More Than Scores:
Parental Choice and the
Educational Opportunity Society

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Roadmap

- **Some disturbing cultural statistics**
- **Some GOAL Scholarship Program stats**
- **The reasons why parents choose independent private schools**
- **The school information parents desire**
- **The steps parents take to secure information**
- **How private schools could respond**
- **How independent school associations could respond**
- **The nature and implications of the battle between the Educational Operating System and Educational Opportunity Society**

Some disturbing statistics in *More Than Scores* (p. 5)

- In 2011, 40.8 percent of all births were to unmarried mothers. Among Hispanics, that figure was 53 percent and, among blacks, it was 72 percent.

- In 2012, 14.8 percent of high school seniors used a prescription drug non-medically in the past year.

- In 2010, only 52 percent of black male ninth graders graduated from high school in four years.

- During the 2009–10 school year, about 20 percent of students ages 12–18 reported that gangs were present at their schools.

Spring 2013 GOAL Parent Survey

- Survey of 754 GOAL Scholarship parents

- Low and middle income parents were asked a variety of questions about
  - themselves
  - why they chose a private school
  - what information they deem important in the school selection process & how they would obtain this information

- In 2013, 6,819 Georgia taxpayers contributed a total of $15,035,842 to GOAL.

- In 2013, 6,747 individual contributors, 72 corporations.

- Since inception, GOAL has awarded 12,357 scholarships worth $46.4 million to 6,615 students, with an additional $20.3 million being obligated and reserved for the funding of multi-year scholarships that have been awarded or for the awarding of future scholarships.

- The average value of the scholarship awarded to each student has been $3,754.

- Since inception, the average adjusted gross income ("AGI") of the scholarship recipient families (as adjusted for family size) has been $25,138.

- GOAL has awarded 50% of its scholarships to families with an AGI of less than $24,000 and 90% of its scholarships to families with an AGI of less than $48,000.

- GOAL has awarded 36% of its scholarships to minority recipients.

- GOAL has awarded 1,667 scholarships in north Georgia; 4,392 scholarships in metro Atlanta; 3,254 scholarships in central Georgia; and 3,044 scholarships in south Georgia.

Spring 2013
GOAL Parent Survey Results

Characteristics of GOAL Survey Parents

Educational Attainment		
	Less than a college degree	31.6%
	College degree or higher	68.4%
Marital Status		
	Not married	26.9%
	Married	73.1%
Race/Ethnicity		
	White or Asian	72.8%
	Other race/ethnicity	27.2%
Urbanicity		
	Rural	29.1%
	Suburban	61.0%
	Urban	10.0%

Income of GOAL Survey Parents

Income		Percent
	$0– $12,000	1.9%
	$12,001– $24,000	9.0%
	$24,001– $36,000	13.7%
	$36,001– $48,000	14.7%
	$48,001–$60,000	18.0%
	$60,001–$72,000	11.7%
	$72,001–$84,000	9.7%
	$84,001–$96,000	7.2%
	More than $96,000	14.2%

Why do parents choose private schools?

GOAL Parents Satisfied with their Decision to Send their Children to a Private School

