

EDUCATION NEWS & NOTES

Facts On Fixing The Public Education System

by Martin Lueken, Ph.D.

(NAPS)—Some parents will stop at nothing to provide the best opportunities for their children—as the recent college admissions scandal shows. Given that many of the parents involved are (very) wealthy, the differences in educational opportunities between wealthy and low-income families couldn't be starker.

So what do parents who don't have that kind of cash do when the K-12 education system isn't doing enough for their children? Many commit something called residency fraud.

Parents who can afford to sometimes move to access what they deem to be quality public schools. Families that can't may lie about their address.

A Quick School Funding Lesson

Local school funding—generated by levying local property taxes for local schools—comprises more than 40 percent of total revenue in more than half the states. Even though funding gaps have closed over the last several decades, with some states providing equalization aid for poorer districts, inequities still remain—where you live can determine how many resources your child gets, and inequitable access still persists.

How Can We Do Better?

One option is for states to collect property or other taxes at the state level instead of locally, and distribute education funds to families rather than to schools. To improve the system even more, they can implement education savings accounts (ESAs), through which children and their families receive public funds they can use on such approved educational expenses as tuition to a public or private school they choose, as well as educational services such as tutoring, therapies and more.



Recent cheating scandals have shone a light on funding inequities in American public education—but there is an answer.

When it comes to school finance issues, revenue is only part of the equation. One route to funding equity is to adopt a weighted-student formula that delivers dollars to schools based on student need rather than residence. This will also strengthen incentives for schools to serve high-need students.

What Happens To Public Schools?

Research shows public schools generally respond positively in ways that benefit their students when programs such as ESAs and school vouchers are implemented and the students who remain in public schools experience positive gains on test scores.

An education system with ESAs as the funding mechanism would increase educational opportunities for all families, especially the ones that can't move or pay and don't want to break the law by lying to get into a better school.

Learn More

For further information on improving education, go to www.edchoice.org.

• *Dr. Lueken is Director of Fiscal Policy and Analysis, EdChoice, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to advancing full and unencumbered educational choice for successful lives and a stronger society.*