

Education

Principles:

- Curriculum standards should be rigorous, clear and measurable
- Student learning gains should be the key criteria in evaluating the success of all education efforts
- All students should be held to high standards and high expectations
- Teacher recruitment, education, training and compensation should be focused on attracting and retaining high quality teachers
- School finance should be on a child basis, not a district basis, so that the money follows the child
- The public should be able to see where the money for education is spent, down to the building level
- Students have diverse needs and should have the maximum amount of choice to find the educational setting that is best for them

Agenda:

- Create a testing, assessment and student information system capable of measuring student growth
- Aggressively encourage non-traditional paths to the classroom to aid the recruitment of quality teachers
- Implement a comprehensive teacher pay program that attracts and rewards excellence
- Hold teacher colleges accountable by tracking and publishing their graduates' performance
- Implement a funding program that is student-centered, transparent and encourages flexibility
- Continue to shift authority and responsibility to the local school level
- Continue to provide facility funding options for charter schools and career academies
- Encourage competitive sourcing of school services and shared services to promote more efficient uses of funding
- Continue to expand public and private school choice options so that every child has the best opportunity for a quality education

Facts:

Grades given to Georgia's state curriculum standards on national studies conducted by the Washington, D.C.-based Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, under the old Quality Core Curriculum (QCC) and the new Georgia Performance Standards (GPS). Overall, Georgia's new standards were ranked fifth best in the nation.¹

	Old QCC	Old QCC	New GPS
	1998	2000	2005/2006
English	B	B	B
Science	D	F	B
Math	B	B	B
World History	D	C	A

In its report "Sizing Up State Standards," the American Federation of Teachers gave Georgia's standards a "strong" rating for clarity, specificity and content in all subjects except social studies in the elementary grades.²

¹ "The State of State Standards 2006," August 29, 2006, Thomas B. Fordham Institute, http://www.edexcellence.net/detail/news.cfm?news_id=358&id=130

² "Sizing Up State Standards," American Federation of Teachers, March 2008, <http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/downloads/teachers/standards2008.pdf>

2007 NAEP Test Scores - The National Assessment of Educational Progress³ is one of the best measures of how Georgia's student achievement compares to other states.

Test	Percent of Students At or Above "Basic"	Percent of Students At or Above "Proficient"	National Rank of Average Scale Score
Reading - Grade 4	66	28	32
Reading - Grade 8	70	26	35
Math - Grade 4	79	32	40
Math - Grade 8	64	25	38

2007 SAT Scores⁴

	Georgia	National Average	Rank
Composite Score	989	1017	48
Percent Change in SAT Scores 1997-2007	4.32	0.89	12

Pupil/Teacher Ratio⁵

	Georgia	National Average	Rank
Pupil/Teacher Ratio	14.7	15.2	24
Percent Change in Pupil/Teacher Ratio	-21.8%	-15.1%	6

Georgia's adjusted per-pupil expenditure in 2005 was \$8,658 (ranking 27th highest), while the national average was \$8,973.⁶

The percent change in per-pupil expenditures in Georgia from the 1985-86 school year to the 2005-06 school year was 114.6 percent (2nd largest increase in the nation), while the national average was 53.6 percent.⁷

Georgia's total operating and capital expenditures per pupil in the 2006-07 school year was \$10,697, up 7.2 percent from \$9,975 in the 2005-06 school year.⁸

Preschool enrollment (2006) 50.8 percent, 10th highest in the nation (National average: 46.1 percent)⁹
 Kindergarten enrollment (2006) 77.3 percent, 15th highest in the nation (National average: 75.7 percent)¹⁰

Total enrollment in Georgia public schools (2006-07): 1,589,839
 Number of school systems in Georgia (2006-07): 180
 Number of full- and part-time teachers in Georgia schools (2006-07): 113,055
 Number of full- and part-time administrators/support employees (2006-07): 19,212
 Source: Governor's Office of Student Achievement

Although Georgia's average annual teacher salary is the 18th highest in the nation, after adjusting for cost of living, pension contributions and teacher experience, Georgia's teacher compensation is the highest in the nation.¹¹

³ <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/states/profile.asp>

⁴ "2007 Report Card on American Education," American Legislative Exchange Council, <http://www.alec.org/am/pdf/states/georgia2007.pdf>

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ "Quality Counts 2008," Education Week, <http://www.edweek.org/media/ew/qc/2008/18shr.ga.h27.pdf>

⁷ "2007 Report Card on American Education," American Legislative Exchange Council, <http://www.alec.org/am/pdf/states/georgia2007.pdf>

⁸ Governor's Office of Student Achievement, <http://gadoe.org/ReportingFW.aspx?PageReq=102&StatId=ALL&T=1>

⁹ "Quality Counts 2008," Education Week, <http://www.edweek.org/media/ew/qc/2008/18shr.ga.h27.pdf>

¹⁰ Ibid.

Average annual teacher salaries adjusted for cost of living, pension contributions and teacher experience

Initial Rank	State	Average Salary (NEA)	Pension Contribution Rates	Average Years of Experience	Cost of Living Index	Adjusted Compensation	Final Rank
18	Georgia	\$49,905	9.24%	12.3	0.924	\$64,756	1
30	Texas	\$44,897	6.58%	12.1	0.900	\$59,320	7
25	North Carolina	\$46,410	2.66%	12.2	0.946	\$55,731	10
36	Alabama	\$43,389	8.17%	12.3	0.929	\$55,450	11
35	Kentucky	\$43,646	13.11%	12.9	0.939	\$55,018	13
--	U.S. Median	\$45,941	8.17%	13.5	1.000	\$50,920	—
--	U.S. Average	\$50,816	9.37%	13.7	1.000	\$50,330	—
39	Louisiana	\$42,816	15.90%	14.5	0.951	\$48,582	31
34	Tennessee	\$43,816	6.13%	14.7	0.881	\$48,474	32
31	Virginia	\$44,727	6.62%	13.3	1.007	\$48,069	33
49	Mississippi	\$40,182	10.75%	13.7	0.916	\$47,873	34
33	South Carolina	\$44,133	7.55%	14.5	0.933	\$47,365	37
29	Florida	\$45,308	6.28%	13.2	1.043	\$47,217	38

Sources of new Georgia teachers (2007): Out of state teachers: 28%; Georgia educator preparation institutions: 26%; returning teachers: 20%; alternative preparation: 23%; reassigned: 3%; other: 1%.¹²

Graduation Rates:

Graduation rates are calculated in many different ways, leading to differences in data depending on the method. According to Education Week, Georgia's graduation rate for 2004-05 was 58.1 percent, ranking 46th lowest in the nation. The national average was 70.6 percent.¹³ A calculation by the Manhattan Institute for 2001-02 produced a graduation rate of 56 percent, ranking Georgia 49th. The national average in this study was 71 percent.¹⁴

According to the Georgia Department of Education (GDOE), the graduation rate for 2004-05 was 69.4 percent. The graduation rate for 2007-2008 was 75.4 percent. This represents a 13 percent increase from the 2001-02 rate of 61.8 percent.

¹¹ "Rankings and Estimates," National Education Association, December, 2007, p. 67, www.nea.org/newsreleases/2007/nr071210.html and "Annual Report on Teacher Pay," John Locke Foundation, January, 2008), http://www.johnlocke.org/acrobat/spotlights/spotlight_340-teacherpay.pdf

¹² Georgia Professional Standards Commission

¹³ "Diplomas Count 2008," Education Week, June 2008, <http://www.edweek.org/media/ew/dc/2008/40sgb.ga.h27.pdf>

¹⁴ "Public High School Graduation and College-Readiness Rates: 1991–2002," Jay P. Greene, Ph.D. and Marcus A. Winters, Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, February 2005, http://www.manhattan-institute.org/html/ewp_08.htm

The average annual income for a high school dropout in 2005 was \$17,299. This compares with an average income of \$26,933 for a high school graduate, \$36,645 for someone with an associate's degree and \$52,671 for someone with a bachelor's degree in 2005.¹⁵

The unemployment rate for high school dropouts in late 2007 was 7.6 percent, compared to high school graduates (4.5 percent) and college graduates (2.2 percent).¹⁶

Charter Schools

Georgia's 71 charter schools are outperforming traditional public schools and are serving a more diverse and economically disadvantaged population than traditional public schools.¹⁷

	Georgia Public Charter Schools	Georgia Traditional Public Schools
Percent making AYP	85%	82%
Graduation Rate	90%	72%
Average Poverty Rate	56%	50%
Minority Enrollment	61%	53%

How do outside groups evaluate education in Georgia?

Education Week's 2008 Quality Counts Report

Georgia received an A- for "standards, assessments and accountability" and a B for both "transitions and alignment" (connecting K-12 with early learning, higher education and the workplace) and "the teaching profession". Although test scores were below average, Georgia received points for reducing the achievement gaps in reading and math and for high scores and improvement in Advanced Placement tests. In the teaching category, Georgia lost points due to a lack of a ban or cap on out-of-field teachers, teacher preparation programs are not held accountable for their graduate's classroom performance, the inability to link teachers and test scores, the lack of teacher-pay parity with comparable professions, the lack of reporting of school-level salaries, and the lack of pay-for-performance awards or incentives.¹⁸

The Fordham Report 2006: How Well Are States Educating Our Neediest Children?

