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The Financial, Legal, and Political Context of Private Education

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THE FINANCIAL, LEGAL, AND POLITICAL CONTEXT OF PRIVATE EDUCATION

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Five principles underlie the changing policy architecture of American K-12 education. The author discusses these principles; how they are blurring the traditional demarcation of public and private schools; and the implications of this discussion for a private education research agenda.

The policy architecture of American elementary and secondary education is undergoing immense changes, and the public education policy establishment is fiercely resistant to those changes. While most in the private education community support many of those developments, few fully comprehend the emerging policy architecture of American K-12 education and its implications for what we call private or nongovernment education. This article discusses the main features of these developing policy changes by setting forth five principles that are guiding the transformation of American education:

- Shift power from producers to consumers.
- Focus on results.
- Demand accountability.
- Offer families choices of different schools.
- Foster professionalism.

A perspective on schools emerges from these principles, one that blurs the line that many believe separates public and private, government and nongovernment schools. This new perspective should form the context for developing a coherent research vision for the private education community.

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REINVENTING AMERICAN EDUCATION

American education is being reinvented. The basic ground rules and assumptions that have long governed its structures and power relationships are being replaced by something new and different. Under this new approach, public authorities have responsibility for setting academic, fiscal, and other performance standards and holding the providers of education accountable for meeting them. A marked difference here is that government bureaucracies—i.e., public authorities—do not necessarily deliver the service, run the institutions, employ the people, or regulate the process. A wide array of providers deliver the service, including parent and community groups, private firms, teacher cooperatives, and nonprofit and religious organizations.

This approach applies to education the fundamental insight of those who preach the gospel of "reinventing government"—i.e., the need to distinguish between policy management and service delivery. Osborne and Gaebler describe the organizations that operate in this fashion as "steering organizations...[that] set policy, deliver funds to operational bodies (public and private), and evaluate performance—but they seldom play an operational role themselves" (1993, p. 40).

This new model is not an unbridled, laissez faire, free market mode. While market forces are necessary, they are not sufficient to provide suitable quality control. Neither is this model an example of privatization, which means selling or transferring public assets to private owners who are accountable to their shareholders but not to any public authority. In the reinventing education model discussed in this paper, the public will always retain an interest in the successful delivery of educational services paid for by public funds. For that reason, public authorities should set standards for educational performance—especially student achievement standards—for all schools receiving public funds and should monitor whether those standards are being adequately achieved. The five principles that are guiding the reinvention of American education will now be discussed.

SHIFT POWER FROM PRODUCERS TO CONSUMERS

The traditional system of public education is producer-oriented. The primary beneficiaries of this model of the school are its employees, not its customers. Bureaucrats, experts, and special interests control the system and make decisions within the framework of a public-school monopoly.

This situation is the result in large part of the progressive political and philosophical perspective of the late 19th and early 20th centuries that held that the institutions of government—particularly the institutions of public education—should be insulated from corrupt machine-style politicians who would use a spoils system to reward their friends and relatives. Only public-spirited lay people and expert professionals should govern and run public

education. That theory made a certain amount of sense but the reality has long since departed from it.

The first principle of the reinventing model turns this approach upside down. It calls for a major shift of authority in American education—from producers to consumers, from experts to lay people. Consumers include all manner of civilians: parents, voters, taxpayers, elected officials, employers, and other community representatives. The beginning of this shift from producers to consumers has its origins in the early to mid-1980s, when dozens of reports—inspired by the April 1983 report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education, *A Nation at Risk*—placed exceptional pressure on politicians and policymakers to improve educational performance. This led to a development unprecedented in the history of U.S. education: Many of the nation's states became hotbeds of education reform. Elected officials (such as governors, legislators, and mayors) and lay people (such as business leaders and newspaper editors) set out to wrest control of education from education's experts (school superintendents, school boards, and other members of the education establishment). These "civilians" demanded that "education experts" make themselves accountable to the public.

