

Education Myths

*What Special Interest Groups
Want You to Know About Our Schools and Why It Isn't So*



Jay P. Greene



Center of the American Experiment is a nonpartisan, tax-exempt, public policy and educational institution that brings conservative and free market ideas to bear on the hardest problems facing Minnesota and the nation.

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Introduction

Mitch Pearlstein, Founder & President, Center of the American Experiment: My all-time favorite education axiom is “Kids do not learn that which they do not study.” It makes perfect sense—actually it’s perfectly obvious—yet its importance is routinely sidestepped when it’s acknowledged in policy debates at all.

I also like the line because it segues perfectly to Jay Greene’s terrific book, *Education Myths*, a copiously documented primer that makes it increasingly difficult for educators, policymakers, or anyone else to sidestep, dance around, or otherwise ignore what empirical research shows to make perfect, often quite obvious sense.

Elementary and secondary education in the United States is more than a half-trillion-dollar industry. Ponder that number for a moment. It’s what the long-departed Everett McKinley Dirksen, if he were still around, might describe as “real money.”

Yet even though the former Illinois senator’s white shock of hair would flutter even more than usual upon noting the amount, that’s not to say he would necessarily view the sum as out of line, as I trust he would still know just how important education is and how big and populous our country has grown.

Still, is it not stunning that so much that’s readily assumed by so many to be true about such a giant enterprise is simply wrong, often diametrically so? Or, as also frequently the case, isn’t it

interesting that so many people—especially in positions of leadership—know that various educational truisms *aren’t*, but they play along either “for the kids” or because it’s simply safer to do so, politically and otherwise.

The best example, of course, is money itself. I’m in favor of spending generously on education. That’s not to say, however, there’s a direct and predictable tie between how much we spend on schools and how much children actually learn. But one would be hard-pressed to hear of such debunking research on most stumps.

Into frays like this, Jay Greene jumps fearlessly, accurately, and seemingly every day.

A political scientist, Professor Greene heads the Department of Education Reform at the University of Arkansas and is a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute. He also has taught at the universities of Texas and Houston, and earned his doctorate at Harvard. He has written prolifically about a wide range of issues, especially school choice, special education, graduation rates, and accountability, and he’s also been known to be cited in watershed Supreme Court cases. He lives in Fayetteville with his wife and three children.

Please welcome a scholar whom I am sure I could emulate if I never, ever did anything as silly as sleeping again, Jay Greene.

Jay Greene: First, let me tell you something that’s not true. It’s a joke. The joke is, I was riding in a cab and the taxi driver asked me what I

did for a living, and I explained that I was an education researcher. And he said, you know, there are only two ways to make schools better, the natural way and the miraculous way. So I said, what's the natural way? He said, the natural way is God himself reaches down into every school, touches every classroom, making it a place of learning and accomplishment. I said, if that's the natural way, what's the miraculous way? The miraculous way is that you researchers will figure out how to make schools better.

So I'm in the business of looking for miracles, but happily, I think miracles are possible. I think that we have ideas about how we can make schools better, but one of the things standing in our way is that people insist upon believing things about schools that are simply not true, that are at odds with a fair reading of the evidence. So the purpose of *Education Myths* is to provide people with a handbook, a reference that they could use to rebut arguments that you come across regularly in policy discussions, in cocktail conversations, where you know that the claim the person is making doesn't make sense, but you don't know exactly what about it is wrong. The book lays out the evidence and the arguments for why those often repeated claims are mistaken.

Now, I hope that I also treat fairly the opposing evidence, and I should emphasize that reasonable people can disagree about what the evidence says. In fact, I expect that everyone here will find something in the book with which they disagree, and that's fine. It's not my enterprise, in writing this book, to get everyone to agree that certain things are true. At the very least, what I'm attempting is to get everyone to have a certain kind of conversation about education policy, and that when we have a conversation, we should talk about what the evidence says. And we can disagree, but if we're going to disagree, we need to disagree about the evidence. Because one of the things that keeps us away from relying on evidence in education policy is that it has a very high emotional content and people will regularly insist that things are true because they assert it while pounding the table, or they will get into contests of who loves children more to determine

what is true. And these are not ways to figure out what's true. We figure out what's true by looking at evidence and trying to sort it out as best as we can.

