

September 13, 1991

NINE PHONEY ASSERTIONS ABOUT SCHOOL CHOICE: ANSWERING THE CRITICS

INTRODUCTION

Free market economics works well for breakfast cereals, but not for schools in a democratic society. Market-driven school choice would create an inequitable, elitist educational system.

So said Keith Geiger, President of the National Education Association, in September 1990.¹

Similar arguments that education and consumer choice, like oil and water, simply do not mix are espoused by many other critics of educational choice. These criticisms of school choice programs have grown louder and more shrill as school choice programs proliferate. To date, some eleven states have adopted some type of plan, ranging from limited choices among public schools in several states to a program including private schools in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Ballot initiatives and legislative battles are pending in another fourteen states, and many of these proposals would give parents the option of sending their children to private schools.

1 Keith Geiger, "Choice That Works: Transforming Public Schools at the Local Level," Advertisement, *The Washington Post*, September 30, 1990.

With growing support for choice in education,² it is hardly surprising that the National Education Association and other opponents of reform step up their attacks on educational choice. The criticisms against choice constitute nine broad categories:

ASSERTION #1

The Undermining-America Argument: Choice will destroy the American public school tradition.

ASSERTION #2

The Creaming Argument: Choice will leave the poor behind in the worst schools.

ASSERTION #3

The Incompetent Parent Argument: Parents will not be capable of choosing the right school for their child.

ASSERTION #4

The Non-Academic Parental Neglect Argument: Parents will use the wrong criteria, such as sports facilities, in choosing schools for their children.

ASSERTION #5

The Selectivity Issue: There will be insufficient help for students with special needs.

ASSERTION #6

The Radical Schools Scare (or the Farrakhan-KKK Theory): Extremists, like Louis Farrakhan or the Ku Klux Klan, will form schools.

ASSERTION #7

The Church-State Problem: Choice is unconstitutional.

ASSERTION #8

The Public Accountability Argument: Private schools are not sufficiently regulated.

ASSERTION #9

The Choice is Expensive Argument: There are high hidden costs associated with school choice.

2 See, for example, Jeanne Allen and Michael J. McLaughlin, "A Businessman's Guide to the Education Reform Debate," Heritage Foundation *Background* No. 801, December 21, 1990; Clint Bolick, "A Primer on Choice in Education: Part I — How Choice Works," Heritage Foundation *Background* No. 760, March 21, 1990; Clint Bolick, "Choice in Education, Part II: Legal Perils and Legal Opportunities," Heritage Foundation *Background* No. 809, February 18, 1991, p. 6.

These criticisms too often go unanswered, and thus begin to gain currency in the press and among many Americans. Even some business leaders are prone to accept arguments against consumer choice and competition in education, despite lauding it as the key to efficiency in the rest of society. Fearful of backing an issue that may be controversial, and lacking precise and accurate information about educational choice, these business executives prefer to err on the side of caution and take no position in the debate.

This reluctance is costly, however, because American business pays heavily for the failures of the school system. U.S. firms, for instance, last year paid out \$40 billion to finance remedial education for their employees. The businessmen's reluctance to back choice in the debate also is misplaced because the criticisms of educational choice either are completely spurious or no longer are valid because they have been addressed in modifications of the original choice concept.

NINE PHONEY ASSERTIONS AGAINST SCHOOL CHOICE

ASSERTION #1) THE UNDERMINING-AMERICA ARGUMENT: Choice will destroy the long tradition of common schools in America by subsidizing private schools at the expense of public schools. These schools, which embody the classless and democratic principles of the United States are enshrined in the public school system.

Says Wisconsin Superintendent of Public Instruction Herbert Grover: "[T]he private school choice program is not a solution but a program that is in conflict with the intent of the common schools established for the common good of our society."³

RESPONSE:

The term "public education" was first used in 1837 by Horace Mann, then chairman of the New York State Board of Education, to describe the goal of an educated citizenry, seen in part as an effective way to knit together the millions of immigrants from many lands who were coming to America. Charles Glenn, educational expert, author, and former director of equal opportunity for the state of Massachusetts writes that, "At the heart of this vision was the idea of the common school, a school in which the children of all classes and representing all levels of society would be educated together and would thus acquire the mutual respect essential to the functioning of a democracy."⁴ Indeed, opponents of choice often talk of the notion of the common school and frequently invoke the name of Horace Mann.

