Chapter 5: School Reform

Propositions

- Critics of school choice fear that the most disadvantaged students will be left behind; preliminary data contradict this assumption.
- Vouchers are becoming more popular by the day, and they are not a solution solely supported by the rich.
- Catholic schools provide high marks at low costs.
- Home education is the fastest-growing alternative to public schooling, and a good one at that.
- The push for increased accountability is apparent, but better schools are still to come.

- **Summer school provides evidence that accountability is changing the way we educate.**
- **California's class size reduction appears to be an education reform initiative gone bad.**

Highlights

- In 1978, public school enrollment made up 89 percent of total elementary and secondary enrollment; private schools, 11 percent; and home school students, 0.03 percent. In 2000, public school enrollment made up 86 percent; private schools, 11 percent; and home school students, 3 percent.[1]
- In the 2000–2001 school year, there were more than 2,300 charter schools enrolling nearly 580,000 students.[2]
- Nationwide, slightly more than 50 percent of charter school students are white, compared with almost 60 percent in public schools. Charter schools are more likely to serve black, Hispanic, and Native American students than traditional public schools.[3]
- In 2000, an estimated 61,525 vouchers were used in private schools, accounting for more than 1 percent of private school enrollment.[4]
- A 1999 survey showed that 60 percent of African-Americans favored vouchers, a higher figure than the general public. Moreover, support swelled to 72 percent among African-Americans earning less than $15,000 a year.[5]
- In New York City, Catholic high schools graduated 95 percent of their senior class each year, while the public schools graduated slightly more than 50 percent of their seniors.[6]
- Attending a Catholic high school raised an inner-city student's probability of finishing high school and entering college by 17 percentage points.[7]

- Home school students' numbers are growing at an estimated 15–25 percent annually; in the year 2000, approximately 1.7 million elementary and secondary students were home-educated.[8]
- In 2000, approximately 20 states had enacted legislation requiring students to pass an assessment test with a minimum score in order to graduate from high school.[9]
- More students than ever before were enrolled in summer school in the year 2000; approximately one in five students in the nation's 53 largest urban districts attended summer school.[10]

Overview

A string of presidents and major events over the past half-century have kept elementary and secondary education at the forefront of American public policy. The launch of *Sputnik* in 1957 shocked American citizens into realizing that their kids were lagging in the sciences; 25 years later, the release of *A Nation at Risk* by a blue-ribbon panel of education experts put the United States on notice for education reform; in 1994, *Goals 2000,* an aggressive piece of legislation, established eight education goals to be achieved by the year 2000—but by 2002, virtually none had been met. George Herbert Walker Bush talked of "one thousand points of light," Bill Clinton sought to become the "education President," and George W. Bush pledged to "leave no child behind." These concerns and promises, however, have led to little change in the American education system.

Sputnik no doubt shook us out of the complacency of the 1950s and made us pay more attention to teaching science. However, despite open classrooms, "modern math," whole learning, and the promises of leading politicians, performance has remained flat and in some cases has fallen. And, at the end of the day, little has changed in the classroom or in the schools.

Reform became the buzzword of the 1990s, mostly in response to the lack of progress in achievement. Parents, educators, politicians, and advocacy groups say they have waited long enough—it is time for change now.

Although not new in concept, the most highly publicized and politically polarizing reforms of the last decade have been charter schools, vouchers, and home education, particularly as

they have found their way into mainstream education discussions. Nobel laureate economist Milton Friedman first proposed school vouchers in 1955. The charter school movement began in 1992. In 2000, there were more than 500,000 students enrolled in charter schools and more than 61,000 publicly and privately funded school vouchers. School choice, as these alternatives are loosely termed, is a venue for parents and schools to partner in the education process, and it is a catalyst for increased family involvement.

In the public schools, a working relationship between school and parent, however, has become increasingly difficult due to the growing education bureaucracy. The greater the bureaucracy is, the less autonomous the school and its administration. When schools and districts are too large, parents have little or no direct access to voice their concerns, and schools are less able to work with and respond to parents directly and personally. Parents have very little incentive to be involved in their children's schools when they feel they will not be heard. Many elements of school choice, however, encourage a more decentralized education style, and hence a chance for parents to be heard. Parents are voting with their feet and their dollars. Enrollment in private schools, and other alternatives to public schools where the individual schools are smaller, is at an all-time high.

Among the most telling statistics is the rise in home schooling. The number of students home schooled in 2000 was an estimated 1.7 million, a figure that dwarfs the number of students taking advantage of either publicly or privately funded vouchers or charter school enrollees. Moreover, traditional public school enrollment has decreased as a percentage of total enrollment from 89 percent to 86 percent over the last 2 decades. The percentage of home-educated students has increased as a percentage of total enrollment from virtually zero to 3 percent during the same time period.

Despite the growth of these alternatives, they have not touched many children; in fact, they have affected a surprisingly small number. In this chapter, we look to provide data on the most promising school reform options: vouchers, charter schools, and home schooling, as well as other alternatives implemented in this education reform era. We look at class size reduction, for example, an eagerly anticipated California initiative, fully within the public school system, that has cost much, yet, according to early results, accomplished little.

Proposition: Critics of school choice fear that the most disadvantaged students will be left behind; preliminary data contradict this assumption.

The two most common school choices available to parents are charter schools and vouchers. In 1992, the charter school movement began. Today there are more than 2,300 charter schools, enrolling more than 575,000 students. This is nearly 1 percent of total elementary and secondary enrollment. In 1990, there were 341 public and private vouchers provided, an insignificant percentage; in 2000, there were 61,525 vouchers used in private schools, totaling more than 1 percent of private school enrollment.[11]

Critics of school choice programs invoke a two-pronged attack. First, they claim that only the best students with the most motivated parents will take advantage of charter schools and voucher programs. Presumably, the best students come from families in which parents are involved at home and at school and who partner with the school in their children's education. Second, critics contend that the flight of the best students leaves behind disproportionately large groups of chronically underperforming, special-needs, and other problem children who will drag down the rest of the students in the public schools. Teachers will thus spend inordinate amounts of time on discipline and basic skills, and administrators will be obliged to devote excessive amounts of resources to meet special needs. Some contend these two effects of choice will doom the traditional public school system to failure.

Indirect evidence to the contrary, however, has been uncovered. These data may be preliminary, but they are compelling.

Charter Schools and Demographics

Enrollment data on charter schools in the 1997–98 school year show that the demographic mix of students enrolling in charter schools is remarkably like that of students in the rest of the school system—the flight of the best and brightest, the affluent, and nonminorities is not apparent. The striking similarity of these enrollment patterns and their performance rebuts arguments that only the privileged will choose charter schools.[12]

Students' eligibility for a free or reduced-price lunch under the National School Lunch program (a measure of economic disadvantage) allows comparisons of poverty levels between students in charter schools and those in public schools. Overall, in the states that have charter schools, the total percentage of students eligible for a free or reduced-price lunch is nearly identical: 37 percent in charter schools and 38 percent in traditional public schools. (See table 5.1 and figure 5.1.)[13]

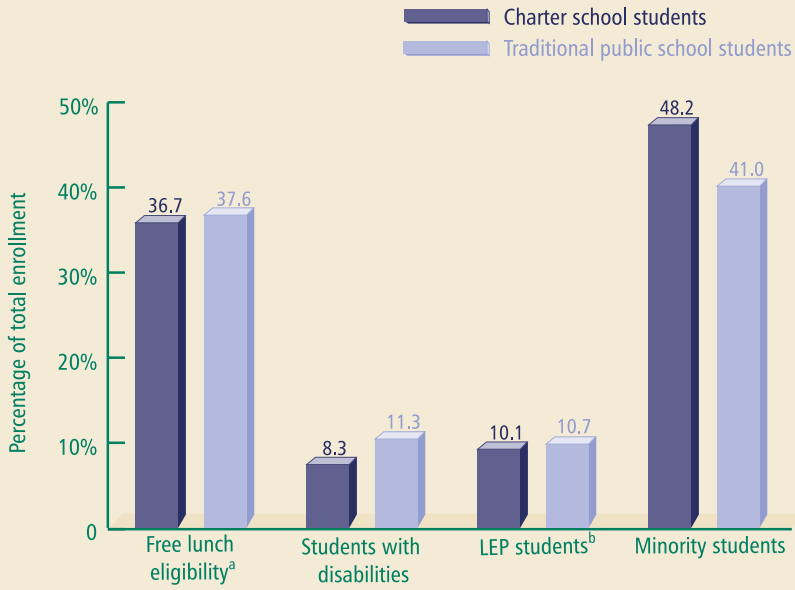
Table 5.1: **Students Eligible for Free and Reduced-Price Lunch Programs**

Selected States

State	Charter schools (1997–98)		All public schools (1994–95)	
	Eligible students	Percent of all students	Eligible students	Percent of all students
Alaska	60	7.0%	32,340	25.7%
Arizona	9,640	39.4	284,357	40.1
California	17,820	35.4	2,257,008	42.4
Colorado	1,967	18.1	174,023	27.8
Connecticut	521	49.6	113,221	22.8
Florida	1,080	37.7	895,510	43.9
Georgia	3,803	29.4	501,824	40.6
Illinois	1,396	88.5	583,238	30.8
Louisiana	344	74.3	474,608	59.3
Massachusetts	2,490	45.1	225,110	25.6
Michigan	5,540	34.1	459,747	28.7
Minnesota	1,502	52.5	217,376	26.8
New Jersey	201	43.1	326,022	28.3
New Mexico	1,167	30.1	159,740	49.6
North Carolina	1,465	40.1	413,729	36.5
Pennsylvania	399	69.3	541,793	31.1
Texas	3,456	68.7	1,662,900	46.1
Wisconsin	438	27.6	210,011	24.9
Total	**53,970**	**36.7**	**10,146,087**	**37.6**

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, *The State of Charter Schools Third-Year Report* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, May 1999).
Note: The total number of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch is based on 566 of the 619 open charter schools that responded to the survey. Of the 566 schools, 9 schools in the District of Columbia and 5 states (Delaware, Hawaii, Kansas, Rhode Island, and South Carolina) are not displayed in the table because each state has 3 or fewer charter schools and percentages are not meaningful. The "Total" row includes data from all 24 charter states, including the 6 states not included in the table.

