

□ *Good Education: Something More Than Fish and Garlic*

We know something is wrong when we walk into a crowded room and one-third of the people disperse. We try to talk with them—to tell them what nice guys we are and that our products are good for them. But their response is an expression of discomfort and the sound of their feet rushing toward the exit sign. Finally a close friend gives us the hint that salesmen hawking garlic and dried fish usually don't get a joyful reception. "But," we argue, "garlic is good for your blood and fish is excellent brain food; look at the Japanese children who eat fish! See how smart they are."

The world realized something was drastically wrong with communism when thousands of escapees risked fortune and life to elude armed guards, barbed wire and attack dogs to find liberty. The Berlin Wall had to come down. And it did! But before it crumbled, millions of people died in search of an alternative to the constraining grip of compulsory participation in Communism's "one size fits all" philosophy. People who needed a "different size" life style voted with their feet. They left the system.

Why, then, does our public education system enforce compulsory attendance only at schools that serve garlic and fish? The fact is that most people don't want dried fish and garlic, and most people don't like compulsory participation in communism or anything else!

There is a stark truth to be gleaned from the sound of at-risk student feet running toward the exit signs in public schools. More than one third of all teenagers currently enrolled in public schools will not be around to receive graduation diplomas. They would rather risk the unknown of street school than to taste our fish and garlic menu. They simply don't care to sit at our table. We obviously are dishing up substance that is not relevant to contemporary hunger pains. The would-be patrons are not hanging around to hear our "good-for-you" argument. And when we try to execute force-feeding with truant patrols, parole officers or in-school suspension, at-risk youth shut down mentally or scramble for the door. They exit!

Street school (where the menu is drug dealing, gang violence, STD survival, and crippling illiteracy) is the fastest growing educational institution in America. By the thousands, kids are hanging around dingy intersections learning how to survive in a world ripped to shreds by single parent families, physical abuse, damaged emotions and drugs. Neither world does them good. Street school is killing them while public school does not connect the compulsory education menu to cultural hurts.

The second fastest growing school is home school. Every year thousands of parents pull their children from the public school table to sit them in home dinning rooms where the menu is parental involvement, discipline, traditional values, high expectations and individualized mastery learning. Kids may even eat some fish and garlic. But they are mixed with home ingredients of love, protection, moral values, discipline peer selection and religion.

It's time to assess just what we are doing that is driving away customers, then to adjust our kitchen agenda so we can offer a more appealing menu. In the free enterprise arena, market demand drives profitability. Companies which offer products demanded by the customer stay in business. Those who offer only "fish and garlic" find an ever-decreasing population, and eventually go out of business. Wise corporate CEO's periodically sit back to analyze competition, social trends and new products, then adjust production to niche the future market arena. They are willing to change production systems, add new products, and if necessary, change personnel in order to survive.

Public education is at that juncture: adjust or go out of business. It's futile to keep insisting that all we need is more money, better facilities, more qualified staff, additional electronic gadgets more truant officers, higher standards or tougher accountability. Dining room tables and dingy streets have none of those!

The answer is to give up some menu items, add some selections and then dare to serve part of our menu in the free market arena where a large portion of our clientele has chosen to eat. It's time to work with the customer. Contemporary parents and students have tastes and needs far different than the menu offered in state controlled public education with its mandated academic essential elements permeated with some good stuff but deplete of items demanded in the market place: job entry skills, moral values, God-consciousness, alternative learning styles, free enterprise, environmental safety, individualized pacing, content-filled courses, positive role models, etc.

The all-too-common argument is that public schools can't afford to offer all those things, especially traditionally Judeo-Christian values. That is tinkling symbol argument and irrelevant to people who hear what is argued while the exit door is jammed with students on their way elsewhere to find what they need and demand and to get away from what they don't want: explicit sex education, lock-step learning, feel good about yourself without achievement junk, violence, etc. Forget the arguments, truant officers and demands for more money. Listen to the sound of the feet of customers!

They want private sector alternatives to existing public status quo education. Customers want a choice. And if the public sector will not provide alternatives, the private sector will eat on the street, at dining room tables, in storefronts, churches or industrial sites where the menu doesn't smell like garlic and fish.

Educational Choice is needed. It will enable youth to select from academic menus appropriate for students who refuse to eat at the standard public school table.