The Fordham Foundation's first ever comprehensive analysis of education reform and results in the 50 states examined student achievement, with a focus on poor and minority students; achievement trends since the early 1990s for these same students; and reform efforts centering on curriculum, standards and school choice. Georgia ranked 36 out of 44 states on student achievement for Black, Hispanic and low-income students, 6 out of 41 states for improvement in student achievement for these students and 10 out of 50 states for education reform. In education reform, Georgia was ranked 5 out of 49 states for its quality of state standards and 40 out of 46 for the rigor of the state's definition of proficiency in its reading and math tests.¹⁹

U.S. Chamber of Commerce report card - "Leaders and Laggards: A State-by-State Report Card on Educational Effectiveness"

Georgia is one of 10 states to earn a D overall. The state got A's for data quality and its 21st-century teaching force; B's for the rigor of the new standards (the Georgia Performance Standards) and flexibility in management and policy and a C for return on investment. But it got D's for academic achievement;

¹⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, http://www.bizjournals.com/atlanta/gen/US_Census_Bureau_7F0AACB69C974D319F8296DAA5E9CB42.html

¹⁶ Employment Policies Institute, November 2007, http://www.epionline.org/gj_report_detail.cfm?date=0711

¹⁷ "Positive Lessons from Charter Schools in Georgia," Georgia Public Policy Foundation, 2008, <http://gppf.org/article.asp?RT=21&p=pub/CharterSchools/Educharters080314.htm>

¹⁸ <http://www.edweek.org/media/ew/qc/2008/18shr.ga.h27.pdf>

¹⁹ http://www.edexcellence.net/detail/news.cfm?news_id=363&pubsubid=1358#1358

academic achievement of minorities and low-income students; post-secondary and workforce readiness and “truth in advertising about student proficiency.”²⁰

Comparing Georgia, Florida and North Carolina on Education²¹

	<u>Georgia</u>	<u>Florida</u>	<u>North Carolina</u>
NAEP Grade 8 Math 2007 Avg.	275	277	284
% At or Above Proficient	25	27	34
NAEP Grade 8 Reading 2007 Avg.	259	260	259
% At or Above Proficient	26	28	28
Pre-K expenditures per pupil (2007)	\$4,111	\$2,335	\$4,712
K-12 Expenditures per pupil (2005)	\$8,658	\$7,539	\$7,525
Pupil/Teacher Ratio (2006)	14.7	16.8	14.8
Average teacher salary (2006)	\$42,486	\$40,668	\$42,679
Demographics	48% White	49.6% White	56.6% White
	38.3% Black	23.9% Black	31.5% Black
	11.2% Other	26.4% Other	11.9% Other
Students Eligible for Free Lunch	41%	37%	35%
Students Eligible for Reduced-Price Lunch	8%	8%	7%

Background:

"If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war."²²

Over the last decade, Georgia has begun a slow but steady course towards raising academic standards, improving accountability, increasing parental choice and providing flexibility to schools by decentralizing authority and responsibility to the system and school level. Georgia's academic standards have moved from near the bottom to near the top nationally. With the Troops to Teachers program and the Teacher Alternative Preparation Program, Georgia has continued to make it easier for schools to recruit non-traditional sources of highly-qualified teachers. Through the charter school and the charter systems laws, Georgia provides a mechanism to give schools the flexibility necessary to provide innovative and creative approaches to our education challenges, while holding them accountable for results. These laws also provide parents with more educational options for their children within the public school framework. Most recently, Special Needs Scholarships and Tuition Tax Credit Scholarships have broadened opportunities for many more Georgia parents to choose among public and private schools as they search for what is best for their child.

Going forward, Georgia must put in place a more simple, more equitable funding mechanism for schools, it must continue to demand more transparency in how education dollars are spent, it must continue to reform teacher compensation and make entry easier for alternative route teachers in order to improve teacher quality, it must continue to remove financial barriers to children and their ability to attend the

²⁰ www.uschamber.com/icw/reportcard/default.

²¹ "State Preschool Yearbook," The National Institute for Early Education Research, 2007, <http://nieer.org/yearbook/pdf/yearbook.pdf#page=52>, "Quality Counts 2008," Education Week, <http://www.edweek.org/media/ew/qc/2008/18shr.ga.h27.pdf> and "2007 Report Card on American Education," American Legislative Exchange Council, http://www.alec.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Report_Card_on_American_Education

²² National Commission on Excellence in Education, A Nation at Risk: The Imperative of Education Reform, April 1983, www.ed.gov/pubs/NatAtRisk/risk.html

school that best fits their needs, and it must improve upon the transition from high school to graduation and on to post-secondary options.

Accountability

Accountability is founded on the simple concept that adults – educators, administrators, policy-makers, political leaders and parents – should be held accountable for the quality of education America’s children receive. Unfortunately, the virtue of accountability is often misunderstood. Critics wrongly portray accountability as a draconian force that diverts schools from real learning and crushes them under unrealistic demands for improvement.

Studies have directly linked strong accountability to improved student performance. One report analyzing gains in Texas and North Carolina on both state assessments and state NAEP results concluded these gains were the result of strong accountability reforms.²³ A strong accountability system includes the following key components:

- Academic standards – determine what students should learn and set the pace for the selection of curriculum, textbooks, lesson plans and teacher preparation.
- Assessments – measure whether students are meeting standards and offer objective data to determine how best to focus resources to enhance strengths and correct weaknesses.
- Access to information – provide assessment results and other data at the school, district and state level to enable parents and the public to track educational progress.
- Action – establish rewards for districts and schools that meet standards and eventual consequences for those that do not. This is often referred to as a “high-stakes” system.²⁴

HB 1209, which passed in 2008 as one of the recommendations of the Governor’s Education Finance Task Force²⁵, allows local school system to request increased flexibility from certain state laws, rules and regulations in exchange for increased accountability and defined consequences through a contract with the State Board of Education. This provides a middle ground for school systems that desire more flexibility, but are not interested in becoming a charter system.

Assessments

As the rigor of Georgia’s standards has increased, the rigor of the Georgia Criteria Referenced Competency Tests (CRCTs), which measure student mastery of the state curriculum, has also been increased. Georgia’s curriculum is now aligned much more closely with national and international standards, so it is realistic to assume that our testing results will more closely align with a rigorous national test such as the NAEP. The table below shows the dramatic gap between the percentage of students showing proficiency in several subjects according to the Georgia CRCT and the national NAEP.

²³ “No Child In Georgia Left Behind,” Georgia Public Policy Foundation, 2003, http://www.gppf.org/article.asp?RT=5&p=pub/Education/no_child_behind.htm#_ftn10

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ <http://ie2.org/>

NAEP vs. CRCT Test Scores

Subject*	NAEP Passing Rate	CRCT Passing Rate	Gap
4th Grade Math	79	78	NAEP +1
8th Grade Math	64	81	CRCT +17
4th Grade Reading	66	85	CRCT +19
8th Grade Reading	70	88	CRCT +18
4th Grade Science	63 (2005 test)	72	CRCT +9
8th Grade Science	53 (2005 test)	75	CRCT +22

*2007 scores unless otherwise noted / NAEP Passing Rate represents percentage of students at or above basic

In 2008, the public was alarmed by a 62 percent passing rate on the eighth grade math CRCT, but clearly this is very close to the 64 percent passing rate on the 2007 NAEP test. These are skills developed by a consensus of experts that every eighth grade child should know. Well-respected national tests indicate that our children are not mastering these skills. Rather than dumbing down the tests to artificially build up self-esteem, Georgia needs to use these test results as a diagnostic tool to develop a strategy to ensure that our children become proficient in these skills.

Transparency

Transparency in finance is another vital aspect of school accountability. According to a report on Texas' public schools by the Koret Task Force on K-12 Education at Stanford University's Hoover Institution, "Parents, voters and school board members should know how a child's funding breaks down into local revenue, state aid and federal aid. They should know how the expenditure per child breaks down into compensation of regular classroom teachers, compensation of other instructional staff, spending on facilities, spending on transportation and spending on all other functions. Such knowledge facilitates good governance of schools."

Texas has led the way on transparency in education. Today, 60 Texas school districts post their check registers online and last year Texas A&M became the first university in the state to post all expenditures online. Georgia now requires school systems to provide the state with building-level expenditures as well as an accounting of the funds spent at the system level. When this information is published in 2008 it will be broken down into various spending categories.

The Teaching Commission Recommendations

Louis V. Gerstner, the former CEO of IBM, formed the 19-member blue-ribbon Teaching Commission in 2003, with the goal of raising student performance by transforming the way in which teachers are recruited and retained. There were three Georgians on the Commission: Roy Barnes, former governor; Dr. Beverly Hall, the superintendent of Atlanta Public Schools; and Scott E. Painter, a Chemistry and Physics teacher at South Atlanta High School. The panel also included Sandra Feldman, president of the American Federation of Teachers, Barbara Bush and former U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley. In 2006, this diverse commission signed off unanimously on the final report.²⁶

²⁶ "Teaching at Risk: Progress and Potholes," 2006, http://www.nctq.org/nctq/images/ttc_teachingatrisk.pdf

The final report published in 2006, focuses on specific policy recommendations to break through barriers such as low standards; low, lockstep pay; mistrust of efforts to identify what makes for effective teaching; education schools out of touch with school needs, and outdated, inflexible work rules. The goal is to ensure “that student learning rather than teacher protection is the number one priority.”

The Teaching Commission’s recommendations were far-reaching and commendable. It called for more money, but also for linking pay to effectiveness (based on value-added measures of student achievement), to subject specialty and to working conditions. It urged new forms of accountability for teacher-education programs, making new teachers pass demanding tests of content knowledge and removing needless certification obstacles. And it would empower school principals as “CEOs” with control over personnel decisions.

It recommends a new compact for teachers: “The nation must increase base pay for teachers, but also teachers must be measured – and compensated – on the basis of their classroom performance, including the academic gains made by their students.” The report recommends higher salaries for teachers in the “toughest” classrooms, in shortage areas such as math and science, and who are mentors and master teachers. Additionally, it calls for university preparation programs and district-run professional development classes to be tied to improving student performance.