3 Herbert Grover, "The Milwaukee Choice Plan," *Wisconsin Choice News*, August 1990, p. 4

4 Charles L. Glenn, *The Myth of the Common School* (Amherst, MA.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988).

As University of Chicago sociologist James Coleman has discovered in his research, however, public schools rarely conform to the common school tradition.⁵ They tend, rather, to be the most exclusive and segregated schools. Ironically, private religious schools are more consistent with the common school philosophy than are public schools. Private, inner city Catholic schools in such cities as Chicago and New York bring together children of widely differing social and economic strata.

Choice, in fact, affords Americans the best chance of re-creating the common school by returning all children to a level playing field and ensuring that schools are representative of diverse communities. Parents of all colors, socio-economic levels, and classes should be able to choose among the widest range of schools possible, rather than being segregated out of a particular school because its cost may be prohibitive. Similarly, taxpayers required to subsidize their local school districts should have some say over what occurs in the schools. While choice opponents boast of "public accountability" in the schools, in reality the schools are no longer accountable for their employees, their product, or their daily operations. Choice makes schools accountable directly to consumers.

Choice would recreate Mann's notion of the common schools by restoring quality education and accountability for results. In the 19th century, the local public school epitomized the ideals, providing education which long ago ceased to respond to the needs of American children.

ASSERTION #2)THE CREAMING ARGUMENT: Choice will "leave behind" the poor and most difficult to educate, while good students will be "creamed" into the best schools.

Says California Superintendent of Public Instruction Bill Honig: "The voucher approach risks creating elite academies for the few and second rate schools for the many."⁶

RESPONSE:

The creaming argument supposes that poorer and less able children will tend to be left behind in the worst schools when parents have a choice of schools. Adherents of this view presume that most minority or lower-income parents do not know the difference between good and bad schools and that their children thus will end up in bad schools. Hence, the argument goes, choice plans are unfair because they separate the "haves" from the "have-nots."

5 James Coleman, *Public and Private Schools* (New York, New York: Basic Books, 1987).

6 Bill Honig, "School Vouchers: Dangerous Claptrap," *The New York Times*, June 29, 1990.

While the “creaming” theorists are concerned about inequality under a choice plan, they seem to ignore that today’s education system is extremely unequal. The “haves” already have choice because they have the money to choose a private school for their children. The “have-nots,” meanwhile, are trapped in major urban school systems in which the quality of education is appalling despite heavy spending by the school districts.

Successful Magnet Schools. Choice is a tool to reduce this inequality. The evidence shows that choice improves all schools, not just a few, and that poor parents are quite able to find the best schools. This is very clear in the case of magnet schools, which are specialized schools offering unique programs. They are designed to attract children of all races. They constitute a limited form of parental choice, in that parents opt to send their children there in place of the school to which they were assigned. They post significantly better results than other public schools. Large magnet school systems have been functioning for more than a decade in over 100 cities nationwide.

Adherents of the creaming argument contend that magnet schools nationwide can boast success simply because they attract smart children of smart and very involved parents.⁷ Yet the evidence on many long-established magnet schools suggests this is not the reason. These schools credit their success to the child’s excitement at being in the school and the school’s ability to tailor its lessons to the needs of individual students.⁸ Magnets do not, in fact, selectively enroll children. Indeed, since demand is high, they operate generally by lottery, to ensure that all parents have an equal opportunity at a limited number of spaces. Moreover, refuting the assertions of choice critics, parents of these children are not necessarily the most involved and better educated parents.

Evidence suggests, meanwhile, that poor and disadvantaged parents are just as capable as better-educated or higher-income parents of distinguishing between good and bad schools. The problem today is that poor parents are rarely given the opportunity to do so. When they have the opportunity and are given full information about the choices open to them, they choose well.

Harlem Turnaround. Consider the case of East Harlem in New York City. Children in East Harlem School District 4 in 1974 scored the lowest of any New York City school district in state assessments. Central office officials blamed their students’ failure on the bad influence and lack of involvement of parents. Then a bold district administration instituted a plan that gives teachers authority to design and run their own schools and gives parents the right to choose among them. Teachers joined administrators in launching a comprehensive outreach program to inform parents about the diversity of options then available. By 1986, students from District 4 ranked sixteenth out of 32 in reading and math scores. When

7 Suzanne Davenport, “School Choice,” *Designs for Change*, 1989.

8 U.S. Department of Education, “Choosing Better Schools: A Report on the Five Regional Meetings in Choice in Education,” December 1990.

asked to choose among a variety of schools for their children, the poorest and most desolate of East Harlem parents in fact made good choices for their children, usually based on academic criteria.

