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This Week on "The Learning Curve" Podcast: **Cato's Neal McCluskey on School Choice & Educational Federalism**

Introducing New Co-Host Gerard Robinson, Joining Cara Candal

*Special thanks to Bob Bowdon & Choice Media for helping us launch
"The Learning Curve"!*



On this episode of "The Learning Curve," Cara welcomes new co-host **Gerard Robinson** and guest **Neal McCluskey**, Director of the Cato Institute's Center for Educational Freedom. They discuss America's growing interest in school choice, with 500,000 children now attending private schools through vouchers, tax credits, or Education Savings Accounts, and another three million enrolled in charter schools. They also review President Trump's federal tax credit proposal, its questionable constitutionality, and its prospects in Congress. Neal describes his public schooling "[Battle Map](#)" project that catalogues social conflict in K-12 education, and demonstrates the merits of greater school choice as a mechanism for ensuring government remains neutral in disputes between religious liberty and civil rights. Plus, the avid grillmaster shares his BBQ tips!

Stories of the Week: A proposal to give the **New York** state education department more regulatory authority over private and religious schools has been put on hold. Is increased oversight of private school curricula necessary to ensure accountability, or an infringement on local autonomy? **Military families**

addressed Congress this week to fix the Exceptional Family Member Program, which is supposed to cover services, including private school tuition costs in some cases, for children with special needs. The program has been meeting with resistance from public school districts claiming they can provide sufficient services, forcing families to fight costly legal battles. Is the program a well-deserved benefit for those serving our country, or an unnecessary financial drain on public school systems?

The **next episode** will air on **February 21st**, with guest, **Margaret "Macke" Raymond**, Founder and Director of the Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) at Stanford University.

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Newsmaker Interview



Neal McCluskey is the Director of Cato's Center for Educational Freedom. He is the author of the book *Feds in the Classroom: How Big Government Corrupts, Cripples, and Compromises American Education*. His writings have appeared in such publications as the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Post*, and *Forbes*. In addition to his written work, Neal has appeared on PBS, CNN, the Fox News Channel, and numerous radio

programs. McCluskey holds an undergraduate degree from Georgetown University, where he double-majored in government and English, has a master's degree in political science from Rutgers University and holds a Ph.D. in public policy from George Mason University. Neal tweets at [@NealMcCluskey](https://twitter.com/NealMcCluskey).

Listeners can find "[The Learning Curve](#)" on [iTunes](#) (Apple Podcasts), [Stitcher](#), [Spotify](#), [Google Play](#), and the Choice Media [mobile app](#). They can also find it online at [Ricochet](#) and [Pioneer Institute](#).

"The Learning Curve" Co-Hosts:



Gerard Robinson is the Executive Director of the Center for Advancing Opportunity, a Washington, D.C.-based research and education initiative to address the most pressing education, entrepreneurship, and criminal justice issues in fragile communities throughout the U.S. in partnership with faculty and students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities and other postsecondary institutions. Robinson is a fellow with AEI, and was Commissioner of Education in Florida and Secretary of Education in Virginia. Gerard tweets at [@gerard_924](#).



Cara Stillings Candal, Ed.D., serves as Director of Educational Opportunity, focusing on private school choice, for ExcelinEd. Cara has spent the last 10 years working in education policy as a Senior Fellow with both Pioneer Institute and the Center for Education Reform. She was also a founding team member of the National Academy of Advanced Teacher Education (NAATE) and a research assistant professor at Boston University in the Department of Educational Leadership and Development. Cara has authored/edited more than 25 papers and three books on education policy. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in English Literature from Indiana University, a Masters of Arts in Social Science from the University of Chicago and a Doctorate of Education from Boston University. Cara is the author most recently of Pioneer Institute's book, [*The Fight for the Best Charter Public Schools in the Nation*](#).

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