Figure 5.1: **Selected Characteristics of Charter School and Traditional Public School Students**
1997–98



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, *The State of Charter Schools Third-Year Report* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, May 1999).
Notes: Data comparisons are based on states with charter schools. See tables for lists of states.
a. Public school free and reduced-price lunch eligibility is based on 1994-95 data.
b. Public school LEP designation is based on 1996-97 data.

Furthermore, although charter schools are free of many of the state regulations that govern schools, they are still subject to laws requiring them to provide access to students with disabilities. In fact, some charter schools are specifically designed to serve students with disabilities. For example, during the 1997–98 school year in Florida, 25.1 percent of charter school students had disabilities, compared with 13.4 percent of traditional public school students. According to recent data, students with disabilities made up 8 percent of the population in

charter schools overall, compared with 11 percent of public school students. Limited English proficiency (LEP) students are concentrated in a few states in both charter and public schools, but the percentage in both is similar, nearly 10 percent. (See tables 5.2 and 5.3.)[14]

Table 5.2: **Students with Disabilities**
Selected States, 1997–98

State	Charter schools		All public schools	
	Students	Percent of all students	Students	Percent of all students
Alaska	43	5.0%	16,005	12.1%
Arizona	1,730	7.1	75,240	9.2
California	3,576	7.1	547,309	9.6
Colorado	857	7.9	65,734	9.6
Connecticut	84	0.8	69,352	13.0
Florida	720	25.1	307,149	13.4
Georgia	1,122	8.7	133,347	9.7
Illinois	172	10.9	250,193	12.5
Louisiana	30	6.5	84,690	10.9
Massachusetts	546	9.9	148,364	15.6
Michigan	853	5.3	181,678	10.8
Minnesota	491	17.2	92,966	10.0
New Jersey	10	2.1	189,219	15.1
New Mexico	673	17.4	15,319	13.7
North Carolina	523	14.3	142,628	11.5
Pennsylvania	77	13.4	202,655	11.2
Texas	362	7.2	443,341	11.4
Wisconsin	137	8.6	100,027	11.3
Total	**12,243**	**8.3**	**3,552,284**	**11.3**

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, *The State of Charter Schools Third-Year Report* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, May 1999).
Note: The total number of students with disabilities is based on 554 of the 619 open charter schools that responded to the survey, although the exhibit does not show breakdowns for states with 3 or fewer charter schools. The percentage of students with disabilities in Florida is inflated by 1 school that reported large numbers of charter students with disabilities. Of the 554 charter schools, 10 schools in the District of Columbia and 5 states (Delaware, Hawaii, Kansas, Rhode Island, and South Carolina) are not displayed in the table because each state has 3 or fewer charter schools and percentages are not meaningful. The "Total" row includes data from all 24 charter states, including the 6 states not included in the table.

Table 5.3: **Students with Limited English Proficiency**
Selected States

State	Charter schools (1997–98) Students	Charter schools (1997–98) Percent of all students	All public schools (1996–97) Students	All public schools (1996–97) Percent of all students
Alaska	6	70.0%	34,942	27.7%
Arizona	1,643	6.7	93,528	11.9
California	9,208	18.3	1,381,393	24.6
Colorado	120	1.1	24,675	7.4
Connecticut	8	80.0	19,813	3.8
Florida	7	20.0	288,603	12.2
Georgia	382	30.0	14,339	1.1
Illinois	54	3.4	118,246	6.0
Louisiana	2	40.0	6,494	0.9
Massachusetts	339	6.1	44,394	4.7
Michigan	407	2.5	25,988	1.6
Minnesota	321	11.2	28,237	3.4
New Jersey	3	60.0	49,300	4.0
New Mexico	954	24.6	78,107	24.0
North Carolina	90	2.5	24,771	2.0
Pennsylvania	20	3.5	na	na
Texas	1,140	22.7	513,634	13.4
Wisconsin	22	1.4	23,270	2.6
Total	**14,856**	**10.1**	**2,814,982**	**10.7**

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, *The State of Charter Schools Third-Year Report* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, May 1999).
Note: The total number of LEP students is based on 611 of the 619 open charter schools that responded to the survey, although the exhibit does not show breakdowns for states with 3 or fewer charter schools. Of the 611 schools, 9 schools in the District of Columbia and 5 states (Delaware, Hawaii, Kansas, Rhode Island, and South Carolina) are not displayed in the table because each state has 3 or fewer charter schools and percentages are not meaningful. The "Total" row includes data from all 24 charter states, including the 6 states not included in the table.

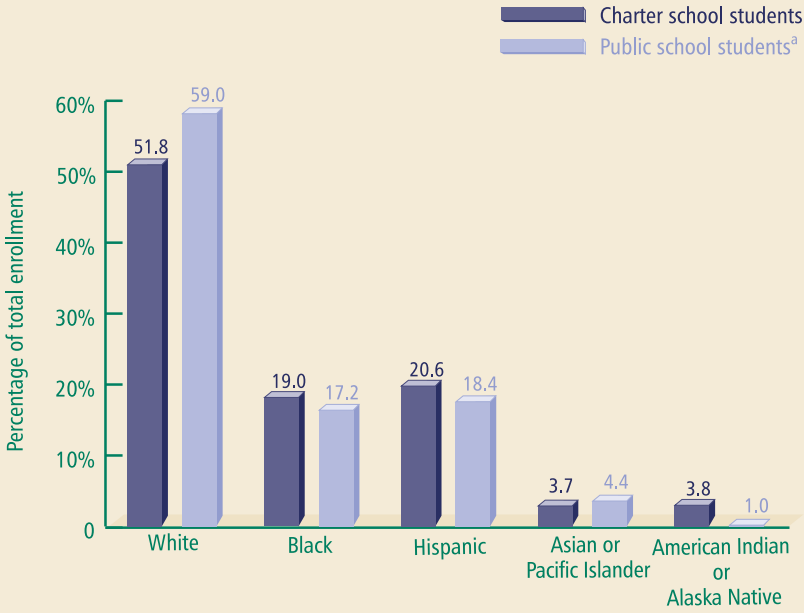
In examining data for the states that have charter schools, slightly more than 50 percent of charter school students are white, compared with almost 60 percent in public schools. NCES concluded that charter schools are more likely to serve black, Hispanic, and Native American students, compared to traditional public schools. (See table 5.4 and figure 5.2.)[15]

Table 5.4: **Racial Composition of Charter School Students 1997–98**

Race	Students		Racial distribution	
	Charter schools	All public schools[a]	Charter schools	All public schools[a]
White, not of Hispanic origin	71,943	16,367,055	51.8%	58.7%
Black, not of Hispanic origin	26,393	4,680,563	19.0	16.8
Hispanic	28,554	5,395,949	20.6	19.3
Asian or Pacific Islander	5,157	1,164,334	3.7	4.2
American Indian or Alaska Native	5,310	278,392	3.8	1.0
Other	1,578	na	1.1	na
Total	**138,935**	**27,886,307**		

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, *The State of Charter Schools Third-Year Report* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, May 1999)
Note: a. All public school students in the 24 states with charter schools.

Figure 5.2: **Race and Ethnicity of Charter School and Public School Students**
1997–98

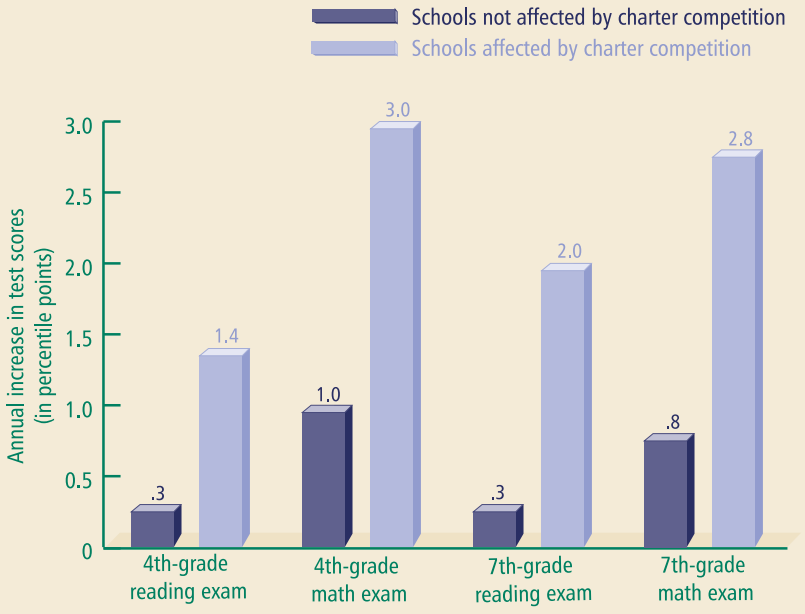


Sources: National Center for Education Statistics, *The State of Charter Schools Third-Year Report* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, May 1999); National Center for Education Statistics, *The State of Charter Schools Fourth-Year Report* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, January 2000).
Note: a. Only public schools in the 24 charter school states.

Large discrepancies are not apparent between charter school and public school demographics. Furthermore, based on evidence from Arizona and Michigan, competition from charter schools may actually improve public school achievement and cost less. For example, in Michigan, during the 1999–2000 school year, the average per-pupil expenditure for public school students was $7,440, compared to $6,600 for charter school students. Moreover, in Arizona, public schools exposed to

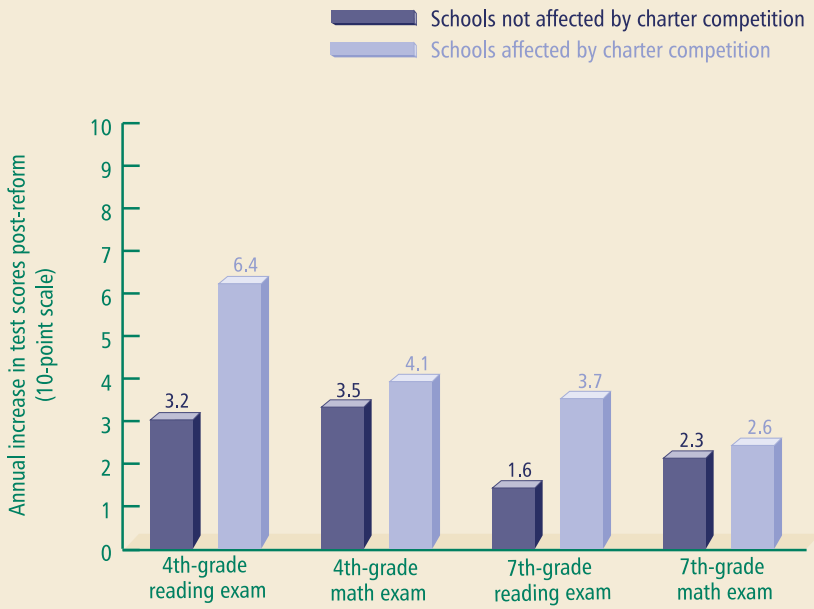
charter school competition recorded dramatic improvements in test scores, two to six times more improved than those public schools that did not have competition. Michigan public schools exposed to competition from charter schools also experienced a greater improvement in test scores than those schools not exposed to competition. (See figures 5.3 and 5.4.)[16]

Figure 5.3: **Public School Performance in Response to Charter Competition**
Arizona, 2000



Source: Caroline M. Hoxby, "Rising Tide," *Education Next* 1, no. 4 (Winter 2001), pp. 69–74.
Note: The difference between "Schools not affected by charter competition" and "Schools affected by charter competition" in every comparison is statistically significant at the .05 level.
Students in districts in Arizona that lost more than 6 percent of enrollment to charter schools began increasing achievement at rates greater than in schools that weren't affected by charters.