THINK ABOUT IT

#2

□ *Youth deserve educational choice.*

What's wrong with educational choice when inner city public schools are producing more dropouts than graduates? Less than 40% of inner city youth in Houston, Dallas, Fort Worth, Galveston, El Paso and San Antonio walk across a graduation stage.

Youth deserve educational options when school attendance is available only at an institution which fails to attract and graduate more youth than those who quit!

THINK ABOUT IT

#3

□ *Vouchers Benefit Local Public Schools and Teachers:*

Couldn't vouchers benefit local schools, especially classroom teachers? Let's champion their cause:

1. Removal of disruptive at-risk youth enables teachers to perform their career skills more peacefully;

2. Reduced student enrollment created by alternative schools establishes a more conducive learning environment for regular classrooms;
3. Local money retained by the public school is designated for classroom supplies. (Vouchers involve state money designated for students while local district money can be used to provide local school supplies)
4. Additional alternative schools created by voucher legislation offer career options for teachers who want to remain in education but in a “different” environment.

THINK ABOUT IT

#4

□ *Youth deserve a choice:*

By the end of 1998, the unwed birth rate among black mothers was an astonishing 68% and 19% among whites. 94% of all juvenile crime is committed by boys from single parent homes.

Pregnancy has become epidemic among girls from single parent homes—800, 000 became pregnant out of wed lock.

Traditionally, at-risk juveniles have no systematic exposure to traditional moral values, positive male role models, or positive life principles on which to break the life cycle inherited from their parents.

Public schools are the only formal institution which “processes” youth. Obviously something is not working. Doesn’t reason dictate that the present educational processing system needs change for at-risk youth? They need “something” that is not being delivered in public schools.

At-risk youth deserve educational alternatives to present circumstances. The time is overdue for serious consideration of vouchers and scholarships for youth who need/want exposure to values that can break the at-risk life cycle.

THINK ABOUT IT

#5

□ *Compare “apples with apples” in school choice:*

Pilot programs are valid when "apples are compared with apples." Data assumes validity when like components are measured against like components. Pending legislation to enable parents to apply education vouchers at private schools is a valid experimental concept. However, legislators will make a major blunder if they insist that alternative "choice" schools replicate the same conditions currently prevalent in regular public schools: accept all applicants, require accreditation, hire only certified teachers, use only state adopted textbooks, measure academics by Carnegie units, etc. Forcing private schools to be mini-patterns of public schools is not an experiment in something new; it is merely replication of existing monopolies.

Imposition of public school blue prints over private school programs simply forces private schools to embrace and replicate the identical circumstances which reduce public school effectiveness. Of particular concern is talk of requiring alternative "choice" schools to accept all applicants, including special education and IDEA students. That is not comparing "apples with apples." Such students enrolled in public schools are exempt from academic assessment tests and other features common to public schools. Moreover, public schools must hire special education teachers, whose per-pupil workload is much lower than the regular classroom teacher-pupil ratio. Additionally, public schools have access to federal funds specifically "earmarked" for special-ed. students. Consequently, the only way "apples could be compared with apples" is to fund the voucher

schools to operate special-education programs just like the public school programs. That, in effect would negate validity of an experimental program.

A valid experimental program should allow private schools to advertise services they provide and let parents decide whether or not to subscribe. But Accountability for services rendered is a valid requirement. "Choice" schools should be required to measure student achievement with comparable criteria applied to public schools. Thus the following "apples" could be required of "voucher" schools:

1. Report student attendance to the local public school district Public Education Information System (PEIMS) processor.
2. Administer state academic assessment tests to "voucher" students concurrently with students in regular school districts.
3. Comply with fire, health and safety regulations for public facilities.
4. Maintain student report cards, immunization records, and academic transcripts.
5. Certify compliance with state course criteria for a high school diploma.
6. Issue diplomas authorized by a Board of Directors in compliance with 501(c)(3) criteria.
7. Make available an annual financial statement disclosing application of "voucher" money.
8. Make staff and school records available to the legislature for discussion of the effectiveness of the experiment.

THINK ABOUT IT

#6

□ *Are profit motive voucher schools really a bad concept?*

As the debate over vouchers heats up, critics of school choice are taking "popshots" at the profit motive, alluding to some form of lurking evil. The irony is that the lifeblood of public schools rests in corporate profits, which are taxed to support teacher salaries, football uniforms, computers, etc. in public schools. Obviously profit is not a bad thing. Without it, public schools would not be funded.