Startling statistics back up the Commission’s concerns: “Fully one-third of students in high-poverty secondary schools take at least one class with a teacher who lacks even a college minor in the subject,” the report states. The Commission urges state leaders to raise the passing scores for teacher certification exams and ensure every new teacher passes a rigorous test of both content and essential skills.

The Commission also urges improvements in compensation and performance, skills and preparation and leadership and support, three areas found to undermine the professionalism of teaching. The Commission wants teachers to be paid more for high performance, “measured by fair evaluations and clear evidence of improved student learning.” Teachers must be given the responsibility and rewarded for what is most important: better student performance. Some version of the “value-added” method, the rate of improvement in student performance each school year, is recommended as an evaluation system. “A system that does not reward excellence cannot inspire it,” the report says.

The Commission wants university presidents to revamp teacher education programs, raise standards for entry and strengthen their academic content. And it wants the federal government to “tie continued funding of teacher education programs to measures of success for graduates of these programs.”

School leaders – principals – should be empowered with the ultimate say over personnel decisions, the Commission says. Improvements in principal recruitment and training are fundamental so school leaders can foster a culture of excellence in which teachers have more opportunity to become decision makers.²⁷

The New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce

The Commission on American Workforce Skills was first formed in 1990 and the bipartisan panel released a report entitled “America’s Choice: High Skills or Low Wages!” Recommendations made in this report led to major changes to state and federal legislation. The new commission, chaired by past University of Georgia President, Dr. Charles B. Knapp, addressed the implications of the evolution of world economies that has taken place over the past decade and how it has affected education in the United States.

²⁷ “National Report on Teaching Focuses on Student Learning,” Georgia Public Policy Foundation, 2004, <http://www.gppf.org/article.asp?RT=5&p=pub/Education/TeacherQuality/Eduatrisk040402.htm> and “The Teaching Commission Final Report,” 2006, http://www.nctq.org/nctq/images/ttc_teachingatrisk.pdf

The Commission's newest report²⁸ was published in 2007 and had this to say:

The core problem is that our education and training systems were built for another era, an era in which most workers needed only a rudimentary education. It is not possible to get where we have to go by patching that system. There is not enough money available at any level of our intergovernmental system to fix this problem by spending more on the system we have. We can get where we must go only by changing the system itself.

To do that, we must face a few facts. The first is that we recruit a disproportionate share of our teachers from among the less able of the high school students who go to college. The second is that we tolerate an enormous amount of waste in the system, failing our students in the early years when the cost of doing the job right would be relatively low, and trying to remediate it later at much higher cost. The third is that this inherently inefficient system has gotten progressively more inefficient over time. While the standards movement has produced real gains, especially for minority students, in recent years, those gains have been leveling off, and the gains have been modest in relation to the increase in per pupil expenditures over the last thirty years.

The fourth is that the growing inequality in family incomes is contributing heavily to the growing disparities in student achievement. The fifth is that we have failed to motivate most of our students to take tough courses and work hard, thus missing one of the most important drivers of success in the best-performing nations. The sixth is that our teacher compensation system is designed to reward time in service, rather than to attract the best and brightest of our college students and reward the best of our teachers.

The seventh is that, too often, our testing system rewards students who will be good at routine work, while not providing opportunities for students to display creative and innovative thinking and analysis. The eighth is that, too often, we have built a bureaucracy in our schools in which, apart from the superintendent of schools, the people who have the responsibility do not have the power, and the people who have the power do not have the responsibility. The ninth is that most of the people who will be in our workforce are already in it, and if they cannot master the new literacy at high levels, it will not matter what we do in our schools. And the tenth is that although we have an elaborate funding mechanism to provide funds to send young people to college and university to launch them in the careers of their choice, we have done a very poor job of making it possible for adults who have full-time jobs and family responsibilities to get the continuing education and training they need to survive in the world that is coming.

But the most important truth is none of these. It is that we do not need new programs, and we need less money than one might think. The one thing that is indispensable is a new system. The problem is not with our educators. It is with the system in which they work. That is what the new Commission focused on. And it is the implementation of this system that will take courage and leadership.

Many of our teachers are superb. But we have for a long time gotten better teachers than we deserved because of the limited opportunities for women and minorities in our workforce. Those opportunities are far wider now, and we are left with the reality that we are now recruiting more of our teachers from the bottom third of the high school students going to college than is wise. To succeed, we must recruit many more from the top third.

To get this group requires us, first, to change the shape of teacher compensation, which is currently backloaded, in the sense that it is weak on cash compensation, especially up

²⁸ "Tough Choices or Tough Times," 2007, <http://www.skillscommission.org/executive.htm>

front, and heavy on pensions and health benefits for the retired teacher. This is what one would want if the idea were to retain the teachers with the most years of service, but it makes no sense if what we are after is to attract young people who are thinking most about how they are going to get the cash they need to enjoy themselves, buy a home, support a family, and pay for college for their children.

"The first step in our plan is to make retirement benefits comparable to those of the better firms in the private sector and use the money that is saved from this measure to increase teachers' cash compensation." The plan would also provide "salary increments for especially effective teachers, teachers at higher points on a new career ladder, those willing to teach in remote or especially tough urban areas, and teachers in shortage fields like mathematics and special education."

The study recommends funding schools directly according to a pupil-weighting formula and "giving schools complete discretion over the way their funds are spent, the staffing schedule, their organization and management, their schedule, and their program, as long as they provided the curriculum and met the testing and other accountability requirements imposed by the state. Districts could provide support services to the schools, but the schools would be free to obtain the services they needed wherever they wished."

"The Commission's report joins a chorus of voices warning us of the looming consequences facing our nation because of the poor level of preparation of students and members of the workforce. What is different is that this report recommends bold steps for action. To do any less will result only in more half-measures that over time have had too little effect and have left us vulnerable as we face growing competition in a changed world economy." — G. Wayne Clough, Past President, Georgia Tech, and Vice Chairman, U.S. Council on Competitiveness

School choice

Our economy is testament to the success of a free and competitive marketplace that provides consumers with choices and rewards innovation, efficiency and quality. Sadly, as Albert Shanker, former president of the American Federation of Teachers said, our public schools system "operates like a planned economy, a bureaucratic system in which everybody's role is spelled out in advance and there are few incentives for innovation and productivity. It's no surprise that our school system doesn't improve: It more resembles the communist economy than our own market economy."

The success of the United States is based on the promotion of civil society and individual freedoms, rather than on government monopolies, and our most basic civil institutions are our schools. The data show that school choice systems produce greater achievement gains in both the choice schools and the public schools by forcing them to compete for students and dollars. Unfortunately, most parents in Georgia do not have the opportunity to choose the best and safest schools for their children.

Our higher education system is an example of school choice. Georgians have many choices between public, private and religious schools; technical, liberal arts and engineering schools; small, medium and large schools, etc. Taxpayer funding is provided for students at all of these schools, either through direct appropriation or directly to individuals through programs such as HOPE, the GI Bill, and Pell Grants. The result is that our colleges and universities are among the best in the country and attract some of the best students and faculty.

Georgia has started down the road of real education reform and school choice. For example, charter schools provide parents some alternative for their children's education, children with special needs can now utilize a state scholarship to choose the public or private school that best meets their specialized needs, and the new tax credit scholarships will provide choices for a wide array of Georgia's children. We

must continue to support these schools and their development so we can then release the powerful incentives of the competitive marketplace that have transformed almost every other facet of our economy.

Charter Schools

Charter schools are public schools, therefore, a successful charter school is a successful public school. Charter schools cannot charge tuition, must accept all students without any entrance requirements and are closed down if they do not meet their student achievement goals. In exchange for this strict accountability, charters are given increased flexibility to manage their school. Start-up charter schools provide parents with choices because they can attend the charter school or, if unsatisfied, they can return to their traditional school.

Georgia's 71 charter schools (start-up plus conversion) are outperforming traditional public schools and are serving a more diverse and economically disadvantaged population than traditional public schools, according to the Georgia Department of Education's most recent Annual Report on Charter Schools.

The findings, based on 2007 data, correct many of the misperceptions that surround the state's charter schools and are particularly significant in light of the increased attention charter schools have received from legislative leadership over the past two years.

In 2007, the General Assembly enacted a law that allows entire districts – not just individual schools – to apply for a charter. Districts promise improved student achievement in exchange for freedom from certain state and local rules. In 2008, the Legislature created a new statewide authorizing commission that would have the power to establish new charter schools that would receive the same funding as other charter schools.

In 2007, charter schools in Georgia met state testing goals – or made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) – at a rate that exceeded traditional public schools. In 2006, fully 85 percent of Georgia charter schools made AYP, compared with 82 percent of traditional public schools.

The national average for charter schools was 64 percent, compared with 73 percent of traditional public schools. Georgia's success rate makes it a leader among chartering states and bolsters the notion that quality chartering, not merely more charter schools, is the key to charter success.

Indeed, while most reputable national studies of relative charter school performance have yielded mixed results, the performance levels in Georgia are increasingly encouraging. During the 2007 school year, for example, charter high schools in Georgia graduated their students at a rate of 90 percent, compared with an average of 72 percent for public schools generally. This is the highest graduation rate in the history of Georgia's charter sector and comes at a time when state leaders are redoubling their efforts to improve high school graduation rates.