Figure 5.4: **Public School Performance in Response to Charter Competition**
Michigan, 2000



Source: Caroline M. Hoxby, "Rising Tide," *Education Next* 1, no. 4 (Winter 2001), pp. 69–74.
Notes: Charter competition occurs when a school district has lost more than 6 percent of its students to charter schools.
The difference between "Schools not affected by charter competition" and "Schools affected by charter competition" in every comparison is statistically significant at the .05 level.

Vouchers and Achievement

Over the past 10 years in the Milwaukee school system, which operates the country's longest-running publicly provided school voucher program, the performance of students has increased remarkably. In fact, their increases have outstripped those of students in the rest of the state. There may be disputes about

the performance of the students who have used vouchers and left the Milwaukee public school system, but the data show that the students left behind are faring quite well. Competition to keep students and concomitant funding may be providing an incentive for the administrators and teachers in Milwaukee to pick up the pace and improve overall performance.[17]

If critics' arguments against school choice had merit, one would expect to see a decline in test scores in school districts with voucher programs because the lower-performing students had been left behind. There are some revealing data from the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) and the Milwaukee Parental School Choice Program. That program—in existence since 1990, when 341 students participated (approximately 0.4 percent of MPS enrollment)— expanded to include 9,638 students in the 2000–2001 school year, approximately 9.2 percent of MPS enrollment. Interestingly, as participation increased, the scores of students left behind increased, not decreased as alarmists predicted.[18]

When comparing test scores of MPS students with those from the rest of the state, students in Milwaukee showed remarkable improvement in both absolute and relative terms. In tests measuring the fourth-, eighth-, and tenth-grade levels in reading, math, science, and social studies, Milwaukee students improved in local, state, and national assessments between 1997 and 2000. The national percentile rank of Milwaukee public school fourth-grade students, for example, improved from a 36 percentile ranking to a 50 percentile ranking in math, 29 to 51 in science, and 35 to 52 in social studies. (See table 5.5 and figures 5.5, 5.6, and 5.7.)[19]

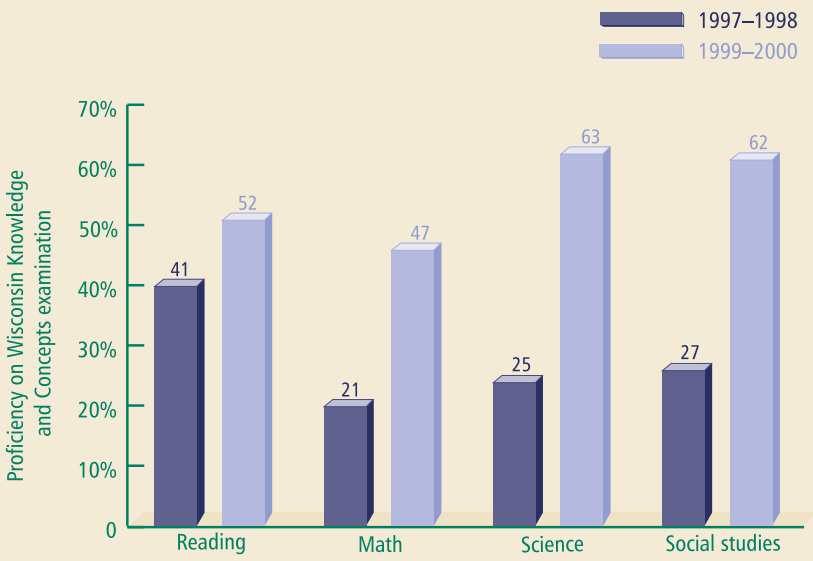
Table 5.5: **Proficiency Levels of Wisconsin Public School Students**

Percentage Change in Number of Students at or above Proficient Level, 1997–2000

Subject area[a]	4th grade		8th grade		10th grade	
	Milwaukee public schools	Wisconsin	Milwaukee public schools	Wisconsin	Milwaukee public schools	Wisconsin
Reading	27%	13%	56%	23%	23%	10%
Math	124	42	38	40	43	11
Science	162	40	59	18	40	21
Social studies	130	37	41	17	38	15

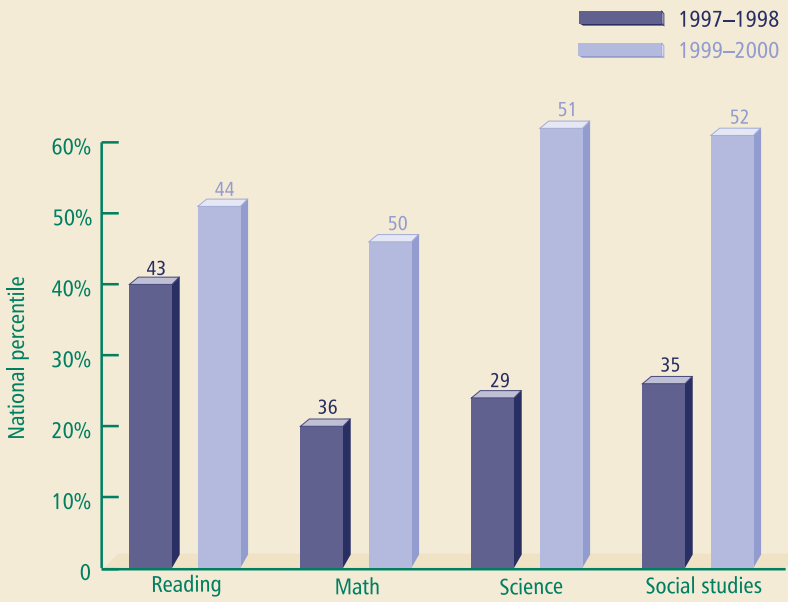
Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, *Wisconsin School Performance Report* (Madison: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction), available online at http://208.170.76.100/DPI/query.asp?yr=…=3619&school=&subject.
Note: a. Based on Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination.

Figure 5.5: **Milwaukee Public School Students' Proficiency in Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination**
Fourth Grade, 1997–98—1999–2000



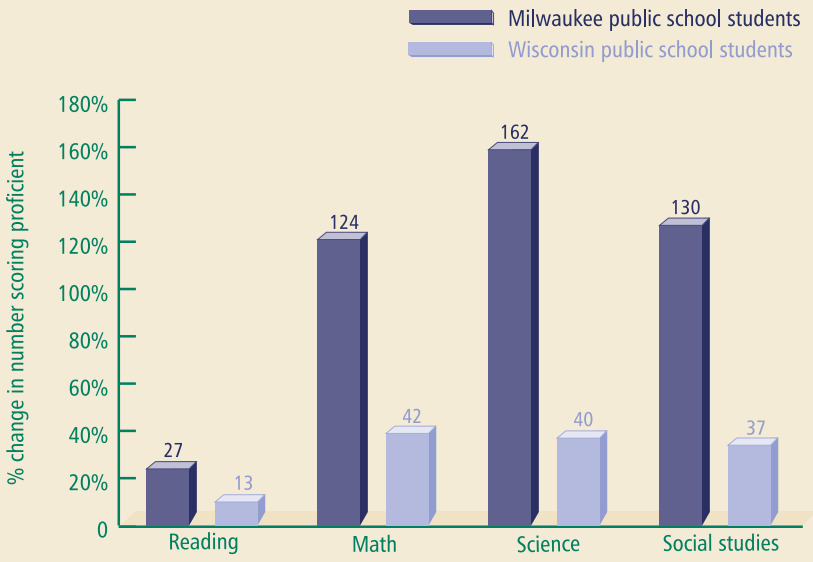
Sources: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, *Wisconsin School Performance Report* (Madison: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction), available online at http://208.170.76.100/DPI/query.asp?yr=…=3619&school=&subject; Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, School Management Services, *Milwaukee Parental Choice Program* (Madison: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction), available online at wysiwyg://6/http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dfm/sms/mpcxgrde.html.

Figure 5.6: **Milwaukee Public School Students' National Percentile Rankings**
Fourth Grade, 1997–98—1999–2000



Sources: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, *Wisconsin School Performance Report* (Madison: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction), available online at http://208.170.76.100/DPI/query.asp?yr=…=3619&school=&subject; Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, School Management Services, *Milwaukee Parental Choice Program* (Madison: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction), available online at wysiwyg://6/http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dfm/sms/mpcxgrde.html.

Figure 5.7: **Milwaukee and Wisconsin Public School Fourth-Grade Proficiency Comparisons**
1997–98—1999–2000



Sources: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, *Wisconsin School Performance Report* (Madison: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction), available online at http://208.170.76.100/DPI/query.asp?yr=…=3619&school=&subject; Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, School Management Services, *Milwaukee Parental Choice Program* (Madison: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction), available online at wysiwyg://6/http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dfm/sms/mpcxgrde.html.
Note: a. Scoring at or above proficiency level.

Milwaukee Public Schools should be applauded. Whether the improvement is due to changing pedagogy, improved academic standards, an increase in resources, or in response to competition remains to be determined.

The success or failure of school choice should be determined by results. If it were successful, all students—those that stay and those that leave the traditional public school system—would be better off, academically and otherwise. A cautious observation is that all students in Milwaukee public schools are doing better.

