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AUTHOR Doyle, Denis P.
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ABSTRACT

Teachers know more than anyone about what the schools are like, and public school teachers know best of all whether it is wise to send one's children to a public school. Data from the U.S. Census and other sources make it clear that, in the largest urban areas, public school teachers are more likely than the public at large to enroll their children in private schools. Overall, teachers are half again as likely to choose private schools for their children (17.1% as opposed to 13.1% of the general population), and in cities, teachers are two to three times as likely to choose private schools. Black teachers are more likely to choose private schools than white teachers, and Hispanic teachers use private schools more than nonHispanic teachers. However, in the nation outside the cities, public school teachers are somewhat less likely to choose private schools. Private school enrollments are largest in the cities for everyone, and teachers are not alone in their desire to remove their children from the public schools. If teachers and their organizations reject the schools in which they teach, on what basis should other parents, particularly the poor and dispossessed, be denied this option. By and large it is the poor who are forced into the country's worst public schools, those of the inner city. School choice should be supported because it is the right thing to do for all children. (Contains 11 tables.) (SLD)

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Where the Connoisseurs Send Their Children to School

By Denis P. Doyle

- *Decreasing student test scores, the spiraling crisis in values, and the recent interest in school "privatization" have placed the spotlight on how the U.S. can best create better schools. Because schools are publicly funded, it is important that we understand how the way we fund our schools affects the education our children receive.*
- *Teachers know more than anybody what the schools are like, and public-school teachers know best of all whether it is wise to send one's children to a public school. The data is clear: in the largest urban areas, public school teachers are more likely than the population at large to enroll their children in private schools. By and large it is the poor and dispossessed, particularly in large, troubled urban areas, who are forced into the nation's public schools. But these schools are so unattractive that the teachers pay significant sums of money to send their own children elsewhere.*

Of the major industrial nations, only the U.S. denies the poor the right to attend schools of their choice. We should support school choice because it is the right thing to do.

Introduction

Where do public school teachers send their own children to school? Are they like chefs who prefer their own cuisine, or are they like the First Family, who selected a private school for the First Child? And if public schools are not "good enough" for many public school teachers—and public servants such as the First Family—for whom are they acceptable?¹ Put more neutrally, what is the significance of public school teachers—and public officials generally—sending their own children to private schools?² At issue is the very nature of the policy process in a democracy. Historically, in our pragmatic American context, practice has been policy. As no less an authority than Forest Gump might say, policy is as policy does. What public school teachers do, then, should be taken seriously.

Three strands of the national debate about education reform make the issue particularly important today: first and most important is our national commitment to both access and equity for the poor, for both moral and instrumental reasons;³ second is the spiraling crisis in values, revealed most poignantly in juvenile crime, violence, substance abuse, and teenage pregnancy; and third is the recent interest in school "privatization," the product of for-profit providers who promise to do schools "better." How do these issues relate to the question of where teachers send their children to school?

The poor—by definition—are excluded from fee-charging markets. And as we look at the nation's urban schools it becomes abundantly clear that they are once again schools for paupers (160 years after New York Governor De Witt Clinton established the privately

Public schools seem unable to grasp this elemental truth: education is more than knowing facts, it is knowing what to do about them. America's public school teachers obtain moral education for their own children by sending them to religiously affiliated schools.

Table 1
Private School Enrollment, By Income, United States

Percent of all families, all teachers, public school teachers, and private school teachers who enroll all or some of their children in private school

	Total	Less than \$35,000	\$35,000 to \$70,000	Above \$70,000
All families	13.1	8.4	15.2	24.2
All teachers	17.1	15.8	16.4	19.9
Public school teachers	12.1	9.8	11.6	15.2
Private school teachers	32.7	32.2	31.7	35.5

funded Free School Society). The poor are trapped in institutions few middle-class Americans would tolerate for their children. If private schools are good enough for teachers—especially in our cities—they might be good enough for poor children who currently cannot escape the public schools. The debate about how to educate poor children equitably is almost always cast as the need to “spend more money,” not to spend it differently. The Washington, D.C., public schools are a case in point. One of the lowest-performing school districts in the nation, it is one of the most expensive, at nearly \$10,000 per child. And 40.4 percent of D.C. teachers who earn more than twice the national median income enroll their children in private schools (see table 1).

Public schools have been virtually stripped of moral content, as education—and behavior—have become “value free.” No longer do public schools support what every educator from Aristotle to Horace Mann knew was fundamental: character formation. Whereas private schools have never lost touch with this simple insight, public schools seem unable to grasp this elemental truth: education is more than knowing facts, it is knowing what to do about them. The debate about education “values,” insofar as it is raised at all, is cast in terms of hygiene rather than ethics—condom distribution, for example, rather than character formation. In city after city, America's public school teachers are

obtaining moral education for their own children by sending them to religiously affiliated schools.

