Confronting the Challenge of Privatization in Public Education

Pedro A. Noguera, Ph.D.
University of California, Berkeley

Introduction

Public education in the United States may be on the verge of radical reform. The impetus for sweeping change is provided by the persistence of severe problems of a systemic nature which show no hint of fading away. Too many public schools have been ravaged by ongoing financial troubles which undermine the provision of educational services. Unstable labor relations, decaying buildings and facilities that no longer meet educational needs, and an array of social problems that overwhelm school personnel, are just some of major issues confronting public schools. There is also growing public concern over the quality of education based on the widespread perception that standards have fallen and that too many public schools are failing to meet the intellectual needs of students. In many communities, public schools have become a last resort for those who cannot afford the option of private schools, while those with means do whatever possible to avoid them.

During the 1980s several national reports (1) drew attention to what was perceived as a precipitous deterioration in the standards and quality of education in the U.S. These reports attempted to link educational decline as measured by school performance and student achievement on the Scholastic Aptitude Tests (SATs) and other standardized tests, to the poor performance of the U.S. economy and the reduced competitiveness of American products on the international market. Increasingly, the whole system of public education has come under attack including the administrative apparatus which has typically been accused of being inefficient, top heavy and too preoccupied with rules and regulations rather than focused on providing quality education. Finally, teachers, students and parents have also received a share of the blame for school failure and the "rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people."(2)

For these reasons and others, the time may now be ripe for radical reform of public education. Under the rubric of a variety of privatization proposals, several advocates for reform have stated as their goal nothing less than the complete dismantling of public education. The proposals for reform vary in form and content, and in the extent to which they alter or transform the existing system. However, regardless of how the ideas are packaged the current crop of proposals for change are unified by a common belief in the market as the preeminent regulator and guarantor of educational quality. Under the guise of increasing consumer accountability, the conservative critics of public education are pushing for privatization as the medicine that will cure the many ills which beset America's public schools.

Given this nation's long history of support for public education, one might conclude that any effort to undermine the extensive system of public education in the United States would be doomed to failure. The United States was after all the first Western
industrialized nation to establish public schools. Moreover, communities across the United States are increasingly looking toward their public schools for solutions to a growing list of social problems. Whether the issue is drugs or the environment, violence or sexually transmitted diseases, more often than not the search for solutions involves turning to the public schools to find ways to influence popular attitudes on matters of critical social importance. Hence, rather then becoming expendable, in many respects American society is becoming increasingly dependent upon public schools as one of the few remaining viable social institutions that can be relied upon to address a variety of social problems.

Yet, despite this reality, large segments of society now appear willing to support efforts to radically transform public education, and replace it with new models many of which are largely undefined and untested. Several recent reports suggest that support for these reforms are particularly high in many African American communities.(3) Ongoing frustration over the poor quality of public education in Black communities combined with a history of indifference, hostility and neglect to the educational aspirations of Black students and parents has undoubtedly contributed to a resounding rejection of the status quo. For many, the various privatization proposals, along with other innovations such as Charter Schools and public school choice, hold out the promise of creating new schools that will be more responsive and accountable to community needs. While such changes are desperately needed, and while experiments with public school alternatives may merit consideration and test case implementation, proposals for full scale privatization may be more dangerous in that the consequences of such changes may have far reaching effects which are presently unrecognized.

This paper will explore the factors that have contributed to the recent rise in support for the privatization of public education. It will do so by first examining the history of the relationship between the state and the provision of educational services, and how it came to be that the state assumed responsibility for this enterprise in the United States. From there we shall trace the development of privatization proposals as they have been applied to public education in order to understand how and why they have attained so much credibility in recent times. Finally, we will explore some of the possible alternatives to privatization as a way of demonstrating that other options for reform do exist and that privatization need not be seen as inevitable.

Additionally, this paper has been written for the purpose of reframing the ways in which questions regarding the ongoing crisis in public education have been raised. Current discussions over privatization and school reform are too often treated as technical matters, focused on questions of efficiency, standards and delivery of services. Such a focus leads to the neglect of the political and philosophical issues that must be considered in the context of deliberations over privatization and school reform. It is my contention that the implications of privatization are potentially so severe that any policy designed without full consideration of the social costs and benefits, is at the minimum short sighted. Moreover, if the ideological assumptions associated with privatization are ignored, the long term implications to the character of the state and the social democratic
institutions of this nation - beginning with the provision of public education - may not be recognized until we have lost or severely undermined an important national resource.

