

What's Next

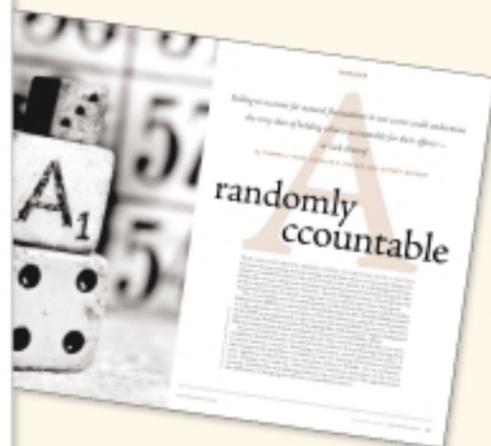
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Program on Education Policy and Governance (PEPG)

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Kennedy School of Government

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Program on Education Policy and Governance



Annual Report 2003

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Center for American Political Studies, Department of Government, Faculty of Arts and Sciences
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A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

School reform has taken two giant steps forward since the Program on Education Policy and Governance (PEPG) issued its last report. The Supreme Court found the Cleveland voucher program constitutional, and the president signed into law No Child Left Behind, the federal government's most significant education legislation since the 1970s.

PEPG has contributed to this forward march. Justices drew on the program's research when explaining the Court's decision. For PEPG, the timing of the Court decision was particularly fortunate. The Brookings Institution published *The Education Gap: Vouchers and Urban Schools*, by William Howell and myself, just before the Supreme Court reached its decision, so the work received more attention than it might have otherwise.

But every forward two-step incurs the risk of a slip backward. To help the forward movement, PEPG held two conferences that gave scholars and practitioners a chance to assess where we are and to peer into the future. Secretary of Education Rod Paige opened the conference on school accountability, which looked carefully at accountability issues raised by No Child Left Behind. Judge Kenneth Starr, who filed an *amicus* brief in the Cleveland voucher case, gave his view on the meaning of the Supreme Court's voucher decision at the conference on "The Future of School Choice."

Meanwhile, PEPG has augmented its internal resources. We are grateful that Bruce Kovner, president of Caxton Corporation, has agreed to chair our newly formed advisory committee of distinguished public leaders and scholars. In addition, the PEPG faculty has been enlarged to include William Howell, an assistant professor in the Department of Government, and Brian Jacob, an assistant professor in the Kennedy School of Government. Christopher Berry has joined us as a postdoctoral fellow, while Tammy Frisby, Francis Shen, and Martin West serve as predoctoral research fellows.

Our award-winning *Education Next: A Journal of Opinion and Research*, produced quarterly as part of a joint venture with three other research groups, is now well into its third year of operation. Many of its articles have shaped the national education debate and helped initiate new federal policies. To read more about these developments and see what else PEPG has been doing, please turn the pages that follow.

Paul E. Peterson



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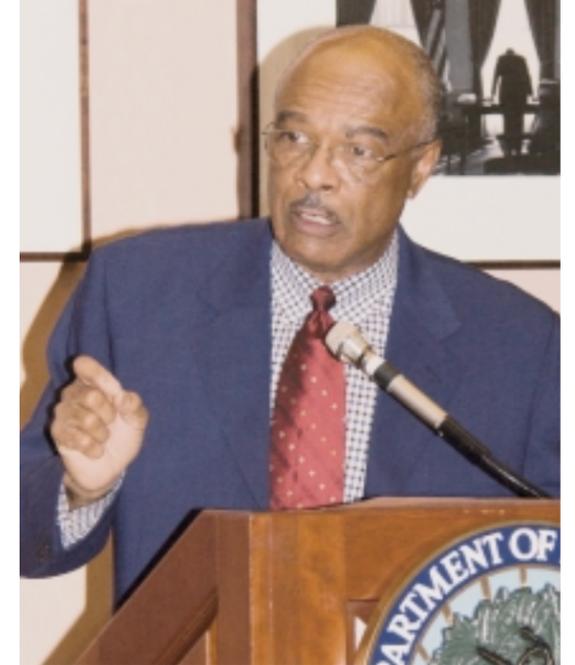
Secretary of Education Rod Paige opened the conference on school accountability, which looked carefully at issues raised by No Child Left Behind.

On June 10 and 11, 2002, PEPG hosted a conference, “Taking Account of Accountability: Assessing Politics and Policy,” at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government. Participants from across the nation and abroad, including U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige and Harvard’s president Lawrence Summers, gathered to discuss recent experiences and future directions in school accountability. The presentations covered topics ranging from the politics behind federal and state accountability legislation to detailed analyses of individual state accountability systems, as well as cross-national and cross-state comparisons of the effects of accountability.