In the book, I document and rebut eighteen common claims, eighteen myths about education, and I would love to talk with you about all of them, but we wouldn't have time. I should say that this list of eighteen myths is not a comprehensive list; one could easily imagine 1,800 myths that could be rebutted, but this is a start. So let me pick a handful to talk about today, and I'm sure in our discussion more will come up. Choosing among these eighteen is difficult. It's like choosing among my children; I love them all so much. But let me begin by talking about the money myth.

The Money Myth

The money myth is probably the most pervasive myth. In some ways, it pops up in every other myth. The money myth is the notion that schools perform poorly because they need more money. If only they were given sufficient funding, education would be better. Well, there are a few things about this myth that should seem obviously mistaken to us. First, we could simply step back and look at how much we spend now and how much we used to spend. Then we could look at the change in aggregate achievement by students over time, as a way of estimating whether there's a relationship between spending and achievement.

So how much do we spend now? We spend north of \$10,000 per pupil per year. This is more than double what we spent three decades ago, after adjusting for inflation. We have doubled per-pupil spending in the last three decades so that we are now spending, in aggregate, more than \$500 billion each year on public K-12 education. Now, how much money is that? How big is half a trillion dollars? Well, according to the World Bank, a half a trillion dollars would be larger than the GDP of all but twenty-three countries in the world. It would be larger than the GDP of Saudi Arabia, Sweden, or Austria.

The public K-12 system would be the twenty-fourth largest GDP per year. Or to think about it another way, it's more than we spend on national defense. As of 2005, we spent \$494 billion on defense; that's including our war in Iraq. So you know the bumper sticker that says, "It will be a great day when the Air Force has to have a bake sale to buy a bomber"? They might have to, because they have less than the schools.

The fact that we spend a lot and the fact that it's gone up a lot doesn't tell us that we're spending too much or too little. It's just a fact. But what has student achievement done during this same period of our doubling in per-pupil spending? We can look at NAEP scores, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). NAEP is the U.S. Department of Education's long-term measure of student achievement. The tests are given to a representative sample of students nationwide, in each state. It's really our best long-term measure, because unlike SAT scores, which are only given to an elite sub-sample of students that changes in composition, this is a snapshot of all of our students taken periodically.

Looking at the NAEP reading test, 17-year-olds were scoring 285 (on a 500-point scale) in 1971. In 2004, they were scoring 285, exactly the same. There's been no change in reading achievement over the last three decades for the "end products" of our K-12 system. Similarly, in math, the NAEP scale score for 17-year-olds in 1973 was 304; it was 307 in 2004, a change that is not statistically significant and substantially trivial. So it's basically flat achievement.

This ought to give us a clue that simply adding more money to schools is not likely to improve our situation. Unless we believe that the next doubling in per-pupil spending will achieve something that the last doubling couldn't, then doubling again is probably not a wise strategy, without also addressing something else.

But I should mention that simply looking in aggregate at how much spending has increased and how achievement has been flat does not prove that there is no relationship between achievement

and spending. It may be the case that students have gotten worse, right? It may be that keeping achievement flat over the last three decades is a huge accomplishment, given that kids are worse. So standing still is a victory and is a sign that our money has been well spent.

The better way to look at the relationship between spending and achievement is to compare the relationship between spending and achievement across places, controlling for the observed differences in students. If it's true that different students will have different achievement, and changes in students across time will produce different achievement, we need to control for those things so that we can isolate the relationship between spending and outcomes. Eric Hanushek at Stanford University has done a review of the literature on this question, controlling for the backgrounds of students, and he found that 129 of 163 studies found no relationship between student achievement and school spending. His conclusion was that the existing knowledge base does not ensure that any added funds, on average, will be spent wisely. So again, this isn't to say that additional money couldn't help; it just hasn't so far.

