Hochschild, J. (2003) The American Dream and the Public School

NY: Oxford University Press

5

CHOICE

In modern times, the diligence of public teachers is more or less corrupted by the circumstances, which render them more or less independent of their success and reputation.

—*Adam Smith, 1776*

I support school choice. If the neighborhood school is failing in its basic mission, parents and teachers don't need more excuses. They need answers. . . . A parent with options is a parent with influence.

—*Presidential candidate George W. Bush, 2000*

Americans like the public school system. While they may not be ecstatic about its performance, most are reasonably satisfied with what they are getting overall. . . . For the voucher movement, then, the problem is obvious but fundamental: it must attract support from a public that is actually quite sympathetic to the existing system.

—*Terry Moe, Stanford University political scientist and voucher proponent, 2001*[1]

ALL OF THE REFORMS DISCUSSED SO FAR seek to promote the individual and collective goals of education by improving *public* schooling—making schools and classrooms more racially integrated, more equitably funded, more academically challenging, more focused on student learning. The most vehement critics of public education, however, look at the forty-year history of reform in this country and conclude that pursuit of the American dream through public schooling is bound to fail. They believe that the current system of public education exists for the adults who work in it and eats money, that the public has invested more than enough time and resources in trying to make the system work and should try another approach. In the words of a mother and choice advocate from New Hampshire, the public system is about "Power and money! The public school system is a powerful monopoly. The people running this monopoly fear change. They fear the resulting demise of their power." To her mind, only by fighting this "chokehold" can we promote collective as well as individual goals of schooling:

> If the school system doesn't live up to our standards, we should have the right to "save" our children. . . . Any child not educated to be the best that he can be is heartbreaking to most parents. Any child not educated to be the best that he can be is of less value to the community he lives in. . . . This is where the concept of "school choice" becomes so important as a civil right.[2]

Advocates of choice believe that public schooling cannot work and dooms poor children. "The combination of monopoly in the public sector, significant profitability for those who serve the monopoly and the unique ability for the wealthy to choose the best schools has translated into a nightmare of predictable results for 'haves' and 'have-nots,'" says Lisa Keegan, the former superintendent of public instruction in Arizona:

> Public education in the United States should be that in which the money necessary for an education follows a child to the school his or her parent determines is best. . . . The nation cannot abide a system that is blatantly unfair in the access it provides its students to excellent education. This battle for the right of all children to access a quality education is the civil rights movement of our time, and it will succeed.[3]

As these people do, proponents of choice sometimes invoke the language of civil rights and the collective goals of education. At other times they speak in terms of individual achievement alone. But either way their message is clear: there is only one path to securing the American dream through education, and taking that path will change everything. "Reformers would do well to entertain the notion that choice *is* a panacea," wrote John Chubb and Terry Moe, the advocates who jump-started the choice movement in the 1990s. "It has the capacity *all by itself* to bring about the kind of transformation that, for years, reformers have been seeking to engineer in myriad other ways."[4]

Chubb and Moe were talking about a very broad kind of choice plan, involving private religious and secular schools as well as the public system, but "choice" has almost as many meanings as "reform." In its mildest form, choice allows parents to choose their child's public school from an array designated by the school district or state. This type of choice originated in the magnet school movement of the 1960s. Magnet schools were originally tools of desegregation; the goal was to create a school of high quality and distinctive profile, with an emphasis on such things as the health professions or the arts, "back to basics" or "open classrooms." Such schools, it was hoped, would attract middle-class blacks and whites who might otherwise move to the suburbs or enroll their children in private schools. Thus one strand of choice was developed and continues to function in more than 1,000 schools across the nation to promote the collective goals of equalizing opportunity and providing experience with racial and class diversity.[5]

In a few districts, magnet schools have broadened into a "controlled choice plan." In these places parents identify their preferred public schools, and their children are assigned to those schools in ways that promote racial and

ethnic balance in each school. The most fully developed and best-known cases are in Montclair, New Jersey, and Cambridge, Massachusetts.[6] A few school districts are moving toward controlled choice plans that focus on family income in addition to or instead of race and ethnicity. Here too choice is seen as an instrument of collective as well as individual goals of schooling.

Charter schools represent another type of choice with a very different history and purpose. These are schools that receive public funding but are often established independent of any regular school district. In the roughly two-thirds of states that recognize them, any individual or group can propose a charter school; the charter is granted by a university, state department of education, school district, chamber of commerce, or other entity designated by the law of that state. Charter schools are freed from many, though not all, regulations governing public schools, and they have more leeway to choose students, pick staff, design curricula, and create a particular atmosphere than do regular schools. In turn they must meet the specified achievement goals or other conditions of their charter in a few years or go out of business. Charter schools are thus something of a hybrid between public and private schools; their proponents see them as a way of "breaking the mold" of rigidified public schools. Depending on their sponsors' vision, they may focus solely on promoting individual success or they may pursue collective goals of opportunity, diversity, and democratic participation as well.

The most controversial and publicly visible form of school choice moves out of the public arena into private and sometimes parochial schools. Some proponents seek laws to grant public funds to children in order to pay some or all of their tuition at private or religious schools. They may focus on poor children, children of color, children in a particular location, or simply any child whose family wants to participate. Other proponents of choice are even more ambitious: they would like to see, eventually, the elimination of all "government-run schools" so that all schools become what we now term "private" and all children can use their public funds to help them attend any school they choose. As former superintendent Keegan puts it, "The nation's education profession should supply an array of schools from which parents may choose, and the state should limit its role to ensuring fair access and reporting on academic quality at each school."[7] As with charter schools, the reasons for endorsing private school choice vary. Most focus solely or primarily on promoting individual success. But others incorporate or even insist on the pursuit of collective goals, particularly equal opportunity for children of color, or group-oriented objectives for children in particular religious or cultural communities.

Public school choice is increasingly widespread and widely supported from presidents down to educators and parents. It sometimes reduces racial and class separation, it usually increases parents' satisfaction with public schools, and with

education. Charter schools are growing rapidly but still involve a small fraction of public school children. They can bring excitement and commitment into the public school system. But they also have a substantial potential to increase racial and class separation, and there is no good evidence yet on whether they actually improve or equalize achievement. They make sense as an educational experiment, at least in poor districts, but so far that is all.

