

CONNECT

MENTOR

DISCOVER



**HARVARD PROGRAM
ON EDUCATION POLICY
AND GOVERNANCE**

ANNUAL REPORT 2019

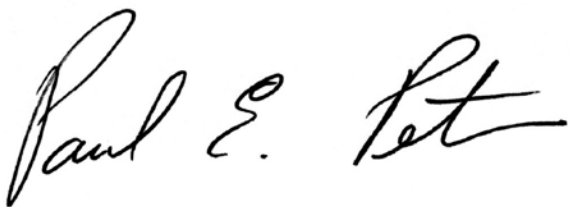
DIRECTOR'S LETTER

Discover, Mentor, Connect

AS PEPG doctoral and postdoctoral fellows have excelled this year, we feature their discoveries in this annual report. On topics ranging from local finance, state standards, and union power to vacation week learning and college aspirations, they have made worthy research contributions, which we share—in synoptic form—for you to ponder. You will also meet our five Academic Visitors, who mentor our education entrepreneurial fellows and others eager to contribute to reform efforts.

The latest results from the *Education Next* poll show rising support for teacher salaries, vouchers for all families, and charter schools. The public also gives thumbs-up for the Supreme Court *Janus* decision declaring agency fees for collective bargaining unconstitutional, and for the planned withdrawal of a letter to all districts asking for equal rates of suspension across students from various racial and ethnic backgrounds. Our conferences on school choice and each issue of *Education Next* connect PEPG to the larger world of school reform.

Sincerely yours,



PAUL E. PETERSON



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Making the Most of School Vacation

By BETH E. SCHUELER



A COMPELLING body of evidence illustrates that high-dosage tutoring—typically delivered with a one-to-two student-to-teacher ratio—can deliver impressive academic improvements for struggling students. Although these programs demonstrate impressive cost-benefit ratios, the relatively steep upfront cost can deter policymakers from adopting tutoring programs on a widespread basis. A less costly alternative is “Vacation Academies,” which provide small groups of roughly ten students with intensive instruction in a single subject over weeklong vacation breaks, delivered by regular classroom teachers selected based on merit and given substantial autonomy to use the extra time as they see fit.

To estimate the causal effect of these programs, I worked with nine middle schools in Springfield, Massachusetts, to implement a field experiment where 6th and 7th grade students were randomly assigned an offer to attend a math-focused Vacation Academy program.

Attendance at these weeklong academies increased the probability that students scored proficient or higher on math

exams by 10 percentage points. Attendance also reduced the odds that a student received an out-of-school suspension post-academy, with disciplinary gains concentrated among students assigned to a single teacher for the entire week (versus those who rotated through teachers specializing in particular lessons).

Skeptics might ask how such substantial progress could be possible in a single week. However, the program provides 25 hours of instruction in a single subject, which is equivalent to a typical month’s worth of instruction

in that subject during the school year. The program’s low cost and use of existing district-based teachers make it a particularly promising approach for scaling individualized instruction for students in need of extra academic support.

Abstracted from a forthcoming article in the journal Education Finance and Policy. Beth Schueler spent two years at PEPG as a postdoctoral fellow and is now an assistant professor of education and public policy at the University of Virginia.

“The program provides 25 hours of instruction in a single subject, which is equivalent to a typical month’s worth of instruction”

Economic Information Fails to Close SES Gaps in College Aspirations

By ALBERT CHENG and PAUL E. PETERSON

WORKERS who possess a bachelor's degree earn more in the labor market, and financial assistance to attend college is widely available. Yet many students, particularly those from low socioeconomic (SES) backgrounds, do not pursue postsecondary education. Could informing these students and their families about the payoffs for investing in a bachelor's degree program encourage them to attend college?

In the 2017 *Education Next* Annual Poll, we asked adults if they were willing to send their child to college to earn a bachelor's degree. But before answering this question, one segment of our sample were told how much more income their child would make if they went to a four-year university instead of a two-year college, and what their net expenses would be after receiving grants and scholarships.

Ninety percent of parents with a bachelor's degree want



their child to attend college, but only 54% of parents who did not attend college desire the same. Giving economic information does little to alter this large gap in aspirations for one's child across SES groups. Informational nudges do not seem to alter deep-seated social and cultural factors that affect both academic preparation and aspiration for postsecondary education.

