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## ABSTRACT

This Third Edition of the 1985 report, "Dialogue for Change," discusses options and examples of educational choice and teacher empowerment and summarizes developments between 1985 and 1987. The following key options are discussed in Chapter 1, "Proposed Options for Change": (1) magnet schools; (2) open enrollment; (3) purchase of services; (4) competency based requirements; (5) two-tier administration; (6) site-managed schools; and (7) school building sharing. Other implications of the options and the concept of teacher as professional are also discussed. Each option includes a discussion of background issues and examples of the option in practice. Chapter 2 is called "Options for Change: Two Updates." The 1985-86 update discusses the following issues: (1) the need for educational change; (2) greater education choice for parents and students; (3) educational excellence and economic development; (4) teachers as professionals and entrepreneurs; and (5) competency testing for students. The 1987-88 update discusses the following topics: (1) general public interest in public school choice; (2) state and federal government responses; (3) new research on existing choice programs; and (4) the role of the private sector in promoting the concept. A list of 56 references, an executive summary of Chapter 1, and a six-item bibliography of Metropolitan Affairs Corporation publications are included. (FMW)

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Dialogue for Change  
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**Dialogue for Change**  
**Options for Re-Structuring K-12 Education**

3rd Edition, 1988

A Report of the Education Committee  
of  
Metropolitan Affairs Corporation



## **Metropolitan Affairs Corporation is...**

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...A private, non-profit organization supported by business, industry, labor and local government. The organization's main purpose is providing a much-needed link between the private and public sectors at the regional level by engaging in research and action programs for those areawide problems that transcend individual community boundaries.

MAC's program priorities include "Urgent Issues" which researches and stimulates action on such key public policy issues as K-12 education, venture capital financing, structural unemployment, regional infrastructure financing, regional interdependency and hazardous waste facility siting as well as "Joint Public Ventures" which supports more efficient delivery of public services through intergovernmental cooperation and coordination.

Metropolitan Affairs Corporation's Board of Directors is a coalition of business, labor, government and higher education. An Advisory Council to the Board of Directors extends MAC's involvement throughout the regional private and public communities. The organization is funded by contributions from business, industry and labor (no tax dollars are used for support).

Re-structuring of K-12 public education has been a high priority on MAC's agenda since 1983. In 1985, a series of options for re-structuring public education were outlined in *Dialogue for Change*. MAC's commitment to schools of choice, educational diversity and teacher/administrator empowerment has been strengthened through subsequent editions of *Dialogue for Change* as well as this and other publications exploring those options.

- Why do providers of education buy that service from themselves alone?**
  - What is a school today? What should it be in the future?**
  - How can teachers be governed as the professionals they believe they are and should be?**
  - How can school districts make better use of available economies of scale?**
  - Why is choice denied to parents and to students...and, for that matter, to professional educators?**
  - Why is educational promotion and graduation determined by time spent, instead of by skills and competence?**
- 

Those key questions helped drive the concerns of MAC's Education Committee in pursuing its examination of K-12 education. Finding historical answers was not the point. Rather, finding future possible answers *was* the objective. The Committee's work began with realization that this nation is "at risk" educationally, as pointed out in a 1983 report by the National Commission on Excellence in Education. In fact, some two dozen national reports have called attention to existing or potential problems with the nation's K-12 process.

Yet, most of those reports recommend little more than "tinkering" with the process, suggesting more of the same—more time, more classes, more money. The crisis—or, potential crisis—is far more serious than solutions just urging more of the same.

Historical perspective suggests a corollary between the railroad industry of 75 years ago and today's public education process. Both—in their times—underpinned the economic vitality and prosperity of their communities. Both enjoyed an extensive period of success under the shelter of a government/industry/labor monopoly.

Unfortunately, the railroad executives had a somewhat myopic marketing view. They saw their mission as simply running railroads—rather than moving both people and products from Point A to Point B. Today, educational leaders face a similar dilemma. They focus too strongly on protecting the means: buildings, traditional teaching and administrative methods. Instead, their focus should be on producing student graduates able to prosper in our society.

What happened to the railroads is history. Entrepreneurs using new technologies—trucks, planes, boats and buses—took the people and the product over, around and past the railroads, and they did it faster and cheaper.

In similar fashion, today's parental

determination and rapidly advancing technology—the computer, in particular—are challenging the public education system. Today's educational leaders need to examine what business they are in.

There are several key concerns that should be part of any such examination...several goals for future concern:

1. Involve parents and motivate students by affording them a **choice of educational opportunities** within the public school process. They could choose from specialized magnet schools as well as from various learning environments within their districts or within individual schools. They would be free to choose what is best without being bound by artificial and traditional boundaries.
2. Accelerate much-needed change through use of the **free market influence** by having school boards buying educational services from effective and efficient sources in addition to the district's staff.
3. Encourage innovation by providing a range of **entrepreneurial opportunities**, both in and out of the system. Teachers might, for example, form professional corporations for the purpose of delivering knowledge in specialized styles or subjects, contracting with school boards as professional entrepreneurs.
4. **Re-cast the role of local school boards** to focus their efforts on the end—effective graduates—rather than on the means, as policy boards ought to do. They should be the providers of education—but, not the producers. In that way, they could (and, should) become results oriented, rather than means oriented.
5. Improve the efficiency of learning by **redefining the concept of "school"** as anyplace teachers and students gather for the



purpose of learning (a better definition than "a building with a fence around it"). Traditionally, the system has viewed school as place oriented instead of activity centered. "School" should be defined by function rather than by form.

6. **Give teachers more control of the teaching/learning environment**, then hold them accountable by treating them as the dedicated professionals they want to be.
7. **Measure learning progress for promotion and graduation through competency skills.**

This report pursues those goals by suggesting changes in the existing educational structure. It does so by proposing seven "Options" for changing how K-12 education is delivered and consumed.

Those options are detailed in Chapter One of this report. They call for creating specialized areawide magnet schools...more choice of individual learning environments for students...site management of schools by professional educators (both teachers and administrators)...more effective use of Intermediate School Districts...more choice for local school boards in selecting producers of educational services...competency testing of graduates...and, better utilization of school facilities.

It is important to understand what those options *are* as well as *what* they are *not*. The options are not precise and prescriptive steps for a school district to take. Rather, they are innovative options that can be customized to local needs by a school board, weaving the specifics of each option into the fabric of their community and its educational philosophy. In that way, local districts can realize the benefits of such re-structuring without losing the vitality of local control.

The options are innovative and they are far-reaching in their implications for establishing and implementing an educational philosophy in a local district. The sort of significant re-structuring envisioned by MAC's Education Committee means, of course, recasting the traditional roles of both local board members and the professional educators, both teachers and administrators.

All involved would need to embrace the underlying principles of greater choice throughout the process, of a more professional role for educators, of moving school boards more into a policy-making mode than an administrative activity. Such changes will not be easy. Pursuing excellence never is.

### **Public Policy Discussion**

The very heart of this report's purpose is raising various public policy options to an arena for public debate and discussion.

The proposed options will generate discussion within a series of audiences. It is entirely possible—even desirable—that the resulting discussion will generate additional ideas about restructuring for consideration by the users and producers of education.

There are three key audiences for this report and for such discussion.

First are local school boards—those persons charged with providing K-12 education.

Second, are professional educators—teachers and administrators, as well as their professional organizations. They, too, are obviously and deeply concerned with how education is provided and produced.

Finally, there are those persons often not organized to address educational issues: the citizens—both individual and corporate. Debate on these options needs to be part of the agenda for community and civic groups at all levels, from local PTA's to the state PTA; from local Chambers of Commerce to the Michigan Chamber; from the League of Women Voters to the Jaycees, the Rotary, the Kiwanis, the American Association of University Women and other civic organizations.

Everyone has a stake in how successfully our educational process works. Therefore, everyone has a stake in these—and other—ideas for improving that process.



**Charles A. Muer**  
Chairperson  
MAC Education Committee

# Dialogue for Change

## Options for Re-Structuring K-12 Education

3rd Edition

Stimulating immediate discussion and eventual change is the basic purpose of this report. Significant change begins with an understanding of options available, followed by discussion and debate about those options, as well as other possibilities which may grow from such discussion. It is hoped that local school boards—both public and private—will be stimulated by those proposals, along with state officials, both educational and legislative.

This report does not embrace the entire K-12 process. Rather, attention is focused on selected areas, targeted as particularly good opportunities for the sort of major conceptual change that should be presented to the community as possible future options for action. Thus, this report concentrates on those opportunities, while recognizing that many other concerns might also have been considered but could not be within available resources.

If there is a single thought about the future of this report and its proposals, it would probably be, "Let the discussion begin."

*This 3rd Edition contains only the first chapter of the original Dialogue for Change report, the chapter outlining seven key options for restructuring K-12 education. In addition, there are two summary updates: the first (pp. 22) summarizes developments between the 1985 release of Dialogue for Change and late 1986 publication of the Second Edition; the second (pp. 27) summarizes developments about public school choice and teacher empowerment between that 2nd Edition and the late 1988 publication of this 3rd Edition.*

A Report of the Education Committee  
of Metropolitan Affairs Corporation  
Detroit, Michigan 1988

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# Preface Preface

## The Committee's Mission

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It would be ridiculous to suggest that there is anything remotely approaching a single, all-encompassing answer to the problems of education. Indeed, the problems themselves are many and varied, some confined to the schooling process and many others rooted in much of society outside of the actual schooling experience. Similarly, possibilities for improving the process are as widespread and far-reaching. The range of considerations for improvement include both those options confined to the schooling process itself and those rooted in other parts of society.

That enormity of subject, problem and solution could be overwhelming to anyone seeking a handle on the problem, let alone seeking to design effective proposals for solving problems or improving the process. Such inertia by magnitude cannot be allowed to stifle persons and organizations wishing to have impact on a process that needs attention and involvement from all citizens, both individual and corporate; inside the educational process and outside it; the makers of education as well as the consumers.

Clearly, this Education Committee of the Metropolitan Affairs Corporation's Board of Directors understands that it cannot embrace the entire concept of K-12 education, neither in understanding its problems nor in proposing possible changes in the existing process. In its deliberations, the Committee made some conscious choices to focus its attention on several specific areas. By no means did the Committee believe or wish to suggest that a variety of other problems were not as important. Rather, *the Committee felt that those areas it targeted were particularly good opportunities for the sort of major*

*conceptual change that it felt should be presented to the community as possible future option: for action.*

Thus, the Committee focused on what it considered opportunities for significant improvement, while recognizing that many other areas of possible consideration would also be productive but could not be considered within available resources of time, energy and funding.

Some of those very important elements are, in fact, touched on indirectly in the various proposed options in Chapter 1 — such matters as parental involvement, the critical role of the school principal, the school size issue, pupil motivation and the very definition of education.

