Families Intervene Against Lawsuits Challenging Nevada Education Savings Account Program

By Heather Kays

A nonprofit public interest law firm representing five Nevada families is intervening to oppose two lawsuits filed to challenge the legality of the newly enacted Nevada Education Savings Account program (NESA).

The lawsuits were filed by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Nevada and Educate Nevada Now (ENN). The Institute for Justice (IJ) is representing the five families against ACLU and ENN.

ACLU of Nevada filed its lawsuit on August 27 challenging the constitutionality of NESA, claiming it furthers a religious and sectarian purpose by allowing parents to choose religious educational options for their children. ACLU argues the education savings account

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Bumpy Start to Wash. State School Year

By Heather Kays

The school year for students in Washington State began in turmoil.

The Washington State Supreme Court ruled the state’s charter school law is unconstitutional on September 4, and teachers unions voted to strike in Pasco and Seattle, leaving thousands of students out of school at the start of the academic year and parents scrambling to find childcare during the first two weeks of school.

Jami Lund, a senior policy analyst at the Freedom Foundation in Olympia, Washington, says the ruling against the state’s charter school law is based on a definition of “common schools” handed down in School District 20 v. Bryan, a case decided in 1909.

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States Sharpen Focus on STEM Education

By Ashley Bateman

Policymakers have been placing increased emphasis on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM).

They have implemented several national education initiatives and state policies within the past year that support the creation and support of programs and disciplines in the category the U.S. Department of Education designates as “Career and Technical Education.”

The Education Commission of the States (ECS) tracks state policies dealing specifically with STEM or Career and Technical Education. ECS started in 1965 and tracks state policy trends, translates academic research, and provides advice for state leaders to learn from one another.

**LEARN MORE**


Idaho Department of Education Requests Public Review of State’s Standards

By Bruce Edward Walker

The Idaho Department of Education (IDE) is requesting comments from the public regarding the state’s Common Core math and English standards. But not really.

House Bill 314, the Idaho Standards for Learning Challenge (ISLC), passed during the 2015 legislative session and was signed into law by Gov. Butch Otter (R). ISLC requires IDE to review Idaho’s standards. IDE asked for “specific input” on the standards, which the state adopted in 2011.

The public will be able to comment by going to a website, where visitors will be allowed only to vote “thumbs up” or “thumbs down” after reading the standards. That is the full extent of the invitation for comment.

“I’m surprised that Idahoans are allowing their state Department of Education to get away with such a closed process,” said Sandra Stotsky, a professor at the University of Arkansas.

“Apparently, reviewers are being allowed only to comment on existing standards, as if the organization of those standards were sacrosanct, and as if there weren’t a lot of missing standards … that need to be taught and assessed in Idaho, as well as elsewhere,” said Stotsky.

“But not only do closed minds lead to a closed process, it seems that elected or appointed state board members, [including] Gov. Otter himself, aren’t willing to demand an open process that allows parents and teachers to recommend a different organization and the kind of standards that lead to deeper learning and critical thinking,” Stotsky said.

Wayne Hoffman, president of the Idaho Freedom Foundation, a nonpartisan government watchdog group and research organization, told School Reform News the Idaho standards are “great for bureaucrats, but horrible for students.”

“What Idaho and the rest of the country should be doing is to stop treating students like machine widgets and start creating a modern education system that actually meets the needs of individual students,” Hoffman said.

Bruce Edward Walker (bwalker@heartland.org) is a policy advisor for The Heartland Institute.
The decision in *Bryan* led the state supreme court to determine charters are not public schools, but experts say eliminating or clarifying the definition of “common schools” would allow the charter school law to stand.

“The decision is tenuous,” said Lund. “Since so little precedent exists, the majority opinion writer had to rely on a precedent from more than 80 years ago that applied to a funding system that has been extinct for decades. They clearly had the decision in mind and built a wobbly bridge to that conclusion.”

**Passed by Ballot Initiative**

Liv Finne, director of education studies at the Washington Policy Center, notes the charter school law was passed by taxpayers through a ballot initiative in 2012 because they wanted serious educational reform, which the court has now denied them.

“Just as schools across Washington open their doors to students, the state supreme court placed school reform in serious jeopardy,” said Finne. “For technical reasons, the court struck down the charter school law passed by voters in 2012. The state teachers union, the Washington Education Association, which funded the lawsuit against the charter school law, celebrated the ruling.”

Finne says the state’s teachers unions have a stranglehold over educational policy in Washington.

“The ruling has shocked and upset the parents and families of the 1,300 children enrolled in one of Washington’s nine new charter schools. Questions are now being raised about union influence on the supreme court.”

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**Washington Policy Center**
Wash. Court Sanctions Legislature Over School Funding

By Chris Neal

The Washington State Supreme Court is holding the state legislature in contempt because lawmakers haven’t fulfilled a previous court ruling that requires the legislature to devise a plan to increase school funding for Washington’s public education system by billions of dollars.

The sanction, announced on August 14, includes a $100,000-per-day fine.

In McCleary v. State of Washington, a case brought by teachers unions and some parents in 2012, the court determined Washington lawmakers violated the state’s constitution by underfunding public schools. The ruling does not specify a fiscal remedy.

“The court required the state to do more than had been done. Services like full-day kindergarten, more high school credit requirements, and smaller class sizes were ordered, even though the law did not have them as part of the basic education obligation.”

JAMI LUND, SENIOR POLICY ANALYST, FREEDOM FOUNDATION

“Our teachers unions sought a greater investment and knew that ‘adequacy lawsuits’ were proving successful in some other states,” said Jami Lund, a senior policy analyst at the Washington-based Freedom Foundation.

“Only 60 percent of public school money is spent in the classroom,” said Finne. “Compare that with 85 percent to 90 percent of private school money being spent in the classroom.”

Bruce Edward Walker (bwalker@heartland.org) is a policy advisor for The Heartland Institute.

Louisiana Governor Jindal Signs Common Core Compromise Bills

By Chris Neal

Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal (R) has signed into law three bills designed to create a compromise between Common Core supporters and opponents.

The laws, which require public hearings and a review of the proposed standards, give the state legislature more power to review changes made by the state’s Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) this year.

House Bill 373, one of the three compromise laws, requires public hearings to discuss Common Core standards in the state’s six congressional districts. It also requires BESE to finish its revision of the state’s education standards by March 4, 2016.

The second of the three bills, Senate Bill 43, adds legislative committees to the review process. Those committees can only accept or review the changes entirely and cannot evaluate individual items.