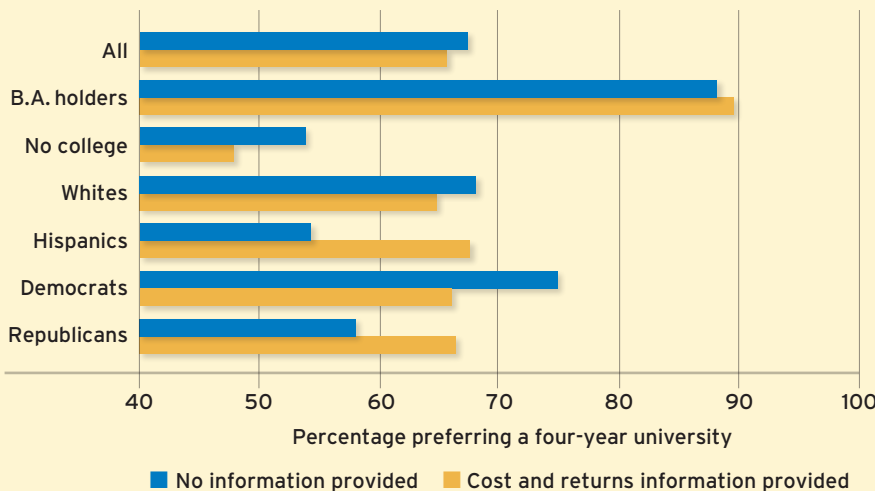
“Ninety percent of parents with a bachelor's degree want their child to attend college, but only 54% of parents who did not attend college desire the same”

There is an important exception, however. Hispanic adults are more responsive to economic information, becoming 15 percentage points more likely to want their child to attend college. Such a shift effectively closes the

aspirational gap between Hispanic and white parents. Oddly enough, the same is true for the difference between Democrats and Republicans. Without information, the latter are 17 percentage points less likely to want their child to earn a bachelor's degree, but, with information, this aspirational gap closes completely.

From a forthcoming article in the Journal of Higher Education, by Albert Cheng and Paul E. Peterson. Cheng, a former PEPG postdoctoral fellow, is assistant professor of education policy in the Department of Education Reform at the University of Arkansas.

Would You Send Your Child to a Four-Year University?



SOURCE: *Education Next* survey, 2017.

States Lift Expectations for Student Performance, but Little Change in Student Performance Has Followed

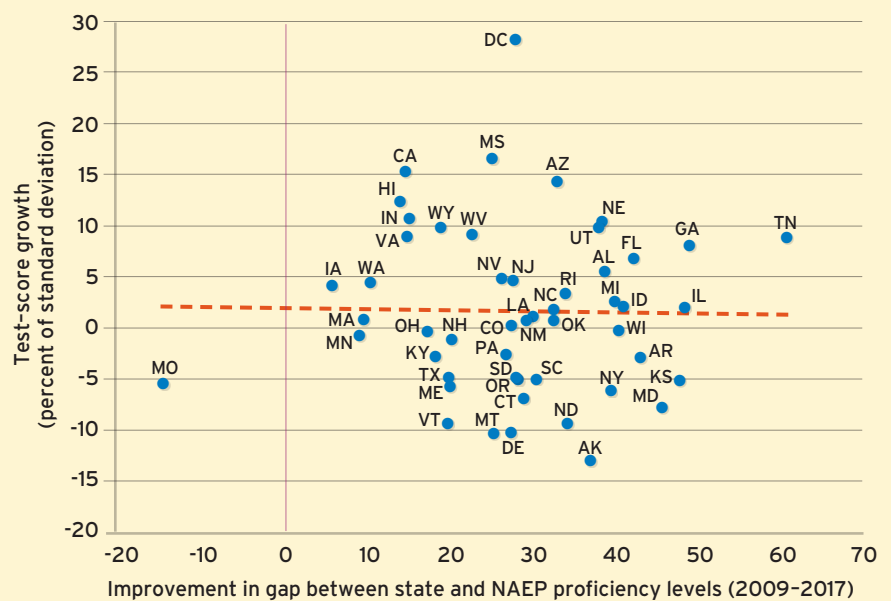
By DANIEL HAMLIN and PAUL E. PETERSON

EXPECTATIONS for student performance on state examinations have risen dramatically in recent years. When researchers at the Program on Education Policy and Governance first began tracking state academic proficiency standards in 2005, they were, on average, much lower than they are today. However, expectations began rising steadily in 2009 with the start of the Common Core movement.

To evaluate expectations for academic proficiency across states, the percentage of students deemed proficient on state examinations is compared to the percentage of students in the state found to be proficient on the rigorous National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which is widely considered to have a high bar for academic proficiency. The higher the percentage of students found proficient on the exam in a particular state, compared to the percentage so identified by NAEP, the lower the state's proficiency standard is judged to be. Using this approach,

No Relationship between Raising Standards and Test-Score Growth

The average change in proficiency standards in each state between 2009 and 2017 shows no relationship with the average growth in test-score performance.



SOURCE: Authors' calculations based on NAEP and state proficiency ratings

“Expectations began rising steadily in 2009 with the start of the Common Core movement”



the percentage of students found to be proficient in math and reading on state exams was 37 percentage points higher than on NAEP at the outset of the Common Core movement. By 2015, that gap had narrowed to just 10 percent, and recent data for 2017 show a difference of only 9 percent.

Proponents of higher proficiency standards have long asserted that improvements in expectations for academic proficiency will lead to improved student achievement. Nonetheless, it appears that education leaders have not figured out how to translate higher expectations into greater student learning. No correlation is found between a rise in state standards and improved student performance. Although higher proficiency standards may still serve to boost academic performance in the future, the analysis provides no evidence that higher standards are producing such an effect.