The K-12 educational process — both public and private — has helped set America apart from the rest of the world. In general, this nation's K-12 system receives at least adequate grades from all concerned: parents, students, professional educators, the business community which utilizes the system's products and officials of higher education who also utilize those student graduate products. There has been a growing concern, however, over the past decade or so that the system, while at least adequate to the task, is not as good as it could be in preparing its graduates for the next step, whether that be into the work place or into an institution of higher education.

This Committee clearly believes that the K-12 educational process in Southeast Michigan, and the state, is not "bad"; but, Committee members also believe it could be much better than it is. *It is to that point this*



*report is dedicated — that is, improving the system, as opposed to repairing damage.*

Change is never easy. That is particularly true when those responsible for actually implementing change — in this case, local school board members and professional educators — feel they are beleaguered by pressures from all sides, many of those pressures (most of them, in fact) well beyond their control. Within an environment that has seen a virtual hailstorm of proposals for change rained down on the educational community in recent years, this report attempts to focus on several basically structural changes to how things are done in the K-12 process.

Finally, the Committee stresses that its proposed options are not an attempt to prescribe inflexible programs on a local and state educational community that is wonderfully diverse in its needs and its preferences. Rather, these proposed options suggest some re-structuring steps that could be significant in changing the course of how educational services are delivered in local districts.

For the most part, these proposed options have not been part of the educational discussion in Michigan. Raising them in this report will provide a basis for interested parties in the educational community to consider such options, and to think about how any or all of these options might be used, modified or ignored in their own specific part of the K-12 educational process, whether that be state official, local school board member, concerned parent, professional educator (teacher or administrator) or, of course, student.

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# Executive Summary

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Because of problems with, and dynamics of, the K-12 educational system as it exists today (examined in Section 2), the Education Committee of the Metropolitan Affairs Corporation proposes the following options as change elements for improving the K-12 system through restructuring major components.

1. *Choices* among educational alternatives should be a more significant part of the K-12 process, for both families with school age children and for local school district officials as well. Such choices should include:
  - a. An opportunity for both parents and local school districts to send students across local district boundary lines to specialized *magnet schools* located throughout the region;
  - b. An opportunity for parents to enroll their children in schools within their local school district that offer *alternative learning environments*, choosing the one best suited for their children's needs; or, an opportunity to choose among such alternative learning environments within individual schools;
  - c. An opportunity for local districts to *purchase educational services* from a wide array of producers, including (but, not limited to) their own teaching and administrative professionals, specialized groups of educational professionals operating in private practice, other school districts, the Intermediate School District, universities, private corporations.
2. Teachers should be free to operate more fully as educational professionals, with management of individual school learning environments concentrated within each school building. Leaders in such "*site-managed*" schools should be able to make a wide range of decisions affecting both teaching techniques and resource allocation, operating under some form of sub-contract with the local district board.
3. Costly administrative duplication and overlap should be attacked by emphasizing greater use of the *two-tier educational administrative system* for public schools that currently exists with local districts and Intermediate School Districts (ISD). Those county-wide

ISD's should be responsible for services and facilities common to local districts, leaving individual local boards and administrative teams to concentrate on the learning environment in the district and its individual schools (an ISD might, for example, establish and maintain the magnet schools).

4. All students seeking graduation from elementary, middle school and high school—both public and private—should be required to demonstrate acceptable *competency* in basic skills, rather than continue measuring graduation requirements in terms of completed time in specific courses.
5. New school buildings constructed in Michigan should be designed as *shared community facilities* for use by social service and other governmental agencies, with abandoned school buildings adapted to such usage along with unused space in currently active buildings. Program offerings should also be integrated with community needs of non-student citizens whenever possible.

Increasing choice for parents in what their children will learn—as well as how and where—will stimulate parental involvement because parents will be part of the process, rather than passive receivers of others' decisions. Many of the proposed options revolve around the principal as key change agent and as educational team leader—the site-management, open enrollment and purchase of service options—all require strength from the principal.

Finally, the package of proposals would be most effective when implemented together as an interrelated set of dynamics working in unison to support and reinforce the "whole" of restructuring an educational process. That whole would, indeed, have much greater impact when the options are implemented together. Each of the options, though, would in its own right provide significant improvement in the K-12 process for any local school district—public or private—putting in place one or more of the proposed options.

***This Part I of the Executive Summary covers Chapter 1: Proposed Options for Change.***

# Chapter 1 Chapter 1

## Proposed Options for Change

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This set of proposed options is a package with seven elements, a coordinated, interrelated "whole" that provides a solid basis for re-structuring K-12 education to bring more choice into the process, opening up the system to a more entrepreneurial, competitive, dynamic that can effectively drive the pursuit of educational excellence.

These proposed options, although radical or provocative in varying degrees, are not totally new and untried — indeed, all can be found in practice elsewhere. Further, most are doable within the framework of existing legal regulation of K-12 education.

What *is* new is the integration of these concepts into a structure that forms the concept of a new educational delivery system, one designed to accomplish the following:

1. involve parents and motivate students by affording them choice of educational opportunities;
2. accelerate change through the free market influence;
3. encourage innovation by providing entrepreneurial opportunities;
4. re-cast the role of local school boards to focus their efforts on the end rather than the means;
5. improve the efficiency of learning by returning to the concept of "school" as any place teachers and students gather for the purpose of learning (rather than a building surrounded by a fence);
6. give teachers control of the teaching/learning environment, then hold them accountable by treating them as the dedicated professionals they want to be;
7. measure learning progress, promotion and graduation through tests of skills competence.

"Choice" as a stimulant of educational excellence should be much more widely available to students, parents, professional educators and local school boards.

Such choice is the hallmark of any system in which competition drives the pursuit of quality. Despite rhetoric about "educational excellence" in recent years, all too often the resulting proposals simply suggest more of the same non-choice process. Few, if any, suggest

significant change in the existing system. Even more noticeably missing are calls for introducing the competition of choice into delivery of K-12 educational services.

The case is well put by Dale Watt, an educational consultant:

"Another way to major educational reform is through the avenue of educational choice. In other words, people should have the right to choose the most appropriate learning environment for their children. The advocates of educational choice believe that the public school monopoly brings about abuses in the educational process. These people believe that the competition resulting from educational choice would lead to educational renewal and reform. Educators would be more apt to listen to parental concerns as well as being more concerned about the quality of education in their school because parents would have the opportunity to pursue quality learning experiences for their children at other schools.

"In the context of educational choice, competition would add another dimension in the quest for educational excellence . . . this free enterprise concept has produced positive results in other areas of society. Increasing numbers of people believe that major educational reform will never take place until the practice of true educational choice becomes a reality."<sup>1</sup>

The idea, as Silber puts it, is ". . . to make public patrons as powerful over their schools as private patrons are now."<sup>2</sup>

With that concept of a choice-driven search for educational excellence as the foundation, this Committee proposes seven Options for Change for consideration and discussion by local school boards, parents, state officials, students and, of course, professional educators — both teachers and administrators.

# Option 1 Option 1

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**Specialized areawide “magnet” schools should be created, providing students with more choice in pursuing individual academic and career paths.**

## **Background**

The concept of such specialized magnet schools is by no means new. Detroit's Cass Tech has long been a shining example of a district-wide enrollment school for advanced students with specialized interests. The Detroit Public School System also maintains an excellent cooking school (the Breighthaupt Center) and for years has maintained a flight maintenance school at its Davis Vocational Technical Center. Some persons may be more familiar with the concept of New York's School for the Performing Arts, made famous in the movie and television program "Fame".

The concept works, but it requires a large student population from which to draw "the best and the brightest". Only school districts as large as Detroit have the necessary in-district student population to support that kind of specialized activity. But, student populations in the area covered by Intermediate School Districts also are at that critical mass size, able to support something as specialized as one or more magnet schools focused on such subjects as mathematics, the sciences, performing arts, college prep and others. Thus, there is a two-fold reason for suggesting the ISD's as a focus for developing such areawide magnet schools:

1. the in-place administrative process, including ISD experience with both vocational education and special education service provision; and,
2. a multi-local district student base sufficiently large to support such an operation.

Functionally, most urban counties have a wealth of available facilities — schools closed by shifting enrollment patterns in local districts, buildings which could be easily adapted to the areawide magnet school concept without major build-from-the-ground-up expenditures.

A variation of the concept is called for by The Conference Board, which sees such schools as an effective means of establishing a business/education partnership, one in which businesses "commit substantial time, talent and money to support magnet or 'theme' schools with specialized curriculum and necessary incentives and support for instructional innovations."<sup>3</sup>

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## Examples

- North Carolina has established a tuition-free residential public high school for students gifted in mathematics and science. The three-year-old school gathers exceptional students on its campus (in Durham) for "rigorous instruction not only in science and mathematics, but in the arts and humanities as well." Last year, the school produced 62 semi-finalists in the National Merit Scholarship Program, out of a senior class of only 208 students.<sup>4</sup>
- Louisiana has opened a residential state school for students gifted in math, science and arts, modeled on the North Carolina boarding school.<sup>5</sup>
- Fairfax County, Virginia is establishing a science and technology school for the county working with a coalition of business and industry leaders.<sup>6</sup>
- In the Houston, Texas school district, students with special needs, talents or interests may enroll in one of 16 senior high magnet schools, 13 middle/junior high school programs, or 37 elementary programs.<sup>7</sup>
- Working with Wayne State University, the Detroit Public School system operates an experimental magnet school, the Golightly Center, which offers an innovative program of individualized instruction and school site management.
- Minnesota has a new inter-district enrollment program in which districts will apply to be designated as "Schools of Excellence." Students may apply to attend and 100 each year will be permitted to leave their present district to do so. The program is designed so that the receiving district and the home district both will receive state aid.<sup>8</sup>
- Recent legislation in California provides start-up funds for locally or regionally developed specialized high schools, particularly for training in high technology and the performing arts; the magnet schools may employ non-credentialed persons as teachers.<sup>9</sup>



# Option 2 Option 2

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## Background

**A choice of diversified learning environments should be available to students through open enrollment choices among elementary, middle/junior high schools and senior high schools as well as within individual school buildings because students do have different learning needs and do respond to different learning environments.**

“Open enrollment” is a concept which bridges the intra-district attendance boundaries that channel students to a single school. But, simply removing boundary lines is not the point; rather, offering a variety of learning environments — with parallel open enrollment access to those choices — is an effective recognition that the “best” learning environment will vary for individual students.

As educator Joe Nathan points out:

“Schools ought to serve the public. Under this (open enrollment) plan, parents would be able to choose from among public schools with various philosophies and sizes. Mario Fantini’s *Public Schools of Choice* is a major statement of this philosophy. Fantini points out that choice is a central American freedom. Consumers are not told which car to buy, or where they must live. Food stamp recipients are not told where to shop. The government does not tell parents where to send their children for day or nursery school.

“Many school districts have tried to provide parents and students with alternatives. Virtually every large city school district offers some ‘open’ and ‘fundamental’ programs, as well as the mainstream schools. Some public schools offer Montessori programs, based on the Italian educator’s ideas. Many rural or suburban school districts offer ‘in-house alternatives’ which depart from the traditional and offer parents and their children some choice.