**Part 2 - Privatization and American Public Schools**

Proposals for privatization of public education in the United States are not new. The proposal to use government funded school vouchers to pay for the cost of education was put forward by Adam Smith in his 1776 publication, *The Wealth of Nations*. Smith called for the government to give money directly to parents for the purchase of educational services in order to prevent the development of a monopoly over the provision of such services which he felt would inevitably develop. During the early debates over the creation of public schools several critics charged that education like child rearing, was a private matter, and therefore not an activity over which the government should assume responsibility (Cremin, L. 1970: 285). Particularly given the control that churches previously held over the provision of instruction to children, many opposed the rigid separation between church and state called for by advocates of public schools such as Horace Mann.(4) Irish Catholics were often among the most ardent opponents of public education, fearing as they did that the commitment to secularism was nothing more than a cover for a socialization process dominated by Protestants. (Katznelson and Weir, 1985:39) For this reason, the Catholic church was among the first to call for public funding of parochial schools, which it put forward as a way of countering the advantages accrued to Protestants who largely controlled the newly created public schools.

By the end of the civil war, the arguments favoring public schools were clearly more compelling and persuasive than those of the critics, and by the end of the nineteenth century a system of public education for white American children was firmly in place. Even in the South, where resistance to mass schooling had been greatest, the much maligned reconstruction governments managed to successfully establish public schools in several municipalities.(5) Beaten but unconvinced, opponents of public education withdrew from the fray and set off to establish private schools which suited their needs and values as the march toward a larger, more encompassing system of publicly financed and controlled education proceeded.

The opportunity to raise anew the debate over public education did not present itself again until the 1950s. By this time public schools were well entrenched throughout the nation, however, there were growing signs of failure associated with the enterprise particularly in urban areas. The combination of Black migration to northern cities and white flight to adjacent suburbs, gradually began to expose some of the tremendous problems confronting urban public schools. Where they had once served as the conduit to the assembly lines for European immigrants, introducing the children of the foreign born to American culture, and providing the essential social inputs to a modern industrial workforce (Bowles, S. and Gintis, H. 1976: 182 -186), many urban schools were by now little more than warehouses for children, often lacking even the promise of a decent job for their graduates.
By the 1950s, the shrinking demand for unskilled labor in the post-war economy left urban schools largely incapable of satisfying the aspirations of a clientele, who like the immigrants before them, had come to the cities in search of opportunity and mobility. Instead of a better life free from discrimination, Black migrants from the South found their housing options limited to the tenements of city slums, and the educational opportunities for their children once again limited to a substandard schools that were either segregated or racially stratified through rigid tracking systems. As the Civil Rights Movement came to the north, suddenly the public schools, which previously had been viewed as primary avenues to opportunity and mobility, now became a major focal point of demands for change, community control and racial equality (Walters, R., 1984:3).

At approximately the same time that the Civil Rights Movement was generating new interest in public education as a vehicle for addressing racial inequality, calls for privatization began to resurface. As early as 1955, Milton Friedman argued for publicly financed education provided by private schools in an article entitled: "Capitalism and Freedom". Friedman argued that the monopoly held by public schools over the delivery of instructional services led to inefficiency and a lack of innovation. He suggested that the quality of educational services available to the public could be improved if the government ceded control of education to private suppliers in a competitive market. In his view, the government's role should be limited to financing the cost of education and "to insure that the schools meet certain minimum standards, such as it now inspects restaurants to insure that they maintain minimum sanitary standards." Friedman, 1956: 12)

It is not coincidental that Friedman's call for privatization occurred at an historical moment when more and more demands were being placed upon public schools to address social problems created by inequalities related to race and class. Many of the social programs that were created as a result of the Civil Rights Movement focused on the public schools. Federally financed compensatory educational programs, Project Headstart, and a number of other state and federal programs were established during the 1960s to promote social equality through educational opportunity. The logic behind these measures was that local public schools, supplemented with special funds from the state and federal government, which were targeted to serve disadvantaged students, could reduce the degree of inequality between racial groups. However, despite a significant increase in the expenditure of public funds on education, by the late 1960s and '70s several critics charged that there was little statistical evidence to prove that these programs had positive effects on educational achievement and attainment (Coleman, J. 1966 and Jencks, C., 1972).