98.6%

Percent "Very Satisfied" or "Satisfied"
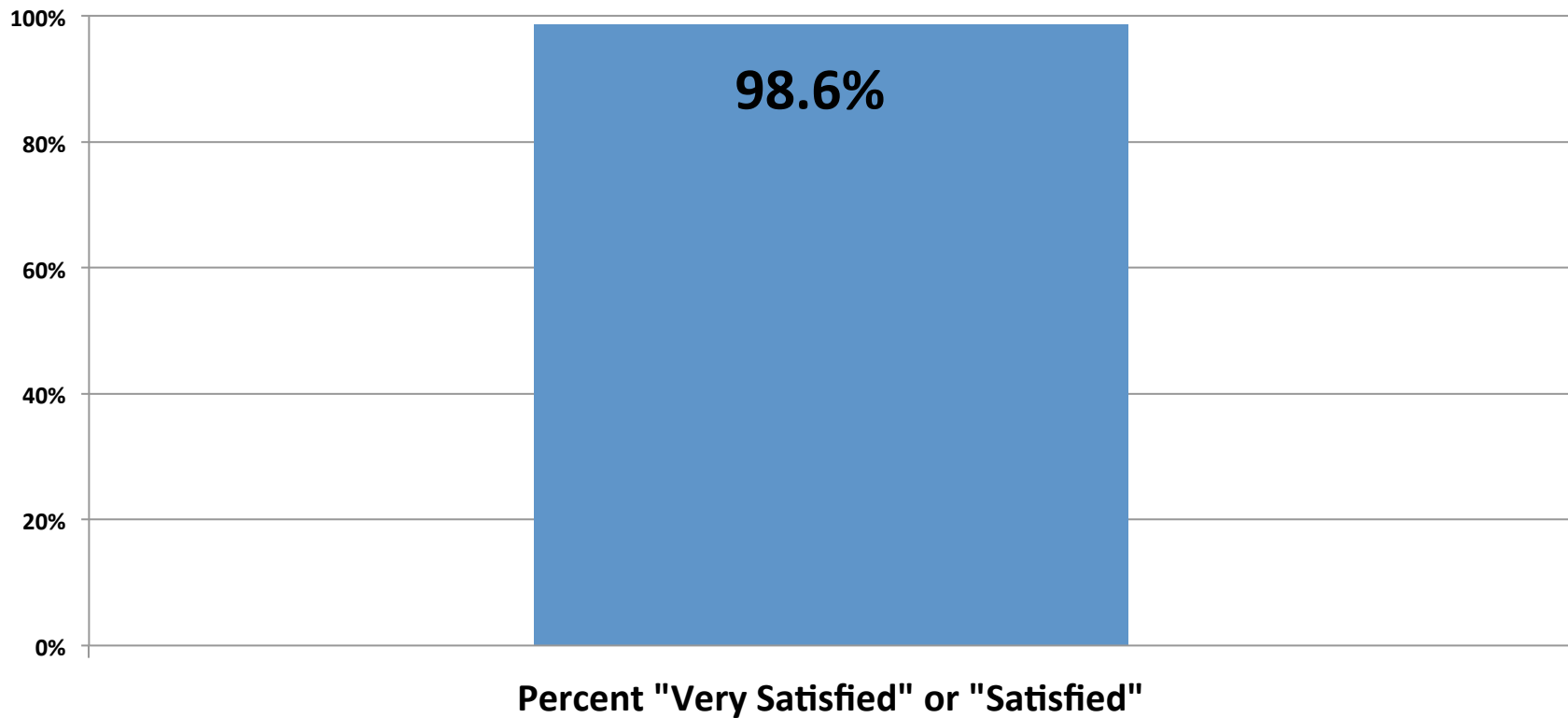
Specific Reasons Why GOAL Scholarship Parents Said they Chose a Private School Instead of a Public School for their Children

Survey parents chose from a list of 21 items, and they could write in additional reasons as well.

Top 5 Reasons GOAL Parents Chose a Private School

Better student discipline	50.9%
Better learning environment	50.8%
Smaller class sizes	48.9%
Improved student safety	46.8%
More individual attention for my child	39.3%
Better education	36.9%
Better preparation for college	31.7%
Religious education	29.7%
More responsive teachers and administrators	23.2%
Greater sense of community	22.1%
Better teachers	20.3%
More attention to the unique needs of my child	14.1%
Other students would be a better influence on my child	13.8%
Higher standardized test scores	10.2%

Most Important Reason GOAL Parents Chose a Private School

Better education	28.2%
Religious education	28.1%
Better learning environment	10.9%
Improved student safety	7.0%
Smaller class sizes	4.4%
Better preparation for college	4.2%
More attention to the unique needs of my child	4.1%
More individual attention for my child	3.3%
Other	3.1%
Better student discipline	2.1%
Greater sense of community	1.1%
Better teachers	0.8%
Other students would be a better influence on my child	0.7%
More responsive teachers and administrators	0.5%
Other parents would be more concerned about their children's education	0.4%

GOAL Scholarship Parents are seeking:

- A more <u>disciplined, safe, and orderly</u> school, peer, and classroom environment

- A better education where their child receives <u>personalized attention</u>

- <u>Religious or character education</u>

- Schools to prepare their children for <u>success in college</u>

What Information About Private Schools Do GOAL Scholarship Parents Want?

Survey parents chose from a list of 21 items, and they could write in additional items as well.

