

THE EXPECT REPORT

Education Outside The Beltway

REAL ANSWERS TO REAL QUESTIONS
October 2000



THE EXPECT COALITION

“Excellence for Parents, Children and Teachers”

Alexis de Tocqueville Institution
Allegheny Institute
American Association of Christian Schools
Center for Equal Opportunity
Citizens for a Sound Economy
Education Policy Institute
Empower America
Family Research Council
Focus on the Family
Heritage Foundation
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MISSION STATEMENT

The EXPECT Coalition is a group of reform-minded organizations seeking educational excellence for parents, children and teachers. It was founded in 1998 to create an opportunity for dialogue and coordinating action with Members of Congress on issues affecting the dynamics of American education from the perspective of the traditional American family, independent businesses, private and home educators, taxpayers, and policy organizations with an education component. Over the past few years, the EXPECT Coalition has sponsored Education Policy Breakfasts with the Education and Workforce Committee to facilitate dialogue between the organizations and Congress. These breakfasts will continue in the 107th Congress.

The Expect Report was produced as a cooperative effort by many member organizations from the EXPECT Coalition. The viewpoints expressed in this report are the result of consensus building within the Coalition and may not reflect completely upon the positions of each individual organization.

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REAL ANSWERS TO REAL QUESTIONS

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INTRODUCTION

Education professionals should follow the example of medical doctors who ask questions of their patients and listen carefully to their answers. Why do doctors seek their patient's input? Because, the vast majority of patients can roughly diagnose their own medical condition. In the field of education, however, few education bureaucrats, politicians and professionals are listening and acting upon the real concerns of American families. Families want to see fundamental changes in the current education system that will benefit their children. They are tired of a system that offers few education alternatives, wastes billions of dollars on ineffective government programs and discourages accountability to the people who know their children's needs best: parents.

Each year the federal government spends \$120 billion on more than 760 "education" and "education-related" programs, yet for the first time in 30 years, "an entire decade has passed without significant and substantial achievement gains" (*Education at a Crossroads 2000: The Road to Excellence*, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, Committee on Education and the Workforce, October 2000, pp. iv, vii). America's poor student achievement record suggests that major problems exist in the current education system, and they must be fixed soon.

The simple plea of most Americans is to get back to teaching the basics. About 92 percent of the public believe that focusing more on academics will raise student academic achievement (John McLaughlin & Associates Poll, March 16-18, 1999). Eighty-three percent of Americans believe it is more important for schools to teach students academic subjects (math, reading, writing and history) than to shape their attitudes, beliefs and values (McLaughlin Poll).

The American public also wants fewer federal mandates and regulations over what is taught in local public schools. Half of the American population believes it is the responsibility of local officials to improve education, while only 33 percent feel it is the responsibility of the state and a mere 13 percent say it is a federal issue (*Washington Post*, Kaiser Family Foundation and Harvard University survey, May 11-22, 2000). Furthermore, a strong majority (61 percent) of Americans would like the federal government to have less influence in determining education programs at local public schools (Gallup Poll conducted August 24-27, 2000). Concerning the presidency, 66 percent of Americans want a leader who will encourage state and local governments to make education improvements as compared with 29 percent who want a president that will pass new federal laws (*Post-Kaiser-Harvard* poll).

It should come as no surprise that parents are increasingly choosing charter, home and private schools as alternatives to public institutions. On the whole, students in these schools are outperforming their publicly schooled peers. If we truly care about the education of our children, shouldn't we consider altering the system to encourage what is proven effective? Giving parents a choice in where their children attend school will encourage much-needed competition among all schools for their mutual benefit. Fewer government regulations and mandates will allow individual schools and teachers to

choose the best curriculum for their students. In such a system of parental choice and local control, schools will be held accountable for results by parents who want the best for their children.

The education establishment must realize that America's children are not guinea pigs to be used for social experimentation. They are America's future, and failing to provide them with a quality education directly impacts the nation. New education fads and programs should be considered carefully, and if they fail to meet criteria backed up by scientifically sound research, they should not be implemented. The American education system is not a full employment program for unions and associations, but a system to educate our children and sustain this nation.

The EXPECT Coalition has produced this publication as a helpful resource for congressional members and staff. It highlights the efforts of the 106th Congress to improve education and dispels many of the myths being told to American families by the education establishment. A list of experts and organizations is also included for more information on education issues. We hope you will partner with us in ensuring that all American children receive the high quality education they deserve. Our entire nation will reap the benefits of a well-educated society.

WHAT HAS THE 106TH CONGRESS DONE TO IMPROVE EDUCATION?

On balance, one could argue that the 106th Congress delivered “better” federal education policy to American families and students. “Better” in terms of increasing local control over education priorities and returning the focus to academic quality instead of grand programs designed by education “experts” in Washington, D.C.

Specifically, the 106th Congress worked to improve education policy by:

- ◆ Encouraging local school control and flexibility;
- ◆ Encouraging accountability to parents;
- ◆ Encouraging teacher quality;
- ◆ Working to reduce education bureaucracy;
- ◆ Encouraging greater access to higher education;
- ◆ Encouraging greater school safety.

The 106th Congress often yielded, however, to the temptation to fund failed education programs at greater levels than the Administration requested, resulting in the largest federal education spending to date. More federal dollars do not make scholars. This problem is indicative of a greater trend in Congress to expand its limited spending authority laid out in the Constitution.

The following items of legislation passed by the U.S. House of Representatives and the Education and Workforce Committee are commended as steps toward restoring local control of education and giving parents greater choice in where their child attends school. Our support for these specific parts of legislation, however, is not an endorsement of each piece of legislation in its entirety.