Though many of the reform programs had only been in place for a relatively short period of time, evidence of their failure was quickly put to use as ammunition by those calling for privatization and cuts in state and federal spending. Arguing that "the large national compensatory educational programs have shown no beneficial results on the average" (Coleman: 125) critics of these programs began calling for a change in public policy based on a redirection of public funding. In response to these criticisms, the Office of
Management and Budget spent several million dollars sponsoring voucher demonstration projects in the 1970s which provided subsidies to parents who elected to send their children to private schools instead of public ones. (Lee, D. 1991) Despite some interest in these programs, the idea failed to spread due to intense lobbying against voucher programs by teachers unions and educational organizations who perceived the proposal as a direct attack on their livelihoods. (Lee, D. 1991)

Since the 1970s, proposals for radical reform based on privatization, have continued to be discussed, but until recently have largely remained marginal to the ongoing debate over school reform. During the 1980s the conservative critique of the social programs created during the 1960s to reduce poverty and racial inequality successfully provided the justification for the dismantling and elimination of those programs by the Reagan administration. However, proposals for privatization of public schools which were also put forward during those years were not able to produce similar results. In part, this is because large segments of the middle class have continued to rely upon public education, and though many have at times been dissatisfied, the quality of education in many predominantly white suburban schools has remained sufficiently high to prevent a massive exodus to private schools or a decline in local support. Because of the support among the white middle class, the call for vouchers and "choice", which are now the two most prominent and far reaching of the proposals for privatization, has tended to be interpreted as nothing more than a ploy for reducing the financial burden on families that send their children to private schools rather than as a serious strategy for educational reform. Until recently, it seemed as though the revolution in public policy based upon a combination of supply-side economics, de-regulation of industry, free trade and varying forms of privatization, which started under Reagan, would be unable to reverse the historic support for publicly financed and controlled education. However, huge cracks are now appearing in the walls that once supported public education, and the tide of privatization now seems poised to finally engulf the opposition.

"The cure for the problems of a socialized monopoly is a good dose of competition." (Gross and Gross, 1988:352) Such reasoning has provided the ideological justification for privatization of public education, and in many communities has generated considerable interest and receptivity to the idea. As the problems confronting urban schools in particular have become more acute, the idea that privatization can serve as a panacea has come to be more widely embraced by a growing number of scholars, policy makers and interest groups. The persistence of high drop out rates, crime and delinquency, and academic underachievement has contributed to the perception that workable solutions to these problems can not be found within the present structures. In poor communities privatization has been marketed as an opportunity for parents to become empowered consumers who will be able to "vote with their feet" by choosing schools which best meet their children's needs. Such advertising has proven effective as a means of drumming up support for privatization given the tremendous frustration of many poor parents over the quality of public education in their communities.
Part 3 - Setting the Stage for Privatization

Though pushed by the federal government under Presidents Reagan and Bush as a national strategy for school reform, the battle over privatization is taking place in the states where ultimate authority over school financing and policy making is based. Even though the Clinton administration has not embraced privatization as a reform strategy (8), the debate proceeds with new leaders and interest groups leading the charge.

The situation in California is particularly significant due to the confluence of factors that has influenced the current debate there. A coalition calling itself The Choice in Education League, began collecting signatures in 1991 to place an initiative on the ballot for the statewide election in 1992. If approved by the voters (publisher: the initiative went on the ballot in 1994 and failed at the polls) , the initiative would have provided parents with a scholarship or voucher of equal value for every child in any given grade, which could be redeemed at any private or public school participating in the program. The stated purpose of the initiative was to:

1. enable parents to determine which schools best meet their children's needs;
2. empower parents to send their children to such schools;
3. establish academic accountability based on national standards;
4. reduce bureaucracy so that more educational dollars reach the classroom;
5. provide greater opportunities for teachers; and
6. mobilize the private sector to help accommodate our burgeoning school-age children." (Text from the California Voucher Initiative Brochure)

After years of marginalization, calls for privatization of public schools have finally entered the mainstream of public debate. Polls conducted by the Association of California Public School Superintendents have indicated support for the voucher initiative to be as high as 70% among registered voters (9). Current conditions appear to favor the passage of a voucher initiative on a future ballot in the state of California for a number of reasons. Foremost among the reasons typically given for support of the proposal is the worsening fiscal disposition of school districts throughout the state and the decline in educational services that have occurred as a consequence. Since the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978, a tax revolt ballot measure which reduced local property taxes by 50% and severely limited the ability of the State or local governments to increase property taxes, (the primary source of revenue used to finance public education) the range of services provided by public schools has steadily declined.