Much of this success can be attributed to the fact that many charter high schools in Georgia were designed specifically to boost graduation rates. Charter career academies, for example, work in partnership with technical colleges and community colleges to offer a more engaging curriculum and to target students who might otherwise have fallen through the cracks. A study by the Carl Vinson Institute at the University of Georgia found that students who were jointly enrolled in classes at both a public high school and a technical college had a high school graduation rate of 98 percent. Furthermore, the placement rate for these graduates was 100 percent – every single graduate had either found work or was continuing their education.²⁹

²⁹ Carl Vinson Institute of Government, University of Georgia Collaborative Study: Final Report, January 2002.

The results are all the more impressive when one considers the student population served by charter schools. During the 2007 school year, 56 percent of students enrolled in charter schools qualified for free and reduced lunch, compared with 50 percent for students statewide. In addition, Georgia charter schools are more likely to enroll racial minorities: Fully 61 percent of charter school students are racial minorities, compared with the statewide average of 53 percent. And 43 percent of charter school students were African-American, the highest percentage recorded since the first charter school opened in Georgia in 1995.

Nevertheless, Georgia charter performance strongly suggests that we should encourage more schools to use flexibility to help improve student learning. Simply put, Georgia's charter schools are high-performing public schools serving a population that, on average, is more racially diverse and less affluent than Georgia generally.³⁰

Agenda

Create a testing, assessment and student information system capable of measuring student growth

According to Stanford University's Eric Hanusheck, "...knowing how a school (or district, state, teacher, pupil) is doing in absolute terms is necessary but insufficient; we also need to know whether youngsters in that school are making acceptable progress. That is, we need to be able to measure, as accurately as possible, whether students are making suitable academic gains from where they started to where they need to get. Without such "growth" measures, an ineffectual school blessed with high-performing (or fortunate) pupils may look good, while a remarkably productive school may look bad because its disadvantaged students have not yet reached a fixed standard, even though they're getting closer and closer to meeting it."³¹

Student performance on assessments can be measured in two very different ways, both of which are important. *Achievement* describes the absolute levels attained by students in their end-of-year tests. *Growth*, in contrast, describes the progress in test scores made over the school year. Georgia currently collects data on end-of-year achievement, but does not measure growth. The University of Pennsylvania makes a compelling case why this information would be valuable for Georgia.

The University of Pennsylvania points out several advantages of measuring student growth compared to simply measuring student achievement at one point in time:

In the past, students and schools have been ranked solely according to achievement. The problem with this method is that achievement is highly linked to the socioeconomic status of a student's family. For example, according to Educational Testing Service, SAT scores rise with every \$10,000 of family income. This should not be surprising since all the variables that contribute to high-test scores correlate strongly with family income: good jobs, years of schooling, positive attitudes about education, the capacity to expose one's children to books and travel, and the development of considerable social and intellectual capital that wealthy students bring with them when they enter school.

In contrast, value-added assessment measures growth and answers the question: how much value did the school staff add to the students who live in its community? How, in effect, did they do with the hand society dealt them? If schools are to be judged fairly, it is important to understand this significant difference.

³⁰ "Positive Lessons from Charter Schools in Georgia," Georgia Public Policy Foundation, 2008, <http://gppf.org/article.asp?RT=21&p=pub/CharterSchools/Educharters080314.htm>

³¹ <http://www.texaspolicy.com/pdf/2003-10-22-hanushek.pdf>

Value-added assessment and a comprehensive accountability framework can serve as a model for states and districts to:

- Establish a politically viable and economically feasible system for evaluation, and compensation for individual teachers and administrators. By following individual students over time, value-added assessment accounts for student background characteristics over which schools have no control and that tend to bias test results. This enables educators to identify not only the progress made by students, but also the extent to which individual teachers, schools and districts have contributed to it.
- Bolsters the morale of effective teachers working in low-income schools. Because value-added assessment accounts for socioeconomic and demographic differences, its outcome measures reveal the extent to which educators have succeeded in helping their students move forward, regardless of where they started. When schools are ranked by their value-added scores rather than on the basis of raw test scores which are greatly influenced by family income, teachers can be defined as successful by virtue of having "stretched" their students beyond what could be reasonably expected based on their past academic achievement.
- Strengthen school leadership. Because value-added assessment helps identify outstanding teachers, it makes possible the recruitment of teacher coaches and mentors who can play a vitally important role in improving the quality of classroom instruction.

William Sanders' research in Tennessee indicates that fifth-grade students who had three very effective teachers in a row gained 50 percentile points more on the state's assessment than students who had three ineffective teachers. A similar study in Dallas, using a different test and a different value-added methodology, found identical results.

Additional research conducted by Dr. June Rivers, associate director of EVAAS® distributors of the Sanders' value-added model, indicates that the chances for fourth-graders in the bottom quartile of performance to pass the state's high-stakes exit exam in ninth grade were less than 15 percent if their fifth-, sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grade teachers were drawn from the bottom 25 percent of the teacher pool (as measured by value-added assessment), but a 60 percent chance of passing if they had four teachers drawn from the top 25 percent.³²

It is critical for Georgia's success to measure student achievement as accurately and fairly as possible. Developing the capability to measure student growth should be a high priority.

³² "Value Added Assessment," University of Pennsylvania, http://www.cgp.upenn.edu/ope_value.html

Continue to encourage non-traditional paths to the classroom to aid the recruitment of quality teachers

Georgia is ahead of the game on streamlining the often-cumbersome bureaucracy surrounding teacher licensure. The state recently passed an alternative certification route for teachers, the Teacher Alternative Preparation Program (TAPP). This program allows college graduates who have not taken college-level education classes to teach if they pass the state's certification exams in content and pedagogy and have a degree in the subject they would teach or a subject related to the one they will teach. These prospective teachers are required to take an intensive three-week induction course in the summer, have mentors/master teachers assigned in their schools and take continuing education classes.

Kati Haycock of the Education Trust points out, "A decade ago . . . we believed that what students learned was largely a factor of their family income or parental education, not of what schools did. But recent research has turned these assumptions upside down. What schools do matters enormously. And what matters most is good teaching."

One example of non-traditional paths to the classroom is the Teach for America program. Teach for America recruits and selects high-achieving college graduates, many of whom have no prior experience or coursework in education, and places them in needy schools after short but intensive training.

Teach for America teachers may be new to the profession, but they are generally more effective than their experienced colleagues, finds a new Urban Institute analysis. On average, high school students taught by TFA corps members performed significantly better on state-required end-of-course exams, especially in math and science, than peers taught by far more experienced instructors. The TFA teachers' effect on student achievement in core classroom subjects was nearly three times the effect of teachers with three or more years of experience.

"School systems working to improve their neediest schools may find that focusing on teacher selection has a greater payoff in high schools than focusing on teacher retention," she says. "In our study, we don't know whether it was the strong academic credentials of TFA corps members or some kind of special motivation that came with being a TFA teacher that made the difference, but the results were clear: students performed better when they had an inexperienced TFA teacher than when they had a veteran educator at the blackboard."³³

Implement a comprehensive teacher pay program that attracts and rewards excellence

There is a broadening, bipartisan consensus that the United States needs to rethink teacher compensation. The final report of the Teaching Commission states, "The nation must increase base pay for teachers, but also teachers must be measured – and compensated – on the basis of their classroom performance, including the academic gains made by their students." The report also recommends higher salaries for teachers in the "toughest" classrooms, in shortage areas such as math and science, and who are mentors and master teachers.

Georgia should work toward discontinuing across-the-board training and experience pay increases and begin to shift to a more market-oriented compensation strategy. This will be a challenging transition, but one that Georgia should start studying and planning for today.

Hold teacher colleges accountable by tracking and publishing their graduates' performance

One of the four major reforms recommended by the Teaching Commission involved "revamping teacher education programs." The report suggests "raising standards at schools of education to make them

³³ "Despite Little Experience, Teach for America Educators Outpace Veterans in Drawing Achievement from Students," The Urban Institute, March 27, 2008, <http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=901157>

commensurate with other university departments; launching concerted efforts to encourage students in all programs and departments to enter teaching; and systematically measuring results—including the number of graduates who go into public school classrooms and the success they have in raising student achievement."

According to the report, "Studies show that a teacher's level of literacy is the single most important teacher attribute affecting student achievement—more important than certification status, experience, and the amount of professional development a teacher receives. Yet our schools of education do very little to attract students of high academic caliber or to provide those who do not arrive with a strong academic background with quality literacy instruction. Universities still tend to separate schools of education from arts and sciences departments, where the deepest knowledge base on specific subjects resides."³⁴

Teacher quality is clearly one of the most pressing education challenges facing education today. Georgia should implement these recommendations in order to improve the quality of our teacher education programs.

Implement a funding program that is student-centered, transparent and encourages flexibility

A lawsuit by 50 Georgia school districts is bringing the school funding issue to the forefront. According to an article in Education Week, "The lawsuit claims that small, poor counties are treated unfairly because they do not raise enough money from local taxes to make up for cuts in state education spending. ... But state officials say they are providing what the law requires and that school districts have the leeway to raise local property taxes or cut spending on nonacademic programs if they are in need of money."³⁵

The Quality Basic Education funding formula (QBE) now more than 20 years old. It was created with the intent to provide a quality basic education for all Georgia children regardless of geographic location or socioeconomic conditions. Georgia has changed in 20 years. The challenges facing our schools, the demographics and the focus on student achievement that has come from state standards and accountability law and because of federal legislation require fundamental change. Furthermore, parents, teachers and the public are more focused on student achievement and want to know what and where money is spent.

The Education Finance Task Force was appointed by Governor Sonny Perdue in August 2004 to reevaluate how Georgia invests in education. The stated vision is to replace QBE's complicated structure with a mechanism for investing in our schools to maximize student achievement.