Proposition: Vouchers are becoming more popular by the day, and they are not a solution solely supported by the rich.

Those in favor of school choice view vouchers as a free-market solution to a failing public school system and as an opportunity to provide choice to those who have no options. In contrast, voucher foes have spent millions of dollars fighting vouchers; for them the very idea of school choice is unconstitutional and anti–public school. Despite the U.S. Supreme Court's recent ruling affirming the constitutionality of vouchers, arguments that vouchers will divert money from the public school system at a crucial time persist. In the words of National Education Association president Bob Chase, school choice is "siphoning money from the communities and public schools that need it the most."[20]

At the heart of the arguments against vouchers is the presumption of inequality, that the rich and more educated will receive even more benefits than the poor. Diminishing resources in the schools that most need them and concerns regarding "leaving children behind" are further examples of antagonists' fears.

The Milwaukee school voucher program, the nation's oldest, portrays the opposite scenario. Resources in Milwaukee public schools have increased, not decreased, and test scores have risen dramatically. In the Milwaukee public school district, from 1990 (when vouchers were introduced) to 2001, enrollment increased from nearly 93,000 to 98,000, and total spending increased from $580 million to more than $990 million. Since vouchers were introduced in Milwaukee, spending increased by nearly 70 percent in the public schools, while enrollment increased by a mere 5 percent. Furthermore, during

the same time period, per-pupil expenditures increased from approximately $6,200 to $9,700, and achievement gains in the public schools are apparent. (See table 5.6.)[21]

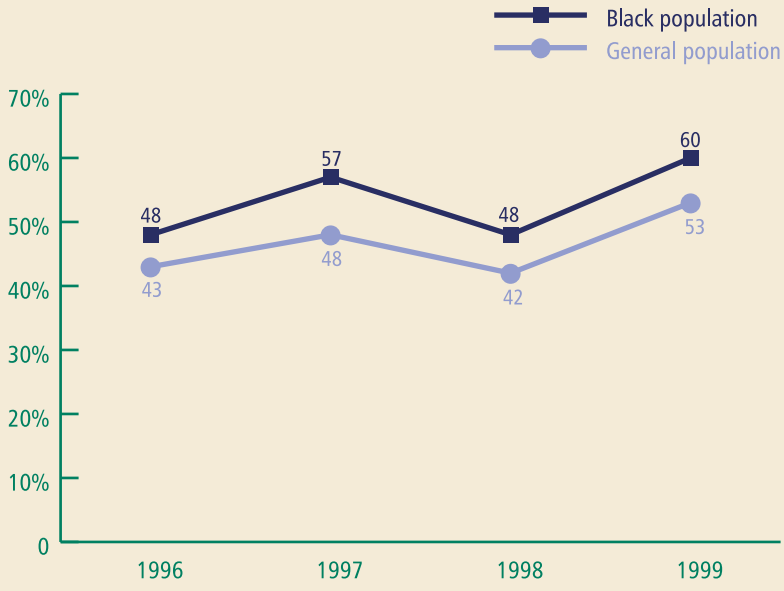
Table 5.6: **Wisconsin Fourth-Graders Scoring at or above Proficiency on the Knowledge and Concepts Examination 1997–98—1999–2000**

Subject	1997–98	1999–2000
Reading	41%	52%
Math	21	47
Science	25	63
Social studies	27	62

Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, *Wisconsin School Performance Report* (Madison: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction), available online at http://208.170.76.100/DPI/query.asp?yr=…=3619&school=&subject.

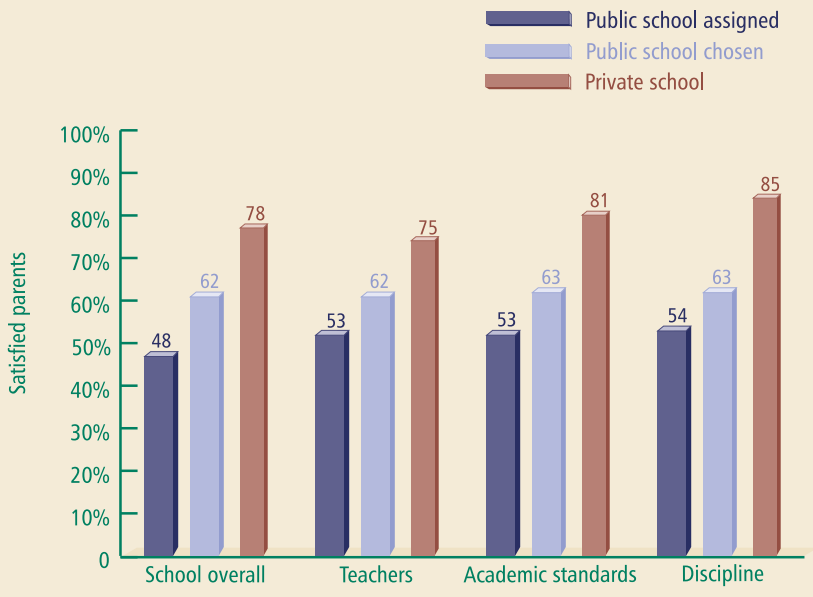
Moreover, many contend that voucher support is decreasing in the general public and, therefore, undesirable. To the contrary, overall voucher support, whether for public or privately funded vouchers, is on the rise, particularly among poor minorities,[22] who also show strong support for school choice in general.[23] A 1999 survey found that 60 percent of blacks favored vouchers, a higher figure than the general public. Moreover, support swelled to 72 percent among blacks earning less than $15,000 a year.[24] In addition, parents whose children attend private schools or have a choice in regard to the public school their children attend have a higher degree of satisfaction with their children's education than those parents whose children attend assigned public schools. (See figures 5.8 and 5.9.)

Figure 5.8: **Support for School Vouchers 1996–99**



Source: David A. Bositis, *1999 National Opinion Poll—Education* (Washington, DC: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, 1999), available online at http://www.jointcenter.org.

Figure 5.9: **Parents' Satisfaction with Schools**
Grades 3–12, 1999



Source: Howard Fuller, "The Continuing Struggle against Unequal Educational Opportunity," speech delivered at the National Press Club, Washington, DC (24 August 2000).

Over the past 10 years, vouchers have moved from the outer edge of acceptability to the center of education reform discussions. Moreover, the voucher programs in existence serve not the rich but the poor. In the 1999–2000 school year, there were 3 publicly funded voucher programs and 60 privately funded voucher programs. Of those existing voucher programs, every one served needy children.

School choice, specifically voucher programs, actually bridges the divide between the rich and the poor. With philanthropists funding the majority of the 60 private voucher

programs, and vouchers providing the opportunity for less-advantaged children to attend private schools or schools of their choice, the advantaged and the disadvantaged can work for the same ends. Parents, regardless of socioeconomic status, want a good education for their children, and school choice may provide that opportunity.

Proposition: Catholic schools provide high marks at low costs.

Historically, Catholic schools have played a significant role in educating America's children. They continue to be important and effective players in the field, despite substantial changes in the size and makeup of their collective student body over the last 4 decades. Studies show that Catholic schools advance the academic, moral, and religious development of the students in their care and they do it at less than half the cost of public schools.

Catholic schools are characterized by a strong sense of community, high academic standards, and a committed faculty. Students are disciplined and orderly. Academic achievement is notable, particularly among inner-city black families, where parental satisfaction also is high.

The number of children that Catholic schools educate has fallen in recent decades. It peaked in 1960, when about 1 in every 8 children was attending a Catholic school; by 2000, the ratio had fallen to 1 in 20. (See table 5.7.)[25]

Table 5.7: **Catholic School Enrollment 1919–20—2000–01**

School year	Catholic school enrollment			Catholic school enrollment as a percentage of:	
	Elementary	Secondary	Total	Total national enrollment	Total private school enrollment
1919–20	1,795,673	129,848	1,925,521	8.3%	na
1929–30	2,222,598	241,869	2,464,467	8.7	93.0%
1939–40	2,035,182	361,123	2,396,305	8.5	91.8
1949–50	2,560,815	505,572	3,066,387	10.8	90.7
Fall 1960	4,373,422	880,369	5,253,791	12.9	92.6
1970–71	3,355,478	1,008,088	4,363,566	8.5	81.4
1975–76	2,525,000	890,000	3,415,000	7.6	68.3
1985–86	2,061,000	760,000	2,821,000	6.3	50.8
1990–91	1,883,906	591,533	2,475,439	5.3	47.3
1995–96	1,884,461	606,650	2,491,111	4.9	44.0
1996–97	1,885,037	612,161	2,497,198	4.8	43.1
1997–98	1,879,737	618,157	2,497,894	4.7	42.6
1998–99	1,876,211	620,277	2,496,488	4.7	42.1
1999–2000	1,877,236	623,180	2,500,416	4.9	44.2
2000–01	2,004,037	643,264	2,647,301	4.8	44.1

Source: Thomas D. Snyder, ed., *Digest of Education Statistics, 2001* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2002), table 62, p. 73.
Notes: Excludes prekindergarten enrollment.
Data reported by the National Catholic Educational Association and data reported by the National Center for Education Statistics are not directly comparable because survey procedures and definitions differ.

