

# Parental Choice in Education

As those first responsible for the education of their children, parents have the right to *choose a school for them* which corresponds to their own convictions. This right is fundamental. As far as possible parents have the duty of choosing schools that will best help them in their task as Christian educators. Public authorities have the duty of guaranteeing this parental right and of ensuring the concrete conditions for its exercise. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2229*)

## Church teaching

- ★ Our motivation for educational reform springs out of a deep conviction that we must correct long-standing social injustices in educational funding and a lack of access by providing real opportunities for parental choice. For the Church this is clearly a matter of justice because those families with limited educational choices are the very families trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty. A quality education is what these families need so their children can develop their fullest potential as participants in our democracy. (*Educational Opportunity for All, Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops*)
- ★ The right and duty of parents to educate their children is “*essential*,” since it is connected with the transmission of human life; it is *original and primary* with regard to the educational role of others, on account of the uniqueness of the loving relationship between parents and children; and it is *irreplaceable and inalienable*, and therefore incapable of being entirely delegated to others or usurped by others.” (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 239*)
- ★ Parents have the right to freely choose schools or other means necessary to educate their children in keeping with their convictions. Public authorities must ensure that public subsidies are so allocated that parents are truly free to exercise this right without incurring unjust burdens. Parents should not have to sustain, directly or indirectly, extra charges which would deny or unjustly limit the exercise of this freedom. (*Charter of the Rights of the Family*)
- ★ The task of educating belongs fundamentally and primarily to the family. The function of the State is subsidiary: its role is to guarantee, protect, promote and supplement. Whenever the State lays claim to an educational monopoly, it oversteps its rights and offends justice. It is parents who have the right to choose the school to which they send their children and the right to set up and support educational centers in accordance with their own beliefs. The State cannot without injustice merely tolerate so-called private schools. Such schools render a public service and therefore have a right to financial assistance. (*Instruction on Christian Freedom and Education*)

## Resources

- ★ **Texas Catholic Conference** Education page ([www.TXcatholic.org/ed.asp](http://www.TXcatholic.org/ed.asp))
- ★ **National Catholic Education Association (NCEA)** The NCEA provides leadership and service to American Catholic Educators ([www.NCEA.org](http://www.NCEA.org))

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The Texas Catholic Conference recognizes parents as the primary educators of their children and supports that role by promoting parental choice in education.

## Facts on Graduation Rates in Texas<sup>i</sup>

- More than 119,000 Texas students in the class of 2005 failed to graduate from high school. The state's overall graduation rate is about 67 percent. Only Mississippi has a higher percentage of its adult population lacking a high school diploma.
- The annual public costs associated with just one year's class of dropouts is \$377 million, or about \$3,168 per dropout. Over an expected lifetime of 50 years, one year's class of dropouts will cost Texas taxpayers \$19 billion.
- If all of Texas's residents of working age had obtained at least a high school diploma, total earnings in Texas in 2005 would have been \$24 billion higher. The lower earnings of Texas's working-age dropouts result in state sales tax revenues \$827 million lower than they would be if all residents had attained a least a high school diploma.
- Dropouts are much more likely to receive or to have a child who receives Medicaid benefits, and more likely to be incarcerated than are those with higher levels of educational attainment.

## Facts on School Choice and Specific Impact in Texas<sup>i</sup>

- School districts with more students in private schools have higher public school graduation rates. All Texas children would benefit from increased competition from private schools.
- The beneficial effect of private school competition on public schools is large enough that even a modest school choice program, one that increased private school enrollment by fewer than 5 percentage points, would reduce the number of Texas public school dropouts by 8,720 to 17,440 students per year, saving Texans between \$27 million and \$53 million in tax revenue, Medicaid costs and incarceration costs every year. The total savings from preventing these students from dropping out, over an expected lifetime of 50 years, would be between \$1.4 billion and \$2.8 billion.
- Introducing more competition into K-12 education in Texas would significantly improve public high school graduation rates. Competition provides a compelling and cost-effective method for improving the productivity of public schools, and would bring about a large reduction in the public costs associated with dropouts.
- School choice programs, rather than benefiting individuals at the expense of the public, provide large public benefits that probably exceed the benefits realized by students participating in the program.

## Pilot Study: At Risk Students in Los Angeles<sup>ii</sup>

A recent study conducted in Los Angeles demonstrated the success of students with a low socioeconomic status in Archdiocesan Catholic Schools. Students for the study were considered "at risk" because of low socioeconomic status and a segment of these students were Saves Our Students children, considered the most "at risk" of Catholic School Students. Students compared by zip code, ethnic background, and income to students in local public schools. Study results showed that L.A. Archdiocesan Catholic schools give children born into poverty a 98% change of going on to college.

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<sup>i</sup> "The High Cost of Failing to Reform Public Education in Texas" by Friedman Foundation Senior Fellow Brian Gottlob.

<sup>ii</sup> "Study Finds Catholic School Education Benefits L.A.'s Underserved." Loyola Marymount University.  
<<http://www.lmu.edu/Page44562.aspx>>