The same has been true in Milwaukee. There the parental choice program gives low-income students state "scholarships" worth \$2,500 to cover tuition at the private, nonsectarian school of their choice. In its first year of operation, parents of almost 400 students exercised their choice and sent their children to institutions such as the highly respected Urban Day School, which boasts a 98 percent graduation rate. A majority of parents participating in the choice program are single parents, and many are unemployed. They are virtually identical to their public school counterparts according to most socio-economic measures.⁹

Proponents of the creaming view assume that there is a static pool of schools and that choice plans will allow good schools to drain away the better students; the bad schools will continue to educate the worst students and deteriorate. This criticism overlooks one of the most fundamental dynamics of choice: the ability of parents to choose schools forces existing public schools to change. Another dynamic is that good schools expand and new schools emerge. If bad schools cannot or will not improve, their students can go elsewhere. The assertions about "bad children being left behind" simply do not take into account the dynamics of a school choice plan.

ASSERTION #3) THE INCOMPETENT PARENT ARGUMENT: Since some parents are truly incapable of making choices, such as those who abuse drugs, some parents also are incapable of wisely exercising their choice option, thus consigning their children to sub-standard education.

Says Urban Institute scholar Isabel Sawhill: "The emphasis on choice...conflicts with the rising body of evidence that poor families are often beset with any multitude of problems, making it difficult for them to cope with the added responsibility—such as evaluating different schools or owning a home."¹⁰

RESPONSE:

The evidence actually suggests that the opportunity to make a real decision—possibly for the first time in years—can shake an individual out of a life of despair and dependency. This notion undergirds the philosophy of empowerment, and its dramatic effects can be seen in the success of tenant management of public housing and similar empowerment strategies.¹¹ According to New York University political scientist Lawrence Mead, allowing or requiring the poor to make de-

9 "Parents are happy with choice program," *The Milwaukee Journal*, August 12, 1990, p. 1.

10 Isabel V. Sawhill, Raymond J. Struyk, and Steven M. Sachs, "The New Paradigm: Choice and Empowerment as Social Policy Tools," *Policy Bites*, The Urban Institute, February 1991, p. 5

11 John Scanlon, "People Power in the Projects: How Tenant Management Can Save Public Housing," Heritage Foundation *Background* No. 758, March 8, 1990.

cisions renders them just as capable of good decisions or work habits as someone who is better off. Writes Mead, "The poor are as eager to work [and participate in decisions] as the better-off, but the strength of this desire appears to be unrelated to their work behavior...most clients in workfare programs actually respond positively to the experience of being required to work, not negatively as they would if they truly rejected work."¹²

The ability to choose leads to one of two outcomes. In very many instances, as supporters of empowerment contend, it leads to parents gaining the self confidence to exercise control over their lives. But even if this does not happen, and parents do not bother to choose a school for their children, they are still assigned a school under choice plans. The assigned school is not likely to be worse than the one now attended by the child. Indeed, it is likely to be better because of the improvements forced by increased pressure from other parents.

Deeply troubled or dysfunctional children, meanwhile, are likely to do better under a choice system because it will make available a wider range of schools, especially if private schools are included in the choice program. Explains Abigail Thernstrom, adjunct Associate Professor of Education at Boston University and author of *School Choice in Massachusetts*, "... Already many private schools meet the needs of dysfunctional children."¹³

To be sure, a ready availability of information is more important to poorer and less able students than to sophisticated parents. For this reason, choice plans such as those crafted by Brookings Institution senior fellow John Chubb and Stanford University professor Terry Moe would require parent information centers and parent liaisons to help parents who need assistance in making choices.¹⁴ But even if such source of information were not available, the worst that could happen is that children for whom no choice is made would be assigned to a school—which is no different from what occurs today.

ASSERTION #4) THE NON-ACADEMIC PARENTAL NEGLECT ARGUMENT: Parents will use such criteria as a school's location or its athletic facilities, rather than the quality of the education it provides, in deciding what school their child will attend.

Asks American Federation of Teachers President Albert Shanker, "Do most [parents]—rich, poor or in the middle—really want rigorous standards for their children? And if they don't, would they choose rigorous schools?"

