PACE

POLICY ANALYSIS FOR CALIFORNIA EDUCATION

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School Choice Grows–With Scarce Evidence On Effects

During the past decade, the school choice movement has blossomed in California and across the U.S. In many communities parents now can choose from one or more alternatives to traditional public schools, including publicly and privately funded vouchers, charter schools, tax credits, magnet schools, and open enrollment.

Although the school choice movement is forging ahead with an abundance of public and political support, such support is not based on a solid foundation of research. In fact, there is relatively little up-to-date, hard evidence on the relative merits or drawbacks of various school choice options. A new PACE report reviews the research that currently exists on this topic.

There is currently no solid research available on whether student achievement has improved in charter schools.

Vouchers

Today, approximately 4,500 children are participating in publicly funded voucher programs in two states, Wisconsin and Ohio. An additional 12,000 children are participating in private voucher programs in over 30 cities and 20 states, with over 45,000 children on waiting lists (CEO America, 1998). These programs are funded by organizations, corporations, foundations, and individuals.

Much of the research on school vouchers focuses on parental satisfaction and student academic achievement, or provides background characteristics

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In This Issue

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NEW PACE PUBLICATIONS

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Through interviews and observations, researchers sought to discern differences in the accountability systems of public and private schools.

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■ **Fuller, Kipnis, Siegel and Strath.** ***Child Care Indicators 1998.*** **December 1998.** Although public support for child-care and preschool programs will double between 1996–99, there has been little information available to help state and local agencies target new monies where supply is most scarce. This report attempts to remedy this situation by providing early indicators of child-care supply and demand for all zip codes in California.

■ **Rumberger and Larson.** ***The Educational Consequences of Student Mobility for California Students and Schools.*** **March 1999.** This study examined three important aspects of student mobility—incidence, consequences, and causes—as they apply to students and schools, especially at the secondary level. (See related story on page 3.)

■ **Coonerty and Levy.** ***Waiting for Child Care: How Do Parents Adjust to Scarce Options in Santa Clara County?*** **January 1999.** In 1997 PACE and the Santa Clara County Social Services Agency initiated a four-year study to track CalWORKS parents seeking child-care prior to entering the workforce. To help the agency streamline the process by which parents attempt to find child-care, the researchers looked at four things: 1) how parents coped with maintaining employment while seeking child-care; 2) how they searched for interim child-care while waiting for a subsidized child-care slot; 3) how they struggled to pay for child-care; and 4) how they perceived the quality of that care.

■ **Carnoy, Benveniste, and Rothstein.** ***Private and Public School Effectiveness: A Reappraisal.*** **February 1999.** Through interviews and observations, researchers sought to discern differences in the accountability systems of public and private schools. They tested the validity of the claim by market advocates that market driven behavior in private schools is significantly and observably different from bureaucratically driven public schools.

■ **Fuller, Huerta, Puryear, Wexler and Burr.** ***School Choice: Rich Hopes, Poor Evidence of Results.*** **March 1999.** This report reviews the historical contention between civic and private values that continues to divide policymakers and citizens over school choice; the aims and scope of five types of school choice programs that are expanding in California and nationwide; and the limited empirical evidence on whether the aims of choice programs are being realized. (See related story on page 1.)

■ **Hayward, Breneman, and Estrada.** ***Tidal Wave II Revisited.*** **October 1998.** This paper, a followup to a 1995 study *(Higher Education Enrollments: Is a Tidal Wave Coming?)* funded by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, reexamines California's higher education enrollment projections. At that time, the panel projected a growth of about 488,000 high school students by the year 2005. The updated report concludes that the original projections were conservative due to an improving economy, tuition declines, and higher numbers of eligible high school students. It also validates an underlying assumption in the original findings that enrollment projections are driven by state policy decisions and by the opportunities provided by California's colleges and universities.

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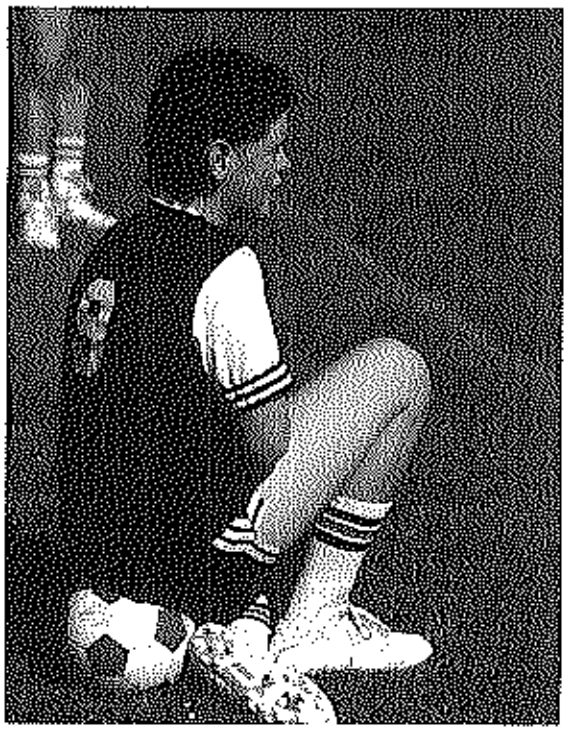
Mobility Hurts Students and Schools

PACE has released a new report demonstrating that student mobility in California is widespread and often damaging to students and schools. Student mobility refers to the practice of elementary and secondary students changing schools for reasons unrelated to grade promotion. The report, titled *The Educational Consequences of Student Mobility for California Students and Schools,* is based on a two-year study conducted by a team of researchers from the University of California at Santa Barbara. Professor Russell W. Rumberger and Research Associate Katherine A. Larson directed the study.