Private school choice financed by public funds involves only a tiny fraction of public school students—fewer than a tenth of one percent. There is no persuasive evidence that it improves the quality of schooling for the children who use it, and there is some reason to fear that it may harm the quality of schooling of the many who remain behind. It also challenges the very *publicness* of education, which is deeply troubling in a country with almost no institutions other than public schools that reach across all citizens for a large fraction of their lives, and no other institutions that play such a central role in promoting the American dream. At this point there is also no reason to think that private school choice has a chance of succeeding politically except in a few idiosyncratic cases. While plenty must be done to improve the public schools, vouchers are therefore not a feasible solution to the inequities and inadequacies of public education. The American dream requires an American institution to teach it, sustain it, and provide the tools children need to pursue it; public schools are still the best lever we have for improving the quality of individuals' lives and the quality of democratic governance in the United States. Even if vouchers would create desirable alternatives in a few places that need them, a huge array of fragmented, privatized, inward-looking schools simply cannot create the atmosphere in which the ideology of the American dream will thrive.

The History of School Choice

At various points in the past half century, school choice has been associated with reformers from both the right and the left of the political spectrum. And although the majority of current choice advocates are politically conservative, some alliances have recently developed across political lines. Nobel laureate economist Milton Friedman initially broached publicly funded vouchers for private schools in the mid-1950s as a way for parents to escape the stultifying effects of governmentally imposed uniformity. He predicted that "if present public expenditures on schooling were made available to parents regardless of where they send their children, a wide variety of schools would spring up to meet the demand. Parents could express their views about schools directly by withdrawing their children from one school and sending them to another, to a much greater extent than is now possible." According to this theory, being able to choose between schools would benefit everyone, just as being able to

choose where one works or lives increases everyone's well-being. As Friedman put it, "Here, as in other fields, competitive enterprise is likely to be far more efficient in meeting consumer demand than either nationalized enterprises [i.e. public schools] or enterprises run to serve other purposes. . . . A market permits each to satisfy his own taste . . . , whereas the political process imposes conformity."[8] He was echoing insights of Adam Smith two centuries earlier, with little more expectation than Smith had that they would ever be put into practice.

Libertarians and people who supported market-based reforms were indeed intrigued by Friedman's idea, but the first real effort to create "freedom of choice" took place in the late 1950s within public schools, as part by the attempt of southern whites to resist substantial desegregation. In principle black parents were permitted to transfer their children to better, predominantly white schools; in practice they were strongly discouraged from applying to these schools and excluded if they did. In addition, many southern school districts authorized transfers upon parental request to make sure that "no child shall be compelled to attend any school in which the races are commingled," to quote the Alabama statute.[9] The language of these laws was neutral, the practice not at all so: encouraging one set of choices and discouraging another set was generally enough to keep schools firmly segregated while pretending to comply with the ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*.

The first serious educational effort to create choice between public and private schools came from people with a very different political orientation from Friedman or the segregationists. Members of the countercultural left in the 1960s promoted alternative schools, sometimes known as independent or free schools. Their goal, explained in 1973 by a professor active in the alternative schools movement, was to respond to what they heard as children's "cries for freedom from the manipulation of adults in order to explore self, interpersonal relations, and cognitive curiosities, whether these lead to status mobility or not."[10] In cities such as Boston, Washington, Chicago, St. Louis, and San Francisco, opponents of "the Establishment" set up private schools mainly for poor and non-Anglo children, with an educational program intended to empower and liberate them. Some were desegregated and focused on diversity; others were all black and focused on "blackology"—a predecessor of what we now describe as emancipatory multiculturalism or Afrocentrism. In a few cases, well-off white members of alternative communities created rural free schools to protect their children from mainstream political and social influences.[11] By 1970 the New Schools Exchange, an information clearinghouse for free schools, listed over 1,000 alternative schools nationwide, mostly private and independent.

Proponents of alternative schools shared with Friedman the view that public schools were the enemy, despite the fact that they had very different visions of what schooling should do. Also like Friedman they came to see that

without public funding their vision could not solidify and grow. By 1970 alternative educators were calling for governmental tuition vouchers for private independent schools, and the *New Republic*, then a magazine far left of center, promoted the cause. Leftists were thus the only reformers willing to take up the standing offer from President Lyndon Johnson's Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) to provide federal funding to school districts willing to conduct a voucher experiment.

The first instance of school choice with public funding was in the small working-class district of Alum Rock, California. The experiment was inconclusive and not very encouraging. It was intended to last five years, but after two years of innovation the program fell apart. Even at its height it was subject to so many restrictions that market forces had little chance to operate; although the (liberal) OEO wanted to include private schools, for example, the California legislature refused. Schools that were supposedly organized around different themes did not appear very distinct from one another; that mattered little, in any case, because parents chose schools based on location and other features that had little to do with thematic content. In the end few families participated in the experiment, and it failed.[12]

During the 1970s, in small part as a response to alternative schools but mostly as a reaction to desegregation efforts, conservatives focused on the importance of neighborhood schools, which permitted children to be near their homes, community members to work together to improve local schools, and parents to have easy access to teachers and principals. But by the 1980s, as part of a more general argument about the virtues of markets, conservatives began to support school choice; their position gained strength as Americans' overall faith in government appeared to decline. In the 1990s market conservatives were joined by groups favoring separate education for specific racial or religious groups, enthusiasts for particular pedagogical techniques, and some reformers who despaired of eliminating racial and class segregation in large urban schools.

By now a fascinating mix of people argues that choice among schools is the best, or only, way to promote the American dream through schooling. Most, like President George W. Bush, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, focus on the individual goals of education, on ways to improve children's chances to pursue their private dreams. Some also believe that parents ought to have a greater say in the way their children are educated, asserting that schooling decisions cannot be left to the state without an unacceptable loss of liberty. "Educational choice," says the mission statement of the Milton and Rose D. Friedman Foundation, "means that parents are given back a basic American ideal of freedom to choose as it applies to the education of their children." The Institute for Justice, a libertarian think tank and law firm, similarly promises to engage in litigation in order to "transfer power over basic educational deci-

such fundamental change can our nation deliver on its promise of educational freedom and opportunity."[13]

Some voucher supporters address the collective goals of schooling, seeking choice because they believe it will enhance opportunities for the worst-off children in the worst schools to achieve the American dream. A few in this group are white liberals such as Robert Reich, former secretary of labor in President Clinton's administration. In 2000 he argued for "giving kids 'progressive' vouchers that are inversely tied to the size of their family's income. . . . There is a powerful case for giving every possible advantage to better-behaved poor kids who are fortunate enough to have caring parents. School vouchers offer them an escape route."[14]

Others are concerned less with class and more with race or other distinct characteristics that put some children at an educational disadvantage. The Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO) argues that "Without a good education" African American children

> will have no real chance to engage in the practice of freedom: the process of engaging in the fight to transform their world. . . . We need systems that truly empower parents, that allow dollars to follow students, that hold adults as well as students accountable for academic achievement, and that alter the power arrangements that are the foundation for existing systems.