Daniel Hamlin, after a year as a postdoctoral fellow at PEPG, is an assistant professor within the Department of Education at the University of Oklahoma, Tulsa.

Local Financing Is Associated with Higher Student Achievement

By CARLOS X. LASTRA-ANADÓN

THE SHARE of revenue for K–12 education in the United States paid out of local taxes declined from the 83% level at which it stood in 1918 to only about half that level (45%) in 2015.

Governments may be more effective if services within a geographic area are funded by local residents. But that could accentuate inequalities in service delivery if income and wealth are unevenly distributed geographically. Surprisingly, there has never been a careful empirical test of these propositions for the United States as a whole.

In this paper I estimate the causal relationship between

student achievement and the local share of total revenue for K–12 education in the 741 commuting zones of the lower 48 states. Measures of achievement are taken from the 2007 wave of the math and reading tests admi-



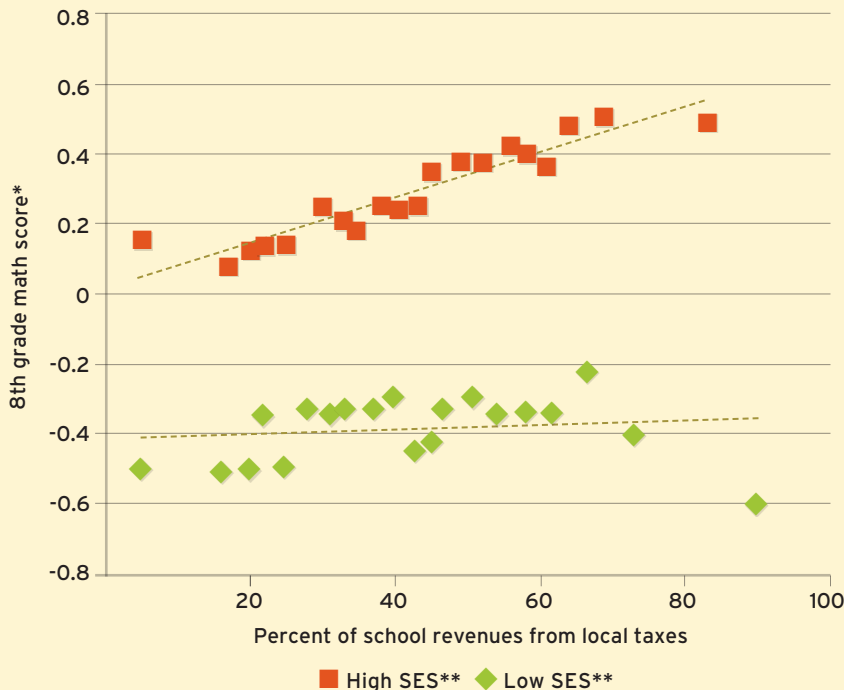
“All boats rise when education is locally financed, but luxury boats rise higher than the rest”

nistered by the National Assessment of Educational Progress to a sample of about 150,000 students.

A ten-percentage-point increase in the revenue share from local resources results in a 3 to 7 percent of a standard deviation increase in student performance. In other words, students living in a commuting zone that covers all of its education costs from local revenues performs at a level that is 30% to 70% of a standard deviation higher than one that relied exclusively upon aid from state and federal sources. That is as much as two to three additional years of learning in grades 4 through 8.

Students from backgrounds of both high and low socioeconomic status (SES) benefit from greater dependence on local revenues, as can be seen in the upward trend from left to right in the two lines displayed in the accompanying graph. But high SES students benefit by a greater amount, as can be

Local Financing of Schools and Student Achievement



NOTE: Includes 113,410 observations for math divided into 20 equally sized bins for each subgroup.

* Scores relative to average performance in standard deviations.

** Socioeconomic status estimated by eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch.

SOURCE: National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2007.

seen by the widening gap between the two lines.

The findings are consistent across alternative models that correct for endogeneity of local revenue to outcomes and for models that control for per-student expenditures.

All boats rise when education is locally financed, but luxury boats rise higher than the rest.

