



homeschool

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DISCUSSION & REVIEW QUESTIONS:

- Towards the beginning of the video, Ms. Friedrichs explains that, “With the old model, under which most American children still live, the government – not the parent – decides which school children will attend... [however] In almost every state and city where there is competition today, educational outcomes improve – often dramatically.” Why do you think that this is the case- what factors do you think play a role in the disparity? Do you think that the government should decide where children go to school? Why or why not?
- Later, Ms. Friedrichs shares with us that, “The National Center for Education Statistics reports that since 1970, public school attendance in the U.S. has gone up by just five percent, while public school employment has gone up 95 percent!” What do you think accounts for this dramatic statistic, and what positions do you think account for most of the hiring? Considering the condition of hiring so many more people yet not having a commensurate increase in positive outcomes for students, do you think that schools should be staffing so highly? Explain.
- When pointing out the dismal results in California, despite the state spending over 52% of its massive budget on education, Ms. Friedrichs further points out that, “...rarely is anyone held accountable for these dismal results. I’ve personally seen excellent, new teachers lose their jobs while incompetent and even abusive veteran teachers keep theirs because of the unions’ infamous “last in, first out” layoff and tenure rules.” Why do you think that actual accountability for educational outcomes is lacking in states like California that have powerful teacher’s unions? Who do you think should be accountable to taxpayers in those states for positive educational outcomes? Explain.
- Later, Ms. Friedrichs further shares that, “...public school teachers are less likely to send their children to public schools when given the choice. Why are most school choice options better? Because teachers at these schools are free from the unions’ stifling work rules. In short, they’re free to teach. And the administrators at these schools are also free to reward good teachers and fire bad ones. The teachers’ unions don’t like school choice because it means less money and less power for them.” Considering that teacher’s unions only advocate and support (certain, not even all) teachers, instead of advocating and supporting the families that the schools serve, do you think that teacher’s unions should hold so much power and influence over how schools operate? Why or why not? What does the fact that public school teachers are less likely to send their own children to public school reflect, in terms of educational values and outcomes?
- At the end of the video, Ms. Friedrichs pleads, “If you believe, like me and millions of others, that parents - not the government - should decide where their children go to school, and that competition will make all schools better, then join the school choice movement.” Do you agree with Ms. Friedrichs that competition will make schools better? Why or why not? Are you supportive of the school choice movement’s position? Why or why not?

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

CASE STUDY: School Vouchers

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the article “The Case for School Vouchers,” then answer the questions that follow.

- Who is Lily Eskelen Garcia, and what is she ‘terrified’ about? What do you think she is referring to when she uses the term ‘public good?’ Exactly how has Florida’s tax-credit scholarship program saved the state nearly \$40 million annually?
- Do you think that the author’s comparison of school vouchers to Obamacare subsidies is valid? Why or why not?
- Considering the fact that Progressives value equality so highly, do you think that their position against school choice is hypocritical? Why or why not? What do you think can be done to get school choice legislation passed in states with powerful teacher’s unions?



QUIZ

WHY GOOD TEACHERS WANT SCHOOL CHOICE

1. What type of school could parents direct the money they receive for their child?
 - a. Public school
 - b. Private school
 - c. Homeschool
 - d. All of the above

2. What makes school choice not a choice for millions of people?
 - a. Personal finances
 - b. Lack of desire
 - c. Teachers unions
 - d. School overcrowding

3. California spends over 52% of its budget on education and ranks _____ in reading and math.
 - a. 16th in the nation
 - b. 45th in the nation
 - c. 37th in the world
 - d. 50th in the world

4. What union rule helps good teachers keep their jobs over incompetent ones?
 - a. There is no such rule.
 - b. "last in, first out"
 - c. "first in, last out"
 - d. "best first, worst last"

5. Students in school choice programs saw their reading and math scores rank roughly the same as those with no school choice.
 - a. True
 - b. False



QUIZ - ANSWER KEY

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The Case for School Vouchers

Why choice should trump coercion.

