



LCEA

Louisiana Children's Education Alliance

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Choices

ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF PARENTS SEEKING CHOICES FOR THE
EDUCATION OF THEIR CHILDREN

Parental school choice in Louisiana is widespread- unless you are poor. Unfortunately, many low-income parents in Louisiana such as Ms. Theresa Jackson are faced with only one option when deciding where to send their children to high school - the public school in their area. Although Ms. Jackson's daughter has attended a local charter school for sixth-eighth grade, there are currently no high school charter schools operating in her area and limited funding is available for her child to attend the private school of her choice. Ms. Jackson's daughter, Erica, did not excel in the regular public school environment. Erica did not get the individual attention she needed and feared for her safety on a regular basis. Ms. Jackson refuses to put Erica in a school that does not meet her needs. She is committed to do everything in her power to make sure her child gets a quality education regardless of her economic status.

Regrettably, Mrs. Jackson's story is only one of many disheartening stories about our current education situation in Louisiana. It is no secret, the K-12 education system in Louisiana is fundamentally broken and the problems have been magnified due to the devastation of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. According to the state's school performance scores for 2004-2005, on a scale of one to five stars (five being the highest), 72 percent of Louisiana public schools retain a ranking of two stars or less. This means that a huge number of our children are attending schools that are not performing at academically satisfactory levels. Although higher accountability standards have been implemented in our public education system, many of the schools our children are required to attend fail to meet their needs and/or are considered academically low performing institutions.

As we find our education system in crisis mode, Louisiana Children's Education Alliance (LCEA) has been formed to educate parents, community leaders and policy makers about how providing educational choices to parents can empower them to choose the best education for their children, and have a positive impact on citizens and businesses in the community. LCEA vows to produce and distribute accurate and credible research and data; build a website that will serve as Louisiana's number one source of information on school choice; and educate and build relationships with community leaders, parents, business leaders and education leaders. States across the country are embracing school choice as an accepted policy option on the education reform agenda. It is time for our state to seriously examine its options as well.

Introducing choice into the public education system will challenge our children and school systems to be innovative and committed to the ultimate goal of a strong education for every child in Louisiana. Louisiana still has hope and there are thousands of families - particularly minority and low-income families - who want this choice in their child's education. It is a great injustice that they are continually denied this opportunity because of their circumstances. We, as citizens of Louisiana, have a moral responsibility to do more than sympathize with these families. We must act in accordance with traditional American principles and extend the right to choose a quality education to those who lack economic means. The only way to change Louisiana's daunting statistics, improve individual lives and our state's ability to attract economic development is to increase student achievement from low-income families.

We formally invite you to embark on this quest for change in our education system. If there is any way that our organization can assist you, please contact us at (225) 753-3733. In addition, if you would like more information on school choice, feel free to visit our website www.lcealliance.org. We will frequently update the website in order to provide the most current information available.

LCEA is dedicated to ensuring that every child has the ability to obtain a quality education. We look forward to working with you to achieve this goal.

Did You Know That...

*There are 20 School Choice Programs in the United States, including the District of Columbia.

*The Milwaukee Parental Choice Program began in 1990 and is the most prominent and largest voucher program in the United States.

*Parents of all backgrounds support school choice because they know it is best for their children.

* School choice has support across demographic and political groups.

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