Researchers examined three important aspects of student mobility—incidence, consequences, and causes—as they apply to students and schools in California, especially at the secondary level. The study drew on an extensive set of data of California students, parents, and schools. Included were surveys of 1,114 eighth grade students who were followed and interviewed over a six-year period (1988 to 1994); surveys of 51 high schools and their tenth grade students who were followed and interviewed for two years (1990 to 1992); interviews with 19 mobile high school students and their parents from Los Angeles; and interviews with 32 school administrators, counselors, and teachers from 10 secondary schools in one urban and one suburban district in Southern California.



The study found:

- **Student mobility is more widespread among students and schools in California than among students and schools in other states.**

Almost three-quarters of California students made at least one non-promotional school change between grades 1–12, compared to 60% of students in other states. In 1990, urban and suburban high schools in California saw an average of 22% of their tenth grade students leave before the end of twelfth grade. In addition, 10% of California high schools had mobility rates in excess of 40%, compared to only 6% in other states.

- **California students who change high schools even once are half as likely to graduate as are other students in the state, even after taking into account other factors that influence graduation.**

Although the study found that students often suffer psychologically, socially, and academically from mobility during high school, the most severe impact was on high school graduation. But the impact of mobility appeared to depend on why students changed schools. Students who made "strategic" school changes to seek a better educational placement generally reported positive academic impacts. In contrast, students who made "reactive" school changes due to intolerable social or academic situations were more likely to report negative academic impacts. Reactive school changes were much more common than strategic changes.

- **One out of every eight students in California experiences "chronic" mobility throughout their elementary and secondary school careers.**

Students with three or more school changes during elementary school are significantly more likely to experience mobility during high school and hence to drop out of school. Consequently, excessive mobility during elementary school should be considered a risk factor for dropping out.

- **Student mobility lowers test scores and classroom achievement of non-mobile students.**

Mobility not only impacts students who change schools, it also impacts classrooms and schools with mobile students. Mobile students create difficulties for teachers, who have to deal with the constant movement of students in and out of their classrooms. Schools must bear the administrative and financial costs of processing these students. As a result, researchers found evidence that average test scores for non-mobile students are lower in high schools with high student mobility rates.

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California students with three or more school changes during elementary school are significantly more likely to drop out of high school compared to their non-mobile peers.

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- **About half of the time that students change schools, it is because their families have changed residences.**

The remainder of school changes are initiated by students or schools, and are prompted by social as well as academic circumstances. Interview data from students and parents revealed that most of the student-initiated changes were reactive rather than strategic in nature—students changed schools to escape a bad situation rather than to actively seek a better situation. There were also differences between Asian, Latino, and white students in their reasons for changing schools. Asians were more likely to make strategic, family-initiated school changes, while Latinos and whites were more likely to make reactive school changes.

- **California students are three times as likely as students in other states to change schools because of discipline incidents.**

Continued on page 4

School Choice Grows

(from page 1)

about voucher applicants and their families such as income, employment, race/ethnicity, and parent education. Parental satisfaction among families whose children use vouchers tends to be higher with their schools-of-choice than with their previous neighborhood public schools. Studies on Milwaukee and Cleveland reveal divergent findings on whether voucher students perform better on achievement tests than their public school peers (Witte, Thorn, Pritchard, and Claibourn, 1994; Greene, Peterson, and Du, 1997; Rouse, 1997; Metcalf, 1998; Greene, Howell, and Peterson, 1997).

Relatively little is yet known about the effects of vouchers on schools and schooling. Do voucher programs empower low-income parents, promote higher academic achievement, inject competition and innovation into a sometimes unresponsive school system, and use educational dollars more efficiently as proponents claim? Or will vouchers lead to greater socio-economic and racial segregation, drain resources away from underfunded schools, promote an exodus of better performing students and more involved families away from public schools, and fail to realize the achievement gains promised by advocates? These are critical questions in need of additional research.

Charter Schools

As of fall 1999, 33 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico have enacted charter school legislation. There are about 1,000 charter schools in the U.S., with approximately 150 in California alone. According to California's enabling legislation, charter schools are intended to accomplish the following:

- improve pupil learning;
- increase learning opportunities for all pupils, with special emphasis on students who are academically low-achieving;
- encourage the use of innovative teaching methods; and
- expand teachers' professional opportunities.

There is currently no sound research available on whether student achievement has improved in charter schools, and little information on whether charter schools are fulfilling their other expectations.

The most comprehensive study of California charter schools was prepared by SRI International in 1997. It surveyed 97 charter schools on their student and teacher characteristics, quality of teaching and learning, and parental involvement. Researchers found that 1) charters serve a slightly less diverse body of students than non-charters; 2) parents are very involved in charter schools; 3) some charter schools offer creative programs and have adopted innovative governance arrangements; and 4) few charter schools report being financially autonomous. Public opinion of charter schools is mixed. Among those who responded to a recent PACE-Field Institute Poll, only 49% favor expanding the number of charter schools, while 37% do not.