The third bill, House Bill 542, requires less than half of the test questions for the 2015–16 exams to come from the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers consortium.

Jindal, who originally supported Common Core, has since changed his view on the issue, and in August 2014, he sued the federal Department of Education for coercing states into adopting the standards through the Race to the Top grant program. On September 16, a federal judge denied Jindal’s attempt to block Common Core, but Jindal’s attorney says he will appeal. Louisiana State Education Superintendent John White remained a supporter of Common Core and fought against Jindal in a long debate over the standards.

Kevin Kane, president of the Pelican Institute for Public Policy, says the long-term implications of the bills are unclear.

“The compromise has definitely cooled things down on the Common Core front,” Kane said. “Statewide elections are being held in the fall, so we will have a new governor and any number of new legislators getting engaged. Students and families can expect to continue with the new testing regime for the foreseeable future, but it remains to be seen what changes will flow from the compromise over time.”

“Common Core’s opponents will likely be disappointed with how this legislation works out in practice,” said Ben Boychuk, an associate editor of the Manhattan Institute’s City Journal.

Boychuk says the addition of legislative hearings and committee oversight offers no guarantee the standards would change or be repealed and replaced.

“Notice that the law says the legislature’s education committee may review what the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education does, but it can only accept or reject changes in standards and testing wholesale, rather than cutting out bad elements and preserving the good,” Boychuk explained. “That creates a powerful incentive for legislators to accept what BESE produces rather than upset the process.”

Chris Neal (cdobre245@gmail.com) writes from New York, New York.

How To Fix Our Schools

Lessons of Hope is Joel Klein’s inside account of his eight-year mission to improve New York City’s schools. Klein demanded accountability, eliminated political favoritism, and battled a powerful teachers union that seemed determined to protect a status quo that didn’t work for kids.

Klein’s initiatives resulted in more school choice, higher graduation rates, and improved test scores. The New York City model is now seen as a national standard for meaningful school reform. But the journey was not easy. Klein faced resistance and conflict at every turn.

Purchase Lessons of Hope on Amazon.com for $22.55 hard cover
Families Fight Suits Against Nev. Education Savings

Continued from page 1

(ESA) program “violates the Nevada Constitution’s prohibition against the use of public money for sectarian purposes.”

On September 9, ENN filed the second lawsuit, arguing the public school system is the only way Nevada is allowed to pay for children’s education.

Expected Opposition

IJ Senior Attorney Tim Keller told School Reform News IJ was involved in drafting the NESA and expected opposition from anti-choice groups.

“The ACLU’s lawsuit was not a surprise,” Keller said. “We fully expected the program to be challenged. We knew there were those who believe this program violates the Nevada constitution.”

NESA allows parents who opt their children into the program to determine where and how their child is educated. State-allocated funding for the student is put into an education savings account that can be used to pay for private school, textbooks, tutors, therapies, and other approved educational services.

ACLU claims allowing parents to choose to send their child to a religious school means the program is furthering a religious or sectarian purpose.

Emphasizes Parental Choice

Keller says the ACLU lawsuit is baseless because allowing parents to make a decision about how to educate their children does not link church and state.

“The only purpose that the program serves is education,” said Keller. “Families are able to select the best option to meet the educational needs of their children. No government official is using a single dollar to fund or further any sectarian or religious purpose. Not one dollar is preordained for any particular use other than education.”

State Sen. Scott Hammond, who wrote the NESA legislation, says the lawsuit was expected, but with more than 2,800 families signing up for the ESA program as of August 27, he thinks the courts will uphold the program.

“We knew the lawsuit was coming,” Hammond told School Reform News. “This won’t deter us. Parents want more say over their children’s education. They want to be able to individualize their child’s education, to choose what is best for their child. This lawsuit won’t deter parents from achieving this goal.”

Keller says ACLU continuously refers to the ESA program as a voucher program because it knows “voucher” is a loaded term.

“The ACLU challenges school choice all across the country,” said Keller. “It is ironic, since liberty is in their name, that they would challenge programs that empower parents.”

Claims of Funding Diversion

The ENN lawsuit claims NESA violates the Nevada Constitution’s ban on using public funding for private schools. The suit claims NESA would divert public funding away from public schools to private schools and other private expenditures.

Chantal Lovell, communications director at the Nevada Policy Research Institute, says the lawsuit is based on flawed math.

“What this latest lawsuit ignores is the fact that Nevada’s ESA program actually increases per-pupil spending,” said Lovell. “In total, Nevada spends over $9,600 to educate each student, so each time a child takes an ESA that is valued between $5,100 and $5,700, thousands of dollars are left in the public school system despite the child having moved on to private education.”

‘Devastating for These Families’

The number of families signing up for NESA continues to grow each day.

“The fact that over 3,000 ESA applications have been filed in just a month’s time is proof of the desperation families in Nevada have felt and their eagerness to exercise choice,” said Lovell. “It would be devastating for these families if their children were forced to stay in failing classrooms because of a lawsuit.”

IJ is representing Aurora Espinoza, a single mother who works full-time and has two daughters in public schools rated among the worst in the state; Aimee and Heath Hairr, whose eldest son was intensely bullied in his public school; Lara Allen, a mother of four children who are either gifted or have special needs; and Liz Robbins, a mother of seven children, three of whom have serious health problems requiring constant testing and treatment.

“There’s no question that Nevada’s public schools are failing our students,” Lovell said. “Despite decades of increased funding, many of Nevada’s public schools aren’t doing their job of preparing students for a successful life. [NESA] gives all students, regardless of their family’s income or their own abilities, the chance to leave a failing school and attend one that is exceptional.”

“I think states know they are doing something right in the education realm when their education reform efforts are challenged in court,” Keller said.

Keller expects more states to enact choice programs as legislators realize school choice is constitutional under both state and federal constitutions.

Heather Kays (hkays@heartland.org) is a research fellow with The Heartland Institute and managing editor of School Reform News.
Oral arguments were heard September 1 in an education-funding lawsuit involving six groups representing school districts, parents, and other groups in Texas.

Attorneys for more than 600 school districts told the state supreme court schools are underfunded and the distribution of funding is unfair. According to the lawsuit, the inequity in funding has been a problem across school districts since a 2011 cut to education funding. The lawsuit questions the constitutionality of how schools are funded in the state.

The Fort Bend Independent School Districts is a group consisting of 81 school districts, including Texas’s eight largest. The Texas Taxpayers and Student Fairness Coalition, organized by the Equity Center, represented more than 400 mostly mid- to low-property wealth school districts, which together account for about 1.3 million students.

The Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund represented districts with many low-income families and English Language Learning students. The Texas School Coalition represented about 60 property-wealthy districts, known as Chapter 41 districts, which give money back to the state under the state’s Robin Hood Laws.

The Texas Charter Schools Association was also represented, along with five charter school students. Texans for Real Efficiency and Equity in Education represented six parents and a newly formed coalition, which includes the Texas Association of Business, school choice advocates, and former state House Public Education Chair Kent Grusendorf.

**Questions About Efficiency**

Although most of the groups were requesting more state education funding, Grusendorf’s group argued Texas education funding is unconstitutional because it is inefficient. The coalition argues efficiency does not necessarily mean more funding, and it wants the court to order a study to determine the true cost of educating a student in Texas. It also wants the state’s charter school cap lifted, regulations on public schools decreased, and the way property taxes work in the state reexamined.

Michael Barba, a policy analyst at the Center for Education Freedom at The Texas Public Policy Foundation, says the lawsuit could make a real difference in how Texas funds education.

“We are very hopeful,” Barba said. “School finance litigation has been ongoing for 30 years now, and it’s time to implement the fundamental reform the Texas Supreme Court has repeatedly asked for. While the supreme court cannot tell the legislature what this change will look like—because the court honors the principle of the separation of powers—the justices can tell the legislature that the system is in need of some type of fundamental, structural reform. If this happened, the justices would conclude that the current system is unconstitutional.

“The legislature would then need to look closely at our current system, understand it, and fundamentally reform it,” Barba explained. “The fact is that Texas is a very conservative state; our government does not tend to chase after the newest and latest policies. We stick to what’s worked for us. The problem is that we are slow to realize our education system is not working.”

**Saving Money Through Choice**

John Merrifield, a professor of economics at the University of Texas-San Antonio, says meaningful legislation to change school funding is long overdue, and efforts such as the Taxpayers’ Savings Grant Program (TSGP) legislation have unfortunately not passed into law. TSGP would reimburse parents for a portion of tuition costs or part of the child’s allotted state average per-pupil spending, effectively saving the state money every time a child moved from a public school to a private school.

“The Taxpayer Savings Grant legislation, Senate Bill 276 in the 2015 session, substantially levels the playing field between the public school system and current and potential private schools of choice,” said Merrifield. “SB 276 provides for fiscal savings, which is politically critical, and it wisely phases in eligibility for a savings grant to those school taxpayers that already use private schools—meaning, as [the late economist and school choice advocate] Milton Friedman said, families that now pay twice. Passage of SB 276 gradually eliminates the injustice of paying private school tuition after having paid the taxes that support the public school system.

“Passage of SB 276 would have been great, but we can do even better with a comparably funded approach to school choice expansion through tuition tax credits or education savings accounts,” said Merrifield.

**Concern for Future**

The court, which heard more than two-and-a-half hours of testimony, may not rule for several weeks.

“Texas leads the way on so many issues, and it has resulted in fantastic prosperity for our people,” said Barba. “But this litigation isn’t about our prosperity today. It’s about what life will be like for our children and grandchildren. Will they have the same opportunities as we did? As our parents did?

“The district court looked at the current state of Texas public education and wrote that it is a ‘dismal’ failure to ‘hundreds of thousands’ of Texas students,” Barba said. “There are children today who have greater potential, ambition, and intelligence than even the greatest of Texas’s current leaders. Our system is failing their genius. We cannot claim to be a state of freedom and opportunity and then defend laws which determine children’s destiny based on the ZIP code they are born into.”

Lennie Jarratt (ljarratt@heartland.org) is the project manager for school reform at The Heartland Institute.
GOP Hopefuls Back Choice at Education Summit

By Ashley Bateman


Common Core, Federal Overreach
Bush and Kasich spoke in favor of Common Core standards, but the other four speakers said the standards are an example of burdensome and destructive federal overreach.

Fiorina said Common Core derails innovation and individualism in the classroom and is an example of crony socialism.

“A bureaucracy by nature will standardize and systematize,” Fiorina said. “They won’t standardize goals; they will standardize methods. … Common Core may have started out as a set of standards, but what it has turned into is a program that honestly is being overly influenced by companies that have something to gain—testing companies and textbook companies.”

Initially, Louisiana adopted Common Core under Jindal’s governance. Jindal later changed his position on Common Core, filing a lawsuit against the federal standards.

“I want parents to be able to help their children with their homework,” Jindal said. “I don’t think it’s a good thing if parents are saying, ‘I have no idea what they’re learning, I can’t help them, I’m disconnected from what they’re learning.’

“We either think that parents and local communities are smart enough to adopt good standards for their kids and tough standards, or think this will only happen if people in [Washington, DC] force us to do this because they’re smarter than us and they know better than us,” said Jindal.

Pushing for Parental Choice
Candidates repeatedly spoke of the virtues of charter schools and voucher programs, with Bush, Kasich, and Walker pointing to voucher expansion in their respective states.

Choice programs not only accommodate different students but also increase competition among schools and put pressure on traditional public schools to improve, Walker said.

Bush lauded reform efforts that target underprivileged students and expand charter schools and voucher programs. Bush also noted the “extraordinary” potential of education savings accounts (ESAs).

Fiorina mentioned Nevada’s expansive ESA option for parents as a transformational reform effort. Nevada’s ESA allows parents who opt their children into the program to control how money allocated for their child’s education is spent.

Unions vs. Merit Pay
Walker led the discussion on collective bargaining. His battle against teachers unions in 2011 garnered national attention.

Teachers unions strongly oppose merit pay and support for exceptional teachers, Walker said.

Christie claimed in New Jersey, educators struggle to reduce large achievement gaps, and groundbreaking contracts negotiated with the American Federation of Teachers in some of the state’s lowest-achieving cities resulted in merit pay for teachers and a better atmosphere for improvement.

Making Education Relevant, Modern
Several candidates said there is a need for more advanced technology in the classroom.

“We are in the twenty-first century; we need to keep changing and making education more and more exciting,” Kasich said. “We lose too many children because we don’t touch their passions.”

Jindal, in contrast, emphasized developing an education culture using more personalized methods of learning.

“We know children learn at a different pace,” Jindal said. “[We can] customize intervention to help them catch up or keep up with [an] advanced learning pace … with the technology we have today.”