Reductions in financial support by state governments throughout the country have occurred at a time of dramatic increases in some regions in public school enrollment. In California, the State has barely managed to construct enough new buildings to accommodate the steady rise in student enrollment (10). Much of the increase in California's public school enrollment is due to the immigration of large numbers of Asians and Latin Americans Nearly 45% of all documented immigrants reside in California, and 30% of these are school age children (Ed Source, Nov. 1991) As of 1991, 54.4% of California's student population was comprised of non-white ethnic
minorities. The fact that calls for privatization of public schools are occurring at a time of dramatic change in the ethnic make-up of California's student population may not be coincidental. As the demographics of California's student population change, the willingness of registered voters, who continue to be disproportionately white, to cover the costs of public education through tax increases may begin to wane.

School funding has failed to keep pace with inflation and the State government has been largely unable to respond to the deterioration of the physical infrastructure in older districts, the increases in the cost of living of public school employees, and the special needs of a growing number of impoverished students. Even the passage of another voter initiative, Proposition 98 in 1988, which requires the state to set aside at least 40.3% of the State's General Fund Revenues or match the prior year's appropriation adjusted for enrollment or per-capita income growth for K-12 education, has failed to make up for the shortfall in funds experienced by local school districts across the state.

As a consequence of the financial crisis, school districts throughout California have been faced with the difficult task of eliminating educational programs in order to maintain a balanced budget. Intercollegiate athletics, instrumental music, foreign languages and a variety of elective courses have been reduced or eliminated in several districts. School libraries have been shut down and school nurses and psychologists have been laid off or have had the scope of their work limited to record keeping activities as local school boards have acted to cut programs and positions in order to retain fiscal solvency. In many urban districts, class size has increased dramatically and the student-teacher ratio has grown due to the inability of districts to hire new teachers commensurate with the rise in student enrollment.

Not all districts have been able to stay afloat financially in this deteriorating fiscal climate. Several large and small districts across the state have gone bankrupt and been taken over by state appointed trustees who have been brought in to administer the cost saving measures that local officials found too painful or politically dangerous to carry out themselves.

In an unprecedented move, the Richmond Unified School District was set to close its schools in 1990 six weeks before the end of the regular school year due to a lack of funds. The Richmond case was particularly important because only a few months before the discovery of a thirty million dollar budget deficit, the district and its superintendent had received national praise and recognition for the implementation of a school choice program. Richmond's school choice plan was widely praised as a model for urban school reform, and the superintendent received national acclaim as a leading "pioneer in education". Shortly after the announcement of the budget shortfall, the superintendent, Walter Marks, was fired and left Richmond for a higher paying job in Kansas City, taking with him several top administrators.

As news of the district's fiscal crisis was released, a political battle ensued over who would take the blame and suffer the consequences for the shortage of funds. The local school board came under attack from angry parents who blamed them for failing to
adequately monitor the expenditures authorized by the previous superintendent. In response to a request by the district for a loan to cover the budget deficit, the Governor called for suspension of the collective bargaining agreement with the teachers' union that had been signed only a few months before the shortfall had been discovered and which guaranteed the teachers its first pay increase in several years. In keeping with the partisan nature of state politics, the State Legislature and the Controller refused to authorize the loan to cover the shortfall because they felt the Governor should assume responsibility. Finally, as the district prepared to shut down operations and close its doors to the thirty thousand students enrolled, Judge Ellen James (Superior Court of Contra Costa County) ruled that the State would have to provide the funds to allow the schools to remain open. She argued that "The law is clear that the responsibility of the State goes beyond merely providing an equal level of funding to all districts. If the district is unable to carry out the State's mandate to provide public education basically equivalent to the education being provided in the rest of the state, the burden falls back on the State to remedy the situation.". (See Ed Source, September 1991)

Richmond has not been alone. For the last twelve years many school districts across throughout the state of California and the entire country have been under a constant state of austerity. To cope with the ongoing fiscal crises local school boards have engaged in annual budget cutting exercises which have brought on further decline to an already weakened educational system. In nearly all cases, the budget cutting process is extremely acrimonious, pitting communities and interest groups (ie. labor unions) against one another, and almost always resulting in the elimination of jobs since 85% of most district budgets is devoted to personnel.