What Information about Private Schools is Important to GOAL Parents? (1)

The ratio of students per teacher and the average class size	84.2%
Evidence that the school is accredited by a recognized school accrediting agency	70.2%
The curriculum (i.e., content of instructional areas) and course descriptions	69.9%
The percentage of students who are accepted and attend college	61.3%
Whether the private school teaches your religion or any religion with which you are comfortable	56.0%
The average performance on standardized tests by students in different grades	52.8%
The graduation rate for students attending the school	48.4%
The disciplinary policy of the school	45.9%
The years of teaching experience and credentials of the teachers at the school	45.4%
Evidence that the private school teaches character education	43.6%

What Information about Private Schools is Important to GOAL Parents? (2)

The quality and availability of extracurricular activities	37.8%
The colleges attended by graduates of the school	37.4%
The financial condition of the school	36.2%
Whether parents have access to the Head of School to express any concerns	32.5%
Whether students have access to tablet, laptop, and classroom computers	24.4%
The percent of teachers and administrators who leave from year-to-year	23.7%
Whether computers are used effectively in classroom instruction	23.2%
The frequency and nature of disciplinary actions	23.1%
The racial, ethnic, and socio-economic makeup of the student population	21.5%
The governance of the school, including the members of the Board of Trustees	19.1%
The duration of the school year and the hours spent by the students in class	14.6%

Most Important Piece of Information

Whether the private school teaches your religion or any religion with which you are comfortable	21.1%
Evidence that the school is accredited by a recognized school accrediting agency	18.4%
The ratio of students per teacher and the average class size	15.6%
The curriculum (i.e., content of instructional areas) and course descriptions	11.0%
The graduation rate for students attending the school	8.8%
The percentage of students who are accepted and attend college	6.0%
The average performance on standardized tests by students in different grades	5.4%
Evidence that the private school teaches character education	2.9%
The years of teaching experience and credentials of the teachers at the school	2.8%
The disciplinary policy of the school	1.6%
The colleges attended by graduates of the school	1.5%

What Information Do these Low and Middle Income Parents Want?

- **They want lots of information:**
  - **Accreditation Status**
  - **Religious Affiliation**
  - **Class Sizes**
  - **High School Graduation Rates and Post-Secondary Success**
  - **And Much More**

- **More disadvantaged parents care even more about high school graduation and post-secondary success relative to other parents**

How Would Parents Obtain the Information They Desire?

Survey parents chose from a list of 8 items, and they could write in additional items as well.

What Steps Would GOAL Parents Take to Obtain Information About Private Schools?

Ask to tour the school	92.8%
Ask neighbors, friends, relatives, or other parents for their views	77.9%
Attend an information meeting for potential families sponsored by the school	76.5%
Review the school website in detail	72.7%
Review information available on the internet	65.0%
Ask to observe a class being taught	57.2%
Ask to meet privately with the Head of School	49.2%
Determine how convenient the private school is to where I live	48.0%

Low and middle income parents are willing to take several time consuming steps to gain information about prospective schools for their children.

Middle income parents said they were willing to take 5.3 out of the 8 steps, while low income parents said they would take 4.8 steps.

GOAL Parents Believe They Can Get Desired Information

I believe I could typically get enough information to make an informed decision	83.3%
Unless the private school provided me additional information, I would be unable to make an informed decision	16.7%

If Schools Fail to Provide Parents' Desired Information, It Would Impact Most Parents' School Choice Decisions

If a private school declined to provide you with some of your desired information, would it impact your decision where to send your child to school?

It would impact my decision	79.2%
It might impact my decision	20.0%
It would not impact my decision	0.8%

Implications of the GOAL Parent Survey for Independent Schools

- Low and middle income parents desire a lot of information about potential schools for their children.

- When they have funds to shop among schools, low and middle income parents are willing and able to hold private schools accountable for being transparent and for providing a safe, high quality, and personalized educational environment for their children.

  - With greater parental choice will come greater transparency for private schools.
    - »Parents will demand it.