“Unquestionably parents, teachers, and children will benefit from having as many well designed choices available as is possible. Perhaps public schools need not develop all the choices. Another way to proceed would be for school districts to extend their contracting system. Many school districts purchase food equipment, and transportation services from private companies. They should also consider purchase of instructional services.

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"In some parts of the country, public school districts choose not to develop certain programs the legislature requires. In such cases (usually with handicapped students) districts either contract with a private school or with another school district which in turn develops a program."<sup>10</sup>

Watt narrows the focus effectively, "People should have the right to choose the most appropriate learning environment for their children. For example, the parent who wants a strong academic emphasis would select a school with a compatible focus. Other parents desiring vocational training for their children would select a school with a good vocational program. Parents would also select schools on the basis of values being stressed in a specific school. Parents desiring a secular focus would select such a school."<sup>11</sup>

Finally, Finn adds some important considerations:

"As long as a policy of open enrollment within a district allows children to change schools and as long as suitable transportation is available, there is no reason whatsoever not to allow schools to develop their own distinctive characters, to take pride in these differences, even to advertise them so that families can choose.

"If this evolves into the functional equivalent of a voucher program for public schools, so be it. Allowing schools to compete for students on the basis of their distinctiveness and their quality will probably produce more vibrant and enterprising schools than their current practice of arbitrary but uniform assignments. Moreover, if parents and students received sufficient information about the schools in their districts, the popularity of a school may become a reasonable proxy for its 'effectiveness'."<sup>12</sup>

Ted Kolderie, of the Public Policy Redesign Project would take the concept a step further, expanding it "...beyond the open-enrollment programs that exist today. In these, choice is limited to schools run by a particular school district. So, the differences among 'alternative' schools are the differences that the

sponsoring district and its board decide to create. A school is typically not permitted to decide for itself what it wants to be, and how it will be different from other schools in the district. Whatever happens, so long as the choice is only among its own schools, the district cannot fail (to meet parent/student expectations). Accountability would be increased considerably if families could move *among different public school districts* (emphasis is his)."<sup>13</sup>

In fact, such options could effectively be offered within individual school buildings, where enrollment is large enough to offer more than one class at given grade levels.

### Examples

- In Detroit, there are several middle schools — most notably the Ludington School — where open enrollment is permitted and where the school quality is so good that, for example, parents at Ludington literally camp out overnight to secure a place in line when enrollment time comes around each year.
- Utica school district has three Montessori schools and an "English-type open classroom" school within its complement of elementary schools, with students from throughout the district eligible to attend (parents must, however, provide the transportation).
- Rochester also has diversified learning environments available within its elementary schools and permits district-wide enrollment into those specialized schools.
- Joe Nathan, previously cited, is a former assistant principal at the highly successful St. Paul open classroom high school, an excellent model of the open enrollment and specialized "magnet" concept.
- In Minneapolis, parents of elementary school children can choose from several types of school: fundamental; contemporary (traditional); continuous progress; open; and, free.<sup>14</sup>

# Option 3 Option 3

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## Background

**Local school boards should have an opportunity for choice in assembling the producers of educational services for students in the district.**

Local school boards are in a unique situation when they essentially buy educational services from themselves; that is, from the teachers with whom they have a contract. They are not legally required to do so. Rather, tradition — and, of course, a collectively-bargained contract — lie at the heart of that process. Plus, there are the teacher certification legal requirements, originally designed to include only qualified persons in a teaching staff but more often now a barrier which excludes qualified (but, non-certified) persons from the classroom.

An important basic distinction about the role(s) of local boards is Ted Kolderie's "producer/provider" dichotomy:

"*Providing*' is the function of deciding that something should be done. Government may act by having something done (or insuring it, subsidizing it, or granting a franchise with a guaranteed rate of return). Or, government may simply require of private parties that something be done. In any event, deciding that something should be done is the policy function. It is the essential government function.

"Having decided to provide a particular service, a governmental unit may or may not then go on to *produce* it. It may turn to some other organization, some other governmental unit, or to some private entity for the actual *doing*. Going outside does not change the public character of the facility or service: a highway is not less a public road because it is built by a private contractor, nor is a university cafeteria less than a university facility because it is operated by a private food service firm.

"Through contracting, government can get out of production while remaining (as I use the term) the provider.

"Basically, there are two policy decisions involved in arranging for the provision and production of any service. First, you will want to think about what services to provide, the level of service, and the mechanisms for payment.

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Second, you will want to think about who actually does the work, how many doers there are going to be, and what they do."<sup>15</sup>

In applying that logic to the K-12 educational process, where might local school boards turn for production of educational services? From whom might they buy such services beyond their current purchase-from-self process? Kolderie suggests a number of possibilities:

- professional educators — teachers — who might form professional corporations to supply their specialized services (skilled math teachers contracting with several districts to teach advanced math classes, for example);
- tuitioning-out to other school districts, which could have programs useful to groups of students not large enough to justify a full scale program within the district;
- the Intermediate School District, which might also offer specialized programs for small groups of students;
- universities, colleges and community colleges, which have many courses and professors that could be academically helpful to a district's students;
- non-profit institutions, where, for instance advanced zoology might be purchased from professionals at the area zoo, etc.;
- business firms, both existing and those specifically incorporated to provide specialized educational services.<sup>16</sup>

At the very heart of such a proposal would be significant broadening of the professional teacher role, into a concept of entrepreneurial teachers who might band together as do other professionals — lawyers, doctors, accountants — into private practices. Opening up the purchase of educational services by school boards could also open up an innovative new direction for professional teaching development.

The Education Commission of the States has suggested, as another step in diversifying educational service delivery, "Review of certification rules to permit qualified people from business, industry, the scientific

and technical communities and higher education to serve in the schools where feasible."<sup>17</sup>

As Nathan points out, teacher certification too often is a barrier. "It is," he says, "worth comparing requirements of college professors with those governing instructors in our elementary and secondary schools. Do we require medical or law school professors to complete a teacher preparation program? Of course not. Colleges frequently bring in professionals to provide instruction — journalists, insurance agents, computer programmers, etc. None of these people would be allowed to teach courses in public schools. They would have to obtain certification first!"<sup>18</sup>

There are, then, a number of opportunities for local school boards to seek non-traditional methods of producing the educational services they decide to provide. Some of those opportunities are readily used — including use of entrepreneurial teachers in arrangements other than full-time employees — while others would require legal changes — such as revamping existing certification requirements to open wider the possibilities for using skilled individuals in the learning process.

### Examples

- The Ombudsman program in Libertyville, Illinois is a private contractual arrangement in which 40 school districts contract with a former teacher to educate their "hard to handle" students. He retains complete control over his budget and staff; school districts simply give him a certain percentage of the per pupil financial allotment, and a certain number of students with whom to work. The students like the program . . . standardized testing shows that they are making substantial progress.<sup>19</sup>
- Another ex-teacher formed the Sylvan Learning Corporation in Bellevue, Washington, which has grown into a national network of franchised learning centers, combatting adult illiteracy as well as the lack of basic reading and math skills in school children.<sup>20</sup>
- The Grosse Pointe and Harper Woods school districts have entered into an arrangement that will make it possible for students from each to take classes in the other district . . . it was initiated because declining enrollments in both districts have cut into some

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programs, particularly advanced programs . . . each school district will charge \$300 per student, with each student's home school board making the payment.<sup>21</sup>

- Four small Connecticut school systems are minimizing the effects of enrollment decline by sharing their students, teachers and resources . . . enabling the districts to expand and diversify curricula without incurring proportional cost increases. In the early stages, teachers feared the idea because it might turn out to be a new way to reduce staff. When assured that all courses for which a district could enroll enough students would be automatically offered in the home school, the teachers agreed to the potential value of the consortium.<sup>22</sup>
- An official of the Carnegie Foundation has proposed that school districts establish a lectureship program to permit qualified non-academic (i.e., non-certified) professionals to teach part-time; that recently retired personnel teach part-time in high-demand subjects; that in-and-out teaching terms be established, permitting a professional to teach one to three years, step out, then return for another one to three year term.<sup>23</sup>
- On a more dramatic note, the California Superintendent of Public Instruction is "kicking around" an idea to "help insure a school is run well" . . . the idea of having an individual school "open for capture." It would be an educational version of Chapter 11 bankruptcy, occurring when a school ranks in the bottom 20 percent of its district for five consecutive years. Other teachers, principals, or parents in the district could make a bid, working with the district administration to take over the school and run it.<sup>24</sup>
- John Silber, President of Boston University, suggests some additional options: part-time teachers from business who can teach at the beginning or end of the day, or on release time from their employers; use of retired engineers and scientists with a desire to teach; use of part-time highly talented women who have devoted themselves to a career of homemaking.<sup>25</sup>



# Option 4 Option 4

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**Requiring demonstration of competence in a variety of learned skills would move K-12 education more specifically toward an appropriate results-oriented process.**

## **Background**

Currently, high school graduation is based on the Carnegie credit system (described in Chapter 4); promotion between grades is generally a "social promotion" process that moves students along with their peers, regardless of competence.

The Michigan Educational Assessment Program tests fourth, seventh and tenth grade students annually in reading and mathematics. Other areas, such as art, career development, health, music, science and social studies are sample-tested on a periodic basis. Such testing, however, is informational and does not affect the progress — or, lack of progress — of the individual students.

A Michigan State University study found that ". . . the national effort to raise academic standards is undermined by an education system that values obtained diplomas more than the learning such diplomas are supposed to represent. In the education system, a diploma and ultimately a job is the goal of schooling, not learning."<sup>26</sup>

A better answer, in the opinion of many, is a process of competency testing . . . measuring acquired skills, rather than time spent in class (or, as some describe it, "seat time").

What is "competency"? North Carolina Governor Hunt suggests that, "Basic competence in reading, for example, must be expanded to include the ability to analyze, summarize and interpret written passages. Competence in writing must encompass the ability to select, organize and develop ideas. Competence in mathematics must include the ability to compute — with whole numbers, fractions, decimals, and percentages — and to use basic concepts of probability and statistics. Most important, students must acquire such 'learning to learn' skills as analysis and problem solving, which will enable them to acquire new skills."<sup>27</sup>

At Joe Nathan's St. Paul open school, "Our graduation requirements committee decided to require a demonstration of skills prior to graduation. This meant that students could not graduate simply by 'putting in time'. They had to prove that they possessed certain talents. The competence system recognizes a number of fundamental learning principles."<sup>28</sup>

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Some key points:

1. In addition to high school graduation, there is a need for competency testing within the process, in the promotion from grade to grade, most particularly in the exit testing at elementary and middle school/junior high before students move on to the next schooling level.
2. In the recent past, competency testing has often been seen as one way of doublechecking the graduates of large urban districts with apparently poor records for student learning. Competency testing is *not* a doublecheck; it is an entirely appropriate primary check of graduate skill levels in *all* school districts, large and small, urban and rural, public and private.
3. If educating students to appropriate levels of competence is the basic responsibility of school boards, then students may well be able to make a case for a form of "educational recall" when they fail such tests, demanding that the school districts provide necessary additional support until competency is achieved (North Carolina offers free remedial summer school to students seeking such help).

