The ABC's of School Choice

Mary Beth Hoblit

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The ABC's of School Choice

Honors Thesis
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Perhaps one of the most controversial issues facing the Florida Legislature in the past few years has been Education Reform. Statistics show that the Florida graduation rate from high school is at an abject rate of only fifty-two percent. In an attempt to try to improve education, the School Choice Program is currently in the process of being implemented.

**What is School Choice?**

School Choice means giving parents the authority to decide which school their child will attend. At present, children go to an assigned public school according to where they live. It is believed that by letting parents choose as to which school their child will attend, parents will become more involved in their children's education. According to the Center for Education Reform, "The Choice Plan reasserts the rights of the parent and the best interests of the child over the system, infuses accountability and quality into the system, and provides educational opportunity where none existed before." By implementing this plan, children will be able to receive higher benefits throughout their education.

In Florida, School Choice is in its infancy. Legal challenges, public
outcry, and many political debates are still at the forefront of this issue.

Today, the School Choice Program, a plan laid out by Governor Jeb Bush and Lt. Governor Frank Brogan, is continuously being extensively researched before it is put into action in the 2003-2004 school year.

However, prior to the Choice Plan, Florida educators had already put into place standards to check the progress of students from the K-12 levels. The Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test, or FCAT, as well as a grading system (which passed in November 1998 by then Governor Lawton Chiles) was being used to track student performance. Nevertheless, the system has been failing miserably.

Shortly after Governor Bush’s Administration took office, it was announced that not only was the high school graduation rate at fifty-two percent, “it was also found that fifty percent of fourth graders could not read at a fourth grade level, and over one-third of Florida’s ninth graders had a D or F average.”3 It was because of these statistics that Bush and Brogan felt it was necessary to push for legislative approval of the Bush/Brogan A+ Plan for Education (Aka School Choice).

The Purpose of the Plan

The main idea and focus of the plan is that no student would be left behind. In other words, "each student would be afforded the opportunity to gain a year's worth of knowledge in a year's worth of time." Within this plan there is accountability as well as parental choice. Additional attention is also given to providing resources to schools, bonuses (or rewards) for improvement, school safety, an end to social promotion, incentives to improve teacher quality, and finally, the introduction of vouchers should the previous attempts to correct the problems at any one certain school fail.

Implementation

The School Choice Plan was first introduced for testing during the 1999-2000 school year. Families instead of school districts were able to choose what they felt was the best learning environment for their child/children through the use of Opportunity Scholarships/Vouchers. "These scholarships were made available to parents only after the schools that their children were assigned to failed to improve after additional assistance from the state had been provided for over a two year period of time." Schools also

had a four-year timeframe to correct any problems.

Initially, the original grading plan based upon data from the FCAT for each school was used according to the outline of the plan. Results from the FCAT were then made available to the public to show how each school was performing according to state standards, with an A-F grade being assigned. Resources were then meted out to each school in proportion with its grade.

**Accountability**

School Choice provides the incentive for teachers and school administrators to earn bonuses based on their individual salary. Teachers can also earn this bonus for their performance level, which will be based on their students’ individual FCAT score. One concern though, is that many parents feel educators will be apt to teach the children more about how to get a good grade on the FCAT rather than pursue a more wide-ranging teaching agenda.

On the other hand, infusing such accountability into the school system can also motivate schools to improve their academic performance. "Students attending Florida schools that receive two "F" grades in a four-year period will be eligible to receive vouchers that enable them to transfer to another school." If this were to happen, the amount of revenue that the failing school

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would receive would be lost mainly to the private sector.

An interesting question arises: If money were taken away from the failing schools, would this not defeat the purpose of public school improvement? A valid argument could be that the FCAT is considered to be a reliable measure of student performance. As such, it is believed that the performance of students on its academic tests would actually improve when public schools face the prospect that their students will receive vouchers. However, this answer takes us right back to the question of educators teaching students how to successfully take the test (FCAT) instead of teaching their daily curriculum.

In order to prevent this from occurring, Florida Statute 229.591 explicitly and specifically lays the groundwork for school improvement and accountability. Per this statute, educational goals on both state and local levels must be established. All school programs must be assessed, with the premise that state fiscal and human resources will be available in order to reach these established goals. If these established goals are not then met, additional resources must be utilized. Readiness programs to prepare children

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and families for children’s success in school, as well as preparing children for postsecondary education and employment, is the main focus of the goals already established under this statute. Other issues set forth are those of measuring student performance, providing a learning environment conducive to teaching and learning, and school safety.