Tax Credits

Several states have recently expanded or implemented tax subsidies for K-12 education expenses. These new measures make school choice more feasible financially for many families. Minnesota and Iowa both have laws permitting families to take either a tax deduction or credit for educational expenses, including private school tuition. The Arizona legislature recently passed a law permitting a $500 tax credit for individuals who make a charitable contribution to a non-profit organization that sponsors scholarships or tuition vouchers. Several other states have proposed or are considering similar laws, including California, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin.

As the tax code becomes a more favored venue for crafting education policy, subsidies raise important viability and equity issues.

At the federal level, the House of Representatives passed a measure in fall 1997 that allows families to establish tax-free education savings accounts to be used for any K–12 educational expense, including home schooling and private school tuition. Known as the A+ Accounts, the bill has yet to muster enough votes to pass the Senate.

Last year, the Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997 included a number of tax subsidy plans for higher education. Known as the Hope Scholarship, Lifetime Learning Credit, and Education IRAs, the plans provide tax breaks for families and are aimed at expanding access to college by making tuition more affordable.

As the tax code becomes a more favored venue for crafting education policy, the practice raises important viability and equity issues. Which families are benefiting most from education tax subsidies? Will benefits be limited to those families that can already afford to exercise choice? Are families with limited income and minimal tax liability being excluded? *—Luis Huerta, Susan C. Puryear, and Edward A. Wexler*

A research report on this topic is available. See page 2.

Mobility Hurts Students And Schools

(from page 3)

Schools can force students to transfer for social or academic reasons, such as for fighting or poor grades. Students in California were much more likely than students in other states to be subjected to school-initiated transfers. This practice raises questions, especially in light of the finding that high school changes increase the risk of dropping out of school.

Average test scores for non-mobile students are lower in high schools with high student mobility rates.

- **Differences in mobility rates among California high schools are due more to the characteristics of the schools than to the characteristics of the students they enroll.**

Student background characteristics account for less than one-third of the differences in school mobility rates, whereas school characteristics account for more than a third. In particular, schools with lower student-teacher ratios and schools where students report doing more homework had lower student mobility rates than other schools.

New admissions criteria were created with scant research about their possible effects.

The report concludes that much can and should be done both to prevent some types of student mobility—especially reactive school changes—and to mitigate some of the harmful effects of mobility. Students, their families, and schools contribute to the high rates of mobility in California. Therefore, they should be involved in trying to address this problem.

Copies of the report, or a policy brief that summarizes the report's key findings and policy recommendations, can be obtained from PACE. *—Russell Rumberger*

A research report on this topic is available. See page 2.

CARING FOR CHILDREN

The Growing Up in Poverty Initiative

Every child's earliest learning unfolds in the home. When families are fragile and threatened by poverty, young children's ability to thrive in school can be jeopardized. Against the backdrop of rising child poverty in several states, the nation has embarked on the huge experiment called welfare reform.

How will children fare under welfare reform? Will the school readiness of children rise or decline as their mothers are nudged back to work? Can a child-care and preschool system of uneven quality provide nurturing settings for millions of additional children? These are the pressing questions motivating our research team at PACE, Yale University, and the Children's Board of Tampa, Florida.

First, meet three of the women participating in our nationwide study. They reveal a bit of what they have experienced in their effort to be good mothers and good workers. They also tell about their challenging search for child-care and preschool programs that seem safe and nurturing. To respect their privacy, all names have been changed. After reading their stories, we invite you to find out more about the Caring for Children Study.

Portraits of Three Women in the Study

Lan

Born and raised in Vietnam, Lan has lived in the San Jose, California area since 1995. Three years ago when Lan told her boyfriend that she was pregnant, he broke up with her and has not contacted her since. Her son, Huy, was born with health problems and needs close supervision. Today Lan depends mostly on welfare assistance for her income. She says it is a real struggle to support herself and her son.

After attending the CalWORKs (welfare-to-work) orientation, Lan learned that she must take classes in English as a Second Language to meet new welfare rules. She is now enrolled in school. As her language skills improve, her job options will increase. Still, Lan feels uncomfortable with the new welfare reform laws.

She fears that she will not be skilled or experienced enough to find work and support herself and her son when she reaches her time limit. If welfare benefits could be extended several more years, Lan feels that she and others in the same situation would have more time to adjust and prepare for work.

Elena

The mother of two young sons, Elena works as a nurse's assistant. She lives in the Tampa, Florida area. Elena is vocal about her experiences with the welfare system:

"It is a struggle every day being a single mom. Dad is not regular with visitation and forgets about child support. My children are confused, sad, and sick a lot. I still do everything in my power no matter how angry I am at my ex-husband or the welfare system. I will be the better one to keep the peace, take the high road, and refuse to give up! I've currently been on welfare for a total of six months.

"The system is really a Catch 22 situation. I am an educated, single mom with an asthmatic child and I can't keep a job because I have to miss work taking care of a son who gets sick in child-care. I have to fight to get welfare assistance; I wish there could be some other way—rather than sitting in the welfare office for many hours—to keep from getting sanctioned and jeopardizing my job again. You never get ahead because of this nasty cycle. And you never catch up financially.

With welfare, you have to not work or make very little money to get assistance, even if it is temporary help. Welfare is supposed to help you, but it seems to entrap you...you can't break free to succeed in life and be independent. I wish I could speak to legislators about [finding] solutions to the problems that we face with this system. There just has to be enough people out there who will open their eyes and hearts to reach back and help us pull out of this terrifying vacuum.