For-profit “privatization” of education is an issue for the simplest of reasons: in city after city and community after community, public schools run by the government are not

working. Policymakers are desperate for solutions, and entrepreneurs are eager to provide them. But it is not clear that a “new” source of private education—paid for with public funds—has to be invented when an exemplary private resource already exists. The privatization debate is cast in terms of greater efficiency, of “doing” existing schools “better,” as if that were the only option. Existing

Table 2
Private Schools by Type and School Level, United States, 1989-90

Private School Type/Level	Percent of total
Catholic	33.9
Parochial	21.7
Diocesan	8.7
Private	3.5
Other Religious	48.2
Conservative Christian	15.2
Affiliated	15.3
Unaffiliated	17.7
Nonsectarian	17.9
Regular	7.5
Special emphasis	7.0
Special education	3.4
Elementary	61.8
Secondary	9.3
Combined	28.9

Note: For comparability, 1989-90 data is used. The total number of private schools was 26,712.

Source: Private School Universe Survey, 1989-90, National Center For Education Statistics, U.S. Department Of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, E.D. Tabs, December 1992, NCES 93-122.

The privatization debate is cast in terms of greater efficiency, of “doing” existing schools “better,” as if that were the only option.

Existing private schools already do it better, and teachers acknowledge this when they send their own children to them.

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Insofar as private schools offer teachers something special, then, they speak directly to the policy dimensions of the national education crisis. This is as it should be, because most of the current debate about education is utterly sterile. It is a debate about incrementalism and technique, not fundamental change. What teachers do speaks volumes about education reform.

Indeed, the debate about each of these issues is fundamentally disingenuous; there are already more than 26,000 private schools (see table 2), each of which faces a market test every day. Each has staked out its own values and makes no bones about it. And each is in demand, not only by the parents of nearly five million children, but by the most discerning patrons in American education—professional teachers.

The major purpose of this study was to ascertain where teachers send their children to school. We focused primarily on public school teachers and analyzed how race and family incomes affect teachers' use of private schools. We looked at private school enrollment patterns in all fifty states and in one hundred of the nation's largest cities. This summary is drawn from the 5 percent household sample of the 1990 Census, prepared for this study as a special run by the Population Division of the U.S. Bureau of the Census.

The unit the Census employs is the family or subfamily, not the individual child. Accordingly, our study provides information on the enrollment patterns of parents—the percent of parents who behave in a certain manner, not the percent of children who do.

Unfortunately, data limitations made it necessary for us to undercount the number of teachers who chose private schools for their children: The sample could not provide a perfect count of teachers by city of residence *and* the school district in which they work. Thus the common case of a teacher who works in the city and lives in the suburbs is counted as a suburban teacher, one who is much more likely

to patronize a public school. (Indeed, an important reason for living in the suburbs is typically to avoid the public-school system in which the teacher in question works.) There is, of course, the rarer case of a teacher who works in the suburbs but lives in the city; he or she will be counted as an urban dweller (one who is more likely to patronize private schools). To a certain extent, these numbers “wash,” but on balance the number of teachers who patronize private schools will be understated. So, too, is the “connoisseurship” implicit in moving to a district with “good” schools.

The sample could not distinguish “central city” from non-central city residents, nor could it distinguish between metropolitan school districts (such as Indianapolis, Indiana) in which the city is actually bigger than the school district, and more compact districts, where the “urban” character is more uniformly distributed across the district (Boston as contrasted to Dallas, for example). This, too, leads to an undercount; in larger, sprawling urban districts there remain “islands” of excellence, “good” public schools in which teachers may enroll their children. Indeed, in some districts, teachers are afforded “open” enrollment options that are not available to the general public.

With these data limitations in mind, the most important numbers included in our study come from the category “all or some private,” meaning parents who enroll some or all of their children in private school. We use this category over “all private” because it indicates a willingness to use private schools despite financial obstacles which might hinder parents from sending all their children to private school.

Where Teachers Send Their Own Children

Nationally, all teachers are half again as likely as the general public to choose private schools (17.1 percent to 13.1 percent of the general population—see table 3). In America's troubled cities, public school teachers are two to three times as likely as the general public to use private schools (see table 4). In extreme cases, they are four to five times as likely to use private schools. Nationally,

black public school teachers use private schools more than white teachers (12.9 percent to 11.9 percent), and Hispanic teachers use them more than non-Hispanic teachers (16.5 percent to 11.9 percent—see table 5).