The differences between the producer and consumer viewpoints are poignantly revealed in the deepening chasm between what the producers in the education establishment identify as education's primary needs and what the consuming public identifies as its most important needs. The Public Agenda Foundation (Farkas & Johnson, 1996, 1997; Immewahr & Johnson, 1994; Johnson, 1995) has been at the forefront of this analysis of divergent producer-consumer views. Their data on the adult population (1994, 1995, 1996) show a public focused on common-sense solutions that they believe will improve our schools:

- safe and disciplined learning environments with high standards for student behavior;
- schools that build on the academic basics and have high standards of student achievement combined with tests that matter, i.e., tests that have consequences for promotion, graduation, and employment;
- teachers freed from many of the bureaucratic rules and regulations that dictate what schools and educators do; and
- more choices among schools, including—depending upon how the question is phrased—the use of such once heretical funding mechanisms for affording access to such choices as school vouchers. Particularly high levels of support for vouchers are found among urban minority parents whose children are compelled to attend schools that are unsafe and educationally bankrupt. A 1997 *Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools* shows that 49% of the adults surveyed, up from 43% the previous year, favor a proposal in which, "For those parents choosing nonpublic schools, the government would pay all or part of the tuition." Support was par-

> ticularly strong among black respondents—62% of whom favor the plan, compared with 47% of whites—as well as young adults—55% of 18- to 29-year-olds, compared with 40% of those 50 and over. (Rose, Gallup, & Elam, 1997, p. 49)

Adults are not the only ones who want higher standards of behavior and achievement. Students also want their schools to be places that exemplify these characteristics (Rose, Gallup, & Elam, 1997).

Unfortunately, Public Agenda (Immewahr & Johnson, 1994) also reports that many "education experts" do not share the public's views. They are out of sync with what most Americans want. Areas of disagreement include fundamental curricular issues such as teaching composition without teaching spelling (60% of Americans reject this strategy) and learning to do arithmetic by hand before starting to use calculators (86% of the public supports this). This Public Agenda report concluded, "...the large majority of Americans are uncomfortable with many of [the] changes wrought by education experts in recent years." Another report (Johnson, 1995) describes popular support for America's public schools as "fragile...porous...and...soft." A striking feature of that report is the fact that nearly 6 in 10 parents with children attending public schools say that they would send their children to private schools if they could afford to. The report interprets this information as "a public poised for flight...unless schools begin to deliver on what the public considers to be the essential elements of education: school safety, higher standards, order, and smaller classes."

Perhaps the most telling illustration of "a public poised for flight" occurred in New York City, where 22,000 parents applied for 1,300 scholarships to send their public-school-enrolled children to Catholic schools. This situation led Sandra Feldman, the president of the American Federation of Teachers, to comment,

> Now, the optimists among us could argue that 22,000 parents out of close to 2 million is not so bad.... But most, I think, would see it as a devastating statement of dissatisfaction with the public schools by a large number of parents. I do. And I think all of us should. (1997, p. 4)

In short, a consumer orientation is far more inherently radical in its potential for change in current schools than a producer orientation. For example, such a shift of attitude and authority could lead to new forms of educational governance where the control of the education system is in the hands of mayors, governors, parents, nonprofit community groups, or for-profit enterprises.

In sharp contrast, most in the private education community would argue that their schools have been and continue to be consumer-oriented. But as public education becomes more consumer-oriented (and it will), as it

becomes more accustomed to dealing with the needs and moral aspirations of Americans (and it will), I believe that private education will be confronted with a different kind of public school that will challenge it in some fundamental ways. At the least, it will provide private education with an opportunity to define its purpose more clearly. Moreover, it will draw students away from private schools to public schools.

One dimension of this challenge is emerging in the now-burgeoning U.S. charter school movement—the drive to create independent public schools of choice that are accountable for the results of student learning. These schools are a hybrid, a different kind of public school with some of the prized features of private schools. Data from a two-year national study of these charter schools (Finn, Bierlein, & Manno, 1996; Finn, Bierlein, Manno, & Vanourek, 1997) indicated that almost 11% of charter school students were previously enrolled in private schools. Moreover, many of these students are from religious schools in urban areas, particularly Catholic schools.

This growing consumer orientation in public education—as yet hardly a tidal wave—will raise new and fundamental issues for private education because charters and kindred developments change the marketplace within which private schools operate. What will it mean for private education—assumed by private educators to be consumer-oriented—to exist within the increasingly consumer-oriented world of American education? Have private schools been genuinely consumer-oriented? Or have they had the luxury of being (far) less than fully responsive to their consumers because the public education alternative has been unable to respond to the most basic consumer desires—e.g., for safety and discipline in the school? What competitive edge, what value will private education offer to families who are seeking better educational opportunities for their children and more able to find them in the consumer-oriented world of public education? Conversely, what can public education learn from private education where voice and exit have been—at least in theory—a way of life?