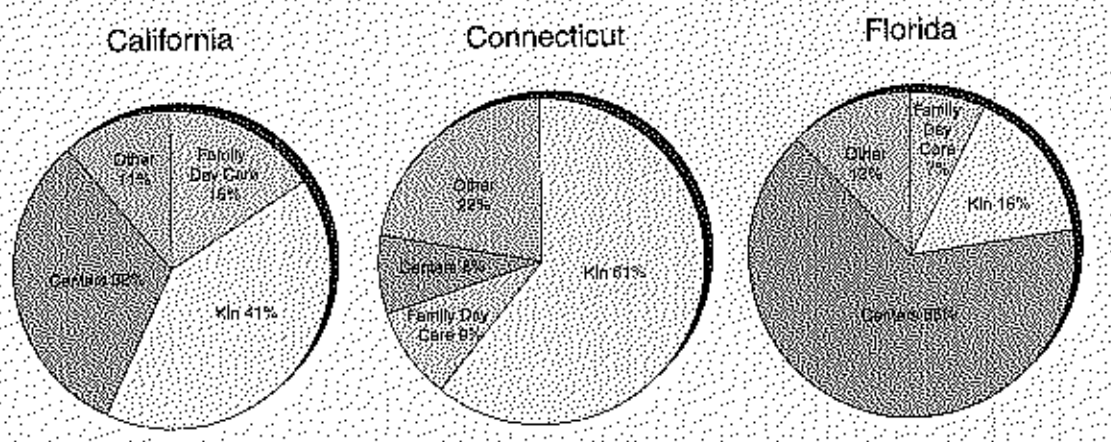
"I am sorry if this sounds angry, but I have been terrified and so lonely trying to care for my children and break this cycle of desperation. I am so eager to make something of myself and I am willing to work hard to do so. I just can't seem to get a break."

Isabel

Isabel has had to wait several months to get approval for child-care for her daughter, Rosa. She spoke with her caseworker in August, and the caseworker told her that she was working on processing 80 to 100 applications. Although the process has been very slow, Isabel remains optimistic that she will receive approval soon. There is a day-care center in her neighborhood that's new, large, and attractive, and she hopes that she will be able to send Rosa there.

Previously, Isabel worked cleaning houses and taking care of children, but now she would like to get a job at a store like J.C. Penney or Costco, work with computers in an office, or work at the post office.

Sharp Differences in the Share of Young Children Who Are Placed in Preschools and Child-Care Centers.



This wide variability may be due to the supply of center-based programs in our participating cities. We are also analyzing how maternal and family level factors are driving these differing patterns of child-care use.

The PACE-Yale Caring for Children Study

One of President Clinton's most popular campaign promises was to "end welfare as we know it." In August of 1996 he did just that by signing the Welfare Reform Bill. Under welfare reform, participants—most of whom are single mothers—can only receive cash benefits for a limited time. Most welfare parents are expected to find jobs and become financially independent within two to five years. In order to work, however, these mothers must first find child-care. But in most communities there isn't enough licensed child-care available to cover this sudden increase in demand. In fact, in order to provide child-care for all of the welfare mothers who will be returning to work over the next five years, many states would have to quadruple the size of their child-care systems.

Some mothers will be able to find high-quality care for their children at a respected day care center or with trusted friends or relatives. Others may have no choice but to place their children in care that is unstimulating or even unsafe.

The Caring for Children Study aims to find out how welfare reform will affect these children, and whether their development will benefit from high-quality care or be hindered by inadequate care. Conducted jointly by researchers at the University of California at Berkeley and Yale University, this four-year, longitudinal study involves 920 welfare mothers who have a child between 12 and 42 months of age.

Learning from Mothers and Children: California, Connecticut, and Florida

Participating mothers and children have been selected from new family welfare programs in San Francisco and San Jose, California; New Haven and Manchester, Connecticut; and Tampa, Florida. The first year of data collection ended in January 1999.

The initial phase of the study involves an in-depth interview with each mother as she begins the process of finding work. During the interviews, the women tell us about their home environment, social support networks, health, prior AFDC aid, education, work experience, and economic and personal well-being. Next, we ask each mother about her child's early language development.

In the second phase of the study, we visit the center or home where the child is being cared for when the mother is at work. During this two-hour visit, we interview the child's primary caregiver, conduct a picture vocabulary test with the child, and observe the physical setting and interaction between the caregiver(s) and the child. In year two of the project and beyond, we will expand the range of development and school readiness measures used with the children.

