

## Key Elements of K-12 School System Reform

- A) Phasing in Non-Discrimination in Public Funding – There’s no legitimate argument for permanently favoring some providers of schooling over others. Education Savings Accounts and Tax Credits are the best ways to have public money follow children for whom the assigned school is a poor fit.
- B) Any place where we expand school choice, everyone must be eligible.
- C) A Weighted Student Funding (WSF) formula to recognize, as a starting point, that schooling for some children will cost more than schooling for others.
- D) The possibility of public-private shared financing of tuition is needed to foster innovation, avoid shortages and surpluses of instructional approaches, and to avoid price control via WSF.
- E) Supporting References – John Merrifield’s 1) *School System Reform* (2019/2022); and 2) *Unproductive School Choice Debates* (2023). Key points: a) no amount of funding will make one size fit all; b) much research shows per-pupil funding differences do not create significant performance differences; c) we need to move from equal access to standardized schooling (a failed equity strategy) to equal fit; and d) because of perverse incentives, many TPS are not a good fit for anyone assigned to them.

Key Typical Elements of Civil, Informed Disagreement – Arguments whose importance is quite controversial.

- I) Invest in under-funded traditional public schools, where most children are and will be for the foreseeable future.
- II) Few, if any states will implement non-discrimination in public funding of schooling. What states have shown a willingness to implement will produce small effects; too small to justify disruptions in longstanding practices.
- III) There aren’t enough open seats in the best schools.
- IV) Even school choice expansion that increases per pupil public funding of TPS, harm TPS because of fixed costs; costs not reduced by enrollment decline.

References: 1) Ravitch, Diane (2010). *The Death and Life of the Great American School System*; and 2) <https://www.progressivepolicy.org/project/reinventing-americas-schools/>

Research and Consensus Needs:

- a) Improve our understanding of the determinants of school system performance (based on efficiency and equity).

- b) Address basis for scandals; real, and just perceived, but not real.
- c) Widespread Agreement on a formal definition of non-discrimination in public funding of schooling.
- d) Phase-in protocol for non-discrimination.
- e) Model legislation/schedule for the weighted student funding (WSF) formula.
- f) A blue state strategy.