



COVER STORY
THE SCHOOL CHOICE STRATEGY

Choice is picking up momentum throughout the country, and as the debate grows, advocates need to be willing to ask some tough questions.

A VOUCHER BY ANY OTHER NAME

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Volume 9, Issue 1

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THE SCHOOL CHOICE ADVOCATE
is published by the Milton and Rose D. Friedman Foundation, a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation classified under section 501(c)(3) of the IRS code.

Robert C. Enlow, Managing Editor
Robert Fanger, Writer/Editor/Designer

The School Choice Strategy



As the movement matures, we as a whole need to examine strategies and tactics.

BY GORDON ST. ANGELO

In 1974, I met the Friedmans for the first time, and it sparked a lifelong friendship. Little did I know at the time that this meeting would lead to the formation of a group dedicated to transforming education in America.

It was 1996 when the Friedmans approached me about starting the Foundation.

Trust me, this was an amazing honor. And as we prepare to celebrate our 10th anniversary later this year, I'm still struck by the Foundation's ability to focus intently on one single issue. There are many subjects in the Friedman repertoire - free markets, capitalism, freedom, monetary policy, and the list goes on. The concentration of the Foundation could have been on any number of these issues.

But, the Friedmans chose education.

To this day, my staff and I still receive questions as to why our focus is solely on education. While Dr. Friedman did pen the school voucher idea in 1955, he had moved to the economic forefront for other reasons such as his work in the fields of consumption analysis and monetary history and growth, which earned him the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences in 1976.

The answer is simple.

The Friedmans explain that many, if not all, of the problems in our society can be traced back to our education system. When Dr. Friedman published the school voucher idea more than 50 years ago, it wasn't because there was a perceived deficiency in education. Schools were not failing like today. Dropouts were not occurring at a rampant rate. Funding was not at record highs, with performance at record lows.

No, in 1955 the government-run monopoly was doing okay. But, Dr. Friedman knew if the government subsidized the producer and not the consumer, inefficiency would follow.

These inefficiencies would eventually lead to the weakening of America's education,

which the Friedmans' view as the foundation of a free society. Without a strong base of intellect, the success and prospect of our country suffers.

The Foundation has worked hard with numerous local partners and groups all over the country to try and bring the free-market to education. And we are finding success.

Before the Foundation began in 1996, there were only five programs in existence, which includes the Maine and Vermont tuitioning started in the 1800s. Now, 10 years later we have 18 programs and expect the 19th to be added within the next few weeks.

And being the Foundation's 10th anniversary, we felt it would be fitting for a discussion of the strategy of the school choice movement.

To jump start the conversation, this issue features a piece by Robert C. Enlow, Executive Director of the Foundation, examining the general fear of using the term "voucher." In addition, Andrew Coulson of the Cato Institute and many other authors, explore whether or not the school choice movement knows when to say no - can we walk away from bad legislation?

We'll be asking other authors to explore the movement strategy in our other issues throughout the year. But as always, we want this to be an open discussion and ask that you send your comments or letters to Robert Fanger, our communications director, at Robert@friedmanfoundation.org.

Much change has happened during the last ten years within our American culture. Technologies that were foreign to us then are an integral part of our existence now. Dinner table conversation often drifts to matters of national security and foreign policy. Students enter classrooms through metal detectors. Despite this change, one thing remains the same. Education is the answer.



Senior fellow spurs national debate over

Friedman Foundation Senior Fellow Greg Forster made big news in education research circles this spring when he published an expose on the questionable empirical methods of Jack Jennings and his organization, the Center on Education Policy. For years the media have portrayed Jennings and CEP as “nonpartisan” and “independent,” when in fact they use unscientific methods that guarantee results favorable to the public school monopoly system. Forster documented Jennings’ shoddy science in an article for the academic journal Education Next.

“There is room for legitimate discussion on the limits of the existing research, but to describe the research as ‘inconclusive’ is a gross misrepresentation.”

News stories in the Los Angeles Times, Education Week and other papers covering the release of CEP research quoted Forster’s critique of CEP. The clash between Forster and Jennings was prominently featured in the Washington Post as part of a full-page education spread. Post columnist Jay Matthews wrote that “Greg Forster, a senior fellow at the Milton and Rose D. Friedman Foundation, has attacked Jennings and his center, and

become the talk of the education think tanks.” From now on, whenever Jennings and CEP push doctored research that is really little more than public school propaganda, the media will have to acknowledge the Friedman Foundation’s critique of his methods. That’s a big win for good science over junk science – and since good science has consistently supported school choice, it’s a big win for kids and parents, too. An excerpt from Forster’s article:

The trouble with [CEP’s] studies is that they do not gather data about the issues they purport to examine....To examine [NCLB] implementation the CEP relies exclusively on surveys of state education officials and interviews with public school staff. In other words, CEP researchers report as facts what the public school system says about how things are going in the public school system....What the CEP does when it studies NCLB implementation is barely distinguishable from public relations work. It ascertains the public schools’ party line and then broadcasts it as fact....These studies’ factual claims and policy recommendations, which are their main purpose, have no scientific basis. They should be taken for what they are: the public school system’s party line, not valid empirical research....

CEP’s take on school choice is as compromised as its views on other hot-button education issues. It does not produce a big annual study on school choice, but early in the debate it released a review of the existing research....The

group’s politics, research

review found the evidence on vouchers to be “inconclusive,” a result achieved only by throwing out all research on privately funded voucher programs, then declaring that the rest of the research produced “varying findings.” In fact, there have been seven scientifically valid random-assignment analyses of voucher programs, and all seven found either that all voucher students perform significantly better than their nonvoucher contemporaries, or at least that most of them do (in some studies the results for black students, the majority of participants, are positive, while the results for other students fail to achieve statistical significance). There is room for legitimate discussion on the limits of the existing research on vouchers, but to describe the research as “inconclusive” is a gross misrepresentation....

If Jack Jennings and the Center on Education Policy want to publish their opinions and call them “research,” that’s their right. But social scientists, commentators, and journalists have a responsibility to distinguish between unfounded opinions and serious empirical research and to warn people when a study doesn’t adhere to scientific standards. ■

Education Next Summer Issue

Donkey in Disguise
Jack Jennings and the Center on Education Policy

Read the full article by Friedman Foundation Senior Fellow Greg Forster at www.educationnext.org.

Foundation expands staff, adds new member to communications team

Ashlee Wilson joined the Friedman Foundation in April 2006 as a communications associate. In this position she will undertake the production of the Foundation’s research, publications and state marketing materials.

Her previous communications and publications experience include internships with the *Indianapolis Business Journal* and Sage Marketing Communications. Additionally, she served as the Head Women’s Counselor for the Indiana High School Journalism Institute summer program at Indiana University, and has also taught workshops on design at Ball State University’s Journalism Day.