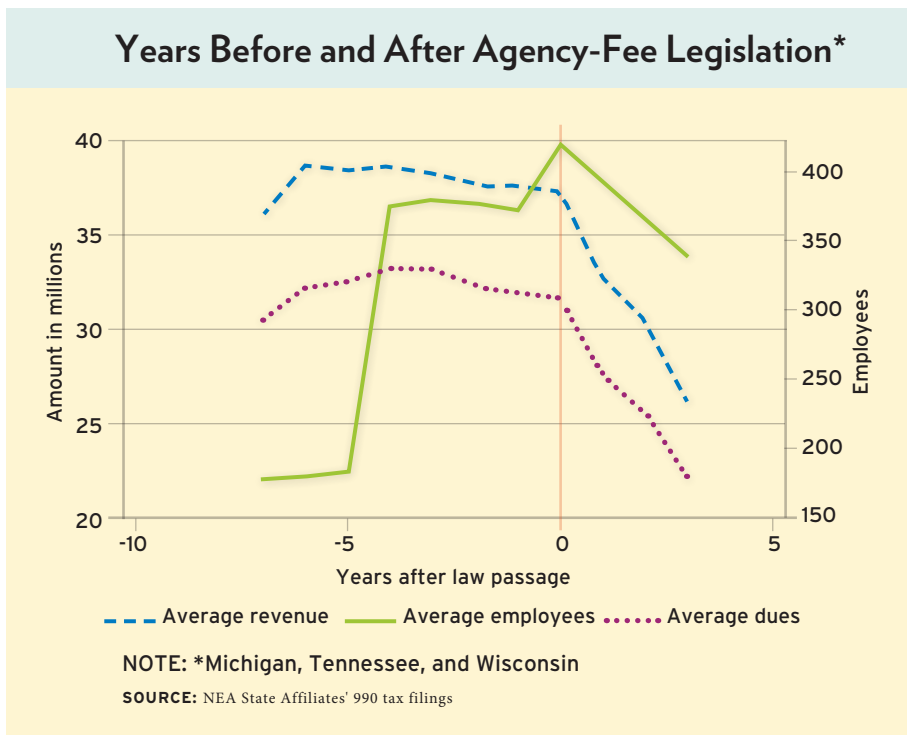
Carlos X. Lastra-Anadón received his PhD in government and social policy at Harvard. He is an assistant professor at IE University's School of International Relations in Madrid, Spain. He is also a postdoctoral research fellow at Stanford University's Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies.

What Happens When Unions Can No Longer Impose Agency Fees on Non-Union Members?

By LESLIE FINGER

TEACHERS UNIONS in some states have become weaker in the wake of recently passed right-to-work legislation, which ban agency fees for teachers who do not join unions. The figure at right displays the average amount of revenue and dues and the average number of employees for the state teachers unions in Michigan, Tennessee, and Wisconsin. The red vertical line indicates the year that either a right-to-work law or restriction on collective bargaining was enacted. Financial information is in 2015 dollars.

In Michigan, a right-to-work law was passed in 2012, and the amount unions earned in revenue and dues fell in the years following the bill's passage. Employee numbers, however, remained stable. In Tennessee, collective bargaining for educators was replaced with "collaborative conferencing" in 2011. This meant that school boards were to



“Strikes may be as much a sign of weakness as underlying power”



consult with teachers but had the final say on salaries, working conditions, and other job provisions. The amount of revenue and dues and the number of employees peaked in 2010, prior to the passage of the bill in 2011. They continued to fall thereafter. The Wisconsin Education Association Council saw a similar pattern, with the amount of dues and revenue and the

number of employees falling in the wake of Act 10, which was passed in 2011 and curtailed the scope of collective bargaining for teachers and other public sector employees.

But how about West Virginia? That state also passed new right-to-work legislation in 2017, but in 2018 teachers struck statewide for nine days and won a 5 percent pay raise. Isn't this a sign of union power? Perhaps, but it might also be a sign of union weakness. The battle raged in West Virginia not because the unions were strong but because they were so weak the legislature felt they could ignore teacher demands altogether. Striking was a last resort. Strikes may be as much a sign of weakness as underlying power.

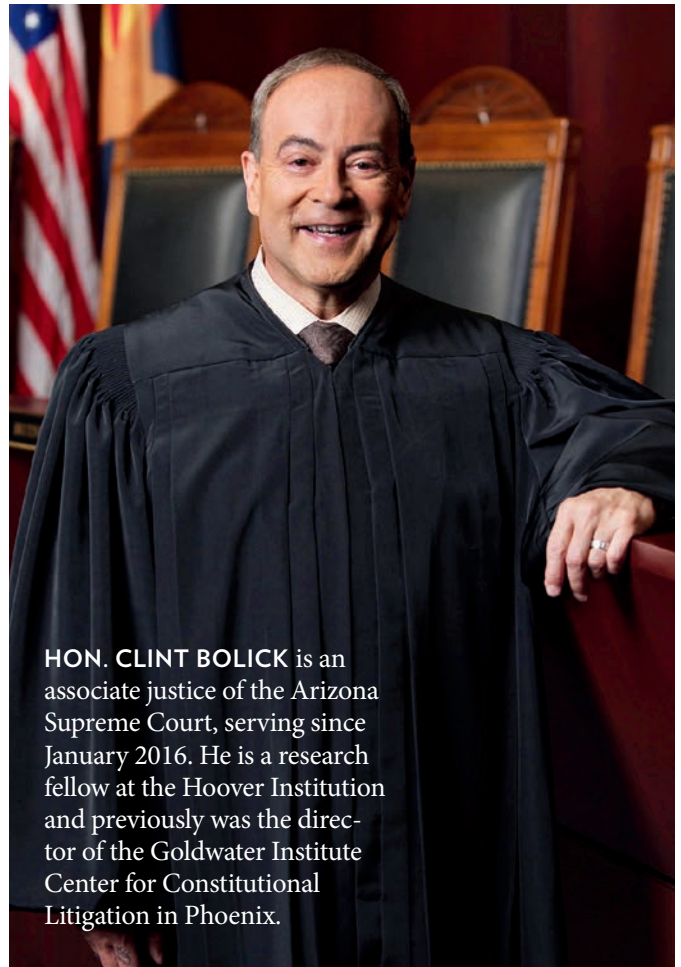
Leslie Finger is a lecturer on government and social studies at Harvard University.