A. Barton Hinkle | June 10, 2015

If you were planning to pull any practical jokes on Lily Eskelen Garcia or Bob Farrace, you might want to hold off. They're probably not in the mood for it.

Garcia is president of the National Education Association. Farrace is a spokesman for the National Association of Secondary School Principals. They recently were quoted about Nevada's passage of a school-choice measure, which allows families opting out of the public education system to send their kids' share of per-pupil spending to whatever school they choose.

Garcia says this leaves her "terrified" because so many states (27 at last count) "have bought into this very dangerous idea that school is a commodity." Farrace warns that "funneling public funds to private schools means fewer teachers, fewer counselors, fewer supplemental services and, in general, fewer opportunities for the vast majority of kids who remain in public schools. It really violates the public trust when policymakers place individual benefit before the public good."

These are standard talking points in the school-choice debate—and rather misleading ones. At worst, voucher programs can leave public schools with slightly less money to spend per remaining pupil. But in fact they usually leave the schools with more, because most vouchers offer less than the state's per-pupil expenditure. For example, if 10 students each leave a school with an 80 percent voucher, then the school has 10 fewer students but loses only eight students' worth of funding. Meanwhile, the state is spending only 80 percent of what it otherwise would have on the voucher students.

Granted, this math doesn't work if all the kids who use vouchers would have gone to private school anyway. But the National Conference of State Legislatures reports that's almost never the case. Usually only 10 percent to 15 percent of voucher recipients fall into that category, and half of them would go back to the public schools without a voucher. Hence Florida's tax-credit scholarship program has saved the state more than \$1.40 for every voucher dollar, amounting to a savings of nearly \$40 million a year. Milwaukee's school-choice program has produced even bigger savings.

So the complaint about siphoning off resources from the public schools misses its mark. But what the heck, let's be sporting and assume for the sake of argument that it's true. In that case, one reasonable response might be: So what?

After all, what is a school voucher but a kind of Obamacare subsidy?

Obamacare's subsidies make private medical care accessible to their recipients. With it, they can choose from among a variety of approved providers—just like those who use school vouchers. The NEA, which supports Obamacare, certainly doesn't consider this “dangerous.” Nor does it fret that offering people a range of choices among health care providers commoditizes medicine. Nor, evidently, do public-education advocates think Obamacare's limited freedom of consumer choice places “individual benefit before the public good.” After all, the public good is served when people get medical care—not when they get it through one particular source only.

Granted, while health care reform was being debated the NEA said it “strongly supports a public health care option.” Guess what? School voucher programs include a public option, too—existing public schools. Nobody is forced to use a voucher. That means a school voucher program resembles precisely the public-private hybrid arrangement the NEA sought for health care.

But what the teachers unions fought to pass in health care, they fight against in education. Go figure.

Critics of vouchers always warn about the dangers of giving parents more options: private schools with low standards, lousy curricula, “abhorrent discipline policies,” and so on—as if we didn't read about similar problems in the public schools every day. They don't bother to mention that public-school teachers send their own kids to private schools at twice the rate the general public does—and, in some places, three to four times the rate.

The current education model, meanwhile, is nothing like Obamacare. It's not like Obamacare with a public option. It's not even like a single-payer system, such as a Medicare-for-all program would be. Rather, it's the equivalent of a state-run system in which the vast majority of the public is consigned to a government-run hospital or clinic, while the rich buy their way out.

But imagine for a moment that America's education system did resemble Obamacare. In each case, consumers chose from a wide array of private providers, along with a couple of public ones, and the government guaranteed financial support for those who couldn't pay. Now imagine someone coming along and suggesting that we scrap the entire free-choice system and herd everyone, except the very rich, into state schools and hospitals managed and run by government bureaucrats.

How many people would be willing to make *that* switch?

A. Barton Hinkle is senior editorial writer and a columnist at the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*.