Wilson is a graduate of the Indiana University School of Journalism, with a bachelor of arts degree in journalism and political science. She also earned a master’s degree in secondary education from Indiana University in 2006. ■



Foundation awards

BY BRIAN McGRATH

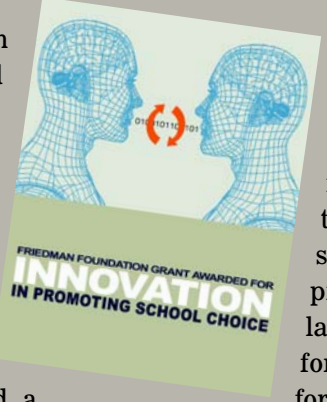
As the fight for school choice moves to more and more states, innovative programs are making their way from the back of cocktail napkins to the pages of think tank position papers and studies, and even into the hallowed halls of state legislatures. That is the spirit and pathway of new ideas, and it is embodied by the Maryland Public Policy Institute’s proposal for *Vouchers for Children in Foster Care*, the 2006 winner of the Milton and Rose D. Friedman Foundation Grant Awarded for Innovation in the Promotion of School Choice.

Sponsored by the Foundation in collaboration with the State Policy Net-

second annual Innovation grant

work, the Innovation Grant was designed to encourage school choice advocates to think outside the box for ways to promote educational freedom. This year, ten organizations submitted proposals, which included a wide variety of ways to make the case for school choice.

“We are truly honored to be the recipient of this award. It will be very helpful in our efforts at promoting and bringing school choice to Maryland,” said Christopher Summers, president of MPPI.



MPPI’s proposal to provide the state’s 11,500 children in foster care, which will create the opportunity to talk about the merits of choice, was deemed the best by the Innovation Grant selection committee, both for its practical implications in Maryland and around the country, and for its intention to build new allies for school choice.

“Now that school choice is more mainstream, we need to keep pushing ourselves to come up with new ways to make our case. That is what the Innovation Grant is all about,” said Robert Enlow, Executive Director of the Foundation. ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

New edition of the ABCs of School Choice available

The 2005-06 edition of the *ABCs of School Choice* is available to anyone looking for a one-stop resources on school choice. The ABCs includes information on school choice programs around the country as well as answers to many FAQs on choice. To request your free copy, simply call 317-681-0745 or e-mail the Foundation at mandy@friedmanfoundation.org.



Partners bring in Walden-Ford to meet families



Foundation partners in Indiana, Missouri and Iowa worked with the Institute for Justice to bring school choice activist

Virginia Walden-Ford to their states to discuss with parents how they can take an active role in the fight for school choice.

Foundation runs radio ads on New Hampshire debate

As legislators discussed a school choice bill in the Granite State, the Foundation ran over 160 radio ads in one week informing the public about the benefits of school choice. The broadcast campaign was supplemented by targeted print ads and a strategic earned media campaign.





Battle for school choice heats up in Iowa

►►► Scholarship tax credit bill advances through House, awaits Senate debate.

This year has proven to be yet another busy year for Iowans who are working to increase educational options for families in the state. Not only does school choice legislation continue to be debated in the statehouse, but a new organization has been established to represent the voices of parents in the school choice discussion.

In 2006, a bill that would create a scholarship tax credit program for individual contributions to scholarship

organizations was waiting to be heard in a Senate committee. The bill had already made its way through the Iowa House during the 2005 session and was carried over into the short session this year. However, with an even 25-25 split in

the state Senate, much of the action on any legislation has been left to negotiations among the leadership in the final days of the session.

“We are so thankful that legislators on both sides of the aisle understand the importance of expanded educational options for families in Iowa,” said Sara Eide, Executive Director of the Iowa Catholic Conference, an organization

that has worked tirelessly to promote and expand school choice. “We hope that 2006 will make choice a greater reality in Iowa.”

In addition to the legislative activity, a new organization has formed to show the great need for expanded educational options among parents in the state. The Iowa Alliance for Choices in Education, or Iowa ACE, seeks to support the educational needs of all Iowa families, regardless of where their children attend school. Founded in late 2005, Iowa ACE represents nearly 30,000 parents and other community members from across the state and will serve as their voice in this fight for expanded educational options.

“Iowa parents have always wanted more educational opportunities,” said Jeff Courter, President of the Iowa ACE Parent Advisory Council, “Iowa ACE just serves as the vehicle to make their voices heard.”

Educational choice is not new to Iowans, but the discussion about the need for more options is certainly growing. Since 1987, Iowa has had a small individual tax credit program giving a family a maximum credit of \$250 for educational expenses whether they are in a public or private school. While this is helpful start for families exercising choice, there is certainly a need for more options.

In 2004, the Iowa General Assembly responded to this need by passing a scholarship tax credit bill out of both houses. Despite the strong bi-partisan support in the legislature, Democratic Governor Tom Vilsack vetoed the bill, prompting the renewed efforts in 2005 and 2006. ■

Indiana teacher’s union files lawsuit, state explores reform options

With student performance lagging, and a recent report showing that more people leave the state for better opportunities elsewhere, Hoosiers are exploring two very different ways to improve K-12 education.

One is school choice, which has been gaining more and more attention in the state as various proposals have moved through the Statehouse in recent years. A new partnership of local and national individuals and organizations, School Choice Indiana, is currently forming to educate the public and

policymakers on the need for more educational options for Hoosier families, and the success that other programs around the country are having.

The other approach follows status quo logic. On April 19, the Indiana State Teachers Association announced plans to file a lawsuit that would demand the state spend more money on disadvantaged children, including students who are from low-income families, are disabled, are learning English as a second language or otherwise tend to have low standardized test scores.

The lawsuit claims the state does not spend enough money, even though according to the *Indianapolis Star*, education spending has increased 69% in the last decade and makes up the largest share of state expenditures.

As expected, the lawsuit offers no specific amount that it cost to educate children, and the union admits it does not know how much more money would be needed to boost test scores. The union has set aside \$2 million dollars of its members’ money for the lawsuit. ■

Support for choice takes new direction in North Carolina

North Carolina has long enjoyed some strong leaders in the school choice movement. Legislators such as Reps. Skip Stam and Curtis Blackwood and Sen. Eddie Goodall, have worked hard to support efforts to allow North Carolina parents the opportunity to choose a school that best meets their children’s needs.

In 2005, these legislators introduced several bills either proposing a tax credit scholarship or a voucher program to expand educational opportunities for families.

Organizations such as the North Carolina Education Alliance (NCEA) have also been leading the charge to spread news about school choice. NCEA has produced research and information on the benefits of school choice from programs across the country, and the potential impact of choice on North Carolina.

But a new organization is poised to move the discussion beyond the legislature and the research. Parents for Educational Freedom in North Carolina is working to connect parents, educators, and other community leaders with one another to build awareness of the benefits of school choice.

“We are traveling the state, working to bring a different perspective to this discussion and broaden support for educational choice across all lines,” said Darrell Allison, President of PEFNC. “We want to involve parents, educators, the clergy and other community leaders in the discussion about parental school choice. They know what their children need most.”