The Michigan State Board of Education has recommended that "local school districts establish written student performance standards for use in parent reporting and as promotion and graduation criteria." The Board's thinking on that subject:

"Evaluations should be reliable indicators of a student's readiness for further study, not simply automatically stamped passports to higher levels. The grading process should also pinpoint the need for remedial work. At the beginning of schooling, parents should be informed of the performance standards that the school district has established for their children. These standards should be clearly defined so that there will be an understanding by parents, students, and teachers of the performance expectations. The Michigan Commission on High Schools' survey found that 77 percent of the schools reported having no minimum competency testing

program which students are required to pass to move to another grade or to graduate, and the Michigan Public Opinion Survey showed 97 percent of the public favored requiring students to pass reading and mathematics tests in order to graduate."<sup>29</sup>

Similarly, the Education Commission of the States recommends that local school boards "establish programs that monitor student progress through periodic testing of general achievement in specific skills."<sup>30</sup>

In its report on education on behalf of the business community, the California Roundtable made a recommendation that "represents a major step the business community could take to raise educational standards in California. California's post secondary institutions have recently provided clear statements of their academic expectations for entering students. But these standards will mostly influence the 20 percent of California students who will go directly to four year post-secondary institutions. If the business community were to inform parents, schools, and students of the basic academic and life skills business expects of its beginning employees, it would help set similar standards for the majority of students who go to work immediately after graduating from high school, or after attending community college."<sup>31</sup>

One interesting possibility in the Detroit area: local businesses have traditionally required at least a high school diploma as a job requirement. Working in concert through an organization like the Greater Detroit Chamber of Commerce, businesses might make successful completion of a school-administered competency test a significant decision factor in hiring, thereby stimulating local school districts to install such a competency testing process without legislative requirement.

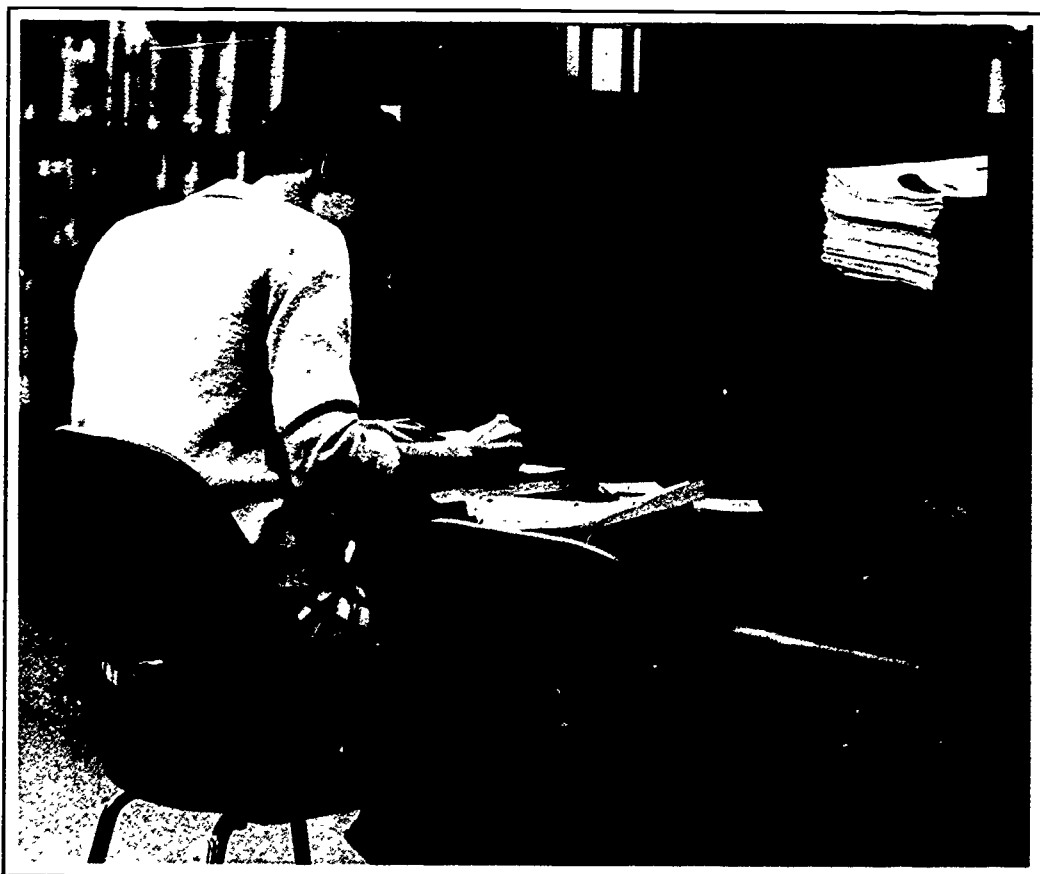
Is competency testing an idea whose time has come? Apparently so. As noted by the Michigan State Board, one survey showed 97 percent of the Michigan residents surveyed favored requiring students to pass at least reading and mathematics tests prior to graduation. In a survey of business executives recently, 85 percent approved of competency testing in English and math for promotion from grade to grade.<sup>32</sup>

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### Examples

- North Carolina requires potential high school graduates to pass a minimum competency test in reading and mathematics as well as a writing section to assess student mastery of effective communication principles. A testing program is also in place at grades 3, 6 and 9. Social promotion has been eliminated. Free summer school for students seeking remedial instruction is offered.<sup>33</sup>
- Benton Harbor has a program which requires every student to master minimum skills before being promoted to the next grade. Achievement test scores have risen 13 percent for first graders, 24 percent for second graders; but, 15 percent of the students in those grades have been held back.<sup>34</sup>

**“Most important, students must acquire such ‘learning to learn’ skills as analysis and problem solving, which will enable them to acquire new skills.”**



# Option 5 Option 5

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**A greater array of administrative services should be transferred up from local districts to the Intermediate School Districts, freeing local board members, administrators and teachers to focus more resources on educational needs of their student populations.**

## **Background**

The strong tradition of "local control" in this state, particularly in education, was never meant to be all inclusive. "Control" of the learning environment and experience is far more important than "control" of who buys fuel oil, where the central computer is located, who arranges for bus maintenance, who acquires and provides specialized teaching materials.

In an era of steadily diminishing resources, there is much to be gained by sharing administrative burdens. Metropolitan Affairs Corporation is doing effective work in the area of "joint public ventures," primarily in the local government areas of cities, villages and townships. Those entities lack the educational system's excellent sharing resource: the Intermediate School Districts. Many ISD's already perform such functions to some degree. A more concentrated effort to shift a fuller array of administrative activities to those ISD's would effectively save both time and financial resources, which local school districts could then focus more closely on the actual learning process which is their primary responsibility and concern.

The Michigan State Board of Education would take the same concept beyond administration to include elements of academic activity as well: "Large local school districts and intermediate school districts should serve as 'regional learning centers' offering or coordinating advanced high school courses which other local districts do not provide on their own. Some local and intermediate school districts have neither the population nor the funds to offer such programs."<sup>35</sup>

That concept parallels Option 1, the areawide specialized "magnet" school proposal, which could be most effectively implemented by Intermediate School Districts, much as many ISD's currently function with regard to vocational education and special education.

Specifically, the Michigan State Board has recommended that "The Governor and State Legislature enact legislation on educational structure to reorganize Intermediate School Districts, defining their future role and providing for stable and adequate funding." Furthermore, the Board has committed itself to "developing models for intermediate and consortia of

local school districts and/or intermediate school districts to operate cooperative academic programs.”<sup>36</sup>

### Examples

- West Virginia uses regional service agencies that can provide several counties with even larger combined services such as data processing and purchasing, and special services like speech therapists.<sup>37</sup>
- In Kansas City, Missouri, the Metropolitan Schools Project is a comprehensive, cooperative effort involving 13 area public school districts, four private

schools and the parochial schools. Working with support from the University of Missouri-Kansas City, the project operates a Mathematics and Physics Institute, which provides advanced learning to high school students; and, a Summer Enrichment Program.<sup>38</sup>

- Minnesota maintains a series of Educational Cooperative Service Units (similar to Michigan's Intermediate School Districts) which provide educational planning, some limited direct services and support for “low incidence” curricular needs.<sup>39</sup>

**“Specialized areawide ‘magnet’ schools should be created...focused on such subjects as mathematics, the sciences, performing arts, college prep and others.”**





# Option 6 Option 6

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**Adoption by local school districts of some form of “site-managed” school administration would provide professional educators—both teachers and administrators—more effective responsibility for the individual school’s learning environment and educational excellence.**

## **Background**

School site management is an effort at disengagement in which a local school district enters into what is, in effect, a contract relationship with one or more of its own schools. The Citizens League has been a leading advocate of this “site management” process for education, consistent with its proposal that education be “deregulated and decentralized.” School site management would be a key of such decentralization. The idea is that the local school board and its superintendent would specify general objectives — what should be taught and learned; provide the resources and challenge the people in the school — principal, faculty, parents and sometimes representatives of the non-parent community — to come up with better ideas about how those objectives can be met.<sup>40</sup>

Such a plan makes “each individual school the key unit for educational change and improvement. Although such management plans differ, they generally have two major features — greater control over the school budget at the school level and some kind of governing council at the school level to determine program priorities and allocate the budget in accordance with them. Because school principals control only an estimated 1-10 percent of the school budgets, they have few incentives to control their costs. With budgets drawn at the district level, individual schools cannot define their purpose. District budgeting results in top-down planning. School-based management permits bottom-up planning, with more control over resources exercised by those most closely involved with the process — teachers, principals, and parents.”<sup>41</sup>

As Chester Finn notes, “Although the prospect of large amounts of uncontrolled money sloshing around in individual schools sends shudders up the spines of accountants and auditors, reasonable means can be devised to confer great control of budgets in the principals’ or schools’ teams. With such control must go the responsibility to account fully for the uses to which public funds are put, but after-the-fact accounting is not inconsistent with budgetary flexibility. Individual school budgets must be constructed within certain ranges set for the school system as a whole, particularly with regard to salary levels, which is a major item in most school

budgets. But so long as total resources are insufficient and choices must constantly be made, it seems altogether fitting to allow those who are responsible for the educational effectiveness of the school to establish its budgetary priorities and to make those hard choices."<sup>42</sup>

Finn, in fact, would go beyond budgeting school site management, he would "make the selection and deployment of professional staff predominantly a school-level responsibility" because "Policy makers who want their schools to be effective must recognize that assembling a good teaching staff is like organizing a symphony orchestra: every part must blend with every other. A single lapse can damage the educational ethos of a school, just as it can ruin the tone of an orchestra. Because no one outside the school can have a sufficiently sensitive feel for these relationships, staffing must be a school-level prerogative. Policy makers must remove the major impediments to school-level hiring — leaving only a framework or general standards in equitable personnel procedures."<sup>43</sup>

The national Educational Commission of the States provides some general support of the concept in its recommendations that local school districts "improve leadership and management of the schools" by "encouraging the superintendent to put principals squarely in charge of improving the quality of education and to hold them accountable for quality."<sup>44</sup>

Support of the concept can also be found in a recent study by the Rand Corporation, which found that teachers are rapidly becoming "bureaucratic functionaries" rather than "practicing professionals." The report's author sees teachers frustrated by "standardized teaching prescriptions" that limit their ability to seek creative ways to meet the needs of students because "there is too much administrative control over the classroom teacher."<sup>45</sup>

With decentralization to a site-managed process, the local school board's role changes from emphasis on "how" education will be produced to "what" education should be produced. The concept focuses on the principal as educational team leader and creates an environment for the teacher to function as a professional, rather than a worker.