Ashley Bateman (bateman.ae@googlemail.com) writes from Alexandria, Virginia.
As the new school year began across the country in August and September, many parents were dismayed to find the cost of school supplies is higher than ever, according to a recent survey.

In its annual survey of school supply costs, Huntington Bank found parents in 2015–16 can expect to pay as much as $1,402 per child for school supplies and extracurricular activities. According to the survey, parents can expect to pay $649 for an elementary school student, $941 for a middle school student, and $1,402 for a student in high school. Huntington Bank says costs have risen by 1 to 9 percent compared to 2014, depending on which grade level a student is in.

**District Control vs. State Mandates**

The burden of increasing school expenses falls on different groups, which varies from state to state.

California, New York, Pennsylvania, and Texas don’t have any state mandates determining who is responsible for back-to-school expenses. In those states, each school district determines who pays the cost of various back-to-school supplies.

“The purchase of school supplies, as with most everything a district would need to ensure a successful academic year, is a local decision,” said Pam Slater, public information officer with the California Department of Education. Lauren Callahan, information specialist for the Texas Education Agency, says the state gives Texas school districts a stipend to pay for instructional materials and textbooks.

“It’s up to our school districts to determine the supplies they need and how they will obtain those supplies,” Callahan said. “The one exception I can think of is our calculator policy. Some of our state assessments require the use of a graphing calculator, and so we require our districts to have them. But again, whether the district purchases them and provides them for students or asks a student to provide his or her own is a local decision.”

Ohio’s law states school districts don’t have to provide anything to pupils free of charge except the required textbooks. The state law says districts may make accommodations for pupils with serious financial needs.

In a 1970 Michigan Supreme Court decision, Bond v. Ann Arbor School District, the court declared books and school supplies are an essential part of the “free” education guaranteed by the state’s constitution. The Michigan Department of Education released a 14-page position statement, updated in 2006, stipulating districts were responsible for course fees, textbooks, and school supplies.

“While we generally believe the legislature shouldn’t micromanage K–12 education in the state, it’s clear this provision in law has prevented an annual food fight over school supplies,” said Gary Naeyaert, executive director of the Great Lakes Education Project, a Michigan organization promoting school reform in the state.

Tom Gantert (gantert@mackinac.org) is senior capitol correspondent for Michigan Capitol Confidential, a daily news site of the Mackinac Center for Public Policy.

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College Board Rewrites Advanced Placement U.S. History Standards—and History Itself

By Peter Wood

When the College Board rewrote the Advanced Placement U.S. History (APUSH) standards in 2012, many scholars and historians saw it as an attempt to rewrite history. As president of the National Association of Scholars, I set out to find the truth about the new APUSH standards, which are intended to guide teachers in high school classrooms nationwide.

History is essentially the record of men and women making important decisions under pressure and with imperfect knowledge of what lies ahead. It tells us what people decided to do and how their decisions worked out. In the past few decades, academic historians have created several “new” kinds of history: history playing up abstract social and economic forces; history “from below,” concentrating on people who had little power and who were often victimized by others; and history as the story of triumphant social movements and ideologies.

APUSH 2012 marked the victory of all these “new” forms of history over the record of men and women making important decisions. Written in such a bland, colorless way, for several years nobody really noticed the defects of the rewritten APUSH standards, but in early 2014, a former high school Advanced Placement (AP) teacher, Larry Krieger, and a lawyer, Jane Robbins, teamed up to write a handful of articles in which they declared there were serious problems with APUSH 2012.

Krieger and Robbins noticed, for example, George Washington had somehow gone down the APUSH memory hole. “[There is] no discussion of his military leadership, his personal sacrifice to accept the call to become the first President, or his wise and steady leadership during the tumultuous first years of our nation,” Krieger and Robbins wrote.

Banishing Historical Figures
Krieger and Robbins spotted what others had missed. APUSH treated the legacy of British colonialism of America as merely “a rigid racial hierarchy,” never mind bringing to the continent the Magna Carta, common law, the rights of citizenship, and respect for personal liberty. APUSH banished many of the best-known figures in our history. No James Madison. No Dwight Eisenhower. No Martin Luther King Jr., though the APUSH drafters somehow found room for lesser-known figures, such as Chief Little Turtle, David Walker, and Mercy Otis Warren.

APUSH likewise omitted many of the key documents of American history, from the Mayflower Compact to John F. Kennedy’s inaugural address, but it suggested AP teachers use documents such as the Clean Air Act and the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision in Planned Parenthood v. Casey.

Krieger and Robbins noticed “a left-ist slant” in APUSH, as well as “a general view that academic historical knowledge is unnecessary.” The APUSH writers were explicit about demoting “historical content[,] such as names, events, dates, etc.,” in favor of what they call “historical thinking skills.” Those “skills,” at least in the abstract, sound wholesome. They include things such as contextualization, historical argumentation, patterns of continuity and change over time, and, of course, historical causation.

How a student is supposed to acquire those skills without first acquiring “names, events, dates, etc.” is a central APUSH mystery. Well, perhaps not entirely a mystery. If history is reduced to a narrative of the glorious struggle of progressive forces against the forces of racist, imperial, class-based, and sexual oppression, the “historical content” is a matter of mere detail.

Reading APUSH
Not long after Krieger and Robbins began to voice their complaints about APUSH, a friend asked me whether there was anything to their criticism. I was skeptical. The College Board, more than a century old, is among the most respected bodies in American education, and the Advanced Placement standards and examinations go back to the 1950s. It seemed unlikely the College Board, of all things, would go off on an ideological tangent like this.

But part of my job as president of the National Association of Scholars is to run down rumors of malfeasance. So I went to work on the 134-page APUSH document. The length itself was a surprise. APUSH used to be a five-page outline of topics, which left the execution up to the classroom teachers. The new APUSH, which was slated to go into effect in fall 2014, replaced that handcart with a Metroliner. APUSH 2012 exuded ambition. Someone was intent on taking control of how American history is taught.

As I read deeper into the new standards, the picture darkened. Krieger and Robbins were right: APUSH 2012 was largely political propaganda. They had accurately reported some of the major omissions and the emphases of favored left-wing causes. Sure enough, Ronald Reagan was known for “bellicose rhetoric,” and World War II was to be understood through the prism of “the internment of Japanese Americans, challenges to civil liberties, debates over race and segregation, and the decision to drop the atomic bomb[,] which[ ] raised questions about American values.”