But ineffective public schools (even though accredited and PEIMS-compliant) that experience 60% non-graduate rate are bad. Speculation is unnecessary. Potential "badness" isn't lurking; it is in residence in some public schools. Now is the time to stop speculating on "what ifs" about profit, and discuss alternatives to "what is" about low-performing public schools. Then give children an option among people who understand the free enterprise concept of "satisfied customers help you make a profit."

THINK ABOUT IT

#7

□ *Is there some arrogance in the accusation that vouchers steal money from public schools?*

Some public school board members, superintendents, principals and teachers claim that vouchers would take money from public schools whose governance rests with elected local citizens. Opposition to vouchers based on the theft concept seems a bit arrogant. Supposition is that only elected public school board members are competent to receive and apply state money to the needs of students.

The theft concept becomes a ploy to direct public (or legislative) attention from reality. In real life privately owned schools operate with the ultimate accountability—satisfied customers place their children under the care of private educators whose competency level is at least comparable with local public school board members, administrators and teachers.

The real theft seems to rest with monopolistic public school systems which simply fear competition from local contemporaries who will likely be successful with students whom some public schools have “robbed” of a quality education.

THINK ABOUT IT

#8

□ ***DISRUPTIVE STUDENTS AND SCHOOL CHOICE***

One disruptive student can distract an entire classroom from optimum learning. Even the best teacher is challenged to keep her/his students focused when "Emilda" or "Michael" is tossing debris, repeatedly going to the trash basket, whispering, rearranging papers, etc. Most classrooms include at least 20 percent at-risk youth; and they habitually contribute to classroom distractions. At-risk youth are prone to hyperactivity and disruptive behavior in conventional classrooms. The cause is not merely consequence of a dysfunctional single-parent or blended family or being off Retalin.

The majority of disruptive youth assigned to in-school suspension (ISS), alternative schools or disciplinary placement are right brain dominant. They learn not by listening to systematically presented subject content, but rather by association of content to an emotional experienced through aesthetics—enhanced by feeling, seeing, hearing, touching. They do not do well in structured lecture style rooms or in independent study that requires them to hunt and search for answers in clutter-filled textbooks.

They do best in learning environments which allow:

1. Authorized physical movement (at-risk youth want to move every six to twelve minutes);
2. Individual studies which do not require keeping up with class objectives;
3. Frequent/prompt feedback on academic questions;
4. Small “bite size” achievable lessons that enable closure (a sense of accomplishment);
5. Academic goal setting based on specific and defined course objectives which the student helps to establish through contract with the teacher;
6. Curriculum specifically designed and packaged for individual, non-teacher dependent learning;
7. Personalized learning stations (personal turf);
8. Tough-love pupil-staff relationships

Vouchers would enable at-risk youth to choose schools specifically designed and operated for right-brain dominant youth. Regular classroom teachers will be spared frustrations and at-risk youth can succeed. Attendance will improve. Dropouts will diminish. Graduations will increase.

THINK ABOUT IT

#9

□ *Should Public School “Franchises” provide the only choice?*

Professional athletes are accustomed to being traded by franchise owners. Individual players are retained or traded according to their financial worth to team owners. Players enter their profession well aware that relocation to new teams or release for lack of financial benefit is inevitable. In essence, professional athletes belong to their team owners who may buy or sell “their property” according to financial benefit to the franchise.

Players have no choice (except when they become free agents) as to where they perform their abilities. Are public school students mini-professional athletes—people owned by a system which offers no choice of where to learn life's game? Children are not chattel to be owned and shuffled around in the best interest of the system. They are individuals who need education choice among schools designed to meet specific pupil needs.

THINK ABOUT IT

#10

□ *Can the private sector help public education reach high standards?*

The 1998 Goals Report is out. Data brings a chill to educational reformers—just like A Nation At-Risk horrified America in the 1980s. The new statistics raise some interesting points. The following is worth considering. The percentage of secondary school teachers who hold degrees in their main teaching assignments has decreased. More schools are hiring teachers who do not have certification in their assigned subjects. In other words, a nationwide shortage of certified teachers exists. As the trend continues, some accredited districts will face the predicament of crossing the threshold for accreditation approval for certified teachers.

One of two choices will prevail; states will:

1. Adjust teacher qualification standards to increase teacher population pools,
2. Disregard government certification altogether and measure student performance rather than teacher documentation.