Because the historical track record with school accountability in the U.S. is limited—as late as 1996 only ten states had active accountability systems—definitive answers to some of the fundamental questions about the effective design and academic consequences of accountability

systems are still years away. Nevertheless, several consistent themes emerged from the conference. Participants recognized that all school accountability systems are not created equal. Even with an increased federal role in the wake of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the design and implementation of accountability systems are left primarily to individual states. Because no two state systems are exactly the same, discerning the effects of particular accountability practices is a challenge. With this in mind, several participants distinguished “hard” state accountability systems from “soft” ones. The former sets high standards, imposes rigorous testing, and specifies clear consequences. The latter has low standards and few or no penalties, focusing instead on the public reporting of test scores. Much of the politics of accountability centers on the choice between hard and soft systems and the propensity for hard systems to soften over time in response to pressure from special interests, such as teachers unions.

The conference proceedings, as well as other studies of accountability, generally support the conclusion that accountability works. Although hard accountability systems seem to be more effective, even soft systems can have an impact. The paper presented by Margaret Raymond and Eric Hanushek illustrates this basic result. See Figure.



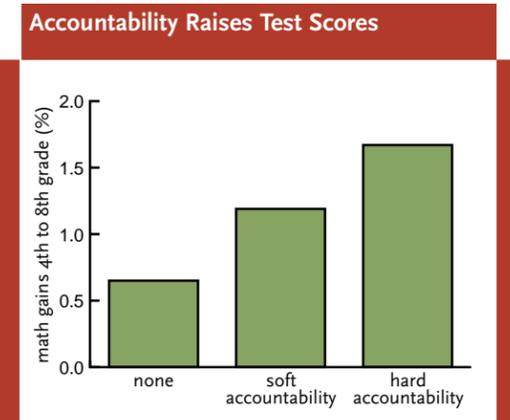
Rod Paige, Secretary of Education

Comparing scores earned on the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) for a cohort of students progressing from 4th grade to 8th grade, Raymond and Hanushek found that students in hard accountability states experienced a 1.6 percent average increase in their NAEP scores. Students in soft accountability states saw their NAEP scores rise by an average of 1.2 percent. By contrast, the average student in a state with no accountability experienced only a 0.7 percent gain in mathematics proficiency. Hanushek and Raymond are the first to acknowledge that their results are preliminary. Nevertheless, early signals suggest that accountability, hard or soft, is moving many schools in the right direction.

The conference proceedings support the conclusion that accountability works.



Left to right: Secretary of Education Rod Paige and Harvard President Lawrence Summers, Tom Kane (UCLA) discussing a point with an *Education Week* reporter, Anne Danenberg (Public Policy Institute of California) listens to Harvard Assistant Professor Brian Jacob



Rep. Bob Schaffer was responding to the Harvard group's call when he inserted language favoring randomized trials into the No Child Left Behind Act.

"It is very clear in No Child Left Behind that questions of what works in education will have high priority. Questions of what works link naturally to randomized trials." —RUSS WHITEHURST

The Department of Education has drafted an unlikely captain for its newly formed Institute of Education Sciences. Not your typical politico, Grover "Russ" Whitehurst is a respected scholar with more than 100 academic publications and a strong background in quantitative research methodology. His appointment as the new assistant secretary for education research and improvement reflects a growing federal commitment to scientifically based research, and in particular to randomized field trials.

The idea behind randomized trials is appealingly simple. To understand the effects of a particular program or treatment, randomly assign a group of participants to receive the treatment and then compare their outcomes with those of another randomly-assigned group that did not receive the treatment. Experiments in medicine using pill and placebo are classic examples of this approach. A recent example of the use of randomized trials in education research was provided by PEPG scholars Paul Peterson, William Howell,

Patrick Wolf and David Campbell, who conducted a multi-year evaluation of voucher programs in three cities. Because demand was greater than the number of vouchers available, vouchers were awarded by lottery, with each applicant family having an equal chance of winning. The academic performance of voucher winners was then tracked over time and compared with a control group of applicants who did not receive vouchers. The research team found that African American voucher recipients outperformed the control group by an average of 6.3 percentile points after three years. This finding led them to conclude that vouchers are a particularly effective policy intervention for African Americans.

While scientists, medical researchers, and even some education scholars have recognized the appeal of randomized trials for answering complex cause-and-effect questions, the methodology has not been a favored tool in traditional education research. But that may soon change. Two major pieces of recent legislation, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) and the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA), make rigorous research, such as randomized

trials, a leading priority of federal education policy. The two laws, using similar language, encourage schools to use programs grounded in scientifically based research and require the Department of Education to provide funding only for studies following scientific standards. Indeed, NCLB uses the phrase "scientifically based research" more than 100 times. Without ruling out the possibility that other research designs might qualify, the laws give clear priority to randomized trials. According to Whitehurst, "It is very clear in No Child Left Behind that questions of what works in education will have high priority. Questions of what works link naturally to randomized trials."

It is unusual for a matter as rarified as research design to



Grover "Russ" Whitehurst
Assistant Secretary of Education

Research Briefs

Public School Graduation Rates in the United States, by Jay Greene, PEPG Research Fellow and Senior Fellow, Center for Civic Innovation at the Manhattan Institute.

The graduation rates as reported in this study tell us that fewer students are graduating from high school than our society recognizes and far fewer than it desires. When more than three in ten students in the nation choose a path—dropping out of high school—that can seriously impair their futures, we are right as a society to have major concerns.