You might wonder, why that is? Most of us are accustomed to the idea that when you spend more, when you have more resources available for something, it ought to be better. Why is it not the case in education? The brief answer is that our singular focus on ensuring that schools have more resources has been accompanied by a neglect of whether schools have the proper incentives to use those resources effectively. Just paying attention to resources without also paying attention to the incentives to use the resources well is a recipe for waste. It's not waste that's intentional. Rather, it's a matter of failing to attach consequences to the decisions of people in the educational system, where they're rewarded or sanctioned for making wise or foolish decisions.

Some people, however, say, it's not just the total amount of money; it's the particular use of money that matters. If only we spent the money on the right things, then we would get greater

achievement out of additional spending—and they happen to know what the right things are. What is the thing we need to spend more money on? Usually the argument you’ll hear is class size.

The Class Size Myth

The class size myth is that schools should reduce class sizes because small classes produce big improvements. Here, again, if we step back and look at what we have been doing in this country for the last few decades, what we’ve been doing is this: We’ve gone on a teacher-hiring binge over the last several decades, so that over the past thirty-five years, we’ve hired 45 percent more teachers, adjusted for changes in student enrollment. So for each student we have now, we have 45 percent more teachers than we used to have. The student-teacher ratio was 22.4 students for every teacher in 1971; it’s now 15.4 students for every teacher. So that’s a big increase in the number of teachers. Yet, as we’ve already discussed, student achievement has been flat.

We have been trying this experiment of spending money. If people say, “What we really need to do is spend the money on hiring more teachers so we can lower class sizes,” we’ve been doing it. And still our results are stagnant. Again, simply looking at this relationship in aggregate is not fair because perhaps other factors have changed over time.

What we really need to do is look at the research on the relationship between class size-reduction and student achievement. And here, the advocates of class-size reduction have a well-known study to hold up: the Tennessee Star Project, a random assignment study. A random assignment study is where people are assigned, by lottery, to treatment and controlled conditions, as in a medical experiment. Some people get the pill, some people get the placebo, with the two sides made up of people with identical backgrounds. When we compare their results over time, if we observe any difference, we know that it’s attributable to the different condition that the subject (or in this instance, the student) was assigned to.

In Tennessee they assigned students, by lottery, to larger classes averaging 25 students, or smaller classes averaging 18 students. They also had a third experimental condition, which were larger classes with a teacher’s aide. For the treatment group, researchers observed an eight percentage point improvement in student achievement, and they observed that college admission test-taking was 43.7 percent for the treatment groups compared to 40 percent for the control group.

Significant benefits were observed from class-size reduction, so this study is regularly held up as proof that we need to lower class size. But there are a number of things that should make you concerned about this study. One is that the entirety of the benefit was observed by the end of the first year of participation, which raises concerns about whether the random assignment was flawed. For example, they never tested the students at baseline. They didn’t test students before they started the experiment. They assigned students to these different conditions and they tested them at the end of the first year and the end of the second and the end of every year thereafter. They followed them, actually, for a long time; those kids are in college now or beyond at this point. But they never tested them at the beginning to make sure the treatment and control groups were, in fact, alike. So the difference that was observed at the end of the first year stayed exactly the same forever after. It never got bigger. It didn’t get smaller. So it’s possible, and people have worried, that maybe the treatment group was always different from the control group and test scores differences had nothing to do with whether they were in bigger or smaller classes.

This could occur by chance, as even in a lottery experiment you could get two groups that are dissimilar, or it could happen because advantaged parents may have figured out how to get their kids into smaller classes. Advantaged parents are clever and they want good things for their kids, they want smaller classes, and they may have figured out how to get their kids into those smaller classes. It’s quite possible that’s what happened. The other thing that should make us worried about adopting statewide class-size reduction policies

based on the Tennessee Star study is that it was a pilot experiment. It was relatively modest in size and it didn't force the school system to hire more teachers. They basically used their existing teaching force, but they just had smaller classes.