Another piece of data from the 1998 Goals Report raises eyebrows. In Texas, areas of educational improvement were not attributed to "factors often considered important . . . real per pupil spending, the teacher-pupil ratio, the percentage of teachers with advanced degrees, and the years of teacher's experience."

Improvements resulted from the private sector as . . . "Business helped keep education in the public eye and developed the political content that sustained reforms over time." Ironically, "These reforms were initially opposed by coalitions of education interests, including representatives of school boards, principals, and teachers."

Opposition to reform efforts by organized educators was circumvented as "individual business leaders (in Texas) became deeply informed about education issues and became adept at presenting the business perspective in ways that lowered the concerns of educators . . . Business

played a pivotal role in designing and supporting policies that proved effective and were sustained through subsequent electoral cycles."

(Order the Goals Report: Phone: 202-632-0957 or HEGP@ed.gov)

THINK ABOUT IT

#11

□ *Charter Schools—Good or Bad?*

Charter schools in Texas were authorized to address the needs of special student population groups (especially at-risk youth) whose needs were not being met in regular schools.

Students who transfer from regular classroom settings to charter school campuses are often below grade level in academic achievement at the time of transfer. That condition, in fact, is what justifies their attendance at an alternative campus. Critics of charter schools are quick to "pounce on" test scores which indicate that "charter school students score below students in regular schools." Such an accusation without explanation is misleading and deceptive. Most charter school students spend the first year or two trying to catch up to peers (and make up for poor teaching while in regular school).

Charter schools would be remarkable (and regular schools shown to be astonishingly defective) if at-risk students scored at or above peers after only one or two years in charter schools. Can regular school personnel explain how students in school for five to eight years, suddenly perform at peer level after only one or two years in a charter school? Are charter schools that good . . . or regular schools that bad?

THINK ABOUT IT

#12

□ *Attempts to Crush the Charter School Movement*

Some state lawmakers have encouraged charter schools by building in an appeal process which allows the state Board of Education or other state-level entity to overrule local school districts which reject charter applications. Such a safety net became necessary because almost every charter application was initially rejected by public school administrators and school boards. They did not want competition. States like Arizona, Texas and California have recognized the critical need to dilute the public school monopoly in educating at-risk youth. Those states have written charter legislation that encourages competition. The major weakness is the requirement that charter schools accept all students (including special education) and follow most public school guidelines. Such a demand places severe limitations on charter school finances and effectiveness. If status quo does not work; if status quo opts to reject alternative schools (charters and private), then how can innovative programs be experienced if they must replicate the same procedures and policies practiced in regular public schools? The net result—no reform.

THINK ABOUT IT

#13

❑ ***Accreditation: Why Educational Choice Needs to Avoid It!***

U.S. News & World Report (January 18, 1999) published an astounding 40-page expose' on outstanding schools—public, religious and independent—which serve poverty level and affluent students. Several things were common among good schools: high academic expectations, no-nonsense attendance rules, parental involvement, caring teachers, strong administrative leadership, spiritual components, and community involvement. Some striking economic and accreditation factors were evident. Basically, the poverty level of students was irrelevant to academic achievement and school effectiveness. Most of the students in the best schools were minority students who qualified for free lunches. Accreditation standards and criteria were also apparently irrelevant because “*being accredited doesn't necessarily mean that schools are doing a good job preparing students*”, says Vincent Ferrandino, executive director of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges . . . “*The reason*”, says Ferrandino, “*is that accrediting agencies have traditionally measured schools' resources rather than their results. They scrutinize the quality schools' cafeteria food, the size of the library collections, and whether they protect records from fire and theft, he says, but the agencies largely ignore critical questions regarding how well students are learning. As evidence: None of the 86 standards Ferrandino's organization uses to judge independent schools measures student achievement.*”

In light of the strong evidence that accreditation is irrelevant to school effectiveness, should legislation designed to encourage school reform require that pilot or experimental programs include accreditation requirements? Shouldn't focus be on results rather than in-place criteria?

THINK ABOUT IT

#14

❑ ***Teacher Shortage vs. Certification Requirements***

Public schools already face a short fall of good teachers. And legislative requirements that public schools employ only certified teachers would effectuate major violations among accredited schools next year (and subsequent years). Look at what schools face now:

- ❑ 75% of all math courses are currently taught by persons without a math major or certificate (The similar percentage applies to science courses.)
- ❑ 50% of all American History courses are taught by persons without certification in social studies

Look at what Texas schools will face in August '99:

- ❑ 12,000 Texas teachers are due to retire this year
- ❑ Only 6000 new teachers are graduating from teacher colleges, and
- ❑ Only 1% of new teachers are certified in math.