THE 106TH CONGRESS ENCOURAGED LOCAL SCHOOL CONTROL AND FLEXIBILITY

The Academic Accountability for All Students Act (Straight A’s) was designed to increase flexibility and local school control by:

- Allowing states flexibility in how they use their federal K-12 funds to meet their own priorities. Funds could also be used to raise academic achievement, improve teacher quality and reduce class size.

- Rewarding states that reduce achievement gaps by at least 25 percent.

(H.R. 2300, passed 213-208, 10/21/99 roll call vote 532)

The Student Results Act increased flexibility for students and parents to be in charge of their child's education by:

- Allowing students and parents a choice when students are in low performing schools to transfer to another public school or public charter school in their community.

(H.R. 2, passed 358-67, 10/21/99 roll call vote 526.)

The Education Opportunities To Protect and Invest In Our Nation's Students Act (OPTIONS) allowed schools to use federal funds for their specific needs by:

- Allowing schools to focus federal funds where most needed locally and putting students' needs ahead of federal regulations. The bill would also expand the allowable use provision in Title VI funding to include public school choice, professional development for teachers and alternative education programs.

(H.R. 4141, passed the Education and Workforce Committee 25-21, 4/13/00)

The Education Flexibility Partnership Act (Ed-Flex) expanded flexibility by:

- Making all fifty states eligible to apply for Ed-Flex. The bill also removed Ed-Flex from the Goals 2000 statute, added additional accountability measures, and required a Title I plan to be in place for states to be eligible.

(H.R. 800, passed 98-1, 3/11/99 roll call vote 48)

Congress encouraged greater local control by sustaining an effort to prohibit national testing:

- This Congress passed several versions of language to forbid the federal government from developing, pilot testing, or working in any way on a "voluntary national test." This language was included in both FY00 and FY01 Education Appropriations bills, as well as in the OPTIONS bill, H.R. 4141.

Congress encouraged greater local control of curriculum by repealing portions of Goals 2000 and School To Work:

- Included in the FY00 Omnibus Appropriations Bill was language that expressly repealed Titles III and IV of the Goals 2000: Educate America Act. This was a tremendous victory for American families who have feared the continued imposition

of federal education policy in local school curriculum. Unfortunately, the President and Senate reneged on their promise to repeal Title IV by restoring funding

- Funding for School To Work was not included in the FY01 Appropriations Bill. This program, created by the School To Work Opportunities Act, has been a serious concern to families for many years. In particular, parents objected to the focus of education being on “career development” and not on classic liberal education.

THE 106TH CONGRESS ENCOURAGED ACCOUNTABILITY TO PARENTS

The Teacher Empowerment Act encouraged accountability to parents by:

- Having states report to the public and parents on the quality of their children’s teachers.

(H.R. 1995, passed 239-185, 7/20/99 roll call vote 320)

The Students Results Act encouraged accountability to parents by:

- Requiring school officials to attempt to notify parents before placing their children in a bilingual education program.

(H.R. 2, passed 358-67, 10/21/99 roll call vote 526)

THE 106TH CONGRESS ENCOURAGED TEACHER QUALITY

The Teacher Empowerment Act encouraged teacher quality by:

- Giving states and localities more flexibility in the use of federal funds so they may focus more on improving teacher quality.
- Allowing schools to use funds for reform measures, including promoting tenure reform, teacher testing, merit-based teacher pay, alternative routes to teacher certification and mentoring programs.

- Allowing teachers to choose among high quality professional development programs in cases where school districts fail to provide such training.

(H.R. 1995, passed 239-185, 7/20/99 roll call vote 320)

THE 106TH CONGRESS ENCOURAGED GREATER ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

The Financial Freedom Act encouraged greater access to higher education by:

- Helping the nation's students attend college by assisting parents with tuition costs.
- Allowing private universities to offer pre-paid tuition plans. Interest or earnings accumulated in these plans would be tax-exempt to allow parents to save more for their children's education.

(H.R. 2488, passed 223-208, 7/22/99 roll call vote 333)

THE 106TH CONGRESS ENCOURAGED SCHOOL SAFETY

The Education Opportunities To Protect and Invest In Our Nation's Students Act (OPTIONS) encouraged greater safety in schools by:

- Strengthening anti-drug and violence programs by requiring schools to implement programs of proven effectiveness.
- Allowing schools to use federal funds to hire appropriate school personnel, install metal detectors and implement character education programs.

(H.R. 4141, passed the Education and Workforce Committee 25-21, 4/13/00)

THE 106TH CONGRESS WORKED TO REDUCE EDUCATION BUREAUCRACY

The Education Opportunities To Protect and Invest In Our Nation's Students Act (OPTIONS) intended to reduce education bureaucracy by:

- Reducing paperwork requirements and bureaucratic costs by allowing states to submit one application for all major federal education programs. This bill also streamlined and consolidated several federal programs.

(H.R. 4141, passed the Education and Workforce Committee 25-21, 4/13/00)

The Dollars to the Classroom Resolution encouraged reducing the education bureaucracy by:

- Calling for the Department of Education, states and localities to ensure that at least 95 percent of all federal funds go directly to the classroom to educate our children.

(H.Con.Res. 88, passed 397-13, 5/4/99 roll call vote 106)

The Education Fraud Audit Act helped to reduce education bureaucracy by:

- Requiring the Comptroller General to conduct an audit of the Department of Education to determine the level of bureaucratic waste, fraud and abuse.

(H.R. 4079, passed 380-19, 6/13/00 roll call vote 258)

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE 107TH CONGRESS

Congress made significant strides this year to reduce the federal government's role in education and to give parents more decision making power. We encourage Congress to continue returning taxpayer dollars to states and localities in order to empower parents and teachers to provide a quality education for America's children. Parents and teachers who know a child's name know better than the federal government the educational needs of our students.

