to charters."**

### 'Sour Grapes' Mentality

Ley characterized the state board's decision to deny the district exclusive authority as arbitrary. Chartering should be done solely by the district, she said, and it is "inappropriate for politically appointed people in Denver to make decisions" about what goes on in local districts. The CSI has chartered a school slated to open this fall in the Poudre District, but Ley said she knew nothing about it.

CSI Director Randy DeHoff disagreed with the districts' stated intentions in launching their lawsuits, calling them "sour grapes."

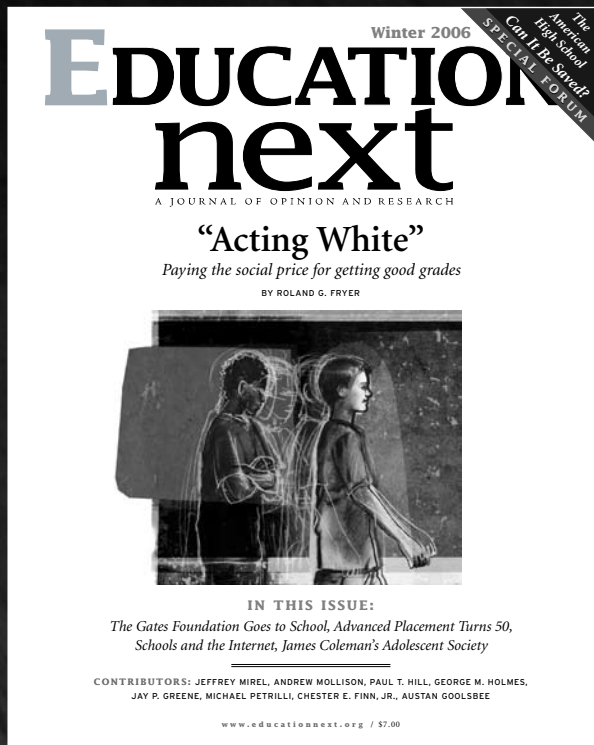
"The districts don't want to lose control," DeHoff said. "It's not about the kids; it's about power and control and who gets to spend the money."

DeHoff said districts that have good relationships with charter schools are not opposed to the CSI.

Students at the CSI schools that opened in 2005 are doing quite well, DeHoff noted, adding his agency "has established a reputation in the education community that we are interested in high-quality applications" for new charter schools.

Krista Kafer ([kristakafer@msn.com](mailto:kristakafer@msn.com)) is a freelance writer in Denver, Colorado.

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# Texas Increases Graduation Requirements

By Connie Sadowski

The Texas State Board of Education (SBOE) met in Austin on July 6 and 7 to determine how it will implement a new law requiring high school students to have four years of math and science in order to graduate. Gov. Rick Perry (R) signed the law in May, and a plan for implementing it must be in place by 2011.

Citizens, administrators, and teachers who addressed the early July hearings supported the tougher graduation requirement despite fears that fine arts, technology, and communications courses would be jeopardized. Once SBOE Chairwoman Geraldine Miller explained courses would not be dropped as the number of math and science credits needed to graduate increased, the tone of the testimony lightened.

The new law leaves unchanged the state's Minimum Graduation Plan for students experiencing academic difficulties, allowing them to graduate with only two years of science, three of math, and four of English.

The Recommended Graduation Plan currently in place calls for four years of English and three years each of math—including Algebra, Algebra II, and Geometry—and science, preferably biology, chemistry, and physics. The Recommended Plan also requires two years of foreign language instruction.

In 2005, 32 percent of Texas high school seniors graduated under the Minimum Graduation Plan, and 68 percent under the Recommended and Distinguished Graduation Plans combined. The Distinguished Graduation Plan calls for a third year of foreign language.



lege," Kress testified.

Citing a report released May 8 by the American College Testing Program, "Ready for College, Ready for Work," Kress said it "shows students taking more rigorous courses in math and science are less likely to require remediation in college, more likely to get higher grades, and more likely to perform better in the workplace. The challenge for us is how we can get our graduates better prepared."

The 15-member elected SBOE is expected to announce later this year which specific math and science courses the districts will be required to implement.

## Implementation Difficult

Over the course of three hours, 35 witnesses discussed the potential hurdles involved in implementing the plan, including possible shortages of certified math and science teachers, which could lead to increased class sizes; the possibility that test scores may drop for students who are not already faring well under the current testing requirements—because if students are not excelling now, the additional requirements might further burden them; the need for students to enter high school better prepared by junior high; and the need for extra facilities such as science labs and additional classroom space.

Additional money would likely be needed to implement the plan, but when the bill was signed, there was no indication of whether new funding would become available.

## Problems Surmountable

District 6 board member Terri Leo, of Spring, said she was confident the districts could meet the new standards.

"Whether the new graduation plan means looking at budgets, training teachers, hiring teachers under the alternative certification program, or actively recruiting at colleges," Leo said, "districts can be creative in implementation of the plan."

The benefits of increasing graduation requirements outweigh the difficulties of implementation, Leo said.

"The recipe for success is high-quality teachers teaching a solid, coherent, and rigorous curriculum in well-disciplined classrooms," Leo concluded. "Difficulties should not keep us from doing what is best for Texas students."

Connie Sadowski ([connie@ceoatx.org](mailto:connie@ceoatx.org)) directs the Education Options Resource Center at the Austin CEO Foundation.

**"The Texas State Board of Education (SBOE) [must] ... determine how it will implement a new law requiring high school students to have four years of math and science in order to graduate."**

## 'Unprepared for College'

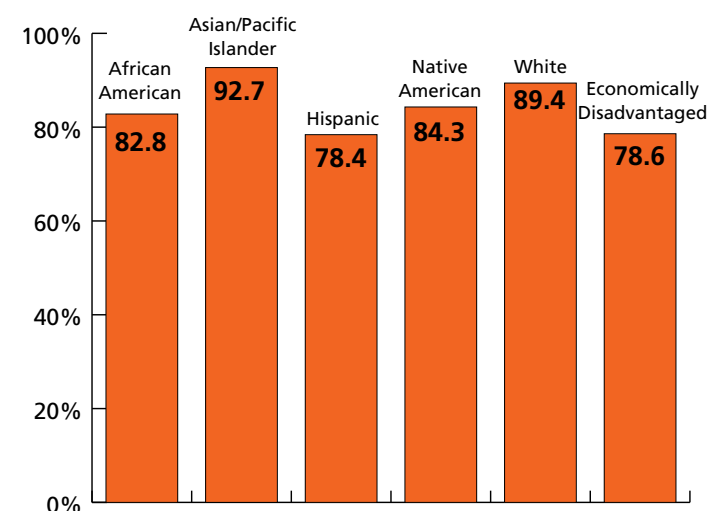
All witnesses before the July hearings agreed the additional year of math and science is welcome and needed. Students are not prepared for the rigors of college, said Jamie Story, an education policy analyst at the Texas Public Policy Foundation, an Austin-based think tank.

"Nearly 50 percent of Texas college freshman require remedial or corrective courses," Story said.

Texas students must be prepared to enter the workforce or college, agreed Sandy Kress, an Austin-based education consultant.

"In these key areas of math and science—subjects shown over and over to be crucial to the jobs of the future—Texas students are exiting high school generally unprepared for col-

Graduation Rates, Texas Class of 2004



Source: Texas Education Agency Web site, verified by TEA spokesperson Debbie Ratcliff.