12 Lawrence Mead, "Jobs for the Welfare Poor," *Policy Review*, Winter 1988, p.65

13 Abigail Thernstrom, "Hobson's Choice," *The New Republic*, July 15, 1991, p. 13.

14 John E. Chubb and Terry M. Moe, *Politics, Markets, and America's Schools* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1990), p. 221.

RESPONSE:

Choice critics like Shanker argue that most parents would not bother to choose a school or if they did, they would do so on the basis of non-academic concerns. They point to public school choice plans in Minnesota, where only a small percentage of students actually switched schools when state-wide open enrollment was instituted last year. The most common reasons given by parents for switching schools included transportation, proximity to work and child care, and athletics.

Minnesota is not a valid example. For one thing, its choice program is limited. In most grades the choice of school is restricted entirely to the public sector. For another thing, there are few academic differences among public schools in Minnesota's mainly suburban, sprawling communities. Significant differences may emerge, of course, as schools begin to make major improvements to meet competition.

The law creating the open-enrollment plan, moreover, did not include mechanisms to make change easy in the organization of Minnesota schools. Thus superintendents function as they did before and principals and teachers have not seen their autonomy increased. As such, schools cannot respond easily to parental choices. Minnesota and other states with open-enrollment policies also have not taken sufficient steps to make information available to parents. In Iowa, for example, no money has been allotted from the annual state school budget for outreach information. The result: parents find it hard to obtain academic information on which to base decisions.

Parent frustration in Minnesota already is prompting changes in the law. The Minnesota legislature this June enacted the Charter Schools Act, making it possible for teachers to form their own school, and be free from most state oversight.¹⁵

Gauge for Achievement. Shanker's argument in any case unwittingly underscores the need for choice. The fact is that parents routinely are kept in the dark about how well public schools perform because hard performance information generally is unavailable. The need for such information has led an increasing number of choice advocates to support calls for state and national testing to give schools performance standards and to give parents a gauge by which to measure their children's achievement.

Once an accurate and dependable system of accountability is in place, parents will become smart consumers and can demand improvements—even if they choose not to change schools. Of course, even with clear performance testing and with precise information on which to make choices, some parents may, as Shanker fears, decide that a neighborhood school or a school with an emphasis on team sports is better for their child than one which excels in mathematics. But that

15 Ted Kolderie, "Minnesota's New Program of 'Charter Schools'" (Center for Policy Studies: St. Paul, MN), June, 1991.

should be their choice to make as parents. It is a choice made routinely by affluent parents. Choice plans allow poor parents the chance to make that same decision.

ASSERTION #5) THE SELECTIVITY ARGUMENT: Private schools in the choice plan will admit only easy-to-teach children, leaving difficult, less academically gifted children in the public schools. Such selectivity is the reason for the private schools' vaunted ability to outperform public schools.

Says Senator Edward M. Kennedy, the Massachusetts Democrat, choice has the potential to be "a death sentence for public schools struggling to serve disadvantaged students, draining all good students out of poor schools."

RESPONSE:

The selectivity issue argument challenges choice advocates. Few are willing to deny a private school the right to set admissions standards. But while some private schools set high admission requirements, the fact is that parochial schools—the private schools serving most children in cities with or considering choice plans—actually are less selective than public schools. Explains Reverend Vincent Breen, superintendent of education for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn and Queens, the claim that selection is normal at Catholic schools is "a completely false statement that's repeated over and over again. Catholic schools are just as open to the needs of the urban child."

According to sociologist James Coleman, Catholic schools in particular boast success in raising the academic achievement of population groups that do poorly in public schools, including blacks, Hispanics and children from poor socio-economic backgrounds. "The proximate reason for the Catholic schools' success with less-advantaged students from deficient families appears to be the greater academic demands that Catholic schools place on these students."¹⁶ Research by Brookings scholars Chubb and Moe further shows that private schools in general excel because of their organization, not because they weed out less able students through set admissions criteria. After controlling for all of the variables used to explain away the performance of private schools such as selection criteria, as well as socio-economic status, student ability, and the influence of peers, Chubb and Moe find that private schools still outperform public schools.¹⁷

To avoid the possibility of private schools rejecting students who are particularly costly to teach or accommodate, such as handicapped children or those with pronounced learning disabilities, Chubb and Moe recommend that choice plans offer more valuable scholarship certificates for such children to encourage schools to create programs suited to their needs. Many school systems in fact already contract with private centers to provide extra assistance to public school

16 James Coleman, *Public and Private Schools*, Basic Books, New York, 1987. p. 148

17 Chubb and Moe, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

children with special needs, indicating that private institutions by no means shun such children.