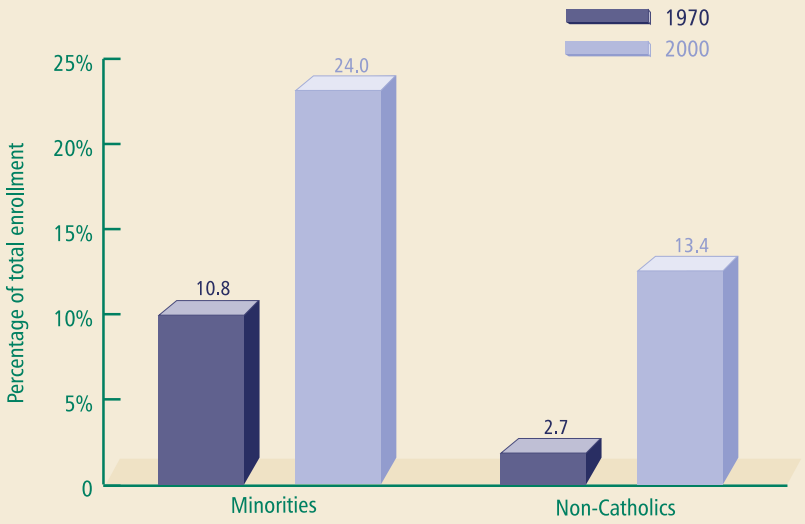
The composition of the student body has undergone a dramatic change, as well. Enrollment changed in terms of race, ethnicity, and religion. For example, in the 1970–71 school year, minority enrollment in Catholic schools was 10.7 percent of total enrollment. In the 1999–2000 school year, minority enrollment had more than doubled to 24 percent. Furthermore, in 1970, only 2.7 percent of Catholic school enrollment was non-Catholic; in 2000, 13.4 percent of enrollment was non-Catholic. (See table 5.8 and figure 5.10.)[26]

Table 5.8: **Catholic School Enrollment By Race/Ethnicity, 1970–2000**

Ethnicity	1970	1983–84	1993–94	1994–95	1999–2000
Black	6.5%	8.6%	8.4%	8.3%	7.8%
Hispanic	5.2	8.9	10.7	10.6	10.7
Asian American	0.5	2.4	4.0	3.9	3.5
Native American	na	0.3	0.6	0.4	0.3
All others	87.8	79.8	76.3	76.9	77.7

Source: Dale McDonald, *United States Catholic Elementary and Secondary School Statistics 1994–1995* (Washington, DC: National Catholic Educational Association, 1995), available online at http://www.ncea.org.

Figure 5.10: **Catholic School Demographics 1970–2000**



Source: Dale McDonald, *United States Catholic Elementary and Secondary School Statistics 1999–2000* (Washington, DC: National Catholic Educational Association, 2000), available online at http://www.ncea.org.

A 1990 study comparing Catholic schools and public schools in New York City showed very different outcomes for minority and disadvantaged youth.

- Catholic high schools graduated 95 percent of their senior class each year; the public schools graduated slightly more than 50 percent of their seniors.
- More than 66 percent of the Catholic school graduates received the New York State Regents diploma; only about 5 percent of the public school students received this distinction.
- Catholic school students achieved an average combined SAT I score of 803; the average combined score for public school students was 642.
- Sixty percent of black Catholic school students scored above the national average for black students on the SAT I; less than 30 percent of public school black students in New York City scored above the average.[27]

Early studies comparing Catholic and public schools were often discounted. Critics claimed that they failed to account for the possibility of selectivity bias in Catholic schools and that selectivity bias left the worst-performing and -behaving students in public schools. Paying special attention to selectivity bias, by restricting comparisons to like students and using data from the U.S. Department of Education's *High School and Beyond* study and other recent reports, the evidence confirms that Catholic schools still produce outstanding long-run results and lifetime advantage.[28]

- Attending a Catholic high school raises an inner-city student's probability of finishing high school and entering college by 17 percentage points.
- Black and Hispanic students attending urban Catholic schools are more than twice as likely to graduate from

college as their counterparts in public schools: 27 percent of black and Hispanic Catholic school graduates who started college went on to graduate, compared with 11 percent from urban public schools.

- When compared with their public school counterparts, minority students in urban Catholic schools can expect roughly 8 percent higher wages in the future.[29]

A study of New York City schools released in 2001 confirms the stellar results of Catholic schools. When comparing per-student costs and student performances in public and Catholic schools in 88 public and 77 Catholic elementary and middle schools located in three New York boroughs—the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Manhattan—evidence shows that Catholic schools are at least twice as efficient and their students perform better on state tests.[30]

To ensure a fair comparison, all expenditures that did not have a private school counterpart were deducted, including, but not exclusively, all monies spent on transportation, special education, school lunch, and bureaucratic functions. After removing all of these expenditures—which make up nearly 40 percent of the cost of running the New York City public schools—the analysis showed that public schools still spent more than $5,000 per pupil each year, compared to the $2,400 spent by Catholic schools.[31]

Test score comparisons also were revealing. When schools serving populations with similar poverty levels were compared, excluding special education student test scores, Catholic schools outperformed public schools on state-administered math and reading tests for the third- and sixth-grade levels in all comparisons. Additional analysis showed that test scores remained higher in Catholic schools even after adjustments were made for race and ethnicity. Other studies show that black students from low-income schools learn more—or at least as much—at half the cost. (See figure 5.11.)[32]

Figure 5.11: **Reading Scores and Welfare Dependency**
New York City[a] Sixth-Graders, 1997–98

Source: New York State Education Department, *1997–98 School Expenditure Report.*
Notes: a. Bronx, Brooklyn, and Manhattan borough elementary and middle schools only, 88 public and 77 Catholic.
Differences are statistically significant at the 5 percent confidence level for each category.

Although their enrollments have declined, the effect of Catholic schools still stands out. Catholic schools continue to contribute to the fabric of American education.

Proposition: Home education is the fastest-growing alternative to public schooling, and a good one at that.

Many view home education as a fringe alternative and an option for the paranoid or overly protective parent. Within the last decade, however, home schooling has become part of the mainstream in education reform discussions. Moreover, it appears to produce results worth acknowledging. Data from the largest survey and testing program for students in home schools provide a look at the exponential growth of the number of children home-schooled, their academic performance, and motivating factors for those who choose to home-school.[33]

Home education has grown faster than voucher and charter school enrollments combined. With virtually zero "enrollees" in 1978, home-schooled students now comprise more than 3 percent of total elementary and secondary education enrollment in the United States.[34] Their numbers are growing at an estimated 15–25 percent annually; in the year 2000, approximately 1,700,000 elementary and secondary students were home educated. (See table 5.9.)[35]

Table 5.9: **Home School Enrollment 1978–2000**

Year	Enrollment
1978	12,500
1985	183,000
1990	301,000
1996	1,225,000
2000	1,700,000

Source: Home School Legal Defense Association, *Homeschooling Research* (Purcellville, VA: Home School Legal Defense Association, National Center for Home Education), available online at www.hslda.org.
Note: Enrollment data for home education are limited.

What is known about those who are home-schooling? Most parents who choose to home-school their children are motivated by a desire to teach specific philosophical or religious values, control social interaction, develop close families, or encourage high academic achievement. The ability to be flexible and tailor curricula to the specific needs of their children is an additional incentive.[36] The demographics of home school families are not representative of the general U.S. population, and neither are their results.

- In 1998, 94 percent of home-schooled children were white, 0.8 percent black, 0.2 percent Hispanic, and 5 percent unknown. In contrast, total enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools by race was 63 percent white, 17 percent black, 15 percent Hispanic, and 5 percent unknown.[37]
- Some 97 percent of home-schooled children were in married-couple families; nationwide in 1997, only 72 percent of all families with 1 or more children enrolled in school were in married-couple families.[38]
- The majority of home school families (62.1 percent) have 3 or more children, with a mean of about 3.1 children per family. Nationwide nearly 80 percent of all families with school-age children have 1 or 2 children, with a mean of about 1.9 children per family.[39]
- A large percentage of home school mothers are stay-at-home moms not participating in the labor force; in 1998, 76.9 percent of home school mothers did not work for pay. Contrast that to national figures, where only about 30 percent of married women with children under 18 were not labor force participants.[40]
- Nearly 88 percent of home school students have parents who continued their education after high school; less

than 50 percent of the general population attended or graduated from college.[41]

- Almost one out of every four home school students has at least one parent who is a certified teacher: 19.7 percent of home school mothers and 7.1 percent of home school fathers are certified. Teachers make up only approximately 3 percent of the national labor force.[42]
- The median family income for home school families in 1997 was about $52,000; nationwide the median income for all families with children was approximately $43,545.[43]
- Only 1.7 percent of fourth-grade home-schooled children watch 4 or more hours of television per day; nationwide 38.5 percent of all fourth-graders watch 4 or more hours of television per day.[44]

Achievement is the best barometer for success or failure in the education arena. When comparing the achievement of home school students with public and private school students, home school students stand out. The median scale scores for home school students on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) or the Tests of Achievement and Proficiency (TAP) are well above those of their public and private school counterparts in every subject and in every grade. (See table 5.10.)[45]

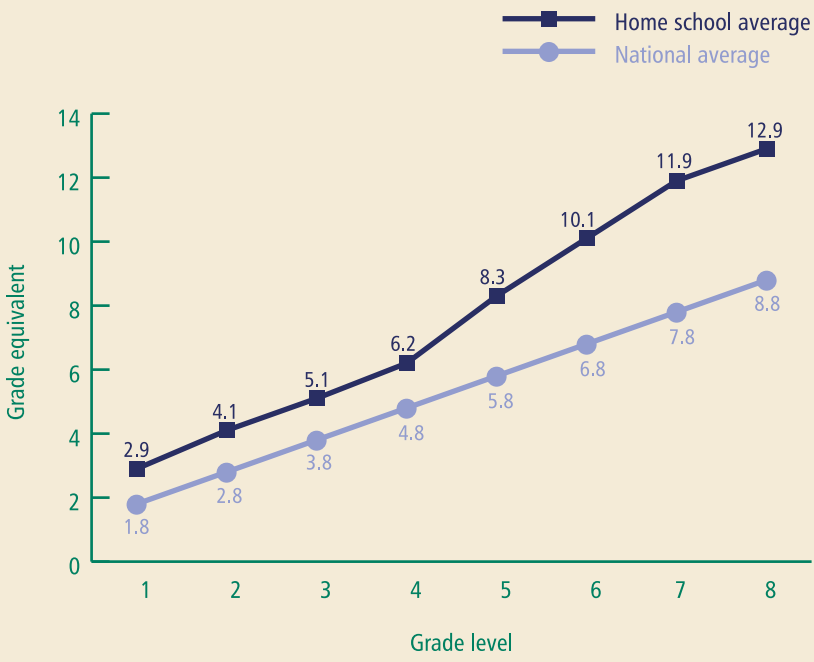
Table 5.10: **Home and Private School Student Performance**
Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, 1998

Grade	National median	Home school students: Median composite score	Home school students: Percentile	Private and Catholic school national percentile
1	150	170	91%	89%
2	168	192	90	88
3	185	207	81	74
4	200	222	76	72
5	214	243	79	71
6	227	261	81	71
7	239	276	82	72
8	250	288	81	72
9	260	292	77	63
10	268	310	84	71
11	275	310	78	63
12	280	326	86	74

Source: Lawrence M. Rudner, "Scholastic Achievement and Demographic Characteristics of Home School Students in 1998," *Education Policy Analysis Archives* 7, no. 8 (23 March 1999), available online at http://www.epaa.asu.edu.