When class-size reduction has been tried on a large scale, either nationwide or when states have adopted class-size mandates, like in Florida or in California, the benefits have not been observed. In fact, a Rand analysis of the class-size reduction effort in California observed no benefit from reduced class size. Now, why would this be? Why would it be the case that when we try class-size reduction on a large scale, we don't see the same thing that happened in Tennessee Star, even if we accept that Tennessee Star was properly done? Well, the possibility here is that when state systems have to reduce class size on a huge scale, they have to go on a teacher-hiring binge, which means they have to dig deeper into the labor pool to find teachers, which means they experience a reduction in average teacher quality. This reduction in average teacher quality offsets the benefit of having fewer kids.

This highlights the false bargain of class-size reduction. When offered to parents, what parents hear is, would you like a personal chef? And people think, yeah, sure, I would love to have a personal chef. A chef just for me! Because, they're thinking Emeril. I'm going to have Emeril as mine. But in reality, they get the fry guy, and that's less desirable. And, then, if that's the option, you might prefer the Applebee's chef with a somewhat larger group of customers.

Moreover, a one-third reduction in class size, which is more or less what was done in Tennessee, would require roughly a one-third increase in per-pupil spending. You have to hire roughly one-third more teachers, build one-third more classrooms. If we were to replicate Tennessee Star on a national basis, we'd be talking about something like \$140 billion extra in annual expenditures, which is quite a lot of money.

The College Access Myth

Let me move on to another common myth: the college access myth, which you'll almost certainly hear about in the next presidential race. This is a popular education issue in presidential contests, since the federal government is involved in providing grants and loans for college attendance. Claims are frequently made about the incredible difficulty that low-income and minority students have in gaining access to college because of financial constraints, and other claims are made that in order to improve access to college for low-income and minority students, we really need to increase the federal loan and grant programs so we can provide more opportunities—for *all* students, regardless of their economic and racial backgrounds.

This argument resonates with middle-class parents, who struggle financially to send their children to college, and it is quite a burden. Even taking on those loans is nerve-wracking, and middle-class parents would like relief for themselves and others, so the argument has a lot of appeal. But it fails to consider what the major constraints really are on college attendance. And by college, here, let me be clear: I'm referring to four-year college.

The main constraint on college attendance is actually the lack of formal qualifications on the part of students; that is, the lack of academic preparation in the K-12 system, not financial aid. Let me demonstrate how this works. There are roughly 4 million students in each cohort moving through our K-12 system. So in each grade, starting out, there are about 4 million students. But this pipeline the students are moving through is a leaky pipeline, so that by the day of graduation, we only have about 2.8 million students left to graduate. The rest have dropped out—leaked out of the pipe. Then, of our 2.8 million students who graduate from high school only about 1.3 million—about half of those students—have the minimum formal qualifications to even apply to a four-year college.

To apply to a four-year college, you need at least four years of English, three years of math, and

two years each of natural science, social science, and foreign language on your high school transcript. There are very few four-year colleges in the country that will accept an application from a student with fewer than those courses on their high school transcript. What people don't realize is that you can graduate high school without those courses. The requirements to graduate high school are not the same as the requirements to be admitted to the state university. There's a gap. In fact, half of the students who graduate from high school don't have this minimum coursework on their transcripts. Only about 1.3 million do.

After beginning with 4 million students, we're left with about 1.3 million students who graduate from high school and have taken the minimum coursework. This is the pool of people who can apply to college. Well, guess how many students enter four-year college for the first time each year? It's 1.3 million. That is the same number of students who are produced out of our K-12 system with the minimum formal qualifications to apply. It's the same as the number who enter four-year college each year.