### Examples

- Detroit's Golightly School is an excellent example of the site-managed concept, involving parents and professional educators in the governance process.
- When Detroit's Renaissance High School, a "college prep" magnet school, was created, it was also put into place with a parent/educator team (although daily functioning now is consistent with the district's overall central administration).
- Many private schools operate in what is essentially a site management process, either because they are single-school operations or because such decentralized management is preferred in the private school federations.
- Oakland Community College's five campuses operate with site autonomy within their approved budgets, providing administrative flexibility to meet local needs.
- One of the concept's leading proponents, Joe Nathan, provides some example-type thoughts on the subject:

"Schools should be given a certain number of dollars, and they would decide how to spend it. For example, some schools may decide to hire one or two fewer teachers, and purchase computers very possibly with the money they save. Some 'site management' schools have established 'mini-grant' programs in which individual or small groups of teachers may apply for \$300.00 to \$1000.00 to try some special project.

"In a few places, districts have tried to provide incentives for staff to reduce their absenteeism, thus cutting substitute costs.

"The concept is simple and reasonable. People responsible for carrying out a program often have ideas about how to cut costs or how to increase efficiency, and every one likes to have their opinions considered. No one of us knows as much as all of us.

"These attempts to provide more authority and accountability at a building level . . . offer excellent opportunities to utilize the academic expertise and talent of fine teachers."<sup>46</sup>

# Option 7 Option 7

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## Background

**A long term strategy for converting the school building infrastructure from essentially periodic single-use buildings to more full-time, multi-use facilities would reap a range of benefits to both local school districts and to their citizens.**

Historically, school buildings have been just that and little more, buildings in which school districts provide educational services. The Mott Foundation in Flint has pioneered the "community school" concept that extends use of such buildings into those periods not used for K-12 instruction. Essentially, adult education and recreation lie at the heart of the Mott process.

More recently, an even broader concept of the "school" building function has developed. It is best described by Joe Nathan, who suggests that we need to "establish community centers, rather than school buildings, by combining other agencies and businesses in the same building. Every building which serves as a school or educational center for youngsters ought to host other agencies and businesses.

"There are many advantages to shared facilities. The financial benefit is obvious. Generally it costs far less to have groups using the same building than it does for each to have its own building. Heating, cooling and construction costs are reduced for each agency.

"A second advantage is found in the increased opportunities which are available for interaction within the community."<sup>47</sup>

An architect specializing in educational buildings points out that "major changes are occurring in the nature, function, uses and appearances of public school buildings — existing facilities as well as new design. These changes are responsive to the dramatic educational, societal, demographic and economic changes of today.

"Prudent administrators and boards of education are now looking at their existing and proposed schools in a much broader perspective than before. Today, school buildings and other capital inventory owned by school districts are being recognized as 1) major assets, to be maximized as revenue-yielding investments, and 2) multi-usage facilities, with K-12 education being only one of the school's potential housing capabilities."

She continues, "the concept of shared usage of under-enrolled schools . . . has become increasingly common and advantageous for school districts, financially and

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otherwise. The idea of senior citizens, professionals or public entities (to name just a few) sharing facilities and learning experiences with children in their schools appears to offer exciting opportunities."<sup>48</sup>

Nathan underscores that point with a St. Paul experience:

"A community center was recently constructed next to a large, older junior high school, with the two buildings connected with a tunnel. That center houses 11 agencies, including: a nursery school/day care center, senior citizen activity program, community college program, medical clinic, delinquency prevention program, and monthly community newspaper. The building is operated under a 'joint powers agreement' between the city government and the school district.

"Young people from the St. Paul junior high school help at the nursery school as part of their classwork in child development classes. Senior citizens who come to the North End Community Center often spend time tutoring youngsters at the junior high school. Several youth workers from the community center have guided the school's peer counseling program. A number of

young people have written articles or taken pictures for the *North End News*, their community's newspaper which is published monthly at the center."<sup>49</sup>

### Examples

- In Wichita, Kansas, a library was built by the city between a public elementary school and a day care center/nursery school, with books in the library available to both students and the general public. Community use of the library has been excellent.<sup>50</sup>
- The Saugas, California school district pre-designs convertibility into its new schools, including an elementary school recently built for later conversion into apartments.<sup>51</sup>
- A New York high rise apartment building was built with a free (to the school district) elementary "school" facility on the building's first floor.<sup>52</sup>
- In New Zealand, every school includes a dental office.<sup>53</sup>
- Lodi, California school district uses a concept of "cul-de-sac" schools, using homes on cul-de-dacs as temporary schools until more permanent buildings can be built.<sup>54</sup>

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### Other Implications of the Options

As noted earlier, there are several important dynamics of the overall matter of educational excellence that are not specifically addressed in this report — such concerns as parental involvement, the key role played by school principals, student motivation, school size and the basic definition of what "education" is, or should be.

While not addressed directly, those issues are, nevertheless, touched on by the various proposed options.

Parental involvement, for example, is near the top of many lists of what makes an effective school. Generally, that matter is concerned with the day-to-day involvement of parents during the school year. Such involvement, though, must be motivated — parents need to see that their participation in the process has meaning.

Such motivation would be significantly stimulated if the various "choice" options proposed were implemented. Certainly one of the most valuable management dynamics goes something like this, "People who are involved in the decision making will be stronger supporters as the decision is carried out." So, too, would parents remain much more involved in a process that follows their own opportunity to exercise some choice in how their children are taught, and where.

Another important dynamic often identified in effective schools research is the key role played by principals. The Education Committee of the States, for example, recommends that superintendents "put principals squarely in charge of improving the quality of education and hold them accountable for quality."<sup>55</sup>

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A consultant on educational change points out:

"The principal at the local school site is vital as a change agent through his or her role as leader of the instructional team. The principal must provide an atmosphere in which teachers can explore and experiment, providing the instructional team the opportunity to work as a group with some degree of protection from administrative and peer interference. The principal must also encourage the start, maintenance and sharing of innovative ideas and activities. The principal who takes responsibility for the quality of education at the local school and provides support for local school reform motivates teachers toward more professional achievement, fostering higher morale and greater job satisfaction."<sup>56</sup>

The principal as leader and change agent is critically central to several of the proposed options. Obviously, the concept of site-managed schools rests on the principal in his or her leadership role, providing the focus for curricular, financial and personnel management. Related to that matter is the concept of choosing among producers of educational services, a choice option that would be applicable for a site-managed school just as it would for a total district. The principal, then, would be a key decision maker in selection of such producers for the school. Utilizing a competency-based advancement and graduation process would change the instructional process, which is also headed by the effective principal.

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**"The principal must also encourage the start, maintenance and sharing of innovative ideas and activities."**

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Finally, the option of parents being able to choose among types of learning environment — between schools or within a single school — would require an effective principal to develop and guide such learning environments.

The principal is, indeed, a key element and one that is central to this report's proposed options.

School size is another important element, one with several facets. Small schools would more easily deal with such changes as site-management or differentiated learning environments. Large school buildings, on the other hand, would lend themselves to development of learning alternatives within a building.

Then, too, there is the matter of "what is a school?". The entrepreneurial principal might well decide that "school" is an experience. . . to be found within a central building as well as out in the community, where specialized learning could take place in specialized settings (as noted earlier, course work in zoology might

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**"...open enrollment choices would provide... involvement stimulation that parents would feel by being a part of the choice decision."**

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be purchased from, and delivered at, the local zoo facility). Or, principals of two adjacent schools might prefer to work out some sharing arrangements for facilities, course content, teacher resources and materials.

In short, school size — even the very definition of school — has much to do with how some of the proposed options could be implemented.

Pupil motivation, too, is spread across many of the options. Magnet schools would stimulate student performance — the excellent records of students at Detroit's Cass Tech and Renaissance high schools demonstrate the point effectively. Similarly, the open enrollment choices would provide the same sort of involvement stimulation that parents would feel by being a part of the choice decision. Competency testing, too, would provide new incentives for students — such goal orientation is generally an effective motivating dynamic.

Finally, reinforcing the teacher as professional through site management would likely reap significant benefits in student motivation. A teacher corps freed of overly burdensome administrative mandates, guidelines and regulations would likely carry over a new enthusiasm to students — there is a strong cause-and-effect relationship between motivated leadership and motivated students.



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The other key dynamic identified by the Committee is the matter of defining what education is, or should be. Much has been written about the load of non-educational considerations that often weigh down the K-12 system: such factors as driver training and sex education.

In addition, there is the administrative load that results in running a multi-million dollar corporation (which is what local school districts are these days). As a result, local school board members often find themselves without time and opportunity to concentrate effectively on setting district policy for learning environments and standards — for, in fact, defining education in their district.

Clearly, the two-step process of devolving responsibility to site-managed school buildings while at the same time transferring non-learning administrative chores up to the Intermediate School District would free local school boards to do that vital work of defining what education should be in a given local district — focusing on the end rather than the means.

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**“The choice of how to best deliver professional services is as important to teachers as is the choice to parents and students of where and in what form to use that learning process.”**

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All too often, “education” has become simplistically viewed as gathering students in a set of buildings and teaching them. Certainly the options proposed in this report move significantly beyond that definition — greater choice for parents and students of learning environments; significant investment of responsibility in educational professionals — both principals and teachers; broadening the definition of “local school” to include areawide magnet schools and other producers of educational services. All of those options would, indeed, re-define what education is, and further re-define how education is produced.

That package of seven proposals would be most effective when taken together as an interrelated set of dynamics that would work in unison to support and reinforce the “whole” of re-structuring an educational process — a whole that would be much greater than its

parts if the options are implemented individually. “Much greater” impact when taken together, but each of the options would, in its own right, provide significant improvement in the K-12 process for any local school district, public or private, putting in place one or more of the choices.

### **Teacher as Professional**

Of particular importance is the impact of this package on the very concept of the teacher as a professional. Obviously the concept of site-managed schools requires emphasis on the professional teacher. Without such strong professionalism, that concept has serious problems. So, too, do the magnet school and open enrollment options rest on solid professionals in the teaching ranks of such schools. Finally, the very concept of school boards choosing among a range of service producers speaks to the ability of professional educators — teachers as well as administrators — working as professional teams in producing those services; some would function as teams within buildings, some as professional corporations under performance contracts, others would be most comfortable employed within those various arrangements, rather than taking on the entrepreneurial role. The choice of how to best deliver professional services is as important to teachers as is the choice to parents and students of where and in what form to use that learning process.