**Elimination of Social Promotion**

Another aspect of the School Choice Plan is the elimination of Social Promotion. Students will be required to meet each grade level’s standards before being promoted to the next grade. Funds appropriated by the Legislature will be used in schools to support programs to improve students’ basic reading, writing, and mathematical skills.

This issue was most likely addressed because the problem of children being promoted without demonstrating achievement feeds directly into poor performance on the FCAT in higher grades, which in turn results in schools continuously receiving failing grades.

By eliminating social promotion, the state would be able to hold students and educators more responsible for the tasks required for each grade level. More importantly, children who have learning deficits in such areas as

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reading, mathematics, and writing may be detected at an earlier age, giving them a better chance at being more successful later in life.

According to an article posted by the State of Florida on its website, “a total of $663 million has been appropriated by the Florida Legislature for use on intensive instruction designed to help students meet promotion and graduation standards.” By using this money constructively, schools should have no excuse when it comes to improving student’s performances in these areas.

Additionally, the State of Florida’s position is that “our educational system must be child centered, not system centered or even school centered. The educational universe should revolve around the individual needs of each and every child.” By implementing simple programs such as tutoring and mentoring students with special needs, social promotion should and must become a thing of the past.

School Safety

With or without School Choice, the issue of school safety should be a top priority in every school. Though it does not appear to be high on the

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priority list of the Choice Plan, Florida Legislatures have had the foresight to address this problem. Though not much is stated in the Florida Statute on Education, a provision has been set forth for “communities and schools to provide an environment that is drug-free, and protects students’ health, safety, and civil rights.”

One problem however, is that this statement is very broad in context and provides no set standards. Yes, every child has the right to learn in a safe and clean environment. Unfortunately, this has not proven to be true in all cases. One only has to remember the heinous bloodbaths of Columbine and Jonesboro to be able to answer this question.

Today, most School Boards have instituted zero-tolerance rules to drugs, smoking, and firearms on campuses, which is highly beneficial. Additionally, School Resource Officers are now present at all schools, but how can one officer handle hundreds of students at one time? So far, their presence alone has acted as a deterrence against more violence.

Furthermore, a commitment to safer schools has also been established through the School Safety and Security Bill, which was signed into law by Governor Bush, requiring schools to use standardized school safety and

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emergency preparedness procedures.\textsuperscript{12} These procedures, it is hoped, will help reduce Florida’s chronic dropout problem by providing second chance schools for disruptive and violent youth, as well as reducing absenteeism and truancy. Preparing teachers to handle classroom discipline has been incorporated into this bill as well.

\textit{The Issue of Vouchers}

Trying to put this plan into action has caused quite a stir. The biggest hurdle to overcome in implementing the Choice Plan has so far proven to be the use of vouchers. In her article “Lessons from Florida on School Choice” Jeanne Allen of Nando Media on July 31, 2000, states that “when Florida passed its A+ program only a year ago, a bevy of Chicken Littles said that public education would soon die in the Sunshine State.”\textsuperscript{13} A great amount of public outcry occurred because of this statement, but opponents failed to address the fact that vouchers were not the sole remedy to fixing education. Vouchers are considered to be an option (actually a last resort), used only if the previous steps of the plan result in the failure of a particular school.

In spite of this, opponents continue to find other reasons as to why the


vouchers would not work. "One belief is that vouchers would be used mainly by the wealthy and educated parents who are shepherding their children's schooling and that the public schools would be left with the failing students of parents who basically just do not care."\textsuperscript{14} This is a pretty harsh statement, and if not properly addressed, could hold true.

The obvious remedy to this problem should be that vouchers would \textit{first} be used for children whose schools have failed to meet state standards. That is, the use of vouchers would first be used and limited to students at the worst schools in the state, and these schools, which would have top priority, most likely happen to be the ones that are made up of poor and minorities.

Other issues concerning the use of vouchers are still cropping up. One of the first problems that come to mind is that of regulation. When vouchers are used for students to transfer from a failing public school to another public school that is not failing, regulation of state education laws are not an issue: they remain under the control of the state.

However, when a voucher is used to transfer a student from a failing public school to a private/parochial school, what jurisdiction does the state have in regulating their curriculum? The separation of church and state

becomes another issue, especially when eighty to ninety percent of private schools in Florida are parochial. Additionally, how will the private sector be held accountable for the success of our children's futures?