Practitioners

Visitors impart their expertise

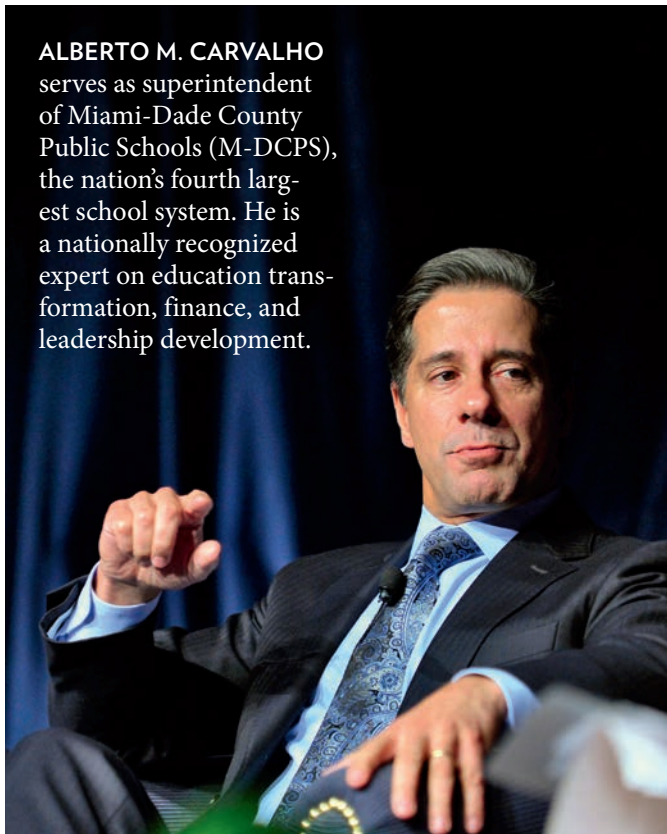
OVER THE YEARS, PEPG has hosted many notable and talented academic visitors and practitioners from within the United States and from countries abroad. They have enriched the quality of the teaching, research, and outreach missions of the program, of the greater Harvard community, and in many other ways. This invaluable tradition continues.

HANNA SKANDERA is editor-in-chief of *The Line* and former Secretary of Education of New Mexico. Prior to that, she was Deputy Education Commissioner of Florida. She also served as a senior policy advisor and Deputy Chief of Staff at the U.S. Department of Education during former president George W. Bush's administration.



HON. CLINT BOLICK is an associate justice of the Arizona Supreme Court, serving since January 2016. He is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution and previously was the director of the Goldwater Institute Center for Constitutional Litigation in Phoenix.

ALBERTO M. CARVALHO serves as superintendent of Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS), the nation's fourth largest school system. He is a nationally recognized expert on education transformation, finance, and leadership development.



RICHARD BARTH is the CEO of the KIPP Foundation and has led the growth of the KIPP charter schools network since 2005.



Education Entrepreneurs

Where are they now?

THE PROGRAM on Education Policy and Governance (PEPG) offers fellowships in education entrepreneurship to graduate and postgraduate students in part with the support of a generous grant from the Charles Koch Foundation. At the master's level, the program provides two-year half-tuition fellowships for those pursuing the Master of Public Policy degree at the Harvard Kennedy School or an equivalent master's program at Harvard University. Spring 2018 saw the graduation of four fellows from the program and the fall added six new fellows.



MARIE PERROT (*MPP 2016–2018*) works at the Ounce of Prevention Fund as a research associate in their Family Engagement department.

LAURA WHITE (*MPP 2016–2018*) is an assistant chief administrative officer for the City of Philadelphia, helping manage projects to modernize government operations.



PRIYANKA KAURA (*MPP 2017–2019*) is working for the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Office of Planning and Research, analyzing drop-out rates for English language learners across the state.



The Continued Need for Federal Support of the Charter School Sector

By MARTIN R. WEST

IT IS OFTEN SAID that the evidence on charters is “mixed.” Individual charter schools do vary widely in their effectiveness, and the most comprehensive studies suggest little difference, on average, in how much students learn in charter versus nearby district schools. Yet dismissing the charter sector’s track record as mixed ignores clear evidence of benefits for students from low-income families, students of color, and students in urban areas—all groups for whom educational opportunities are too often limited. For instance, rigorous lottery-based studies suggest that attendance at oversubscribed urban charter middle schools in Massachusetts dramatically increases students’ achievement. These effects are among the largest on record for an educational intervention implemented at scale—and large enough to close the black-white achievement gap in three years.