We urge the 107th Congress to pass legislation to further these important goals, specifically Straight A's, Education Savings Accounts, Dollars to the Classroom and legislation to stop waste, fraud and abuse in the Department of Education.

- **Straight A's** allows states increased flexibility in return for following strict accountability standards. We encourage the 107th Congress to expand Straight A's beyond the 10 states in last year's legislation to include all 50 states.
- **Education Savings Accounts (ESAs)** allows parents and other individuals to invest in special accounts that accrue tax-free interest for a child's education. We encourage the expansion of ESAs to include K-12 grade levels.
- **Dollars to the Classroom** ensures that 95 percent of federal education dollars go to the classroom where it belongs. Too often, funding for students is wasted on bureaucratic red tape and administration costs, thus hurting our children.

- **Waste, Fraud, and Abuse** legislation would hold administrators accountable to parents and students. It is important that federal funds earmarked for the classroom are not stolen or inappropriately diverted to frivolous projects and personal items. Administrators of our tax dollars must be held accountable to ensure a quality education for America's children.

ANSWERING THE CRITICS

DOES PARENTAL CHOICE IN EDUCATION HURT PUBLIC SCHOOLS?

There is a misconception today that public school students will be hurt if parents are given a choice in where their hard-earned tax dollars are spent for their child's education. Contrary to this belief, all American schoolchildren would benefit from a system in which competition exists among all schools (public, private, charter and home). Parents—not the government—know best the needs of each individual child and efforts to withhold education options from families will prevent our children from receiving the high quality education they deserve.

GIVING PARENTS A CHOICE: MYTHS VS. FACTS

MYTH: Tuition vouchers, or opportunity scholarships, will hurt kids by draining public schools of money necessary to provide a quality education.

FACT: Evidence suggests that per-pupil funding actually increases under school choice programs.

- In general, public tuition scholarships are less than the cost public schools spend per child, so when a student transfers to a private school, about half of the per-pupil funding is left at the school with fewer students to educate.
- Milwaukee's school choice program increased per-pupil spending by 20 percent and overall spending by 29 percent for public schools between 1990-1991 and 2000-2001. (Howard L. Fuller and George A. Mitchell, "The Fiscal Impact of School Choice on the Milwaukee Public Schools," Current Education Issues, No. 99-2, Marquette University.)

MYTH: Permitting the use of public funds at alternative education institutions will create a damaging competitive environment for public schools.

FACT: The competition between schools in a school choice program leads to better academic results in both private and public schools.

- Research of school choice programs in urban areas shows a significant increase in academic achievement among both public and private school students. Students who transfer from public to private institutions display a 12 percent increase in college graduation probability. Students who remain in public schools also improve, showing an eight percent increase in test scores. These increases are in comparison to students attending public and private schools in areas where there is not a school choice

program. (Nina Shokraii Rees, “Public School Benefits of Private School Vouchers,” Policy Review, January February 1999, p. 18.)

- “Increasing private school enrollment in low-spending districts by 25 percent would increase public school performance on the 9th grade proficiency exam by 4.1 percent, while increasing spending per student in these same districts would have no significant effect.” (Eric V. Schlecht, “Playing Monopoly With Our Children’s Education,” *Institute for Policy Innovation Insights*, September, 2000, citing report by The Buckeye Institute for Public Policy Solutions.)

MYTH: School choice will lead to further segregation and division by helping the rich, mostly white population attend private schools while leaving poor, often minority, inner city kids behind.

FACT: School choice programs actually encourage racial integration.

- Private schools are more racially integrated than neighboring public schools, and their students enjoy more cross-racial friendships and engage in fewer race-related fights. (Jay P. Greene, “Civic Values in Public and Private Schools,” *Learning From School Choice*, Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1998.)
- The racial composition of private schools in Milwaukee’s school choice program is almost identical to the area’s public schools. (“Audit Dispels School Choice Myths,” Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, February 2, 2000.)
- Public charter schools, the most available form of school choice, are racially integrated, as well. In 1998-99, the Education Department found that charter schools enrolled a smaller proportion of white students and larger proportion of black and Hispanic students than public schools overall. (Charles Glenn, “Does Choice Harm Children?” *Teachers in Focus*, www.family.org/cforum/teachersmag.)

MYTH: In a school choice program, private schools will “cream” the top, well-behaved students from public schools while leaving low-performing students behind in the worst schools.

FACT: Students who exercise choice in education are often not the top performers, but rather are the struggling students looking for alternative education options.

- An annual evaluation of Milwaukee’s school choice program found that students applying for the program performed below their public school peers on academic achievement tests. (John F. Witte, et al., Fifth Year Report, Milwaukee Parental Choice Program, University of Wisconsin, Madison, December 1997.)

MYTH: Partial scholarships won’t help the poor because they can’t afford to pay the remaining cost of private school tuition.

FACT: Private schools are more affordable than widely believed and hundreds of thousands of low-income students have applied for a limited number of privately funded partial scholarships.

- In 1999, the Children’s Scholarship Fund for low-income families was inundated with 1,250,000 applications for only 40,000 partial tuition scholarships (www.scholarshipfund.org). This overwhelming response shows that many parents are willing to sacrifice some of their own money to make up the difference not provided in the scholarship.
- The average private school tuition in 1996 was \$3,116, while most tuition scholarships range from \$1,000 to \$4,000. (See The Digest of Education Statistics [Washington, D.C.: The Department of Education, January 2000], www.nces.ed.gov/pubs2000/digest99, table 62.)

MYTH: Publicly funded opportunity scholarships, also known as vouchers, are unconstitutional because they violate the “Establishment Clause” of the First Amendment.