Other prominent African Americans, such as former Democratic member of Congress Floyd Flake and former Baltimore mayor Kurt Schmoke, also endorse vouchers, using similar language. The Hispanic Council for Reform and Educational Options joined an amicus brief to the Supreme Court urging it to sustain a voucher program in Cleveland that provides public funding for poor children to attend private or parochial schools. The National Council of La Raza (the nation's largest constituency-based Hispanic organization) is sponsoring 50 new Latino charter schools, with a budget of $25 million, on the simple grounds that "the public school system has failed Latino children."[15]

Libertarians generally have little in common with those seeking racial transformation or economic equality. But occasionally market-oriented conservatives and progressive advocates for particular groups ally, and in a few cases they have succeeded. Milwaukee's voucher program is the best-known case of a state law permitting public funds to be used for private school choice. Its progenitors were state representative Polly Williams, a former welfare recipient, Black Panther, and state chair of Jesse Jackson's presidential campaign; Clint Bolick, cofounder of the Institute for Justice; and Republican governor Tommy Thompson.[16] A mix of leftist (often racially nationalist) local activists and right-wing (often libertarian) choice advocates made possible the voucher plan in Cleveland and the statewide public choice plans of Minnesota and Massachusetts. Nevertheless, it has been conserva-

school choice over the past decade and provided the greatest rhetorical support for private choice programs.

Choice in Practice: Public Schools

Public school choice plays a much greater role in the educational system than private school choice. A few school systems have run public choice programs for years, ranging from magnet schools and controlled choice plans to programs promoting academic specialization at various sites, most notably in East Harlem, a densely populated, heavily minority district in New York City. Public school choice has also been used occasionally to create ethnically or culturally based schools serving an entire district, as in the case of Milwaukee's experiment with Afrocentric schools during the early 1990s.[17]

By 1999 about 15 percent of children in the United States were attending public schools within their own districts that their parents had selected. As of 1999, public school choice was more available in urban areas than elsewhere. As a result, poor children were more than twice as likely as well-off children to attend choice schools. The number of African American students in choice schools was double the number of Anglos; Latinos were somewhere in the middle. Forty percent of districts in the west and almost 30 percent in the midwest, many relatively homogeneous, offer some sort of intradistrict public school choice program. The proportion declines in the South and especially in the Northeast.[18]

Students move within a district for a variety of reasons. One unusually detailed study found that kindergarten parents in Minneapolis typically did not choose schools that produced high test scores or showed strong evidence of improving children's achievement. Instead they chose schools near their homes, schools mostly populated by students of the same race or ethnicity as their own child, or schools whose students appeared to have an ability level similar to that of their own child. Central-city parents are best characterized as having very low levels of information about schools even when they are required by the district to choose among them.[19]

There is little evidence on how intradistrict choice plans affect participants with regard to either individual or collective goals of schooling, and even less evidence on their effects for all students in a district. The best study focused on Chicago, where about half of high school students opt out of their neighborhood schools. It found that choice had little impact on the degree of racial segregation within the district (even though the choice program began as an effort to desegregate Chicago's public schools). Choice did, however, lead to "dramatically increased sorting by ability; high ability students are much more likely to opt out of their neighborhood schools and virtually all travel involves

attending a school with higher-ability peers." Students who chose to move graduated at a higher rate than students who did not, but this was probably the result of their self-selection rather than the move itself. That is, these students are typically among the most able and have unusually high motivation—qualities that would make them more likely to graduate in any case. The researchers concluded that intradistrict choice by itself neither harmed those who remained in neighborhood schools nor demonstrably helped those who moved. Career academies showed a slightly different pattern: students in the middle of the ability distribution were most likely to attend them, and those students were more likely to graduate than similar students who did not move into such academies. Again, however, it is not possible to fully sort out the separate effects of the move itself and the students' motivation and self-selection, so the researchers were reluctant to come to any conclusions about the effects of choice on student outcomes.[20]

Intradistrict public school choice programs do not usually raise serious funding issues, change the accountability structure for teachers, or alter the governance structure of the district. Thus they are not nearly as controversial as other forms of choice, and they receive strong public support—about 70 percent in recent surveys.[21] Almost all politicians of both parties endorse them, and parents of students in intradistrict choice plans are generally satisfied. Their educational impact is probably minimal, but the high level of satisfaction with them strengthens parental attachment to the public schools as the central institution for realizing the American dream. Where they do not result in increased segregation or stratification, where the movement of students does not hurt those left behind, these plans make sense.

Seventeen states also have mandated interdistrict public choice plans, and another 14 have plans in which districts may choose to participate. These plans are more complicated than intradistrict ones: transportation problems can create substantial obstacles and funding issues across district lines can be difficult. In particular, where property taxes account for a high share of school resources or where spending disparities among districts are large, substantial political controversy has developed on the issue of how much local money follows a child to another district.

The greatest restriction on interdistrict choice, however, is the strong preference of parents to send their children to schools in their own neighborhoods or towns. In the 1990s an average of 5 percent of eligible students participated in choice plans across districts. Some parents or students select a school for its more convenient location or for idiosyncratic personal reasons: one urban student chose a suburban school because "I'd always wanted to go to Westridge. I just like the name." In other cases transfers demonstrate "upward filtering," in which students enroll in districts or schools with higher test scores or wealthier families. Some African American students who traveled from St. Louis to

its whiter suburbs every day, for example, particularly appreciated "classes that will help you with college," or "good teachers and good counselors," or the fact that "they give you the freedom to be grown up, young adults." In still other cases, students for some reason transfer away from districts with higher test scores, honors courses, or graduation rates than the ones they choose to go to.[22] In Wisconsin almost no low-income students apply for transfers even though they could receive free transportation to another, sometimes better, district. In Michigan and Wisconsin, affluent or growing districts typically do not participate in interdistrict choice plans: their students do not need to filter upwards and the districts do not want new students from other districts. Whatever their reason, parents appreciate having the choice: "You have some options," says a mother in Wisconsin. "It's not necessarily that one school system is better or worse than another. . . . One system may meet the needs of a certain child but not necessarily another child. And so, what works for one doesn't always work for the other."[23]