The legislative, Texas Education Agency, and accrediting organizations must either change their requirements or force every public school district to break the law or violate accreditation standards.

THINK ABOUT IT

#15

❑ ***Educational Accountability and Choice:***

Accountability is necessary with any institution which stewardships resources belonging to other people. Public schools are no exception. However, even with application of stringent state accountability criteria, public schools continue to perform at levels below acceptable thresholds, especially among inner city districts. Critics of educational choice reluctantly accept charter schools and private schools provided those institutions meet all the criteria expected of public schools.

Logic forces a question: “Why should private schools have to meet accountability criteria which fails to guarantee positive performance in public schools?” Opponents of educational choice argue that private schools might not do well if exempt from compliance with accountability standards on par with public schools. Arizona state Senator Tom Patterson points out a rather interesting fact: “Public schools never fail. They just keep graduating kids that can’t read or write.” Educational choice legislation should encourage diversity rather than replication of a system that fails to address the needs of at-risk youth.

THINK ABOUT IT

#16

- *At-risk youth: below poverty level yet college bound . . . in parochial schools*

Ted Folstmann started the Children’s Scholarship Fund to help at-risk minority children from poverty level single parent homes because he knew such children could make the grade in good schools. He believed poverty level children deserve “to seek a good education wherever they can find it.” He believed in them and observed,

“I learned that *99 percent* of students in parochial schools graduate—compared to a *50 percent* rate in the urban public schools. Further, I learned that nearly *90 percent* of the students in inner city parochial schools go on to pursue higher education compared to roughly *40 percent* for the public schools. Thus, despite the fact that *65 percent* of parochial students are not at or below the poverty level and despite the fact that nearly *90 percent* are minority students, and that *60 percent* of these kids come from single-parent households . . . in the same deprived neighborhoods, and despite the fact that they have more pupils per class” . . . as the public schools. And, those children receive a quality education at half the cost per child in nearby public schools. Apparently educational choice serves some at-risk youth well.

THINK ABOUT IT

#17

- *The key to reduction in class size could be vouchers:*

The buzzword among public school reformers is “class-size reduction.” But the cost to taxpayers to reduce pupil-teacher ratio in public schools through new teachers and facilities would be billions of dollars. Ostensibly a lower pupil-teacher ratio will improve the quality of education. Certainly that is possible, however, the best method may be through vouchers to private schools.

Nationally, private school enrollment has increased 7% over the past twelve years—at no additional cost to taxpayers! Were private schools encouraged to enroll more students (through

friendly voucher legislation) public school classroom enrollment would stabilize without requiring any new education funding.

THINK ABOUT IT

#18

□ *High Academic Standards and Increased Dropouts*

Texas Governor Bush delivered his January 27th State-of-the-State Address in which he reported on improved educational trends. He said, “we are proving that when you raise the bar, people rise to the challenge.” The TEA also released data to support the governor’s claims that high standards raise student performance.

But 281 Texas schools remain on the list of low performing schools. If each of those low performing schools enrolls 150 students, at least 42,150 Texas children remain subjected to adverse educational opportunities.

Moreover, the data showing a trend toward better schools does not show that between 8th and 12th grades most inner city schools which raised their academic standards also “shoved” 60% of their teens onto city streets.

High standards are good—and needed! But a safety net is needed for preventing dropouts whose academic skills are so low at 9th grade that “graduation over high standards” is impossible. Some youth are high jumpers. Others are sprinters, discus throwers, and weight lifters. They will never be high jumpers who can clear the bar. Educational vouchers will provide a safety net that enables at-risk “low jumpers” to be successful in some area other than jumping. Educational choice among alternative schools will be an excellent companion to high standards. They will work together to provide quality educational opportunities for at-risk youth.

THINK ABOUT IT

#19

□ *How valid is the requirement that youth attend only accredited schools when:*

- 50% of teachers of American History do not have certification or a major or minor in history.
- 75% of science and math classes are taught by persons who do not have certification in math or science.
- Most students have at least one daily class taught by a teacher who is not certified to teach the course content.
- Local school districts may “certify” a teacher in emergency circumstances based on school need rather than teacher competency.
- Private schools without certified teachers provide education quality equal with or superior to public schools.
- Certification provides no guarantee of quality teaching or student learning.
- Students from classrooms taught by certified teachers often fail state exams.