Within such an atmosphere proposals for private school vouchers resonate and find willing supporters. While support for the proposal is particularly high among private school parents, there is evidence of growing support among low income people from urban areas as well. In California's urban areas, the financial crisis is most severe. Faced as they are already with high drop out rates, a deteriorated physical plant, and an increase in crime and violence on school property, the voucher initiative has been embraced by some parents as the only hope for reform. Many of these parents perceive private schools as providing a substantially better education, and view the vouchers as their means to obtain access to quality education for their children. The voucher system would enable these parents to abandon what is widely seen as a sinking ship; schools so poor in quality and in the services they provide that only those who can not escape them are presently resigned to sending their children there.

Part 4 - The Search for Alternatives to Privatization

Those who accept the original arguments in favor of public schools are unlikely to support California's voucher initiative or any of the other similar proposals that are now surfacing across the country. Despite their weaknesses, public schools continue to offer one of the only sources of mobility to poor and working class people in a society that remains stratified by race, class and gender. In all likelihood the implementation of a voucher system would only add to the disparities that presently exist in education.
Though advocates of "choice" and vouchers claim that competition would elevate quality and drive poor schools out of business, there is no guarantee that "good" schools will be accessible to all who desire admission. Poor parents seeking to use vouchers to take advantage of elite private schools are unlikely to obtain access given the probability that such schools will not expand enrollment in order to accommodate increased demand.(14) Rather than becoming less restrictive, elite schools will in all likelihood become even more selective given the increased demand for admission that is likely to accompany enactment of a voucher policy.(15)

Moreover, what will happen to low quality schools as those students with greater ability and means depart for schools that are perceived as better? Particularly given that public school funding is based largely on student enrollment, it seems unlikely that schools that lose students due to perceptions of quality will have the resources needed to improve their status. Rather, it is more likely that there will be a high demand placed on schools that are seen as "good", while those that are seen as "bad" will only get worse. Undoubtedly, such schools are likely to cater largely to poor and non-white parents who are unable to take advantage of school choice because their kids are less likely to be chosen in the application process by "good" schools. As is true now the poor quality schools will be concentrated in the poor communities, and rather than being improved through competition, they will more likely become poorer, both with respect to the quality of education provided and the amount of funding available to the school. The implementation of choice and vouchers will therefore have a triage effect on the public schools, with the "good" schools attracting high ability students and thereby generating more resources, while the bad schools are left to flounder until they are shut down completely.

What about the possibility that new private schools will form to compete with the public schools for their share of the educational vouchers? There is a great chance that this will occur much like the new airlines that were established shortly after the deregulation of the airline industry during the 1980s. At this point it is difficult to determine how good the quality of such schools will be, and for those who are fed up with the poor quality of public education in certain areas it may be argued that they couldn't possibly be much worse.(16) However, unlike the public schools which are required to meet legally established educational standards, both with respect to credentialing requirements for teachers and accessibility for students, the private schools will not be held to similar guidelines. Moreover, unless the vouchers exceed the $2,500 presently proposed under the California plan, it is not clear that the revenue obtained from vouchers will be sufficient to operate private schools that are actually better than the public schools they seek to displace.(17)

The public's readiness for choice and vouchers may not be as high as its advocates hope or have claimed. Recent evidence from a poll conducted by the Carnegie Foundation indicates relatively little support for the school choice or voucher proposals among the parents of public school children. According to this study 70% of the respondents stated that there was no other public or private school to which they currently wanted to send their children. 62% of the respondents expressed opposition to the use of vouchers for
funding education. (Education Week, October 28, 1992) Other studies such as one conducted by Gallup in September of 1992 contradict these findings and provide evidence of strong support for vouchers. (18) It may still be too early to determine whether or not voters will approve choice and voucher proposals in the states and school districts where they have been proposed. However, six states and several individual school districts have already implemented some version of choice. The city of Milwaukee remains the only publicly funded voucher experiment in the country. (19) However, to the extent that vouchers continue to be promoted by politicians and others as a solution to the problems experienced by public schools, the idea stands a chance of being implemented and can not be dismissed as a mere pipe dream. (20)

Given the dire circumstances in so many schools and the political nature of the battle over vouchers, advocates for public schools must do more than merely extoll the virtues and promise of public education. In many cases the criticisms levelled at public schools by the conservative critics are accurate. Many public schools are failing to adequately meet the needs of students, and too often those who manage them are not sufficiently responsive to the concerns of parents. Rather than reacting defensively or devising compelling excuses for their failure, supporters of public education must be in the forefront of efforts to promote reform. In this respect the best defense will be a strong offense.