ASSERTION #6) THE RADICAL SCHOOLS SCARE: A choice system will lead to “fly by night” schools, which take public funds without providing adequate education. Worse still, schools espousing radical or extremist dogmas would emerge, perhaps even those run by the Ku Klux Klan or by black extremists.

According to critic Isabel Sawhill, “Diploma factories might be established in the inner cities to take advantage of the government funding, it is argued, similar to the recently exposed examples of vocational schools that exploit low income students to profit from federally sponsored student loans.”¹⁸ Adds California Superintendent Bill Honig, choice “opens the door to cult schools. Public schools are the major institutions transmitting our democratic values. By prohibiting common standards, [choice proponents] enshrine the rights of parents over the needs of children and society and *encourage tribalism* [emphasis added]. Should we pay for schools that teach astrology or creationism instead of science? Should we inculcate racism?”¹⁹

RESPONSE:

Most states have imposed minimum academic standards on private as well as public schools. Most education choice proposals, moreover, require the government to play some role in enforcing federal anti-discrimination laws and ensuring contractual obligations to students. If governments fail to do this effectively, as the federal government is accused of doing for trade schools, this is a deficiency of government, not of consumer choice. As it is, a good number of public schools today would be found delinquent in complying with a government regulation requiring good value for money.

While many for-profit trade schools abuses have been documented, the vast majority of schools of higher education currently operate in a choice system and state or federal assistance follows needier children to the school that they choose. Unlike its public education system, American higher education is considered world class.

As to the claim that bizarre or extremist schools will proliferate under a choice system, nothing prevents such schools from opening and attracting customers today in the private sector. The fact is that few exist. Fewer, if any, would be established under choice programs. One reason is that schools are banned from discrimination on the basis of race under the 14th Amendment. Another reason is that a school accepting government funds under a choice program would be sub-

18 Isabel V. Sawhill, Raymond J. Struyk, and Steven M. Sachs, "The New Paradigm: Choice and Empowerment as Social Policy Tools," *Policy Bites*, The Urban Institute, February, 1991, p.5

19 Honig, *op. cit.*

ject to some additional constraints. In short, Honig's vision of "cult schools" is mere fantasy.

ASSERTION #7) THE CHURCH-STATE PROBLEM: Choice plans that include private, religious schools are unconstitutional because they violate the First Amendment's establishment clause.

Robert L. Maddox, Executive Director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, claims that public funds cannot be used at religious schools without "violating the constitutional separation of church and state." He adds that "A long line of Supreme Court cases has repeatedly found that the First Amendment bars the expenditure of tax money to support religion or religious schools."²⁰

RESPONSE:

This claim, though widely believed, simply is wrong. As the *Congressional Quarterly* notes in an April article on school choice: "The federal government already provides Pell grants to students at private, religiously affiliated colleges, notes Michael W. McConnell a law professor at the University of Chicago. The GI bill even covers tuition at seminaries."²¹ The journal also points out that Harvard Law School's Lawrence Tribe, one of America's most liberal constitutional scholars, says that the current Supreme Court would not find a "reasonably well-designed" choice plan a violation of church and state. He agrees there may be policy concerns about choice, but that the constitutional concerns have been addressed in a litany of cases.

The Supreme Court generally has applied three tests in "establishment clause" cases, to determine whether legislation to support private schools is constitutional. First, the program must serve a secular purpose. Second, its "primary effect" must neither advance nor inhibit religion. And third, it must not foster an "excessive entanglement" between government and religion.²²

In practice, as long as a school choice program puts the decision of where the funds are spent in the hands of individual students or parents, and as long as the program does not discriminate in favor of religious schools, the program is likely to survive any constitutional challenge.

20 Robert L. Maddox, Letter to the Editor, *The New York Times*, May 10, 1991

21 The *Congressional Quarterly*, April 27, 1991.

22 Bolick, Part II, *op. cit.* The study provides details of key court cases on choice.

ASSERTION #8) THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY ARGUMENT: Private and parochial schools in a choice system would not be regulated by state and federal laws, and therefore would not be accountable to public authority.