Independent School Marketing Efforts

Based on the results of the GOAL Parent Survey, the Florida League of Christian Schools is advising its members: "If you are an accredited school, consider your school profile. Are these items clearly outlined on the profile for easy access and clear readability? Improve your marketing strategy by simply giving parents the information they want to see."

http://www.flocs.org/articles_view.asp?articleid=79713&columnid=5740

The National Catholic Education Association uses the results from the GOAL Parent Survey and advises its members: "Consider these reasons when designing your student retention and recruitment efforts as parents often deem them more important than test scores for enrolling their children in private schools."

http://www.ncea.org/department-news/why-and-how-parents-choose-private-schools

Racine Unified School District Superintendent Ann Laing, Wisconsin (2012)

"African-American families are the ones who (were) most prone to enroll their kids in the fly-by-night schools that cropped up after vouchers existed…. [African-American families] don't know how to make good choices for their children. They really don't. They didn't have parents who made good choices for them or helped them learn how to make good choices, so they don't know how to do that."

- Low and middle income families appear to be quite good at choosing among schools.

- Parents choose private schools for a wide variety of reasons, but standardized test scores are <u>not</u> among the most important reasons.

- Instead of trying to turn private schools into public schools, states should promote an information-driven, market-based Educational Opportunity Society that facilitates a "<u>spontaneous education order</u>."

- Promote minimum rules of just conduct, not detailed rules of organization (Friedrich Hayek).

Associations of private independent schools could:

- Educate their member schools about the importance of operating in a transparent manner that empowers parents to make informed school choice decisions

- Agree on, design, and implement online presence that provides prospective parents with the pieces of information they need to become effective consumers of K–12 private school education

- Inform their elected representatives that, in lieu of increased government regulation of private schools, their member private schools are prepared to operate in a more transparent manner so that parents have the information necessary to hold them accountable through their school choices.

More than Scores: An Analysis of Why and How Parents Choose Private Schools

www.edchoice.org/morethanscores

- Why are policymakers not being responsive to the reasons why parents are choosing independent private schools?

- What is the difference between an Educational Opportunity Society and an Educational Operating System?

- How does an Educational Operating System rely on "big data" about students and what are the implications?

- How are policymakers seeking to make independent private schools participate in the Educational Operating System?

- How should independent private schools respond?

Recap from *More Than Scores*: The primary reasons parents choose private schools

- **A safe, disciplined, and orderly school and classroom environment**
- **Religious or character education**
- **Preparation for success in college**
- **Relatively unconcerned about student standardized test scores**

Are public education policies consistent with these parental preferences?

Parent reason #1: Parents want a safe, disciplined, and orderly school, peer, and classroom environment

Contradiction: Concerned about the disproportionately higher number of minority students that are being disciplined, on January 8, 2014, the U.S. Education and Justice Departments issued joint guidance to K–12 schools nationwide on the need to avoid disciplinary policies that discriminate on the basis of race or ethnicity.

Problem: If (at the advice of their lawyers) local school districts refrain from disciplining unruly students, then the learning of many well-behaved African-American or Latino kids will be negatively impacted.

Parent reason #2: Parents want religious or character education for their children

"The most important educational task facing the public schools today is to teach those moral and spiritual values that underlie the principles upon which our country was formed."- John S. Martin in the Forward to *A Resource Guide to Moral and Spiritual Values*, Atlanta Public Schools (1966)

Effective 1997, Georgia law mandates that public schools teach a comprehensive character education program, which local schools were to have implemented beginning in the 2000-2001.

Contradiction: Relatively few K-12 public schools teach moral and spiritual values and few public school districts are complying with the character education mandate.

Parent reason #3: Parents want their children prepared for success in college

Contradiction: The Georgia Department of Education's Career Development Initiative promotes tools, knowledge, and resources for systematic, developmental, and comprehensive career planning for all students in grades K-12.

"I hope that you are working with your school counselors to ensure that your system is focusing on career awareness in elementary grades, career exploration in the middle school grades, and career development in the high schools."– David Turner, Director, Georgia Career, Technical and Agricultural Education, Fall 2013

Parent reason #4: Parents are relatively unconcerned about student standardized test scores

<u>Contradiction</u>: **A majority of states have adopted the national Common Core state standards and are implementing its student data collection regime**

Some reformers want to impose the Common Core standards on private schools that accept scholarship or voucher students, which means aligning their curriculum to those standards, which means testing students on that curriculum, which means teaching to standardized tests—just like the public schools families are trying to escape.

Parents want more discipline, religious or character education, and preparation for college, but are ambivalent about standardized test score performance.