School restructuring, the move toward a more integrated curriculum, performance based assessment of students, and the development of the neighborhood school as a center or "hub" of community services, are just some of the more prominent reform initiatives being discussed and initiated in school districts across the country. (21) In California, Charter Schools have been proposed as another alternative within public education that may allow opportunities for innovation that are more difficult within conventional schools. (22) Cynical observers may dismiss these efforts as nothing more than recycled versions of the reform efforts that have been tried in the past. However, what sets these efforts apart from their predecessors, and what makes them unique is a common recognition of the need to rely upon a democratic process of reform that involves all of the significant players in the educational process in the effort to create change. In practice this means that rather than relying on experts or the application of models that have been produced elsewhere (23), these new reform efforts aim at involving parents, teachers, administrators, students and the community in partnerships geared toward fundamentally changing the ways in which schools have operated. Such efforts seek to build upon the uniquely democratic character of public schools rather than seeking to undermine that legacy.

Clearly, it will take some time to determine whether or not these new reform efforts will yield the results that have been promised and hoped for. In the mean time, those who continue to understand and appreciate the need for public education must carefully monitor the movement toward privatization in public education. At this point, time may be a luxury that can no longer be afforded. Advocates for choice and vouchers appear to have the momentum and the political advantage, and where public schools are failing to meet the needs of students, they may find willing converts to their cause. If nothing else
the claims of the privatization advocates must be challenged and exposed as nothing more than untested promises.

Yet, because in many cases the advocates of privatization have focused upon real problems which beset large numbers of public schools, a defense of public education based upon their potential to improve will undoubtedly not be sufficient to thwart the efforts of those who seek to destroy them. Public education is in desperate need of reform, and those who value and appreciate their role in this society should be in the forefront of efforts to hasten the pace of change.

Rather than empowering parents through the use of vouchers as consumers of education, parents should be empowered as decision makers through efforts aimed at democratizing school governance even further. Though widely criticized by some, the movement for community control of public schools launched in the Ocean-Hill Brownsville section of Brooklyn, N.Y. during the mid 1960s provides a model worth considering again. That brief experiment in the application of grassroots democracy in the governance of public schools, showed that poor African American and Puerto Rican parents can and will become actively involved in supporting the education of their children when conditions allow for this to occur. When this happens public schools are more likely to become accountable and responsive to those they serve, and as a result, they will have to find ways to improve the quality of service that they provide.

Despite all their weaknesses, the nation's public schools constitute an important national resource. During times of crisis and national disasters we turn to our public schools for safety and refuge. When confronted by diseases that pose a threat to the public health or social problems that undermine the well being of our communities we turn to our public schools to provide preventative education to the youth about the dangers and risks which confront them. Rather than abandoning this vast infrastructure of public schools or transferring responsibility into private hands, we should find ways to improve quality through increasing the control of the communities that are served.

Footnotes

1. The following is a list of the most prominent of these national reports on education in the United States: Academic Preparation for College: What Students Need to Know and Be Able to Do, Educational Equality Project, The College Board, May 1983; Action for Excellence: A Comprehensive Plan to Improve Our Nation's Schools, Taskforce on Education for Economic Growth, Education Commission of the States, May 1983; America's Competitive Challenge: The Need for A National Response, A Report to the President of the United States from the Business-Higher Education Forum, April 1983; A National at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform, The National Commission on Excellence in Education, April 1983. There are several others as well which were produced during the same time period. For a critical discussion of these reports see The

2. Ibid p. 5

3. A recent survey conducted by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies found that 88% of African Americans were in favor of education choice plans that include public and private schools, with the highest support (95%) coming from families that earn less than $15,000 per year. A poll conducted by Gallup showed similar results with 77% of the African American respondents expressing support. See Oakland Tribune, November 2, 1992.