One model Georgia should carefully consider is the weighted student funding (WSF) model. This type of funding model has been implemented in several large school districts, including San Francisco, Cincinnati, Houston, Edmonton (Canada), Seattle and Denver.

This funding model rests on three key principles:

- all state funding follows the child to the public school that he or she attends;
- per-pupil funding amounts are weighted according to students' specific needs and circumstances; and
- resources arrive at the **school** as real dollars (not teaching positions, programs, etc.) that can be spent flexibly with emphasis on results, rather than predetermined and inflexible programs or activities.

This model fundamentally changes the relationship between schools and school systems, as explained in a recent study in Ohio:

³⁴ The Teaching Commission Final Report, 2006, http://www.nctq.org/nctq/images/ttc_teachingatrisk.pdf

³⁵ "Lawsuit Over School Funding in Ga. Heads to Court," Education Week, July 18, 2008

As funds in a WSF system follow each child to school, they do so as spendable, flexible dollars – not as teacher salaries or staff positions. Therefore, an important question arises: Who makes key spending decisions? In a WSF system, the aim is to place this decision-making authority at the building level, so that school leaders can tailor the instructional program in their buildings to the educational needs of their pupils. Because dollars follow students to the school level, principals would gain far greater budgetary autonomy – and with it, the solemn responsibility for making decisions vital to the interests of their pupils as well as increased expectations and accountability for success. For example, school leaders would determine their staffing needs and make hiring decisions, as well as decide academic program offerings, scheduling and the use of school time, and such issues as whether to “buy” professional development from the district or from other “vendors.” Placing greater authority in the hands of school leaders makes good sense on a host of grounds unrelated to school finance systems. Pressing authority downward to the actual performance unit is a key tenet of modern management across practically all enterprises.

Currently, most central offices act as decision-making hubs for instructional and budgeting issues and as central management for a complex bureaucratic system. As state and districts devolve funds to the building level, however, central office staffers will find themselves thrust into more of a supporting role. District-level curriculum staff will still work with principals and teachers to improve student learning. Central office accountants and bookkeepers will still review expenditures. And, of course, superintendents will still be asked to provide a vision for the future and engage in the even more critical task of selecting principals and holding them to account for their performance. Yet all of these parties will come to support and empower smart and effective building-level decision-making that serves the needs of students.

Put another way, in a WSF system the primary responsibility of the central office changes from being product-and-control-oriented to being service-oriented. Rather than prescribing specific academic programs, for example, central office administrators will focus on establishing transparent methods of accounting, evaluating students and staff, and developing other “systems that support school sites’ expanded authority.” Central office personnel will provide reports to the schools on budgets and student achievement. They will train principals in their dual role as financial and instructional leaders. Some central office services, like teacher professional development, would become options for schools to “purchase” if the district makes a more compelling case than alternative vendors. It is possible, therefore, that certain central services would “go out of business” – or transform themselves into high-performing, highly sought-after service providers for their schools.”³⁶

The “weighted” funding would be designed “to ensure that all children carry with them an amount of education funding that is proportional to their education needs. The amount attached to each student is calculated by taking a base sum and adding funds determined by ‘weights’ assigned to various categories of student need, so the weights take the form of a percent of the per-pupil base payment. For instance, if the per-pupil base were \$5,000, a child with a specific kind of disability might have \$1,000 dollars added, an amount equal to 20 percent of the base. Overall, this student would be weighted at 1.2 – the sum of 1 as a base amount plus 0.2 for the special need characteristic. A student living in poverty might generate an additional \$1,250 and therefore be weighted at 1.25. A student with more than one need characteristic

³⁶ "Fund the Child: Bringing Equity, Autonomy, and Portability to Ohio School Finance," Public Impact, University of Dayton School of Education and Allied Professions and the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, March 2008, http://www.edexcellence.net/doc/fund_the_child_ohio_031208.pdf

would generate the combination of supplements. As a result, schools that enroll the students with the greatest educational needs would generate the most funding.”³⁷

Although it is impossible to determine the “correct” amount to spend on education, the state’s portion of funding should not subsidize inefficiency and should be based upon best practices from diverse schools that have produced consistently high student achievement.

Continue to shift authority and responsibility to the local school level

The New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce study recommends funding schools directly according to a pupil-weighting formula and "giving schools complete discretion over the way their funds are spent, the staffing schedule, their organization and management, their schedule, and their program, as long as they provided the curriculum and met the testing and other accountability requirements imposed by the state. Districts could provide support services to the schools, but the schools would be free to obtain the services they needed wherever they wished."

This is very similar to how charter schools operate in Georgia. It is also supported by the creation of local school councils by Governor Roy Barnes. Unfortunately, the school councils have been very limited in their participation in school-level decision-making as opposed to the role of a charter school's governing board.

Georgia schools must make many changes in the coming decade to respond to the increasing importance of K-12 education to our economic competitiveness. Schools will need the flexibility to innovate and make quick decisions that a decentralized organizational model provides.

Continue to provide facility funding options for charter schools and career academies

Improving Georgia's low graduation rate should be one of the state's top priorities. Research shows that continued focus on technical education is part of the answer. Specifically, high school students participating in dual enrollment programs with technical colleges have shown a dramatic increase in graduation rates.

New research also shows significantly higher employment and earnings for students participating in career academies than similar students.³⁸ "Poverty experts called the findings encouraging because few interventions with low-income teenagers, especially blacks and Hispanics, have shown significant and lasting effects, and they come at a time when young minority men, especially, are losing ground disastrously in the job market. Eight years after high school, when most participants were about 26, the academy group had average earnings 11 percent — or \$2,088 a year — higher than the control group."

One of the primary challenges for career academies, and charter schools in general, is the lack of facility funding. For the last two years, the General Assembly has appropriated more than \$15 million for career academy facilities, but the demand for these funds greatly outstrips the supply. One partial solution would be to include capital funding in a charter school's regular funding. This way, a school system would not have the financial risk of building a facility for a charter school and the charter school would have the flexibility of building a new facility and using the facility funding to help pay the mortgage or leasing facilities and using the facility funding to help pay the monthly lease. This also addresses the issue of growth, as every school would be able to plan knowing that additional students would also bring them additional facility funding.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ "Career Programs Stress College, Too, and Give Students a Leg Up, Study Says," New York Times, June 25, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/26/education/26careers.html>)

Encourage competitive sourcing of school services and shared services as an alternative to consolidation

Although education is the core mission of every public school, operating a school is like operating a multi-million dollar business, which takes time, effort and resources. Georgia schools could free up valuable resources with an aggressive focus on consolidating and sharing services with other schools and/or systems, as well as exposing these services to competition.

Competitive sourcing is the competitive process for determining the most efficient and effective source – private or public – for performing specific governmental functions or services. Competitive sourcing is not the same as privatization. Instead, a school or school system defines a service or a function and takes bids from private and public providers. The lowest bid wins. Whether the service stays in-house with government employees or is contracted out to a private provider, taxpayers are the victors. The competitive process ensures that the service is provided at the lowest price. As such, it provides a powerful tool for officials to cut costs while providing essential services. Savings of 5 – 50 percent due to competitive sourcing have been reported, with savings in the amount of 20 – 30 percent being common.

Former Indianapolis Mayor Stephen Goldsmith used what he called the Yellow Pages test. In looking for ways to increase competition, the mayor's rule of thumb was to "look in the city's yellow pages. If the phone book lists three companies that provide a certain service, the city probably should not be in that business, at least not exclusively." Schools could easily perform the same analysis.

According to a nationwide survey, only one Georgia school system contracts out its food services, among the lowest in the nation. If this is any indication of the level of competitive sourcing in our school systems today, we should have a great opportunity to realize significant savings.

Another advantage of bringing in outside vendors is the ability to focus on your core function. In a paper for The Case Program at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, author Kirsten Lundberg described Former U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige's approach while superintendent of the Houston Independent School District: "One of Paige's stratagems for making schools deliver a better educational product was to concentrate on what should be educators' chief expertise – teaching. To do so, he aimed to free the school system from jobs for which it was not especially qualified, such as maintaining buildings, running a bus service and feeding children. Privatization, or outsourcing, such services to private sector contractors would not only save HISD money – in itself a worthwhile goal – but allow HISD administrators and principals to concentrate on educational issues."³⁹

Deloitte and the Reason Foundation make a compelling argument for shared services in a recent study:

In most states at least 40 percent of every dollar spent on education never makes it into the classroom. Instead it is expended on business operations: transportation, human resources, food services, information technology, building maintenance, administration and other largely support functions. The often high costs of providing these services, and the inefficient way in which they are often provided, has caused more and more state political leaders to call for school district consolidation. The goal – to take advantage of economies of scale and reduce these costs – makes a lot of sense. Consolidation, though, can also have some serious downsides: it is politically unpopular, reduces local control, can negatively impact educational outcomes, and eventually can lead to even higher costs due to the dead-weight of bureaucracy. In short, consolidation may not be the most effective strategy to help districts direct more money into the classroom.

³⁹ "A School Privatization Primer," <http://www.mackinac.org/article.aspx?ID=8691>, Mackinac Center for Public Policy

From an education quality perspective, a strong case certainly can be made for smaller schools, which have been associated with higher SAT, ACT and National Assessment of Educational Progress scores. There is a major problem, however, with small school districts. According to a substantial body of research, they tend to have comparatively high non-instructional costs.

Fortunately, there's another option, one that makes it possible to educate students like a small district and still have the economies of scale and buying power of a large district. How? By implementing shared services. Small districts can band together to share everything from transportation services to building gymnasiums, creating the purchasing power and economies of scale of medium-sized districts. Large districts can organize their individual schools into smaller clusters and still benefit by sharing services internally. Charter schools can purchase administrative services from school districts or other charter schools. Districts of all sizes can participate in agreements that improve the quality of their staff and internal capacities.