Without putting too fine a point on it, teachers—public and private, white and black, Hispanic and non-Hispanic, low income, middle income, and high income—know how to address the nation's education crisis: they vote with their feet and their pocket books. They choose private schools for their children when they think it serves their interests best. Indeed, in seventeen states and the District of Columbia, public school teachers are more likely than the public to use private schools (see table 6).

In the nation as a whole, public school teachers as a group chose private schools less often than the general public, by a one-point margin—12.1 percent to 13.1 percent (see table 3)—which is precisely what one would expect. It is when the going gets tough, however—in our nation's cities, where the schools are arguably the worst—that a large number of teachers abandon the institutions in which they work and enroll their offspring in private schools. And they do so in the face of both high costs and professional disapprobation. They must overcome any internal reluctance they

Table 3
Private School Enrollment, the Fifty States and the District of Columbia (Percent Enrolled in Private Schools)

State	All Families	All Teachers	Public School Teachers	Private School Teachers
United States	13.1	17.1	12.1	32.7
Alabama	10.4	16.1	10.4	38.0
Alaska	7.4	7.0	4.1	36.1
Arizona	8.3	11.3	8.6	23.1
Arkansas	7.6	10.4	7.4	22.4
California	13.3	19.1	13.9	37.7
Colorado	9.3	12.1	9.1	22.5
Connecticut	15.9	18.9	15.5	32.4
Delaware	20.6	30.7	19.1	61.9
District of Columbia	19.7	36.4	28.2	60.7
Florida	14.3	18.9	12.4	43.0
Georgia	10.0	15.2	9.9	41.4
Hawaii	21.4	32.2	25.0	59.5
Idaho	6.4	7.6	4.8	22.9
Illinois	17.6	22.4	17.0	33.8
Indiana	11.6	16.2	11.7	25.8
Iowa	11.2	14.0	9.6	25.8
Kansas	10.7	12.9	9.1	23.3
Kentucky	10.4	13.5	7.8	35.2
Louisiana	18.8	28.2	21.0	51.3
Maine	7.7	10.6	7.5	24.8
Maryland	16.3	22.5	14.6	51.2
Massachusetts	16.7	20.4	17.3	33.7
Michigan	12.5	18.1	13.4	27.5
Minnesota	12.5	14.5	10.1	26.1
Mississippi	11.7	16.9	11.0	42.4
Missouri	15.5	19.2	12.1	31.1
Montana	7.4	7.4	5.4	18.3
Nebraska	13.7	15.5	11.1	27.9
Nevada	7.4	11.2	9.2	23.8
New Hampshire	15.2	17.6	13.2	33.6
New Jersey	19.3	23.0	17.9	38.2
New Mexico	8.2	9.6	6.5	24.9
New York	17.8	20.6	15.9	32.4
North Carolina	7.0	10.2	6.2	38.1
North Dakota	6.9	7.5	5.2	15.4
Ohio	14.7	21.0	15.2	30.8
Oklahoma	7.3	9.0	5.5	22.9
Oregon	10.0	12.1	9.6	22.6
Pennsylvania	19.4	22.7	16.5	32.8
Rhode Island	18.1	25.8	22.1	42.3
South Carolina	9.3	14.4	9.6	39.7
South Dakota	8.1	9.3	7.5	13.9
Tennessee	9.3	14.1	7.8	46.0
Texas	8.5	12.9	9.1	22.6
Utah	6.0	6.1	4.3	17.8
Vermont	9.0	11.2	8.8	21.8
Virginia	9.8	14.2	9.0	40.3
Washington	11.1	13.4	9.1	30.9
West Virginia	5.5	9.2	5.6	34.4
Wisconsin	17.3	21.6	14.8	38.2
Wyoming	5.0	6.2	5.1	10.5

may feel about patronizing the competition—and suffer the slings and arrows of critics.

If the education crisis the nation faces is not about doing old things better—but about doing things differently—the behavior of America's public-school teachers presents a dramatic policy remedy, one that is readily available. Let all Americans do what large numbers of American teachers do: send their children to private schools. And if not for all Americans, at least extend the option to those who need it most—low-income Americans who cannot afford private school tuition and cannot move to the suburbs where the schools are perceived as better.

It is clear to most Americans that education reform that creates "more of the same" will be futile. And the simplest and most direct way to end the "more of the same" mindset would be to end the "exclusive franchise" public schools now enjoy and give all parents the economic means to choose their children's schools.⁴ Most Americans would agree that it is sensible, even wise, for government to pay for the education of our children. But more Americans are coming to the conclusion that government can provide for education without necessarily owning and operating schools. And it is clear that a government monopoly—at least a monopoly for the poor—is relentlessly harmful to children's best interests.