This set of options is a package with seven elements, a coordinated, interrelated “whole” that provides a solid basis for re-structuring K-12 education to bring more choice into the process, to open up the system to a more entrepreneurial, competitive dynamic that can effectively drive the pursuit of educational excellence.



## OPTIONS FOR CHANGE: A 1986 UPDATE

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Since *Dialogue for Change* was published in early 1985, a number of developments around the nation have added to the growing momentum for restructuring K-12 education, most particularly the concept of greater choice within the educational process. The best of those developments are summarized here, including a source for learning more about individual situations.

### Issue: Need for Educational Change

"The nation's governors (have) unveiled a dramatic, five-year plan for improving education.

"The proposals included allowing parents to pick the public schools their children attend, merit pay for teachers, restructuring the nation's schools so that local authorities are given more power and allowing states to take over schools that do not measure up."

"The Governors are ready for some old-fashioned horse-trading," said Tennessee Gov. Lamar Alexander, chairman of the National Governor's Association (NGA). "We'll regulate less if schools and school districts will provide better results."

Included in the governors' recommendations:

"Parents be able to choose what public schools their children attend.

"Below-standard schools and districts 'be declared bankrupt, taken over by the state and reorganized'.

"People from outside the educational community, such as business leaders, be eligible to become school principals.

"School buildings, valued at a quarter of a trillion dollars, be kept open all year in fast-growing communities.

"A national board of professional teacher standards be established, paired with strong state counterparts."

("Governors push plan for schools," *Detroit News*, 8/25/86)

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Commenting on recent Minnesota developments in thoughts applicable to most state situations, the University of Minnesota's Ted Kolderie: "Gov. Rudy Perpich has proposed a dramatically different solution to the state's strategic problem of developing a more innovative public school system, more willing to make the difficult changes that a commitment to excellence requires.

"This was based on a recognition that the state at the moment has given the education system no *reason* to change. The institutional arrangement created by the state holds out no rewards to school boards, administrations and teachers if they make changes and improvements that improve student learning, and threatens no sanctions if they fail to do so. The state gives them no incentive or system of accountability that links their success to their students' success. The state in fact assures them that next year their students will come and their money will come whether they make changes and improvements or not.

"The state cannot put in the improvements directly: Only those inside the system can do that. What the state can do is to introduce the *incentive* for improvement. If the education system is changed so that a district succeeds when its kids succeed then the districts—in their own interest—will do what they must to ensure that the kids succeed."

("School Improvement and the Dynamics of Change," Humphrey Institute's Public Services Redesign Project, University of Minnesota, 909 Social Services, 267 19th Avenue South, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 55455 (612) 376-9855.)

★ ★ ★

Bill Honig, superintendent of public instruction for the State of California, on educational excellence:

"If we can reach working agreements among ourselves on educational philosophy, useful strategies, and respective responsibilities, then we will probably be able to sustain the momentum for school improvement. On the other hand, if we consume ourselves with internal squabbling, nit-picking, and naysaying, we will miss a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to revitalize public education. We need a little less 'I Did it My Way' and a little more 'We Shall Overcome' in order to win the struggle for better schools.

"I know that many educators worry that the lack of resources will cripple our ability to perform. Certainly, education is seriously underfunded, and the lack of support affects class size, the extent of staff development, and resources available for collaboration, and countless other areas of schooling. But surely the best way to

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secure needed funds is through the increased public support that will come when the public perceives that schools have improved.

"The risks of undertaking reforms...are great, but the risk of doing nothing is greater. For if we fail to improve the performance of our schools, we invite voucher plans or alternative methods of educating our young. Public schools have always been the backbone of our democracy. I would hate for our generation of educators to be the one that lost its nerve, forgot its roots, and presided over the demise of public education. That would be a calamity from which the nation might never recover."

("The Educational Excellence Movement: Now Comes the Hard Part," in *Phi Delta Kappan*, June, 1985.)

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From William R. Walworth, a professional educator and intermediate school board President: "We in education must stop dreaming about staying number one and take a long hard look at ourselves before we, in reality, become number two, or even worse, number three in the race to educate our children. Number three, mind you, if in the public's eye, private schools and industry both turn out to be doing a better job than we are."

"How many of us have noticed some of the new signs that are in direct conflict with public education?

- Did you know that over one million children are being educated at home?
- Did you know that 35 states have laws permitting home education?
- Did you know that Idaho has been seriously considering a rather permissive law that will allow home schools to operate with few standards or restrictions?

"We can take this lightly or begin to address this issue realistically. Do you realize that by 1990, custom tailored, home-schooling computer software will become a very competitive alternative for parents to consider instead of depending on teachers with conventional or traditional ideas of education?

"Have you given any thought to the fact that we are a monopoly?

"The federal government broke up AT&T because it was a monopoly. Isn't public education

a monopoly? Are we looking at a possible breakup of public education in light of the increase in the deregulation of government controlled industries?

"Will things be so bad by 1990 that the American people will step in and demand radical changes to education in this country? Will they endorse what private education and industry will be doing and ask public education to step aside?

"We as board members and superintendents will develop the road map with our innovative thinking and action. We must be the change agent for all of education in this country."

"I honestly believe that if we don't take up this challenge as board members and superintendents at the local level, someone else will and that someone may bury public education as we know it today."

("Public Education: What Does The Future Hold?", by William R. Walworth, president of the Genessee Intermediate School District Board of Education and instructor-computer science at Mott Community College in Flint, published in *Michigan School Board Journal*, January, 1986.)

**Issue: Greater Education Choice  
for Students, Parents**

Dr. Charles Glenn, Director of the Bureau of Equal Educational Opportunity, Massachusetts Department of Education, testifying before a task force on open enrollment in Minnesota:

"I believe that *choice* offers the best prospect for accommodating within public education the very different expectations which we have as a people about how our children will be schooled and what they will be told about life of virtue."

"Choice is important to public education because choice is important to the public. It is perhaps the key element of that moderization of consciousness which is placing all of our institutions under critical strains. A public which can choose its toilet paper and its long distance telephone service expects to choose in the infinitely more important area of schooling for its children. Generic-brand education does not satisfy sophisticated consumers of goods and services. The public schools which survive as attractive to those parents who have any alternatives will be those which dare to be diverse, to be responsive, to concentrate on satisfying some parents very much."

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"Flavor, creativity, energy, responsiveness to parents—for too long, we have trusted in our monopoly position and given away these competitive advantages to private schools. Speaking as a public school educator, I'm tired of being on the defensive. We will always be the schools of last resort, of course, we will always educate those children who have no place else to turn, and we must do it very well, but why can't we have the confidence to present ourselves as schools of first resort as well, as schools which are willing to face an equal competition because of the quality and distinctiveness of the schooling we offer?"

"I've suggested that, far from being a threat to the enterprise of public education, the extension of school choice can help to realize the promise of the common school of the Republic, can permit us to respond to the diversity of beliefs about how children should be educated, and can place us in a competitive posture which is essential to our long-term prosperity. Choice can help us to break out of what is fast becoming a dead end for public schools."

("The Significance of Choice for Public Education," *Equity and Choice*, Spring, 1985.)

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Myron Lieberman, professor of education at the University of Pennsylvania, on choice and entrepreneurial opportunities:

"Family-choice proposals, especially vouchers, can vary on several critical issues: the amount of vouchers, pupil eligibility, school eligibility, treatment of pupils who move in or out of the state or school district, the regulation of voucher schools, and the tax treatment of supplemental expenditures.

"Fortunately, family choice measures are not the only way that competition can be introduced into public education. One alternative is to encourage profit-making private schools; another is to encourage school districts to contract out instructional as well as non-instructional services to private contractors, preferably profit-making ones.

On contracting out, "Instead of employing teachers to provide instruction, school boards might contract with private profit-making companies to provide it. Such an approach would not provide parents with consumer choice, but it

could have several advantages over family-choice measures where profit-making schools are not feasible. In any event, contracting out and family choice could coexist.

"For various reasons, however, school boards have not routinely contracted out instructional services, even when the rationale for doing so was clearly present.

"No school board need be required to contract out; it would simply be a management option.

"Suppose, for example, that a school board were to contract with a teacher corporation for instructional services. The parties might agree on a fee that was somewhat less than the overall cost of conventional operations. The teachers, having an entrepreneurial interest in increased productivity, would certainly want to avoid union rules against flexibility in assignment; if they were the managers instead of the managed, the union-negotiated restrictions upon management would not likely be so attractive to them.

"Furthermore, it would be extremely difficult for a teacher union to oppose contracting out to teacher corporations. To do so would clearly position the union against the interests of teachers. Note also that contracting out instruction could drastically upgrade the professional status of teachers. They would no longer be able to blame their problems on management. They would have clients—clients who would be lost, or who could provide a springboard to greater financial and professional success."

("Market Solutions to the Education Crisis," *Policy Analysis*, No. 75, 7/1/86, Cato Institute, 224 Second St., SE, Washington, D.C. 20003)

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Do citizens see choice working to their benefit? A 1985 poll in Minnesota produced these results:

1) Asked "if parents had the opportunity to select among various public schools, how more responsive if at all, would school boards and educators be to parental concerns?", 54% felt school board and educators would be more responsive while 14% thought they would be less responsive; 22% saw no change likely;

2) Asked "if parents had the opportunity to select among various public schools, do you think education would be better or worse for the students?", 46% thought education would be bet-

ter, 18% felt it would be worse, 29% felt it would stay the same.

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Governors in four states have instituted some form of choice in their K-12 educational systems—in Minnesota, Colorado, Tennessee and South Dakota.

In Minnesota, students in the 11th and 12th grades of public schools are permitted to enroll in post-secondary institutions, full or part-time, with tax funds following the students. Gov. Perpich had proposed that 11th and 12th grade students be permitted to move across district lines to attend any public school in the state, a proposal that received strong support from citizen organizations but which failed in final legislative action, which limited the choice option to post-secondary schools.

In Colorado, students who are not successful in their own public school may attend another public school better suited to their needs. Gov. Lamm would have opened that option to either public or private schools, but the legislature limited students to programs established by public school districts only.

In very rural South Dakota, students attending high schools with less than 45 students (almost half of the state's 194 districts have less than 100 students in high school) are permitted to exercise choice by attending a neighboring school with more than 50 students enrolled, in a "family option" plan initiated by Gov. Janklow.

Tennessee's Gov. Alexander has proposed greater choice of public schools for students, noting that "coercion, not choice has become the American way for public schools. I tried to think of something as coercive as American public schools and all I could think of is land condemnation and the military draft." He feels choice "is the American way. And it also works. It will be more trouble for administrators, but schools are not set up for administrators, they are set up to benefit children and the community at large."