Essentially four-year colleges are taking almost the entire available pool and enrolling them. This should make sense to people, because—especially at state universities—there are large subsidies attached to each student who's enrolled. In fact, part of the reason for formal constraints on enrollment and course requirements is that state boards of education want to limit the amount of subsidy that's provided to higher education. Because higher education makes more from the subsidy than they make from the tuition, this provides colleges with strong incentives to discount tuition for low-income students in the hopes of getting them in, because then it generates subsidy from the state.

So one way or another, colleges will create packages to make it affordable to low-income students. But they can't get them in if they don't graduate and if they don't graduate with the right courses on their high school transcript. So the main constraint in getting more kids into college is that we are not graduating more kids and we are

not getting more kids to take an academically rigorous set of courses that's required for admission to college.

Until we address those things, increasing the amount of financial aid available will reduce the financial burden for those who already go—which could be a good thing—but it won't increase the number of kids who get to college. Basically, we can open the spigot on this pipe wider, but no more water will come out because too much already has leaked.

The Draining Myth

Let me turn to the last myth, the draining myth: the idea that school choice harms public schools. Let me, if you'll indulge me, read to you classic examples of myth-making.

First, from the *New York Times*: “Vouchers do nothing to improve education for those remaining in the public system. In theory, they are supposed to cause bad schools to reform themselves by threatening them with market competition. In fact [*this is my favorite part here*] they make reform harder, if not impossible, by siphoning away meager resources and skimming off good students, leaving the most troubled children and the most apathetic families behind.”

What I like about that, as a nice example of myth-making, is that despite the table-pounding assertion of “in fact,” you'll find no facts in that statement. It's not just my excerpting, you can read the whole thing and there won't be facts anywhere in the vicinity of this statement. So table-pounding is the same as truth.

Here's another variant of it, this time from the *Boston Globe*: “Vouchers, by definition [*this time, it's 'by definition' instead of 'in fact'*] can only help a handful of needy students. When the public dollars contained in vouchers follow a student to a private school, the public system is slowly impoverished and those who are left behind are doubly disadvantaged.”

This is true “by definition.” Well, now, let me be clear. These claims could be true. They are

plausible, but plausible is not the same thing as proven. One has to look at evidence to sort out claims of this kind. There is an alternative claim that rather than draining schools of resources and talent and hindering their ability to improve, perhaps vouchers spur public schools to improve by offering them competition so that they have stronger motivation to make wise decisions. So what evidence do we have?

We have germane studies of voucher systems in Florida, Milwaukee, Maine, and Vermont, of charter competition in Arizona, Michigan, and Milwaukee, and we can go into the details of those studies, if you'd like, but every one of those studies finds that public school achievement improves in response to voucher competition. In fact, I'm not aware of a single study of a choice program introduced in the United States that has shown that test score achievement in public schools went down in response to that increase in choice and competition. You don't have to believe me; you can also take a look at a review of the literature by Clive Belfield of Queens College and Henry M. Levin of Columbia's Teachers College, researchers who are not friends of school choice.

Keep in mind that we've always had and always will have school choice; we just have relatively inefficient and inequitable choice. The relatively inefficient and inequitable choice that we have is *residential* school choice. I can choose where I live to gain access to a desired school. I understand that in Minnesota you have interdistrict choice, as well, but there are costs and difficulties with doing that. So the main way that people exercise school choice is by choosing where to live. In some places in the country, this is more readily available than in others. For example, in Boston, you have more than a dozen school districts in the metro area, while, in Miami Dade, the entire county is a single school district. So in some areas of the country, you have more available residential school choice, in some areas you have less.

Some 206 studies have examined whether variation in residential school choice is associated

with variation in student achievement, controlling for other factors. This is what Belfield and Levin conclude from their review of that literature: "A sizeable majority of these studies report beneficial effects of competition across all outcomes. The above evidence shows reasonably consistent evidence of a link between competition (choice) and education quality. Increased competition and higher educational quality are positively correlated."