The fact that so many teachers choose private schools for their own children is all the more interesting in light of what teaching is all about. Teaching is a helping profession. Teachers are compassionate and cooperative, not competitive. They are following a "vocation"—teaching—because it is a good thing to do, not because of the money. Moreover, they are members of the most heavily unionized workforce in the nation. Their unions—the large National Education Association and the smaller American Federation of Teachers—ardently oppose public funding of private

Table 4

Private School Enrollment for Children of Public School Teachers, by Income, in Selected Examples from the One Hundred Largest U.S. Cities (Percent Enrolled in Private Schools)

City	Less than \$35,000	\$35,000 to \$70,000	Above \$70,000
United States	9.8	11.6	15.2
Akron	6.6	26.9	52.2
Albuquerque	11.1	9.7	15.9
Bakersfield	11.0	10.2	24.0
Baltimore	20.8	32.9	48.0
Baton Rouge	17.5	39.0	59.1
Boston	24.4	49.6	65.8
Buffalo	23.2	20.7	49.8
Charlotte	5.7	3.6	8.5
Chicago	24.6	39.5	44.1
Cleveland	37.3	46.5	31.2
Colorado Springs	3.7	9.1	13.9
Columbus, Ga.	6.7	12.1	20.2
Dayton	44.7	29.3	0.0
Denver	15.7	23.2	50.2
Des Moines	5.3	10.5	5.2
Detroit	16.5	35.1	44.2
El Paso	11.0	13.6	13.1
Fresno	10.2	10.7	3.8
Grand Rapids	22.7	50.0	48.6
Greensboro	8.0	8.8	14.4
Hialeah	0.0	31.8	50.0
Honolulu	43.2	24.3	60.1
Houston	9.9	12.0	22.5
Jackson, Miss.	16.9	22.3	56.1
Jersey City	26.7	57.1	61.1
Lincoln	5.7	15.4	8.3
Little Rock	13.2	26.5	53.3
Long Beach	14.9	10.3	11.9
Los Angeles	18.9	30.6	36.4
Lubbock	10.4	7.1	5.1
Memphis	6.6	12.3	6.1
Mesa	6.5	6.2	3.3
Miami	35.4	23.6	37.8
Mobile	13.0	25.3	50.8
New Orleans	27.2	46.1	46.8
New York	21.4	26.9	33.4
Newark	28.8	32.2	61.4
Philadelphia	25.4	37.4	47.5
Phoenix	9.7	12.7	15.5
Raleigh	3.6	9.8	9.9
San Diego	5.6	15.4	13.9
San Francisco	12.0	34.7	55.9
Santa Ana	0.0	7.1	0.0
Seattle	21.4	31.7	39.1
St. Louis	21.3	33.2	55.8
Virginia Beach	14.1	11.5	10.4
Washington, D.C.	25.7	19.2	40.4
Wichita	14.4	15.6	14.6
Yonkers	25.5	41.4	42.4

Table 5
Private School Enrollment, by Race and Ethnicity, United States

Percent of all families, all teachers, public school teachers, and private school teachers who enroll all or some of their children in private school

	Total	White	Black	Other Races	Not Hispanic	Hispanic
All families	13.1	14.2	8.1	10.8	13.4	10.1
All teachers	17.1	17.5	14.2	15.9	17.1	18.7
Public school teachers	12.1	11.9	12.9	13.6	11.9	16.5
Private school teachers	32.7	33.9	20.3	24.7	32.9	27.0

education, despite the large numbers of their members who patronize private schools.

Public-school interest groups oppose any form of aid to non-public schools because they are genuinely convinced that such a development would mean the "ruin" of public education. But how can a massive industry commanding public expenditures approaching a quarter of a trillion dollars per year, employing 2.5 million teachers, and educating (if that is the word for it) more than 40 million youngsters annually seriously suppose that aid to nonpublic schools would ruin them? They suppose so because it might be true.

It is possible that all that holds this vast system together is compulsion. The monopolist's worse fear, of course, is competition. Indeed, in the private sector, monopolies can exist only if they enjoy the active support of the state. As Peter Drucker has pointed out, monopolies create a "price umbrella" which alert providers can first work under, then defeat. That is, the monopolist's artificially high prices provide price protection for fledgling entrepreneurs. As a novice gains experience, he can go toe-to-toe with the monopolist. Unless the state allows unfair practices, the monopolist's inefficiencies will eventually be revealed, and the more efficient producer will sweep him aside. It may take time. It certainly takes energy. And it takes vision. But it happens. Perhaps the teachers' unions know this. But if their own members, on average, patronize public schools in larger numbers than the public at large, what have they to fear?