Founded in 2005, PEFNC seeks to inform parents about the benefits of expanded educational options and empower them to exercise the freedom to best meet their children’s needs. ■

QUICK STOPS



1 New York joins the school choice fight

After being voted down, Gov. George Pataki’s proposal to give parents in low-performing districts tax credits for educational expenses may have new life. Pataki may use the legislature’s property tax credits as leverage to get the votes for his proposal.

2 Florida moves to make choice constitutional

Gov. Bush has asked the legislature to put a constitutional amendment on the ballot this fall to provide a remedy to the State Supreme Court’s ruling earlier this year. The ruling was based on the Florida definition of a “uniform” education system.

3 South Carolina group goes to Milwaukee

The South Carolina Center for Grassroots and Community Alternatives took 15 members to Milwaukee to see choice in action. Sponsored by the Friedman Foundation, the trip allowed the activists to tour schools, meet with community leaders and leave armed with facts and experience to be better advocates.

4 North Carolina group visits Pennsylvania

Philadelphia played host to school choice leaders from North Carolina, showing off an often overlooked scholarship tax credit program. The tour was sponsored by the Friedman Foundation and coordinated by the Harrisburg-based REACH Alliance.

5 Arizona seeks to empower foster care

The Arizona House passed a bill that would allow children in foster care to receive education grants to attend private schools. The program would provide grants worth up to \$5,000 to the first 500 applicants each year.

6 Virginia considers special needs bill

The Virginia legislature pushed a bill that would have allowed special needs children to receive scholarships to attend a school of choice. While defeated in the Senate, the bill’s sponsors vow to bring the proposal back in the near future.



A VOUCHER BY ANY OTHER NAME

BY ROBERT C. ENLOW

A debate is brewing within the school choice movement about the terminology that we all use; Enlow examines whether a greater discussion is necessary

In July of 1776, with the British gathering an enormous invasion force to crush Washington's outgunned and outnumbered troops in New York City, Thomas Jefferson and John Adams took time out from the struggle for independence to have an argument over whether the Declaration of Independence should describe the rights of humanity as "unalienable" or "inalienable."

Looking back, it's easy for us to laugh at the thought of these two great men turning aside from such urgent matters as the Battle of New York to bicker over the difference between "unalienable" and "inalienable." Seems silly, doesn't it? But we shouldn't laugh too loudly, because the same type of myopic debate over terminology plagues the school choice movement.

Opponents of school choice work wonders among policymakers and the public by invoking magic phrases like "drains money" and "inconclusive results" and "we take all comers." They frustrate us constantly by throwing out a short but powerful little phrase that it takes us at least 100 words to refute.

How is it that two words like "drains money" can evoke such irrational fear of school choice? People don't normally worry that their decision to get treated at St. Luke's Hospital will lead to worse patient care over at St. Vincent's Hospital because it "drains money" from St. Vincent's budget.

These fear phrases work because of the mystique that has grown up around government-run schools. The public believes in what Charles Glenn calls "the myth of the common school." They believe that a government monopoly on schooling is the best way to raise children as good democratic citizens who believe in the principles of freedom and are tolerant of differences in others.

This mystique is flatly false. It is certainly true that the goal of the common school movement was to inculcate democratic values, but this laudable goal has been subverted by what has become a destructive government school monopoly. Moreover, there's a good-sized body of social science work showing that children in private schools have stronger civic values than children in public schools. Private school kids are more likely than public school kids to favor the same political rights for people they don't like as for people they do like. Private schools make more freedom-loving citizens than public schools do.

You see what I just did? When faced with a phony mystique, I refuted it

with arguments and evidence. That's really the only way to refute a mystique. If we want to fight the establishment's lies, we are just going to have to accept that it takes longer to make our arguments – you can't do it in just two words. We shouldn't worry about being long-winded, because it is very effective in the long run. Our opponents' cause is intellectually bankrupt, and once you refute their magic phrases they have nothing substantial left to say.

What we should be worried about is not how we are reacting to our opponents' phrases but the real difficulties we are having in creating powerful phrases of our own, and how the school choice movement is handling our own amicable dispute over terminology.

Many good people in the movement are convinced that the only way to defeat the education blob is to avoid the term "vouchers" at all costs. They're concerned that this word has too many negative connotations, so they advocate other terms: "opportunity scholarships," "educational choice scholarships," "education tax credits," "scholarship tax credits," "student tuitioning organizations," and so on. Others think that school choice is already firmly associated in the public's mind with the word "voucher," so we should embrace the term because it makes people suspicious if we avoid it. Still others believe that we should use polling to find the most acceptable, and thus right, terminology to describe school choice.

It strikes me that these disputes are basically a modern version of the myopic argument over whether "unalienable" is better than "inalienable." While the enemy gathers his forces near New York Harbor, we distract ourselves from the task at hand: winning the school choice war.

Our opponents' phrases don't work so well because they discuss technical aspects of public schooling, i.e. class size, funding formulas, etc. They work because they tap into values that the public holds dear, such as security, stability and community solidarity. They reaffirm these values constantly, which in turn reinforces the mystique of government schools.

Unfortunately, the terminological disputes among supporters of educational freedom are more about the technical side of school choice – vouchers versus tax credits – rather than the values of the movement, such as parental

pride, concern for future generations, freedom and peace of mind.

I don't mean to slight anyone here. We're all on the same team. There's no question that everyone involved in these disputes is serious about winning the fight to expand educational freedom, just as Jefferson and Adams were both serious about winning the fight for independence. But that doesn't mean their dispute over prefixes wasn't a distraction from their real problems.

