



# Education

- 1 Parents bear primary responsibility for the nurture and education of their children. This fact is recognized in both American and international law.
- 2 In justly exercising its responsibility to provide for the general welfare, government may – and indeed should – help parents meet their responsibilities. For most of American history, such assistance has included the funding of elementary and secondary education.
- 3 With its support of schooling and its mandate that all children receive an education, government should concentrate on upholding public equity provisions, assuring that each child has fair access to quality education.
- 4 To honor the educational responsibilities of families and to fulfill its own responsibility to treat citizens equitably, government should be impartial in its treatment of the diverse types of schooling parents choose for their children.
- 5 Those who educate and establish schools should be free to decide on the philosophical and pedagogical approaches they offer, the curricula they adopt, and the means of governing and administering the schools they open to the public.
- 6 When government certifies a variety of schooling options that fulfill the public purpose of educating children and when parents choose schools for their children, justice demands that each child should receive the same kind and degree of public financial support. Equitable public funding should be offered without regard to the religious, philosophical, or pedagogical differences among the variety of certified schools parents choose.
- 7 At present, government fails to do justice when it does not fund equally all of the schooling options it legally certifies. Instead it discriminates against many American families and schools by not funding the education of children who attend non-government schools, including religious schools. This stands in contrast to public funding of school choice in most other democracies in the world.
- 8 The Center for Public Justice advocates equitable public funding for all children, allowing parents to choose the means of education that is best for their children. A school-choice system of this kind does justice to parental responsibility for children, to the diversity of publicly approved schools, and to the religious freedom of all citizens, ensuring a just and proper relationship between government and society's diverse families and schools.

## Implications

1. State education vouchers for each student may be the best means of covering tuition costs equitably for students at all schools, including religious schools.
2. Schools receiving public support, whether via vouchers or directly, should be free to hire staff and to design curricula that reflect their distinctive educational, philosophical, and religious missions.
3. State laws that authorize specialized charter schools may be the best legal means of expanding choice in American education. In order to be fair and equitable, however, charter-school laws should be revised to include religious schools as eligible schooling options.

## For Further Reading

- Glenn, Charles L. *Ambiguous Embrace: Government and Faith-Based Schools and Social Agencies*. Princeton University Press, 2000.
- McCarthy, Rockne M., James W. Skillen, and William A. Harper. *Disestablishment a Second Time: Genuine Pluralism for American Schools*. Christian University Press, 1982.
- Skillen, James W., ed. *The School Choice Controversy: What Is Constitutional?* Baker Book House and Center for Public Justice, 1993.

For more information, search on this topic at [www.cpjustice.org](http://www.cpjustice.org).

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