

# THE FACTS ABOUT SCHOOL CHOICE:

As the debate for educational freedom grows, it is important to know the facts about how school choice could benefit New Hampshire.

## FACT: SCHOOL CHOICE MAKES PUBLIC SCHOOLS BETTER

- Harvard economist Caroline Hoxby conducted research in 2001 to investigate the effect of school choice on the achievement of public school students in Milwaukee. She found that the test scores of students who transferred schools and who remained in public schools, went up. Further research in 2003 demonstrated that the first-generation school choice program 1) improved student achievement; 2) prompted local public schools to respond positively to competition; and 3) did not “cream-skim.”
- Between 1997 and 2004, Milwaukee Public Schools scores on state standardized tests increased in 12 of 15 categories.
- A 2002 study of the voucher programs in Maine and Vermont found that student test scores were highest in public schools that were competing with each other to attract students from towns offering vouchers.

## FACT: SCHOOL CHOICE HAS NOT DRAINED MONEY FROM PUBLIC SCHOOLS

- The Arizona Tax Credit Program began 1998 in and currently provides scholarships to 21,160 students. In Arizona, inflation-adjusted current expenditures were up from \$5,060 per student in 1998-99 to \$5,851 in 2001-02, a growth rate of 8.6 percent per year. If it continued to grow at the same rate it would be at \$8,125 in 2005-06.
- The Florida Corporate Income Tax Scholarship Program began in 2002 and currently provides scholarships to 11,231 students. In Florida, inflation-adjusted current expenditures were up from \$6,138 per student in 1999-2000 to \$6,213 in 2001-02, a growth rate of 3.3 percent per year. If it continued to grow at the same rate it would be at \$6,859 in 2005-06.
- The Pennsylvania Educational Improvement Tax Credit Program began in 2001 and currently provides scholarships to 25,000 students. In Pennsylvania, inflation adjusted current expenditures were up from \$9,499 in 2001-2002 to \$10,233 in 2003-2004, and increase of and increase of 8.3 percent. If it continues to grow at the same rate, expenditures would be \$12,001 in 2005-2006.

## FACT: SCHOOL CHOICE LEADS TO BETTER PERFORMING STUDENTS, MORE SATISFIED PARENTS

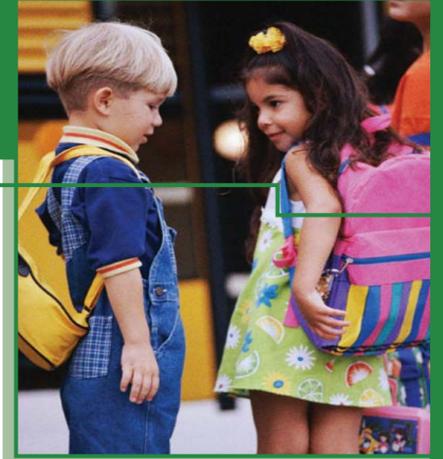
- After five annual reports by the State of Wisconsin Legislative Fiscal Bureau, in general, the evaluations have concluded that: (a) the program had accomplished the purpose of making alternative school choices available to low-income families whose children were not succeeding in school; (b) parents were very satisfied with the program and have been highly involved in their children’s education;
- In a 2004 study of Milwaukee’s graduation rates, researcher Jay Greene found that choice students graduate high school at much higher rates than students in its public schools.
- Every credible study of the Milwaukee and Cleveland school choice programs has shown that parents who exercise school choice are much happier with their child’s school and much more involved in their child’s education.
- In Florida, the McKay Scholarship program serves 15,910 students who have an Individualized Education Plan. More than 700 private schools participate in the program. Of those who participate in the program, 93 percent were satisfied with their choice of school through the McKay program, while only 33 percent were satisfied with their public school.