FOCUS ON RESULTS

The second principle guiding the reinvention of American education gets to the heart of how the public's interest in education is protected: focus on what children learn and how well they learn it—not on what rules schools follow, how they are run, the (worthy) intentions of educators, or what schools spend. Those who govern schools will monitor the academic results of education, leaving individual schools free to determine much of the rest—e.g., yearly calendar, daily schedules, staffing arrangements, organizational approaches to student grouping, budget decisions, and so forth.

This focus on results reflects a shift in thinking about how quality in education is evaluated, a shift from inputs to outcomes. The conventional wis-

dom judges quality in terms of inputs: intentions and efforts, institutions and services, resources and spending. Another perspective—a radical challenge to the conventional wisdom—can be traced to research by the sociologist James Coleman and others that began in the mid-1960s. It suggested that inputs might not have a strong effect on quality of student achievement. Coleman wrote the following when reflecting on his original study of the equality of educational opportunity in America:

> The major virtue of the study as conceived and executed lay in the fact that it did not accept [the input] definition, and by refusing to do so, has had its major impact on shifting policy attention from its traditional focus on comparison of inputs (the traditional measure of school quality used by school administrators: per-pupil expenditure, class size, teacher salaries, age of building and equipment, and so on) to a focus on output. (1972, pp. 149-150)

Increasingly, policymakers began to place primary emphasis in judging quality on what students achieved academically. Perhaps the single most important effort to turn the focus toward outcomes was that of the National Governors' Association (NGA). In the mid-1980s, the NGA gave the outcome approach far-reaching policy attention when it devoted 12 months to investigate and report on the condition of education in the states, with follow-up activities and reports for an additional four years. They focused on education for one reason. In the words of the then-NGA chair and governor of Tennessee Lamar Alexander: "Better schools mean better jobs. To meet stiff competition from workers in the rest of the world, we must educate ourselves and our children as we never have before.... Schools...must produce better results" (National Governors' Association, 1986, p. 3). In short, the governors cast their lot with those arguing that the time had come to place primary emphasis on what students learn, the outcomes they achieve.

The approach endorsed by the governors gained further momentum in 1989, when President George Bush convened an Education Summit in Charlottesville, Virginia. The President and the governors agreed to set six (later expanded to eight) ambitious national education goals—outcomes—from early childhood through lifelong learning that they would work to achieve by the year 2000.

In summary, advocates of the focus on outcomes in judging educational quality hold one common belief: Specify what all our children are expected to learn and then test them to determine whether they have learned it. In this outcome approach, success is measured by the extent to which inputs raise educational achievement. Changes are worth making if there is some assurance that they will produce the expected outcomes.

Focusing on results means that the bottom-line question asked by those involved in reinventing American education is less likely to be "How much

are we spending?" and more likely to be "What are our children learning and how well are they learning it?" That is the question on which policymakers, parents, and those who govern reinvented schools will focus. Private school educators must be prepared to answer that question more candidly and in more detail than ever. This challenge is more daunting than most private educators are willing to admit, perhaps because they have relied on the appeal of other sorts of inputs, like religion, social status, etc.

What does the achievement evidence look like? On average, private school students do learn more than public school students. But not that much more. The main advantage of private schools—particularly Catholic schools—is with disadvantaged and minority youth. This is no small accomplishment. But there is no evidence to say—on average—that private schools are doing a far superior job.

Consider the 1996 mathematics results from the *National Assessment of Educational Progress,* also known as the *Nation's Report Card.* In 12th grade, only 24% of private school students were proficient; 2% were at an advanced level; 18% could hardly do any math. The comparable public school student figures were 15% proficient, 2% advanced, and 32% able to do only the most rudimentary math. Here are the 1994 reading results for private school 12th graders: slightly more than half (52%) were reading proficiently; 13% could hardly read. The corresponding figures for public school twelfth graders were 35% proficient readers and 27% below the basic level.

Are these results worth bragging about? Moreover, how much does selectivity account for the existing differences; how much of the difference is due to a school effect? On the other hand, people choose private schools for a number of reasons, not just superior academic achievement.