Variations Among States

The vast majority of all parents in the United States send their children to

public schools. In the U.S. as a whole, 13.1 percent of all parents enroll all or some of their children in a private school. Of all the states, Hawaii and Delaware have the highest private school enrollment: in Hawaii 21.4 percent of all parents send all or some of their children to private school, and in Delaware 20.6 percent of parents do so. Wyoming and West Virginia have the lowest rates of private school enrollment: 5.5 percent and 5.0 percent of parents, respectively, send their children to private

Table 6
School Enrollment for All Families, by State

States where the percent of parents who enroll all or some of their children in private school is greater than the national average (13.1); the five states with the smallest percent in the same category

State	All Public	All Private	Some Both	All/Some Private
California	86.7	10.3	3.0	13.3
Connecticut	84.1	11.7	4.2	15.9
Delaware	79.4	17.1	3.5	20.6
District of Columbia	80.3	17.0	2.7	19.7
Florida	85.7	11.2	3.1	14.3
Hawaii	78.6	16.7	4.6	21.4
Illinois	82.4	13.8	3.8	17.6
Louisiana	81.2	15.6	3.2	18.8
Maryland	83.7	13.1	3.3	16.3
Massachusetts	83.3	12.1	4.6	16.7
Missouri	84.5	12.4	3.1	15.5
Nebraska	86.3	10.0	3.7	13.7
New Hampshire	84.8	10.2	5.0	15.2
New Jersey	80.7	14.7	4.6	19.3
New York	82.2	14.1	3.7	17.8
Ohio	85.3	11.6	3.1	14.7
Pennsylvania	80.6	15.6	3.9	19.4
Rhode Island	81.9	14.0	4.2	18.1
Wisconsin	82.7	12.9	4.4	17.3
United States	86.9	10.1	3.0	13.1
Idaho	93.6	4.2	2.2	6.4
North Dakota	93.1	4.5	2.3	6.9
Utah	94.0	3.4	2.6	6.0
West Virginia	94.5	4.0	1.4	5.5
Wyoming	95.0	3.2	1.8	5.0

Table 7
Private School Enrollment, by Income, United States

Percent of all families, all teachers, public school teachers, and private school teachers who enroll all or some of their children in private school

	Total	Less than \$35,000	\$35,000 to \$70,000	Above \$70,000
All families	13.1	8.4	15.2	24.2
All teachers	17.1	15.8	16.4	19.9
Public school teachers	12.1	9.8	11.6	15.2
Private school teachers	32.7	32.2	31.7	35.5

public school teachers it is 12.1 percent. However, in the District of Columbia and seventeen states—California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Nevada, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Wisconsin—public school teachers

schools in those two states (see table 3).

Slightly more than 6 percent of all parents are teachers; more than 75 percent of those are public school teachers, and less than 25 percent teach in private schools. As a group, teachers (including those in both public and private schools), are more likely than the public at large to enroll their children in private school (17.1 percent to 13.1 percent for the nation as a whole). In Hawaii, 32.2 percent of teachers send all or some of their children to private school, compared to 21.4 percent of the general population. In Delaware, 30.7 percent of teachers enroll their children in private school, and 20.6 percent of all parents do. In addition, whereas only 19.7 percent of the public enrolls its children in private schools in the District of Columbia, an astounding 35.4 percent of D.C. public school teachers send all or some of their children to private schools.

In all but two states—Montana and Alaska—teachers send their children to private schools at a rate greater than does the population at large. In fact, Alaska is the only state in which teachers send their children to private school at a rate lower than does the general population (see table 3). Only 7.4 percent of all parents in Alaska send their children to private schools, and 7 percent of teachers do.

Private school teachers enroll their children in private school at rates much higher than does the population at large. This is true for all states and is to be expected. The more interesting story is the enrollment patterns of public school teachers.

In the United States overall, public school teachers are slightly less likely than the general population to send their children to private school; the national average for private school enrollment for all parents is 13.1 percent, and for

public school teachers it is 12.1 percent. However, in the District of Columbia and seventeen states—California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Nevada, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Wisconsin—public school teachers

are *more likely* than the public at large to send some or all of their children to private school. Controlling for income and race sheds more light on the numbers for the entire United States. Higher-income families (incomes over \$70,000) are nearly twice as likely to use private schools as lower-income families (under \$35,000 annual income) in the nation as a whole—24.2 percent to 13.1 percent. Interestingly, although low-income public school teachers are more likely to use private schools than low-income parents generally (9.8 percent to 8.4 percent), middle-income public school teachers (incomes between \$35,000 and \$70,000) are *less likely* to use private schools. The following percentages of teachers enroll their children in private school: 19.9 percent of those in the highest income brackets, 16.4 percent of those in the middle, and 15.8 percent of those in the lowest brackets. These figures suggest that, overall, income is only a very modest predictor of a public school teacher's propensity to use private schools (see tables 7 and 8).