This is a valid argument. After all, the whole idea of vouchers has risen because of the failure of state run schools. Yet one must see the overall picture. "Government schools are not failing because of the students, their teachers, their parents, or their income levels. They are failing because they are a bureaucratic, unresponsive, self-serving monopoly." So how is incorporating education in the private sector going to be any different?

To begin with, big corporations, unlike government entities, are governed by laws against monopolies, thus opening the door for competition. By creating this competition, students should then in turn be able to benefit from not only an increase in the quality of their education, but also in being better prepared for a higher quality of life once they venture out into the real world.

On the other hand, opponents of vouchers are operating under the guise that putting more money into education will have the same effect. One can argue however, that for several decades Florida, as well as the rest of the

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United States, has done nothing but throw more money into the system, and it is obvious that more money has not solved the problem.

In regard to the separation of church and state, as of this writing, no clear answers have been given. Will children in private church run schools also take the FCAT? If not, how is success or failure to be measured? What about teacher and administrative accountability? Will private entities be required to report as to how they spend state funds?

These questions may only have to be answered by proven fact. Take, for example, Derek Neal, who has done extensive research across the United States on the “Effects of Catholic Secondary Schooling on Educational Achievement,” has found that “while sixty-two percent of students at urban public schools graduate, the graduation rate for similar students of corresponding background in Catholic schools is eighty-eight percent.” Additionally, Neal has found that of these same graduates, “eleven percent from public schools go on to complete college, yet twenty-seven percent (more than double) of Catholic school graduates go on to graduate from college.”¹⁶ It seems that accountability can be proven by statistics alone.

The bottom line of the voucher program appears to be more of just a

“threat” to the public school system. In creates a higher level of motivation for teachers and administrators to do a better job of educating our children. Without better grades, the public school system risks losing children to the private sector, as well as putting their own livelihood on the line. Whether or not this is the case remains to be seen, as the issue of vouchers is continuously being challenged through the courts. The constitutionality of vouchers will be addressed later on in this writing.

Public Opinion

With the lack of comprehension of the plan, parents especially and understandably, are apprehensive about the unknown. According to an article that appeared in the St. Petersburg Times, “some people see some value in choice and are willing to give the plan a chance. However, others have already concluded that the plan will not work and would be very disruptive to their lives.”

It is interesting to note that parents who opposed the plan did not mention anything about the disruption to their children’s lives. Furthermore, many of these people are the same parents who have been complaining that a change to the school system was needed, especially in the area of busing.

Their argument then was that it was harder for them to be as involved in their children’s education because of the distance they had to travel for teacher’s conferences and extra-curricular activities for their children. Ironically, these two problems are addressed and reconciled through the Choice Plan.

Parents, given the choice, will reap some benefits, yet will be displeased by others. One will have to weigh the good with the bad. By being able to choose, children will have the opportunity to attend schools that offer magnet and fundamental programs of individual interest to the child.

For example, those children who are interested in music, theater, and production, can apply to attend Pinellas County Center for the Arts at Gibbs High School. While others, who may be interested in subjects such as Agriculture, Horticulture, and Veterinary medicine, can apply to be a part of the Agri-science program in Tarpon Springs.

The downside however, is that even though transportation will be provided, students will still have to face long and arduous bus rides from one end of the county to the other, and parents will continue have the problem of inconvenience.

When speaking with one parent, Georgia Delisle of Saint Petersburg, she stated that “School Choice is a crock. Children should be able to attend
schools closest to their home in order for these children to be able to build relationships with children in their own neighborhood, ones that they will interact with most often.\textsuperscript{18} This is just one reason why Mrs. Delisle has chosen to home-school her two daughters.

Yet another parent, Linda Salvaggio of Seminole, has chosen the convenience of choice and safety for her son Kyle, who is five years old. This was not a decision made over his education as much as it was over his health. "I chose to keep my son at Starkey Elementary because of the close proximity to my work and to my mother’s house."\textsuperscript{19} Her experience with the school system is new because Kyle is just in kindergarten, and her opinion later on may change. Ms. Salvaggio’s higher priority at this time is being able to get to her son quickly in the event of an emergency, as Kyle suffers from acute asthma. By giving her a choice, Salvaggio also gets much-needed piece of mind.

\textit{Innovation and Change}

Schools themselves are also struggling with School Choice. As part of choice, every school has been asked to work on innovations to attract

\textsuperscript{18} Georgia Delisle of St. Petersburg, interviewed by author, 31 August 2002, St. Petersburg, personal Notes of the author, St. Petersburg, Fl.