In short, this move to focus on results raises complicated and controversial topics for private school research. Some of these issues are part of the traditional universe of private school research questions—e.g., what are the academic outcomes of students in private schools; what are the effects of different inputs on those outcomes; and what are the motivations for choosing private schools? How do answers to these questions differ across types of private schools? Other questions are not part of this traditional universe and now need to be investigated—e.g., what happens when parents become more knowledgeable of private education's academic outcomes, some of which are not as admirable as private school educators may like to believe.

DEMAND ACCOUNTABILITY

The focus on results is closely related to the third principle guiding the reinvention of American education: Pursue accountability and create an accountability system that focuses on results. An accountability system must, at a minimum, have three parts: clear expectations, tests to measure achievement,

and genuine rewards for reaching and consequences for failure to meet the expectations. In short, a results-oriented achievement strategy needs standards, testing, and consequences built into it. I have come to think of this as the "grammar of accountability."

Well-functioning enterprises begin with a clear set of expectations. In education, these expectations were defined for many years by the Carnegie unit, i.e., a uniform measure of inputs. This "seat time" definition is giving way to the results-oriented approach that spells out standards of student achievement, of knowledge and skills that must be demonstrated.

There are two different types of standards. Content standards define the skills and knowledge that students should acquire at various stages of their education, what they should know and do. Performance standards—some call these achievement levels—specify what depth of knowledge is "good enough." In other words, performance standards spell out an expected level of proficiency—what is good enough to advance from one stage to the next.

For standards to have an impact, good tests and other assessments of student and school performance are needed at various levels: the individual child, the school as a whole, the state, and so forth. These tests should include a blend of teacher-designed assessments of various types for classroom diagnosis as well as external tests—independent audits—prepared and administered by people other than the school's own managers. They should also use traditional and nontraditional measures that will help gauge whether students are learning to high standards. The more traditional tools include norm- or criterion-referenced multiple-choice tests of basic (and sometimes higher order) skills. Some also include open-ended (essay style) questions. Nontraditional tools include all manner of portfolios, performance assessments, individual evaluations, exhibitions, self-reports, and teacher observations.

Assessment results must be reported in a timely and understandable manner that allows for comparison over time with other students, schools, jurisdictions, and countries. Additional indicators of school success should also be gathered and reported—information such as attendance, graduation rates, incidence of discipline problems, advanced placement results, and finances.

Finally, any serious accountability system must have real stakes and consequences for everyone involved. Students should be promoted and graduate only when they have met specified standards; universities should admit students only when they meet college-level entry norms; employers will look at transcripts and see how well a student did in school—as IBM announced it will do. Consequences should also apply to teachers, principals, and other responsible adults who should be rewarded for success, penalized for failure, and dismissed if their schools cannot get the job done.

Deciding how consequences will be integrated into the student accountability system is a vexing task yet to be taken seriously by many who other-

wise adhere to the reinvention model. Accountability in the discipline area is far more visible than in the academic area. This can be traced, in part, to the fact that those who seek to reinvent education are genuinely committed to the precept that all kids can learn. This means that they often assume—perhaps naively—that no pupils will fail. They work earnestly to provide remediation and other academic assistance to help youngsters master the curriculum and attain standards. But they may be lax when it comes to consequences for poor academic performance. This shortcoming is most evident in schools that, to begin, do not have (or perhaps believe in) a rigorous set of standards with a supporting curriculum. Laxity is also certain to be a constant temptation for schools that are having trouble attracting and keeping enough students—and thus cannot afford to lose many. This could lead to grade inflation, lack of enforcement of discipline, "cooked" report cards, falsely positive teacher feedback, and a general tendency to soft-pedal individual accountability for the consequences of a student's actions, lest a family pick up its marbles and depart. It is in this way that the marketplace works against serious standards and consequences.

This accountability triad of standards, testing, and consequences should not create higher hurdles for fewer to jump over. It should raise expectations, let all know what to aim for, and provide all with an equal opportunity to learn. Widespread access to high standards that reflects a rich and challenging curriculum advances the twin goals of education excellence and quality. Moreover, standards need not lead to uniformity, standardization, or a national curriculum. The means to achieving them can and should be left to individual schools, teachers, parents, and communities.