## INTERNET INFO

"Ready for College and Ready for Work: Same or Different?" <http://www.act.org/path/policy/reports/workready.html>

"Benefits of a High School Core Curriculum," <http://www.act.org/path/policy/pdf/core-curriculum.pdf>

"Academic Preparation for College: What Students Need to Know and Be Able to Do," <http://store.collegeboard.com/productdetail.do?Itemkey=239200>



# State Legislators Draft Model School Choice Bills

By Matt Warner

State legislators from across the country met in late July to advance education policy and craft model legislation during the American Legislative Exchange Council's 33rd Annual Meeting.

After remarks from Nobel Prize-winning economist Dr. Milton Friedman assessing the state of education reform in the United States, ALEC's education task force convened to develop new strategies for reform efforts and to share experiences from past and current programs.

## Special-Needs Students

With states such as Florida, Ohio, and Utah touting successful scholarship programs for students with special needs, more states are now considering similar

programs.

In 2004, task force members passed the Special Needs Scholarship Act—a model bill for laws that offer students with special needs scholarships to attend the public or private school of their choice.



Jon Peterson  
Ohio State Rep.

In states such as Delaware, Kansas, and Ohio, versions of the bill have been introduced, though all have been stymied in state legislatures.

In response, ALEC's education task force considered new model legislation this sum-

mer for laws that would offer scholarships to a small but rapidly growing segment of special-needs students. Inspired by state Rep. Jon Peterson's (R-Delaware) Autism Scholarship Program in Ohio, which serves more than 500 students, the Autism Scholarship Act would offer scholarships to autistic students.

"Some of our most vulnerable children are trapped in failing schools and programs," Peterson said. "This program is working well in Ohio, and the ALEC designation is a significant step toward expanding the program to scale nationally."

## Growing Population

U.S. Department of Education data reveal more than 165,000 autistic students received federal support provided by the

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 2004. Most states have seen dramatic increases in the number of autistic students over the past few years.

Proponents of special-needs scholarships note autistic students do not all respond to teaching approaches the same way. As a result, they say, parental choice is the best way to ensure each child receives the most appropriate educational services to meet his or her needs.

## Other Student Populations

With the June 2006 adoption of Arizona's innovative scholarship program for students in foster care (see "Arizona Passes School Choice Measures," page 1), the education task force will likely consider

**CONTINUED on right**

## Ohio

Continued from page 1

held: April 3-June 9, 2006, and July 21-August 4, 2006.

## Operating Statewide Program

Under the legislation, as many as 14,000 students who attend schools designated by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) as being in academic emergency or on academic watch can receive scholarships to attend private schools. If more than 14,000 students apply, priority is given to families at or below 200 percent of the federally defined poverty level.

Students in kindergarten through eighth grade can receive vouchers for up to \$4,250, while high school students can receive up to \$5,000. If a chosen school charges less than those amounts, the state will pay only the tuition amount. Schools cannot charge families at or below 200 percent of the poverty level more than \$4,250 for K-8 students, or more than \$5,000 for high school students.

Once a student receives a scholarship, he or she will have priority for a scholarship in future years. The participating student will continue to be eligible even if the public school he or she previously attended is no longer on academic watch or in academic emergency.

Students who are ineligible for the vouchers are those already attending private school, homeschooled students, or those living in Cleveland, which has operated its own citywide voucher program since the 1996-97 school year.

## Identifying Failing Schools

At press time, the ODE had identified 99 schools in 23 school districts whose students are eligible for the vouchers. The majority are in urban centers such as Columbus and Cincinnati.

Private schools must choose to participate in the program. Once in, they can accept or reject students who apply. Participating private schools must have a valid state charter and comply with ODE's operating standards.

At press time, approximately 300 private schools had chosen to participate—including Catholic schools, Protestant and Jewish religious schools, and nonreligious schools. Though neither School Choice Ohio nor the ODE could say how many private schools are operating in the 23 districts with failing schools, both agencies said participating private schools are not required to be in the district from which they accept students. According to School Choice Ohio, one private school in Toledo is 10 miles from the nearest failing public school but has attracted new students through EdChoice for the coming school year.

Students in the program attending private schools must continue to take the same state achievement tests as their public school peers.

**"Ohio's EdChoice Program—a new, statewide voucher program—enrolled about 2,600 students in private schools this spring for the 2006-07 school year."**

## Judging the Program

Matthew Carr, director of education policy at the Buckeye Institute, a Columbus-based free-market research organization, said Ohio EdChoice is a "well-conceived program."

"Theoretically, it's the kind of program you want, because eligibility is based on school ratings," Carr explained.

Susan Zanner, executive director of School Choice Ohio, agreed.

"I do think there are great opportunities with the program, and it was a product of bold legislative leadership," Zanner said.

But the Ohio Federation of Teachers (OFT) disagrees. Communications Director Lisa Zellner said Ohio EdChoice assumes that by sending students to private schools they will automatically improve academically but that's not the case, she claimed.

Zellner said studies—including one released on July 14 by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the U.S. Department of Education's data-collection arm, and older ones focusing on Cleveland's voucher program—have shown students in private schools perform no better than those in public schools. Those studies have been questioned, however. (For a discussion of the flaws in the NCES study, see "The School Choice Movement's Greatest Failure," by Andrew Coulson, on page 15 of this issue.)

## Signing Up Students

Because only 2,600 of the 46,000 eligible students statewide signed up for the vouchers this spring, critics such as Zellner said many parents "realize that a private school is not a better option."

"Even though ODE has marketed it heavily," Zellner said, "it's interesting that folks aren't jumping at it."

But Zanner and Carr said they were not surprised by the low initial turnout—nor were they discouraged by it.

"With any new program, there are challenges," Zanner said. Both she and Carr noted many parents of children who could qualify for vouchers are not sure of their eligibility. "I'd like to see a notification—a letter [sent to parents from either the failing school or the ODE] that shows that they are eligible," Zanner said.

## Untangling Red Tape

Both Carr and Zanner noted the application process can be financially daunting, as most private schools have application and registration fees. Zanner hoped in the future those fees could be paid with scholarship funds.

Clint Bolick, president of the Alliance for School Choice, a school choice advocacy group based in Phoenix, said the



enrollment figures confirm the public's demand for education alternatives.

"Usually enrollment in school choice programs begins slowly and builds over time, but [Ohio's] numbers demonstrate dramatic demand for school choice," Bolick noted in a June 12 news release.

Bolick compared Ohio's 5.5 percent eligibility participation rate with the 0.7 percent rate at which eligible students participated in the first year of the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program in 1990, and the 0.3 percent rate at which eligible students participated in the first year Florida operated its statewide voucher program in 1999. Bolick also cited the two-year-old citywide voucher program in Washington, DC, which only enrolls 1.7 percent of eligible students.

*Michael Coulter (mlcoulter@gcc.edu) teaches political science at Grove City College in Pennsylvania.*

## INTERNET INFO

"Lessons for Improving Ohio's EdChoice Voucher Program," by Matthew Carr and Greg Forster, is available through PolicyBot™, The Heartland Institute's free online research database. Point your Web browser to <http://www.heartland.org>, click on the PolicyBot™ button, and search for document #19525.



CONTINUED from left

a version of the program for model legislation when it meets this December in Phoenix. The program promises to alleviate the instability of traditional, residence-based school assignment, which can be



Linda Gray  
Arizona State Sen.

highly disruptive for students in foster care.

"Foster students will benefit academically and socially by having the same teacher and friends instead of moving from school to school," explained state Sen. Linda Gray (R-Glendale).

#### Failing Performance Scholarships

With help from the school choice experts at the meeting, the task force addressed the advantages and disadvantages of programs that tie student scholarships to school or district performance.

"For those considering new programs that tie scholarships to school or district performance," said Scott Jensen, national director of state projects at the Alliance for School Choice, "it is important to consider some of the challenges such programs may face."