Much Worse Than Imagined
Krieger and Robbins had only scratched the surface. APUSH 2012, on closer inspection, was carefully thought through. It amounted to a full-on deconstruction of traditional American values. For example, the APUSH
The College Board’s immediate response was a collective sneer. Its representatives and proxies derided the critics as ignorant nobodies who wanted patriotic flag-waving and feel-good myths in place of the brilliant historical analysis embodied by APUSH.

The College Board stuck with that sneer for about six months, but then it seemed to notice the critics were rapidly gaining credibility both with the broader public and with major academic historians.

In June 2015, I posted to the National Association of Scholars website an open letter from more than 120 professional historians. It begins, “The teaching of American history in our schools faces a grave new risk,” and in very measured language it indicts the 2012 APUSH for its “scrubbing” of “vivid and compelling narrative,” its reliance on “bloodless interplay of abstract and impersonal forces,” and its “notable political or ideological biases.”

The College Board took note of the developments leading up to this open letter. It stopped stonewalling, organized its version of a listening tour, and appointed a committee to revise APUSH. The result was a new document issued at the end of July, which we might call APUSH 2015.

Did We Win?
At The Wall Street Journal, Henninger summarized APUSH 2015 with the headline, “Hey, Conservatives, You Won.” Susan Berry at Breitbart countered with the headline, “Conservative Victory on AP US History Framework? Not So Fast.” So which is it?

Much as I would like to share credit for the 2015 revision of APUSH, it would be a mistake. APUSH 2015 is not a standalone enterprise. It is connected to Common Core and College Board’s ongoing project of “aligning” all AP tests to Common Core. David Coleman, the architect of Common Core, now serves as president of College Board and is making sure his vision of national standards will be extended from Common Core’s vision of English language arts and mathematics to every other area of K–12 study. The AP European history standards have recently been released and—a surprise, surprise—are a close ideological match with APUSH 2012.

In short, praise for the 2015 revision of APUSH is one of those things that is too good to be believed. The closer you look, the less you’ll believe it.

Peter Wood (pwood@nas.org) is president of the National Association of Scholars, a network of scholars and citizens with a commitment to academic freedom, disinterested scholarship, and excellence in American higher education.

“Krieger and Robbins had only scratched the surface. APUSH 2012, on closer inspection, was carefully thought through. It amounted to a full-on deconstruction of traditional American values.”
NEA Supports Left, Ignoring Conservative Members

By Tom Gantert

The National Education Association (NEA) donates large sums of money to several left-leaning organizations even while a large proportion of its members identify themselves as conservative, according to NEA’s latest financial report.

NEA, the nation’s biggest teachers union, gave People For the American Way (PFAW) $112,500 in 2014, according to the latest financial report the union submitted to the United States Department of Labor.

PFAW is described on numerous websites as an organization that “conducts research, legal, education, and advocacy for a wide variety of liberal causes.” PFAW’s website recently read: “Sign The Pledge: Stop the Right Wing.”

Other Donations to Liberal Groups

In addition to People For the American Way, NEA gave money to dozens of other liberal organizations in 2014.

NEA gave $160,000 to an organization called Democracy Alliance. The website for the organization states it aims “to build progressive infrastructure that could help counter the well-funded and sophisticated conservative apparatus in the areas of civic engagement, leadership, media, and ideas.”

Democratic Alliance, started in 2005, is a group of progressive donors who fundraise for groups working to enact progressive ideas.

NEA also gave $235,000 to the Progressive States Network, an organization that works to promote progressive state-level legislation, and it gave $25,000 to Netroots Nation, which describes itself as “this country’s largest progressive gathering.”

“Netroots Nation is a political convention for progressives.”

According to Open Secrets, a website that tracks campaign donations, NEA has made nearly $93 million in campaign contributions from 1989 to 2015 to political candidates and parties, and 97 percent of the money went to “Dems and Liberals.” According to Open Secrets, NEA gave just $3.2 million to Republican and conservative candidates over the same 26-year period.

Many Conservatives Paying Dues

NEA, which has a total membership of nearly three million, has long acknowledged having many conservative members. A 2006 survey conducted by NEA reported 45 percent of member teachers under 30 labeled themselves as conservative.

The survey also reported 63 percent of member teachers aged 40 to 49 considered themselves conservative.

NEA did not respond to e-mails seeking comment for this story.

Tom Gantert (gantert@mackinac.org) is senior capitol correspondent for Michigan Capitol Confidential, a daily news site of the Mackinac Center for Public Policy.

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Indiana Ranks Best, Montana Worst in School Choice

By Tom Gantert

The Center for Education Reform (CER) released its 2015 Parent Power Index in August, and the results show a significant disparity in parental empowerment among states.

According to the report, Indiana ranked best in parental empowerment and school choice, while Montana finished last.

CER President Kara Kerwin says the Parent Power Index ranks several variables, including strength of charter school laws, school choice, online learning, teacher quality, and transparency in education information across the country.

“An informed parent is an empowered parent,” Kerwin told School Reform News. “The Parent Power Index isn’t just about school choice. It’s also about a variety of components, such as how much parents can learn from state report cards and whether school board elections are held during general elections, which makes it easier for parents to make their voices heard and hold their leaders accountable.”

Montana Ranks Last

According to the report, many states provide quality educational options for parents and their children, and there’s a high level of competition among the states to determine which one provides the most educational freedom. However, there’s little doubt about which state is the most restrictive and deserves to rank last.

Montana received an abysmal score of 0 percent on the 2015 Parent Power Index. Every other state and Washington, DC scored at least 50 percent in the ratings.

Indiana was the top state, earning a score of 90 percent. Florida was just one percentage point behind at 89 percent, and Arizona was third-highest, finishing at 88 percent. The overall average was 68 percent.

Montana’s ranking was due in part to its failure to provide a law that allows charter schools and because the state does not allow statewide, full-time online schools.

“Montana’s ranking reflects the shameful behavior of many public officials,” said Brent Mead, executive director of the Montana Policy Institute. “Our governor, Office of Public Instruction, and numerous others are content to ignore the struggles of students and families falling behind in the traditional public schools. We owe it to these families and our communities to keep fighting for change so all children are able to reach their potential.”

Reform Efforts Stymied

Teachers unions and Montana Gov. Steve Bullock (D) have blocked efforts to introduce school choice in Montana since Bullock assumed office in 2013, Mead says.

“Unfortunately, Montana’s ranking shows how much power the entrenched special interests have compared to parents,” Mead said. “We worked hard to pass a great charter school bill last session. ... However, Gov. Bullock did not listen to the parents and children who came to tell their story. He listened to the groups who fight for the status quo.”