(Recap of choice actions in the states and the National Governors Association from Public Schools Incentives, a non-profit organization; material prepared by Joe Nathan, 1852 Pinehurst, St. Paul, MINN, 55116.)

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Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers, in a speech in 1985:

"I believe that we in the teacher union movement ought to support the greatest possible choice in terms of schools by parents, students and teachers. The current system is one that was designed a long time ago when most people who sent their children to school were not educated. Most...just accepted the authority of government. People aren't like that now. Students are dropping out in large numbers or not attending in many high schools, which essentially shows that they are telling us something..."

"If students can move from one school to another, and we ought to consider the possibility of having students have the choice in some ways of moving from one district to another within the public system, it very substantially reduces the argument for giving money to parents to send their children to private schools."

"We could turn to a parent and say: 'You've got a huge number of choices here in the public sector; why not take them?'"

"The problem we have that other professions don't have is that in most other cases the clients of that profession are not captives. You choose the doctor you go to; you choose the lawyer you go to...We are different because children are assigned to your school or to you as a teacher."  
(From *Education USA*, 5/20/85)

#### **Issue: Educational Excellence and Economic Development**

"We've figured out that better schools mean better jobs and we are deadly serious about having the best schools we can get."—Gov. Alexander of Tennessee.

"What has really thrust Mr. Alexander into the limelight is the perception that Tennessee is gaining industrial eminence as a direct result of its surge of school reform.

"That perception, which the Governor has carefully nurtured, was reinforced earlier this year when the General Motors Corporation announced plans to build a multibillion-dollar plant to produce its new Saturn automobile in Tennessee, citing the state's school reforms as one reason.

"We were thoroughly impressed with Tennessee's commitment to education," said William Hoagland, president of Saturn Corporation.



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"The Governor himself says this: 'I got into better schools because I found it was a way to get better jobs. The first two years, I set out to recruit industry. Then I realized that was not the answer. Most jobs are grown, not recruited.'

"Without an improved education system, 'We weren't going to catch up, we were going to fall further behind,' he says,"

("Tennessee's Best Salesman," from *Education Week*, 10/30/85.)

**Issue: Teachers as Professionals and Entrepreneurs**

Teaching would be more attractive as a career if it were truly treated as a profession, allowing teachers to set their profession's entry standards, to pick and train new members of the profession, to have responsibility for policing removal of the unethical and the incompetent—those are major conclusions of "Who Will Teach Our Children," a report from the California Commission on the Teaching Profession.

The commission also supports a site management process, recommending a full re-structuring of school management to embody a team approach to school management that would have greater delegation of responsibilities to teachers.

(California Commission On the Teaching Profession, 1010 Eleventh Street, Suite 205, Sacramento, California, 95814, 916-324-8880.)

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The Columbus, Indiana school system is working toward implementation of a fall 1987 program "that could revolutionize education. When the program is in place, some teachers will hang out a shingle and cater to consumers—kids seven to 17 and their parents—who will choose their teachers, free-market style, in an 'entrepreneurial' system."

" 'Teachers as a group are frustrated and kids are powerless,' said Ralph Lieber, superintendent of schools. 'Custodians have more authority than teachers. It's time to turn it upside down'.

"Teachers will be paid according to the number of clients served, and can specialize or adjust their hours to fit public demand, Lieber said. The school administration will intervene only to certify teachers, regulate class size and curriculum and monitor performance with regular tests for students and teachers.

"Lieber said he expects about 60 to 500

teachers in 13 schools to voluntarily begin the pilot program in 1987. Students will be tested for improvement in everything from reading skills to self-esteem, and the results will be made public to help parents and students choose teachers who are most successful in the areas the student needs most.

"Instructional styles will also be matched with learning styles."

("Businesses pay tab," *Detroit Free Press*, 6/30/86.)

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In Minneapolis/St. Paul, four teachers/artists have formed a corporation—Partners in Arts in Minneapolis—to offer their services to school districts in a contractual, private practice concept. Each teacher will spend one day per week in a school district assisting regular teachers in core curriculum subjects.

Supporters of the plan say private practice teaching is a way both for teachers to have more control over their work and for school districts to hire teachers for subjects with limited enrollments.

The Partner ' plans include incorporating as a business and contracting with other schools, business and public service agencies to provide arts-related services.

("Minneapolis Artists Test Private-Practice Model in Public Schools," *Education Week*, 9/4/85.)

**Issue: Competency Testing for Students**

A 1985 national survey done by Market Opinion Research of Detroit showed that 95.1% of the respondents believe that students should be required to pass high school graduation exams in reading and math; 95.2% supported junior high promotion exams in reading and math—the two strongest support totals of 17 reform options surveyed.

("Survey Finds Public Continues to Support Education Reform, Higher Academic Standards," *Education Times*, 4/8/85.)

## RECENT DEVELOPMENTS WITH CHOICE AMONG PUBLIC SCHOOLS, 1987-88

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By Joe Nathan

This report describes the dramatic progress of an idea. It is a simple concept: that families and educators should be allowed to choose among public schools. Over the last several years, this notion has been strongly endorsed by the nation's Governors, and by a clear majority of the general public. This report examines recent developments in four broad areas:

- a. General public interest in public school choice
- b. State and the federal government response
- c. New research on existing choice programs
- d. Role of the private sector in promoting the concept.

### What Does the General Public Think?

It is easy to describe what the general public thinks of allowing families to select among schools: there is widespread and growing support for the idea. Gallup polls illustrate this trend. In 1986, a national Gallup poll asked: "Do you wish you had the right to choose which public schools your children attend in this community?" 68% answered "Yes," with 25% answering "No." A year later, (1987), another national Gallup poll asked "Do you think that parents in this community should or should not have the right to choose which local schools their children attend?" 71% answered "yes," 20% said "no" and 9% did not know. (Gallup, 1986, 1987)

Another example of this trend occurred in Minnesota. In 1985, Governor Rudy Perpich recommended that families should have the option to send their children to

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*Joe Nathan is a national expert on educational excellence. He has been a teacher and administrator, most recently in the St. Paul, Minnesota public schools. He is the author of *Free to Teach: Achieving Equity and Excellence in Schools* and served as consultant/coordinator of the National Governors' Association project, *Time for Results: The Governors' 1991 Report on Education*. His perspectives on "Choice and Excellence in Public Education" were published as an Occasional Paper by Metropolitan Affairs Corporation.*

various public schools, so long as the receiving district has room and the students' movement did not have a negative impact on desegregation activities. Two months after Governor Perpich made his speech, a statewide poll found 33% in favor, 60% opposed. Nevertheless, parts of the Governor's proposal were adopted during each of the next four years. As the state had experience, support grew. In 1987, a statewide poll found support for Perpich's proposal had increased to 56% (39% opposed). A 1988 statewide poll found 63% now supported the idea, with 31% opposed. Thus, in four years, opinions had changed from about 2-1 against, to 2-1 in favor of parental choice among public schools. (Craig, Minnesota Business Partnership)

The national press, sensing public interest, discovered the issue. The *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, *Boston Globe*, and *Philadelphia Inquirer* ran front page stories on Minnesota's new public school program during the summer of 1988. *Newsweek* and *U.S. News and World Report* published major stories on the subject during September, 1988.

### State and Federal Initiatives

Governors and legislators of both political parties noticed that more than 70% of Americans supported choice among local schools. Edward Fiske of the *New York Times* described an emerging national consensus on the value of expanding choice among public schools: "Liberals and conservatives are backing the same policies on a broader scale for widely different reasons . . . Conservatives have always liked (choice) schemes and magnet schools because they promote competition between schools. Now liberals are joining the bandwagon as a way of giving the poor what the wealthy already have." (Fiske, B6, June 22, 1988)

In the last several years, 13 states developed new programs or increased financial support for existing public school choice programs. These states decided that increasing educational options expanded opportunity, used a "market" to stimulate improvement, and recognized that there is no one best school for all students or educators.



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## Summary of State Actions Promoting Public School Choice

**Arizona:** 1986 law allows 11th and 12th graders to attend post-secondary institutions.

**California:** Adopted a law in 1986 permitting families to send elementary students to public schools in districts where they live or work, so long as the movement does not harm desegregation efforts.

**Colorado:** 1988 law allows 11th and 12th graders to attend colleges and universities.

**Florida:** Allows high school students to take courses at community colleges.

**Illinois:** Governor inserted provisions into the 1988 Chicago reform bill which require the district to expand options for all students in the district within the next several years.

**Iowa:** 1987 law allows families to send students to public schools in their own or adjacent districts if a different academic program is available.

**Maine:** Passed a Post-Secondary Options law in 1987 modeled after Minnesota's program.

**Massachusetts:** Provides funds to help individual districts offer choice among public schools.

**Minnesota:** Post-Secondary Options program adopted 1985, High School Graduation Incentives, Voluntary Open Enrollment adopted 1987, K-12 Enrollment Options Act adopted 1988.

**Mississippi:** Maintains state-wide magnet school for advance science and math students.

**Missouri:** Funds magnet schools and transportation to promote integration between St. Louis & suburbs.

**New York:** Provides funds to help local districts develop public school choice programs.

**North Carolina:** Has two statewide magnet schools: one for the Arts, one in Math and Science.

**Virginia:** Established several regional magnet programs emphasizing math and science.

**Wisconsin:** Funds magnets & transportation to promote integration between Milwaukee & suburbs.

## State Legislation Discussed in 1988

**Arizona:** House passed, Senate defeated bill allowing students to move across district lines.

**California:** Considered legislation which would require state funds to go to public schools established by teachers if parents of 30+ students want to send their children to the program.

**Massachusetts:** Legislature passed a bill allowing movement between cities and their suburbs without racial balance guidelines — Governor vetoed and asked Department of Education to develop new pilot plan.

**Michigan:** Governor proposed assistance to school districts expanding choice among public schools. The legislature considered this recommendation but took no action on it. School finance reform legislation under consideration in late 1988 includes "educational quality" provisions that include a provision permitting parents to petition local school boards for schools of choice program.

**New Jersey:** Governor has asked the Commissioner of Education to develop recommendations on public school choice which he intends to introduce in 1989.

**Washington:** 1988 hearings on public school choice, legislators developing proposals for 1989.

As state governments took these actions, the federal government's role has been one of advocacy and limited financial assistance. The federal Government has provided millions of dollars over the last eight years to help urban districts establish magnet schools. In the 1988 reauthorization of Title I, Congress increased funding for urban magnet schools.

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Former Secretary of Education William Bennett spoke extensively about this issue. Bennett would go beyond *public* school choice to include certain private and parochial schools in publicly supported plans. Most state level proposals and legislation have been explicitly limited to expanding choice among public schools. In his report summarizing what has happened in the last five years, Bennett wrote "Magnet Schools and other programs that promoted parental choice inject into public school districts some of the vigor of the free market — and create one of the most effective accountability systems possible." (Bennett, 1988, p. 48.) The Secretary also quoted Michigan's Governor James Blanchard, who in proposing more *public* school choice in his state, explained "The result should be an explosion of creativity and innovation, with significant increases in quality for the entire system." (Blanchard, 1988)

### Research on Public School Choice

With all this activity, it is not surprising that information was gathered about the impact of different choice plans. The research showed that choice is a powerful tool, but that all plans are not equally effective. Authorities agreed that the details of plans are critical — and that failure to include certain features in a program could have unintended and unfortunate consequences. This section describes several key studies conducted on various programs over the last several years. Studies looked at several programs in Minnesota, at the St. Louis desegregation-choice plan, at magnet schools in four large cities, and at choice plans in Massachusetts and East Harlem, New York.