\textsuperscript{19} Linda Salvaggio of Seminole, interviewed by author, 1 September 2002, St. Petersburg, personal Notes of author, St. Petersburg, Fl.
Though some schools already have marketable programs in place because they have been previously designated as magnet or fundamental schools, others will have to first develop innovative programs, and then devise a marketing strategy. The problem that arises in this instance is that not much time has really been provided for them to develop, much less market the new programs in an organized and favorable manner.

With this additional worry, there also appears to be the hidden question of where the money to fund these programs will come from. Furthermore, there is no guarantee that when student's receive vouchers, they will attend these public schools as more and more parents appear to be choosing to send their children to private schools. On the other hand, as part of an agreement with the NAACP Legal Defense Fund to slowly end mandatory busing for desegregation, more minorities will be able to choose schools with programs of interest. This will most likely aid them in being more successful in school, and later on in life, or so one would think...

**Racial Concerns and Busing**

A high profile issue that has risen against implementing the Choice Plan is that of racial concern. In Pinellas County, for example, Enrique Escarrez,

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who is the lead local attorney for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund maintains that “by letting parents choose their children’s school, high racial migration will occur.” Under the Choice Plan, this is what district officials are hoping will happen, not on the basis of race, but on the basis of parental choice. Yet, Escarrez’s co-counsel Roger Plata states: “It is my contention and my very firm belief that this [plan] favors whites and is at the expense of blacks.”

Escarrez was mainly referring to the issue of busing which also lies within the area of racial concerns.

However, the issue of busing does not appear to be what some people are calling legalized segregation by the State. This is not the intent of School Choice, though it could be the result of the matter. In response, Superintendent of Pinellas County Schools Howard Hinesely provides what he feels is a solid solution to the problem. “A special provision for black children and white children who have been forced to be bused far from home in order to meet race ratios be given the option to be “grand fathered” in to the far away schools or attend schools closer to home that would be chosen by the district.”

This policy appears to satisfy some of Escarrez's concerns for black children, who have borne the brunt of forced busing. However, a middle ground needs to be met. Children have enough to worry about without the added stress of being shuffled around. When Choice starts in 2003, students who are currently bused to fulfill the race ratio should be able to finish their education at the school they are presently attending, if they choose to do so.

In any case, there is real concern being voiced by the minority population. Given the racist history of Florida, one can see why this problem needs to be addressed. Common sense about School Choice will most undoubtedly show that most people will be inclined to send their children to schools closest to their home. In trying to create (or maintain) racial diversity, given the housing patterns in a community such as St. Petersburg, for example, the school districts are most likely going to end up with one-race schools--either all black or all white, anyway. What has not been publicized, however, is the fact that "the Choice Plan includes oversight by a biracial committee that is supposed to keep one-race schools from developing."23

Another problem that has the NAACP up in arms has arisen in St. Petersburg as well. It is the fact that three new schools--two elementary and

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one middle school south of Central Avenue were built in hope of giving the African American children of this area a better chance of attending a school closer to home once choice starts. But the problem is that these schools have now been set up to be fundamental or magnet schools, so these children still will not have the option of remaining close to home. Students will continue to be bused to other areas of the county, so what benefit will these children gain from Choice? Parents living in these areas have good reason to be angry.

What could they be able to say that has really changed? This brings us right back to Roger Plata’s contention that “we believed we were going to have a choice with preferences, not something that now unduly limits choice [in these areas].”

What this all boils down to is that minorities, especially mostly low-income minorities, are being denied the power to choose where their children attend school, and this is wrong. As it stands right now, about sixty percent of black students are bused out of their neighborhoods from these areas, compared to only five percent of white students being bused.

Even though busing will be “phased out” by the end of the 2002 school year,

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year, these kids living south of Central Avenue will see little to no change.

This issue is going to prove to be one of the toughest challenges. After all, how will the state of Florida really be able to promote the best education with the best choice for all, and still be able to allow for continued racial diversity?

The continuing struggle of African Americans and other minorities to obtain the power to make real educational choices today, will remain a stark reality.

Constitutionality and Scholarships

The main issue at the state level has nothing to do with race or busing.