Kerwin says Montana has made some recent changes but it is too soon to judge how effective they will be.

“It’s unfortunate that Montana has consistently been one of the lowest-performing states when it comes to empowering parents,” Kerwin said. “The state recently adopted a tax credit scholarship program, but it’s too early to tell if it will result in greater opportunities for children. Seeing how policies play out on the ground, rather than simply grading them based on how they look on paper, is a key piece when it comes to ranking parent power.”

Indian Ranks First Again

Indiana ranked number one for both 2014 and 2015 on the Parent Power Index. “Indiana continues to hold the top spot on CER’s Parent Power Index, in large part thanks to a much-tested and improved charter school law and a statewide school choice program that has attracted tens of thousands of students,” Kerwin said.

“While the top 10 parent power states remain strong, there’s still room for improvement and much left to be done, as most states are barely scratching the surface when it comes to empowering parents,” Kerwin said.

Tom Gantert (gantert@mackinac.org) is senior capitol correspondent for Michigan Capitol Confidential, a daily news site of the Mackinac Center for Public Policy.

LEARN MORE
Parent Power Index 2015, Center for Education Reform, August 2015: http://parentpowerindex.edreform.com/
Summit Educational Association Focuses on Virtues in Mentoring Milwaukee Youth

By Heather Kays

Summit Educational Association (SEA) has mentored thousands of minority students on the south side of Milwaukee over the past 25 years. Matt Smyczek, executive director of SEA, says the organization began when a group of businesspeople, inspired by the social teachings of the Catholic Church, decided to start a tutoring program.

“What we’re doing is very simple,” said Smyczek. “It’s the simplest thing you could ever imagine. What we are doing is getting mentors and kids together during the week.”

Each week the program provides one-on-one tutoring and character talks emphasizing honesty, hard work, and respect for others.

“We’re not replacing the school at all,” said Smyczek. “We’re trying to make the sponge more absorbent. We’re a virtue-based tutoring program.”

Minorities, Lower-Income Students Take Advantage

During the school year, 200 students take part in the mentoring program and 150 mentors participate. The program starts with students in the 4th grade and goes through the senior year of high school. Most of the mentees are Hispanic or black, and many come from lower-income households, Smyczek says.

There is also a seven-week summer program that includes a tutoring program from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., and college students lead teams of 10 to 12 students.

During the day, mentees do a lot of reading aloud, attend character class, and play sports. There is a rewards program that includes a field trip for mentees who participate in a read-a-thon.

“Kids were reading hundreds of pages when we provided these incentives,” Smyczek said. “Now each student reads about 609 pages. Grade level equivalency [has shot] up by one semester.”

Invoking Parents

SEA also holds parenting meetings, which include seminars on subjects such as how social media affect children, study habits, and modesty.

Most weeks, more than half the parents come to the meetings, and almost every parent attends at least two meetings during the summer, according to Smyczek.

MENTORS HELP WITH GOALS AND TO SPEAK WITH THE MENTEE’S PARENTS. THE WEEKLY CHECK-IN CALLS WITH MENTEES HELP ENCOURAGE ATTENDANCE AND CREATE A STRONGER EMOTIONAL BOND BETWEEN THE MENTOR AND MENTEE, SMYCZEK SAYS.

“It really makes a difference,” said Smyczek.

“When you receive a call from a friend, it kind of makes your day sometimes,” Smyczek said. “Kids take it seriously that way.”

SEA provides fact sheets about study habits and good behavior at home. Parent surveys during the summer program help parents and counselors gauge children’s progress. Specific goals are set for each mentee, who is provided with clear expectations.

Encouraging Future Mentors

The summer volunteers are typically university students, and most of the volunteers in 2015 were graduates of the summer program themselves.

The summer program began seven years ago with 60 kids the first year, and now there are more than 400 children in the program. The mentors receive a stipend of $250 a week.

Boys and girls are in separate programs.

“We want to have boys mentored by men and girls mentored by ladies,” said Smyczek.

Massachusetts May Add Common Core Question to Ballot

By Vivian Hughbanks

Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healy deemed constitutional a proposed statewide ballot question that asks voters to decide whether the state will adhere to Common Core standards.

In the wake of Healy’s September decision, a statewide campaign called End Common Core Massachusetts is collecting voter signatures to get the question on the ballot in 2016.

“We need to gather around 68,000 signatures,” Donna Colorio, chairwoman of End Common Core Massachusetts, told School Reform News. “Then, we’ll continue to build public support for passing the ballot initiative and returning Massachusetts back to its previous nation-leading position in state academic standards and tests.”

End Common Core Massachusetts advocates ending the use of Common Core standards and Common Core-aligned tests in the state, restoring the previous Massachusetts standards. Colorio says Common Core standards are of lower quality than the state’s previous standards.

 “[Common Core] cuts classic literature, poetry, and drama in the Bay State by 60 percent,” Colorio said. “Since Massachusetts began to implement Common Core in our schools between 2011 and 2013 on NAEP fourth-grade reading, [which is] the strongest predictor of future academic achievement, though still number one in the country, we’ve dropped five [percentage] points, the largest drop in the country.”

Colorio says state control of standards is important.

“The U.S. Constitution leaves K–12 education to the states, not the federal government,” Colorio said.

Vivian Hughbanks (hughbanks.vivian@gmail.com) writes from Hillsdale, Michigan.
Milwaukee Mentoring Program Benefits Students—and Counselors

By Heather Kays

The Summit Educational Association (SEA) mentoring program, which recently celebrated its 25th year, has helped thousands of students, but the counselors say they feel they’ve gained as much as the students they mentor.

SEA is a nonprofit corporation located in the heart of Milwaukee’s Hispanic community and works with urban families. The goal of SEA is to help students academically while it helps to build character through mentoring, tutoring, and recreational activities.

Lupe Serna, an 18-year-old counselor at Summit, plans to study education at Marquette University. She attended Summit herself from 3rd through 8th grades and was a junior counselor at Summit before becoming a counselor this year.

“As a counselor, you go through all the lesson planning, you think about each girl individually, and you really try to help them all to reach their goals,” said Serna. “I love Summit. That’s why I keep coming back. I really love that they give you the attention that you deserve.”

Finding Positive Role Models

Counselor Nashali De Leon, 18, says she discovered a deep desire to help others through the counseling she has done at SEA. She plans to attend the University of Wisconsin in Madison and study communications and speech pathology.