Jay Greene

Class-Size Effects in School Systems around the World: Evidence from Between-Grade Variation in TIMSS, Ludger Wößmann, PEPG Research Fellow and Research Fellow, Institute for Economic Research, Munich, Germany; and Martin R. West, PEPG Research Fellow. The effects of class size on student performance were estimated in 18 countries. Smaller classes exhibited beneficial effects only in countries with relatively low teacher salaries. The authors found sizable beneficial effects of smaller classes only in Greece and Iceland.



Ludger Wößmann

A License to Lead? A New Leadership Agenda for America's Schools, by Frederick M. Hess, PEPG research fellow and Resident Scholar, American Enterprise Institute.

American schools suffer from a lack of effective leaders and sensible leadership models at both the school and the district levels. Today, 47 states license principals and 43 license superintendents before deeming them eligible to apply for a position. These states have mandated costly and onerous preparation regimens for which even an exhaustive search can uncover no evidence documenting their contribution to improved student learning. In lieu of the existing regimen of restrictions and regulations, truly professionalizing educational leadership requires granting administrators the same tools and responsibilities enjoyed by leaders in other fields.



Frederick M. Hess



Frederick Mosteller
Harvard Professor of Statistics

become a focus of attention in Congress. In this case, legislative action appears to have resulted from the confluence of lawmakers' growing dissatisfaction with the quality of past education research and a renewed focus on methodology among a small cadre of education scholars. Early in 1998, a diverse group of Harvard faculty with a shared interest in education

policy, led by PEPG's Paul Peterson and renowned statistician Frederick Mosteller, began meeting to discuss ways of evaluating the effectiveness of education policies and programs. Methodological issues quickly became a focal point of the group's discussions, with many participants surprised and concerned that randomized field trials were so seldom used in education research. After months of study, culminat-

ing in a major conference at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the group's primary recommendation was to increase the use of randomized trials, which they deemed to be just as applicable to education as to medical research. (The results of the conference were subsequently published in a book, *Evidence Matters: Randomized Trials in Education Research*, reviewed in the 2001 PEPG annual report.)

The group's call for increasing scientific rigor in education research fell on receptive ears in Congress, where many legislators are dissatisfied with how little there is to show for decades of federally funded studies. Typical of this sentiment is Rep. Michael Castle (R-Del.), who observes:

Whitehurst's department plans to spend \$47 million for randomized studies.

"I strongly believe that in education research, while there are many well-informed and well-intentioned people, the end product has never been of much excellence." Concerned lawmakers have used the phrase "scientifically based research" in other recent bills, and Rep. Bob Schaffer (R-Col.) pushed the bar even higher by introducing language

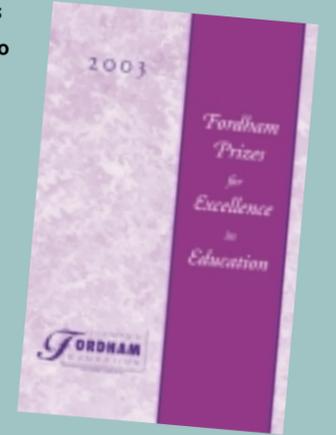
into NCLB defining that phrase as including "a preference for random-assignment experiments." According to his legislative analyst, Rep. Schaffer "was responding to [the Harvard] group's call when he drafted the language."

Of course, higher standards in education research cannot be simply legislated into existence. Compared with more qualitative research, randomized field trials can be expensive and time consuming. One sign of a broader federal commitment to take up this challenge is that Whitehurst's department plans to spend \$47 million between 2002 and 2004 for randomized studies in 11 areas: early reading instruction, preschool literacy instruction, after-school programs, family literacy, alternative certification of teachers, professional development, education technology, English-language learning, vocational education, charter schools, and adult literacy.

Whatever the future brings, PEPG is well positioned to continue influencing federal policymaking on education. PEPG director Paul Peterson was recently named a member of an independent panel to advise the Department of Education in evaluating the Title I program for disadvantaged students. The panel is exploring ways to evaluate Title I using randomized field trials.

Award Received

Director Paul E. Peterson along with University of Chicago professor Anthony Bryk shared the 2003 Fordham Prize for Distinguished Scholarship, given to "a scholar who has made major contributions to education reform via research, analysis, and successful engagement in the war of ideas." The award is granted annually by the DC-based Thomas B. Fordham Foundation.



Program Advisory Committee Formed

In 2002 PEPG formed an advisory committee to counsel the program on potential research topics, ways of communicating to a broader audience, and other ideas for improving the program and attaining its mission's goals. Bruce Kovner, president of Caxton Corporation, agreed to serve as chair of the committee.