**"State legislators from across the country met in late July to advance education policy and craft model legislation during the American Legislative Exchange Council's 33rd Annual Meeting."**

For example, Jensen said, students who receive scholarships in elementary school may not be able to keep their scholarships if their junior high or high schools are not judged to be failing.

"You are also less likely to see the benefits of the market when the population of eligible students is fragmented across a particular [geographic] region," Jensen warned. "Finding ways to make eligibility permanent and geographically coherent would serve to create stability in the market."

Matt Warner ([mwarner@alec.org](mailto:mwarner@alec.org)) is the American Legislative Exchange Council's Education Task Force director.

#### INTERNET INFO

A statement reflecting the guiding principles of the American Legislative Exchange Council's Education Task Force is available online at <http://www.alec.org>.

# World History Missing From Today's Classrooms, Fordham Study Says

By Mat Herron

Ever heard of Simon Bolivar?

If not, you're not alone. And unless they live in California, Georgia, Indiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New York, South Carolina, or Virginia, students returning to the classroom this fall are likewise unlikely to hear of the general for whom Bolivia is named. That's according to a report released by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute this summer.

When it comes to world history—particularly history south of the Rio Grande—two-thirds of the classrooms surveyed scored "D's" or "F's," according to the report. Only the eight states mentioned above got "A's."

"At a time when the United States faces threats and competitors around the globe, and when our children's future is more entangled than ever with world developments, our schools ought not treat world history so casually," Fordham Institute President Chester E. Finn Jr. said in a statement.

"Nations that once were little more than curiosities to most Americans have transformed themselves into places of vital interest and concern," Finn noted. "No one can be considered adequately prepared for life in the 21st century unless they understand the history and culture of the world's major civilizations."

#### Tunnel Vision

Walter Mead, a historian and foreign policy expert at the Council on Foreign Relations, which has offices in New York and Washington, DC, spearheaded the study. He found only a handful of states require students to pass a world history test to graduate or get promoted to the next grade.

"Educators' preoccupation with subjects tested under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) can only increase the chances that world history will be 'narrowed' out of the curriculum," Mead concluded in a news release.

"The failure of public schools to teach world history amounts to denying equal opportunity to our most vulnerable populations," Mead said. "Millions of low-income and minority students are being denied basic cultural and economic rights."

#### Poor Content

States that did poorly in the study have several things in common in their classrooms, according to the report. These include:

- little or no historical content, or so much historical content teachers couldn't possibly begin to cover it all;
- excessive focus on modern European history;
- extreme multiculturalism that treats all nations and cultures as equally significant;

nificant;

- standards that provide students with no logical timeline, relying instead on trendy "themes" without regard to the overall story of history.

#### Two Priorities

Martin Davis, Jr., a senior writer and editor at the Fordham Institute and a former history professor, said Americans haven't had to pay as much attention to world history, including Latin American history, in the past as they do now.

"It's something that's going to affect you your entire adult life," Davis said.

Davis agreed with Mead that states' pressure to comply with NCLB has led to an overemphasis on mathematics and reading, when world history is just as valuable.

"Reading and math are the only two scores that matter [under NCLB]," Davis said. "Schools that don't meet these requirements can be put on probation and can be forced into restructuring. [Therefore,] you're going to devote more time and more energy to math and reading. Something's got to give on the other end."

#### Better Standards

One encouraging development noted in the report is the increasing numbers of students taking advanced placement tests and SAT II subject tests in world history. "Those numbers are booming," Davis said.

But those rising numbers illustrate another important point, Davis said. Kids who are motivated to go to college take a greater interest in and place greater importance on world history. State departments of education, Davis said, should direct their resources and attention toward kids who don't.

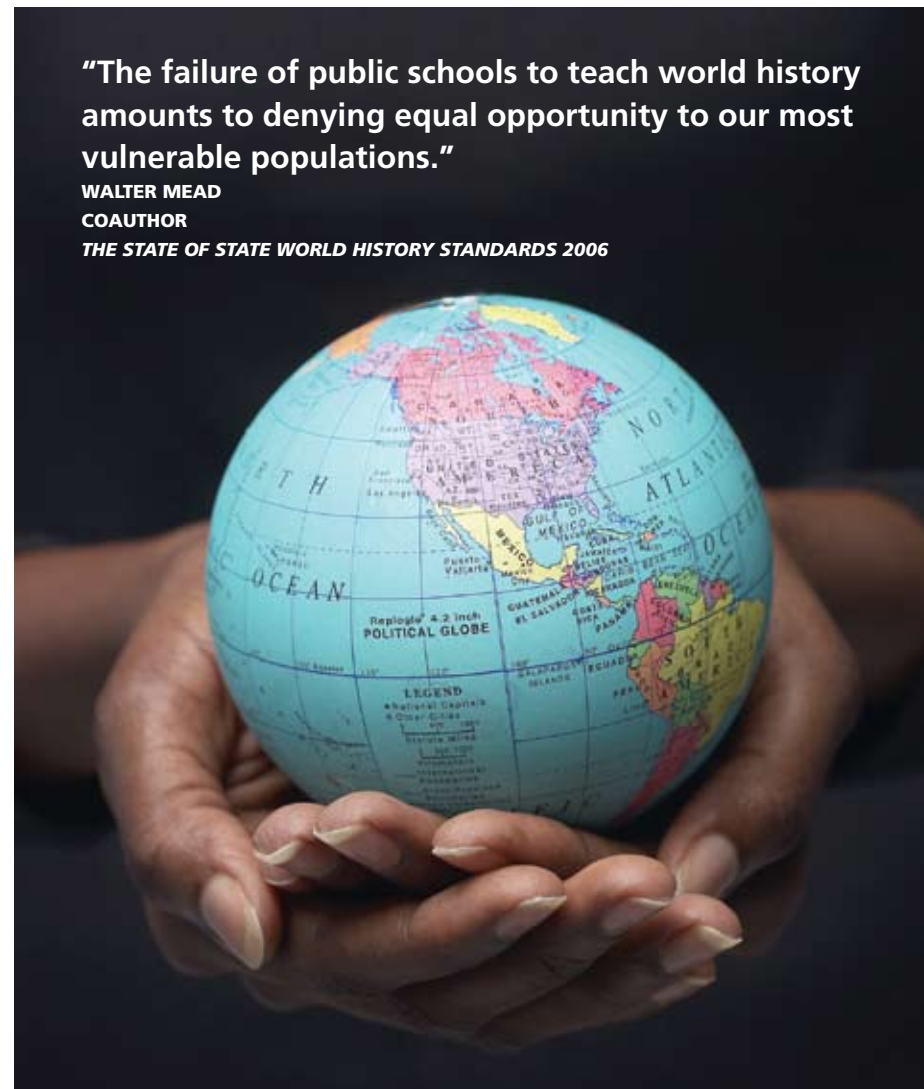
Revamping educational standards doesn't take more money, Davis said. Departments of education "can decide to trash what they have and rewrite standards from the ground up. The Advanced Placement [world history] exam is a great model for states to follow. It doesn't have to be a huge fiscal issue."

Mat Herron ([mat.herron@gmail.com](mailto:mat.herron@gmail.com)) is a freelance writer in Kentucky.

**"The failure of public schools to teach world history amounts to denying equal opportunity to our most vulnerable populations."**

WALTER MEAD  
COAUTHOR

THE STATE OF STATE WORLD HISTORY STANDARDS 2006



#### INTERNET INFO

*The State of State World History Standards 2006*, by Walter Russell Mead, Chester E. Finn Jr., and Martin A. Davis Jr., published by the Fordham Institute in June 2006, is available through PolicyBot™, The Heartland Institute's free online research database. Point your Web browser to <http://www.heartland.org>, click on the PolicyBot™ button, and search for document #19524.