A related issue is the income pattern of public school teachers. Despite the widespread perception that public school teachers are underpaid, they are in fact nearly twice as likely as the general

Table 8
Annual Income Breakdown for All Categories, United States

	Less than \$35,000	\$35,000 to \$70,000	Above \$70,000
All families	49.6	36.3	14.1
All families with children	48.9	37.8	13.3
All teachers	22.6	51.6	25.8
All teachers with children	22.7	52.6	24.7
Public school teachers	21.5	51.8	26.6
Public school teachers with children	22.0	52.8	25.1
Private school teachers	26.1	50.9	23.0
Private school teachers with children	24.7	51.9	23.4

What is most interesting is private school enrollment in our largest cities, where public schools are arguably the worst. In the largest urban areas, public school teachers are more likely than the population at large to enroll their children in private schools.

Table 9
Percent Distribution of Families and Teachers, by Race and Ethnicity, United States

	White	Black	Other races	Not Hispanic	Hispanic
All families	81.7	11.6	6.7	92.3	7.7
All families with children	76.9	14.4	8.7	89.9	10.1
All teachers	87.9	9.0	3.1	96.0	4.0
All teachers with children	87.7	9.0	3.3	95.6	4.4
Public school teachers	87.2	9.6	3.2	95.8	4.2
Public school teachers with children	86.8	9.7	3.5	95.4	4.6
Private school teachers	90.2	6.9	2.9	96.4	3.6
Private school teachers with children	90.4	6.8	2.8	96.3	3.7

public to be high earners. Whereas 14 percent of all families in the U.S. earn more than \$70,000 annually, 26.6 percent of public school teachers' families earn more than \$70,000 per year. And whereas half of all families are in the lowest income bracket, fewer than 25 percent of all teachers' families are; indeed, more than half of all teachers are in the middle bracket (see table 8).

Also revealing is the information on how race affects private school enrollment. Race and ethnicity are reported by the Census Bureau as white, black, and other, and not-Hispanic and Hispanic. Overall, white parents comprise slightly less than 77 percent of all U.S. parents, and slightly less than 90 percent of all U.S. parents are non-Hispanic (see table 5).

White parents are somewhat more likely than nonwhite parents to send their children to private school. In the United States as a whole, 13.1 percent of all parents send their children to private school; 14.2 percent of white parents do so; 8.1 percent of black parents do so; 10.8 percent of parents of other races do so. Broken down by ethnicity, 13.4 percent of Hispanic parents do so, and 10.1 percent of all non-Hispanic parents do (see table 9).

Whereas 12.1 percent of all public school

teachers send their children to private school—one point less than the public at large—white public school teachers are less likely than public school teachers in general to use private schools (11.9 percent vs. 13.1 percent). Black teachers, however, are almost as likely as the public at large to use private schools (12.9 percent as compared to 13.1 percent—see table 5). Black teachers who can afford a choice exercise it: they are 50 percent more likely than black parents in general to enroll their children in private schools. This might explain the high support for publicly funded school choice programs among minorities—they are

often in the worst school districts and are more inclined to put their children in private schools when they can afford it.

Enrollment Habits in the One Hundred Largest Cities

What is most interesting is private school enrollment in our largest cities, where public schools are arguably the worst. Although even here most parents enroll their children in public schools, the balance tips dramatically in a number of the nation's largest cities.

Jersey City, Philadelphia, and Yonkers, for example, have the highest private school enrollments among the nation's largest cities, at 34.4 percent, 34.7 percent, and 34.5 percent, respectively. Of the nation's twenty largest cities, fifteen—Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Columbus, Dallas, Detroit, Indianapolis, Jacksonville, Los Angeles, Memphis, Milwaukee, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Washington—show private-school enrollment for all parents above the national average, whereas only five—Houston, Phoenix, San Antonio, San Diego, and San Jose—do not (see table 10).

Public school teachers in the one hundred largest cities in the United States are generally more likely than the general public to enroll their

If teachers and their organizations reject the institutions they are teaching in and feel free to choose a private alternative, on what basis should other parents, particularly the poor and dispossessed, be denied this option?

children in private schools. In sixty-nine of the one hundred largest U.S. cities, the percentage of public school teachers who send their children to private school is greater than that of all parents who do so.