The first meeting of the advisory committee was held at Harvard on October 17, 2002, in conjunction with the "What Next for School Vouchers?" conference. The committee comprises business leaders, foundation officials, public officials, and policy experts, including Cory Booker (Booker, Rabinowitz), John E. Brandl (University of Minnesota), Peter Flanigan (UBS AG Investor Relations), C. Boyden Gray (Wilmer, Cutler & Pickering), Roger Hertog (Alliance Capital Management), Gisèle Huff (Jaquelin Hume Foundation), Lisa Graham Keegan (Educational Leaders Council) and Jerry Rappaport (Rappaport Associates)



Managing Editor of *Education Next* Carol Peterson with Committee Member Gisèle Huff



Paul Peterson and PEPG Associate Director Antonio Wendland confer



Committee member Cory Booker reminisces with his former teacher, Stanford Professor Terry Moe



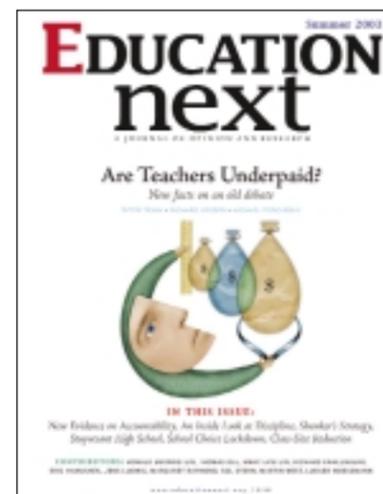
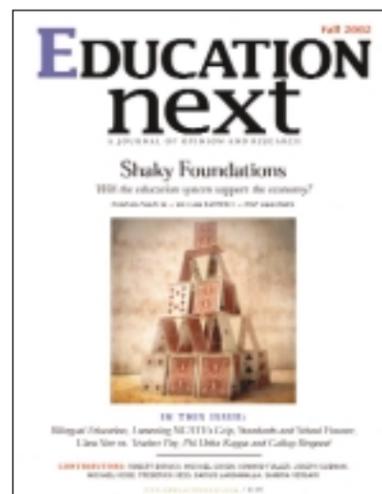
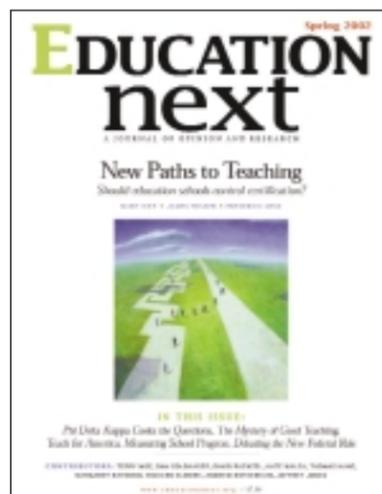
Committee member Lisa Graham-Keegan with Jeanne Allen, president of Center for Education Reform



Bruce Kovner, PEPG advisory committee chairman and Institute of Justice legal expert Clint Bolick

What's Next for Education Next?

In May 2003, the PEPG journal *Education Next* celebrated the publication of its tenth issue. By all measures, there is a sizable audience for a journal focused exclusively on school reform, independent of interests tied to the status quo, and devoted to communicating with a broad, policy-minded audience. *Education Next* is already becoming a much-quoted and valuable resource for the academic and policy communities, as well as for business leaders, legislators, journalists, educators open to change, and energized parents.



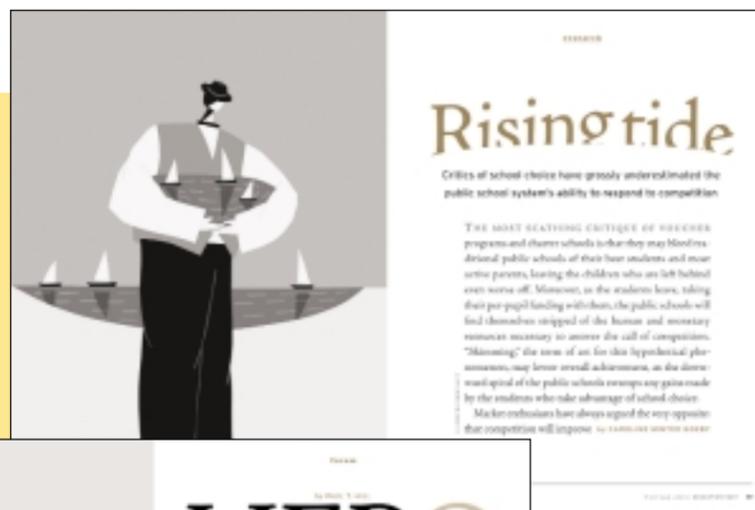
Tackling the Big Issues

Education Next has taken on many of the difficult education reform topics. In addition to examining the effect of competition on schools, it has focused on how to pay teachers fairly; educators' teaching to the test; schools of education and their stranglehold on certification of teachers; the important new education law, No Child Left Behind; the use of

randomized field trials in education; the media's exaggeration of violence in the schools; and the falling high school graduation rate as masked by the increasing number of GEDs. The journal reviews major new books on education reform and has checked the facts on reports issued by some of America's most established institutions and scholars.