“Dismissing the charter sector’s track record as ‘mixed’ ignores clear evidence of benefits for students from low-income families, students of color, and students living in urban areas”

Importantly, in many states, charters receive substantially less funding than district peers, implying a greater return-on-investment.

There is also evidence that the performance of the charter sector is improving over time and that charter sector growth has not come at the expense of students remaining in traditional public schools. Although a substantial loss of enrollment to charters can create challenges, it is critical to distinguish between the charter sector’s effects on school districts as organizations and its effects on students in those systems.



Martin West testifying before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and the Workforce

The available evidence indicates these students are not harmed by charters and may even benefit. It is therefore disappointing that, after a decade of climbing by 6–9 percent a year, growth in the number of charter schools has fallen to 2 percent annually over the past three years. This is not due to a lack of demand or need. One factor is surely the gap in the state and local funding charters receive and the difficulties many charters face in securing adequate facilities. This makes continued federal investment in the charter sector all the more vital.

In June 2018, Martin West offered testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and the Workforce at its hearing on “The Power of Charter Schools: Expanding Opportunity for America’s Students.” West was recently promoted to full professor of education with tenure at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

The Future of School Choice

PEPG CONFERENCE / SEPTEMBER 28-29, 2017

“It is the inalienable right and responsibility of parents to choose the learning environment that best meets their child’s unique, individual needs”

– Keynote Address, Betsy DeVos, U.S. Secretary of Education

Martin R. West (right) with Gema Zamarro, University of Arkansas; Michael Magee, Chiefs for Change; and Stig Leschly, Match Education



United States Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos with Paul E. Peterson

Nina Rees, National Alliance for Public Charter Schools



Chris Cerf, New Jersey Department of Education, with James Peyser, Massachusetts Executive Office of Education

Learning from the Long-Term Effects of School Choice

PEPG CONFERENCE / APRIL 19, 2018

“What is school choice? Folks out there that say school choice is public versus private schools is thinking from 1995. It is not public versus private schools. School choice is about allowing the individual to design their pathway for success”

– Keynote Address, Christopher T. Sununu, Governor of New Hampshire

Anna Egalite, North Carolina State University with John Kirtley, Step Up For Students



New Hampshire Governor Christopher T. Sununu delivers keynote address

Paul E. Peterson and Bill Oberndorf, American Federation for Children



Michael McShane, EdChoice, Derrell Bradford, 50CAN, and Chris Stewart, Wayfinder Foundation

Education Next Annual Poll, 2018

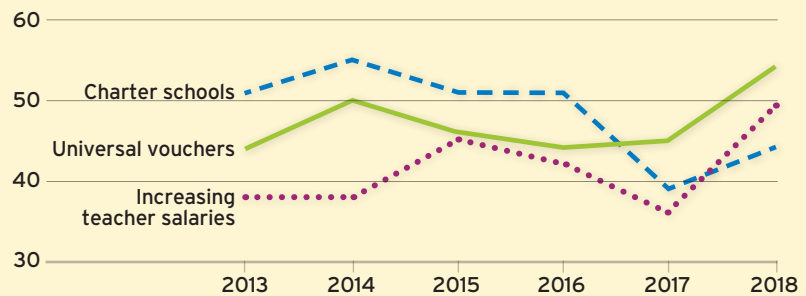
Support for Charters and Higher Teacher Pay Rebounds, Continues to Increase for Vouchers

THE 2018 *Education Next* poll consists of a representative sample of 4,600 American adults, with oversamples of parents, teachers, Hispanics, and African Americans. It reveals rising support for charters, vouchers, and teacher salaries when respondents are told what teachers currently make. Among other findings, the survey shows little support for union agency fees and policies forbidding racial disparities in school discipline practices.



Support for Vouchers, Charters, and Teacher Salaries

Support for vouchers, charters, and higher salaries all shift upward in 2018.



SOURCE: Education Next survey

Both Teachers and the Public Back *Janus* Decision by Supreme Court

IN JUNE 2018 the Supreme Court found agency fees covering collective bargaining costs to be unconstitutional if imposed on non-union teachers. Union leaders such as Eric Heins, the president of the California Teachers Association, claimed that the “wealthiest one percent, and politicians who do their bidding” launched the lawsuit. “They want to use the Supreme Court to take away the freedom of working people to join together in strong unions,” he said.