What I have called the grammar of accountability—standards, testing, and consequences—is standard rhetoric today at the highest national policy levels. For example, President Bill Clinton and U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley endorse the standards and testing model and see it as a fundamental education reform strategy. The administration's 1997 education budget places this model at the heart of its K-12 agenda by calling for the creation of voluntary national tests in fourth grade reading and eighth grade mathematics. (Ironically, President George Bush and his Secretary of Education, Lamar Alexander, proposed a similar approach for congressional consideration and enactment in 1991, only to have outraged Democrats crush the plan.)

Moreover, there is broad-based public support for efforts to make the accountability triad of standards, testing, and consequences the cornerstone of America's efforts to transform all its schools. This raises important policy questions for private schools, which can be informed by research but not ultimately answered in any satisfactory or definitive way by research. The most fundamental question is this: What are the implications for private schools of a truly accountable and results-oriented public school system? Moreover,

there are many other important questions. The following are suggestions for that list of key questions, categorized under three topics.

The grammar of accountability
What content and performance standards do private schools set for their students? Should they be strengthened or more centrally coordinated or controlled? What market research has been done to learn what future clients want and expect these standards to delineate?

Standards and tests
As the U.S. proceeds to develop standards and tests nationally, at the state level, or locally, what should be the role of the private school community in this process? Should it support this effort, oppose it, or be neutral? Will different sectors of the private school community come to hold varying views on this issue? Moreover, with colleges, employers, and other groups attaching consequences to successfully navigating the proposed national tests, what happens to the freedom that private schools have traditionally exercised over their curriculum? Will private schools come to believe that they must administer these exams or risk the exit of families who want their children to have the credentials needed for entrance to a college or the workforce? What will be the effect of situations as in Ohio, where policymakers (and the court) insist that private school students take the same tests (and demonstrate the same results) as public school students? Will not vouchers or other forms of public aid also tend to subject private schools to these standards and accountability systems? Is that a good thing?

Private school success with disadvantaged students
Will the effect of national standards and (probably) a more rigorous core curriculum in all U.S. schools diminish the private school student market, especially among minority families? There are already signs of this occurring under the banner of the charter school movement. Half of those students now enrolled in charter schools are minority students (compared to one-third in conventional district schools). How will private schools more clearly define their competitive advantage and attract these families to them?

OFFER FAMILIES CHOICES OF DIFFERENT SCHOOLS

The fourth principle guiding the reinvention of American education is driven by the proposition that schools should be different from each other rather than identical and that families should be free to choose among a variety of educational opportunities and settings. Schools should be created to fit the differing needs of families—not bureaucrats, state and local regulations, or union contracts—with families free to choose the school that meets their

needs. Though some diversity has always been a part of our nation's public school system—e.g., open schools, alternative schools, magnet schools—it has been a minor element.

While in nearly all areas of life we assume the superiority of freedom to choose among many options, in education we have too readily allowed a group of people to obtain and sustain a monopoly over the supply of schools, over the kinds of schools that can be created. The predominant school model—public and private alike—is based on an outmoded design: an 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. day, Monday through Friday, open only half the year (180 days), with one teacher trained by a university school of education, lecturing most of the time using little more than the technology of the textbook.

This now antiquated design offers little flexibility for dealing with the changing nature of family or community life or decades of research into effective organizational and instructional arrangements. The U.S. is simply too big and diverse a country to expect this one-school model to fit everyone's needs. As communities begin to adopt standards and to adapt them to their specific situations, they will focus attention on and judge quality by the academic results students achieve. Consequently, there will be less monopoly control and centralized government regulation of schools and of how educational services are delivered. The reinvented school will be customer-driven and diverse in many different ways: forms of governance and organization, hours and days of operation, length of the school year, grade arrangements, staffing, curriculum, resource allocation, types of tests administered, methods and styles of teaching, etc. And families would be free to choose from a wide variety of educational options.

The extent of this choice is controversial. Recent years have seen a spurt of efforts to expand public school choice for families. For example, a 1997 report from the Center for Education Reform shows that 18 states now permit public school choice throughout the state. Another 11 states allow public school choice within some or all districts in the state. Twenty-nine states and the District of Columbia allow public school choice under some form of charter school legislation (with a small number of states allowing nonsectarian private schools to convert to [a] charter [status] school). And there are now over 30 cities that have private scholarship programs (mostly for low-income families) that allow recipients to choose public or private schools. Moreover, support for giving families more choices of all schools is growing.