“When I was growing up, I didn’t have a lot of very positive role models,” De Leon said. “I know from experience how looking up to the wrong people can have a negative effect.

“I wanted to be that person that could help that, that could give them a good example to follow.

“A lot of these kids, I ask, ‘Who do you look up to?’ and most of the answers I get are people who aren’t a very positive influence,” De Leon said. “Miley Cyrus, Nicki Minaj. Working as a junior counselor made me realize I enjoyed working with children very much and the career path I wanted to go into would involve children. It made me realize I could be a good role model with children, [and] that I could actually show them how to work hard in school, how to be honest, [and] how to show respect.”

Former Mentees Become Mentors

Counselor Alondra Garcia, 18, intends to attend Cardinal Stritch University and major in elementary education and minor in psychology. Garcia attended SEA herself in the 6th and 8th grades.

“I have one girl on my team right now,” said Garcia. “She was a really shy girl, [and] she came in thinking she couldn’t make any friends,” said Garcia. “You don’t need to feel like that. Everyone accepts you for who you are here. I teach my team [not to] judge anyone. You don’t get to judge. She’s become so much more open. She’s grown so much.

“I like to see the kids’ eyes sparkle when they get an answer,” Garcia said. “I tell them to never underestimate someone. Never give up. Life is not easy; you just have to work for it. I’m just so grateful Summit has grown so much and turned into what it is today.”

Heather Kays (hkays@heartland.org) is a research fellow with The Heartland Institute and managing editor of School Reform News.
Book Offers Wide Range of Reasons to Dislike Common Core Standards

By Jay Lehr

If you want to learn all there is to know about Common Core State Standards and their impact on our children’s education, there is no better place to turn than this book, which features 19 essays by a variety of authors who have been intimately involved with this horrendous program.

Essayists include parents, academics, psychologists, psychotherapists, politicians, and teachers.

This book provides an outstanding collection of heartfelt expertise decrying the disaster that is Common Core. The book provides myriad evidence Common Core ruins mathematics and that reading and literature instruction plans suffer from an attempt to make most readings relevant to modern society, rather than focusing on the great, widely acclaimed literary giants of the past.

Nothing is more riveting than the history of how this terrible program took root, and Common Ground on Common Core does an excellent job of summarizing the most important historical developments and interesting facts about Common Core. For instance, one author explains no single state legislature voted on Common Core prior to the K–12 math and English standards being adopted. It is clear that at both the state and federal level, the people had no voice, which is supposed to come through elected representatives, in the decision to accept Common Core.

Standardizing, Centralizing, Homogenizing

Christopher Tienken, an assistant professor of education at Seton Hall University, makes a brilliant case in his essay, stating implementation of policies and programs that attempt to standardize, centralize, and homogenize public education are entirely misguided.

Tienken focuses on how Common Core stifles creativity, and he shows why national standards are necessary for success by pointing to the United States’ long-standing leadership in science. Tienken says bibliographies in scientific journals include five times more references of U.S. scientists compared to German scientists, and there are 10 times more U.S. references than Chinese citations.

Sandra Stotsky, emerita professor of education at the University of Arkansas, profiles the amazingly unqualified people who created Common Core and the total lack of validation performed by third-party participants. Stotsky concludes the standards are not rigorous and will not make students competitive. She says Common Core inappropriately stresses writing over reading, and educational research supports none of Common Core’s approaches.

James Milgram, emeritus professor of mathematics at Stanford University, and Ze’ev Wurman, a visiting scholar at the Hoover Institution, show despite its professed goal to improve American competitiveness, Common Core aimed from the beginning to redefine college readiness standards so that they would be much lower compared to where accurate college readiness standards need to be.

In just two sentences, William Estrada, a lawyer with the Home School Legal Defense Association, nails the extent of the problems with Common Core: “The imposition of fixed standards and curricula are only the first blows to individualized education. ... True individualized education comes from a teacher identifying a child’s strengths and weaknesses and helping him or her to learn in light of those attributes and circumstances.”

Jane Robbins, an attorney and senior fellow with The American Principles Project, demonstrates Common Core creates a national database in which student privacy will no longer exist.

Common Ground on Common Core: Voices from across the Political Spectrum Expose the Realities of the Common Core State Standards

Kirsten Lombard, ed., 436 Pages

Resounding Books, 2014, $25.00 on Amazon.

Poor Outcomes, Opting Out

S. Wharton, with advanced degrees in education and counseling from Northeastern University, offers a heartfelt story of how her 11-year-old daughter and kindergarten-age son received poor outcomes at the hands of Common Core. She explains in detail how the “constructivist” teaching techniques that are embedded in Common Core fail to provide quality outcomes for the students unfortunate enough to be subjected to them.

A national movement of parents opting their children out of standardized tests has erupted as an unintended consequence of Common Core. Opt-out forms are now flooding schools across the United States, as explained by Karen Lamoreaux in her essay. Lamoreaux is a small business owner in Maumelle, Arkansas, whose testimony before the Arkansas Board of Education went viral when someone posted a video of her arguments before the board in December 2013.

In her essay, titled “Common Core and America’s People of Color,” Ceresta Smith, a schoolteacher for 26 years, makes it clear the standards were never properly vetted. Smith also says they violate state and federal laws, are developmentally inappropriate, neglect special-needs and lower-income students, and will negatively affect many teachers’ careers.

System vs. Individuality

In the final essay, Marsha Enright, who holds a master’s degree in psychology from Northwestern University, explains the right way to operate a public education system is by relying on clarity and simplicity. Enright says the focus should be on teaching children how to arrive at truth, discerning multiple ways to approach problems, discovering their individual interests, understanding how to learn new material, and learning to collaborate with others.

Enright’s plan is supported by professor Charles Glenn of Boston University, who is quoted eloquently saying, "How can the pluralism that we claim to value, the liberty that we prize, be reconciled with a ‘state pedagogy’ designed to serve state purposes?”

Jay Lehr, Ph.D. (jlehr@heartland.org) is science director at The Heartland Institute.
As Urbanites Take Up Homeschooling, Diversity Rises

By Larry Sand

According to the latest data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the number of U.S. K–12 children educated at home increased from 1.09 million in 2003 to 1.77 million in 2012, now constituting 3.4 percent of the nation’s school population.

The National Home Education Research Institute puts the number at 2.2 million, nearly 4 percent of all K–12 students.

As the growth in homeschooling continues, the ethnic and cultural diversity among families choosing to homeschool is also increasing.