Instead of comparing specific grades and their corresponding test scores, another way to evaluate test scores is to look at the composite scale score in relationship to relative grade placement, the grade equivalent score. For example, the sixth-grade home school student's median composite score of 261 is the median score for a ninth-grader nationwide. Over time, the achievement gap between home school students and their peers nationwide widens. By the time home school students reach eighth grade, their median scores are four grade equivalents above their public school peers. (See figure 5.12.)[46]

Figure 5.12: **Grade Equivalents**
Home Schooled Students, 1998



Source: Lawrence M. Rudner, "Scholastic Achievement and Demographic Characteristics of Home School Students in 1998," *Education Policy Analysis Archives* 7, no. 8 (23 March 1999), available online at http://www.epaa.asu.edu.

An interesting sidebar is the performance of home-schoolers in national geography bees. In the 2002 national geography bee, for example, 4 of the 10 finalists were home-schooled. The winner—who was the youngest finalist, at age 10, and the third-place finisher were both home-schooled.

Home school students and their families are not a representative cross-section of the United States population; there are distinct demographic differences. Furthermore, it is evident by the degree of parental involvement that there is a very strong

commitment to education and children among home school parents.

There are a few things, however, we can learn from this small, select group. What they're doing appears to be working, and working quite well. According to a recent study by Caroline Hoxby, various family aspects have a greater impact on school achievement than school inputs; the growth and achievement of home school students, by definition in homes where parents have made a serious commitment to education, appears to validate this point.[47]

Proposition: The push for increased accountability is apparent, but better schools are still to come

Dissatisfaction regarding public schools has grown, and with it mounting pressure to hold schools responsible for their results. Until the 1966 Coleman report, *Equality of Educational Opportunity,* accountability efforts focused on the measuring and tallying of resources (inputs). The Coleman report, followed by *A Nation at Risk* (1983), shifted attention to the measurement of outcomes and achievement. In the early 1990s, states, districts, and schools began to establish measurable standards to gauge progress and improvement. Establishing an effective accountability program takes careful planning, strategic implementation, and patience. However, because of poor design, accountability programs have often been ineffective, and poor evaluation techniques and bad programs lead to unintended consequences.

Although there are critics, the majority of the general public, parents and teachers included, greatly favor holding students accountable to standards. An August 1999 survey by Peter D. Hart reported that 73 percent of teachers and 92 percent of principals endorse standards-based reform.[48] Furthermore, according to an August 2000 Business Roundtable survey, 65 percent of parents and 70 percent of the general public answered "Yes" when asked whether students should be required to pass state tests before graduating from high school, "even if they have passing grades in their classes." Support was notably higher, 76 and 81 percent, respectively, as long as students were allowed to take the state exams several times, which is common in most states.[49]

A good accountability program does not consist of requirements and tests alone. Currently, there are many requirements

and tests at all different grade levels, none of which necessarily ensures competence or effectiveness. For example, nearly all states administer some form of norm-referenced exam, a test where results are reported on a comparative basis—kids are measured relative to one another, not against established academic standards. Most states, however, also use a standardized test that is developed, administered, and scored under controlled conditions, and a minimum score must be achieved to pass.[50] Neither norm-referenced nor standardized tests can stand alone in their guarantee of effective accountability. An effective accountability program consists of four primary components:

- Standards
- Testing
- Incentives
- Flexibility

Providing an objective viewpoint on the effectiveness of state accountability programs can be difficult. As of August 2000, the Education Commission of the States (a clearinghouse for educational issues across the states), *Education Week's* "Quality Counts 2000," and the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation's *State of the State* Standards provided the most comprehensive comparison. (See table 5.11 and figure 5.13.)

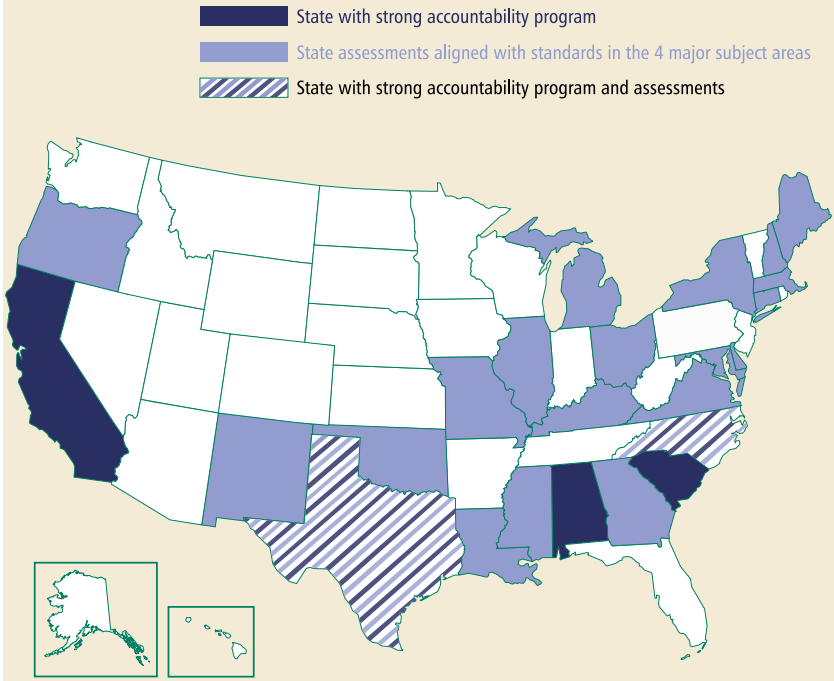
Table 5.11: **Standards and Accountability**

By State

State	Students must master 10th-grade standards to graduate[a]	Rewards	Criterion-referenced assessments aligned to state standards				Strong accountability, assessments, and high standards
			English	Math	History	Science	
Alabama	yes		yes	yes		yes	yes
Alaska	yes		yes	yes			
Arizona	yes		yes	yes			
Arkansas			yes	yes			
California	future	yes	yes	yes			yes
Colorado	future		yes	yes		yes	
Connecticut			yes	yes	yes	yes	
Delaware	yes		yes	yes	yes	yes	
Florida		yes	yes	yes			
Georgia	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	
Hawaii							
Idaho	future						
Illinois			yes	yes	yes	yes	
Indiana		yes	yes	yes			
Iowa							
Kansas			yes	yes			
Kentucky		yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	
Louisiana	future		yes	yes	yes	yes	
Maine			yes	yes	yes	yes	
Maryland	future	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	
Massachusetts	future		yes	yes	yes	yes	
Michigan			yes	yes	yes	yes	
Minnesota			yes	yes			
Mississippi			yes	yes	yes	yes	
Missouri			yes	yes	yes	yes	
Montana							
Nebraska							
Nevada	yes		yes	yes			
New Hampshire			yes	yes	yes	yes	
New Jersey	future	yes	yes	yes		yes	
New Mexico	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	
New York	yes		yes	yes	yes	yes	
North Carolina		yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
North Dakota							
Ohio	future		yes	yes	yes	yes	
Oklahoma			yes	yes	yes	yes	
Oregon			yes	yes	yes	yes	
Pennsylvania		yes	yes	yes			
Rhode Island			yes	yes			
South Carolina	future		yes	yes			yes
South Dakota							
Tennessee		yes	yes	yes			
Texas		yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Utah		yes					
Vermont			yes	yes		yes	
Virginia	future		yes	yes	yes	yes	
Washington	future		yes	yes			
West Virginia							
Wisconsin	future						
Wyoming			yes	yes			
U.S. total	**8**	**13**	**40**	**40**	**21**	**25**	**5**

Sources: Chester E. Finn Jr. and Michael J. Petrilli, eds., *The State of the State Standards, 2000* (Washington D.C.: The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation; January 2000); Lori Meyer, Greg F. Orlofsky, Ronald A. Skinner, and Scott Spicer, *Quality Counts 2002* (Bethesda, MD: Education Week on the Web, 2002), available online at http://www.edweek.org.
Note: a. 1999–2000.

Figure 5.13: **Education Accountability By State**



Sources: Lori Meyer, Greg F. Orlofsky, Ronald A. Skinner, and Scott Spicer, *Quality Counts 2002* (Bethesda, MD: Education Week on the Web, 2002), available online at http://www.edweek.org; Chester E. Finn, Jr., and Michael J. Petrilli, eds., *The State of the State Standards, 2000* (Washington DC: The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, January 2000).
Note: According to Finn and Petrilli's report, states with strong academic accountability systems have both clear and high academic standards and assessments designed to measure progress toward those standards.

Education Week data disclose the trend toward increasing accountability.

- In the 1997–98 school year, 45 states had adopted standards in at least one subject; by the 1999–2000 school year, 49 states had.

- In the 1997–98 school year, 38 states had adopted standards in English, math, social studies, and science; 44 had by 1999–2000.
- In the 1997–98 school year, 35 states had tests or some form of assessment that measured achievement according to set standards in at least one subject; 41 had by 1999–2000.
- In the 1997–98 school year, 17 states had tests or assessments that measured achievement according to set standards in English, math, social studies, and science; 21 had by 1999–2000.[51]

Furthermore, recent reports regarding the 2000–2001 and 2001–2002 school years show states continuing in their efforts toward increased accountability.[52]

Despite these efforts, the Fordham study found that only five states (Alabama, California, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Texas) had strong accountability programs, that is, high standards coupled with tests to measure progress and effectiveness.

Evidence that testing is on the rise can be seen by looking at test-scoring companies. National Computer Systems (NCS) works with states to develop customized, criterion-referenced exams and also scores them. In the spring of 1998, the number of test sheets that the company scored leapt to 177.7 million, up from 88.3 million in the spring of 1997.[53] Although elementary and secondary enrollment increased less than 2 percent between the 1997 and 1998 school years, the number of test sheets scored by NCS increased by more than 100 percent.[54] Some of this increase is a result of more open-ended questions, which require longer answers and more test sheets than multiple-choice questions. Regardless of these changes, there has been a decided overall increase in the number of tests taken.

Changes in test sales, compared to enrollment in grades K–12, for the period from 1960 to 1990 are notable, as well.

Revenues from sales of commercially published standardized tests increased from approximately $35 million to about $95 million (in 1982 dollars), while enrollment grew by only 15 percent.[55] The increase in the number of tests taken by students and ballooning revenues is revealing; however, test-taking does not necessarily equate to effective accountability or improved achievement.