FACT: Well-designed voucher laws that allow parents to direct the money to the school of their choice do not violate the Constitution.

- Public funds transferred to private institutions through the independent decisions of parents are constitutional. The Supreme Court has made clear that “programs that are wholly neutral in offering educational assistance to a class defined without reference to religion do not violate” the First Amendment, “because any aid to religion results from the private choices of individual beneficiaries.” (*Witters v. Washington Department of Services for the Blind*, 474 U.S. 481 (1986), pp. 490-491 [Powell, J., concurring].)
- The federal and state governments already give financial aid to religiously affiliated higher education institutions, daycare providers, hospitals and social service providers. The use of opportunity scholarships at religious schools would be similar to the use of Pell grants and G.I. benefits at religiously affiliated colleges and universities. (Clint Bolick, “School Choice, the Law, and the Constitution: A Primer for Parents and Reformers,” *The Heritage Foundation Backgrounder*, No. 1139, Sept. 19, 1997.)
- State supreme courts in Wisconsin, Ohio and Arizona have ruled school choice programs constitutional under the First Amendment. The U.S. Supreme Court has not yet reviewed a parental choice case.
- In 1998, Milwaukee’s Parental Choice Program was upheld 4-0. The Wisconsin court’s majority opinion stated, “The simplistic argument that every form of financial aid to church-sponsored activity violates the Religion Clauses was rejected long ago.” And, “Not one cent flows from the state to a sectarian private school under the [plan]

except as a result of the necessary and intervening choices of individual parents.”
(Nina Shokraii Rees, *School Choice: What’s Happening in the States 2000*
[Washington D.C.: *The Heritage Foundation*, 2000], p. 183, citing majority opinion
in *Jackson v. Benson*.)

OUR VISION

Families should be able to choose their children’s schools based on their children’s educational needs. Some families will find their children’s needs best fulfilled in a public school in their neighborhood; some will find them best fulfilled in a public school outside their district; some will find them best fulfilled by a private or religious school; some will find them best fulfilled in a home school setting. Rather than imposing one-size-fits-all programs on students whose families cannot afford other options, the government should remove barriers to ensure that children have access to the education they need, regardless of the provider.

Congress should support education savings accounts for all levels of education. Education savings accounts allow parents and other individuals to save their own money for a child’s education. Withdrawals and accrued interest are tax-free. Congress should also encourage legislation at the state level that would implement choice programs such as tuition tax credits, vouchers and charter schools. Voucher programs permitting public funds to be used at private institutions must be crafted carefully to protect the independence of those schools. Private and home schools should not have to modify their curriculum or participate in state and federal testing to qualify for receiving funds. Additionally, public school management should be in the hands of localities and individual schools, thus decentralizing the education decision making and making schools more accountable to parents and the needs of students.

IS FEDERAL FUNDING FOR SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION THE SOLUTION TO CRUMBLING SCHOOLS AND A GROWING STUDENT POPULATION?

The “baby boom echo” and reports of a school construction crisis have caused the White House and some members of Congress to push for including school construction within the scope of federal involvement in education. This new, unprecedented role for the federal government would represent a gross breach of the principles of federalism by entangling federal funds in the last remaining area of education untouched by Washington, D.C. Historically, allocations of federal funds for school construction have been indirect and rare. Elementary and secondary public school construction has been almost wholly funded through state and local taxes (mostly local). The continual expansion of federal authority over state and local education decision-makers is not in the best interest of American schoolchildren. Local school boards, teachers and parents can most accurately assess and respond to the school construction needs of the country’s 16,000 school districts.

SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION: MYTHS VS. FACTS

MYTH: A school construction crisis exists that can only be met by intervention from the federal government.

FACT: State and local education systems are able to most effectively respond to construction needs and are rapidly closing the school construction funding gap.

- The most recent cost estimate of school construction needs is \$127 billion, but local and state governments are quickly responding to this need (see below). At the same time, the student population is leveling off and will only increase 1-2 percent over the next five years with a slight decline after that. (National Center for Education Statistics, *Condition of America's Public School Facilities: 1999*, Report No. NCES2000-032; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *The Condition of Education 2000*, NCES 2000-602, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2000, http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2000/coe2000/section1/s_table3_1.html).
- State and local governments spent \$39.7 billion in 1999 on construction, modernization, and renovation of public education facilities—up 54 percent from \$25.8 billion in 1995 and more than double the 1990 total. (Ronald D. Utt, “Classroom Modernization Bill Promotes Unwarranted Federal Intrusion,” The Heritage Foundation Executive Memorandum No. 692, August 16, 2000.)
- The ASU survey forecasts \$75 billion in school construction spending over the 2000-2002 period, with about half of that amount to be spent on modernization

and upgrades. (Ronald D. Utt, "Classroom Modernization Bill Promotes Unwarranted Federal Intrusion," The Heritage Foundation Executive Memorandum No. 692, August 16, 2000.)

- State and local governments have allowed or are exploring other options that respect parental authority in education decisions. These other options include repairing or remodeling existing buildings, building new schools with local authorization and taxes, privatizing public school districts, and issuing school vouchers and other parental choice initiatives. (Thomas Jacobson, "Federal Funds For Public School Construction: An Offer We Should Refuse," *Insight*, Family Research Council, p. 5.)

MYTH: Federal investment in school construction efforts would allow states to focus their limited financial resources on much-needed school supplies and equipment for the classroom rather than maintenance and repair of school buildings.

FACT: Local schools would actually pay more money—diverting money from the classroom—to comply with federal regulations.