I read that to you so you wouldn't think this is just my claim. This is what the evidence has to say on this question. Yet you almost never hear people say this when they talk about the effect of choice on public schools. All they can say is, it will make public schools worse by taking resources away from them. Yet the evidence is clearly pointing in the opposite direction.

So what can we do to produce miracles? Well, we can move discussion of education policy from these emotional assertions toward greater focus on the research, so that the research really will make a difference. I think the best way we do that is by sticking to the evidence, referring to the evidence when we have these conversations, and attempting to shame those who won't produce evidence for their claims by calling them on it when they do.

Following his comments, Professor Greene answered questions from the audience.

Pearlstein: Let me ask a question for clarification. When talking about class sizes, you mentioned that the student-teacher ratio has fallen from 25 to 1 to 18 to 1. But folks know there aren't eighteen kids, on average, in classes. Where are those extra teachers?

Greene: In Tennessee, they actually went from twenty-five to eighteen. It's true the "student-teacher ratio" is not the same as "average class size." Part of the reason for that is that teachers spend time during the day not in the classroom. Some of their day is spent on other responsibilities such as committee assignments and lunch duty, and they also have planning periods during the day. One of the things that has happened nationwide is that, as the number of

teachers has increased and the student/teacher ratio has dropped, there also has been a reduction in the number of hours, on average, that teachers spend in the classroom each day, which has somewhat offset the reduction in class size that we would have expected.

We have not experienced a 45-percent *reduction* in average class size; we've experienced a 45-percent *increase* in the number of teachers. But again, this speaks to whether our schools are being efficient or inefficient, whether they are making wise or foolish choices. That is, is it the best use of those additional teachers to reduce the number of hours that teachers spend in the classroom? Or is it a better use of those teachers to actually lower the average number of students in the classroom?

Tom Prichard: There's a big push in Minnesota and across the country for early childhood education, all-day kindergarten. Are there any myths associated with that?

Greene: I should say it's not in the book, and it's not an area that I am particularly expert on, but I can give you a few tidbits. One thing I can tell you is, there's a chapter in the book called "The Myth of Helplessness," which looks specifically at the idea that kids have gotten worse over time, more difficult to educate over time, and that that increasing difficulty has offset the increase in resources, which is why we don't come out ahead in achievement.

To address that, I helped put together something called the Teachability Index, where we looked at sixteen factors that are related to how difficult it is to educate children. Fourteen of those factors have made it easier to educate children over time. The only two that have gotten worse are an increase in single parenthood, which is an important thing, and we've had an increase in the percentage of students who are non-English speakers, who don't speak English in the home. These are increased challenges that schools do face.

But on fourteen other dimensions, schools are facing an easier time. One is that there's far more preschool education available without a public

system of preschool. Through either subsidies or through private consumption, there's been a huge increase in the percentage of students who attend school prior to kindergarten. So our students are actually coming into school better prepared, more advantaged than they were. But we fritter away those advantages during our K-12 years, so that by the time they hit seventeen, they're no better off than they were before.

Given this, does this tell us that we need to make preschool ever-more universal? Well, it depends how we do it, and there are two nice examples of this. One is Florida and the other is California. In Florida, they passed a constitutional amendment to provide universal preschool, which the Bush administration—the *Jeb* Bush administration—interpreted as meaning the offering of vouchers for preschool, which is how they did it. The other way is California, which had an initiative to offer universal public, publicly-operated preschool. That initiative was defeated, but my guess is that would be a worse way to do it, because then we would be expanding the relative inefficiency of our K-12 system into earlier grades, when I think that our current system of preschool is better than that. If we want to expand access to preschool, we might pursue it through something more akin to what Florida did, which is by subsidizing the activity rather than having the state operate it directly.

David Anderson: Has there been any study of the increase or decrease in average IQ of students from 1971 through the present?

Greene: I'm sure there has; I don't know it off the top of my head. But my guess is that IQ has not substantially changed over time. Because there's no reason to expect that it should. The only thing that might affect it would be things like reduction of environmental influences that would lower IQ, like lead paint. So we've actually made all sorts of improvements in public health, like eliminating lead paint, that have improved the preparedness of students and might have some effect on average IQ. But in general, there's no reason to expect that IQ would change over time due to genetics.