Wide Support for the Caring for Children Study

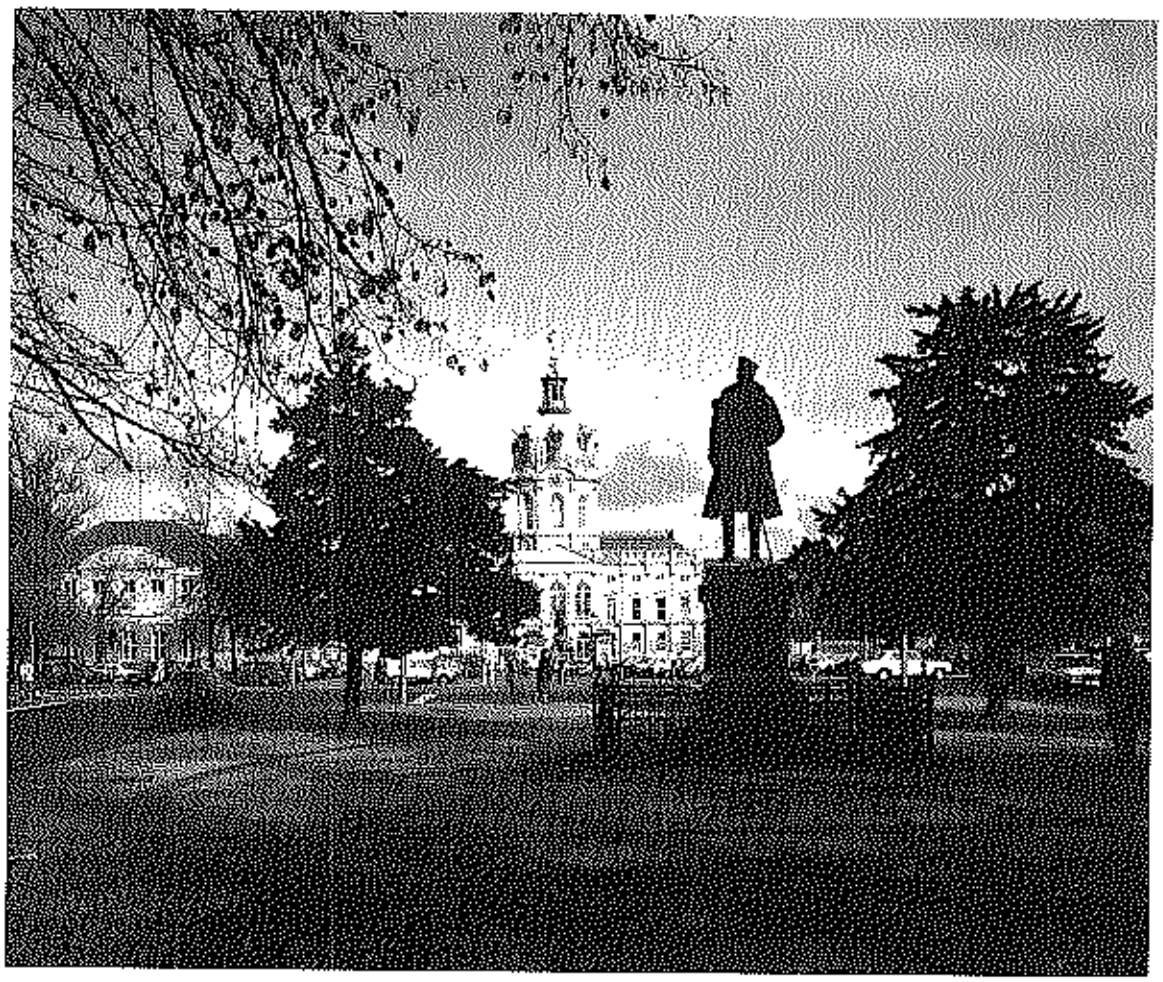
The PACE–Yale initiative aims to inform policies at state and local levels throughout the U.S. in order to reduce the number of children growing up in poverty. This work is closely linked to the success of school reform, which depends upon collateral efforts to strengthen working families.

Our research and development program on child-care, early education, and family poverty is supported by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the Spencer Foundation, Annie E. Casey Foundation, the California Department of Social Services, the Child Care Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement. This newsletter insert and other dissemination activities are funded by the Miriam and Peter Haas Fund and the Luke Hancock Foundation. The Caring for Children Project is co-directed by Sharon Lynn Kagan at Yale and Bruce Fuller at PACE–UC Berkeley. For more information, call 510-642-7223.

The End of Affirmative Action: New Criteria for University Admissions

When a Texas court and California voters banned affirmative action in higher education in 1996, the reaction ranged from jubilation to outrage. In Texas, the Fifth Circuit Court ruled that race cannot be used as a criterion to achieve a diverse student body. The state attorney general interpreted the ruling as prohibiting the consideration of race or ethnicity in *all* internal school policies in higher education institutions across the state, including admissions, financial aid, scholarships and fellowships, and recruitment and retention. This interpretation is currently the law of the land in Texas.

Meanwhile, in California, 54% of those voting during the November 1996 general election supported Proposition 209, which effectively ended the practice of using affirmative action as one criterion in college admissions. As a result of these victories, long-term opponents of affirmative action felt that a long overdue end to racial bias in college admissions could finally be achieved. Supporters of affirmative action, on the other hand, feared that the most competitive state universities would be purged of promising minority students.



Too often lost in the sometimes acrimonious debate over affirmative action, however, has been an attempt to understand the profound changes in university admissions criteria caused by changes in affirmative action policy.

Indeed, many people have no idea what changes have been made in college admissions criteria. But understanding these changes and their possible implications is crucial. Policymakers need to know if the new criteria give state universities a way of maintaining diversity in spite of the ban. High school teachers and counselors need to consider how the criteria may affect their students' chances of getting into the colleges of their choice.

Prior to the banning of affirmative action, both the University of Texas and the University of California—like many state university systems—admitted students by calculating indices of high school performance and SAT/ACT scores. The higher the grade point average or high school class rank, the lower the SAT/ACT scores needed for admission. The same basic calculation was made for minority students, only some were admitted with lower grade point averages and SAT scores than non-minority students. Admissions officials considered race and ethnicity in their decisions for students on the borderline of not being admitted.

Proposition 209 in California and a court ruling in Texas stopped this affirmative action-bound practice in its tracks. Universities had no choice but to radically overhaul their admissions criteria, hoping that the new criteria they developed would somehow continue to promote minority admissions while adhering to the law banning the consideration of race. A grand experiment in university admissions began.