Sharing services is a technique that both the private and public sectors have employed for decades and has been growing rapidly in popularity in recent years due to its proven ability to reduce costs. Since the late '90s, companies such as Ford, General Electric, Hewlett Packard, Pfizer and British Petroleum have all realized significant cost savings from shared services.

Shared services have also become commonplace in government. The U.S. Postal Service saves \$25 million a year by using shared services for accounting. Work that had been performed by 1,100 employees at 85 unique district offices has been consolidated and standardized, and is now being performed by only 350 employees at three Accounting Service Centers (ASCs). In New Jersey and Michigan, many municipal governments have engaged in shared services agreements for everything from purchasing to benefits administration. School districts have also made use of productive shared service arrangements. For example, two school boards in Ontario, Canada, joined together to share bus transportation services and audio-visual resources.

By creating a single bus system, the two boards will save \$8 million in administrative, capital, and fuel costs over three years. The boards' shared AV library serves classrooms in both districts, saving \$300,000 annually. Similarly, in the greater Lawrence area of Massachusetts, 10 school districts banded together to provide special education services. This sharing will save them approximately \$13 million over the next two decades.

Yet across the country, school districts have barely scratched the surface in terms of tapping into the cost savings potential and other benefits from shared service arrangements. Shifting just a quarter of tax dollars spent by school districts throughout America on non-instructional operations to shared services, for example, could potentially yield savings in the range of \$9 billion. To put this number in perspective, it is equivalent to 900 new schools or more than 150,000 additional school teachers.

States that desire to promote the greater use of shared services in local school districts have several levers they can pull, including budget pressure, financial incentives and technical assistance. The states of New York and New Jersey, for example, both provide financial incentives for school districts to engage in shared services. One New Jersey incentive program, the Regional Efficiency Aid Program, provides tax credits directly to homeowners as a way to publicly reward school districts and municipalities for sharing services.

Sharing services creates the economies of scale and consistency of process and results that come with more centralized models. It also allows districts to maintain the benefits of decentralized control, allowing individual administrators to retain oversight of curriculum, education, and other aspects of non-shared processes. By sharing processes that aren't mission-critical while still retaining local control of the most important aspects of education, shared services can bring the best of big and small.⁴⁰

Continue to expand public and private school choice options so that every child has an opportunity for a quality education

Although Georgia should continue to do everything it can to improve public schools, there will always be situations where a public school is not the best option in a specific community. If the goal of education policy is to ensure that every Georgian has access to a quality education, then we should not care if the school is public or private. Concern that enhancing school choice will harm public education is greatly exaggerated. In fact, studies have shown that increasing choice improves public education. Even if every child in Georgia could attend the school of their choice at no personal cost, the great majority would likely attend public schools. Sweden is a good example. In the early '90s, Sweden passed school voucher legislation that gave every child the opportunity to attend a private school. The voucher represents 85 percent of the cost of local public schools and private schools may not charge additional tuition.⁴¹ Before vouchers there were virtually no private schools in Sweden. Now there are almost 800. They educate around 6 percent of all pupils.⁴²

On one hand, critics argue that vouchers will destroy public schools (with the assumption that students will leave public schools in large numbers, we assume), and on the other hand they argue that vouchers are a false choice because there is not enough space available in existing private schools and there are no private schools in many communities. What the Sweden experiment shows is that the private sector will respond by creating more capacity and new schools, but it also shows that a great majority of the public will still likely choose public schools. We believe the same would occur in Georgia. Affordable, quality private schools would appear in many communities to meet the new demand, particularly in areas where the quality of the local public school was poor. Just as in Sweden, however, we believe the great majority of students would remain in the public schools even if Georgia had a universal voucher program. In the end, research shows that competition will improve the public schools and the private schools provide needed options for all children. Now is the perfect time to enhance school choice in Georgia because the reforms enacted in the last few years have given public schools the flexibility to respond quickly to competition.

Atlanta resident Gerard Robinson, president of the Black Alliance for Educational Options, addresses several of the common arguments against school choice:

Fallacy: Vouchers will destroy public education. No such doomsday prophecies have materialized in the 20 years that we have had this type of school choice in America. Instead, in the three city-based voucher programs in the nation – Milwaukee, Cleveland and Washington, D.C. – the introduction of parental choice has invigorated a healthy dialogue among community stakeholders about the importance of a quality education. This is not just rhetoric from the right. Public school leaders believe so as well. For example, two former Milwaukee public school superintendents, Howard Fuller and Spence Korte, and current superintendent Bill Andrekopoulos, all agree that the

⁴⁰ "Driving More Money into the Classroom: The Promise of Shared Services," Reason Foundation / Deloitte, 2005, <http://www.reason.org/ps339.pdf>

⁴¹ "Sweden's School Voucher Program: Choice and competition improve all schools, public and private," Frontier Centre for Public Policy, May 2005, <http://www.fcpc.org/images/publications/FB034Swedish%20school%20vouchers.pdf>

⁴² "Swedish parents enjoy school choice," BBC News, October 2004, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/education/3717744.stm

introduction of vouchers into Milwaukee has produced positive effects on Wisconsin's largest school district.

Fallacy: Parents, particularly poor parents, are incapable of making good decisions in an educational marketplace. This claim is unconvincing on two fronts. First, the same poor parent who is smart enough to use a Section 8 voucher to find a suitable place to live or is smart enough to use a food stamp voucher in a grocery store will not suddenly become stupid when it comes to shopping for his child's education. Yes, choosing between schools is different from choosing between apples, but parents know a rotten school and a rotten apple when they see it. Parents whom I've met in Milwaukee and Washington, D.C. – two cities with scholarship programs – are savvier than voucher opponents give them credit for. In fact, the role of parents in the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program that kicked off here last year represents one example of active parent participation in the education marketplace.

Fallacy: There is little parental demand for scholarships or vouchers, and there is no evidence that they improve student achievement. In 2007, at least 55,550 students participated in publicly funded voucher programs in Arizona; Washington, D.C.; Florida; Georgia; Ohio; Utah and Wisconsin.

Here in Georgia, more than 5,000 parents inquired about the new voucher program for special-needs children last year; 908 children earned scholarships for this first year. In 1999, a privately funded Children's Scholarship Fund here in Georgia offered a total of 750 scholarships to parents of children in Atlanta and Savannah public schools. More than 18,000 parents applied. That illustrates incredible local demand – and that was almost a decade ago.

Low-income Georgians currently have few options if they are stuck in a dysfunctional school. Unable to afford the housing prices of neighborhoods zoned for better public schools and unable to afford the cost of tuition in a private school, these parents and children are limited to waiting for change – change that may come long after their child has moved through the school. These children, particularly low-income students in failing schools, deserve the opportunity to attend the best school possible. A scholarship that would pay the cost of attending a private school or another public school would make this opportunity a reality.

Many middle-income students are also stuck in either failing schools or schools that may be successful, but do not meet their individual needs. For these students who may not need as much financial assistance, Georgia's existing Tuition Tax Credit law provides the mechanism for partial scholarships to private schools. Unfortunately, the scholarships are capped at \$50 million, or less than 1 percent of the total funds spent on education in Georgia.

In addition, expanding school choice should save money. A recent study on tax credit scholarships in Georgia⁴³ found:

- When students leave Georgia public schools, their local school districts experience reductions in expenses that are greater on average than the reduction in their state aid. In addition, school district revenues from local sources do not decline when enrollments decline. Because expenses decline more than revenues when students leave public schools, private school scholarships produce a net gain of resources available to students who remain in public schools. The gain is equal to about \$6,600 per public school student using scholarships.
- A scholarship program for current public school students that provided \$50 million in scholarship funding; established income eligibility at 200 percent of the free and reduced-price lunch level;

⁴³ "The Fiscal Impact of Tax-Credit Scholarships in Georgia," (February, 2008), <http://gppf.org/pub/Education/Choice/taxcreditscholarships.pdf>

and awarded scholarships of \$3,500 each would produce a total fiscal benefit of \$94 million for local school districts and savings of almost \$6 million for the state.

- A tax-credit scholarship program is a more efficient way to direct dollars to education than increasing state aid. Georgia data show that every dollar of increased state aid to schools only produces an additional 53 cents of additional school spending, because local governments respond to the state spending increase by reducing local spending on education. By contrast, every dollar spent on a tax-credit scholarship program is a full dollar that goes to education.

Georgia should continue to expand school choice options until every child in Georgia has the opportunity for a quality education.

Further reading:

- "Teacher Merit Pay in Ohio," Buckeye Institute for Public Policy Solutions, August 4, 2008 <http://www.buckeyeinstitute.org/article/1158>. This paper outlines the issues surrounding merit pay, summarizes the available research, and provides a prototype merit pay plan.
- "A Nation Still at Risk: The Case for Federalism and School Choice," (April, 2008), <http://www.heritage.org/Research/education/bg2125.cfm>
- "The Effect of Special Education Vouchers on Public School Achievement: Evidence From Florida's McKay Scholarship Program," (April, 2008), http://www.manhattan-institute.org/html/cr_52.htm
- "The Fiscal Impact of Tax-Credit Scholarships in Georgia," (February, 2008), <http://gppf.org/pub/Education/Choice/taxcreditscholarships.pdf>
- "Fifty Educational Markets: A Playbook of State Laws and Regulations Governing Private Schools," The Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, April 2008, <http://www.friedmanfoundation.org/friedman/research/ShowResearchItem.do?id=10095>

Questions and Answers on School Choice⁴⁴

Does school choice help students do better in school?