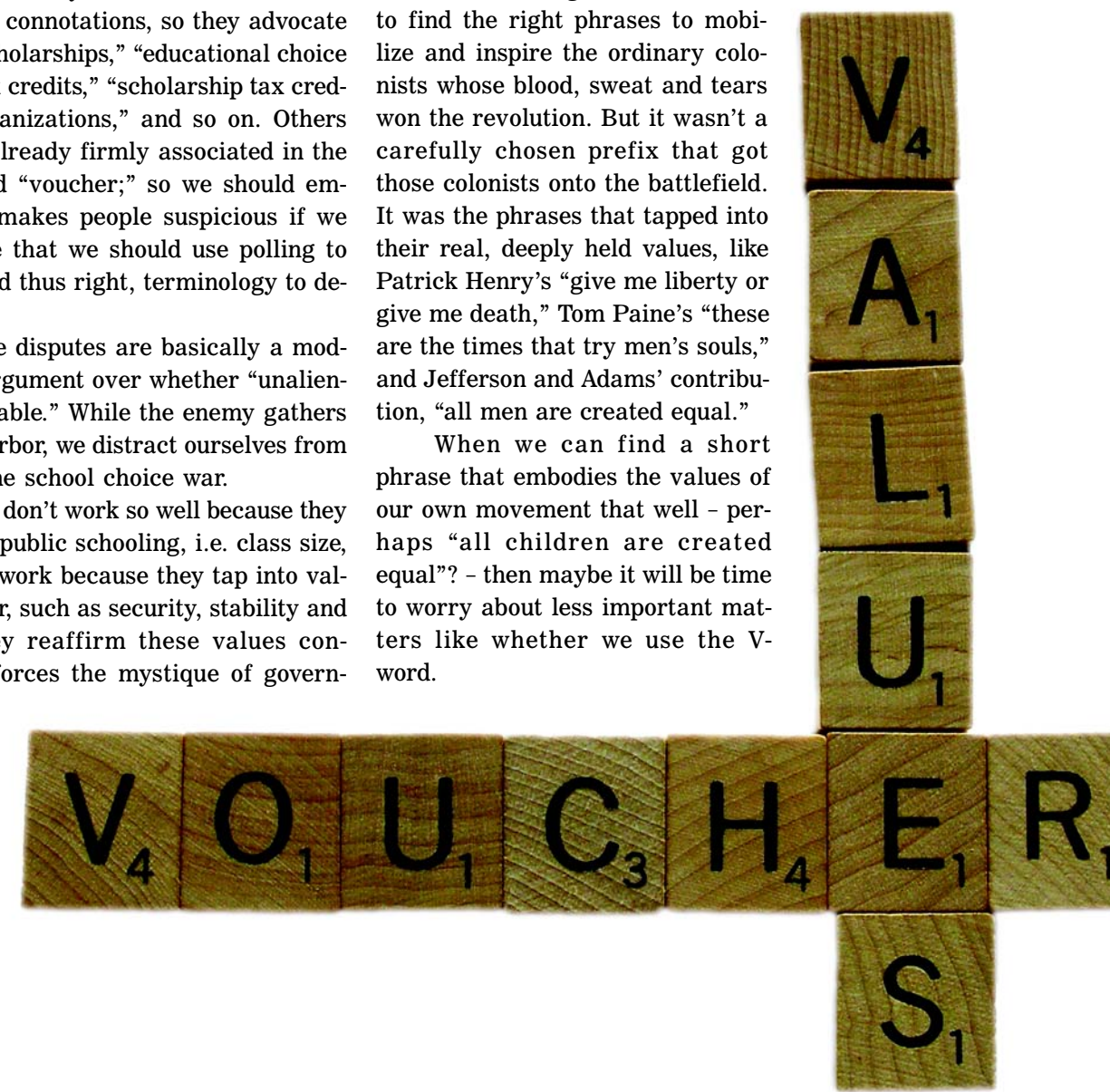
The school choice movement should actively be looking to develop phrases that really reflect the values of our movement. It's simply not enough that the arguments and the evidence support school choice. Those arguments

and evidence need to be communicated to people in ways they will easily understand and act on, and that will tap into the values that they hold dear.

The founding fathers did have to find the right phrases to mobilize and inspire the ordinary colonists whose blood, sweat and tears won the revolution. But it wasn't a carefully chosen prefix that got those colonists onto the battlefield. It was the phrases that tapped into their real, deeply held values, like Patrick Henry's "give me liberty or give me death," Tom Paine's "these are the times that try men's souls," and Jefferson and Adams' contribution, "all men are created equal."

When we can find a short phrase that embodies the values of our own movement that well – perhaps "all children are created equal"? – then maybe it will be time to worry about less important matters like whether we use the V-word.

“How is it that two words like ‘drains money’ can evoke such irrational fear of school choice?”



IS EVERY "CHOICE" A GOOD ONE



ANDREW J. COULSON, CATO INSTITUTE; MATTHEW BROUILLETTE, COMMONWEALTH FOUNDATION; JOSEPH LEHMAN, MACKINAC CENTER; MYRON LIEBERMAN, EDUCATION POLICY INSTITUTE; NEAL MCCLUSKEY, CATO INSTITUTE; JOHN MERRIFIELD, UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS, SAN ANTONIO; RYAN OLSON, MACKINAC CENTER; HERBERT WALBERG, HOOVER INSTITUTION; AND BOB WILLIAMS, EVERGREEN FREEDOM FOUNDATION

If NEA president Reg Weaver walked up to you and said: “Have I got a school voucher plan for YOU! Care to endorse it?” would you want to take a look at it before offering your approval?

This is a hypothetical (and unlikely) scenario, but you see the point. It’s possible to slap the “school choice” (or “voucher,” or “tax credit”) label on pretty much any policy imaginable. As a result, we can all envisage “choice” plans that we’d be reluctant to champion.

This hypothetical raises some very practical and very important questions: If there are choice plans that would do more harm than good, which ones are they? How can we tell the good from the great, and the so-so from the awful. To some extent, this is unavoidable. The legislative process is lubricated by compromise, and there is currently no state in the nation where a free market education policy could be enacted without a whole lot of lubricant. We cannot allow the best to become the enemy of the good, pulling the plug on reforms that, while short of ideal, at least move us in the right direction.

But is every “school choice” policy currently in existence and on the drawing board necessarily a step forward, or could leave us worse off than when we started?

In principle at least, it is possible that a policy could have beneficial effects in the short run but give rise to undesirable side effects in the long-run. It’s also possible that a weak program incapable of producing significant positive re-

sults could actually hurt the prospects for passing better policies, through guilt by association.

To reduce the risk of such Pyrrhic legislative victories, we feel that the following questions have to be asked. We do not all have positions on every one of these questions, and the positions we do hold are not always in agreement. What we share is a deep concern that these issues be given the attention they deserve.

With those thoughts in mind:

Will small, particularly sparse, programs make it harder to pass big ones?

The effectiveness of markets depends on their size and concentration. The more prospective customers there are, the more entrepreneurs will be willing to enter the field (provided that profit-making is permitted), and the more competitors there are, the more specialization can be supported. Hence, size matters.

At least as important as market size is market concentration. Fifty schools 100 miles apart will not generate as much competition, and hence efficiency, as the same number just 10 miles apart.

So, if small programs that scatter students widely around a state are unlikely to create substantial market forces, will they give the false impression that genuine market reforms would also be ineffective?

What regulations should be considered drop-dead conditions?

One of the cornerstones of a free market is the ability of providers to specialize to serve different clienteles. As a result, any policy requiring private schools to follow state curriculum guidelines would arguably kill the prospects for creating a true educational marketplace. Should this be considered a deal breaker?

The imposition of mandatory high-stakes testing on private schools has a similar effect, because such tests drive the curriculum and hence would also curtail specialization and the division of labor. Same question.

Also crucial to effective markets is the ability of employers to hire the best people they can find. Therefore, any mandate that private schools hire state-certified teachers is exceedingly problematic. Of course some states already require this of their private schools even in the absence of a school choice program, which makes matters more difficult. Should such restrictions be deemed unacceptable?

What about compulsory collective bargaining for schools of choice?

Will charter schools enlarge the existing government monopoly in the long run?