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Policymakers need to know if the new criteria give state universities a way of maintaining diversity in spite of the ban on affirmative action.

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For a specific example of how new admissions criteria are being used, we can look at the University of California at Davis. The university employs three criteria in its admissions policy. For 60% of those admitted to Davis, the university uses an academic index of SAT I, SAT II, and GPA. For the remaining 40% of its students, it also uses a campus enhancement quotient and an academic potential campus contribution index. In California, some UC campuses have decided to use a number of other criteria, including being a first-generation university student; attending a high school with a low socio-economic student body; demonstrating marked improvement in eleventh grade; and demonstrating specific instances of perseverance. In essence, these campuses are seeking non-traditional applicants who will maintain or increase diversity.

Also considered at many California campuses, including Davis, are factors over which the applicant has had little direct control and which he or she has had to surmount. An applicant, for instance, may have been faced with unusual family disruptions, certain medical or emotional problems, an adverse immigrant experience, an environment of drug or alcohol abuse, a lack of academic role models, or the need to learn English.

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The End of Affirmative Action

(from page 5)

While the University of California has so far refused to admit all students who score above a certain class rank, it is currently debating admitting the top 4% or even the top 10%. Projections suggest that admitting the top 10% would reduce by half the number of students enrolling into the university system from high-scoring SAT schools in largely affluent communities such as Palo Alto and Huntington Beach.

The new admissions criteria will require more thorough counseling of high school students than in the past.

The University of Texas, unlike the University of California, accepts all students from the top 10% of their high school class, regardless of SAT/ACT scores. After accepting the top 10%, the university considers other applicants based on 18 criteria. Some of these more conventional criteria include a consideration of essays, the number of college units taken, leadership abilities, work experience, and community service. The university also uses other criteria similar to those being used in California. These include being from a low-income or single-parent home, speaking more than one language, and attending a school operating under a court-ordered desegregation plan.

What, if anything, will the criteria now being used by these state university systems do to foster diversity and the completion of degrees by minorities? Right now, no one can say for certain. New admissions criteria were created with scant research about their possible effects—effects that will only become fully apparent over time.

Based on what is known so far, however, it is possible to make a few preliminary observations. Asians have seemed to benefit in both Texas and California from the new criteria. Fewer African Americans were admitted to the most competitive UC campuses (Berkeley and UCLA), but more were admitted to less selective campuses like Riverside and Santa Cruz. In Texas, the highly competitive University of Texas at Austin and Texas A&M did not experience much of an increase in students from the top 10% of their high school classes despite the state's automatic admission policy for this group. The geographic pattern of where students choose to attend college appears difficult to change, at least in Texas. Forty fewer African Americans were admitted to the Austin campus in 1997, despite a 3.4% increase in total applications for that year.

A major drawback of the traditional GPA/SAT indices is their tendency to overlook the more intangible factors that predict success at universities.

One thing is certain about the new admissions criteria: they are a lot more difficult for students, parents, and the public to understand then the old GPA/SAT index. Students in California and Texas can no longer simply calculate their chances of admission from a chart using this index, now that qualitative factors such as persistence and determination are also being considered. It cannot be assumed, however, that the more complex criteria are necessarily a bad thing. A major drawback of the traditional GPA/SAT indices is their tendency to overlook the more intangible factors that predict success at universities, while at the same time eliminating the very kind of non-traditional students that universities wish to attract. The new criteria—complex as they may be—may signal to minority students that they are welcome at state universities. In any case, the new admissions criteria will require more thorough counseling of high school students than in the past, because the criteria are more complex and more subject to change.

In considering the impact these new admissions criteria are having, policymakers must look not only at the number of minority students being admitted, but also at the number of students who are actually completing degrees. Currently, the emphasis in admissions is based solely upon diversity, which could cause a backlash if voters perceive that students admitted under the new criteria are performing poorly in university classes or failing to graduate.

The end of affirmative action in Texas and California has launched an era of experimentation and volatility in selective university admissions, and even more changes are likely in these states in the years ahead. Rather than spending all our time celebrating or condemning the banning of affirmative action, we must scrutinize the impact new admissions criteria are having. And we must not settle on any one set of criteria until all of us educators, parents, and the public—have had a long and fruitful debate about their effectiveness and fairness in allocating scarce places at selective universities.

—Michael W. Kirst

Guest Column

Editor's Note: This column is a new feature of the PACE Newsletter. The views expressed here are those of the writer, and are intended to stimulate reflection and consideration of educational public policy issues. They do not necessarily represent the views of PACE.

Coming Up: In the next PACE newsletter, Gary Hart, California's new Secretary of Education, will discuss Governor Gray Davis' education priorities.

Governor Wilson's Education Reforms

by Marian Bergeson

In many ways, Samuel King Elementary in Sacramento reflects the challenges facing public schools throughout California. It is the most socio-economically disadvantaged school in the Elk Grove Unified School District. Some of its students have to study language arts in a converted hallway. Because there is no lab space and equipment is limited, teachers teach science from a box they haul from classroom to classroom. And on the day I visited, the principal was sharing her office with a cot for sick children so that the nurse's office could be used to take annual school pictures.