- School districts were burdened with \$3.8 billion in costs between 1992-95 to comply with federal mandates. Ten percent (\$11 billion) of the estimated \$112 billion needed to address the nation's school construction problem is also to bring schools in line with federal mandates. (U.S. General Accounting Office, *School Facilities: Condition of America's Schools*, report to Congressional Requesters, Report No. GAO/HEHS-95-61, February 1995.)
- School districts would likely have to follow the Davis-Bacon Act when using federal funding for school construction. The Davis-Bacon Act, which requires all federally funded construction projects costing more than \$2,000 to pay the prevailing wage rate, would increase labor costs by 5-30 percent. (Associated Builders & Contractors, "Repeal of the Davis-Bacon Act," *ABC Issue Brief*, June 1997.)

MYTH: New schools and building renovation will decrease class size and improve student performance.

FACT: Smaller classes do not necessarily mean students will excel in school.

- On average, being in a small class does not increase the likelihood of a student scoring higher on the NAEP reading test. Children in small classes (20 or fewer students per teacher) do not score higher than students in the largest classes (31 or more students per teacher). (Kirk Johnson, "Do Small Classes Influence Academic Achievement? What the National Assessment of Educational Progress Shows," A Report of the Heritage Center for Data Analysis, June 9, 2000, p. 1.)
- Class size has fallen over the last few decades (22.3 students per teacher in 1970, 17 students per teacher in the late 1990s), and academic achievement has not improved. (U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States 1998*, [Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1988], using data from

National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics*, [1974 to 1998], published 1998.)

OUR VISION

It is an overstatement to say there is a school construction “crisis” in America. There is no doubt that American children deserve nothing less than the best we can offer. However, it has been shown that states and local school districts are, in fact, providing funds and programs to maintain existing schools, build new schools, and modernize classrooms. Federal construction programs would prove to be more costly than local efforts, causing local school districts to do less. The federal government should leave school construction alone. States and localities should encourage public school systems to partner with the private sector and tap into its vast financial, managerial and creative resources to improve and expand school facilities throughout the nation. After all, it is the local school districts that know best how to provide for their children—not the federal government.

WILL FEDERALLY FUNDED AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS AND UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL BOOST ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND REDUCE CRIME?

There is a push today in Washington to expand the federal government's role in education to include more afterschool programs and "universal preschool"—the catchphrase for expanding the public school system to include 3- and 4-year-olds. Advocates of such programs argue that the entry of women into the workforce and the subsequent increase in working hours per family has decreased the supervision and time parents have with their children. The result, they say, is children who don't perform as well in school and higher crime rates among youth after school.

Rather than correcting the accurately diagnosed problem (the lack of time parents have to spend with their children), proponents of publicly funded preschool and afterschool programs merely perpetuate the problem by encouraging parents to rely on the government for doing what parents do best—care for their children. A recent YMCA survey found teenagers' top concern is "not having enough time together" with their parents, and 40 percent of parents agree that time spent with their teens is inadequate ("Canceling Summer Vacation," *Washington Times*, June 20, 2000, p. A18). In light of the widely acknowledged failure of many government schools to fulfill their primary responsibility of educating kids, proposals to expand the government's responsibilities to include universal preschool and afterschool programs is misguided.

AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS: MYTHS VS. FACTS

MYTH: 15 million American children are "left to fend for themselves" each day. (William Jefferson Clinton, "Fact Sheet: President Clinton Announces New Grants for After-School Programs," White House, Office of the Press Secretary, November 12, 1998.)

FACT: At the most, there are only 7 million children aged 5 through 14 who ever care for themselves.

- The Census Bureau found that only an estimated 12 percent of children aged 5 through 11 ever care for themselves, and they do so for only six hours per week on average. If 13- and 14-year olds are included in this data, there is at most 7 million children (roughly half Clinton's estimate) that ever spend time unsupervised. A mere 2 percent of children aged 5 through 12 *regularly* care for themselves. (Kristin Smith and Lynne Casper, "1995 Survey of Income and Program Participation," p. 27; Sandra L. Hoffereth et al., *National Child Care Survey* [Washington: Urban Institute, 1991], p. 288.)

MYTH: There is a shortage of afterschool programs.

FACT: The average enrollment in afterschool programs is only 59 percent of capacity. One in four afterschool programs has vacancy rates greater than 75 percent. (Patricia Seppanen, Dianne Kaplan deVries, and Michelle Seligson, *National Study of Before- and After-School Programs* [Washington: Office of Policy and Planning, U.S. Department of Education, 1993], pp. 16, 31.)

MYTH: Afterschool programs will boost academic achievement.

FACT: There is little evidence to suggest afterschool programs will boost academic achievement.

- Two literature review studies found the research on the academic benefits of afterschool programs to be plagued with serious methodological shortcomings and inconsistent results. A conclusion could not be drawn to support a link between afterschool programs and greater student achievement. (Olatokunbo S. Fashola, “Review of Extended-Day and After-School Programs and Their Effectiveness,” Johns Hopkins University Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk, Report No. 24, October 1998, p. 50; Jodie Roth et al., “Youth Development Programs,” in *America’s Disconnected Youth*, ed. Douglas Besharov [Washington: Child Welfare League of America, 1999], p. 274.)

MYTH: Afterschool programs reduce delinquent behavior.

FACT: A study of 500 juvenile crime prevention programs found that afterschool programs not only had no effect on cutting crime but actually made matters worse in some cases by encouraging deviant youth to congregate for extended periods of time.

- Furthermore, there is evidence that the students most in need of afterschool supervision often don’t participate in the programs. (Darcy Olsen, “12-Hour School Days? Why Government Should Leave Afterschool Arrangements to Parents,” *Policy Analysis*, Cato Institute, June 7, 2000 citing Lawrence W. Sherman et al., “Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn’t, What’s Promising,” Report to Congress, National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice, 1997.)

UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL: MYTHS VS. FACTS

MYTH: Starting all children in preschool will lead to higher IQ’s, higher reading and achievement levels, higher graduation rates and greater success in the workplace.

FACT: Evidence does not show that starting children in preschool benefits them in the long term.

- The frequently cited 1960s study of universal preschool supporters, the Perry Preschool Project, showed that preschool has lasting benefits on kids, but the study has been shown to have sizable sampling and methodological flaws and has never been replicated in three decades. (Charles Locurto, "Beyond IQ in Preschool Programs?" *Intelligence*, 1991, p. 299-305; Edward F. Zigler, "Formal Schooling for Four-Year-Olds? No," in *Early Schooling: the National Debate*, ed. Sharon L. Kagan and Edward F. Zigler, 1987, p. 40.)
- Head Start, a federal educational program for underprivileged children ages 3 to 5, has yielded no long term benefit for children. Cognitive and socioemotional test scores of former Head Start students have not remained superior to disadvantaged children who did not attend Head Start. (Ruth McKey et al., "The Impact of Head Start on Children, Families, and Communities," U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, HHS 85-31193, June 1985, Executive Summary, p.1.)

MYTH: There is a childcare crisis due to the increasing number of women entering the workforce.

FACT: The market is currently responding to supply and demand.

- Research shows that 96 percent of all parents say they are satisfied or very satisfied with their current child care arrangements. ("Necessary Compromises: How Parents, Employers and Children's Advocates View Child Care Today," Public Agenda [Steve Farkas et al.], 2000, pp. 25, 27.)
- Roughly 70 percent of preschool age children are cared for by their mother, father, or relative. (See U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Ways and Means, 1998 Green Book [Washington: Government Printing Office, 1996], p. 661; Jeffery Capizzano, Gina Adams and Freya Sonenstein, "Child Care Arrangements for Children Under Five: Variations Across States," Urban Institute report B-7 in the series, "New Federalism: National Survey of America's Families," March 2000.)
- Many parents do not want federal childcare or early education programs. Over 70 percent of parents of young children said having a parent at home is the best arrangement for young children, and 68 percent said they would prefer to stay at home with children when they are young. ("Necessary Compromises: How Parents, Employers and Children's Advocates View Child Care Today," Public Agenda [Steve Farkas et al.], 2000, p. 13.)

MYTH: Preschool is currently only available to the wealthy who can afford it, so a federal preschool system must be provided for the middle to lower class.

FACT: Quality childcare and early education programs are available to all classes of Americans.

- Only 30 percent of families regularly pay for childcare, and those fees have increased little over the past 20 years. (See David M. Blau, "Child Care Subsidy Programs" Working Paper 7806, National Bureau of Economic Research, July 2000, p. 15.)
- Seven in ten parents of young children say that childcare is “not much of a problem.” (“Necessary Compromises: How Parents, Employers and Children's Advocates View Child Care Today," Public Agenda [Steve Farkas et al.], 2000, p. 27.)
- Nine out of ten parents say they would be willing to pay more for their current child care arrangements. (Ellen Galinsky et al., *Quality in Family Child Care & Relative Care* [New York: Teacher's College Press, 1995], p. 191.)

OUR VISION

Congress should resist expanding public education to a 15-year, 12-hour-a-day system through the funding of universal preschool and afterschool programs. Instead, Congress should support families in making the best choices for their own children by increasing the per-child tax credit and allowing parents to set up education savings accounts. The federal government should do more to reduce the overall tax burden on families so parents can afford to spend more time at home raising their children. State legislators can provide universal tuition tax credits for parents to select their children’s schools, including independent schools, with or without afterschool programs. In sum, government can do more to help America’s children achieve academic success by not interfering with the role of parents. There are just some things that parents do better than government. Raising children is one of them.

HOW CAN WE HELP DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS ACHIEVE ACADEMIC SUCCESS?

Since the landmark 1966 Coleman Report, educators have recognized the great inequalities that exist in America's education system. This report found that minority students were several years behind white students in academic achievement and that the gap widened each year that a student remained in school. Of the many programs created to remedy this situation during President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty, Title I is the single largest federal expenditure in education. The long-term goal of Title I was to reduce poverty by providing poor children with the opportunity to excel in school. It was conceived to ensure an equal education for all children. Despite spending over \$120 billion on Title I since its inception, the gap in achievement levels remains great. Other programs such as Head Start have been initiated in an attempt to close achievement gaps, but these programs have been largely unsuccessful, as well. More federal funding is clearly not the answer because throwing more money at the problem has not and will not work.

DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS: MYTHS VS. FACTS

MYTH: Low-income students do poorly in school because they are disadvantaged.

FACT: Low-income students achieve great success when placed in school environments that encourage parental choice and have fewer government regulations.

- A recent groundbreaking study by Jay P. Greene of the Manhattan Institute indicates that "providing families with additional options in the education of their children is comparable to the benefit of significantly increasing medium household income." Greene rated all 50 states on the degree of choice parents have in where their child attends school. He found that an increase of one point on the "Education Freedom Index" score for a state led to a 21 point increase in the average SAT verbal score and a 22 point increase in the average SAT math score. (Jay P. Greene, "The Education Freedom Index," Center for Civic Innovation at the Manhattan Institute, Civic Report No. 14, September 2000.)
- A Harvard study on the effects of school vouchers on test scores demonstrates that African American students who switched from public schools to private schools achieved statistically significant test score improvements compared to control groups. "If the trend line observed over the first two years continues in subsequent years, the black-white test gap could be eliminated in subsequent years of education for black students who use a voucher to switch from public to private school." (William G. Howell et al., "Test-Score Effects of School Vouchers in Dayton, Ohio, New York

City, and Washington, D.C.: Evidence from Randomized Field Trials," August 2000, [http://data.fas.harvard.edu/pepg/.](http://data.fas.harvard.edu/pepg/))

- Charter Schools, which have more legal and fiscal autonomy than public schools, are seeing positive results in low-income areas. The KIPP Academy in Texas is one example. Ninety-five percent of KIPP Academy's inner city students are black or Hispanic. Of the kids entering KIPP, only 57 percent had passed the TAAS (Texas Assessment of Academic Skills) reading tests in the fourth grade. After one year of KIPP's intensive learning experience, 98 percent passed; after two years, 100 percent of them passed the test. (Samuel Casey Carter, *No Excuses: Lessons from 21 High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools* [Washington, DC: Heritage Foundation, 2000], p. 93.)