Todd Flanders: You talk about school choice raising performance, even in public schools. Are there comparative data about what raises the public school performance better, private school choice, such as vouchers, or public school choice, such as charters?

Greene: The research is not that fine-tuned yet. People have looked at residential school choice, which is a type of public school choice. People have looked at charter school choice, and people have looked at private school choice. All of them have been shown to improve public school performance, but we do not know which is the more effective.

I can tell you one thing, which is that choice only produces this result if choice means that money follows children from one organization to another. So public school choice, like magnet programs, where you can choose among public schools within a public system, is choice in the sense that you can choose something that might be better suited to your tastes, but it does not change the financial incentives of the organization at all. It's a little bit like post office choice. I can drop my letter in any post office I like, and that's convenient for me, I don't have to drive far away to get one, but the postal service doesn't care which one I drop it in. The money all comes to them. Similarly, with magnet school choice within a public school district, the district is relatively indifferent to which of their schools you choose. Or to give another analogy, McDonald's doesn't care whether you choose the Big Mac or the fish fillet, right? It's nice that you have those options, because maybe you'd prefer fish, but it doesn't alter the financial incentives of McDonald's. The money all comes to them.

Pearlstein: Please address two of the criticisms of real school choice, vouchers. One would be that it leads to more segregation, and the other one is that it would lead to more intolerance.

Greene: Sure. There are actually two chapters in the book that specifically address those claims. Interestingly, the empirical research on this question suggests that expansion of school choice actually decreases segregation in schools and

improves civic outcomes of education, such as political tolerance, volunteering, and voter participation.

Why should choice increase integration, why should it decrease segregation? Well, one of the greatest contributors to segregation in schooling is that we largely assign students to schools based on where they live, and housing patterns are highly segregated by race and income. So we essentially replicate these patterns of segregation in our schools and, in fact, we exacerbate the segregation in housing by attaching schooling to housing. People live on one side of a line for fear of being on the wrong side of that line. What choice does is detach schooling from housing, so it makes it easier to draw students from across a political boundary to produce a more integrated environment.

Now, I should say that the research on this question doesn't show big differences between the segregation in public and private schools, or in choice and non-choice programs. Both systems are highly segregated. But, on average, you get better integration when you expand choice.

Regarding civic outcomes, I should first tell you how it is that people measure political tolerance: you ask people to name members of their least-liked group. Who do you like the least? Either they choose from the list or they volunteer a group. KKK is the usual winner. Everyone hates the KKK. And then you're asked, would you let members of this group march in your town, run for political office, give a speech, or have a book in your library, and the more willing people are to let members of their least-liked group engage in these political activities, the more tolerant they're said to be. Students at private schools are more likely to express this political tolerance than public schools. Graduates of private schools, who are adults, many years later, are more likely to express this tolerance, controlling for other observed factors. Why would that be?

In fact, let me give you a hard case of this. I did a study once of the Latino National Political Survey. This is a survey of a national sample of adult Latinos and I looked at the relationship

between private school attendance, which was overwhelmingly Catholic school attendance, and political tolerance. The number one least-liked group listed in this survey was gay activists. And what I found was, the more Latinos attended Catholic schools, the more likely they were to be tolerant of the political activities of gay activists.

Why would that be? Well, one possibility is that perhaps private schools are more effective at teaching, period. And just as perhaps they produce better results in math and reading, they produce better results in political outcomes, too. Another possibility is that maybe the rhetoric (and belief) in Catholic schools regarding separation of sin from sinner really works. Maybe they really do effectively distinguish between people and their activities, and they denounce activities while still loving people. I don't know, but I can tell you that this is the result. In addition, in a review of that literature conducted by Patrick Wolf, this is a consistent finding across the studies, which I think is quite striking. ■



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