We know this is a delicate question, but our own history demands that it be asked. A close historical analogue to a modern charter school is a conventional U.S. public school of the mid-to-late eighteen-hundreds. In fact, early public schools had greater local control and autonomy than most charters do today.

Look what has become of them.

The natural pattern for public schools has been relentlessly increasing centralization and regulation. Is there any reason to think that charter schools, or any public school choice variation, will escape that fate?

Many private schools are opting to convert to charter schools as a way of alleviating financial pressures, so the eventual result could be a nearly universal government monopoly that is as heavily regulated as are public schools today. Is that a tolerable risk?

Can the risk of this scenario be abated by coupling charter school programs with stronger market education reforms that include private schools (and that preserve their autonomy)?

How important is direct payment of tuition by parents?

Historically and internationally, schools paid for by the state tend to look like state schools. This can be observed from India and Indonesia to the Netherlands. One large scale statistical study finds that school efficiency (measured in terms of test score points per dollar spent) is positively and significantly related to the share of funding coming directly from parental fees.

The Dutch, who have had a nationwide voucher program since 1917, are toying with creating what we would call charter schools. The reason is that their vouchers now come with such a heavy burden of regulation (everything from teachers’ salaries to the curriculum is set by the state) that the opportunity for specialization and innovation has all but vanished.

Is there any way to defend government-funded private schools from regulatory encroachment? Alternately, are there ways of ensuring universal access to the education marketplace without spending government funds? Would that really help?

What is the cost, in social conflict and litigation, of compulsory tax-funded schooling (of any system that compels taxpayers to support schools that may violate their convictions)? What are the alternatives?

What is the proper role of the federal government in education?

The Constitution mentions neither the word “education” nor the word “school,” and hence reserves, by the 10th Amendment, power over education to the people and their state representatives. Does that matter? Should we advocate/

condone/tolerate federal choice programs anyway?

Entirely apart from the Constitutional concern, what about the risks of centralized educational power? Under our (still largely) federalist system, any state that thoroughly botches its own education system is likely to drive families and businesses to other states, creating an important check against excessive and harmful government interventions. That check would disappear under a national school choice program. Remember the degree of central control in the Netherlands. Is this a risk worth taking, or something to be avoided?

These are hard questions. Even with a solid empirical foundation for our deliberations, we won’t necessarily all agree on every policy. But any effort that reduces our risk of driving the school choice bandwagon into a ditch will be worthwhile.

“If NEA President Reg Weaver walked up to you and said: ‘Have I got a school voucher plan for YOU! Care to endorse it?’ would you want to take a look at it before offering your approval.”

EXPANDING FREEDOM IN AZ

BY ROBERT FANGER

Jose Magana is one reason advocates refused to relent in the fight to expand school choice in Arizona. Following veto after veto from Gov. Janet Napolitano (D), legislators, activists and parents stuck to their demand for educational freedom.

Magana's story explains it all. He credits school choice with saving his life. It was the catalyst that took him from his struggles in a school with low test scores and high drop out rates to valedictorian at a Phoenix-based private school to his current full-ride scholarship at Arizona State University.

"I got lucky, I got a choice," Magana said referring to the scholarship he received through the school choice program funded by personal tax credits.

And it was this credit and successes like Magana that led to the push for a corporate version of the tax credit program.

In March of this year, Napolitano allowed a corporate tax credit bill to become law without her signature. The new program will provide scholarships worth up to \$4,200 for K-8 and \$5,500 for 9-12 to nearly 5,000 additional students. But the victory wasn't easy.

"School choice does not happen overnight," said Robert C. Enlow, executive director of the Friedman Foundation. "But the tenacity of parents, opinion makers and legislators makes it happen eventually."

Legislators had been debating the corporate tax credit program since the spring of 2005. When it passed both the House and Senate in the budget, the Republican leadership arranged a deal with the governor to allow more funding for several projects in exchange for her signature on the tax credit program. However, Napolitano nixed the school choice component (though she did allow the removal of a marriage penalty on the personal tax credit). Both sides cried foul.

After threats of a special session, legislators decided to make the corporate tax credit bill one of the first sent to Napolitano in the 2006 session.

Groups like the Foundation, Hispanic Council for Reform and Educational Options and the Alliance for School Choice continued the push to educate the public on the benefits of choice despite the resistance of the governor.

Magana became the focus of several Foundation-sponsored radio and print advertisements. In partnership with HCREO, several other advertisements featuring parents were published in or broadcast on many Hispanic media outlets.

However, when legislators sent the tax credit bill to the governor, again it was vetoed. Legislators then sent two other bills with the corporate tax credit attached up to the governor. Those were vetoed.

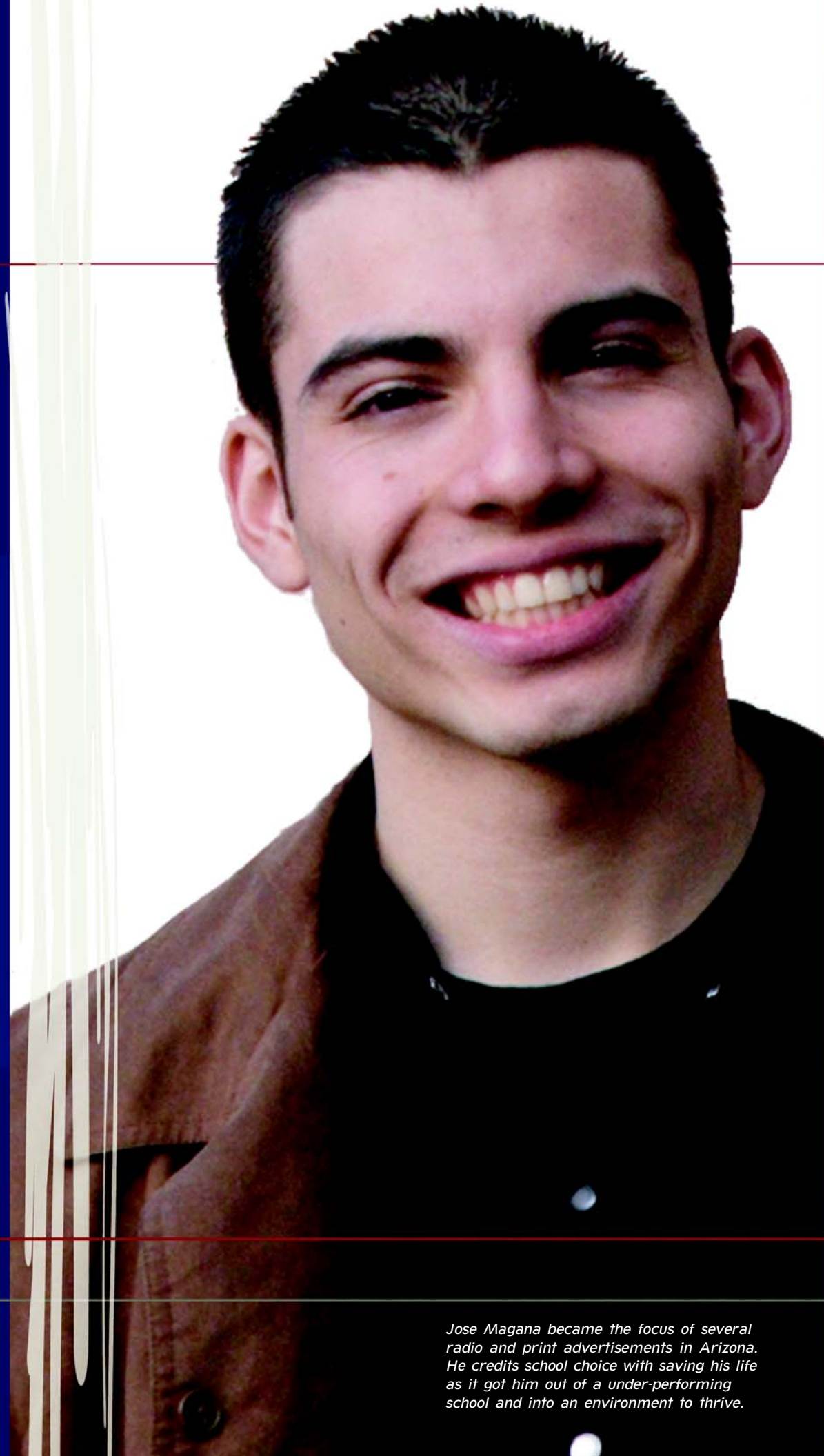
In between vetoes in the 2006 session, a poll conducted by SurveyUSA found that Latinos, a group that overwhelmingly supports school choice, had reduced their support of the governor by 21 percent.