Awards & Kudos

From more than 7,500 submissions in the Society of Publication Designers 37th Annual Competition, *Education Next* was honored with two awards in the design and illustration categories. This honor represents the highest recognition in editorial design. The awards were given for essays in the Winter 2001 issue: Caroline Hoxby's article, "Rising Tide," about the ability of the public school system to respond to competition; and Paul Hill's "Hero Worship," describing the sustained community effort needed to transform school systems (shown right).



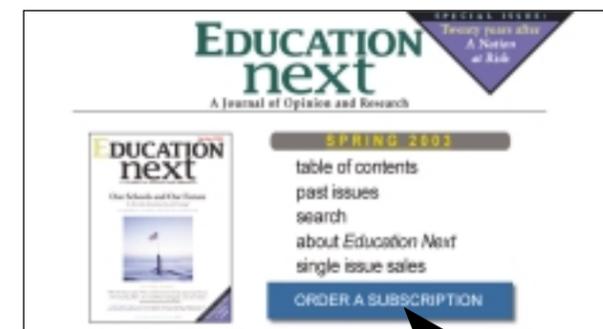
Policy Impact: Blue Ribbon Schools

Education Next is becoming an increasingly influential voice in education policy at all levels. Of particular note, an article in the Summer 2001 issue by Brookings Institution scholars Tom Loveless and Paul Diperna prompted the reorganization of the Department of Education's Blue Ribbon Schools Program. Loveless and Diperna found that a quarter of Blue Ribbon winners—the highest honor the nation bestows on a school—fell in the bottom half of their state's schools on reading and math test scores (controlling for students' socioeconomic characteristics). The authors argue that the program rewards schools for their answers on an application questionnaire rather than placing a premium on learning. As a result of this critique, the Department of Education initiated a fundamental reorganization of the program.

Circulation, Subscriptions, and Distribution

Education Next is available by subscription and at bookstores throughout the United States. Over the past year, subscription and bookstore sales have grown steadily. This year we also began making *Education Next* available to those who fly the shuttle between New York and Boston and Washington, D.C. In addition to bookstore sales, paid subscriptions, and copies for the shuttle, complimentary copies are sent to members of Congress, key members of state legislatures, key staff in the Department of Education and state education offices, media representatives interested in education policy, foundation officials, key analysts at think tanks, and other influential members of the education policy community.

In addition to the printed journal, *Education Next* has a website (www.educationnext.org), which is rapidly becoming the destination of choice for serious online research on school reform. Because of its increasing visibility and improved ties to search engines, the site has experienced a surge in use during the past year. It currently has, each month, 300,000 hits and more than 40,000 requests (downloads of material). If use continues at this level, it will receive more than 3.6 million hits in 2003.



All issues available on line @ www.educationnext.org

On October 17–18, 2002, PEPG held a conference on the Supreme Court’s *Zelman* decision, upholding the constitutionality of Cleveland’s school voucher program, which allowed voucher recipients to attend religious schools. Judge Kenneth Starr, who filed an *amicus* brief in the case, was the keynote speaker.

The following text is adapted from Judge Starr’s remarks.

The *Zelman* decision arose from a deeply unifying principle developed in cases addressing neutrality and private choice. But those are technical words. I want to leave you with one word this evening, and that is *equality*. Neutrality, after all, is just an expression of equality. The power of the equality principle for this Court is quite noteworthy. It is shown by reference to the Court’s work in the free speech area, which set the stage. In *Widmar v. Vincent*, a small Christian group at the University of Missouri, Kansas City, wanted to meet on campus. But the university said *no*, invoking the separation principle and the Establishment Clause. The case went to the Supreme Court of the United States. The ruling, an eight-to-one decision, was that the University cannot discriminate. The University must treat all groups equally. It can’t single a group out and exclude them from the public square because of the particular viewpoint that they are articulating and embracing.

Widmar was really the fountainhead. It embraced 21 years ago the equality principle—the principle essentially of nondiscrimination—and it crowned the equality principle the winner over the separation principle. I give you this provocative thought: Separationism died 21 years ago as a unifying principle of the Court’s work, but people were very slow to discover its death. What the Court did in *Widmar* was not a sort of balancing act. There was to the Court a right answer and only one answer, and it was the equality answer. In other words, there is a principle—equality—and when we apply it we get an answer as if we were in the world of mathematics. It is very simple: Do not exclude. Stop the discrimination. This is obviously a principle of enormous power. When we focus on that principle, we see that, in terms of what is ahead, the Supreme Court has given school choice a very bright green light.

So what does this mean for litigation that is under way in Florida and Maine? What about those Blaine amendments to some state constitutions, with their virulently anti-Catholic pedigree? People should be ashamed to be wrapping themselves in the cloak of Senator James G. Blaine, the 19th century opponent of Catholic immigrants. Pick another hero. For whenever a particular state from time to time starts to embrace the idea of exclusion, as a Florida trial court has recently done, these state Blaine clauses create real tension with the equality principle.