As with intradistrict choice, there is very little evidence on the effects of interdistrict choice on various goals of education; what evidence we have suggests little measurable impact. A comparison with other nations that have longer and more extensive experience with school choice helps to fill that evidentiary gap, though lessons from such comparisons must be taken cautiously. The British educational system, for example, permits parents to choose any public school in England or Wales, subject to space constraints; funding to schools follows the students. The number of students choosing their schools has increased considerably since the program began in 1989 and now reaches over 1,200,000 in England, about 15 percent of public school students. Segregation of poor children in secondary schools declined for the first eight years of the program, after which it started to rise, although it has not reached the original level. Schools that control their own admissions are much less likely to have a proportional share of low-income students than other schools. Average student achievement scores have increased steadily and substantially; achievement gaps have diminished by gender, ethnicity, and region, and between the highest- and lowest-achieving students, although not by socioeconomic class. The authors of this comprehensive study conclude that "education in the U.K. would appear to be moving in the right direction."[24]

Like intradistrict public school choice, interdistrict choice seems on balance to be a good policy. It provides some students with the chance for a better educational alternative or just a new start; it can thus help a few students pursue their dreams. As we will see, however, the politics of race and class mean that too few students can participate for public school choice to be a major solution to the problems of unequal opportunity and declining diversity within student bodies.

Choice in Practice: Charter Schools

More controversy and harder judgment calls arise with charter schools. They provoke passionate reactions, for and against. A former assistant secretary of education characterized them as "schooling based on freedom, innovation, choice, and accountability, . . . a new model for public education"; the head of a state teachers' union, in contrast, called them an "idea . . . hijacked by profiteers and ideologues, . . . an abandonment of public education."[25] Charter schools typically have a contract that sets eligibility criteria for attending the school, achievement targets and deadlines, and relevant regulations. The charter may include waivers that permit the school to hire teachers who are not licensed or not members of unions, to give salaries and pension rights that differ from those in public schools, to offer curricula and set graduation standards unlike those of public schools, and to provide fewer and less frequent reports to state authorities.

Depending on their nature and extent, these regulatory waivers can provide a limited or broad challenge to aspects of the public system and its vested interests, such as teachers' unions. If waivers are extensive and achievement goals clear, charter schools can respond to many of the criticisms raised by critics of reform; they can, for example, more easily innovate in teaching methods or develop curricula more tailored to particular student needs than conventional public schools. In sufficient numbers they could theoretically provide a high level of competition with each other and with conventional public schools. However, they could also further fragment and stratify public education and draw resources and support from the public schools.

Charter schools vary enormously from one another. One was founded in 1997 in Princeton, New Jersey, a wealthy school district with both a very well educated set of (mostly white) residents and a substantial and poorer non-Anglo enrollment. By almost any standards, its public schools are near the top. But some parents believe that the schools have succumbed to fads and too many progressive shibboleths. The charter school prides itself on "drill and skill," using textbooks from a series called "The Classics"; its mission statement calls for "a rigorous curriculum that requires mastery of core knowledge and skills." So far the Princeton Charter School offers education only in elementary grades. A quarter of the eligible students in the public school system have applied for admission, which is by lottery (some of the founders' children were not admitted the first year it opened). The school is small and has small classes, which may be part of its attraction. Whatever the reason, this is a place concerned entirely with the individual goals of education rather than the needs of the wider community, and focused only on its direct participants.

Barely 50 miles south of Princeton is Nueva Esperanza, whose students are Latinos from a poor north Philadelphia [illegible]

says 18-year-old freshman Mark Cruz, "The door was always wide open, you could do anything you wanted to, there were always fires in the school." Perhaps not surprisingly, "I was not learning in there"; were it not for this new school, "I'd be dropped out." The force behind Nueva Esperanza and a group of other new charter schools for Hispanic students is Anthony Colón from the National Council of La Raza. Latinos, he says, are "not getting what they need from the public schools for a whole host of reasons." In a charter school, however, "we're able to provide . . . a sense of mission. You own it." Danny Cortés, the chief administrative officer of Nueva Esperanza, echoes him: "I want a private-school feel in a public institution. We want to create the traditions, . . . the ethos and culture" of a school committed to its students. He also wants the school to reflect the students' ethnic heritage; although all classes are taught in English, everyone must study Spanish. "I don't want to be a ghetto," says Mr. Cortés, "but we want the place to express who they are, culturally. We want that to be affirmed." The school is far from scorning individual achievement—"I really want those kids to be competing with you for your job," says Mr. Colón—but it is committed to the collective goal of equalizing opportunity and the group-based goal of cultural affirmation. This distinguishes it sharply from the Princeton Charter School.[26]

The profiles and goals of charter schools differ, but they all carry the weight of their founders' high hopes. So far this enthusiasm rests more on faith than on facts. Nueva Esperanza includes only two grades so far, and like the Princeton Charter School, is very new. In general, charter schools are too new and too diffuse for there to be systematic evidence on whether they improve students' achievement more than regular public schools. One prominent supporter, Paul Hill of the University of Washington, is unusually blunt: "As for are students doing better or worse, they [states or chartering agencies] haven't got a clue. We haven't figured out the difference between success and failure." A recent analysis by the Rand Corporation of charter schools, based largely on evaluations of charters in Texas and Arizona, nevertheless calls for "cautious optimism" about their effects on students' learning.[27]

So far two-thirds of the states have authorized charter schools. Since they began a decade ago, their numbers have grown fast, and there are now about 2,500; most are concentrated in Arizona, California, Michigan, Texas, and Florida. They are usually very small schools, and together they enroll roughly 1 percent of all public school students in the nation.[28] They are clearly not yet an alternative to a national public system, and no one can predict with confidence whether they will continue to grow at the same pace.