Asks Boston University Professor of Education Abigail Thernstrom: "Would taxpayers have an adequate say in how their money is spent?" Claims a *New York Times* editorial, choice among both public and private schools would "undermine the accountability and morale of public schools."²³

RESPONSE:

The irony of the accountability argument is that in most cities it is the public schools, not the private schools, that are not accountable to parents or even taxpayers. The private schools, by contrast, are directly accountable to their customers. The editors of *The New York Times*, for instance, need only consider the abuses of public funds in New York City schools, which their newspaper has documented, to appreciate that limiting the use of public funds to public schools is no guarantee of accountability.

Residents of Chicago also know that government control of a school does not guarantee fairness or equity. This is why in 1989 they backed a radical overhaul of the city's schools, giving control to parents to run schools. Most private institutions constantly feel forced by competitive pressure to provide a regular accounting of expenditures and receipts, and to detail the achievements of their students.

The accountability argument is also used to advance claims that private schools, left to their own devices, will discriminate. Yet all constructive choice proposals require that schools follow legal accountability requirements and federal anti-discrimination laws.

ASSERTION #9) THE CHOICE IS EXPENSIVE ARGUMENT: There are large hidden costs associated with school choice programs. Transportation costs, for instance, would be so prohibitive as to offset benefits.

Senator Nancy Landon Kassebaum, the Kansas Republican, fears that "transportation costs alone could grow and grow, making choice programs infeasible."

RESPONSE:

Choice does not imply higher costs, even higher transportation costs for large districts. "A system of educational choice need not cost more than current educational systems, and might cost less," says Brookings' John Chubb. "If the supply of schools is allowed to respond to demand, the supply is likely to expand, with relatively small numbers of large comprehensive schools being replaced by larger numbers of small, specialized schools. This expansion could easily occur without

23 "Skimming the Cream Off Schools," *The New York Times*, July 26, 1991.

the construction or acquisition of new facilities if several schools shared a building.”²⁴

Chubb’s view is firmly grounded in experience. The choice program in East Harlem District 4 in New York City was created among 20 pre-existing school buildings. Today students can choose from 52 alternative schools, many of which share a building with other schools. Thus wider choice does not necessarily mean increased overhead on transportation costs. This schools-within-a-school concept would be very appropriate for rural areas where transportation costs could indeed mount if students needed to travel farther to their chosen school.

Choice plans actually may reduce transportation costs in many instances because demand might lead to new schools. And overhead administrative costs very likely would fall since, as Chubb explains, “There is every reason to believe that the administrative structure of a choice system would be less bureaucratized than today’s public school systems, and look more like private educational systems, where competition compels decentralization and administrative savings.”

CONCLUSION

There is ample evidence that a market-driven education system would spur improvements in the way schools operate, and thus improve education for America’s children. Despite this evidence, school choice has its critics. Many are motivated by the challenge to their bureaucratic power that is posed by choice. Others, though, are motivated by misunderstandings and misplaced concerns.

Some critics worry that parents cannot, or are not equipped with the necessary information to make wise choices about their children’s education. This view enormously underestimates the common sense of ordinary Americans. It also conveys the startling suggestion that today’s bureaucratic schools are in the best interests of students. And to the extent that information is unavailable to parents, this has been the explicit policy of public school districts determined to cover up their failure to educate and to use money well. In New York City, for example, few parents know that of the \$6,100 allocated per child, only one-third ever reaches the classroom.

Other worries stem from the belief that some schools, particularly if private schools are included in a choice program, will cream off “profitable” students or discriminate in other ways, and may shortchange students. These worries too are baseless. Not only do schools participating in choice programs abide by non-discrimination policies, but they have a history of providing a more integrated environment and a higher caliber of education than traditional government schools.

24 John Chubb, “Educational Choice, Answers to the Most Frequently Asked Questions About Mediocrity in American Education and What Can Be Done About It.” The Yankee Institute for Public Policy Studies, July 1989, p. 22

Refuting Arguments. Even though the concerns may be erroneous, they are in most instances sincerely held. Yet, when presented with the facts, most Americans can see that most of the arguments raised against school choice are spurious. Without the facts, however, Americans can be taken in by arguments like NEA President Keith Geiger's dismissive "breakfast cereal" analogy. Thus if reform based on choice is to succeed, those committed to choice, including George Bush and Education Secretary Lamar Alexander, as well as business leaders and reform organizations pressing for choice at the state and local level, must step up their efforts to explain the facts about choice. While the intellectual debate on school choice is over when it unites all ideological viewpoints, its supporters must demonstrate repeatedly that choice works and is the key to restoring a world class educational system in America.

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