Are we going to tell the GI returning from Kandahar and Tora Bora: “Sorry, you can’t go to Notre Dame, it’s too religious?” That idea—that you can’t use government funds to go to an institution of your choice—seems quite silly now. Wisely, the separationists tend to look the other way when it comes to the GI Bill, and they seek more vulnerable targets: vouchers for inner-city children, for instance. There really is something morally unattractive about telling an otherwise qualified needy family that they cannot use otherwise available funds to send their child to a school that fosters values of their faith community. There is, in short, a difference between (1) parents’ being unable to choose a religiously affiliated school because they do not have the means, and (2) the state’s giving the parents the means but then limiting the choices available. The former involves choices naturally influenced and shaped by economics; the latter involves choices being shaped, if not directed, by government.

Has the bell tolled for programs that, in response to state separationist principles, say “we hereby exclude”? *Zelman* tells us now that it is over. You cannot discriminate. The well-designed choice program is the inclusive choice program.

What Next for School Vouchers?

In October 2002, PEPG hosted a conference bringing together legal scholars, policymakers, and others active in the school voucher debate to discuss the Supreme Court’s landmark *Zelman* decision and its implications for the future of school choice. Over the course of two days, more than 200 people participated in the conference.

Continuing the PEPG conference tradition of engaging multiple sides of important policy debates, chief litigators on both sides of the *Zelman* case presented their arguments and interpretations of the decision. Clint Bolick, of the Institute for Justice; Steven Green, of Americans United for the Separation of Church and State and Willamette University College of Law; and C. Boyden Gray,



Judge Kenneth Starr

of Wilmer, Cutler & Pickering, discussed the arguments they filed in briefs submitted to the Court, analyzed the underlying rationale of its decision, and assessed the likely paths of future litigation related to school choice. Other scholars examined the policy implications of the Court decision.

Are we going to tell the returning GI: “Sorry, you can’t go to Notre Dame, it’s too religious?”

BY PAUL PETERSON AND WILLIAM HOWELL



Because African-Americans suffer most in today's real estate-driven system of school choice, they stand to benefit most from school vouchers.

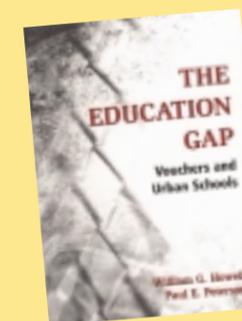
The U.S. Supreme Court in *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris* recently found that Cleveland's school vouchers do not favor religion over nonreligion, and that no one religion is favored over others. Parents can choose among neighborhood public schools, magnet schools, charter schools, and private schools, both religious and secular. As long as choice is permitted and decisions are being made by parents, not by the state, public dollars may flow to parochial schools without establishing a religion.

That's the nub of the majority opinion. Behind the legal reasoning, however, stands a large civil-rights question: How much flexibility should governments be given in the struggle to close the black-white education gap? Though only

hinted at in the majority opinion, it is the main subject of Justice Clarence Thomas's concurrence.

Thomas says states need to be allowed to experiment so they can find solutions to the education gap that divides blacks and whites. His point is well taken. Despite a host of education reforms, the education gap between blacks and whites has remained intact for decades. Existing forms of school choice have helped to maintain the education gap. Despite all the talk about vouchers as a radical departure, there is in fact nothing new about school choice in American education. But the choice is disguised. It occurs at the time a family buys a house or rents an apartment. According to a recent survey, 45 percent of white parents

New Books



The Education Gap: Vouchers and Urban Schools, by William Howell and Paul Peterson (Brookings, 2002). The authors report new findings drawn from the most comprehensive study on vouchers conducted to date, including randomized field trials in several cities. While acknowledging that vouchers are not a panacea, Howell and Peterson report signs that vouchers may help close the achievement gap found nationwide between African American and white students. This landmark work—portions of which were presented to the U.S. Supreme Court during oral arguments for the Cleveland school voucher case—offers much-needed factual information and analysis on a complex and controversial issue.

No Child Left Behind? The Politics and Practice of Accountability, Paul Peterson and Martin West, eds. (Brookings, 2003) As a path-breaker, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 stands alongside the pioneering compensatory and special education laws enacted in 1965 and 1974, respectively. The law's arrival on the education scene raises many questions. How did its passage come about? What were the social, educational, and political forces that shaped it? What issues will arise in its implementation? What are its likely consequences? Contributors to this volume examine these questions, provide an early assessment of the practice of school accountability, discuss detailed case studies, and offer valuable advice for policymakers.



(but only 22 percent of African American ones) consider the “quality of the public schools” when deciding where to live. This process is becoming ever more sophisticated and pervasive, involving access to detailed test scores and other information on any school district.

The system of choice by residential location perpetuates the education gap, and African Americans are the losers in this arrangement. Holding less equity and facing discrimination in the housing market, blacks choose from a limited set of housing and schooling options.

Thus, they benefit the most when choice is expanded. In a multi-year evaluation of a private voucher program in New York City, we found that African American students, when given a choice of attending a private school, scored approximately two grade levels higher on standardized tests than comparable students remaining in public school—an impact that reduces by almost half the black-white test score gap nationwide.