Although a majority of Americans admit to knowing nothing about charter schools, a majority consistently supports their creation when asked for an opinion.[29] Surveys of parents and their children in charter schools can be misleading, since many of those who are dissatisfied or disappointed have presumably left. Nevertheless, their overall tone is positive. In a poll taken by one advocate, three-fifths of charter students say their teachers are better than in the old schools (only 5 percent say they are worse), and half say they are more interested in their school work (compared with 8 percent who report less interest). In the same poll, substantial majorities of participating parents report that charters are better than their children's former schools in everything from class size and quality of teaching to curriculum, academic standards, and discipline. More neutral surveys also provide evidence of parents' and students' enthusiasm as well as greater parental involvement with the schools and more services from the schools. Even the NEA (hardly a group of enthusiastic proponents) found that three-fourths of charter teachers would choose to teach in a charter school if they were to decide again despite the fact that salaries are no higher and job security is lower; only one-tenth would not.[30] Greater options do provide higher satisfaction for all kinds of participants in charter schools; it is just not clear that they provide any better results.

In a majority of the 21 states with a relatively large number of charter school students, they enroll a higher proportion of nonwhite students than do regular public schools. About half of these states also have a disproportionate number of poor children enrolled in charter schools. In Illinois and Ohio, in fact, almost 70 percent of charter school students, but only 30 per cent of regular school students, are poor. If charter schools can help these poor children to catch up to others, they will promote the American dream; to quote an advocate, "We have a deeply inequitable public school system in which the wealthy already have school choice. . . . The charter approach expands options for families who have the fewest options now."[31]

A serious problem remains. Except in relatively homogeneous districts, charter schools that focus on poor or non-Anglo children, like those that appeal to wealthier or white children, will reduce diversity and make it harder for students to engage comfortably with those different from themselves. Right now, overall, there is a higher proportion of nonwhite students in charter schools than in regular schools, roughly even proportions of poor students and English language learners, and a much lower proportion of students with disabilities. But compared with other schools in their own districts, charter schools sometimes have many more, or many fewer, nonwhite students.[32]

This pattern is consistent with a variety of studies showing that when public school choice is available, parents (especially white parents) typically choose schools in which their children will not be in a racial or socioeconomic minority. Washington, D.C., for example, has a Web site with a variety of information on all District schools so that parents can choose among them. Since it was made available, almost a third of parents—more than looked at any other single piece of information—checked information on students' race and class very early in their search process. They look next at school location; very few examine information on teacher quality. Highly educated parents are especially likely to focus on student demographics (and then on test scores).[33] Similarly,

a study of 1,006 charter school households in Texas found that even though no parents claimed to care about shared race or ethnicity when choosing a charter school, each group (blacks, Anglos, and Hispanics) ended up in schools that had considerably more members of their own race or ethnicity than the schools that they had left. These results held even when the analyst controlled for a variety of parental and school characteristics.[34] As with other experiences with parental choice, then, the early evidence on charter schools suggests that they are more likely than not to increase the overall level of racial and ethnic isolation in the school system.[35]

Charter (or other public) schools run by profit-making companies, rather than by nonprofits or individual reformers, can raise additional difficult issues. In general these schools look like most other charters: the company agrees to run the school for the same per-pupil cost to the district as a similarly situated public or charter school, and in exchange promises to reach a predetermined set of student achievement levels or other academic objectives. At the same time, the company hopes to make a profit if it can run the school for less. This approach can produce efficiencies, particularly in the delivery of custodial, cafeteria, and other support services. But since most of a school's budget goes into salaries for staff, the greatest potential savings comes from replacing union with nonunion teaching personnel or from replacing some teachers entirely with computer-based instruction. Substantial savings can also come from receiving waivers from special education regulations of various kinds. This was the basic approach when Education Alternatives, Inc., (EAI) tried to run the Hartford schools in the mid-1990s; it is not an approach that has been shown to enhance student achievement.

All charter schools are unstable because they can be closed if they do not meet their mandates, and some have been closed because of financial or educational malfeasance.[36] But for-profit schools face an additional level of instability. Profit-making companies are subject to the vagaries of financial markets, takeover or bankruptcy, or problems in the company's other corporate divisions that drain financial and personnel resources. In addition, at present only a few companies are in this business; school districts can therefore face a real dilemma when a company's initial contract expires and the company seeks to set more expensive or less responsive terms. Most importantly, when the company appears to protect profits and eliminate services at the expense of children, trust between parents and schools can be broken; this situation greatly contributed to the termination of the EAI contract in Hartford. While none of these problems necessarily follow for-profit charter schools, few school districts have been willing to take the risk. Most parents are just as reluctant, as demonstrated in New York City by the overwhelming rejection of a plan to allow a for-profit charter company to take over even five very troubled public schools.[37]

Charter enthusiasts promise that they will enhance the education not only

Lieberman, the Democratic senator from Connecticut, argues, for example, that "competition from charter schools is the best way to motivate the ossified bureaucracies governing too many public schools. This grass-roots revolution seeks to reconnect public education with our most basic values: ingenuity, responsibility, and accountability." The evidence is mixed on whether charter schools do, or do not, induce constructive reforms in noncharter schools. Some public schools in districts with charters have become more energetic themselves, advertising in the local media, trying to reduce costs by outsourcing noneducational services, or enhancing preschool programs. In other places school leaders ignore or know little about nearby charters. In a few cases, schools may even be pleased that a charter is easing pressure by removing disaffected parents or unhappy children.[38] So far, in fact, charter schools' main impact has been in the political arena; despite some hostility from both public school educators and voucher proponents, they have provided a compromise between those who would focus on reform within the public system and those who would replace it with a broad private choice program.

The evidence is similarly mixed on whether charter schools are themselves very innovative. Advocates see them as "seedbeds of innovation and educational diversity," but reliable academic studies find that "when compared with traditional public schools, many charter schools seem unremarkable." Founders of charters most often describe their goals as "realiz[ing] an alternative vision" focused on curricular or instructional innovations intended to improve individual achievement, in the words of the most extensive survey. In contrast, about a quarter seek mainly to "serve a special population of students."[39] Advantage Schools, a for-profit charter school company, sees the core "customer base" as one that "crave[s] a school setting that is orderly and safe and focused and on task. And that's the brand we endeavor to provide them with."[40] It is too soon to tell whether any consistent pattern of educational innovation will actually result from these various goals.

In sum, many states promote charter schools (for different reasons), and most citizens endorse them; they have some unrealized potential to bring energy and innovation into the education system, and they may spur on the public schools. They can, however, also further separate the student body along racial, ethnic, or class lines and can draw funds and support from the public schools; for these reasons they do not make nearly as much sense in districts with schools that are good or have problems that can be rectified with some concentrated effort. In those places potential charter school parents can provide a strong force for reform; in those places it is best to keep the money and parental attention focused on schools for all children.

