

# NEW HAMPSHIRE UNION LEADER

## **Another View -- John Reagan: School choice leads to lower taxes and better education**

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Entertaining performing groups, robotic teams and Gov. Chris Sununu joined students, teachers, and parents from all areas of the Granite State on Tuesday at the Currier Museum of Art in Manchester.

What was all the hullabaloo? Celebrating National School Choice Week.

Freedom of choice is as American as apple pie. Unfortunately, most of New Hampshire's parents have been unable to afford some of the items on the school choice menu.

The New Hampshire education system is comprised of public, public charter, private schools, and of course, home-schooled children. Many success stories continue to happen despite being handicapped by the state Legislature.

The Legislature, persuaded by lobbyists of the powerful education unions, enact legislation hindering a parent's ability to provide a safer and higher standard of education through school choice. Quality education the parents feel their children deserve.

Public charter schools operate through support gained primarily by private fundraising efforts. Funding from the state to all public schools amounts to about a third of what the local school districts expend.

On the one hand, we can say that because public charter schools only receive about one third of the public funding local school districts spend, that this a big win for the taxpayer. However, we also need to consider the quality of the education and safety of our children.

Does school choice work and how do we know? If it does work, how can we afford it? Several scientific studies performed by reputable organizations, neither financed nor influenced by property taxpayer dollars, would seem to indicate that school choice provides a safe environment and multiple sources high educational standards for our children.

Ed Choice (formerly Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice) has presented 33 empirical studies all showing positive results from school choice. Twenty-eight of these same studies (a whopping 85 percent) showed positive, or neutral fiscal effects. Other studies show a higher

level of awareness of both civic values and responsibilities.

On a tour of a New Hampshire charter school, I asked what were some of the reasons why students choose to transfer to a charter school. The number one response: No bullying.

Another win for school choice is that of additional learning and higher test scores. Former Rep. Jason Bedrick, now a member of the Cato Institute, writes “... highly significant educationally meaningful achievement gains of several months of additional learning from school choice.”

Bedrick said further, “30 of 42 studies showed how competition had a positive impact on neighboring public school student test scores.”

Parents always wish the best for their children; and as a society we are constantly persuaded to believe that our future depends on the education of our children. This theory may, or may not be true. But many would agree that better educated citizens would result in a stable and constantly expanding economy.

The lack of competition for educational service providers, leads us to ask two questions.

Without alternative methods and systems for training our children, how will we know if students are attaining their full earning potential, or developing personally to the best of their ability?

Without competing suppliers of educational services, how do we know the true cost of education?

Competition would demand excellence to attract students at every level and at a price that is fair to the taxpayer and the student alike.

Both the Senate and House Education Committees will be earnestly searching for solutions to improve the quality of education and decrease the cost paid by property taxpayers.