Even President Clinton, in his first 1996 presidential debate with Bob Dole, seemed to forgo the opportunity to offer any argument against school vouchers for private schools, though he did state that federal funds should not be used for such a program. He implied that his administration would not create obstacles or oppose efforts by states and communities to experiment with vouchers for low-income students. To quote one of his three debate statements on this issue: "If a local school district in Cleveland, or anyplace else,

wants to have a private school choice plan, like Milwaukee did, let them have at it."

Moreover, one of President Clinton's former key domestic policy advisors, William Galston, believes that the way the president handles this voucher issue (along with welfare reform and the Medicaid problem) will determine the lasting significance of his presidency. Galston urges "the path of bold innovation," including vouchers for low-income students (1996, p. 36).

Choice plans should (and eventually will) include nonsectarian and sectarian private schools. These schools should have the option to become part of any publicly funded choice system, subject to the same amount of regulation that is applied to all reinvented schools, which are accountable primarily for the results of student learning. Moreover, such plans should also provide some help to parents who choose to send their children to any lawfully authorized home school. This discussion on offering families choices of different schools raises many complex issues.

The legal issue

There are various proposals as to how schools would receive money under a choice plan that includes today's nongovernment schools—e.g., tax credits, tax-free K-12 education savings accounts, publicly and privately funded scholarships, etc. The one most often discussed involves doing on the elementary and secondary levels what the U.S. did on the university level after World War II: create a G.I. Bill for Children, which would provide families with scholarship money to spend at the school of their choice or even purchase additional academic services for their child. Since these scholarship dollars would be aid to families, not to schools, they could be used at any lawfully operating school—public, private, or religious. Many believe that aid to families avoids the constitutional difficulties that exist now under the establishment clause of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (Bolick, 1997; Gaffney, 1981; McConnell, 1991; Stuart-Wells & Biegel, 1993). Lawrence Tribe, a well-respected legal scholar, sees no serious constitutional questions. He says, "Given the existing doctrine about the separation of church and state, I do not see a serious First Amendment problem in a reasonably written voucher program" (1991, p. 55).

Because of the evolving federal constitutional situation and federal policy context, legal battles over giving families more choices among schools, including all types of private schools, are now being fought before state rather than federal judges. This is a deliberate legal strategy being followed by opponents of school choice, for each state has its own legal standard for determining the relationship between church and state. Many of these standards are governed or were created by "Blaine amendment" provisions that impose stricter constraints than federal provisions on the separation of church and state. Moreover, as historian Jorgenson (1987) notes, common school

reformers did not claim that it was unconstitutional to spend funds in Catholic schools. Rather, their arguments were rooted in anti-Catholic bigotry.

The legal question here is perhaps best summarized by a line from the infamous Mr. Dooley (a.k.a. Finley Peter Dunne). In offering a reflection on the Supreme Court, he commented, "No matter whether th' constitution follows th' flag or not, the supreme coort follows th' iliction returns" (Bartlett, 1939, p. 796). And perhaps so too do justices of state courts.

The finance issue

This increasing diversity in the kinds of learning designs available to families and the expanding scope of educational choices to include public and private education sectors has a natural consequence for education funding. This consequence is embodied in the maxim, "The money should follow the child." In other words, education funds should not be allocated directly to districts or institutions on the exclusive basis of enrollments, formulas, or categories. Neither should education funding be shaped to fit the geographic, demographic, and bureaucratic counters of school systems. These have been the central devices for allocating nearly all education aid. In contrast, a basic education grant that includes federal, (but mostly) state, and local dollars should follow individuals to whatever schools they attend. Additional funds should be configured to aid individuals who (by virtue of poverty, disability, etc.) are eligible for additional resources, with it, too, following individuals to whatever schools they attend.

In conclusion, what does this discussion about diversity and choices of different schools suggest for a private education research agenda? I believe the most fundamental issue that needs an answer is this question: What are the positive and negative implications for private schools of vouchers and other forms of public aid to private schools? Little research has focused on answering this question. It is particularly important that private education research investigate this issue, as the chorus of those who oppose vouchers grows within the private education community, likening it to a "devil's deal" (Trowbridge, 1997).

FOSTER PROFESSIONALISM

The final principle of the reinvention model involves those who work in schools. They should be treated like—and conduct themselves as—professionals. This means deregulating the schools, freeing them from bureaucratic control and micromanagement. It means allowing individual schools, educators, and parents wide latitude and autonomy in decision making on issues such as teaching loads and methods, hiring staff, and allocating resources. As long as students learn to high standards—the ends of education, after all—

and the customers are satisfied, the school's staff should be permitted to operate as they think best, retaining responsibility for the myriad decisions about the varied means—the how-to—of education.