In contrast, in overwhelmingly poor, minority districts where schools are failing, problems are widespread, and reform will take many years, an experi-

myriad of obstacles in the acquisition of education for our kids," says Rev. Luis Cortés, who heads an organization in Philadelphia beginning a charter school, "anything that is innovative, that is different, that tries [to do better] is being welcomed."[41] Charter schools in districts like this can hardly increase the existing high level of segregation, and they may help to equalize opportunity as well as give some students a better chance to pursue their dreams. This is a situation in which experimentation makes real sense.

It is "as yet unclear," in the words of a careful researcher, whether charter schools will "prove to be a public alternative that encourages greater performance in the system as a whole . . . or to be a minor passing fad."[42] They are too new, too few, too diverse, too mutable, and too bereft of careful evaluation to allow any strong conclusion about their impact on the realization of the American dream.

New Zealand, which created a national system of charter schools a decade ago, may offer a perspective on what a more extensive system of charters might mean in the United States over the long term. It devolved authority to local public schools with elected boards of trustees, eliminated most central governmental regulations, and allowed students to choose among schools, a change that won the approval of most New Zealanders. Edward Fiske, the former education reporter for the *New York Times*, and Helen Ladd, an educational economist at Duke University, have evaluated this reform with an eye toward its implications for choice programs in the United States. They found that most parents in New Zealand evaluate a school by the class and race of its students. As a result, schools with the highest-status students are oversubscribed, so they can choose among applicants. Average performance in these popular schools has improved; some minority and poor white children have been admitted to them, and evidence shows that those students receive a better education than they would have under the old system. However, New Zealand's schools overall are more polarized by race, ethnicity, and class than a decade ago, and average performance in less popular (that is, mostly poor and predominantly nonwhite) schools has declined. The least popular schools are caught in a spiral of failure where "rolls decline, which leads to a reduction in staff, which affects the quality of the academic program, which makes it even more difficult to attract skilled staff," which further reduces rolls. These schools have stumbled along for a decade, and only recently has the government recognized that they need many more resources and much more help than simply advice on how better to manage budgets and personnel. Few schools, even the most successful, are very innovative or seek to appeal to students outside the mainstream; they are too dependent on attracting parents who turn out to be quite conservative in their curricular and pedagogical choices.[43]

All this is consistent with the evidence so far on charter schools here and with our knowledge of parental preferences in the United States. The authors "highlight the fact that the competitive system increased the disparities among schools not only in terms of the ethnic and SES [socioeconomic] level of the students but also in terms of student performance." They conclude that "other countries . . . would have to be extremely vigilant . . . to avoid similar outcomes."[44]

Private and Parochial School Choice

A broad choice program, one that provided public funds to help pay the tuition of students at any parochial or private school in the state, would obviously present the greatest challenge to the current system of public schooling. The system would no longer be public in the same sense and it would no longer be subject to democratic control in the same way. The public schools would no longer be the central institution chosen by Americans to put into practice the various values of the American dream. Some voucher proponents endorse both individual and collective goals of the dream, and some add group-specific goals as well, but many focus mainly on individual achievement and are willing to take substantial risks with the other goals in its name. All believe that public schools have failed to incorporate all children into the dream because they are deeply, perhaps irremediably, flawed. Moderate supporters make this claim about troubled inner city schools; the strongest proponents make it about the whole system, which should in their view be abandoned. In the first category is the angry mother in Cleveland who is tired "of being told to stick it out and wait because they [public schools] will eventually improve. But my children and all children cannot wait. Their lives cannot be put on hold until the public schools improve." The *Wall Street Journal* sometimes provides the rhetoric for those less moderate: test scores, it says, show "not simply failure. This is mass fraud. And in an economy that increasingly puts a premium on skills, this is a system condemning too many . . . children to second-class citizenship in the American Dream. What these kids need is not more money thrown in but more back doors opened up."[45]

Voucher proponents are right about the dismal state of some public schools, particularly those attended by poor children in poor neighborhoods. But they are not right in claiming that a system of market-based schools will solve the educational problems of those children. There is little evidence on the effects of private and parochial school choice through vouchers, and what we have is inconclusive. There is overwhelming evidence, however, on the ability of better-off parents to insulate their children from poor (and often non-Anglo) classmates. Vouchers will be not be politically acceptable to the majority of Americans if they are designed to move more than small numbers of poor children into middle-class schools, and they will not be educationally effective if they just move poor children from public to private schools with almost the same proportion of poor children. Markets cannot solve, and could even

exacerbate, the educational problems created by the preference of parents for class (and racial) separation.

The idea of vouchers has a more general, deeper, flaw as well. Public schools are the only institution in which, in principle, all American children have equal standing and are expected to interact on the same footing. They are also the only institution in which, in principle, American children are taught to become good citizens through learning a common core of knowledge, acquiring a common set of democratic values and practices, and developing a common commitment to their nation and its people. That some public schools fail to achieve these goals is a deep problem, but the collective goals of the American dream are too important for failure to mean that we should give up on the public system.

This does not mean that all public schools deserve to be protected or that private and parochial schools do not benefit their students. It does not imply that educators bear no blame for children's failure or that incentives for improved performance would not help. It certainly does not mean that experiments in private choice should not be carefully evaluated to see if we can learn lessons to help children in the worst schools. But broad claims on behalf of publicly funded, systemwide, private or parochial school choice are empirically unwarranted and ideologically destructive.

