



Analytics

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Institute

School Choice: Education Opportunity and Excellence in Delaware

In the 1960's we were told that support of institutions of higher education and school districts will address inequality and literacy will improve for all. It didn't.

By the 1980's the threat to education from programs implemented over the previous two decades was so egregious we became a Nation at Risk; more expensive programs were demanded to prevent the situation in education from worsening. It did anyway.

Then they told us more investment (at sometime the word spending became investment) coupled with education standards, first from the state and later on a national level then national standards will "...put America on a path to global leadership ... (and) prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace." Programs like No Child Left Behind and Race To The Top were combined with accountability measures to bring positive results to our education standards. We are still waiting for those positive results.

Governor Markell stated during his Inaugural Address, "we will continue our efforts to make Delaware's public schools the envy of the world." Well, he is right in regards to spending. More than forty other states and most countries envy the amount of money Delaware spends per pupil for public education.

Performance is essentially unchanged over the past four years: the children of the most disadvantaged low-income families continue to be 2-3 grade levels behind their wealthier peers, and ALL school districts in Delaware score below the SAT combined proficiency level of 1550 for college preparedness.

Many people instead have a simpler, more accountable vision of education.

A vision nearer to the classroom where each child has equal access to quality education and families are responsible for choosing the best education experience whether it be traditional public, charter, private, online, faith-based, or home schooling.

A vision where the everyday working relationship between families and teachers achieves the best education for each child; a relationship encouraged without the barriers imposed by onerous top-down programs or special interests.

A vision where teachers are able to teach and have a valued relationship highlighted by performance in communities enabled by principals and boards of education who actually run schools; that understand quality management, continuous improvement and governed by a limited set of regulations.

Surveys consistently show that more than 60% of you agree and would send your children to private or faith-based schools if you could afford the cost.



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As part of National School Choice Week we urge you to join your fellow moms, dads, grandmothers, grandfathers, aunts, uncles, and taxpayers, in telling elected officials that we want to be part of reform and support three key building blocks required for real transformation of Delaware's school system.

-Transparency: appropriate, easy to understand reporting of student achievement and financial performance will pull people into education in a meaningful way.

-Better evaluation system of schools: A simple 'A-F' system that recognizes children at different levels, encourages overall achievement and progress for overall performance, especially those considered near the bottom 25% academically, and builds in reward for achievement from school districts to individual teachers.

-Savings accounts for parents: Well-informed families empowered by education scholarships and savings accounts to invest in their children will be partners, customers and owners of their children's educational achievement.

It is time to reverse under-performing trends and neglect throughout the system caused by expensive top-down imposed education solutions.

Imagine the time when families, teachers and communities are in the position to focus on education for their children.

Let those we've elected to make a difference know the time is now. Contact information for elected officials is available on our website www.caesarrodney.org.

Thank you,

James E. Hosley
Director, Center for Excellence in Education
Caesar Rodney Institute