



Idahoans for Choice in Education

Creating a Brighter Future for Idaho Families

LEGISLATIVE BRIEF

Home School

Harbor School

Traditional School

Charter School

Virtual School



More School Choice a Solution to Budget Problems Gale Pooley, Ph. D. *Education Excellence Idaho*

Governor Otter and the Idaho Legislature are facing a tough problem funding public education. President Obama has a great solution. The President is a strong supporter of charter school expansion as a way to improve the public schools. "I've consistently said, we need to support charter schools. I think it is important to experiment, by looking at how we can reward excellence in the classroom." He doubled the number of charter schools in Illinois There is also a new Barack Obama Charter School in Los Angeles.

The President and his wife are strong believers in school choice. For their two daughters they chose the University of Chicago Lab School, a private school. He said, "it was the best option for our kids." When they came to Washington D. C. the Obamas chose Sidwell Friends School, opting for another private school that Bill and Hillary Clinton's daughter attended a decade ago. "A number of great schools were considered, said Katie McCormick Lelyveld, a spokeswoman for Michelle Obama. In the end, the Obamas selected the school that was the best fit for what their daughters need right now."

If the President and his wife can choose the best school for their children, why limit choice for the average family in Idaho. Remember, it is not how much we spend on education, it is what we get out of this investment that counts. Education productivity can be measured as achievement divided by costs.

According to the Idaho State Department of Education, total expenditures for all Idaho schools were \$9,585 per student based on average daily attendance during the 2007/2008 school year. In contrast, during that same period charter schools spent around \$8,371 per student. This is a 13% savings, or around \$1,214 per student. Of the total \$9,585 per student expenditure, around 67%, or \$6,393 comes from the State's General Fund. Charter schools received around \$5,605 per student from the general fund. This is a 12% savings, or around \$788 per student. In 2008 there were 271,982 public school students in Idaho, of which only 10,306 (3.8%) attended charter schools. If all district schools were as productive as charters, the taxpayers would have saved almost \$300 million last year. It is very important to remember that unlike district schools, charter schools can't levy property taxes.

SCHOOL CHOICE:
Freedom to choose a school that provides the environment that you desire...not someone else's!
Freedom to choose a school that meets your student's needs... not someone else's!
Freedom to choose a school that meets your expectations... not someone else's!
Freedom to choose a school based upon its performance... not where you live!

Darrel Deide, Chairman
Holland Johnson, Treasurer
Directors
Becky Stallcop
Julie Yamamoto,
Leslie Mauldin,
Ann Flydalch
Ralph Smeed
Jack Barraclough
Past Directors
Jack Wenders,
Gayle O'Donahue



Idahoans for Choice in Education

Creating a Brighter Future for Idaho Families

LEGISLATIVE BRIEF

Home School

Harbor School

Traditional School

Charter School

Virtual School



Darrell Deide,
Chairman



Holland Johnson,
Treasurer

SCHOOL CHOICE:

Freedom to choose a school that provides the environment that you desire...not someone else's!

Freedom to choose a school that meets your student's needs... not someone else's!

Freedom to choose a school that meets your expectations... not someone else's!

Freedom to choose a school based upon its performance... not where you live!

Darrel Deide,
Chairman

Holland Johnson,
Treasurer

Directors

Becky Stallcop
Julie Yamamoto,
Leslie Mauldin,
Ann Rydalch
Ralph Smeed
Jack Barraclough

Past Directors

Jack Wenders,
Gayle O'Donahue

School district property taxes generally add another \$2,000 to \$3,000 per student per year to taxpayer's bills. Not only do charter schools spend less, they produce greater achievement growth. ISAT scores suggest achievement growth at charter schools is around 15% higher than district schools. If charter schools cost 12% less and produce 15% they are effectively about 30% more productive than district schools.

This should be great news to taxpayers, parents, students, and politicians. Public charter schools provide a great benefit to districts facing overcrowded schools and costly override and bond elections. Parents get more choices without more taxes. Accountability is meaningless without choice. Wherever parental choice is introduced, be it charter schools, vouchers, or education opportunity tax credits, productivity improves. Like the Obamas, all Idaho parents should have the freedom to choose the best school for their children. Remove the cap on new charter schools and start solving both our budget and education problems now.-

This Legislative Brief is sent via e-mail to about 1,500 recipients and mailed to friends of school choice throughout Idaho.

Please note the student essay on the reverse side. It represents the 1st place winner in the Jr. High Division of our recent essay contest. Other winning essays can be read at ice-pac.net