Despite all the talk about vouchers, the United States has had very few broad choice plans involving public funding of private or parochial school tuition. The only ones have been in Milwaukee, where an initially small program recently expanded and now includes parochial schools, a similar program in Cleveland, a new statewide program for failing schools in Florida that quickly ran into trouble in state courts, and small programs in Vermont and Maine. In total they involve about 15,000 children—less than a tenth of 1 percent of all K-12 students. (There are also privately funded experiments in roughly 90 districts around the nation, including Indianapolis, San Antonio, and New York City, involving about 60,000 low-income students. They remain private and usually operate on a small scale in any one location, so up to this point they have raised few challenges to public schools.)[46]

The Supreme Court recently decided, in *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris*, that it is constitutional for public funds to be used to pay tuition to religious schools. Since over three-quarters of private school students now attend such schools, this decision could permit a substantial expansion of broad choice plans. It will certainly make it easier for groups of parents united by ideology, religion, or values to assert their right to control the education of their children and have their tax money support the schools that their groups favor.[47] States have until recently accommodated these parents' desires mainly by permitting home schooling[48] or by providing limited support for services to some students enrolled in private or parochial schools. Using public funds on a wider scale to support schools sponsored by churches or other religious groups will clearly

Most advocates of broad choice programs, however, probably care less about group-based goals than about enabling individual students to pursue success. As the mission statement of the pro-voucher Institute for Justice puts it, "Our vision is one of individual initiative and opportunity, not group rights and entitlements."[49] Advocates also argue that families pursuing success for their own children will enhance the possibility that others will also find success. That is, regardless of income, all parents with vouchers and sufficient information about school quality would be able to patronize successful schools and thereby provide motivation for other schools to improve or go out of business. Schools seeking students would specialize enough for parents to find one that matches their goals, and some would experiment enough to find the right mechanisms for promoting success. These would attract more parents and imitators—thereby improving the quality of yet other schools. This system requires a high level of school autonomy and therefore a minimum of district-level management or direct democratic control by the public at large.

Finally, some advocates believe that vouchers promote fairness, participatory democracy, and engagement with public debate as well as improved quality of education. Subsidies in their view would enhance fairness by giving poor parents the same freedom to choose a private or parochial school that wealthier parents have always had. The very fact of choosing, they continue, will encourage parents and their children to care more about their schools and to become more involved in decision making within the schools.[50] As political scientists Paul Peterson and David Campbell put it, "Students who attend non-government schools . . . are . . . not being taught to withdraw from civic life but to practice it in a certain way. . . . In fact, many parents who have removed their children from government schools have done so to re-attach them to a civic idea." Thus in this view a properly managed voucher program would promote individual *and* group-based educational goals, *and* it would strengthen the community in ways consistent with the collective goals of the American dream. They believe, in short, that "teachers will be more effective, parents more engaged, students increasingly challenged, and minority learning problems better addressed."[51]

Opponents of broad choice programs worry, however, that market-based incentives will result in low-cost, low-quality schools. They fear that without careful monitoring schools will hire unqualified teachers and cut corners on safety, financial safeguards, and facilities. They are skeptical about the quality and extent of information about teaching likely to be available to and used by parents, especially those with little education, thin social networks, or poor English language skills. They are concerned about what will happen to students when schools close or move or when public schools, especially in poor districts, lose essential funds, innovative teachers, and engaged parents to the private sector.

gravity [in the debate over school choice] is shifting is simple: vouchers seem to work,"[61] but that conclusion is not warranted.

Three results do consistently appear in evaluations of voucher programs. Parents are generally more satisfied than they were with their child's previous school, and children frequently, though not always, behave better when they move to a private school with a voucher; not surprisingly, the more satisfied they are, the more likely they are to stay in the new school. Second, in relatively large programs, a substantial number of eligible students choose not to participate. In Milwaukee the program now permits about 15,000 students to participate, but fewer than 11,000 have enrolled. In Edgewood, Texas, where the entire student population of over 13,000 were offered privately funded vouchers, only 1,655 accepted the offer in 2001. In the second year of a program in Florida, about 8,900 children in 10 schools were made eligible to receive vouchers to transfer; parents of only 659 had applied for vouchers by the beginning of the school year in 2002. Finally, where they have the option, most voucher students end up in religious schools; as the pro-voucher Friedman Foundation puts it, "No current school choice program of significant size can exist without the inclusion of parochial schools."[62]

Analysts do not agree on whether voucher programs affect the quality of the public school system at all, never mind whether the effects are beneficial or harmful. And even choice advocates agree that small-scale experiments tell us little, if anything, about the likely impact of vouchers if their scale were to be dramatically increased within a single district or across many districts. In the words of the most recent study of vouchers by the Rand Corporation, "Even if the experimental findings are methodologically sound, they may be imperfect predictors of the achievement effects of more generous, publicly funded voucher and charter programs that would bring in a larger segment of the population" and a different set of schools.[63]

Voucher proponents naturally want a big experiment to settle the question of the impact of a large-scale program, but they are unlikely to get one, for political and substantive reasons. Opponents are likely to block or distort a major experiment, as they did in Alum Rock, California; voters are likely to reject it, as they have every time they have been asked in a referendum. And school districts are likely to refuse to cooperate with it, as would any organization asked to undermine itself. Evaluations are also intrusive: educators in Edgewood and the three comparison districts threw the evaluators out after one year. Finally, the substantive evidence on large-scale voucher systems in other nations will not impress anyone who cares about the role of schools in promoting the American dream.

In 1980, for example, Chile implemented a voucher plan similar to that now advocated by American proponents. Private schools were deregulated and fully subsidized if they chose to participate in the system, and they now compete for students with deregulated locally run public schools in most metropolitan areas. Private schools were allowed to charge fees and screen students; teachers' unions were essentially eliminated after 1990, as were national curricula and national standards.

By 1990 three-quarters of the poorest 40 percent of the children attended municipal public schools, and three-quarters of the richest 20 percent attended subsidized or elite private schools. During this first decade, achievement test scores overall remained about the same, with slight gains for middle-income students and slight losses for poor students. In the second decade, under a new governmental regime, the schools received much more funding, overall achievement rates rose, and the gap between highest- and lowest-scoring schools declined somewhat. Since 1996, however, improvements have stalled and debate over the effectiveness of the 1990s reforms has risen. Two careful evaluators of this experiment have found that "non-religious and profit maximizing voucher schools . . . [were] marginally less effective than public schools in producing Spanish and mathematics achievement in the fourth grade. . . . [They] are even less effective than public schools when they are located outside of the capital. . . . Catholic voucher schools . . . [were] able to achieve higher test scores for similar students but only by spending more." Even the pro-choice *Economist* points out that "poorer parents lack information and cannot afford the bus fare to more distant schools in better-off areas. Neither can bad teachers or heads be easily sacked."[64] As in New Zealand's extensive charter school system, parents like having more choices, but overall, achievement scores changed in different directions for different sets of children, and schools became more separated by socioeconomic class. Neither those who put a priority on individual goals of schooling nor those who care most about group-based or collective goals should want to emulate this experience in the United States.