These gains were accomplished at religious and other private schools that had little more than half the funds available to New York’s public schools. (The vouchers themselves were worth around \$1,500, about half the cost of the private schools.) The schools did not have fancy buildings and play-

grounds. Yet parents of private-school students were more likely to report that their children had smaller schools, smaller classes, and an education-friendly environment (less fighting, cheating, property destruction, and racial conflict). Their children had more homework and the schools were more likely to communicate with the family. (There was no evidence that vouchers improved the test scores of students from other ethnic groups, however.)

The findings are all the more important because they come from randomized field trials and they confirm findings from other studies. Economists Jeffrey Grogger and Derek Neal concluded that “urban minorities in Catholic schools fare much better than similar students in public schools,” but the effects for urban whites and suburban students are “at best mixed.”

Is it any wonder that many African Americans are among those most eager to find alternatives to traditional neighborhood public schools? A 1998 survey found that 59 percent of white parents supported vouchers, while 72 percent of African American parents did.

Important questions remain unanswered. We don’t know what would happen if more generous vouchers were handed out to all comers in a given community. What would happen

to those remaining in traditional public schools? Would larger programs be as open to African American families as these small programs have been?



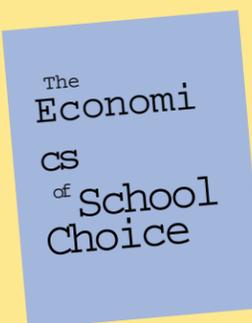
African American students, when given a choice of attending a private school, scored approximately two grade levels higher on standardized tests than comparable students remaining in public school.

State legislatures should put partisan bickering aside and launch demonstration programs that can obtain genuine answers to these questions. It’s time to take seriously the American commitment to equal educational opportunity. Precisely because African Americans suffer most in today’s real estate–driven system of school choice, they stand to benefit most from school vouchers.

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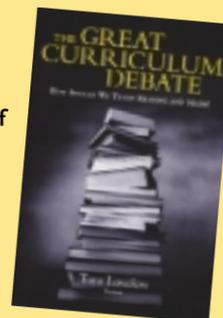


New Books

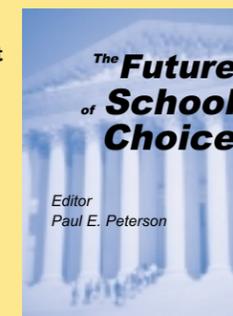


The Economics of School Choice, Caroline Hoxby, ed. (University of Chicago Press, 2003). Now that the U.S. Supreme Court has declared school voucher programs constitutional, the effects of school choice become an urgent area of study. Combining the results of empirical research with analyses of the economic forces underlying local education markets, contributors to this volume present evidence concerning the effect of school choice on student achievement, school productivity, teachers, and special education. The book also tackles difficult questions such as how choice can be integrated into a system of school financing that gives children from different backgrounds equal access to resources. Revealing the promise of school choice, this book also examines its pitfalls and shows how to design programs that avoid them.

The Great Curriculum Debate: How Should We Teach Reading and Math, Tom Loveless, ed. (Brookings, 2002). Throughout the twentieth century, educators argued about what schools should teach and how they should teach it. At the end of the century, the debate focused on reading and mathematics. This book is about the public conflict that surrounded the two subjects in the 1990s. It includes contributions from influential scholars on both sides of the debates, as well as chapters by distinguished nonpartisans. It examines what fueled the controversies, clarifies adversarial positions, analyzes the politics of the disputes, and investigates how curriculum conflicts may have affected policy and practice.



The Future of School Choice, Paul Peterson, ed. (Hoover, 2003). The recent Supreme Court decision in the Cleveland case (*Zelman*) has given vouchers a green light, and new legislative efforts can be expected in many states. Contributors to this volume, legal scholars, political scientists, and others active in the voucher debate, analyze the Court’s decision and assess the future of school vouchers and other choice initiatives. Chief litigators on both sides of the case present their arguments and interpretations, while other contributors examine cross-national experiences with religious schools, charter schools, tax credits, and the politics of school choice after *Zelman*.



Our Schools and Our Future: Are We Still at Risk? Paul Peterson, ed. (Hoover, 2003). In 1983 the National Commission on Excellence in Education released the now-famous *A Nation at Risk*, noting a “rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people.” On the 20th anniversary of the original report, this volume assesses how far we’ve come. Contributors describe the historical significance of the original document, changes in student achievement, school finance, inequities for minority children, teacher and curriculum reform, and the politics behind education change.



School boards are one of the most understudied institutions in American politics. The conference hopes to change this.

For much of American history, school boards stood at the center of education politics. Boards of locally appointed (and later elected) citizens resolved everything from curriculum disputes to contract negotiations. No longer, for in the past half-century, powers have shifted dramatically. State and federal governments have played an increasingly prominent role in the public's education, effectively challenging school boards' once dominant position in education governance. Federal courts have issued a bevy of education regulations and decrees, further limiting the range of education reforms that school boards may consider. Unions have acquired collective bargaining rights, which generate contracts that limit board discretion. Meanwhile, choice-based and site-management education reforms threaten to further erode the effective influence of school boards.

