

# American Education

Chapter 6: Local Control, Choice, Charter Schools,  
Home Schooling, and Commercialism

# School Boards

- Trustee Representation
  - Premised on the idea that decisions, especially about institutions such as schools, should be removed from the immediate control of the general public
  - Board members make decisions based on what he/she believes is good for the public
  - Often criticized for not being able to separate own decisions from the decision making process

# School Boards

- Trustee Representation
  - Most school boards operate this way to limit public participation in direct control of school board affair
  - Most are elected in non-partisan elections
    - Favors elites
    - Critics claim that it often creates a partisan bias for republicans
    - Often business in the community throw their support for one candidate or another causing party divides

# School Boards

- Delegate Representation
  - Reflects the actual desires of the voters
  - Representatives make decisions based on what the public wants
- 85.5% of school board members are White
- 61.1% are male
- Very few actually have a background in education

# School Choice

- Free Market
  - Competition will produce the best products
- Plans
  - Public School Choice
    - Open enrollment in and among districts
    - Magnet schools attract students and integrate schools.  
Schools for the gifted
    - Charter schools

# School Choice

- Plans
  - Public-Private Choice
  - Failing-School Choice
    - Under No Child Left Behind, parents of students in schools that do not make adequate yearly progress can choose another school for their children
  - Low-Income Private School Choice
    - Taxpayer money is used to pay for all or part of the cost to attend a private or religious school for low income families

# No Child Left Behind: Choosing a School

- The Unsafe Schools Choice Option
  - Students in unsafe situations are allowed to transfer to safer schools when:
    - The school is determined to be persistently dangerous
    - When a student becomes the victim of a violent crime at school
  - States determine if schools are unsafe by using criteria such as the number of firearms are found and how often

# No Child Left Behind: Choosing a School

- Failing Schools
  - Parents are allowed to choose another school in the same district if the school does not make adequate yearly progress (AYP)
  - When a school is not achieving like it should the state sets up a timeline for that school. If this timeline is not met or completed
    - Should this timeline not be completed the state supplies supplemental educational services such as tutoring.

# No Child Left Behind: Choosing a School

- Failing Schools
  - The availability of seats in classrooms where kids are transferring to is a major problem
    - In Baltimore there were 30,000 students in failing schools and only 194 spaces in non failing schools
      - Only 394 applied for these spaces
    - In Chicago there are 145,000 kids in failing schools, and while 2,425 applied for a transfer, only 1,170 were seated
    - Priority should be given to low income and underachieving students

# No Child Left Behind: Choosing a School

- Federal money is set aside for failing schools
  - No additional money is provided to the well performing schools to pay for additional spaces
- Any schools offered as a choice option for transferring must have a better record than the previous school attended

# National Private School Choice Plan: America's Opportunity Scholarships for Kids

- Passed by Congress in 2006
- Give Grants to families to send their children to private or public schools outside of their school district.
- This would provide about 4000 annual scholarships to low income students.
- Some people in legislation believe that it will mislead parents and funnel money away from public schools.

# Model Private School Choice Plan: The District of Columbia School Choice Incentive Act

- Passed by Congress in 2004
- Provides vouchers to low-income families to send their children to a private school of their choice.
- Looking at it from a teachers union standpoint, it shows that the Government would to funding religious schools mostly.

# Question:

- What could be a problem with these plans?

# Charter Schools:

- The first one was founded in Minnesota in 1991
- Local agencies apply to the state to receive a charter to operate as a school at public expense.
- Gives the school a chance to experiment with different methods of instruction and school organization.
- No Child Left Behind provides 300 million dollars to support charter schools.
- <http://www.uscharterschools.org>

# Charter Schools, Cont.

- In 2006, a study showed that students in these schools got lower scores on reading and mathematics tests than those students in public schools.
- Texas teacher organizations claimed the poor showing of charter schools was a result of their exemption from hiring certified teachers and class-size limits.

# Question:

- What are the students getting out of Charter schools?
- Are Charter Schools worth having around?

# For-Profit Schools and Charter Schools

- For-Profit organizations are starting to build Charter Schools
- Some critics believe that No Child Left Behind will result in the privatization of public schools because they give money to those charters to hire for-profit companies.
- The problem with For-profit charter schools is most of them are the same, which is not what Charter Schools are all about.
- In one For-profit Charter School nearly half of its teachers chose to not go back to the school next year because of the tightly controlled educational plan.

# Question

- Should For-Profit organizations be able to create Charter Schools?

# Edison Schools

- Originally a school privatization operation; was called the Edison Project; created by Benno Schmidt, who was the president of Yale at the time (1990) and entrepreneur Chris Whittle
- Of the for-profit school companies, Edison Schools Inc. is most well-known
- The company manages schools through contracts with school boards/operates charter schools
- Under No Child Left Behind, failing schools need to be completely restructured
- New product Edison Alliance provides services creating a working relationship between state and local officials
- Federal government is source of profits for Edison Alliance

# Home Schooling

- Estimated 1.2 to 2 million children currently home schooled
- Home schooled students in first through fourth grade generally perform a grade level higher than students in public or private school
- Number of families choosing to home school increasing by estimated rate of 7 to 15 percent per year.
- Reasons families choose home schooling include religious reasons, social environment, academic standards, individual needs of child, curriculum choice, and flexibility
- Families in many countries seek to home school children
- Each state has different guidelines. Information is available from the Home School Legal Defense Association.
  - Some states offer more than one option
  - Some states require a minimum level of education for home school teachers
  - Some states require testing for students

# Commercialism in Schools

- Students increasingly exposed to advertising at school
- Examples include district contracts with beverage companies, Channel One, encouragement of students to give personal information using computers (to be sold to advertisers), textbooks that mention specific brands, Zap Me, BOOK IT!