# States Allow High Schoolers to Choose Majors, Coursework

By Mat Herron

Education officials in Florida and Mississippi are overhauling their approach to secondary education, allowing high school students to choose a major and giving students more choice in what classes they take.

In May, Florida Gov. Jeb Bush (R) signed into law a measure permitting high school students to declare majors starting in 2007. In Mississippi, the state superintendent is pushing a five-year, \$115 million plan, to be fully implemented by 2008, to allow high school students to design their course schedules to support their career interests. That plan still needs legislative approval.

Educators emphasize they're not necessarily abandoning traditional secondary education methods entirely—students are permitted to change their majors without fear of losing their high school diplomas.

## Empowering Students

Low graduation rates and high drop-out rates, combined with the pace of technological change and international competition for jobs, are causing state educators to reinvent both the way they teach and what they're teaching.

"If you look at kids going through 13 years of education, oftentimes there's a lack of focus on what they want to do," said Cheri Pierson Yecke, Florida's chancellor of K-12 education. "You never want to [trap] a child. You want to make sure all doors are open."

To do that, Florida is putting the decision-making power, at least in part, back in students' hands. Beginning with the incoming freshman class in the 2007-08 school year, four of the 24 credits

required to graduate from high school will be elective courses or a "major" that relates to a specific subject.

The goal is to help students identify their likes and dislikes. For example, if a student wants to be a veterinarian, Yecke said, he or she could sign up for extra science classes.

**"Education officials in Florida and Mississippi are overhauling their approach to secondary education ..."**

## Discovering Interests

"Isn't it better to find out [your interests] in high school than when you're a junior in college, where you're paying for your credits and you've invested three years of your life?" Yecke said. "As adults, we do students a disservice if we allow them to wander aimlessly through 13 years of school."

The school system will not penalize or withhold diplomas from students who decide to change their majors, Yecke said. And students are still required to pass 16 general education credits. "Those are absolutely key," she said.

For Mississippi Superintendent of Education Hank Bounds, changing the way students learn is essential because of its dismal dropout rate. "Forty percent of our kids don't graduate," Bounds said.

To address that concern, Bounds has submitted to Mississippi's state legislature an ambitious proposal that

would allow students to design their own curricula, starting in 2008. Though the \$115 million plan would take five years to implement, state legislators and the governor support it.

"It's just a matter of funding now," Bounds said.

## Looking Ahead

In formulating the plan, Bounds said he and other educators examined the schools' technology preparatory courses and found they were outdated.

"We looked at what the job market will look like 10 or 15 years down the road," Bounds said. "Tech prep [from] the early '90s is not necessarily what's needed in 2006 and beyond. Most of the middle-school students these days know more about the Web than you or me."

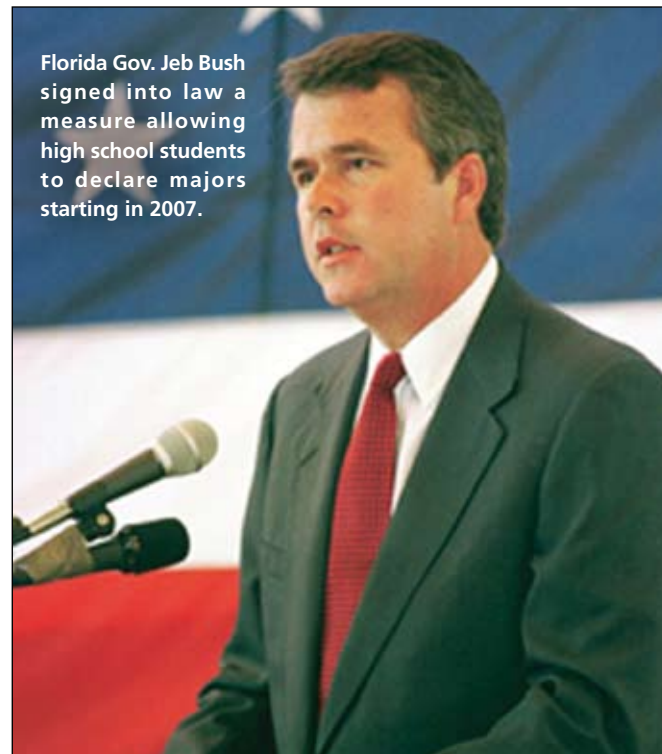
"My 5-year-old can get on the computer and surf the Web," Bounds said.

## Partnering with Industry

Bounds' plan focuses on seventh-, eighth-, and ninth-graders. In the seventh grade, students would be taught how to use technology for problem-solving. Eighth-graders would learn how to take online courses, while ninth-graders would work on self-directed projects, the parameters of which have not been set, Bounds said.

"We want to help students understand what various employment opportunity

Florida Gov. Jeb Bush signed into law a measure allowing high school students to declare majors starting in 2007.



needs will be in terms of technology usage," Bounds said.

The plan emphasizes strong academic counseling and significant parental involvement.

For career counseling, Bounds said the state is revamping high school career centers statewide and expanding their hours of operation. The state's 50 vocational skills courses are also being boiled down to 20.

Bounds is hoping to partner with as many industries as possible in formulating a curriculum.

"We're working with these industries to develop online courses," Bounds explained. "Schools will be able to use that content, and industry will be able to use it to retrain their workforce online."

Mat Herron ([mat.herron@gmail.com](mailto:mat.herron@gmail.com)) is a freelance writer in Kentucky.

# Teach for America Popularity Soars

By Daschell M. Phillips

When students walk into class as school opens this fall, chances are greater than ever their new instructor will be a graduate of the Teach for America (TFA) program.



This year, a record 19,000 top college students nationwide applied to spend the next two years teaching in under-resourced public schools. Though only 15 percent of those applicants are accepted annually, the 17-year-old nonprofit TFA program now counts more than 3,500 corps members teaching in more than 1,000 schools nationwide. In 2000, 900 recent college graduates participated in the program; last year, 2,300 did.

"Our goal is that by 2010 we have 4,000 new teachers per year," said Abigail Smith, TFA's vice president for research and public policy. She said she hopes to see the program double in size by 2010.

## Changing Education

Though the job market is stronger this year than in recent memory, Ivy League graduates are opting for TFA's low pay and long hours like never before. While TFA's recruiting tactics—the program employs 90 full-time recruiters—and

growing ranks of alumni play a role in its success, Smith said students are interested in TFA's holistic aspects.

"We have found that what motivates them is the appeal of the challenge the program gives them," said Smith, herself a TFA alumnus. "The students who join our program are looking for a challenge and looking to do something important for the world."

Kristen Wong, a Dartmouth grad starting her first year of teaching at a school in Hawaii, told The Associated Press in June she wasn't looking to become a teacher when she was recruited.

"I told them right up front that I was going to go to med school," Wong said. "They liked that even better. They pick people who become leaders in the community, who make policy, who vote."

Over the past few years, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., a nonpartisan group with three East Coast offices, has released several independent studies

demonstrating TFA's effectiveness in the classroom on math achievement. No impact was made on students' reading, according to the most recent report.

Daschell M. Phillips ([dashwriter@aol.com](mailto:dashwriter@aol.com)) is a freelance writer in Chicago.

## INTERNET INFO

Teach for America, <http://www.teachforamerica.org>

"Alternative routes to teaching: The impacts of Teach for America on student achievement and other outcomes," by Steven Glazerman, Daniel Mayer, and Paul Decker, published by Mathematica Research in April 2005, is available through PolicyBot™, The Heartland Institute's free online research database. Point your Web browser to <http://www.heartland.org>, click on the PolicyBot™ button, and search for document #19523.