But when *Education Next* asked both the public and teachers what they thought, it found that when it comes to agency fees, the nays have it by a clear majority. No less than 56% of the general public and 54% of public school teachers are



Mark Janus, center, surrounded by supporters

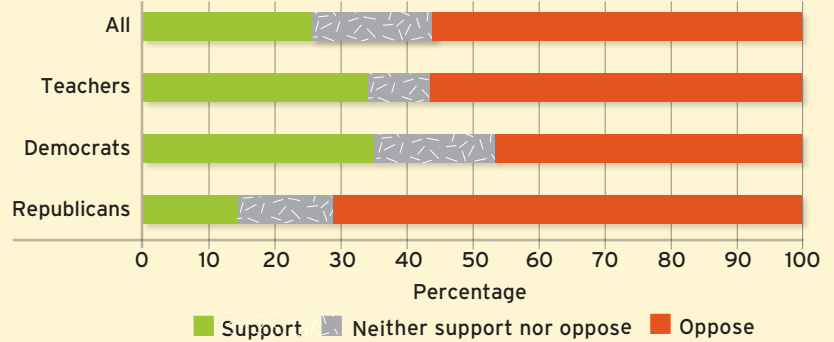
opposed. Only 25% of the public and 37% of teachers favor collecting union dues from non-members. The remaining respondents say they neither support nor oppose the idea.

The implications of the court decision are serious for teachers unions. When we asked teachers how pleased they were with their local unions' political activities, we discovered that many union members are less than enthusiastic about what is being done in their name. Only 46% of teachers are satisfied with their local unions' political activities, while 23% say they are dissatisfied, and another 32% take a neutral position.

Without the ability to impose agency fees, unions could lose a hefty share of their revenue. Leaked documents drawn up by the National Education Association indicate the union is already preparing a 13% budget cut of \$50 million. That may be an optimistic projection.

Public Opinion on Agency Fees

A majority of the public—and teachers—oppose imposing collective bargaining fees on non-union members.



Q: In some states, all teachers must pay fees for union representation even if they choose not to join the union. Do you support or oppose requiring all teachers to pay these fees even if they do not join the union?

SOURCE: Education Next survey

Racial Disparities in School Discipline

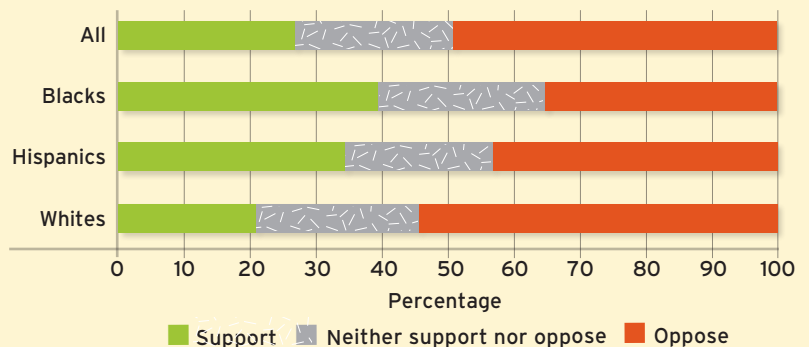
IN 2014 the Obama administration's Departments of Education and Justice, acting jointly, sent a "Dear Colleague" letter to school superintendents in every district warning of the risk of a civil rights violation if minorities are suspended, expelled, or otherwise disciplined at higher rates than students from other backgrounds. Black students comprise 36 percent of all reported expulsions even though they account for only 15 percent of public school students, the letter says. The U.S. Department of Education is considering withdrawal of the letter, a step that has drawn heavy criticism from civil rights groups.



The Trump administration is unlikely to get in trouble with a majority of the public if it withdraws the letter. Support for federally set limits on racial disparities in student discipline practices comes in at a low 27 percent, and civil rights groups do not command a majority of either African American or Hispanic adults.

Racial Disparities in School Discipline

Only a minority of white, African American, and Hispanic adults support federal policies requiring similar school suspension and expulsion rates across racial and ethnic categories.



Q: Do you support or oppose federal policies that prevent schools from expelling or suspending black and Hispanic students at higher rates than other students?

SOURCE: Education Next survey

[FALL 2017]

Competency-Based Education, Put to the Test

An inside look at learning and assessment at Western Governors University

By JON MARCUS

UNLIKE conventional colleges and universities, Western Governors doesn't require students to spend a set number of hours in a classroom, average out their performance on assignments and tests, then hand out letter grades and credits. Using a complex system of assessments developed over the two decades the university has been operating, WGU's method is competency-based, requiring that students prove they've mastered all the skills and knowledge offered in a given subject area. Until they do, they don't advance.

"You have to pass. You have to meet the criteria. There's no [grading] curve," says Cassidy Fann, a high-school science teacher who earned her undergraduate degree from Barnard College.

A dramatic departure from the conventional "seat-time" standard, competency-based assessment allows students to proceed at their own pace, a feature that's attractive to both those who want to accelerate their degree program and for older-than-traditional-age students juggling schoolwork with families and jobs.



To test how well its methods work, Western Governors resorts to an unusual form of evaluation: a Gallup poll. It surveyed its alumni last year—2,676 of them, randomly selected, who graduated between 2000 and 2016—to ask if what they learned prepared them for life. Thirty-one percent responded that it did, which might seem low, except that only a surprising 26 percent of graduates nationally said this, 24 percent from public universities and 20 percent from for-profit universities.