Time is still needed to show large-scale improvements, but the state of Florida provides a snapshot of the possibilities when high-stakes standards, regular and tailored assessment, and flexibility are integrated simultaneously. In 1999, Governor Jeb Bush's A+ Plan for Education became the first program to offer state-paid tuition scholarships for children in failing public schools to attend public, private, or parochial schools of choice. In Florida, schools are given a grade of A, B, C, D, or F, based on student performance. Schools that improve their scores are rewarded with up to $100 per pupil. Students in schools that get a failing grade for 2 consecutive years are entitled to choose another school by using their "opportunity scholarship," worth up to $4,000 a year, regardless of their income or their grades. In the first year (1999–2000), 134 families from two elementary schools were offered scholarships; children from 78 of these families attended public schools. It was projected that as many as 78 schools would qualify in the 2000 school year. However, no new schools received a grade of F in 2000, and all 78 schools that were given grades of F in 1999 made substantial progress on the writing part of their state's standardized tests.[56]

Many believe that the higher scores prove that the A+ Plan works and that raising expectations in the classroom gets results. A recent survey of more than 750 public school teachers in Florida found a large number who concede that the possibility or threat of vouchers this year helped cause a dramatic improvement in test scores at some of Florida's worst public schools. Of the respondents expressing an opinion, 65 percent

said that Florida's A+ Plan for Education played a role in education changes. Only 17 percent said it did not.[57]

Early results indicate that accountability, combining high-stakes standards, integrated testing and assessment, and flexibility, produces better schools. If, however, accountability becomes merely another form of increased regulation—failing to give parents, teachers, and administrators the opportunity to participate and tailor solutions to their children, their school, and their community—it will not be successful.

Proposition: Summer school gives clear evidence that accountability is changing the way we educate.

As student achievement has waned, social promotion—where students are allowed to pass from grade to grade with their peers without satisfying academic requirements or meeting performance indicators—has become increasingly common. Thus, the desire to improve achievement has led to a renewed focus on decreasing social promotion. This leaves teachers begging for solutions for children who have fallen behind.

A majority of teachers surveyed in 1996 indicated that they had promoted unprepared students in the past year, and 60 percent of teachers surveyed felt under pressure to promote students out of fear that high failure rates reflected poorly on schools and administrators.[58] Not surprisingly, research shows that passing students on to the next grade when they are unprepared neither increases student achievement nor properly prepares students for college or future employment. Thus, the new emphasis on summer school is a by-product of the national movement to raise academic performance, improve scores on standardized tests, and end automatic promotion based on age rather than achievement.

More students than ever before were enrolled in summer school in the year 2000; approximately one in five students in the nation's 53 largest urban districts attended summer school. Districts in Chicago, Miami, and St. Louis led the increased attendance, with more than 40 percent of students enrolled during the summer months, some required to attend and others accepting the option to attend. In recent years, other districts have also experienced dramatic increases in both summer-time remediation and enrichment programs.[59]

- Cleveland's summer school enrollment jumped to 18,000 students in the summer of 2000; enrollment was only 1,000 in 1998.
- New Orleans's summer school enrollment increased from 500 in 1995 to 11,000 in 2000.
- Boston's anticipated summer school enrollment in the 2000 school year was 12,000, up from 2,800 five years earlier.
- New York, in an effort to end social promotion, projected 2000 summer school enrollment to be roughly 264,000.
- By June 2000, 14 states had enacted legislation expanding summer school requirements, and 24 of the nation's 53 largest urban districts had mandatory attendance for some students.[60]

A recent survey of the nation's 100 largest school districts found that 59 percent of the districts offer summer school as an alternative to social promotion and 55 percent are using the extra weeks to help students meet more challenging state and local standards. More than 80 percent of the districts offering remedial summer programs held back students who did not successfully complete summer school. Every one of the 100 largest school districts in the nation reported some type of summer program in operation during the summer of 1999. Twenty-five years earlier, a similar survey indicated that only half of U.S. school systems offered summer school.[61]

Past studies on the effectiveness of summer school programs have been mixed; however, recent comprehensive studies report that the vast majority of programs have had positive effects on student achievement. In Harris Cooper's study *Making the Most of Summer School,* a recent compilation of 93 summer school research reports, 85 percent of students who attended summer school outperformed their nonattending peers.[62]

Chicago's 2000 summer school program, for example, reported its best promotion rates since they began requiring their failing third-, sixth-, and eighth-grade students to attend summer school. According to their 2000 district report, 83 percent of the 9,722 Chicago third-graders required to attend summer school met promotion criteria at summer's end, nearly double the rate for each of the 3 years prior. Of the summer school students in the third-, sixth-, and eighth-grade, less than 10 percent were held back.[63]

New Orleans results, however, were not as encouraging. Hundreds of eighth-graders failed to pass a retest of the newly required ninth-grade advancement exam. Of the 1,416 students who took the language arts retest after 4 weeks of study, 80 percent still failed. In math, 86 percent of the 2,819 who took the retest failed. Reports did show, however, that 75 percent of the students who attended summer school did improve their test scores, perhaps just not enough to pass the advancement exam.[64]

Data from New York City provides the most recent and accurate assessment of a large school district's summer school program. In the summer of 2000, the New York City Board of Education instituted a large-scale summer school program for students in grades 3–12 who had failed to meet standards for promotion to the next grade, as well as for students who met promotion criteria but who were believed to be still at risk of failing to achieve high academic standards. This program represented the largest summer program ever offered anywhere in the United States. In 2001, the program enrolled nearly 375,000 students in more than 800 locations in the five boroughs of New York City. The results appear to confirm that summer school makes a difference when it comes to achievement. (See table 5.12.)[65]

Table 5.12: **Recent New York City Summer School 2000 & 2001**

	Summer school students	
	2000 (%)	2001 (%)
Enrollment		
Total, grades K–12	279,927	374,411
Total, grades 3–12	237,509	314,674
Enrichment students, grades K–12	185,423	184,047
Mandated students, grades 3–12[a]	94,504	190,364
Achievement in reading and math, grades 3–8[b]		
Mandated students scoring at Level 2 or above in reading	10,710 (41.2%)	16,301 (48.0%)
Mandated students scoring at Level 2 or above in math	12,587 (37.5%)	16,601 (39.6%)
Promotion and retention, grades 3–9		
Mandated students who were promoted, grades 3–8	38,960 (64.0%)	46,539 (64.7%)
Mandated students who were retained, grades 3–8	21,105 (35.0%)	23,942 (33.3%)
Passing of Regents Examinations, grades 9–12		
Mandated students who took one Regents examination and passed at 55% or higher	2,268 (37.3%)	8,981 (50.5%)
Mandated students who took one Regents examination and passed at 65% or higher	1,185 (19.5%)	5,091 (28.6%)

Source: New York City Board of Education, *Summer School 2001 Evaluation Report* (New York: Metis Associates, March 2002), available online at http://www.nycenet.edu.
Notes: a. There are no mandated students in grades K–2.
b. Does not include ESL students.

The accountability push has encouraged many districts to work toward ending social promotion. The increasing availability of summer schools and their burgeoning enrollments are signs of this endeavor.

Proposition: California's class size reduction appears to be an education reform initiative gone bad.

Identifying effective school reform policies sounds easy enough; however, a seemingly good idea implemented in haste can bring more harm than good. California's class size reduction (CSR) initiative is a perfect example. At face value, everyone would agree that achievement should be enhanced by more teachers teaching fewer students. With smaller class size, however, more teachers, more classroom space, and more money are needed. Class size reduction may be politically savvy—60 percent of parents surveyed in a *U.S. News* poll said they would be more likely to vote for a political candidate who wants to raise taxes if the money went to pay for smaller class sizes in kindergarten through third grade—but across-the-board cuts in class size do not appear to be the most cost-effective or achievement-effective way to spend education money.[66]

Nearly one-eighth of the nation's public elementary and secondary students are enrolled in California.[67] Prior to 1996, California had the highest student-teacher ratio in the nation;[68] in 1996, California's state legislature passed SB 1777, a reform measure aimed at cutting class size in the early school grades from what had been an average of 28 students to a maximum of 20 students. According to many, the CSR initiative was and still is the largest state educational reform in history. The program incurs costs of approximately $1.5 billion annually and affects more than 1.8 million students.[69]

The policy was inspired by Tennessee's Project Student/Teacher Achievement Ratio (STAR), which suggested that reducing class size to 15 students positively affects student achievement. For example, 69 percent of STAR project

first-graders in smaller classes passed the state's reading test, compared to 58 percent of students in larger classes.[70]

California, however, differs from Tennessee in many respects. California's policy targets all students; Tennessee's included only 10,000 carefully controlled students. California's program reduced its maximum class size of 33 students down to 20; Tennessee took its class size of 22–26 students down to 13–17. This translated to approximately 250 additional teachers needed in Tennessee and more than 25,000 new teachers needed in California.

Moreover, because of the comprehensive nature of California's program, it lacked two important ingredients that Tennessee schools had—adequate space and enough qualified teachers for program implementation. The greatest concern, however, is that a study of Tennessee's Project STAR did not provide convincing evidence of long-term achievement gains.[71] The study shows that students in substantially smaller classes in their first year of schooling (whether kindergarten or first grade) perform better than those remaining in classes of larger size. No similar benefits, however, were observed for older grades.[72]

Despite this shaky evidence, California proceeded with the CSR policy. At the time of implementation, the nation's education system was short on teachers who were skilled and willing to teach. With California's CSR initiative, the lack of available, experienced, effective teachers was exacerbated. In 1997, for example, school districts had 18,000 new slots to fill, and as a result, nearly two-thirds of the new hires had little or no teaching experience.[73] Decades of research confirm that the quality of teacher affects the level of student achievement, and many consider it the single most important factor in ensuring that students learn. When there are not enough good teachers, students suffer.[74]

CSR costs, both economic and otherwise, were further exacerbated by space shortages. For example, throughout the state,

schools began parking portable classrooms on their playgrounds as fast as they could purchase them. By 1997, 7,000 portable classrooms were already back-ordered, and several thousand of the "temporary" structures were only permitted to be used for 2 years, according to state law. When total costs for new construction are considered, the true costs of the CSR initiative are actually much higher.[75]

Numerous studies show that teacher quality has a greater proven impact on student performance than class size.[76] Two important observations can be made when evaluating California's CSR initiative: (1) The teacher quality in California's schools has dramatically decreased, particularly in already low-performing schools; and (2) economic costs are very high. Recent evaluations comparing the whole 1997–98 fourth-grade class, which had little or no exposure to reduced size classes, with the complete 1998–99 fourth-grade class, which had over a year of exposure to CSR, found, on average, no difference in achievement. Furthermore, the program has not reduced the gap in achievement between low-income, minority, or English language students and other students.[77] Did CSR work? Preliminary evaluations say marginally, at best.