"Thousands of Arizona Latino students have been trapped with no way out," said Rebeca Nieves Huffman, president and CEO of HCREO. "Decades of poor results and minority gaps have proved a one-size-fits-all approach to schools is not good for students."

The efforts of the national and local groups were reaching families. But all the media campaigns, advertisements, news articles and rallies are of no value if legislators aren't listening. In Arizona, the families were heard loud and clear.

"The dedication and leadership of Senate Majority Leader Ken Bennett and House Speaker Jim Weiers serves as an example not just in Arizona, but for the country," said Enlow. "Without their resolve and attention to empowering parents through choice, thousands of children would be forced to attend a school based solely on where they live and how much their parents earn."

Arizona has been one of the most active states, discussing numerous school choice options. And while the battles have been long, legislators, parents and advocates will know it was worth the effort as more students like Jose Magana prove the value of freedom. ■



The Arreaga family explained their desire for school choice in the joint advertising campaign the Foundation sponsored with HCREO.



THE CORPORATE TAX CREDIT PROGRAM

- \$5 million annual cap
- Scholarships worth up to \$4,200 for K-8 and \$5,500 for 9-12
- Families will have to be below 175 percent of poverty
- All STOs can participate in both Arizona programs
- There is a five-year sunset clause


This photo of several Arizona families was the centerpiece of an ad that ran in a Phoenix-based Hispanic newspaper.



Jose Magana became the focus of several radio and print advertisements in Arizona. He credits school choice with saving his life as it got him out of a under-performing school and into an environment to thrive.

TRIUMPH OVER ADVERSITY

BY BRIAN McGRATH



In a city marked by destruction and tragedy, a response is blooming because of private enterprise. While public schools are still struggling to get up and running, over 80 percent of the city's Catholic schools are working overtime to bring a sense of normalcy to New Orleans.

My first visit to New Orleans was in December of 2005, just three months after Hurricane Katrina delivered devastation to that city and the Gulf Coast. As I flew in over the city, blue tarps covered at least 25% of all the houses I saw, evidence of severe damage. I mentioned to my host how shocked I was to see so many homes relying on tarps to keep the weather out. She replied that a blue tarp was good; those were the houses that were being saved.

It is hard to get your head around the level of destruction. In places like Lakeside and the Ninth Ward, debris is still stacked high. "This must be what it is like in a war zone" is what I remember thinking. Street after street of abandoned neighborhoods. House after house uninhabitable. Water marks at the tops of many houses, and on each door, a series of cryptic markings; the date the home was searched, by whom, and the survivors, or fatalities, found.

Downtown, the city is remarkably quiet on this December night. There were a few party goers at night, but mostly construction guys and military police. Very little traffic made its way through the streets. All in all, there was a dark feeling about the place, a sense from people of just trying to get from one day to the next and hoping that one day things might get back to whatever would pass for normal.

On a return visit in April, a lighter mood fills the city. Maybe it is just spring and the sense of hope that comes with spring. But the airport is busier, downtown is busier, traffic is moving. Families are beginning to come back.

But coming back to what? Not the city, or the public schools, that they left.

Many would argue that the New Orleans public school system in its pre-hurricane form was not worth saving. Nearly all of the schools were in academic trouble. The Recovery School District (RSD) was created in 2003 to allow the state to take over failing schools and defined a "failing school" as a school labeled "academically unacceptable" for four consecutive years. Most New Orleans schools were in this category.

The failure of so many New Orleans schools was the rationale behind last year's voucher legislation, which passed the House with bi-partisan support before stalling in the Senate. The bill, sponsored by Rep. Tim Burns, would have given about 1,200 children in grades K-5 in Orleans Parish schools considered failing by the state a \$3,600 voucher to attend a private school of their choice.

Legislation passed during the November 2005 special session of the legislature expanded the definition of a "failed school" to include schools scoring below the state average that are in school systems declared to be in Academic Crisis, with at least one school labeled as failing for four or more years. Currently, only Orleans Parish falls into this category. A total of 107 schools in New Orleans have been placed in the Recovery School District, to be operated by the Louisiana Department of Education.

But the post-Katrina education needs of New Orleans children have taken on a whole different meaning. While creating good schools for children to attend is still the goal, they simply need schools to go to, and the hurricane has wiped out a lot of the infrastructure.

Prior to Katrina, Orleans Parish served around 65,000 students in 114 schools, according to Louisiana Department of Education enrollment figures taken in October of 2004. The city currently has 25 schools up and running, serving

around 11,000 students. Demographers are estimating that in at the start of the 2006-2007 school year, there may be as many as 30,000 to 33,000 students back in New Orleans. According to State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education member Leslie Jacobs, although there will be capacity for 34,000 students by the beginning of the 2006-07 school year, the state will staff schools to handle about 22,000 students by August. What will the other students do?

In the aftermath of Katrina, the US Congress passed legislation that provided displaced students with federal

vouchers to reimburse families who sent their children to private schools. But after much political bickering and the usual fears by the teachers unions and the public school establishment that this was just a scheme to get vouchers, the funds were only appropriated for the 2005-2006 school year. According to Congressional sources, there is little appetite to extend that money into future years, so children who are receiving reimbursement this school year to attend a school of choice will be sent back to whatever public school the state can come up with next year.