Yes. Seven studies using random assignment, the gold standard for social science, have found statistically significant gains in academic achievement from vouchers, and no study has ever found negative effects. Random-assignment methods allow researchers to isolate the effects of vouchers from other student characteristics. Students who applied for vouchers were entered into random lotteries to determine who would receive the voucher and who would remain in public schools; this allowed researchers to track very similar treatment and "control" groups, just like in medical trials. Other research establishes positive academic effects from vouchers as well.

Milwaukee

Milwaukee has been studied twice with top quality random-assignment methods:

- A 1998 Harvard study found that after four years of participation, voucher students gained 11 points in math and six points in reading compared to the control group.
- Another 1998 study by Cecilia Rouse of Princeton found that voucher students improved more than the control group by eight points in math over four years.

In a 2004 study, Jay Greene of the Manhattan Institute found that vouchers improve graduation rates:

- In the graduating class of 2003, private schools participating in the voucher program had a graduation rate of 64 percent, while Milwaukee's public high schools had a graduation rate of 36 percent.

⁴⁴ The Friedman Foundation.

- Even at academically selective Milwaukee public schools, the graduation rate was only 41 percent, still well below the rate for schools participating in the voucher program.

Florida

A 2003 Manhattan Institute study by Jay Greene and Greg Forster found that:

- 93 percent of McKay participants are satisfied with their McKay schools, while only 33 percent were similarly satisfied with their public schools.
- Only 30 percent of current participants say they received all services required under federal law from their previous public schools, while 86 percent say their McKay schools provide all the services they promised to provide.
- 47 percent of participants were bothered often and 25 percent were physically assaulted at their previous public schools because of their disabilities, compared to 5 percent bothered often and 6 percent assaulted in McKay schools.
- More than 90 percent of former McKay participants who have left the program said the McKay program should continue to be available for those who wish to use it.

New York

A privately funded voucher program in New York has been studied twice with top quality random-assignment methods:

- A 2002 Harvard study found that, after three years, African-American voucher students improved 9.2 percentile points more than the control group in combined reading and math scores.
- A 2003 study by four researchers from Harvard, Columbia and Johns Hopkins universities found that after only one year in the program voucher students improved 4.7 percentile points more than the control group in math.

Dayton

A 2002 Harvard study using random-assignment methods found that, after three years, African-American voucher students receiving a privately funded voucher improved 6.5 percentile points more than the control group in combined reading and math scores.

Charlotte

A 2001 study by Jay Greene of the Manhattan Institute using random-assignment methods found that, after only one year, students receiving a privately funded voucher improved six percentile points more than the control group in combined reading and math scores.

Conclusion: A large number of high-quality studies show that vouchers improve academic achievement. No empirical study has ever found that vouchers hurt academic achievement.

Doesn't school choice drain resources from public schools?

No state or city with school choice has seen its public school budgets go down. When Milwaukee's school choice program was founded in 1990-91, its public schools spent \$6,316 per student; by 2003-04 that had risen to \$10,375. Cleveland's public school spending rose from \$6,616 in 1996-97, when its choice program began, to \$10,420 in 2003-04. And these figures include only the portion of school budgets known as "current expenditures"; figures for total education spending would be even higher.

Why have cities with school choice seen such large increases in per-student spending? Believe it or not, school choice is one of the reasons. The claim that choice drains money may sound plausible; schools are funded on a per-student basis, so fewer students means less money. But a growing body of research

finds exactly the opposite: School choice programs actually improve public school financing. School choice gives the public school system more money to educate each student.

The amount of money spent on the voucher or scholarship for each participant in a school choice program is less than what would have been spent on that student if he or she had remained in public schools. That means states save money that can be plowed back into their education budgets and spent on the students who remain in public schools:

- While the average public school spends about \$10,000 per student, the average private school charges about \$5,000 in tuition. That's the fundamental reason school choice saves money – private schools do a better job at about half the cost.
- A 2006 joint Friedman Foundation/Cato Institute study finds that Washington, D.C.'s voucher program saves the city over \$250,000 due to the greater efficiency of school choice.
- A 2005 joint Friedman Foundation/Goldwater Institute study finds that Arizona spends between \$8,500 and \$9,000 on each student in public schools, but students using tax-funded scholarships receive only \$3,500 to \$4,500. The authors project total savings of \$32 million if 5 percent of Arizona students used scholarships.
- A 2005 Friedman Foundation study of a proposed voucher program in Minneapolis finds that the city's public schools spend \$13,600 per student. Since the voucher program would cost only \$4,600 per student, the potential savings would be quite large – more than \$16 million annually.
- A 2005 joint Friedman Foundation/Maryland Public Policy Institute study of a proposed voucher program in Baltimore finds that even a hefty \$7,000 voucher still would save public schools money, since the city spends \$8,900 on each public school student. Annual savings would total \$9 million for every 1,000 enrollees.

Facing numbers like this, the teacher unions usually retort that they don't account for fixed costs. If a student leaves a public school, that school still has to spend some of the money it did before to cover costs that don't vary much with enrollment levels, such as building maintenance. But studies show that schools' fixed costs aren't big enough to offset the huge savings from school choice:

- A 2005 Clemson University study finds that, even after accounting for fixed costs, a proposed voucher program for South Carolina (offering \$4,000 to \$4,600, compared to public spending of \$8,300) would save \$594 million over its first five years.
- A 2004 Utah State University study finds that a proposed school choice program in Utah would save between \$26 million and \$144 million every year, even after schools' fixed costs were taken into account.
- A 2005 Friedman Foundation study finds that tax-funded scholarships in New Mexico would save \$63 million over 10 years.
- A 2004 joint Friedman Foundation/Josiah Bartlett Center study finds that a proposed voucher program in New Hampshire would save \$9 million annually.

Conclusion: School choice programs do not drain money from public schools. Actually, they leave more money behind to educate fewer students. No state or city with school choice has seen its public school budgets go down.

Does school choice make public schools better?

A large body of evidence says yes. If all schools compete for students, public schools will not be able to take students for granted, as they do now; they will have to improve to prevent students from walking out the door. In practice, it is becoming clear that this is exactly what is happening. Not one empirical study

has ever found that outcomes at U.S. public schools got worse when exposed to school choice, and numerous studies have found that they improve.

Florida

A five-year study of Florida schools by the National Bureau of Economic Research found that "schools facing accountability pressure changed their instructional practices in meaningful ways" and that these changes had a positive effect on affected student test scores.⁴⁵

A 2004 study by Jay Greene and Marcus Winters of the Manhattan Institute, published in the journal *Education Next*, found that:

- Low-performing schools facing the threat of vouchers made significantly greater test-score gains than similarly low-performing schools not facing the voucher threat.
- The closer a school was to having vouchers offered to its students, the more dramatic the gains.
- Schools already facing competition from vouchers showed the biggest improvements, outpacing other Florida schools by a full 15 points.

A study by Rajashri Chakrabarti of Cornell, published in the same issue of that journal, found that schools given F grades under the A+ system made greater-than average gains, while schools given F grades under Florida's earlier system (which had no vouchers or other accountability sanctions) made no gains relative to other Florida schools.

Milwaukee

In a 2001 study, Caroline Hoxby of Harvard found that public schools more exposed to voucher competition had test-score gains over a three-year period that outpaced other public schools by 10.2 percentile points in math, 9.3 points in language, 16.2 points in science and 8.1 points in social studies. A 2003 Manhattan Institute study found that fourth-grade test-score gains were much bigger in schools in which more students were eligible for vouchers, such that a school with 100 percent of students eligible would have test-score gains 15 points higher than a school with only 50 percent eligible.

San Antonio

A 2003 Manhattan Institute study by Jay Greene and Greg Forster found that a San Antonio school district facing competition from a privately funded voucher program outperformed 85 percent of Texas districts in its achievement gains.

Maine and Vermont

A 2002 Friedman Foundation study by Christopher Hammons found that tuitioning introduces healthy competitive incentives that improve public schools:

- Public high schools closer to tuitioning towns had better test scores than other public high schools, controlling for school spending and student demographics.
- The effect is large enough that if a town a mile away from a school decided to tuition its students, we would expect the percentage of students passing the state test at that school to increase by 3.4 points – a gain of 12 percent over existing scores.
- If a state wanted to purchase the same test score gains by increasing per-pupil spending, it would have to spend an extra \$909 per student.

Residential Choice

⁴⁵ "Feeling the Florida Heat? How Low-Performing Schools Respond to Voucher and Accountability Pressure," NBER Working Paper No. 13681, December 2007, <http://www.nber.org/papers/w13681>

A large body of studies on residential choice confirms the positive effects from school competition. Public schools perform better in cities with a large number of small school districts, where it is easier for people to choose the district in which they will live. A 2002 review of all the available research by two professors at Columbia's Teachers College found that the evidence strongly supports a positive effect from school competition caused by residential choice; this has been further confirmed by recent studies conducted by Harvard's Caroline Hoxby and the Manhattan Institute's Jay Greene and Marcus Winters.

Conclusion: A large body of studies shows that competition from school choice improves public schools. No empirical study has ever found that school choice hurts public-school outcomes.

Does the public really want school choice?