Alternative schools designed to prevent dropout or to address the needs of at-risk youth should be exempt from current certification requirements as long as some empirical data is available to verify classification of at least an “acceptable” rating in the state accountability standard. Staff and

student performance in courses must assume a greater role than teacher compliance with criteria established at colleges of education or state education agencies.

THINK ABOUT IT

#20

- *Should Private Schools be required to meet public school standards of excellence—or be closed down?*

Two things make that statement frightening.

- (1) Private schools located in inner cities are not experiencing a 60% dropout rate—like the neighboring public schools. Private schools consistently experience a higher attendance rate than their neighboring public schools and achievement test scores for students enrolled in private schools are equal with or higher than scores by public school students.
- (2) Were private schools to be closed, the public schools could not absorb the current 20% student population level enrolled in America's private schools; a 20% increase in public school enrollment would devastate public school pupil-teacher ratio, burden building maintenance, overload counselors, and increase cost for textbooks and supplies.

Educational choices relieve public schools of the enrollment “straws that would break the camel’s back” in public school classrooms.

THINK ABOUT IT

#21

- *Educational Choice Could Improve Teacher Wages and Employment Options*

Secretary of Education Riley’s 1999 State of Education speech revealed the critical need for better teachers and better schools. He warned, “our nation’s math and science curriculum does not come close to matching world standards in our middle and high schools.” The Secretary declared, “too many of our schools are failing some of our children and some of them shouldn’t be called schools at all. We need to turn this around . . . Our nation’s school buildings are overcrowded or simply wearing out.” He called for 2 million teachers during the next ten years, but said, “Too many potential teachers are turned away because of the cumbersome process that requires them to jump through hoops and lots of them . . . and too many of our best teachers are leaving the profession because of low pay, poor working conditions, and weak school leadership . . . as a result, a growing number of school districts are throwing a warm body into a classroom, close the door and hoping for the best . . . and if a school is failing its students, we ought to react like our house is on fire.” “What

else can we do?" he asked. "We can create vigorous alternative paths to give moral Americans the opportunity to become a teacher . . . we can also do a much better job of matching future teachers to job opportunities." He called for policy workers to "change the system" to attract more teachers and to improve schools. He then promptly declared that passage of private school vouchers would be an attack on public schools. He called for greater government intrusion through national teacher licensing and testing and peer approval.

The irony is that the same educational conditions described by the Secretary existed 30 years ago when big government proponents also called for teacher licensing and testing, peer approval and more money for salary increases. Thirty years later the same problems (multiplied) still exist! Yet the Secretary decries vouchers while calling for more of the same strategy which has failed to help American children for three decades.

We should however consider one aspect of Secretary Riley's challenge, "We can create vigorous alternative paths to give more Americans the opportunity to become a teacher." Educational choice should be one of those "vigorous alternative paths." Vouchers would enable teachers to hang out their "professional teacher" shingles and offer services, options, and opportunities to America's youth—without greater government intrusion and without hurting public schools. Creative entrepreneurial options in privately owned buildings would relieve overcrowded public school classrooms, attract professional teachers, and encourage production of vigorous curriculum that would address academic challenges needed to make America competitive in the world arena.

Let's follow the Secretary's challenge to "change the system" through educational choice.

THINK ABOUT IT

#22

□ *189 Books on the Wall*

A publisher's catalog recently listed 189 books on suggestions and guidelines for reforming or improving public education. Topics ranged from moral values to mathematics, gender factors to goal setting, classroom lectures to computer-based learning, charters to choice vouchers, and religion to racial relations.

Such a large selection in one catalogue makes a good argument for reform. Obviously a vast pool of thinkers think something is wrong with public education. Several of the 189 books identified the history of increased funding over the past three decades—and the simultaneous drop in academic competencies, reduction in graduates, rise in violence, loss of career teachers and decreased student attendance.

The 189 volumes called serious attention to specific deficiencies which have prevailed through 30 years of quasi-reform efforts to bolster the public school system, which amazingly has remained unchanged—except for per pupil funding which has experienced massive increases since the 1960s.

One thing hasn't been tried—educational choice from the private sector. Students have nothing to lose and an education to gain. Let's add another literary piece to the 189: Legislation that activates educational choice for America's youth.