Deregulation must also apply to the education profession. Recruitment of educators for the reinvented public school should not be limited to graduates of teacher- or administrator-training programs. Different paths into the classroom and the administrator's office need to be opened up. Individuals with sound character who know their subjects, want to teach children, and are willing to work with master teachers to learn the art and craft of teaching should be permitted to teach and administer in the new American public school.

This approach to professionalism has implications for the teachers' unions. And they seem to sense this. For example, National Education Association President Bob Chase has called for his union to move beyond old-style labor-management antagonisms. Time will tell whether he achieves this objective. On another front, new mechanisms are being created to certify teachers in a manner similar to other professions—e.g., the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. In one interesting and provocative proposal, Kerchner, Koppich, and Weeres (1997) call upon unions to consider three key principles as they refashion themselves: organize around quality issues like standards for student learning and standards for teaching; organize around individual schools by changing the nature and scope of labor agreements and creating individual school compacts; and organize the teacher labor market by modeling unions on craft forms more than industrial ones so that mobility is easy and portability of benefits becomes commonplace.

These and other efforts aim to transform the collective bargaining agreement's bureaucratized, centralized, one-size-fits-all approach to teachers and schools in order better to reflect the world of reinvented education. Whatever transformation the union-management relationship undergoes, the new arrangements and agreements must value initiative and results more than process and uniformity and create incentives to advance the twin goals of initiative and results.

Private education has much of value to offer the reinvention model on how to foster genuine professionalism in a school. This presents a host of research opportunities on the function, role, and vision of the private school educator. For example, research on the teacher's role in Catholic secondary schools has shown that educators believe that their role includes subject-matter or curricular knowledge, technical skill and expertise, and a sense of calling and obligation. Teaching is a vocation, a ministry of service. Collegial working relationships among faculty within the school create and support a shared sense of purpose. This is reinforced by social interactions outside the school among themselves as well as with students and their families (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993).

The implications for the reinvented education model are clear. Contemporary discussions about professional development that neglect the normative or evocative dimensions are not likely to improve or develop the teaching profession. Neither will ignoring this sense of calling provide most public school educators with that normative or moral dimension that is such a key element of a true profession. While reinstating this moral dimension into the discussion about teaching will be controversial to some, it must be done.

Conversely, private education has some self-interest in such research. In the increasingly consumer-oriented, competitive arena of American public education, where families will choose from an increasing variety of educational opportunities, private education will need to become more rigorous at describing and delivering its product. Focusing only on what private education has to teach public education about how to create professional and collegial environments without serious attention to how it can improve professionalism will only work to undermine private education.

THE REINVENTED WORLD OF AMERICAN EDUCATION

The five principles discussed are guiding the transformation of American education. They should form the context for developing a coherent research vision for private education. Some issues for this research task have been suggested, though the surface has barely been scratched.

There are two reasons for pursuing a rigorous research agenda informed by the five principles discussed. First, private education has lessons to teach public education. Coming to understand what works and sharing that information with the wider American education policy community will contribute to the nation's common good. Second, unless private education begins itself to learn about how to improve its product—its outcomes—from some of the lessons it has to teach public education, the reinvented world of American public education will seriously challenge private education's "market share." This move of students from private schools to public schools is one of the effects that charter schools are having on private schools.

The most important implication of these five principles for private education is how this reinvention model of American education redefines public education, thereby blurring the line that now exists between the public and private education sectors.

Until the mid-19th century, when states began to establish public schools under the control of government, there was no meaningful distinction between public and private schools. Most schools were community institutions supported by a mix of public and private funds. With the establishment of the common or public school as an institution supported by taxpayers,

American education was divided into two sectors: public or government schools and private or nongovernment schools.

Today, most see the line between these two sectors as clearly drawn. All public schools are part of a uniform system, controlled by government bureaucracies. Nearly 90% of the K-12 student population attends these public schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 1997) Most students are assigned to schools. Taxpayer funding comes from federal, state, and local sources. It is distributed on the basis of student population; demographics; and special, categorical needs.