But a closer look at King Elementary reveals fundamental reforms in the works. The school's kindergartners, first, second, and third graders are studying in classes with reduced student-to-teacher ratios of 20:1. Reading classes focus on phonics. Shipments of new textbooks, library materials, and science equipment are on their way. And administrators are laying plans for a new science and reading center, paid for with funds from the new $9.2 billion state education bond.

These reforms and others have been implemented over the past eight years by Governor Pete Wilson. Even those frequently on the other side of issues from the former governor concede that his record on education is impressive. Consider this quotation from an education union official: "When you look back at the kinds of reform that have taken place, it's a remarkable list." So remarkable, in fact, that it is worthwhile to review some of the most significant ones.

Reduced Class Sizes

When Wilson took office, students in grades K–3 were studying in classrooms where student-to-teacher ratios exceeded 30:1. In 1996 he proposed and implemented a class-size reduction in these first four grades. As of the 1997–98 academic year (the most recent for which figures are available), 99% of first graders, 96% of second graders, 67% of third graders, and 69% of kindergartners were receiving instruction in classes with student-to-teacher ratios averaging no more than 20:1. Working with legislative leaders, Wilson included funding in the 1998–99 budget to reduce class size in ninth grade reading classes—and in classes for one additional subject area selected by each district—beginning with the second semester of the current academic year.

Raised Standards

As a result of Wilson's leadership, California moved away from ineffective instructional fads and returned to the basics and to raised academic standards. In 1995, he signed the "ABC bills," which returned instruction in California's schools back to the basics, including phonics, spelling, and basic computation. The State Board of Education adopted new, rigorous standards in math, language arts, science, social science, and history. To ensure that school instructional materials reflect these new standards, Wilson provided $250 million in the state's 1998–99 budget for new textbooks—the first year in a four-year, $1 billion program.

Charter Schools Authorization

In 1992 Wilson signed legislation that authorized the establishment of charter schools in California (SB 1448). It allowed teachers, principals, parents, and communities to create their own publicly funded schools which would be free from most state mandates and bureaucratic requirements. During 1997–98, there were 130 approved charter schools in California. In 1998 Wilson signed legislation to expand that number to 250, with a provision for increasing charter schools by 100 each subsequent year.

End to Social Promotion

Wilson signed into law a statute prohibiting the destructive practice of social promotion, the practice of promoting students who fail to achieve at grade level. This new law is accompanied by more than $100 million in the 1998–99 budget for remedial instruction, which provides the additional assistance needed to help students who are failing.

Mentors, After-School Programs

To help get students back on track, Wilson created the Academic Volunteer Mentor Service program in 1992, which focuses on developing partnerships to bring academic mentors and tutors into schools. In 1996–97 grant recipients matched over 6,600 students with mentors. Wilson's 1998–99 budget provided an additional $5 million to expand this successful program. Wilson also allocated $50 million in the 1998–99 budget for an after-school program that provides students with personal academic instruction and educational enrichment activities.

Lengthened School Year

Wilson signed a law ending the euphemistic practice of "pupil-free" instructional days. Today, every student in every California public school receives instruction for a minimum of 180 days. For some districts, this has meant an increase of as many as eight instructional days. Wilson also allocated $195 million to provide three paid staff development days for teachers, in addition to the 180 instructional days spent in the classroom.

Teacher Training and Development

As governor, Wilson stressed the importance of teacher training and alternative credentialing for qualified, out-of-state teachers and retired teachers. He allocated millions of dollars in his 1998–99 budget for teacher training in mathematics and reading instruction to help teachers meet new state credential standards. Wilson also signed AB 838, which eases the time-consuming process required for out-of-state teachers to comply with California's credentialing requirements, and AB 18, which allows retired teachers to return to the classroom without penalty.

Beginning Teacher Support

In 1997 Wilson signed AB 1266, which established the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) Program. The program provides training and performance assessment for beginning teachers. BTSA's funding has been increased to $67.8 million to expand the program for 1998–99.

Increased School Safety

School safety was among Wilson's top priorities, and he enacted a number of important measures in this area. One bans serious violent offenders from working in schools. Another authorizes the use of school uniforms. A third establishes "zero tolerance" policies that require the expulsion of students who bring weapons to school or sell drugs on campus. According to the California Safe Schools Assessment, between 1995 and 1997, crime in California declined in all four of the state's safety-related categories: "property crimes, drug and alcohol offenses, crimes against persons, and other crimes."

All of the above reforms are beginning to bear fruit, which is why it is critical to stay the course. We must not revert to the old ways of bloated bureaucracies, shifting instructional fads, and no assessment or accountability. For if we do, we will undermine the hard-fought reforms made in recent years and condemn California's students to substandard education for generations to come.

Marian Bergeson was Secretary of Child Development and Education and a cabinet-level education advisor for former Governor Pete Wilson. She is now on the State Board of Education. ■

PACE NEWS NOTES

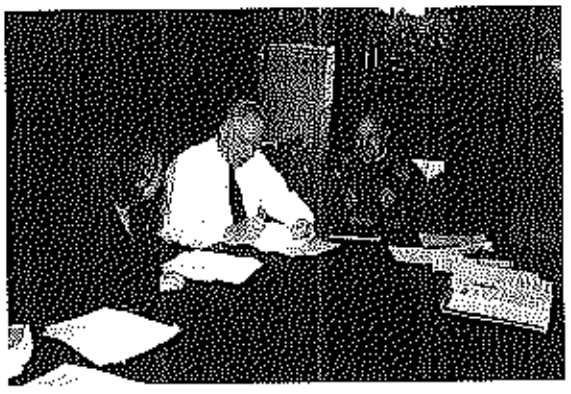
Media seminar

PACE convened a seminar in October for Southern California print and broadcast media to discuss proposed education reforms in preparation for the November election. Titled "Policy Schizophrenia: Centralized Accountability Versus Radical Decentralization," the seminar gave researchers a chance to present their findings on three topics related to Proposition 8, the Permanent Class Size Reduction and Education Opportunities Act.