Numerous polls find that most Americans express support for school choice:

- 62 percent agreed, two years in a row, that "parents should have the option of sending their children to non-public schools, including those with a religious affiliation, using vouchers or credits provided by the federal government that would pay for some or all of the costs" (First Amendment Center 2003 & 2004).
- 56 percent said they would select a private school if offered a full-tuition voucher; 48 percent said they would do so even if only offered a half-tuition voucher (PDK/Gallup 2004).
- 61 percent supported, and 27 percent opposed, school vouchers allowing parents to move their children from under-performing schools to more successful schools (Sacred Heart University 2005).
- 63 percent supported "allowing poor parents to be given the tax dollars allotted for their child's education and permitting them to use those dollars in the form of a scholarship to attend a private, public or parochial school of their choosing" (Zogby 2002).
- 53 percent agreed, and 42 percent disagreed, that "the federal government should set aside public funds for students enrolled in public schools that are considered to be failing; the money will then be used to pay for the students to attend their choice of public, private, or parochial school" (Zogby 2002).
- 51 percent favored, and 40 percent disfavored, the idea of school vouchers to help send children to private or parochial schools (Associated Press 2002).
- 69 percent supported vouchers even if public schools got less money: "What if that meant the public schools in your community would receive less money, then would you agree or disagree that parents should get tax-funded vouchers they can use to help pay for tuition for their children to attend private or religious schools instead of public schools?" (CBS/New York Times 2001).
- 54 percent said yes, and 38 percent said no, when asked: "Would vouchers improve the public school system?" (CNN/USA Today/Gallup 2001).
- Five polls using various question wording all found support for vouchers in 2000:
 - 64 percent agreed, and 34 percent disagreed, that "parents should have the option of sending their children to religious schools instead of public schools using 'vouchers' or 'credits' provided by the government that would pay for some or all costs" (University of Connecticut).
 - 56 percent preferred the position that "government should give parents more educational choices by providing taxpayer-funded vouchers to help pay for private or religious schools," compared to 38 percent who preferred the position that "government funding should be limited to public schools" (NBC/Wall Street Journal).

- 53 percent favored, and 44 percent opposed, "federal funding for vouchers to help low- and middle-income parents send their children to private and parochial schools" (Pew/Princeton Associates).
- 50 percent favored, and 45 percent opposed, "establishing a school voucher program that would allow parents to use tax funds to send their children to a private school" (University of Maryland).
- 49 percent favored, and 47 percent opposed, "providing parents with tax money in the form of school vouchers to help pay for their children to attend private or religious schools" (Washington Post/Kaiser/Harvard University).

Unfortunately, not all polls are created equal. Some use slanted questions that produce biased findings. The most frequently cited education poll, the annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll, contains a voucher question that has been proven to be extremely sensitive to small changes in wording. In 2004 and 2005, the Friedman Foundation commissioned a poll that asked 500 people the PDK/Gallup question, and 500 people the same question with two small changes. The results shifted dramatically both times – by 22 and 23 points, respectively.

The methodological problems of the PDK/Gallup voucher question were originally documented by Terry Moe of Stanford University in the Spring 2002 and Fall 2002 issues of the academic journal *Education Next*.

Many other polls are equally questionable. In Florida, one poll produced the appearance of 61 percent opposition to vouchers by misleadingly defining "vouchers" as "giving state funds to private schools" (St. Petersburg Times 2006). Another poll taken in the same month, which didn't define what vouchers are but simply asked whether people supported the governor's proposed voucher legislation, found 48 percent supported it and 41 percent opposed it (Tampa Tribune 2006).

In Utah, one poll found 54 percent opposed to vouchers "for parents who send their children to private schools," a description that would lead many respondents to think that vouchers would only go to parents who currently send their children to private schools (Desert Morning News 2005). Another poll taken only three months later, by the same polling company, said that "some have proposed that the government provide a certain amount of money for each child's education. The parents can then send the child to any public, parochial, or private school they choose. This is called the 'voucher system';" this poll found 56 percent favored vouchers and 24 percent opposed them (Brigham Young University 2006).

School choice also has diverse popular support. Polls show that Hispanic Americans want school choice:

- 57 percent of Hispanic Americans supported "allowing low-income parents to use taxpayer-funded vouchers to place their kids in private or church-run schools" (Latino Coalition 2003).
- 52 percent of Hispanic Americans agreed, and 39 percent disagreed, that "parents should get tax-funded vouchers they can use to help pay for tuition for their children to attend private or religious schools instead of public schools (CBS/New York Times 2003).
- 64 percent of Hispanic Americans supported "allowing poor parents to be given the tax dollars allotted for their child's education and permitting them to use those dollars in the form of a scholarship to attend a private, public or parochial school of their choosing" (Zogby 2002).

Polls also show that African Americans want school choice:

- 77 percent of African Americans supported school vouchers allowing parents to move their children from under-performing schools to more successful schools (Sacred Heart University 2005).

- 72 percent of African Americans supported "allowing poor parents to be given the tax dollars allotted for their child's education and permitting them to use those dollars in the form of a scholarship to attend a private, public or parochial school of their choosing" (Zogby 2002).

- 57 percent of African Americans supported, and 43 percent opposed, "a voucher system where parents would get money from the government to send their children to the public, private, or parochial school of their choice" (Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies 2002).

Conclusion: School choice has strong support across political and demographic groups, because it brings together all people who want to empower parents and students rather than a government school bureaucracy.

Is school choice constitutional?

This question was answered resoundingly in 2002, when the U.S. Supreme Court handed down its decision upholding the constitutionality of Cleveland's voucher program. By a 5-4 vote, the justices made it very clear that when an individual uses public funds to make a private choice – in this case when a parent uses a voucher to send his or her child to a private school, including religious schools – it does not violate the First Amendment. As Chief Justice William Rehnquist explained in the majority opinion, voucher programs such as Cleveland's are "neutral in respect to religion (because they) provide assistance directly to a broad class of citizens, who, in turn, direct government aid to religious schools wholly as a result of their own genuine and independent private choice."

This landmark decision is in line with a long series of high-court decisions. For example, in 1983 the court upheld Minnesota's income tax deduction for educational expenses, including private-school tuition. In 1993, the court unanimously upheld the use of public funds by a blind student pursuing a divinity degree at a religious college. Moreover, the court did not strike down the G.I. Bill or Pell grants, both of which are voucher programs allowing college students to attend the public or private school of their choice, including religious colleges.

While recent U.S. Supreme Court rulings favor vouchers, some state constitutions also have language prohibiting the use of taxpayer dollars to support religious schools. However, as the Institute for Justice argues, "many court decisions interpret state constitutions to parallel the First Amendment. If so, the recent First Amendment cases discussed above should control state constitutional interpretation. If the state constitutional provision is more restrictive, advocates may have to challenge such restrictions under the federal constitution."

In the end, whether or not voucher or school choice legislation is constitutional depends on how well the bill is designed. If parents make a truly private choice of which school their child attends, if there is no financial incentive to attend a religious school over a non-religious school and if the program does not allow undue government interference with religious schools, chances are the bill will be looked on favorably by the court.

Conclusion: Rulings by the U.S. Supreme Court strongly favor school choice. Because parents make a truly independent choice of where to send their children to school, there is no violation of the U.S. Constitution if they freely choose religious schools.

Does school choice really lead to more integrated schools?

Private school classrooms are more racially integrated than public school classrooms, and school-choice programs put children into more integrated schools. Our nation's public schools are heavily segregated. According to a Harvard University study, "more than 70 percent of the nation's black students now attend predominately minority (public) schools." Public schools are so segregated primarily because of residential segregation. Attendance at public schools is determined by where people live, which guarantees that segregation in housing patterns will always be reproduced in public schools.

Desegregation efforts have largely failed because they are geographically limited; white families who move to the suburbs can't legally be forced to bus their children across municipal lines.

Private schools, by contrast, can draw students from anywhere. In fact, because they offer a superior education and other attractions that parents want for their children but can't get at public schools, private schools typically draw from a much larger geographic area than public schools. That means private schools can mitigate the effects of residential segregation in a way public schools can't match. What's more, the superior desirability of private schools gives parents a reason to overcome any qualms they may have about desegregation. Because private schools are better, parents are more likely to trust them to handle the challenges of a multiracial classroom environment. For these and other reasons, private schools succeed at integrating where public schools fail.

Many studies that purport to measure segregation in schools use inadequate methods, such as failing to adopt an objective standard of what counts as "segregation." There have been only seven studies comparing segregation in voucher-participating private schools to segregation in public schools using valid empirical methods. All seven find that students using vouchers are attending private schools that are less segregated than the public schools they would otherwise attend:

- A 2006 Friedman Foundation study found that private schools participating in the Milwaukee voucher program are 13 points less segregated than Milwaukee public schools on a "segregation index" that compares the racial composition of each school to the composition of the greater metro area.
- A 2002 Marquette University study found that Milwaukee public school students were more likely to attend racially homogeneous schools than voucher students, both in elementary schools (58 v. 50 percent) and secondary schools (44 v. 29 percent).
- This result confirmed Marquette University studies in 1999 and 2000 that produced similar findings.
- A 2006 Friedman Foundation study found that private schools participating in Cleveland's voucher program are 18 points less segregated than Cleveland public schools on the segregation index.
- A 1999 University of Texas-Austin study found that among Cleveland elementary and middle school students, public school students were less likely than voucher students to attend schools whose racial composition was similar to that of the metro area (5 percent v. 19 percent) and more likely to attend racially homogeneous schools (61 percent v. 50 percent).
- A 2005 Manhattan Institute study found that Washington D.C. public schools differ from the racial composition of the metro area by a greater amount than private schools participating in the city's voucher program (40 v. 34 percentage points) and that public school students are more likely to attend racially homogenous schools than voucher students (85 v. 47 percent).

Conclusion: Contrary to the claims of opponents, school choice leads to more integrated schools. Research shows that children using school choice attend more racially integrated schools than their public school counterparts.