Education reform policies should be well researched and have identifiable outcomes before implementation. Despite the lack of solid evidence, though, numerous states have already followed California's trend.[78] To be successful, the benefits or results must outweigh the costs. In 1997, the cost of implementation included a 7.5 percent increase in state-level education spending, with no noticeable impact on achievement.

Chapter Notes

1. Thomas D. Snyder, ed., *Digest of Education Statistics, 2001* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2002), table 3, p. 12; Dale McDonald, *United States Catholic Elementary and Secondary School Statistics 1994–1995* (Washington, DC: National Catholic Educational Association, 1995), available online at http://www.ncea.org; Dale McDonald, *United States Catholic Elementary and Secondary School Statistics 1999–2000* (Washington, DC: National Catholic Educational Association, 2000), available online at http://www.ncea.org; Center for Education Reform, *Charter School Highlights and Statistics* (Washington, DC: Center for Education Reform, 2000), available online at http://www.edreform.com; Marquette University, Institute for the Transformation of Learning, Office of Research, *School Choice Enrollment Growth* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University, 2000), available online at http://www.schoolchoiceinfo.org; Children First America, *The Road to Success: Private Vouchers Helping American Children* (Bentonville, AR: Children First America, 1999); Home School Legal Defense Association, *Homeschooling Research* (Purcellville, VA: Home School Legal Defense Association, National Center for Home Education), available online at www.hslda.org.
2. Center for Education Reform, *Charter School Highlights and Statistics.*
3. National Center for Education Statistics, *The State of Charter Schools Third-Year Report* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, May 1999).
4. Snyder, *Digest of Education Statistics, 2001,* table 3, p.12; Marquette University, *School Choice Enrollment Growth;* Children First America, *The Road to Success: Private Vouchers Helping American Children.*
5. David A. Bositis, *1999 National Opinion Poll—Education* (Washington, DC: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, 1999), available online at http://www.jointcenter.org.
6. Nina H. Shokraii, "Why Catholic Schools Spell Success for America's Inner-City Children," *Backgrounder,* no. 1128 (30 June, 1997), available online at http://www.heritage.org.
7. Ibid.
8. Home School Legal Defense Association, *Homeschooling Research.* Note: A study by the Department of Education entitled "Homeschooling in the United States: 1999" was recently released;

however, the sample size for the study was quite small (275 home-school students). The results from this study were quite similar to the results of Lawrence Rudner's study "Scholastic Achievement and Demographic Characteristics of Home School Students in 1998"; however, Rudner's sample size was much larger (20,760 students). One distinct difference between the studies was the projected number of students home-educated within the United States. The Department of Education based 2000 "enrollment" projections at roughly 1,000,000. In this proposition, the larger study results (Rudner, 1999) were used as the primary data source.

9. Education Commission of the States, *ECS State Notes* (Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States, August 2000), available online at www.ecs.org.
10. Jodi Wilgoren, "Summer Classes Expanding in Push to Improve Skills," *New York Times* (5 July 2000).
11. Ibid.
12. National Center for Education Statistics, *The State of Charter Schools Third-Year Report;* National Center for Education Statistics, *The State of Charter Schools Fourth-Year Report* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, January 2000).
13. National Center for Education Statistics, *The State of Charter Schools Fourth-Year Report.*
14. Ibid.
15. National Center for Education Statistics, *The State of Charter Schools Third-Year Report.*
16. Caroline M. Hoxby, "Rising Tide," *Education Next* 1, no. 4 (Winter 2001), pp. 69–74.
17. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, *Wisconsin School Performance Report* (Madison: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction), available online at http://208.170.76.100/DPI/query.asp?yr=...=3619&school=&subject; Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, School Management Services, *Milwaukee Parental Choice Program* (Madison: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction), available online at wysiwyg://6/http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dfm/sms/mpcxgrde.html.
18. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, *Wisconsin School Performance Report;* Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, *Milwaukee Parental Choice Program.*

19. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, *Wisconsin School Performance Report*.
20. Frederick M. Hess, "The Work Ahead," *Education Next* 1, no. 4 (Winter 2001), pp. 8–13.
21. Ibid.
22. Bositis, *1999 National Opinion Poll—Education*.
23. Bositis, *1999 National Opinion Poll—Education*.
24. Howard Fuller, "The Continuing Struggle against Unequal Educational Opportunity," speech delivered at The National Press Club, Washington, DC (24 August 2000).
25. Snyder, *Digest of Education Statistics, 2001*, tables 3 and 63, pp. 12 and 73.
26. McDonald, *United States Catholic Elementary and Secondary School Statistics 1994–1995;* McDonald, *United States Catholic Elementary and Secondary School Statistics 1999–2000*.
27. Shokraii, "Why Catholic Schools Spell Success for America's Inner-City Children."
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. Paul E. Peterson and Herbert Walberg, "In New York City, Catholic Schools Do a Better Job—at Half the Cost," *Columbus Dispatch* (2 March 2001).
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. See note within endnote 8 starting, "A study by the Department of Education entitled 'Homeschooling in the United States: 1999' was recently released."
34. Snyder, *Digest of Education Statistics, 2001,* table 3, p. 12; Home School Legal Defense Association, *Homeschooling Research*.
35. Home School Legal Defense Association, *Homeschooling Research*.
36. Lawrence M. Rudner, "Scholastic Achievement and Demographic Characteristics of Home School Students in 1998," *Education Policy Analysis Archives* 7, no. 8 (23 March 1999), available online at http://www.epaa.asu.edu. Note: This study is comprised of the largest sample size ever used to evaluate home school students and their families; however, it should be noted that it was not possible within the parameters of the study to evaluate whether the sample is truly representative of the entire population of home school students.

37. Rudner, "Scholastic Achievement and Demographic Characteristics"; Jeanne Nathanson, *The Condition of Education 2000 in Brief* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2001), available online at http://nces.ed.gov.
38. Rudner, "Scholastic Achievement and Demographic Characteristics."
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. Rudner, "Scholastic Achievement and Demographic Characteristics"; Bureau of Labor Statistics, available online at ftp://ftp.bls.gov.
43. Rudner, "Scholastic Achievement and Demographic Characteristics"; Bureau of Labor Statistics; Bureau of the Census, available online at http://ferret.bls.census.gov.
44. Rudner, "Scholastic Achievement and Demographic Characteristics."
45. Ibid.
46. Rudner, "Scholastic Achievement and Demographic Characteristics." Note: Approximately 20 percent of eighth-grade students in public schools score similarly.
47. Hoxby, "If Families Matter Most, Where Do Schools Come In?"
48. Standards-based reform requires that achievement be measured against a set standard.
49. Diane Ravitch, "The Backlash against the Backlash," *The Weekly Standard* 6, no. 23 (26 February 2001).
50. Merrill Lynch, *The Book of Knowledge* (San Francisco: Merrill Lynch, Global Securities Research & Economics Group, 1999).
51. Lori Meyer, Greg F. Orlofsky, Ronald A. Skinner, and Scott Spicer, *Quality Counts 2002* (Bethesda, MD: *Education Week on the Web,* 2002), available online at http://www.edweek.org.
52. Ibid.
53. Merrill Lynch, *The Book of Knowledge*.
54. Snyder, *Digest of Education Statistics, 2001,* table 3, p. 12.
55. Gregory J. Cizek, "Filling in the Blanks: Putting Standardized Tests to the Test," *Fordham Report* 2, no. II (October 1998).
56. Nina Shrokraii Rees, "Florida State Profile," *School Choice 2000* (Washington, DC: Heritage Foundation, October 2000), available online at http://www.heritage.org.
57. Ibid.
58. National Center for Education Statistics, *Taking Responsibility for Ending Social Promotion: A Guide for Educators and State and Local*

Leaders (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, May 1999), available online at http://www.ed.gov.

59. Jodi Wilgoren, "Summer Classes Expanding in Push to Improve Skills."
60. Ibid.
61. G.D. Borman, "Summers Are for Learning," *Principal* 80, no. 3 (January 2001).
62. Ibid.
63. Robert C. Johnston, *Bumper Summer School Crop Yields Mixed Test Results* (Bethesda, MD: *Education Week on the Web,* 2000), available online at http://www.edweek.org.
64. Ibid.
65. New York City Board of Education, *Summer School 2001 Evaluation Report* (New York: Metis Associates, March 2002), available online at http://www.nycenet.edu.
66. Thomas Toch, Betsy Streisand, and Steven Butler, *Does Class Size Matter?* (Washington, DC: *U.S. News Online,* 13 October 1997), available online at http://www.usnews.com.
67. Ibid.
68. Policy Analysis for California Education, *California Class Size Reduction Evaluation Project,* available online at http://www.gse.berkeley.edu/research/PACE/pace_cal_class_size.html.
69. CSR Research Consortium, *Class Size Reduction in California: The 1998–99 Evaluation Findings,* available online at http://www.classize.org.
70. Toch, Streisand, and Butler, *Does Class Size Matter?*
71. Ibid.
72. Eric A. Hanushek, "Deconstructing RAND," *Education Matters* 1, no. 1 (Spring 2001), pp. 65–67.
73. Toch, Streisand, and Butler, *Does Class Size Matter?*
74. Lynn Olson, "Finding and Keeping Competent Teachers," *Education Week* XIX, no. 18 (13 January 2000); Education Trust, "New Frontiers for a New Century," *The Education Gadfly* 1, no. 9 (12 July 2001).
75. Toch, Streisand, and Butler, *Does Class Size Matter?*
76. Hanushek, "Deconstructing RAND"; Olson, "Finding and Keeping Competent Teachers."
77. CSR Research Consortium, *Class Size Reduction in California: The 1998–99 Evaluation Findings.*
78. Toch, Streisand, and Butler, *Does Class Size Matter?*