



Analytics

Published by the Caesar Rodney Institute

RELEASE: CRI - Center for Education Excellence

RE: In Other States Parents Can Choose the Best Education Options

DATE: 10/11/2012

Parents know when a school is failing their child, and they know if they do nothing the failure will have a negative impact on their child's entire life.

CRI has put a spotlight on Delaware's lack of progress to improve performance and parents want to know what options are available to them to provide the best education experience for their children.

Delaware has a narrow range of options available to most unless a family has the income to pay for private school.

Other states have adopted a range of choices to tailor education to the individual pupil for better outcomes. Parents choose from a variety of technology and delivery systems that include traditional public, charter, faith-based and private schools, home schooling and digital learning. Mom and dad can deliver on their choice because the parent control funds allocated for their child's education.

Louisiana Scholarship Program

Louisiana's new state scholarship program free parents to leave government-mandated schools for private and faith-based schools.

Last year, Falesha Augustus' 10-year old son Willie attended a failing school. This year, because of the new program, he qualified for a scholarship controlled by his family who chose Hosanna Christian Academy because its discipline, structure and small class size was a better fit for Willie.

Falesha reports that, "In just a few short weeks, he has learned so much. All I hear about is how he is eager to learn, and he is discovering this and that. Willie is way happier than he has ever been – and he is not coming home complaining about being bullied like he did."

Parents are embracing the program and want more. But, change is not easy. Louisiana's public employee unions are challenging the program in court.

Falesha says it best, "Those schools (government-mandated schools) failed my child. He did not learn the fundamentals, and classes were often out of control."

It is difficult to believe a public union or any special interest would fight ways to improve literacy -- but they do.



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Arizona Provides Education Savings Accounts

A new report by Dr. Matthew Ladner published by the Friedman Foundation describes the way of the future -- Education Savings Accounts (ESA).

ESA's are savings accounts that "allow parents to withdraw their children from public district or charter schools and receive a deposit of public funds into government authorized savings accounts with restricted, but multiple, uses. Those funds can cover private school tuition and fees, on-line learning programs, private tutoring, community college expense and other high education expenses."

Arizona through its ESA program deposits 90 percent of a child's state education fund into an account that parents have access to through use-restricted debit cards.

Dr Ladner writes in The Way of the Future: Education Savings Accounts for Every American Family, "Through ESA's, parents can choose between a much wider gamut of instructional approaches. The idea is to fund students directly; whose parents then can choose the type of education that best suits their needs. ESA's also encourage families to shop more economically for schooling options, as unused funds can be saved for postsecondary education." (A copy of Dr. Ladner's report can be obtained by contacting the Caesar Rodney Institute)

Freedom of choice enabled by school voucher programs like those in Louisiana and Arizona provide alternatives for families to improve their children's literacy; and these programs continue to gain support.

Partisanship Doesn't Serve Our Children – Particularly the Most Vulnerable

Cory Booker, Democrat Mayor of Newark in a recent address said that in education issues "partisanship doesn't serve my city". He went on to say that too many children "by law are locked into schools that fail their genius ... there are parents every day who scheme and plan, 'How can I liberate my child's potential from failing schools?'"

Unfortunately the limited options in Delaware do not give the advantages parents in other states have so -- Delaware parents have to 'scheme and plan'.

In fact, alternatives may be more limited depending on the outcome of the Governor's Charter School Task Force and how the Department of Education deploys the new Charter School Accountability process (coincidentally part of DSEA's Legislative agenda).

Even more unfortunate is the political conversation in Delaware that is more about accountability and less about alternatives to involve parents and allow them the choice of the best education experience for their children. Politicians are either running away from the issue or avoiding it in order not to offend special interests like the Delaware State Education Association.



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Regardless of the reason you as a parent, grandparent, aunt, or uncle have a responsibility to insure your child, grandchild, niece or nephew has an equal opportunity for a good education.

It is not a partisan issue and you can make a difference.

Ask candidates running for office what they will do to give you the freedom to choose the best education experience for the best outcome for your child, to encourage your involvement as parents, to limit the influence of special interest groups, and to bring oversight to regulatory agencies like the Department of Education.

It's your child. If you don't ask, who will?

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