It seems essential, and maybe inevitable, that private educators will have to be a part of the New Orleans education solution. In fact, the Catholic schools have already stepped up.

"Katrina did not discriminate based on public and private schools", said Father William Maestri, Superintendent of Catholic schools in Orleans Parish, and a longtime leading voice for school choice in Louisiana.

"Katrina did not discriminate based on public and private schools."

Father William Maestri
Superintendent of Catholic schools in Orleans Parish

New Orleans continued...

While the wreckage was still being sifted through, Catholic schools were busy getting kids back in school. In the fall, they had already combined at least one high school and created two different "shifts," one morning and one afternoon, so that twice as many students could continue to attend school.

Pre-Katrina, there were around 50,000 students enrolled in Catholic schools in Orleans; there are currently 43,000 students back in Catholic schools. There were over 100 Catholic schools operating before Katrina; 83 have reopened their doors. And more schools could be opened and more students served, if only the political will existed to do the right thing for the children of New Orleans.

Father Maestri and the Diocese have offered to take in as many as 10,000 additional elementary and secondary students, and do it at a much lower cost. But they can only do that if the state is willing to help by offering direct financial assistance to the schools.

I was recently invited to participate in a meeting in New Orleans hosted by local business leader Joe Cannizaro, and attended by several national organizations, and on-the-ground leaders like Rep. Burns and Father Maestri. The overwhelming consensus of that group was that school choice was needed, but not to save children from failing schools, as had been the rationale in the past. School choice is needed to simply entice families to come

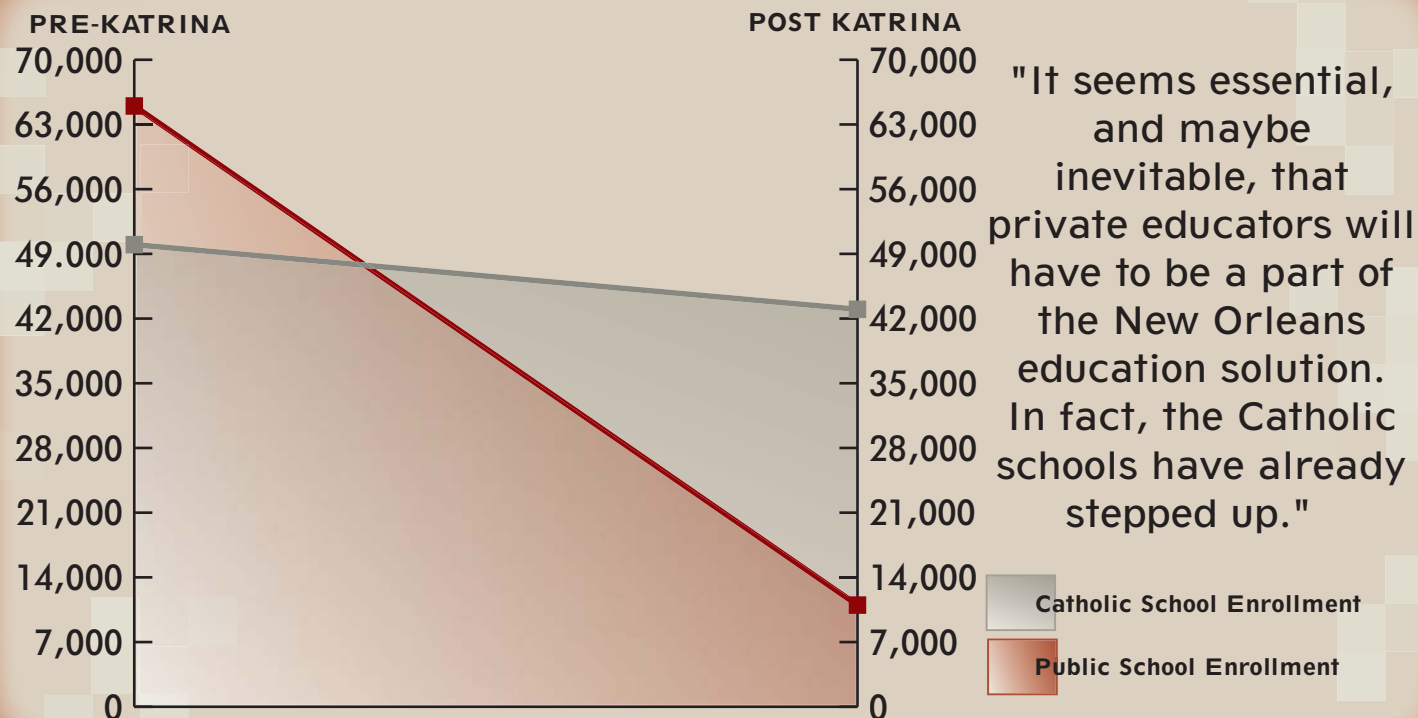
back and provide an education for the children of those who return to the city.

"With the New Orleans public school system devastated from the storms, providing education options to our children is more important than ever," said Rep. Burns, author of last year's New Orleans voucher legislation. "Had school choice passed last year, we would have been able to accommodate these deserving kids. In fact, the public system was unable to accommodate several thousand students who returned to the city and had no place to go for school."

As reconstruction continues, with federal, state and local authorities working to rebuild the basic systems of a community, school choice is a natural solution to the education problem facing the city. In fact, it could be argued that rebuilding the school system, a process that by necessity should include state-funded vouchers for children to attend private schools, is just as important as rebuilding the levees. Right now, too many children are not attending school and are losing out on vital years of their education. With the setbacks the community has already suffered, it can ill afford not to provide for these children - even if that means creating a new kind of "public" education system that includes vouchers.

"State education officials are very concerned about whether adequate facilities will be in place for the 2006-2007 year," said Burns. "That is why this school choice is more important than ever in New Orleans." ■

Private vs. Public School Enrollment After Katrina



TWO-MINUTE TALK

CHARLIE ARLINGHAUS

Charlie Arlinghaus is the president of the Josiah Bartlett Center for Public Policy, a free-market oriented think tank based in Concord, New Hampshire.

Why has school choice taken off in a rural state?

NH is a very different kind of state. There is some rural, some urban, some suburban. But like any state, we have a range of problems with our education system. Most alarmingly, we have a 25% dropout rate. Something is not working, and so people understand that we need alternatives, we need options, and that those options should not only be for those who can afford them.

Why is school choice such a big issue for the Bartlett Center?

Since our inception the Bartlett Center has been about promoting market-based alternatives. There is no more important issue to the progress of our state than the quality of education we can provide our children. We know from other programs around the country that school choice works. And we know that empowering parents and promoting freedom is the right thing to do.

Why are some rural legislators against the idea of school choice and how do we convince them to support school choice? I think that the rural/urban divide is not really an issue here, and that the perception of that divide is mostly put out and perpetuated by our opponents. The division is really between those who think parents deserve a choice and those who don't. Public schools work for a lot of kids, but not for all of them. And it is those kids who most desperately want, and will take advantage of, having a choice in their education.