A broad voucher program in the United States would represent the kind of fundamental change in schooling that has historically been justified only by a present or imminent crisis. But most people do not perceive the schools in their districts to be in crisis. Typically 40 to 50 percent of survey respondents rank their local public schools as excellent or good, and about 30 percent rank them as fair; the majority of parents are reasonably satisfied with their own child's school.[65] After all, students in most schools have held steady or made gains in achievement and attainment over time.

If asked, citizens usually endorse the idea of more choice, especially for children in "underperforming" schools; frequently a majority of African Americans, Latinos, the poor, the young, urban residents, and the poorly educated support the idea of vouchers on public opinion surveys.[66] But confronted with a direct choice, a larger majority prefers investment in school reform to spending on vouchers for private schools. When asked in 1999, for example, what the next president should do to improve education in this country, almost two-fifths of respondents endorsed increases in public school funding, one-fifth

proposed better teachers, and only 2 percent chose vouchers and competition.[67] Even general support for "choice" should not be taken too seriously: when asked directly if they understood what vouchers entailed, 80 percent of Americans said that they knew too little to have an opinion on them. Substantial majorities of parents even in Cleveland and Milwaukee know nothing about them and have no opinion on their merits.[68] Most generally, two-thirds of Americans agree that "the public schools deserve our support even if they are performing poorly," and two-fifths agree that "the more children attend public schools, rather than private or parochial schools, the better it is for American society." As staunch voucher supporter Terry Moe said in one of the comments heading this chapter, "Americans like the public school system . . . [and most] are reasonably satisfied with what they are getting overall."[69] That attitude is unlikely to provide the support needed to make the huge changes inherent in a big choice program.

The public's actions, for once, accord with their sentiments as expressed in surveys: despite much expressed interest in the idea of vouchers, there is little commitment to their actual implementation. Private voucher programs in large cities with bad schools often receive many more initial applications than there are spaces, but many of those families selected (usually by lottery) do not take up the voucher or withdraw their children from their new schools after a year or so. And voucher proposals have suffered definitive losses whenever put to a popular vote. A proposition in California in 2000 received the support of only 30 percent of the voters; the result was the same in Michigan in the same year despite the fact that proponents of vouchers spent more than twice as much as opponents. No demographic group came close to giving vouchers majority support in either state; even a majority of self-identified Republicans or conservatives voted against them.[70] Congress has consistently refused to pass a voucher proposal, even one coming from President George W. Bush as part of an enormously popular education reform bill, and private choice programs have similarly failed to gain sufficient support in most state legislatures. Even the vehemently pro-voucher Heritage Foundation counts only 12 governors as supporting vouchers, and only four of them enjoy unified Republican rule in their legislatures; without Republican majorities, and sometimes even with them, these proposals have little chance. *New York Times* reporter Richard Rothstein summarized the situation this way: "Yes," he said in a headline, "Vouchers Are Dead."[71]

The Political Conundrum of Vouchers

In principle the broadest choice program would permit students to attend, at public expense, any public, private, or parochial school in a state. If poor ur-

increase racial and class integration for all students as well as the chances for individual success of predominantly nonwhite children. The most compelling arguments for choice have been made on behalf of poor children trapped in failing schools; this approach would provide them with a way out. But when it comes to broad programs involving urban children, especially programs that include suburban public schools, the politics of choice begin to resemble the politics of desegregation; most middle-class whites profess belief but few are willing to participate in anything more than token numbers. The new federal education reform law ostensibly gives children in failing schools the option to transfer out, but public schools in various districts have already announced that they will have no room for them. "I don't see the choice thing as a big change," said the deputy commissioner of education for Massachusetts. "Good schools that are doing well are pretty much at capacity already."[72] It does not take a high level of suspicion to assume that if they have any excess capacity at all, good schools will add other students before turning to poor inner-city children who have already suffered through several years of atrocious schooling.

In addition, since the number of private and parochial schools is small, their capacity to accommodate additional students from the public schools is very limited. So is their willingness to participate in such a program, in at least some cases. As the author of a letter to the editor of *Education Week* observed,

> Most private schools . . . do not need the money badly enough to take on the challenges of teaching at-risk voucher kids. Neither do they care to personally save the ghetto with their own schools' reputations. If they did, they would be leaders in the pro-voucher movement, which they most assuredly are not. . . . When middle and upper-middle-class parents asked themselves the what's-in-it-for-me question, they quickly realized the answer was nothing. . . . [W]idespread voucher support disappeared.

President Bush apparently recognizes this fact: in January 2001 he inadvertently broadcast a whispered observation that "there are a lot of Republicans who don't like vouchers. They come from wealthy suburban districts who are scared to death of irritating the public school movement, and their schools are good."[73]

For broad choice programs to really help many children, a substantial number of schools outside the cities would have to participate. Few nonurban politicians, however, can risk supporting a program that permits a large number of poor non-Anglo children from the city to attend public schools (and sometimes even private schools) in the suburbs. That political dynamic in good part explains why the two major private choice programs in this country were authorized only within the city limits of Milwaukee and Cleveland, and why no public schools in suburban districts adjoining Cleveland accepted either the state's invitation or the federal judge's plea to participate.[74]

endorse the idea of the broadest possible choice but they cannot find a way to do it that is acceptable to them or their constituents. And as in the case of desegregation, poor urban children, who could gain access to better schools and increase diversity within them if such a choice program were implemented, are unlikely ever to benefit from it. Once again a majority of Americans outside the cities will not accept a proposal for change—this time from the right rather than the left—in part because they fear its impact on the achievement of their own children and on their own associational preferences.

On vouchers, then, both politics and substance lead to the same conclusion: large-scale privatization of public schooling would not necessarily promote individual success, and would undermine the public's long-standing commitment to put the American dream into practice through the shared institution of the schools. Americans believe strongly in what Terry Moe describes as the public school ideology:

> Many Americans simply like the idea of a public school system. They see it as an expression of local democracy and a pillar of the local community; they admire the egalitarian principles on which it is based, they think it deserves our commitment and support, and they tend to regard as subversive any notion that private schools should play a larger role in educating the nation's children.[75]

In our terms, Americans believe that schools should not only promote the ability of individuals to pursue their dreams but should be the vehicle for Americans to learn to engage in a common enterprise of shared citizenship. Voucher programs for private and parochial schools violate this ideology. Americans love the idea of choices. But school choice is too weak a lever to provide the answer to the problems of American education. Help can only come on the difficult roads of finance equity, school reform, and inclusion.