# Entrepreneur Envisions String of School Franchises

By Mike Scott

A Rhode Island entrepreneur has developed a high-technology-based school development model he believes will provide a higher level of education than is currently available to most children nationwide.

In 2003, David Anderson, Ph.D., a retired physicist, came up with the idea of Stellar Schools franchises as an education option for parents concerned about the quality of their children's education.

Anderson's concept is designed as a for-profit network of K-12 schools to be located across the country. He believes his model—which would use more new technologies, such as video conferencing and virtual classes, than other for-profit education companies such as Edison Schools or KIPP have employed—can help solve many of the problems currently afflicting both public and private education.

"I have the business model on my Web site and have been trying to raise capital and interest for the last three years," Anderson said. "I think it would be a perfect concept for some public or charter schools, or could be a way for a brand-new school [to define] itself."

## Using New Technology

Stellar Schools is currently in a development phase, with the organization focused mainly on developing a staff and acquiring financial support. Once those are acquired, franchising opportunities will be made available.

Anderson's model would provide each student with a laptop computer, on which they would access the instructional services and content for all courses in the core curriculum at remote school sites. All routine teacher functions would be automated, and the teaching faculty—those who do the actual instruction—would be based at the franchisor's central service facility.

These faculty members, working in two-person teaching teams, would produce the courseware, including Web-based video lectures. They also would generate and maintain the examination database and assist at the franchisor's help desk when the remotely located students seek additional help that's not available at their franchisee locations. Meanwhile, teachers at the local schools will act as tutors, helped by teaching assistants and peer tutors.

The curriculum of Stellar Schools is operationally defined as the universe of examination questions and answers applicable to its courses.

## Threatening Entrenched Interests

The franchising model would allow Anderson and Stellar School administrators to give franchisees some autonomy while maintaining control over each school's management and curriculum. "Web-based video lectures" will keep costs down, and use of technology will keep quality high, Anderson said.

Individual schools in the system will be owned by franchisees, who will use centralized services provided by the



franchisor, including the aforementioned Web-based distance education services, examinations, and supplies. Homeschools also will receive services from the franchisor under a format similar to those of existing "virtual schools."

Guilbert Hentschke, an education professor at the University of Southern California and advocate of the for-profit school concept, said Anderson's model has significant merit. But he noted some of its unique aspects could threaten traditional educational beliefs.

"I think it is a viable idea we need to look at because compared to other countries, our model of [school] education doesn't seem to be working," Hentschke said. "This type of model would definitely force [existing] schools to improve their standards in the wake of competition."

**"A Rhode Island entrepreneur has developed a high-technology-based school development model he believes will provide a higher level of education than is currently available to most children nationwide."**

## Challenging Mediocrity

Even though students would receive less direct, personal attention using his model, Anderson is confident interaction would be more advanced and effective.

Anderson believes there is a lot wrong with today's standard K-12 education, notably high dropout rates and poor achievement. "We know, both from anecdotal accounts and from research sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, that many high school-aged children either drop out of school or are among the 75 percent of high school graduates who are not proficient at the twelfth-grade level," Anderson said.

According to a U.S. Department of Education study released in 2000, 5 percent of all U.S. high school students nationwide dropped out in 1999, and other studies suggest schools greatly underreport dropout rates. Private schools do no better than public ones, Anderson said.

"It is generally believed that nonprofit

private schools primarily compete with the public schools and therefore they need not be markedly better to succeed—they simply must be 'enough' better to fill their seats," Anderson explained. "This tendency toward private-school mediocrity does not seem to extend to those few private schools that are for-profit."

## Offering Flexibility

Ken Calvert, headmaster at Hillsdale Academy—a K-12 school run by Hillsdale College in Michigan—supports the Stellar Schools concept as well as the traditional classroom model of teacher instruction. He believes the Stellar Schools approach offers flexibility that will enhance the learning experience by

allowing students to be more creative and forward-thinking.

"I support anything where we are trying to go beyond the typical public school restrictions," said Calvert, whose academy provides curricula to 500 charter schools nationwide. "I believe that there is a need to challenge the public school model, and I think alternative options are needed."

"The potential is there for a great educational model, so I hope [Anderson] can get it up and running," Calvert said.

Mike Scott ([mas1774@yahoo.com](mailto:mas1774@yahoo.com)) is a freelance writer in White Lake, Michigan.

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# Reforming K-12 Education from the Outside In

*There are ways to put helpful pressure on these institutions and avoid politics*

By David V. Anderson

What can education reformers, including parents, do to help foster a more competitive environment to help improve K-12 education now, without having to await anyone's permission?

The public education dream of "one best system" is belied by numerous failing public systems. Moreover, the weak competition these public schools provide does little to lift nonprofit private schools from their own mediocrity.

Reforming public schools internally by bureaucratic measures is theoretically possible, but on the practical level it is exceedingly difficult. Even indirect reforms, such as government-funded vouchers, are politically difficult to enact.

## Private Action

However, there are ways outside of the political sphere to improve our K-12 school systems, both public and private. Parents and other interested parties have considerable power to influence our K-12 schools, even when they lack the wherewithal to pursue alternatives.

Unfortunately, most parents are ignorant of schools' real condition and the limits of their children's academic skills—kind of an "ignorance is bliss" situation. Once armed with facts, however, they generally become eager to deal with the problems they see. Fortunately, they have many alternatives, as the following discussion shows.

**"Parents and other interested parties have considerable power to influence our K-12 schools, even when they lack the wherewithal to pursue alternatives."**

## Several Options

- **External achievement testing.** School systems generally use achievement tests to determine children's competency. That sounds good, but the test results often are grossly inflated to make the students look better than they are. If public schools can't be trusted to do this testing, parents should use independent testing services. That would help identify problems and potential remedies.

- **Better publicly available information.** Education reporters are often

ignorant of some of the problems within our schools. They tend to focus too much on public schools. What can be done to improve media coverage? Perhaps the simplest solution is the letter to the editor. Individuals with knowledge about school problems can participate in school board meetings or otherwise get themselves covered by the media. Or they could write an op-ed.

As parents learn more about their children's schools, they become more discriminating customers. As savvy consumers, they can make better choices among the various schooling options. Some are able to afford private schools or turn to homeschooling. The rest have information with which they can seek help from others.

- **Expand the for-profit sector.** The competition between public and nonprofit private schools is weak. The latter have the modest incentive of solvency to improve their performance, but not the strong motivation of real profits. For-profit schools exist and generally not only outperform their nonprofit private counterparts, but do so for lower tuition charges.

I foresee tuition charges for for-profit schools becoming markedly lower than those of pricy private academies—maybe even less than the relatively inexpensive Catholic parochial schools. The promise for-profit schools hold is not only cost-effectiveness and superior instruction but also the prospect of energizing their nonprofit private and public school rivals through robust competition.

- **Encouraging private vouchers to foster more competition.** Private vouchers (scholarships) are provided through charity. Demand far outstrips supply. As donors become better aware of the need, the supply should increase. Better publicity about the true condition of our K-12 schools can help build that awareness.

- **Micro-vouchers can multiply the benefits of charitable resources.** Generally, in a public school or even a private school it's easy to see that some classes are taught well while others are not. Parents, so informed, might simply wish to enroll their children temporarily in alternative instruction to avoid a bad class. If they can't afford that, they might want a scholarship or voucher to pay for it.

If private voucher foundations would provide special limited vouchers that would cover these instructional gaps, their expenses over the 13-year K-12 sequence of educating any given child would be much less than if they were providing vouchers throughout that child's entire time in the K-12 system.

Such vouchers are called micro-vouchers. If enough micro-vouchers are available, parents of an entire classroom of children could remove many or all of them from an inadequate teacher. That would send unmistakable feedback to school administrators.