Increasingly Urban
City Journal Associate Editor Matthew Hennessey, a homeschooling parent, says city-dwellers are teaching their kids at home in greater numbers because they are frustrated with traditional public schools. Citing NCES numbers, Hennessey says 28 percent of homeschoolers live in cities.

“That’s almost as many as live in suburbs [about 34 percent] or rural areas [roughly 31 percent],” Hennessey wrote. “Boston, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles are home to swelling communities of homeschoolers. And in the nation’s largest city—New York—the number of homeschooled students has risen 47 percent, to more than 3,700 children, over the last five years.”

Dispelling Exclusivity Myth
The myth of homeschooling being the domain of the ultra rich, the very religious, and the very “weird” is less true today than ever. Mike Donnelly, attorney and director of international affairs at the Home School Legal Defense Association, says the 2012 National Household Education Survey of parents shows considerable diversity in the reasons families choose to homeschool.

According to the survey, “Ninety-one percent of parents cited concerns about the environment of public schools, 77 percent cited moral instruction, and 74 percent expressed concerns about the academic instruction. … 64 percent listed wanting to give their children religious instruction as a reason, followed by 44 percent saying they wanted their child to have a nontraditional form of education.”

When asked what the single most important reason for homeschooling was, “25 percent of parents said they were concerned about the environment of other schools; 22 percent said ‘other reasons’ [including family time, finances, travel, and distance], and 19 percent said they were dissatisfied with the academic instruction at other schools,” the survey reported.

Online Assistance
With some creative ideas, modern technology, and a solid support system, parents are finding it easier than ever to leave traditional schools, both public and private. Homeschool co-ops, where a group of parents get together and combine their talents to take the burden off individual moms and dads, have proliferated.

For subjects in which parents are not proficient, the Internet offers a whole new world of assistance. The online Khan Academy alone has produced more than 6,500 video lessons on a wide spectrum of subjects, mainly focusing on mathematics and science. As of April 1, 2015, the Khan Academy channel on YouTube had attracted 2,825,468 subscribers, and the videos were viewed more than 527 million times.

The Home School Legal Defense Association maintains a comprehensive website where parents can learn about their state’s homeschool law, find supplemental resources, exchange curricula, and access other useful information.

Larry Sand (lsand@sbcglobal.net) is a former classroom teacher and president of the California Teachers Empowerment Network.

LEARN MORE
Home School Legal Defense Association: http://www.hslda.org/
Khan Academy: https://www.khanacademy.org/

And Now, News from the Grinch ...

At its annual national convention, the National Education Association passed Resolution B-83 (exactly the same as 2011’s B-82, 2008’s B-75, etc.), which in part reads:

“The National Education Association believes that home schooling programs based on parental choice cannot provide the student with a comprehensive education experience. When home schooling occurs, students enrolled must meet all state curricular requirements, including the taking and passing of assessments to ensure adequate academic progress. Home schooling should be limited to the children of the immediate family, with all expenses being borne by the parents/guardians. Instruction should be by persons who are licensed by the appropriate state education licensure agency, and a curriculum approved by the state department of education should be used.” [Emphasis added.]

—Originally published in Union Watch, reprinted with permission.
African-American Parents Favor School Choice

By Lennie Jarratt

African-American parents overwhelmingly favor school choice, according to a new nationwide report by Brilliant Corners Research and Strategies (BCRS).

Seventy-eight percent of respondents in the report say they would support allowing parents to send their children to the school of their choice using state education tax dollars. Seventy-two percent favor public charter schools, and 70 percent favor a system that would create vouchers parents could use to cover tuition for those who want to enroll their children in a private or parochial school.

African-American parents overwhelmingly want school choice options to ensure their children receive access to a quality education, says Mendell Grinter, Tennessee state director for the Black Alliance for Educational Options.

“We’ve seen first-hand that when we empower parents to get engaged and explore all of the available education options in their communities, they universally select schools with the highest quality and strongest academic track records to unlock their child’s full potential,” said Grinter.

School choice does not enjoy universal support in black communities, especially where teachers unions exert influence.

James Thindwa, Midwest community engagement coordinator for the American Federation of Teachers, a powerful national teachers union, said, “The idea of choice is very seductive. The question is, do we really want a system that pushes an idea that has winners and losers?”

A greater proportion of African-American respondents in the BCRS survey say they support school choice compared to the proportion of parents who say they are concerned about teacher quality or funding. Nearly four in 10 say a lack of funding has prevented successful educational outcomes in their own community, and 33 percent say there is or has been a lack of quality teachers in local schools.

Low expectations for students and poor student behavior were cited by 34 percent of the respondents.

“When we set high academic standards for our young people, particularly those from underserved communities, they will often meet and exceed those standards. Parents are once again in the driver’s seat for their child’s education.”

MENDELL GRINTER
TENNESSEE STATE DIRECTOR
BLACK ALLIANCE FOR EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS

Support for Choice

Most African-American parents, 56 percent, agree parents should have a public charter option regardless of the effect on traditional public schools.

The survey item stated, “As a parent I should be able to decide which school my child attends. If a public charter school can give my child a better educational opportunity my child shouldn’t be prevented from enrolling just to prop up a failing public system.”

A second, related question revealed only 24 percent favor trying only to improve traditional public schools without giving parents charter options.

When asked to choose between a system that allows only public school choice options or a choice model that includes private schools, 56 percent preferred the latter. Just over one in four said they wanted to limit choice to public schools, strongly suggesting parents care more about obtaining access to a quality education than preserving the current system.

In many low-income areas, transportation is a problem for school choice systems. Survey participants were asked whether they would make sure their child attended a charter school regardless of transportation restraints. Forty-five percent of all respondents said they would. The figure rose to 59 percent for parents who already have children in charter schools.

Brilliant Corners Research and Strategies’ survey had a sample size of 621 and a margin of error of 4 percent. The respondents were all African-American, and neither they nor an immediate family member currently works in a public, private, or parochial school, nor did they homeschool their children. Household income was below $50,000 for 59 percent of the respondents, and 67 percent had not obtained a college bachelor’s degree.

Lennie Jarratt (ljarratt@heartland.org) is the project manager for school reform at The Heartland Institute. This story was first published by the Urban News Service.

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We know: that’s a big headline. But the impact of school choice is even bigger. And, thanks to you, National School Choice Week continues to grow every year. Don’t miss the celebration in 2016! Discover how your organization can reserve a box of supplies — completely free — and shine in the positive spotlight of National School Choice Week 2016! Visit SchoolChoiceWeek.com/MyMeeting to learn more.
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