The highest percentages of private school enrollment among public school teachers are in Grand Rapids, Honolulu, and Jersey City, where 55.1 percent, 50.5 percent, and 51.4 percent of all teachers, respectively, enroll all or some of their children in private school. The largest differences between the percent of public school teachers and all parents who send their children to private school are in Miami and Newark: in Miami 13.2 percent of all parents enroll their children in private schools and 31.4 percent of public school teachers do, a difference of 18.2 percent; and in Newark 18.8 percent of parents and 37.8 percent of public school teachers do so, a difference of 19.0 percent.

Finally, it is significant that in nineteen of the twenty largest cities in the United States, the percentage of public school teachers who send their children to private school is both greater than the national average and greater than the percentage of all parents in the city who do so; only in Memphis is it not. It seems clear that in the largest urban areas, public school teachers are more likely than the population at large to enroll their children in private schools (see table 11).

Conclusion

No matter how one examines the data, teachers and their organizations owe the public an answer to this question: if they reject the institutions they are teaching in and feel free to choose a private alternative, on what basis should other parents, particularly the poor and dispossessed, be denied this option? In no other area of the modern welfare state are the poor denied a service simply because they are poor; on the contrary, the guiding impulse of the

welfare state is precisely to eliminate disparities in access occasioned by poverty.

Having said this, in examining what teachers do—particularly as one tries to tease out policy implications—one must resist the temptation to moralize. It would be uncharitable, for example, to think of them as hypocrites. Teachers are like the rest of us, living complicated lives, making difficult decisions under conditions of uncertainty, and generally trying to do the best they can. This is particularly true as regards their own children. And as the data shows, their choices involve a variety of factors. Although the trends are

Table 10
Private School Enrollment for All Families, by Race, by City

The fifteen cities where the percent of parents who enroll all or some of their children in private school is greatest; the five of the one-hundred largest cities with the smallest percent in the same category

City	Total	White	Black	Other races
Boston	28.9	47.4	16.4	13.4
Chicago	26.6	47.9	14.2	21.5
Cleveland	25.2	48.2	9.0	23.0
Grand Rapids	27.3	38.3	4.2	4.8
Honolulu	31.0	35.4	11.3	30.0
Jersey City	34.4	44.0	23.1	36.6
Little Rock	26.6	46.1	4.9	25.1
New Orleans	26.5	62.3	16.8	20.3
Philadelphia	34.7	57.1	16.0	24.8
Pittsburgh	28.0	40.8	6.9	33.5
San Fran.	30.1	44.5	17.8	23.3
Seattle	28.7	37.5	10.5	15.7
St. Louis	28.4	60.8	8.6	40.8
Toledo	26.7	30.1	17.4	24.9
Yonkers	34.5	43.8	10.6	25.9
United States	13.1	14.2	8.1	10.8
Aurora, Col.	7.8	8.1	5.3	10.0
El Paso	7.5	8.2	5.5	5.6
Fresno	6.2	9.2	2.1	2.9
Lubbock	7.6	9.7	1.8	2.9
Mesa	7.0	7.3	4.1	4.4

One thing is abundantly clear. The “worse” the public schools (and the more you know and can do about it), the greater the likelihood one will enroll one’s children in private school.

pronounced, different teachers behave differently in different circumstances. As we have already noted, for example, black public school teachers are more likely to use private schools than white public school teachers. In the extreme case, Hawaii, one hundred percent of black teachers—the entire sample—used private schools.

One thing, however, is abundantly clear. The “worse” the public schools (and the more you know and can do about it), the greater the likelihood one will enroll one’s children in private school. In particular, urban teachers’ behavior shows us that the more you know about a city’s public schools, the less likely you are to send your children to them.

That teachers prefer private schools drives home arguments about choice, not in terms of competition, but in terms of its ethical and normative dimensions. When public-school teachers choose private schools, the truth is self-evident: although they work in public schools they choose private schools for their own children because they believe the latter are better. These teachers are connoisseurs. No one in our society is better qualified to make that judgment than teachers.

To public school teachers—and indeed to the general public—the public school is no longer a temple of civic virtue that demands unquestioning allegiance. That is why school districts across the country are exploring “privatization.” To more and more teachers, teaching is a job and school is a business. If schools were able to exert some compelling claim on our loyalty—for example, if they were superb instruments for forging a democratic society, inculcating habits of prudence and civic virtue—we could argue that teachers *should* send their children to public school. Indeed, teachers themselves would so argue, as they have in the past. Today, however, numerous public school teachers are actually making the decision to enroll their children in private school, and in doing so are overcoming a

Table 11
Private School Enrollment for Families Where One or Both Parents Are Private School Teachers and for All Families, by State