- **Legal actions can help.** Parents and others can seek remedies in the law. They can file lawsuits to recover damages

or to remedy schools' wrongful actions. For example, by using the private testing services discussed above, parents could subsequently use legal means to force schools to properly retain or advance their children into academically appropriate grade levels. Suits could be filed for the costs of remedial instruction. Even employers of educationally deficient high school graduates could sue.

- **Parent organizations can be changed.** Parents have traditionally joined associations intended to benefit their children's schools. The National Parent Teacher Association and its affiliates are the largest of these. Unfortunately, these organizations reflect more the interests of teachers, unions, and school officials than those of the students.

I foresee a different type of organization that would combine parents and pupils while excluding school personnel. It would advocate for children. It would have the power of numbers to bolster its persuasiveness. It could deal directly with school administrators or could resort to external remedies on its own.

Such organizations could be the vehicle by which many of the preceding proposals could be accomplished. For example, they could deal with incompetent instruction by organizing alternative instruction funded by micro-vouchers. The result would be better instruction for children, as well as constructive feedback to schools.

## Fundraising Assistance

Most of these proposals require funds. Contributions must be solicited from potential donors. But when parents and other interested parties are better informed about the conditions in our schools, they are motivated to help improve them. The right kind of publicity can help motivate donors to provide some of what's needed.

Interested parties can take action now. Those with financial resources can donate. Some can offer their labor and skills as volunteers. Leaders can lead. Aware parents can seek alternatives for their children. There is much to be done, and those seeking to press for real reforms can get started now.

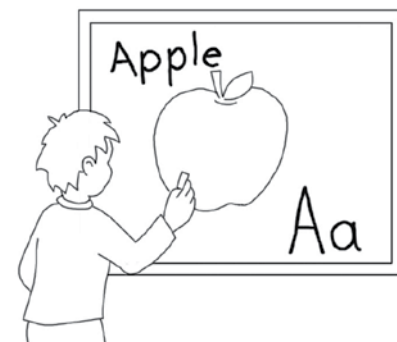
David V. Anderson is planning a franchise network of for-profit K-12 schools.

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# The School Choice Movement's Greatest Failure

By Andrew Coulson

Both *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times* jumped on the July 15 release of a new study by the National Center for Education Statistics. The *WSJ*'s headline was particularly dramatic: "Long-Delayed Education Study Casts Doubt on Value of Vouchers."

No, it doesn't.

And it is a failure on my part, as well as a failure of the school choice movement as a whole, that the media don't understand why.

Taking the study entirely at face value, what it says is this: Private school students consistently score better in math and reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) than public school students, but their advantage essentially goes away if you apply a particular set of controls for the differing student characteristics between the two sectors (things such as wealth, race, etc.).

Okay, you say, but if private schools don't significantly outscore public schools, what's the point of school voucher programs or other reforms that would give all parents access to the public or private school of their choice? Why, in other words, is the *Journal*'s headline wrong?

## Defining Markets

It is wrong because the point of voucher programs is to create a competitive education industry, and the existing population of U.S. private schools does not constitute such an industry.

**"[T]he point of voucher programs is to create a competitive education industry, and the existing population of U.S. private schools does not constitute such an industry."**

A vigorous, free market in education requires that all families have easy access to the schools of their choice (whether public or private); that schools are not burdened with extensive regulations on what they can teach, whom they can hire, what they can charge, etc.; that consumers directly pay at least some of the cost of the service; that private schools not be discriminated against financially by the state in the distribution of education funding; and that at least a substantial minority of private schools be



operated for profit.

This set of conditions does not exist in any state in the nation. Instead, American education is dominated by a 90 percent government monopoly that is funded entirely through taxation. The private sector occupies the remaining 10 percent niche, is almost exclusively operated on a nonprofit basis, and is forced to charge thousands of dollars in tuition in the face of the "free" monopoly schools that spend an average of \$10,000 per pupil per year.

This is not a market, and no study was necessary to point this out.

**"[T]he pace of innovation [in education] has been so slow that a student from the mid 1800s would immediately recognize a modern classroom setting."**

## Playing Monopoly

Competitive markets are characterized by innovation, inexorable improvements in cost effectiveness and the quality of goods and services, and the rapid growth of the most successful providers. None of this has occurred in the U.S. private education sector, precisely because that sector does not constitute a competitive market.

The last great innovation to transform classroom instruction occurred during the presidency of Thomas Jefferson (the invention of the chalkboard, around 1801). Since that time,

the pace of innovation has been so slow that a student from the mid 1800s would immediately recognize a modern classroom setting. The most sought-after private schools enroll only about a thousand more students today than they did a century ago.

This degree of stagnation is unheard of outside of the education sector, because it is only there (at least in liberal democracies) that market activity has been so thoroughly extinguished by government monopoly provision.

Hence, the NCES study of our current small, non-market niche of private schools does not allow any generalization to the sort of outcomes to be expected from a truly free market in education—and the creation of such a market is the primary justification for voucher and other school choice policies. That justification extends well beyond academic and cost-effectiveness benefits.

A free market in education allows all families to obtain the sort of education they want for their own children without having to foist their preferences on their neighbors. That, in turn, eliminates the endless cultural conflict that accompanies one-size-fits-all, state-run systems (think school prayer, book selection and censorship, the teaching of human origins, etc.).

If I were better at my job, and if the school choice movement as a whole had a more effective media machine, this fact would be widely understood, and we wouldn't see fallacious headlines like the one cited above.

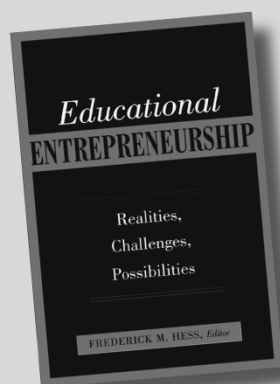
Andrew Coulson ([acoulson@cato.org](mailto:acoulson@cato.org)) directs the Cato Institute's Center for Educational Freedom.

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FREDERICK M. HESS is director of education policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute.

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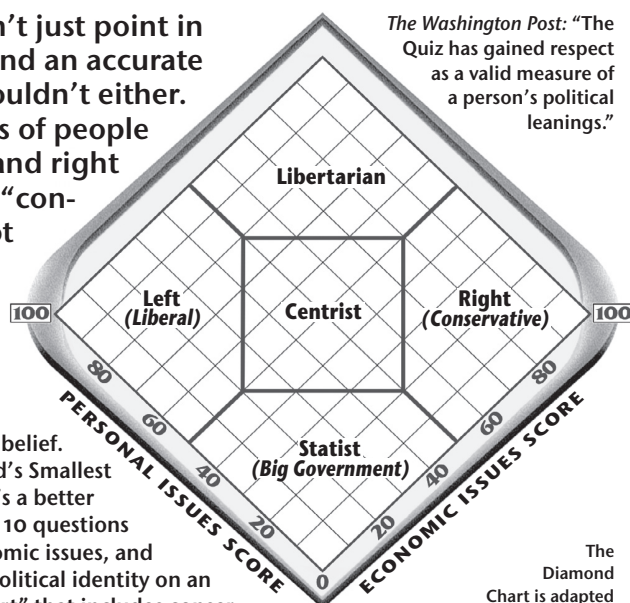
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The Diamond Chart is adapted from an original idea by David Nolan. Chart and questions © Advocates for Self-Government.

by the *Washington Post*, and more than 7 million people have taken it online. What's your real political identity? Take the Quiz. For each statement below, circle A for agree, M for maybe, and D for disagree/not sure. Then find your position on the chart.