MYTH: Students who lack English proficiency achieve greater academic success if first taught in their own native language.

FACT: Segregating English learners into dual language classrooms hurts their English proficiency and academic achievement.

- Poor Hispanic students who also lack proficiency in English have traditionally been the worst performers on academic assessment measurements. Recent test results from California indicate that it is not poverty but lack of English proficiency that has caused so many Hispanic students' poor performance. After California voters abolished bilingual education—which taught Hispanic students in Spanish instead of English for most of the school day for years on end—academic performance skyrocketed, in some cases doubling and even tripling over a two-year period. In the Oceanside district, replacing bilingual programs with English immersion led to a rise in test scores for English learners in the second grade from the 12th percentile in reading to the 32nd percentile and from the 18th percentile in Math to the 47th percentile. (Jorge Amselle and Amy Allison, "Two Years of Success: An Analysis of California Test Scores After Proposition 227," READ Institute, August 2000.)

MYTH: Low-income minority group parents do not favor school choice because they believe it will harm their children's education.

FACT: Black parents show the strongest support for vouchers.

- Sixty percent of black parents favor vouchers compared with 53 percent of the overall population; support swells to 72 percent among black families earning less than \$15,000 a year. (1999 National Opinion Poll, Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies on Education.)

MYTH: More federal funding for education programs like Title I and Head Start will help disadvantaged students close achievement gaps.

FACT: Spending more money on failing programs does not produce a better outcome for disadvantaged students.

- Despite spending more than \$120 billion on Title I and more than \$44 billion on Head Start over the past 35 years, achievement gaps remain large and continue to grow.
- Differences between white and black students' average NAEP scores in reading, mathematics and science for 9-, 13- and 17-year-olds, have either increased or have shown no improvement through the 1990s. NAEP scores show that the longer a student remains in the school system, the greater the achievement gap. (National Center for Education Progress, *NAEP 1999 Trends in Academic Progress*, U.S. Department of Education, August 2000.)
- Over the past decade, the disparity between black and white students' SAT scores increased by 3 points on the verbal section and 8 points on the math section. (David Hoff, "Gap Widens Between Black and White Students on NAEP," *Education Week*, September 6, 2000.)

MYTH: Federal funding for disadvantaged students is most effective if given to schools with high populations of low-income students.

FACT: Federal funding will be most effective if it follows the low-income child instead of rewarding failing schools.

- Title I currently serves over 11 million students, but only half of these students live below the poverty line, leaving some 4 million students unserved because funding is targeted at schools, not needy students. Student-centered funding would allow the money to follow the student, which would more directly benefit those who are in the most need. Under the current system there is little incentive for schools to be accountable to parents. Portability of funding would give parents the opportunity to send their children to schools with a proven educational track record. (Wayne Riddle, Specialist in Educational Finance, Congressional Research Service, testimony before the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, 106th Cong., 1st Sess., March 16, 1999.)

OUR VISION

Current educational funding plans have failed America's disadvantaged because they have focused on school systems rather than the students themselves. Any legislation that promotes individual student achievement over the system is worth pursuing. For this reason low-income families would benefit greatly if given the freedom to choose the school best suited to their needs through the help of Title I portability, tuition tax credits

and education savings accounts. Moreover, all other federal funding should be allocated as flexible block grants so that schools can choose how to best help their students. “Straight A’s” and “Dollars to the Classroom” legislation would give states and local schools wide latitude in using federal education dollars as they see fit.

Disadvantaged students are quite capable of great academic achievement; however, the status quo has shut many American children out of reaching academic success. We cannot allow this to continue. We must ensure that all children have equal access to the best possible education America has to offer.

WILL FEDERAL FUNDS TO HIRE MORE TEACHERS AND REDUCE CLASS SIZE HELP END THE EDUCATION RECESSION?

Low test scores and literacy rates are evidence of the fact that America is experiencing an education recession. Rather than empowering local schools, teachers and parents to initiate reform that will improve student achievement, the education establishment believes the federal government can help solve the problem by hiring more teachers and reducing class size. Hand-wringing reports claim there is a teacher shortage and that the nation will need to hire 2.2 million additional teachers in the next decade. Proponents of federal involvement in K-12 education have jumped on the bandwagon to support the hiring of 100,000 more teachers in order to reduce the average class size and improve education quality. These highly centralized federal solutions discourage innovation and reform at the local level that will respond most effectively to student needs.

TEACHER SHORTAGE: MYTHS VS. FACTS

MYTH: A booming student population over the next decade makes it necessary to train and hire 2.2 million teachers.

FACT: The teacher shortage is not as bad as widely believed.