What powers do school boards retain today? How effectively can they use these powers to reform public schools? What incentives do board members have to reform urban schools? Who elects board members? Whose interests do the school board reforms represent? Remarkably, we know

very little about these questions. Indeed, school boards are one of the most understudied institutions in American politics. Falling between the interests of education schools and those of the dominant disciplines, school boards have escaped the attention of all but a limited number of scholars.

Paul Peterson and William Howell, Assistant Professor of Government, have solicited essays from political scientists, legal analysts, economists, education researchers, and other scholars on the changing roles and responsibilities of school boards in the nation's education system. The conference organizers expect the essays to focus on a wide variety of topics: contemporary school boards' legal status and powers, their relations with state legislatures, Congress, and federal courts, their politics and elections, and the effects they have on education outcomes. In addition, for a debate on whether school boards should be eliminated, PEPG plans to bring together scholars and practitioners with wide-ranging views on matters of local education governance.

Conference Research



Chris Berry

Christopher Berry, PEPG's postdoctoral fellow, is engaged in a major research project on school district consolidation. Between 1930 and 1970, consolidation reduced the number of school districts in the United States from approximately 130,000 to only 15,000. In a paper for this conference, Berry is analyzing the politics behind district consolidation, as well as the effects of consolidation on school performance and student outcomes. In other research, Berry is working on a paper with William Howell examining how school board elections are influenced by test scores.



PEPG Research Associate Martin West advises William Howell on conference planning

RESEARCH PAPERS

Staff Research

"An Evaluation of the BASIC Fund Scholarship Program in the San Francisco Bay Area, California," Paul E. Peterson, David E. Campbell and Martin R. West

"An Evaluation of the Florida A-Plus Accountability and School Choice Program," Jay P. Greene

"An Evaluation of the Children's Scholarship Fund," Paul E. Peterson and David E. Campbell

"School Choice in Dayton, Ohio After Two Years: An Evaluation of the Parents Advancing Choice in Education Scholarship Program," Martin R. West, Paul E. Peterson and David E. Campbell

"Results of a School Voucher Experiment: The Case of Washington, D.C. After Two Years," Patrick J. Wolf, Paul E. Peterson and Martin R. West

"Schools and Community Life: Why Schools Matter to Community Life, and Vice Versa," Sandra E. Black

"School Choice in New York City After Three Years: An Evaluation of the School Choice Scholarships Program," Daniel P. Mayer, Paul E. Peterson, David E. Myers, Christina Clark Tuttle and William G. Howell

"Class-Size Effects in School Systems Around the World: Evidence from Between-Grade Variation in TIMSS," Ludger Wößmann and Martin R. West

"Effects of Funding Incentives on Special Education Enrollment," Jay Greene and Greg Foster

"Which School Systems Sort Weaker Students into Smaller Classes? International Evidence," Martin West and Ludger Wößmann

Papers from the Conference: Taking Account of Accountability: Assessing Politics and Policy (June 10–11, 2002)

"School Accountability California Style: An Analysis of Recent Trends in Achievement, School Resources and Intervention," Julian Betts and Anne Danenberg

"Racial Subgroup Rules in School Accountability Systems," Thomas J. Kane and Douglas Staiger

"No Child Left Behind, Chicago Style: What Has Really Been Accomplished?," Anthony Bryk

"Test-Based Accountability and Student Achievement Gains: Theory and Evidence," Brian Jacob

"A Prospective Policy Evaluation of the Michigan Merit Award Program," John H. Bishop

"Standards and Student Outcomes: Lessons from the 'First Wave' of Education Reform," Thomas Dee

"Charter School Achievement and Accountability," Tom Loveless

"How Central Exams Affect Educational Achievement: International Evidence from TIMSS and TIMSS-Repeat," Ludger Wößmann

"I Say 'Refining,' You Say 'Retreating': The Politics of High-Stakes Accountability," Frederick Hess

"Accountability and Avoidance in the Bush Education Plan: the 'No Child Left Behind Act of 2001'," Andrew Rudalevige

"Lessons and Limits of State Accountability Systems," Eric Hanushek and Margaret Raymond

"Politics, Control, and the Future of School Accountability," Terry Moe

Papers from the Conference: What Next for School Vouchers? (October 17–18, 2002)

"School Vouchers after *Zelman*," C. Boyden Gray and Louis R. Cohen

"School Choice: Sunshine Replaces the Clouds," Clint Bolick

"Liberalism and School Choice," Peter Berkowitz

"Educational Freedom and Accountability: An International Overview," Charles Glenn and Jan de Groof

"School Vouchers: Results from Randomized Experiments," Paul Peterson, William Howell, Patrick Wolf and David E. Campbell

"The Voucher-Charter Connection," Bryan Hassel

"School Choice through the Tax Code: Past Limitations, Future Prospects," Martin West

"Beyond *Zelman*: An Essay on the Future of Vouchers," Terry Moe