4. In part, Horrace Mann argued in favor of secularism to avoid the charge that public schools were biased in favor of a particular religion. Mann also believed that schools must play a role in forming a common national culture which he viewed as essential given the continuous influx of immigrants to the U.S. See Curti, Merle, The Social Ideals of American Educators (Totowa, New Jersey: Littlefield Adams and Co., 1968) p. 119


7. In addition to the school voucher proposals there have been a variety of private school subsidy proposals which have aimed at reducing the cost of private school tuition. For a discussion of these see "What if Government Subsidies are Legislated" by D. Frey in Why We Still Need Public Schools edited by Art Must Jr. (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometeus Books, 1992) p. 192-201.

8. During his campaign for the presidency, Clinton expressed support for school choice limited to public schools, a plan he supported and implemented in the state of Arkansas. For a discussion of the Clinton administration's views on school choice and other reform initiatives see Ed Source, May 1992 (Menlo Park, CA: Ed Source, Inc. 525 Middlefield Road, Menlo Park, CA 94025)

9. In a report from the Association of California Public School Superintendents, Charlie Binderup, the President of the Association, issued the following warning: "As public school superintendents we've faced some hard times and dealt with tough problems. We're now faced with our most difficult threats ever: an initiative that would provide vouchers for pupils to attend private schools...Even if not one student transfers from public schools to private it would cost 1.5 billion to provide vouchers to the 531,000 pupils currently attending private schools in the state." (ACSA Report, January 17, 1992)
10. Student enrollment in the state of California is estimated to increase at a rate of 200,000 per year. 90% of those students will attend public schools. See Ed Source, November 1991, 525 Middlefield Rd., Suite 100, Menlo Park, CA 94025.

11. In 1991 California's student population was 45.6% white, 34.4% Hispanic, 10.6% Asian, 8.6% African American, 0.8% Native American. Of these students approximately one third speak a language other than English. See Ed Source, Nov. 1991.

12. Throughout the country the number of children living in poverty has increased substantially. Over twenty percent of all American children live in poverty. Many of these children, and others who do not fall below the poverty line, lack health insurance, decent housing and adequate shelter. For a discussion of trends in child poverty see Phillips, K. The Politics of Rich and Poor (New York: Random House, 1990) p. 201 205

13. In 1991 25 school districts across the state filed either "negative certifications" (meaning that they were not able to meet their financial obligations) or "qualified certifications" (meaning the district will not meet its financial obligations unless they receive some form of relief either from contracts negotiated with unions or from deferred payments to creditors) with the California Department of Education. See Ed Source, September 1991.

14. Using private universities and preparatory schools as a model, Alexander Astin makes a similar argument with regard to the effect choice and voucher programs are likely to have upon access by poor parents to elite schools. See Astin, A. "Educational "Choice" Its Appeal May Be Illusory" in Sociology of Education, October 1992 (Washington D.C.: American Sociological Association)

15. For a critique of school choice proposals and a discussion of issues related to student access see Astin, Alexander "Educational "Choice": Its Appeal May Be Illusory" in Sociology of Education, October 1992 Vol. 65, No. 4


17. For a discussion of the possible impact of school vouchers under a privatization scheme on school integration see Fege, A. "Private School Vouchers: Separate and Unequal" in Why We Still Need Public Schools edited by Must, A.

18. According to the Gallup poll sponsored by the National Catholic Educational Association 70% of those interviewed expressed support for a government funded voucher system that would enable parents to send their children to public, private or parochial schools. See Education Week September 23, 1992.
19. The states with the most comprehensive choice systems are: Minnesota, Massachusetts, Arkansas, Washington, Iowa and Nebraska. These programs limit choice to public schools however.


21. For a discussion of current school reform efforts that are being implemented in a variety of school districts across the United States see Fiske, E. Smart Schools, Smart Kids Why Do Some Schools Work? (New York: Touchstone Book, 1992)

22. For a description of the Charter Schools legislation that has been developed in the State of California see Amsler, Mary Charter Schools in Policy Briefs (San Francisco, CA: Far West Laboratory, No. 19, 1992)

23. For a critique of school reform efforts initiated by experts and university-based researchers, see Saranson, S. The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change (New Haven, Ct.: Yale University Press, 1969)

References


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