Private education is the second and much smaller education sector, with roughly 10% of all K-12 student enrollment (National Center for Education Statistics, 1997). These schools are chosen by families and privately financed through tuition and other sources, though small amounts of public money are provided for specialized needs. The schools are governed independently and relatively free from government regulation.

Strangely, even with these fundamental differences, both public and private schools are the same in many structural and organizational ways when it comes to the learning designs and environments they create for students. They are open 180 days a year for approximately 6 hours, 5 days a week. They are divided into grades, use many of the same textbooks, use the same tests, etc. A major body of research has pointed to the curricular and communal differences between the public and private sectors. Perhaps the greatest difference is in the explicit moral education and character development—in religious schools, the religious instruction—offered by private schools (though public schools in recent years have become more mindful of the need to engage in moral education in explicit ways).

The reinvention model discussed in this paper suggests a different way to think about education today—i.e., visualize families and their children as having a continuum of educational opportunities and learning designs from which to choose, with public money following the child to the school of choice. One end of the continuum is the current district public school. On the other end of the continuum is home-based instruction. Moving from the district public school to home instruction involves traversing numerous educational opportunities from which families should be free to choose. For example, there are:

- magnet schools, organized around grade levels, themes, or other specialties;
- alternative schools—e.g., for special student populations;
- schools within schools—i.e., more than one school within a single school building;
- mini-schools, such as New York City has created with 100 to 200 students in each;
- tech-prep schools that include some post-secondary schools;

- "after school" schools, for enrichment and remediation;
- public schools that are privately managed;
- private schools that contract with public agencies to provide services for special populations (e.g. special education, kids in trouble, etc.);
- charter schools (including converted private schools);
- non-sectarian private schools that receive public funds (e.g., the Milwaukee choice program);
- sectarian private schools that receive public funds (e.g., the Cleveland choice program); and
- private schools that continue to be supported primarily by private money.

These are examples of the growing number of educational opportunities that the reinvention model is creating and from which families can choose. If reinventing public education means that the classic public-private categories merge, that all sorts of hybrids arise, what are the implications of that momentous development for private schools themselves? I do not have an answer to that question. In fact, no one in the mainline private school world has thought systematically about much of this. Mounting private school opposition to vouchers suggests that some sort of line in the sand is being drawn by those who would rather keep their independence than participate in a blurring that is apt to bring considerably more control from others.

CONCLUSION

The reinvented school gives power to consumers, focuses on producing results, provides choices to parents of differently organized and structured schools, creates genuine accountability mechanisms, and fosters a deregulated educational environment for professionals to perform. Moreover, it is not micromanaged by government bureaucracies but thrives on decentralized control. Public officials govern these schools by establishing performance goals, particularly academic goals, and holding the schools accountable for meeting these goals. In this context, the function of a public authority is to ensure that the public has the broadest range of choices available to it; that every child has a school to attend; and that the terms of the performance agreements are met.

A public school is any school willing to embrace high standards, to enroll students in a nondiscriminatory manner, and to be accountable for its results, no matter who owns or operates it. Public money follows the child to these schools. What unites them is a compulsory set of academic outcomes that is confined to a core list of broadly accepted knowledge and skills.

These new American public schools do not look or feel or act like government. But they are plainly larger than the individual or family. In that sense, they satisfy the classic definition of a mediating institution, They are, in fact, examples of what contemporary analysts term "civil society." They

are voluntary institutions, neither compulsory nor monopolistic. They are anchored in their communities more than schools that are created by system bureaucracies. And, of course, they shift power from those bureaucracies to the schools themselves and to the individuals responsible for them—educators, parents, and students. Within this context, revitalizing and reinventing our schools is a task that falls under the banner of what William Kristol has called fostering a sociology of virtue: "Strengthening the institutions of civil society that attend to the character of the citizenry—this is the sociology of virtue" (1994, p. 32). "Today's sociology of virtue...implies a thinking through of the way in which social institutions can be reinvented, restructured, or reformed to promote virtue and to foster sound character" (1994, p. 35).

Perhaps the most interesting and important research issue to pursue in this regard is this: How is the task of reinventing our schools aligned with the task of fostering a sociology of virtue? Perhaps the most significant contribution to be made to that research effort is to be found in the history of private education in the United States, an effort that has striven to foster in students an ethical sense and moral vision for preparing them to enter the worlds of work, family, and citizenship.

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