- The 2.2 million teacher shortage figure is misleading. It is the sum of all annual hiring over the next ten years. A more telling prediction is that hiring increases over the next few years will be 2-3 percent per year. (Andrew J. Wayne, "Teacher Supply and Demand: Surprises from Primary Research," *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, Sept. 18, 2000, <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v8n47.html>.)
- Student enrollments are actually leveling off. Compared to the 16 percent enrollment increase from 1988 to 1998, National Center for Education Statistics predictions for the future sound good. Enrollment should only increase 1-2 percent between 2000-2005 and should decline, although negligibly, between 2005-2010. (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *The Condition of Education 2000*, NCES 2000-602, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2000, http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2000/coe2000/section1/s_table3_1.html.)
- In reality, "the best available projection is that a school with 1000 students today will have about 1010 students *five years from now*." (Andrew J. Wayne, "Teacher Supply and Demand: Surprises from Primary Research," *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, Sept. 18, 2000, <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v8n47.html>.)

MYTH: Hiring 100,000 new teachers will solve the teacher shortage problem.

FACT: 100,000 new teachers will not significantly change the nationwide student-teacher ratio.

- Currently, there are 3.2 million teachers, 53 million students, and more than 118,000 public and private K-12 schools in the United States (U.S. Census and National Center for Education Statistics data). Hiring 100,000 new teachers would barely provide one new teacher per school, amounting to only .031 of the total K-12 teacher population. It is also unlikely that the federal government would pay these teachers' salaries for their entire career. Thus, once the new teachers achieve tenure (three or four years on average), the local district would be obligated to keep them whether or not the federal government provided the funding.

MYTH: Hiring more teachers to decrease class size is essential for student success—especially for minority children.

FACT: Research does not conclusively support a link between smaller class size and higher academic achievement.

- Public school class size has decreased from 22.3 students per teacher in 1970 to about 17 students per teacher in the late 1990s due to a combination of demographic trends and conscious policy decisions. Academic achievement, however, as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) exam, has remained relatively constant. (Kirk Johnson, "Do Small Classes Influence Academic Achievement? What the National Assessment of Educational Progress Shows," A Report of the Heritage Center for Data Analysis, June 9, 2000, p. 2.)
- Children in the smallest classes (20 or fewer students per teacher) do not score higher than students in the largest classes (31 or more students per teacher) on the NAEP reading test. (Kirk Johnson, "Do Small Classes Influence Academic Achievement? What the National Assessment of Educational Progress Shows," A Report of the Heritage Center for Data Analysis, June 9, 2000, p. 1.)
- A study of 13,635 students found that African-American students in smaller second and third grade classrooms did not continue their gains from first grade, nor did they gain compared to other African-American students in regular-sized classes. (Thomas Hruz, "The Costs and Benefits of Smaller Class Sizes in Wisconsin," Wisconsin Policy Research Institute, September 2000.)

MYTH: Not enough teacher candidates are graduating from teacher colleges.

FACT: There are enough teacher candidates graduating.

- Currently, institutions of higher education annually graduate over 200,000 teacher candidates, but our nation's schools hire only 50,000 new teachers in any one year. Each year, one-third of teachers hired are teachers *returning* to the classroom;

teachers “new” to a school does not mean new teachers. (Feistritzer, National Center for Education Information, 1999.)

MYTH: Teachers are leaving the field because of low pay.

FACT: Other factors are equal to or more important than low salaries as reasons why teachers leave the profession.

- Research by the National Center for Education Statistics showed that among departing teachers with less than four years experience, the reason most often cited for departure was “personal and family reasons” (44 percent). Only 17 percent left mainly “to pursue other work or better salary.” (Andrew J. Wayne, “Teacher Supply and Demand: Surprises from Primary Research,” *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, Sept. 18, 2000, <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v8n47.html>.)
- Working conditions and student misbehavior, as well as relatively low salaries, are the most common reasons teachers leave teaching. (From “Who Should Teach?” a report from Education Week, cited in “‘Best and Brightest’ Leave Teaching Early, Study Says,” *The Washington Post*, Jan.13, 2000.)
- In 1995 the average public school teacher’s salary was \$36,933 for working just over nine months of the year. When benefits, typically 30 percent of salary are added, the annual average compensation isn’t bad: \$48,013 for 180 workdays and summers off.

MYTH: Unless teachers go through four to five years of the traditional certification programs, they are unqualified to teach.

FACT: Many highly qualified individuals are prevented from teaching due to unnecessary teacher certification requirements.

- New Jersey alleviated its teacher shortage problem by changing its certification requirements. Indicators of candidate quality improved and potential teacher candidates more than doubled. (Leo Klagholz, “The National Teacher Shortage Debate,” *Education Matters*, August 2000.)
- Maryland and Virginia are developing alternative licensing programs that substitute on-the-job training for years of education course work. Such programs are seen as especially attractive to mid-career professionals in such hard-to-fill posts as math and science. (“Teacher Shortage Spurs Debate on Certification Process,” *American Association of School Administrators*, Aug. 26, 1999.)
- Forty-one percent of alternate-route teachers are willing to teach in inner cities and outlying rural areas (the areas with the greatest teacher shortage), while less than 10 percent of people trained in traditional college-based programs want to teach in such areas of need. (Interview with Emily Feistritzer, “Demand Grows for Alternative Certification,” *Christian Science Monitor*, April 20, 1999.)

OUR VISION

Congress should resist federal intrusion into K-12 education matters—including the hiring of more teachers. Congress should instead focus on reducing regulations and allowing states the freedom to make teacher hiring decisions through flexible funding programs such as “Dollars to the Classroom” and “Straight A’s.” States and local school districts can best assess and respond to the shortage of teachers in their area. States can encourage more people to become teachers by offering alternate certification routes. Strong charter school laws that give school administrators more autonomy over teacher pay and licensing can also help teacher shortage issues.

The end goal is to create a diverse education system that generates continuous incentives to improve and compete. Divisive educational issues would all be solved if we had a competitive education industry from which parents could choose the most appropriate educational choices for their children.

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