In March of 2000, Circuit Judge L. Ralph Smith ruled that the voucher component of the Choice Plan was unconstitutional. The Judge’s argument against the vouchers was based solely on his interpretation that “the State of Florida’s Constitution is violated by spending public money on private schools, as well as violating the separation of Church and State when vouchers are used for parochial school attendance.”

This judge makes a strong case; however, it is not entirely true.

The Choice Plan states that children with vouchers may attend other public schools, not just private ones. The bottom line here is that PEOPLE are given a choice. It is their tax dollars at work, and they should be able to

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do with it as they see fit, keeping in mind that it is the relative quality of education that is important. With this thought in mind, The First District Court of Appeals later reversed Judge Smith's decision on October 3, 2000. Its holding was that “Nothing in the Florida Constitution clearly prohibits the Legislature from allowing the well-delineated use of public funds for private school education, particularly in circumstances where the Legislature finds it necessary.” This decision has enabled Florida educators to take a positive step forward on the path of revamping the school system.

Unfortunately this was just the beginning of a very long and controversial battle. One must ask why constitutionality is such a hot issue in this case, especially since precedent has been set on such projects as Faith Based Initiatives. These initiatives, like vouchers, are also funded by the state to administer to programs within the Juvenile Justice System and in other agencies and institutions that provide aid to the needy.

It appears though, that choice is an issue that will proceed up the court ladder and fall in to the lap of the Supreme Court: Constitutional, unconstitutional, and constitutional. And as of August 2, 2002, the voucher program has been declared unconstitutional once again, this time by the

Northern Circuit Court of Florida.

Vouchers have served as a birdie in an unending game of badminton.

The issue has cleared through the courts numerous times only to get caught back up in the net on the return serve. It is very hard for people to decipher which side is best to be on when trying to make an educated decision. For example, grading of schools in Florida has been shockingly inconsistent.

“Last year (2001), not a single school in Florida got an F, and it appeared few students might ever qualify for vouchers. This year however, Eighty schools across the state received failing grades, and ten schools became eligible for vouchers.”28

No wonder so many people are having such a hard time putting any faith into this new system.

People are unable to gauge how well vouchers may work. There is not yet enough statistics accumulated in Florida to measure its success or failure rate against the current public school system. This information will not be available on a broad-based scale until it has been widely implemented, which will take several years.

Maybe this is why people should give School Choice a chance and see how it works. They may be pleasantly surprised to find that it will be much

better than what we have been using in the past. Then, after the system has been solidly tested, let the constitutionality of the issues be debated. After all, is anyone really going to be that hurt by just giving it a chance? Where is the offense occurring in being allowed to make a decision for yourself and your family?

Additionally, what many people may not know, is that Florida has other school choice options available. Unlike the voucher issue, they have not been challenged in court, yet. Note the key word here is yet. For example, “McKay Scholarships, named for Florida Senate President John McKay, allows special education students to use state money to pay for private schooling, and serves children with learning disabilities to profound handicaps.” Considering the targeted students for these scholarships, it is highly unlikely that these funds and where they are going will be challenged to the extent that vouchers are.

Another scholarship is the Tax-credit Scholarship, “which allows corporations to give up three-quarters of their state corporate income taxes to nonprofit groups that give scholarship money for students to attend private schools.” This scholarship may not cause as much of a stir as vouchers, but

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when one looks at the end result, though beneficial, the money these corporations are putting into education, is technically still negating state revenue.

At least one good thing can still be said about School Choice (per Education Commissioner Charlie Crist, anyway). “…Choice has clearly served as a catalyst for improvements in our free public school system, resulting in benefits for all our students, especially those in lower performing schools.”\(^3\)

Even though the results are not in yet, Crist is, for the most part, correct. Something has to be done about Florida’s failing schools, and by implementing the Choice Plan, our children are given the opportunity to have a fresh start when it comes to enhancing their overall educational experience.

**Influence of Voters**

The segment of the population that has time and again voiced their concern for lower taxes and lower crime rates over the importance of education has been the elderly, retired citizens of this great state. Where candidates, especially incumbents, have failed miserably is in not making a bigger issue of education for this voting bloc. These candidates might achieve higher approval ratings when it comes to education if they would find enough

forethought to show people how a good education over a period of time would play a huge role in actually getting them what they want: lower taxes and lower crime rates.

This is an election year in Florida, and there is no doubt that education is the leading issue in the Governor's race. A problem that Florida faces, though, is the fact that most of Florida's residents who consistently and actively vote are these same people who have in the past had a track record of not putting education high on their list of priorities. This is mainly because these seniors have already raised and educated their children elsewhere, and have paid their share of school taxes. They seem to be more concerned with their safety and financial stability.