States where the difference between the percent of private school teachers who enroll all or some of their children in private school and that of all parents who do so is greater than the national average (19.6); the five states where the difference is smallest

State	Private school teachers	All families	Percent difference
Alabama	38.0	10.4	27.6
Alaska	36.1	7.4	28.7
California	37.7	13.3	24.4
Delaware	61.9	20.6	41.3
D.C.	60.7	19.7	41.0
Florida	43.0	14.3	28.7
Georgia	41.4	10.0	31.4
Hawaii	59.5	21.4	38.1
Kentucky	35.2	10.4	24.8
Louisiana	51.3	18.8	32.5
Maryland	51.2	16.3	34.9
Mississippi	42.4	11.7	30.7
North Carolina	38.1	7.0	31.1
Rhode Island	42.3	18.1	24.2
South Carolina	39.7	9.3	30.4
Tennessee	46.0	9.3	36.7
Virginia	40.3	9.8	30.5
Washington	30.9	11.1	19.8
West Virginia	34.4	5.5	28.9
Wisconsin	38.2	17.3	20.9
United States	32.7	13.1	19.6
Montana	18.3	7.4	10.9
North Dakota	15.4	6.9	8.5
South Dakota	13.9	8.1	5.8
Utah	17.8	6.0	11.8
Wyoming	10.5	5.0	5.5

strong professional push to the contrary.

We are left, then, with a striking spectacle. By and large it is the poor and dispossessed, particularly in large, troubled urban areas, who are forced into the nation’s public schools.

It was the great insight of an earlier Governor Clinton to create “schools for paupers,” the nation’s

It is a bitter irony that our urban schools have become schools for paupers once again, in large measure because of their administrators' and unions' doctrinaire hostility to public funds for private education.

first "public schools." It is a bitter irony that our urban schools have become schools for paupers once again, in large measure because of their administrators' and unions' doctrinaire hostility to public funds for private education. This irony throws in high relief the stock response to the news that teachers in troubled districts are more likely to use private schools than the general public. The response, dripping condescension, typically begins as follows: "Well, if you control for income . . ." or "If you control for race . . ." The implicit assumption is "What do you expect of people like that?" So let us ask the question: What indeed should we expect? This argument takes us full circle: What is good enough for rich kids is good enough for poor kids. Given the choice, the poor would choose private schools.

Unfortunately, the thoughtful economic arguments of thinkers such as Milton Friedman have made little headway against what can only be described as reactionary liberalism. Perhaps it is time for a moral argument. Advocates for greater access to private schools should advance the argument not on instrumental or efficiency grounds but as a question of simple human decency. That argument has led to choice in the other democracies. Only America denies the poor the right to attend schools of their choice. Oddly enough, even in a pragmatic society such as ours, the instrumental economic argument makes little progress in the

face of overwhelming ideological and bureaucratic opposition. But perhaps that is where the debate belongs. We should support school choice because it is the right thing to do.

Notes

¹The results reported here are a follow-up to an earlier study of 1980 data that was limited to 13 states and 25 cities; that was the extent of the data available and it permitted my co-author, Terry Hartle, and me to prepare a short report, released in Spring 1986 by the American Enterprise Institute. This study demonstrates that the earlier work was not an aberration; public school teachers in urban areas enroll their children in private schools at significantly higher rates than does the population at large.

²That the issue is not restricted to teachers and the First Family was demonstrated quite forcefully in a recent Heritage Foundation study of where members of Congress send their children to school. They, too, disproportionately choose private schools. Released in February 1994, the study was based on a survey of members which found that 50 percent of Senate Republicans and 39.5 percent of Senate Democrats used private schools, more than three times the national average; consistent with its more egalitarian composition, fewer House members used private schools: 25.2 percent of House Democrats and 36 percent of House Republicans (only two and three times the national average, respectively).

Two subsets of the data are especially interesting:

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29.6 percent of the members of the Black Caucus used private schools, and 70 percent of the Hispanic Caucus did. For the full report, see "How Members of Congress Exercise School Choice," by Allyson M. Tucker and William F. Lauber, the Heritage Foundation, Washington, D.C., February 1, 1994.

³Indeed, public schools as we know them today were invented by another, earlier Governor Clinton—De Witt Clinton of New York—who founded the "Free School Society" to receive private funds to educate the poor because of the perceived market failure of the day: private schools, good at educating those who could pay, did not reach many in great need of education, the poor. The Free School Society could not survive without public funds; not long after public funding was made available it became the "Public School Society" and quickly lost its private, voluntary character. A cautionary tale if ever there was one.

⁴Ted Kolderie of the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute should be credited with this evocative coinage. He has spoken and written widely about it.

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