## FACT: IF A SCHOOL CHOICE PROGRAM IS WELL-DESIGNED, THEN IT’S LIKELY CONSTITUTIONAL

- In 2002, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the Cleveland voucher program, making it very clear that the programs was “neutral in respect to religion [because they] provide assistance to a broad class of citizens, who, in turn, direct government aid to religious schools wholly as a result of their own genuine and independent private choice.”
- According to a 2004 study by former New Hampshire Supreme Court Justice Charles Douglas, “A school choice program that is purposely designed to be neutral with respect to religion, and which provides only incidental and indirect benefits to a religious sect or religion in general, benefits that are purely the result of the choices of individual citizens receiving state funds does not violate the religion/state separation provisions of either the United States or New Hampshire Constitutions.”

Maine and Vermont have had choice programs for over 100 years!

# SCHOOL CHOICE: BECAUSE EVERY CHILD SHOULD HAVE THE FREEDOM TO SUCCEED!



## SCHOOL CHOICE IN MAINE AND VERMONT

### VERMONT

- School choice program (called town tuitioning) since 1869.
- Of the 246 towns in Vermont, 136 offer tuition for students to attend a school in another district.
- 95 percent of school districts accept tuition money from students from other districts.
- 8,040 students took advantage of the program in the 2005-06 school year.
- Of students making choices, approximately half chose private schools, and half chose public schools outside their town.
- Sending towns pay the receiving districts average per-pupil cost for each student it sends to an out of district school. In 2005-2006, that figure was \$8,155 for grades K-6, \$9,000 for grades 7-8, and \$8,890 for grades 9-12.

### MAINE

- School choice program (called town tuitioning) since 1873.
- Of the 492 towns in Maine, 147 offer tuition for students to attend a school in another district.
- 75 percent of school districts accept tuition money from students in other districts.
- 13,959 students took advantage of the program in the 2005-06 school year.
- Of students making choices, 57 percent chose to attend a different public school and 43 percent chose to attend a private school.
- Sending towns pay public and private schools differently, but in 2004 the minimum amount of the voucher was \$7,567.

## NUMBER OF SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS IN FLORIDA PROGRAM AND NUMBER OF SCHOOLS PARTICIPATING

15,910 special needs students participate in the McKay Scholarship program.

More than 700 private schools also participate in the program.