If it had passed (Proposition 8 was soundly defeated on November 3), the measure would have created a new Office of the Chief Inspector of Public Schools. It would also have guaranteed permanent funding for K-3 class-size reduction, and created new school governing councils to give parents power over curriculum, budgets, and other areas. Columnist Peter Schrag and PACE Co-Director Mike Kirst opened the day by describing California's evolving educational landscape and by disentangling the key provisions within Proposition 8. With education as the state's number one issue, they said, voters are demonstrating their loss of confidence in local school officials and their worries about poor academic achievement. Furthermore, with a fractured and contentious state governance structure, California has been unable to set forth a coordinated, comprehensive education strategy.

In the first panel, two scholars addressed the subject of student achievement and assessment. Michael Feuer from the National Research Council's Board on Testing and Assessment advocated for the appropriate use of testing to promote student learning. Too often, he said, high stakes decisions are made before students are taught the knowledge and skills on which they will be tested. Furthermore, since there is no uniform standard for linking tests, it is difficult to compare achievement test results. Rich Brown from UCLA's National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST) explained that the Stanford 9 test is being redeveloped. Since the test was not created with the new state standards in mind, it will need to be revised again. Brown offered a balanced picture of growth in California, and demonstrated why interpreting test results is so difficult.

Next, Priscilla Wohlstetter from the University of Southern California and John Easton from the Consortium on Chicago School Research discussed the impact of school level governance councils. Wohlstetter, who has conducted research on school-based management throughout the U.S., cautioned that although school site councils are a necessary component of effective school improvement, they are insufficient in and of themselves. Easton then shared mixed results from Chicago's experiment with local school councils. Both researchers confirmed that, although schools can experience improvements through increased parental involvement, there is little evidence that this form of decentralized governance alone can boost student achievement.



Sketching plans for the popular *Conditions of Education in California* are (l-r): Elizabeth Burr, PACE Research Coordinator; Gerald C. Hayward, PACE Director–Sacramento; and Michael W. Kirst, PACE Director–Stanford. The next edition—which will have a new format, including contributions from various authors—will be available in fall 1999.

Finally, PACE Co-Director Bruce Fuller and UCLA's Amy Stuart Wells discussed school choice options. Fuller described the range of school options now available including charter schools, magnet schools, vouchers, tax credits, and open enrollment. Wells then described her work studying 17 charter schools in 10 districts. She addressed the main claims of charter school advocates—that charter schools are more accountable for student performance, spur innovation due to their autonomy from the school system, increase efficiency, and create competition among other schools. She indicated, however, that there is scant evidence so far that charters raise parent satisfaction or student achievement.

Conditions of Education

PACE is reviving the popular publication, *Conditions of Education in California*. Widely used by state and local policymakers, school leaders, and other stakeholders, the annual volume provided information on critical issues in state education policy and presented them within the context of major policy developments. In its new form, with contributions from various authors, *Conditions* will contain data and analysis on student achievement and assessment, early education and family poverty, teachers and teaching, instructional policy, and school finance. Look for the new edition later this year.

Child Care Indicators

PACE is pleased to announce the release of *Child Care Indicators 1998*, which contains new information intended to assist state and local child-care planners in understanding child-care needs. Working with the California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, and funded by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), PACE has developed a more complete set of child-care supply indicators, and new measurements for determining the amount and location of needed child-care expansion.

Part I of the report includes new tables that update data on the availability of child-care and add information about family demand. The supply data now contain information on both licensed and license-exempt child-care. The tables now cover all areas of the state and, for the first time, provide information down to the zip code level. Part II, to be published in early March, will include new welfare earnings data on the number of working families and county totals for the data currently being released. This will allow planners to focus resources on areas of greatest need.

Over the next few months, PACE will publish countywide maps of major child-care supply and demand variables. In addition, PACE will continue to track growth in child-care supply and explore other sources of data that might provide indicators of demand.

Child Care Supply and Demand

In another project funded by CDSS, PACE is studying the extent to which the supply of child-care services is keeping up with the demand. Working at the state and local level, PACE researchers are examining available data in order to inform planning efforts around the provision and expansion of child-care services. The study is also addressing a new question–whether efforts to expand child-care services match the types of care families prefer. PACE is collaborating with three counties (Alameda, Kern, and Los Angeles) to collect more detailed information about child-care demand, and to see how parents move through the child-care subsidy system. This study includes an analysis, via administrative data, of the pathways that CalWORKs and Alternative Provider clients follow, depending on the types of child-care they select. Using this data, researchers are also looking at how clients move through the three child-care "stages" (as described in the state's 1997 welfare bill). In addition, PACE, in collaboration with the counties, is collecting information through focus groups on welfare and working poor clients' experiences with the child-care subsidy systems and on parent child-care preferences. The final report is planned for summer 1999.

New PACE Website

PACE now has a new website address: <http://pace.berkeley.edu>. Visit the site to find out more about our current research areas, order past publications or recent reports, or contact a staff member. —*Elizabeth Burr*