-Brian McGrath

NOVEMBER 2005

NOTES, QUOTES AND VOTES

CHOICE CONFERENCE WILL EMPOWER STATES

The school choice movement will convene in Milwaukee this October for the K-12 Education Reform Summit, a critical discussion of strategies for advancing the school choice movement. The conference, held jointly by the Friedman Foundation, the Alliance for School Choice and the State Policy Network, seeks to engage a broad range of education reformers who wish to become more involved in promoting school choice.

INSIDE THE NUMBERS

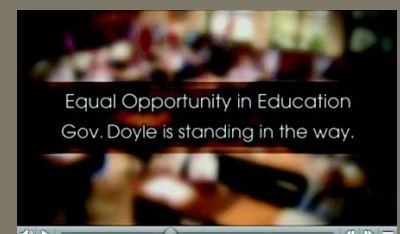
\$100,000

Nearly half of the NEA's employees and officers earned more than \$100,000 in salaries and allowances. The most recent survey shows the average teacher salary at \$45,891.

GOV. DOYLE DID THE RIGHT THING, EVENTUALLY

After years of fighting, Wisconsin Gov. Jim Doyle agreed to expand the school voucher cap on the Milwaukee program (see page 6).

This year the c(4) organization Alliances for Choices in Education ran a blistering ad directed at the Doyle regarding his past decisions to fight expansion and the need for him to do the right thing. The various radio and television ads featured parents and students discussing how Doyle is "standing in the way" and "throwing away" children's dreams.

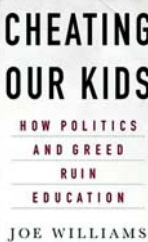


"Parents have a fundamental human right to choose the schooling that will shape their children's understanding of the world. But a right isn't really a right if it can't be exercised."

Charles Glenn, former education advisor to Gov. Michael Dukakis

PUTTING KIDS 2ND

Joe Williams, education reporter with the New York Daily News, looks at how children come second to interests of jobs, wages and contracts in his book *Cheating our Kids: How Politics and Greed Ruin Education*. He also examines how unions, politicians and vendors squander funds designed for improving education.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF WWW.SCHOOLCHOICEWV.ORG

SCHOOL CHOICE

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SCHOOL CHOICE ADVOCATE

JUNE 2006

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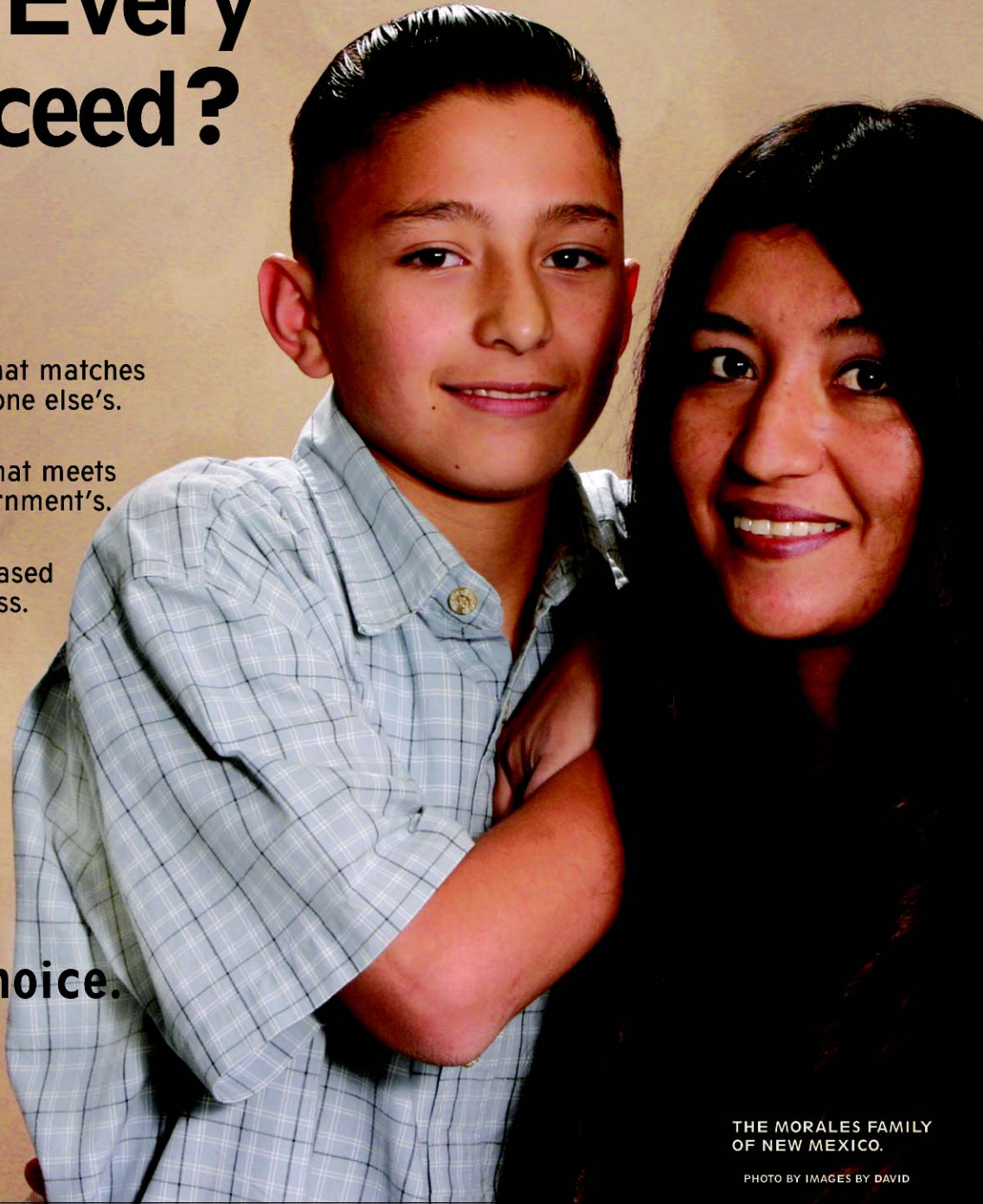
How Can Every Child Succeed?

Freedom to choose a school that matches your child's needs...not everyone else's.

Freedom to choose a school that meets your standards...not the government's.

Freedom to choose a school based on its quality...not your address.

This is freedom.
This is school choice.



THE MORALES FAMILY
OF NEW MEXICO.
PHOTO BY IMAGES BY DAVID

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THE SCHOOL CHOICE

ADVOCATE

JUNE 2006

The School Choice Strategy

Is every "choice" a good one? Should we run from the term voucher? Inside we explore the future of the movement.

Arizona Adds Newest School Choice Program

Milwaukee Celebrates: Voucher Cap Lifted

Outperforming the Monopoly in New Orleans