## SCHOOL CHOICE DOES NOT DRAIN MONEY FROM PUBLIC SCHOOLS

### ARIZONA

1998 CHOICE STUDENTS: 0  
CURRENT CHOICE STUDENTS: 21,160

PUBLIC SCHOOL EXPENDITURES PER STUDENT

\$5,060

\$8,125

8.6% GROWTH RATE

1998-99

2005-06\*

### FLORIDA

1999 CHOICE STUDENTS: 0  
CURRENT CHOICE STUDENTS: 27,000

PUBLIC SCHOOL EXPENDITURES PER STUDENT

\$6,138

\$6,859

3.3% GROWTH RATE

1999-00

2005-06\*

### PENNSYLVANIA

2001 CHOICE STUDENTS: 0  
CURRENT CHOICE STUDENTS: 25,000

PUBLIC SCHOOL EXPENDITURES PER STUDENT

\$9,499

\$12,001

8.3% GROWTH RATE

2001-02

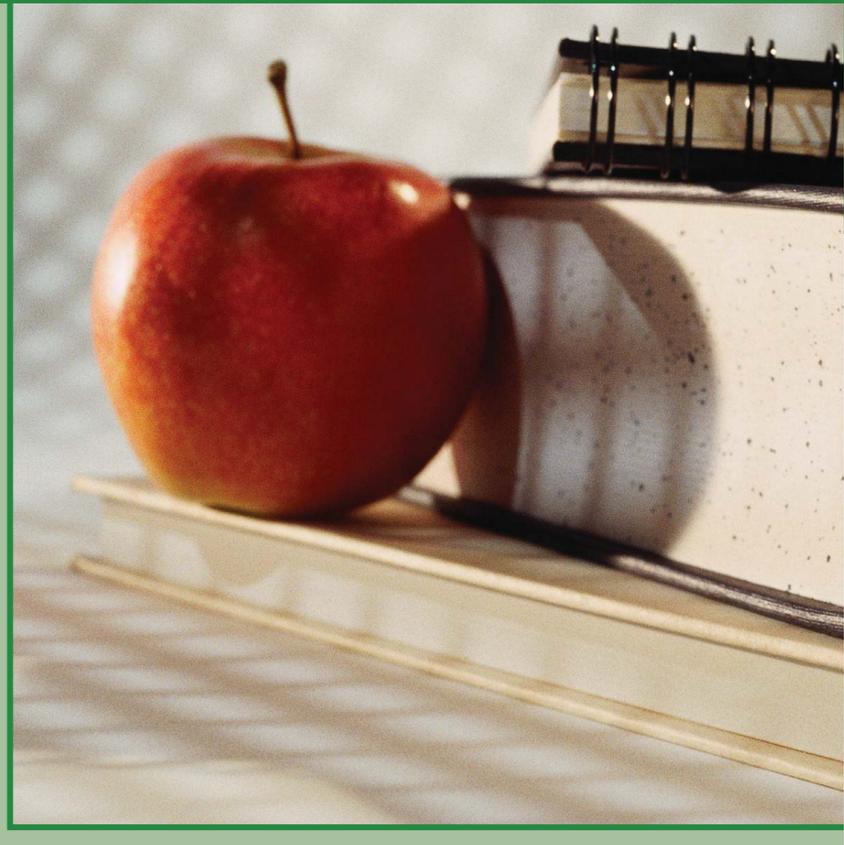
2005-06\*

\*projected



**School Choice:** because every child should have the freedom to succeed!

Did you know that there are now **22** school choice programs in **12** states?



Why School Choice Today?



*Before New Hampshire's citizens and elected leaders can engage in an informed debate about school choice, they need to have the facts. This newsletter is a joint venture between the Josiah Bartlett Center for Public Policy and the Milton and Rose D. Friedman Foundation in an effort to fully explain what it means to provide the best education possible for our children.*

*We believe parents should be empowered to make a free choice of the school that they deem best suited to serve the individual needs and interests of their child. Others believe that the status quo system of assigning children to a school based solely on where they live is the best way. It is our sincere hope that the information contained in this and other issues of School Choice Today will enlighten that debate.*



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## Let families choose the best school for their children

by **Charlie Arlinghaus**



A school administration lobbyist once said to me that our traditional public schools do the best possible job for the greatest number of children. And of course he's right. In general, they do a terrific job for most children. However, no one school can possibly be right for all children. Even with tube socks, one size does not fit all.

For parents with economic means, this isn't a problem. If one child has different needs, tuition at another school is easily accessible. As one wealthy parent described, "I already have school choice for my kids."

But parents with limited income have limited choices. All too often there is no alternative for the child that doesn't fit into the system, and their limited educational options serve to limit their options in life.

Because a school choice program makes so much good common sense, opponents throw up a smokescreen of misleading criticisms. They allege constitutional concerns, but a Josiah Bartlett Center study found that a well-designed school choice program would meet the legal tests suggested by past New Hampshire rulings on the subject. The United States Supreme Court has also weighed in on the subject, finding school choice to be permissible in 2002.

Some lobbyists have suggested non-public schools have a competitive advantage because of the regulations on public schools. The obvious solution is not to deny alternatives

to lower-income pupils, but to work together to reduce those burdensome regulations.

Finally, some opponents of school choice will try to pretend school choice is an attack on the public school system. But, the attempt to provide greater opportunities to students who need it is nothing of the sort. New Hampshire's public schools do a terrific job for the vast majority of students, but no system can be perfect for everyone.

When 25 percent of New Hampshire's high school students drop out, something needs to change. We need to think of real solutions to our education

problems, and not just recite the same old rhetoric over and over. We need to not be fearful of change, but rather grasp at new opportunities. Far too many of the students who need the benefit of a good education are falling through the cracks and dropping out. A school choice program can provide students whose only current option isn't working with an opportunity to find another choice to help them succeed. Isn't that an idea worthy of a serious debate?

*Charlie Arlinghaus is the President of The Josiah Bartlett Center for Public Policy.*

FAMILIES FIRST



*Families like the Jarvises want school choice programs in New Hampshire. By allowing families to decide the appropriate education for their children, New Hampshire would foster the best possible learning environment for all children. This should be New Hampshire's number one priority.*