### Minnesota Studies Show Encouraging Results

The 1985-1988 Minnesota Legislatures passed several laws expanding educator and parental choice among public schools.

*Post-Secondary Options* allows public school 11th and 12th graders to attend colleges, universities and vocational schools. Participants increased from about 3600 students to about 5400 in 1988-89, (about 5% of those eligible). First year results showed that about 6% of the participants had dropped out of school, that 2/3

of the students had average grades of B, C or D, that the high school students had done as well or better in post-secondary courses, that 90% of the parents said their children learned more, and 95% of the students said they were satisfied with the program. A number of school districts have responded to this program by starting or expanding programs for students.

*High School Graduation Incentives* permits students ages 12-18 who have not succeeded in one public school to attend another public school outside the district, so long as the receiving district has room and student movement does not have a negative impact on desegregation. Criteria used to indicate lack of success include low test scores or grades, chemical dependency, excessive truancy or expulsion. Minnesota Department of Education found that during the first semester, about 1400 students are enrolled in the program. Over 50% of HSGI students are re-enrolled dropouts. In its first 6 months, the program helped convince 700+ young people that they should return to high school.

The third law is called the *Enrollment Options Program*. Parents of children ages 5-18 may transfer their children to public schools outside their resident district if both districts approve. Beginning in 1989-90, school districts lose the power to prevent students from leaving unless the movement will have a negative impact on desegregation plans. The initial law was passed late in the 1987 session, limited publicity was provided, and families had to apply during the summer of 1987 if they wanted to transfer. 95 districts of Minnesota's 435 districts agreed to participate during the first year. (151 districts, which enroll 49% of Minnesota's students, are participating in 1988-89). 137 students from 94 families used the law to transfer in September, 1987. About 440 students are using the law in 1988-89. The Department of Education surveyed parents who used the program in the 1987-88 school year. 100% of the parents whose children are not graduating said they intend to use the program again next year. Here are sample explanations parents gave for transferring:

"My child needed a more flexible program that allows her to use the community extensively to pursue her many interests. Our home district has very rigid requirements not suited to her needs and abilities."

"The resident district has no auto mech, welding, aviation, slow learning English classes."

"To meet child's needs for more accelerated Art courses."

"The new district has a larger school with more learning disabled facilities and teachers."

"We have a business in the nonresident school district where both my husband and I work. It's much easier for transportation."

"My son has been attending the nonresident district for four years. He is black, and this option was open to us. We were very displeased with the resident school system. An older son graduated from the resident high school. We are very satisfied with the nonresident schools. We see a vast difference in quality of education."

44% of families said their major reason for participation in the Enrollment Options Program was better curriculum and academics, 26% because of the location (closer to daycare, job or home), 23% because of more options, 21% because of social benefits — social problems alleviated, 16% because of better teaching, 14% because of more specialized classes, 7% because parents attended there, and 7% to complete high school or to maintain continuity after family moved. (Zastrow, 1988)

### St. Louis Desegregation Plan

In an extraordinary series of articles published in January and February, 1988, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* looked at what had happened during the five years of the St. Louis desegregation plan using public school choice as a key strategy to promote intergration between the city and its suburbs. Twelve reporters and three photographers visited 118 schools in 17 school districts and conducted more than 1600 interviews. The newspaper also commissioned a series of telephone polls of more than 2,500 teachers, parents and students in St. Louis and the suburbs. The plan has several key components:

- a. Black students from the city are allowed to request a transfer to suburban districts. Suburban districts may reject students who have created discipline problems. Transportation is provided by bus or taxi from the city to the suburbs. The average cost of transporting a city student into the suburbs was \$1677 during the 1987-88 school year.
- b. White students from the suburbs are allowed to request a transfer into the city. Transportation is provided by bus or taxi from the suburbs into the city. The average cost of driving a county student into the city during the 1987-88 school year was \$3517.
- c. 26 magnet schools have been established in St. Louis to improve education for urban students and attract white suburban students. During the 1986-87 school year, the magnet elementary schools spent \$5590 per student, 42% more than was spent at neighborhood schools. Magnet high schools spent \$7602 per pupil, 27% more than the \$5403 spent on neighborhood high schools.

Despite the expenditure of more than \$500 million in the last five years, almost two out of three black students in St. Louis attend schools which are at least 90% black. Many St. Louis black officials felt that the suburban schools were attracting some of the "best and brightest" black students. Only 626 white suburban students attended St. Louis public schools in the most recent school year, while 11,000 black students were enrolled in suburban districts.

### Four-City Magnet School Study

Many large cities have created a few magnet schools to promote integration, with most schools continuing to serve a certain geographical area. Many cities have allowed magnet schools much more flexibility, given them more financial resources, and allowed them to select faculty and students. Two Chicago-based researchers recently studied the impact of magnet high schools in four cities: Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago and New York.

Boston was the only one of the four cities which did not give extra resources and freedom to its magnet schools. Researchers found a "five tier" system in the other cities.

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"Many schools in the upper tiers operate as separate, virtually private schools, while those in the bottom tier, catering almost exclusively to low-income students, provide essentially custodial care." (Moore and Davenport, p. 3). These researchers were not critical of all choice plans — but urged changes in school district procedures so that "neighborhood" schools had more opportunity to compete with other schools.

### Massachusetts Choice Plans

During the last seven years, the Massachusetts legislature has allocated more than \$40 million to promote public school choice plans. The state has helped school districts and educators develop distinctive schools from which parents may choose. State funds have supported planning, building and parent information activities. The funds have been allocated by the state's Department of Equal Educational Opportunity. Recently the state studied the impact of expanding public school choice.

State officials pointed to Cambridge, Massachusetts, which five years ago eliminated *all* neighborhood schools at the kindergarden-eighth grade level. The state helped educators plan various programs, and then helped support a parent information center. This "controlled choice" plan allowed parents to select among various schools, so long as racial balance guidelines were followed.

State and local officials are delighted with the results of the plan. Since it was initiated about five years ago, average student achievement has *increased* every year. Moreover, the gap in achievement between black and white students has *decreased*. A state department official concluded, "The biggest impact is on school climate . . . the policy appears to be stimulating positive educational environments, and it clearly reinforces the theory that socio-economic mixing enhances school achievement." (Snider, 1987, p. 15)

### East Harlem

It is a long way from Cambridge, Massachusetts to East Harlem, New York, in mind set, if not in miles. While Cambridge is racially and economically diverse, East Harlem is one of the lowest income areas in the country.

Nevertheless, as John Merrow of the Public Broadcasting System "McNeil-Lehrer Report," pointed out, "East Harlem is educationally rich." For the last eight years, the district has developed a system of choice among its public junior and middle school programs. For the last several years, there have been no neighborhood programs — each is available on the basis of choice.

When East Harlem started this program, its students ranked 32nd among the 32 community districts in New York City (last). Today, its students rank, depending on the test, 15th or 16th. District administrators report a major reason for this improvement is their choice plan. (Merrow, 1987, Fiske, 1988, p. 13)

### Hofstra University Study

Hofstra University professor Dr. Mary Anne Raywid recently has completed a review of research on various public school choice plans. Her research will be published in a book by the national education organization Phi Delta Kappa in early 1989. Raywid concludes that when families have the opportunity to select among various public schools, students achieve more, like school and themselves better, parents have better attitudes toward school, and educators feel more like professionals. (Raywid, 1988)

### Summarizing This Research

Some people believe that there is an educational study to prove almost anything! But the studies cited above, conducted all over the country, do not necessarily contradict each other. There is an emerging consensus about key features of public school choice plans. While plans will differ, the most effective plans:

- Include student assignment and transfer policies that do not discriminate against students on the basis of past achievement or behavior;
- Provide methods of helping parents select among various programs for their children;
- Encourage and assist most schools within a given geographical area to develop distinctive features, rather than simply concentrating resources on a few schools;



- Provide opportunities for building level educators to help create programs;
- Make transportation within a reasonable area available for all students;
- Include provisions for continuing oversight and modification.

Failing to include these features will result in programs which expand choice for some (especially affluent, well-informed families), while increasing the achievement gap between affluent and poor. However, well-designed choice plans can and have helped narrow achievement gaps, and have had a dramatic positive impact on youngsters from low income families.

### Advocates for Choice

In a democracy, it is not enough to have popular support for an idea . . . it must have advocates. New, often unusual coalitions including businesspeople are promoting public school choice throughout the country.

Minnesota is one example: The Governor was joined by the League of Women Voters, Minnesota PTA, Elementary and Secondary School Principals, as well as the Minnesota Business Partnership. MBP members are the "CEO's" of the 75 largest companies in the state (i.e. 3M, Honeywell, Pillsbury, etc.). They were joined by hundreds of individual educators.

Similar coalitions are emerging in states such as Colorado and California. In California, the Business Roundtable recently adopted a series of reform recommendations which included allowing 11th and 12th graders to choose among various secondary and post-secondary schools, as well as promoting more choice within individual school districts. (Berman-Weller Associates, 1988) The California Business Roundtable is beginning to work with public alternative school educators to win support for this program. Consultant Paul Berman recently was hired by Hawaiian businesspeople to help them draft a plan which includes choice as part of their state's reform program. In Colorado, liberal and conservative state legislators agreed to a post-secondary options plan recommended by a liberal state board of education member who spent years opposing voucher plans (funding private and

parochial schools) and a conservative "think-tank," supported by various businesses, the Independence Institute. In Ohio and Connecticut, businesspeople are encouraging their legislators to adopt some form of expanded public school choice.

These recommendations have not been ignored by education leaders. Al Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers, suggested in April, 1988 that public school teachers be allowed to create distinctive programs from which families could choose. (Shanker, 1988). And the Minnesota Education Association lobbyist, acknowledging that his organization initially opposed Governor Perpich's open enrollment proposals, says "We are starting to see it as teacher empowerment." (Bencivenga, p. 20)

### Conclusions

When the Metropolitan Affairs Corporation published its report *Dialogue for Change* in January, 1985, expanding choice among public schools was rarely discussed as a key education reform strategy. In the last two years, attitudes have changed. A vast majority of the public supports the idea. More than a dozen states have acted, in response to new coalitions of private and public sector advocates. Research shows that choice is a powerful tool. While there is no one best approach for each state, certain features ought to be included in any plan. Allowing families and educators to select among various public schools can have a rapid, dramatic positive impact. As educators, parents and — most important — students, have testified, being allowed to select among public schools: "Changed my life . . . it made me a positive person again."

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