### How do you stand on PERSONAL issues?

- |  |    |    |   |
|--|----|----|---|
| ◆ Government should not censor speech, press, media or Internet.   | 20 | 10 | 0 |
| ◆ Military service should be voluntary. There should be no draft.  | A  | M  | D |
| ◆ There should be no laws regarding sex between consenting adults. | A  | M  | D |
| ◆ Repeal laws prohibiting adult possession and use of drugs.       | A  | M  | D |
| ◆ There should be no National ID card.                             | A  | M  | D |

**PERSONAL SCORING:** take 20 for every A, 10 for every M, and 0 for every D: \_\_\_\_\_

### How do you stand on ECONOMIC issues?

- |   |    |    |   |
|---|----|----|---|
| ◆ End "corporate welfare." No government handouts to business.        | 20 | 10 | 0 |
| ◆ End government barriers to international free trade.                | A  | M  | D |
| ◆ Let people control their own retirement: privatize Social Security. | A  | M  | D |
| ◆ Replace government welfare with private charity.                    | A  | M  | D |
| ◆ Cut taxes and government spending by 50% or more.                   | A  | M  | D |

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# Racial Gap Roadmap for Teachers, Administrators

**Generational Change: Closing the Test Score Gap**  
edited by Paul E. Peterson (Rowman & Littlefield, 2006)  
216 pages, softcover, ISBN 0742546098, \$24.95  
Available through Amazon.com

## Review by Mike Scott

In this scholarly book, the authors draw on a variety of research, facts, and theories to identify ways in which students of all races and backgrounds can raise their educational performance and reduce the achievement gap between racial groups.

The editor, Paul Peterson, includes an impressive array of research statistics to examine the effects a broad range of policy alternatives—accountability, school choice, preschool programs, and greater resource commitments—can have in improving education. He concludes competition can help improve schools and that increased school choice for parents can help the entire American public education system.

Peterson and nine other authors address the premises behind the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in the landmark case *Grutter Bollinger v. University of Michigan Law School* (2003), in which

Justice Sandra Day O'Connor opined for the majority that "25 years from now, the use of racial preferences will no longer be necessary." As a result of that decision, Peterson surmises, America's schools need to provide an equal level of quality education for all students regardless of race, ethnicity, or family background.

## Finding the Root

The authors examine the causes of the racial achievement gap, consider what it will take to close it, and offer significant research and statistics. The book explains how the past two decades have brought an array of cultural changes that continue to have a significant impact on schools today, such as large percentages of minorities growing up in single-parent households.

Shrugging aside conventional pieties

about desegregation, preschool, and the notion that schools serving black children are struggling against insuperable odds, the authors conclude the currently favored remedies are of limited value because the current American public school structure is simply outdated. They recommend increased choice and competition.

To the authors, educational reform is breaking down the barriers of cultural, racial, and income differences. The book outlines a plan to limit the effects of racial preferences not just in college applications but throughout society.

## Starting Early

It all starts in early education, say the authors. If the playing field is level for students of all backgrounds in preschool and elementary school, they believe, that balance will ultimately extend to the rest of American society.

One chapter details lessons learned from desegregation after *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). The question is whether desegregation has helped close the racial education gap, and there is some evidence it has, the authors note. But they are unsure that forced integration can be defended on the basis of educational benefits.

In addition, the authors claim it is difficult to force changes in the racial composition of schools on a large scale because Americans are too comfortable with the notion of geographically defined school districts. Therefore, they advocate

using interdistrict transfers of students of all ages, races, and socioeconomic backgrounds to private, charter, and voucher schools.

## Offering Support

The overriding theme of the book's second half is the importance of school district accountability in improving student achievement—meaning district funding must be tied to schools' performance, as measured by benchmarks such as student test scores and college scholarships.

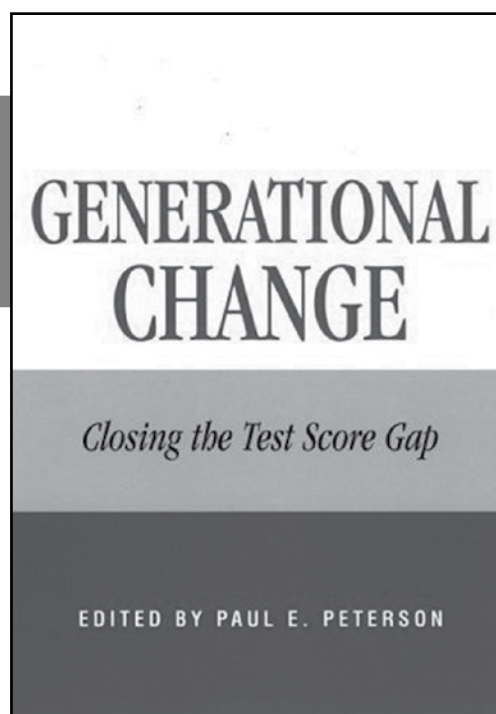
But accountability alone won't effectively raise overall student performance and provide equal outcomes across various groups simultaneously, the authors note, because without backing from school administrators, accountability won't be stressed.

**"[T]he authors draw on a variety of research, facts, and theories to identify ways in which students of all races and backgrounds can raise their educational performance and reduce the achievement gap between racial groups."**

School choice holds more promise in shrinking the achievement gap than does the traditional system of assigning students to a school based on where they live, the authors conclude. But even where school vouchers are available, the authors show, wealthier families still find ways to get their children into desired schools and don't want lower-income children to be let in.

What *Generational Change* offers that other school choice advocacy books might not is detailed data supporting the arguments presented, and unique perspectives on how to improve minority students' performance in America's schools today through increased school competition and choice.

Mike Scott ([mas1774@yahoo.com](mailto:mas1774@yahoo.com)) is a freelance writer in White Lake, Michigan.



## New Bilingual Edition!



## LET'S PUT PARENTS BACK IN CHARGE!

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

In November, The Heartland Institute released a new bilingual edition of its popular book, *Let's Put Parents Back in Charge!* The new edition includes both English and Spanish texts.

*Let's Put Parents Back in Charge!* was written by Joseph L. Bast and Herbert J. Walberg and first published by The Heartland Institute in 2003. It was a groundbreaking tool in the school choice movement, making the case for competition and markets in K-12 education in clear and easy-to-understand language. Some 70,000 copies have been distributed throughout the country by elected officials, education reform advocates, parent groups, and others.

The Heartland Institute is working with grassroots school choice organizations, charter schools, Hispanic business and civic groups, and national school choice groups to distribute the new book. If you are interested in assisting with distribution, please contact Heartland Public Affairs Director Ralph Conner at 312/377-4000, email [conner@heartland.org](mailto:conner@heartland.org).

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**National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation**  
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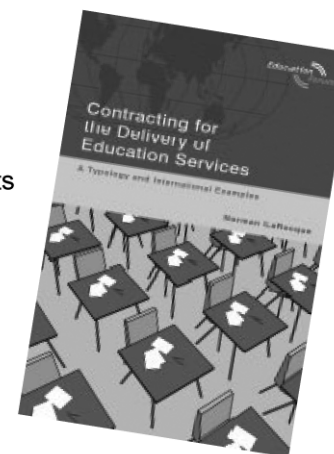
## Contracting for education services: it's a growing global phenomenon

Around the world, more and more governments are turning to contracting for education services to solve financial and quality concerns.

- In the Philippines, around 400,000 students get their education under the Educational Service Contracting scheme.
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America, Great Britain, Australia, China, Pakistan and many other countries all run contracting programmes.

Find out more in an in-depth, new report by **Norman LaRocque**, from New Zealand's Education Forum. *Contracting for the Delivery of Education Services: A Typology and International Examples* is online and available now for purchase at <http://www.educationforum.org.nz>



*A Forum for New  
Thinking in Education*

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# Book Helps Parents Cope with Back-to-School Stresses

As families everywhere ramp up to the hectic back-to-school pace, all parents can use a healthy dose of "clear thinking" to make their way through the clutter and information overload.