Another way of measuring WGU's effectiveness is through student pass rates on professional licensing exams. Western Governors says its students pass teacher certification tests administered by Pearson Education at a rate of 96.2 percent, and that they pass the Educational Testing

Service's Praxis teacher tests at a rate that's 3.8 percentage points above the national average.

Jon Marcus is higher-education editor at the Hechinger Report and North America correspondent for the London Times.

[SUMMER 2018]

Why Is Charter Growth Slowing?

Lessons from the Bay Area

By ROBIN J. LAKE, TREY COBB, ROOHI SHARMA, and ALICE OPALKA

THE PACE of new charter school openings and enrollment growth in the Bay Area has slowed in recent years. New schools continue to open each year, but the rate slowed considerably from its peak in 2012–13, when more than 18 percent additional students enrolled compared to the previous year. Since then, the sector has added fewer students every year,

enrolling about 4 percent additional students in 2017–18. Non-charter enrollment in the Bay Area has been almost flat during the same period.

The most immediate and overwhelming single factor constraining charter school growth in the Bay Area is a lack of access to affordable school buildings. This phenomenon is common across the United States, with charters fighting

for space in high-cost cities without the legislative and financial supports that district schools enjoy.

Districts are required to give local charters first refusal to rent or purchase “surplus” space or buildings. But that option is only helpful when districts identify “surplus” space, and charter operators report that many have been unwilling to share their facilities or consolidate under-enrolled schools in order to do so.



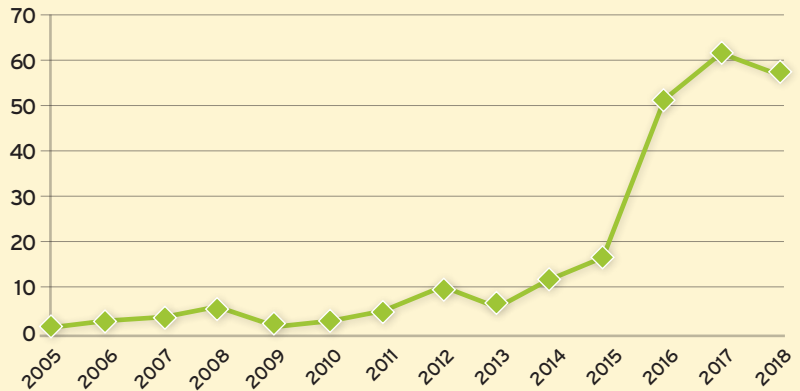
Political opposition has always been a reality for charters, but leaders we interviewed report that it is growing, in part because of national politics and in part because of local resistance to the charters’ expanding presence and the perceived fiscal impact on districts.

Robin Lake is the director of the Center on Reinventing Public Education at the University of Washington. Trey Cobb is a graduate student at the University of Notre Dame. Roohi Sharma is research coordinator at the Center on Reinventing Public Education at the University of Washington Bothell. Alice Opalka is a project manager at the Center on Reinventing Public Education.

Education Next Footprint

Average Influential Media Hits* Per Issue

Major media hits have jumped upward in recent years

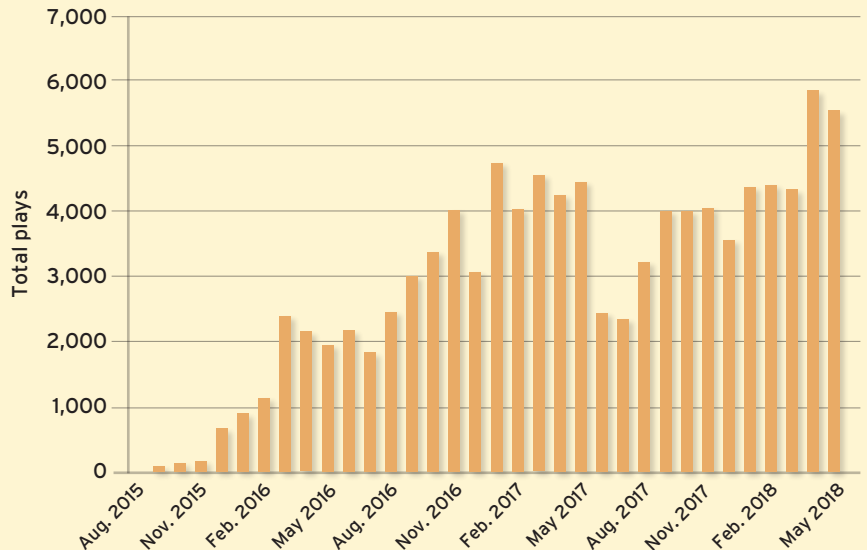


NOTES: *Media hits as of August 31, 2018

Influential media is defined as top 30 newspapers ranked by highest circulation, the top 30 magazines ranked by ad revenue, and influential education media.

Podcast Plays: EdNext Podcast and Education Exchange

The Education Exchange podcast was started in 2017 and along with the EdNext podcast started two years earlier, continues to grow a loyal following.





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