Is it that difficult to find statistics that would show that the higher the level of education achieved, the less inclined an individual would be to break the law or use illicit drugs? By investing in education, in children, and affording them a better opportunity in life, one would think that the crime rate over a relatively short period of time would go down, and lower taxes would follow suit. Why? Because children would be able to create a better path in life for themselves, whereas without the opportunity may turn to a life of crime, if only just to survive in the outside world.

By eliminating, or at least cutting down the element of criminality, the
crime rate would automatically drop, which in turn would lessen the need for more taxes to build more jails and rehabilitation facilities, therefore causing taxes to remain the same or even drop. This elevator of hope does not fall under the “fallacy” category. The real fallacy in this given synopsis lies in the fact that candidates have not, and most likely will not, bring this scenario to the public.

What counts right now is the vote, and, as is well documented by the Supervisor of Elections, the elderly and retired have the highest rate of voter turnout in this state. Because of this, the candidates will voluntarily succumb to working at these issues from the outside in, instead of the other way around. In other words, it’s crunch time; they will deal with the real issues after the election.

*It's All About Money*

For years, school boards have been *screaming* at the State Legislature to provide more money in the budget in order to afford students a better education. For instance, the Florida Lottery was implemented years ago, under the guise that lottery money would go to education. Instead, lottery money replaced money that was already allotted for education, so that the original education fund could be used elsewhere:

About one year ago, it was noted in an article that appeared in the St.
Petersburg Times that monies (about $375,000) that had been allocated to provide teachers with ongoing training had been taken away with no reason given. The very next day, the same newspaper ran a story advising that the state had decided to provide a large sum of money ($350,000) to special interest groups so that these groups could study what type of trash was being thrown on Florida highways!

So, where exactly does education fit into the state’s list of priorities? With so much political maneuvering taking place, the answer at this time remains unclear. Transition for many, is sometimes a hard task to deal with.

There are many organizations out there today that have over the past few years given a great deal of money to candidates who are against vouchers and other School Choice Initiatives. "In order to put a stop to this anti-School Choice mentality, School Choice advocates have formed a new political action committee called Citizens for Quality Education."32 The purpose of this committee is to raise money and support for candidates who support School Choice. Whether the group (which formed around September of 2001) will be successful in getting and retaining officials in office that are pro-Choice Plan is a question that will only be answered at the voting booth.

**Funding**

The last issue, and just as equally important as the others, is where additional money to make this plan successful will be coming from. The Bush-Brogan budget plan for the Choice Program currently provides additional funding for each area of the plan. “Over $868 million has been added for grades K-12, $60 million for teacher recruitment and retention, $8.2 million for higher education, $75 million for School Safety Programs, and an additional $192 million for textbooks and instructional materials.” This added funding, it is hoped, will aid the Florida school system in closing the education gap.

By using some of these funds to establish mentoring programs in reading, math, and basic skills, for example, it can be reasoned that children will be more successful from the elementary grade level onward. In turn the high school graduation rate will increase, and more students will move on to higher levels of education. Children will also have a greater opportunity to successfully function in today’s technically advanced society.

**Can school Choice Work?**

At present, it is far too early to determine whether or not the Choice

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Plan will be successful in Florida. However, School Choice appears to be the popular remedy not only to Florida’s education woes, but also across the country. “Places such as Washington, D.C., Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and Cleveland, Ohio, School Choice has been put into practice.”

Court battles, debates, and public outcry have been a part of these cities’ concerns as well, but they are also working through them within the guidelines of the system. While most of these programs are young as far as implementation, evidence so far suggests that the School Choice system is working. One must note, however, that School Choice has been implemented in these cities, whereas in Florida, School Choice will be statewide.

A Final Result

The most important point to be made is that, as a final result, children in these School Choice programs are being afforded the opportunity to improve their education. The benefits that children will reap because of the plan appear to be what is best for Florida, now, at this time. With the drop out and crime rates as high as they are today, a change is definitely needed. The old system is broken, and the path of future generations should be our top priority.

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Additionally, the problems of persistent racial diversity, school improvement, and overcrowding should straighten out over time. These issues are mild in comparison to what the rate of literacy is in our country today. By helping our children to succeed now, we will not only help mold the future of the State of Florida, but the rest of the nation, and be confident that WE HAVE A CHOICE!
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