**"As families everywhere ramp up to the hectic back-to-school pace, all parents can use a healthy dose of 'clear thinking' to make their way through the clutter and information overload."**

According to Joe LoCicero, co-author of *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Clear Thinking*, focus, clarity, and powerful thinking can be a part of every interaction and communication, once we understand the processes of thinking, logic, and reasoning. *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Clear Thinking* helps readers tap into their innate brain power and improve their decision-making,

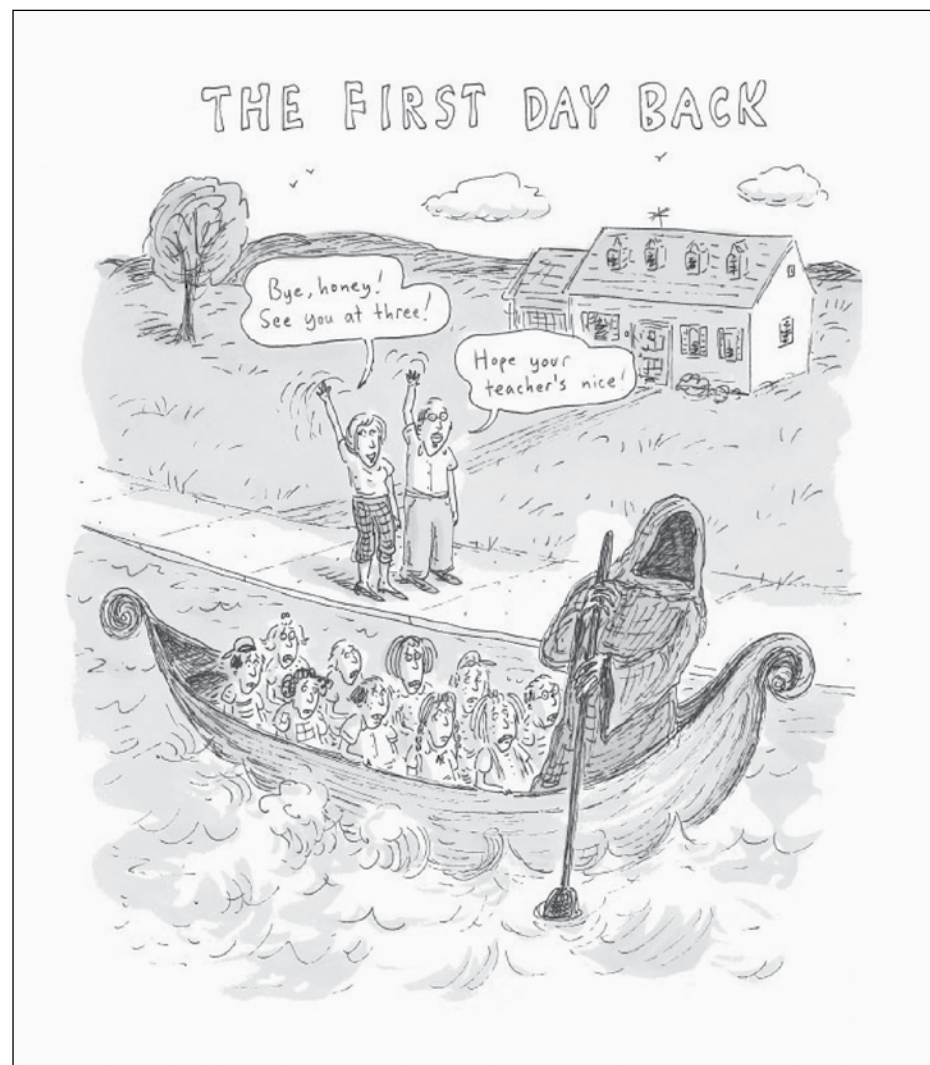
problem-solving, and communication skills.

The book offers various brainpower-boosting strategies, including a multitude of word games and problems, quizzes, analogies, and brain teasers to help readers flex their mental muscles and apply clear-thinking skills in everyday situations.

The authors offer expert advice on how to apply logic and reasoning to form well-thought-out opinions, show readers how to use clear thinking to define problems, and identify the techniques needed to solve the problems. Readers also learn how to translate thoughts into clear communication, gather facts from a variety of resources, and become better listeners.

## INTERNET INFO

To learn more about clear thinking strategies to prepare for back-to-school scheduling, contact Tina Weinheimer, 708/366-1084, [tinawpr@aol.com](mailto:tinawpr@aol.com); or Gardi Wilks, 708/366-8389.



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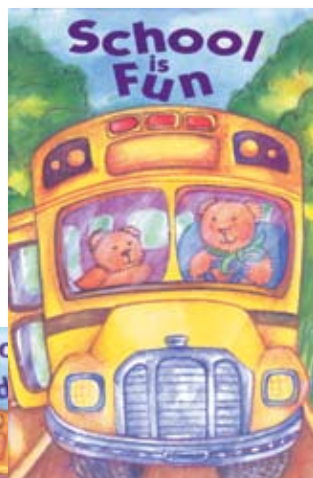
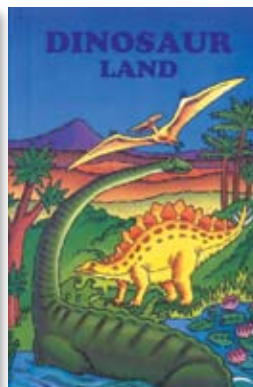
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## SKEPTICISM, FAITH, and FREEDOM



### First Keynote Address **Richard A. Epstein**

Richard A. Epstein received a B.A. in philosophy summa cum laude from Columbia in 1964. He received a B.A. in law with first class honors from Oxford University in 1966, and an LL.B., cum laude, from the Yale Law School in 1968. Upon his graduation he joined the faculty at the University of Southern California, where he taught until 1972. In 1972, he visited the University of Chicago, and

became a regular member of the faculty the next year. He was named James Parker Hall Professor in 1982 and Distinguished Service Professor in 1988. He has also been the Peter and Kirstin Bedford Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution since 2000.

Prior to joining the University of Chicago Law School faculty, he taught law at the University of Southern California from 1968 to 1972. He served as Interim Dean from February to June, 2001. He received an LL.D., h.c. from the University of Ghent, 2003. He has been a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences since 1985 and a Senior Fellow of the Center for Clinical Medical Ethics at the University of Chicago Medical School, also since 1983. He served as editor of the *Journal of Legal Studies* from 1981 to 1991, and of the *Journal of Law and Economics* from 1991-2001. At present he is a director of the John M. Olin Program in Law and Economics.



### Second Keynote Address **Robert A. Sirico**

Rev. Robert A. Sirico received his Master of Divinity degree from the Catholic University of America, following undergraduate study at the University of Southern California and the University of London. During his studies and early ministry, he experienced a growing concern over the lack of training religious studies students receive in fundamental economic principles, leaving them

poorly equipped to understand and address today's social problems. As a result of these concerns, Fr. Sirico co-founded the Acton Institute with Kris Alan Mauren in 1990.

As president of the Acton Institute, Fr. Sirico lectures at colleges, universities, and business organizations throughout the U.S. and abroad. His writings on religious, political, economic, and social matters are seen in a variety of publications, including: *The New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Forbes*, *London Financial Times*, *Washington Times*, *Detroit News*, and *National Review*. Fr. Sirico is often called upon by members of the broadcast media for statements regarding economics, civil rights, and issues of religious concern, and he has provided commentary for CNN, ABC, the BBC, NPR, and CBS' 60 Minutes, among others.

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