Yet, education policymakers think disciplinary policies are discriminatory, neglect character education, believe many students should be prepared for a technical career, not college, and are focused on the standardization and centralization of education.

Why is there such a disconnect between parent preferences and education policymakers?

Many policymakers, fearing negative publicity and lawsuits, hesitate to speak publicly about the breakdown of culture and tackle the resulting lack of discipline.

Many policymakers neglect character education because they think it detracts from teaching for better performance on standardized tests and is controversial.

Many policymakers believe the American economy no longer needs as many college-educated decision-making managers or executives, but needs well-trained technical or service workers.

Many policymakers think technology and "big data" can be used to control educational and social outcomes.

Educational Opportunity Society

Provide <u>choices</u> to <u>concerned</u> parents who <u>conscientiously</u> <u>commit</u> to a school <u>community</u> that will enable their <u>children</u> to become <u>competent</u> and <u>creative</u> adults with <u>character</u>.

Educational Operating System

<u>Coerce</u> parents into a <u>common core</u> framework designed to <u>centralize</u>, <u>calibrate</u>, and <u>control</u> education to facilitate <u>careers</u>, <u>conformity</u>, <u>commerce</u>, and <u>comparison</u>.

The Educational Operating System depends on "big data" information about students.

Without easy access to comparable detailed student information, the U.S. Institute of Education Sciences is unable to conduct enough basic or applied research about student demographics and challenges, educational inputs, and educational, social, and career outcomes.

"Many questions are still open in statistics, computing, measurement, research design, human-computer interaction, curriculum and instruction, implementation, social intervention design, . . ." —Jack Buckley, Commissioner, National Center for Educational Statistics July 2013 presentation at NCES STATS-DC Conference

What is the primary role of U.S. Department of Education in "big data" collection and use? (Jack Buckley)

- **Helping to ensure privacy while still allowing utility**
- **Building infrastructure and technical capacity**
- **Eliminate incomparable state assessments**
- **Helping make data standards and systems interoperable**
- **Supporting (and conducting) basic and applied research**

USDOE needs states and schools to operate within the Educational Operating System so that student data can be shared with "data consumers" (i.e., textbook companies, software providers, social service agencies, health care providers, economic planners) in order to "tailor" education and student and social interventions.

Since 2006, the National Center for Education Statistic's Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) grant program has given out over $500M in grants to states.

Georgia Department of Education

"CHRONICLE": A data clearinghouse for Georgia's public education system

Project period: 3/2/2009 to 2/28/2014

Amount Awarded: $8,942,640

The Georgia Department of Education plans to use funds from the Statewide Longitudinal Data System Grant to establish a new infrastructure that manages the exchange, integration, analysis, and reporting of educational data for the State of Georgia.

Theoretically, under the Educational Operating System, using "big data," public authorities __might__ determine, evaluate, and address each student's *Modified Yearly Health, Attitude, Behavior, Intelligence, and Training Score* (MYHABITS).

Public authorities might modify the raw score to reflect any special advantages or disadvantages of the student relative to the general population.

Based on some existing public school student evaluation and data points, as well as on potential aspects of the Common Core State Standards Initiative, what __might__ the potential elements of MYHABITS (with corresponding hypothetical acronyms) include?

HABITS:

Health: Environmental, Mental, and Physical Health Assessment and Student Inoculation Status (EMPHASIS)

Attitude: Survey of Interactions with Groups, Networks, and Society (SIGNS)

Behavior: Assessment of Compulsions, Conduct, Experiences, and Possible Threat (ACCEPT)

Intelligence: Cognitive, Academic, Social, Emotional, and Spatial (CASES)

Training: Academic, Language, Interpersonal, Global, and Negotiating Skills (ALIGNS)

In implementing the Educational Operating System, education policymakers face a problem . . .

From their perspective, permitting students to be educated outside of traditional public schools (i.e., independent private schools, homeschools, charter schools):

- Creates "unequal" educational opportunities
- Encourages engaged and responsible parents to remove their children from public schools
- Negatively impacts those who benefit from the Educational Operating System (i.e., teachers unions, textbook and software companies, and social and economic planners).

Unless private school students are part of the Educational Operating System, their above-average outcomes will not be included in the measurement, analysis and comparisons of educational outcomes at the local, state, federal, and international levels.

That is why some education policymakers want to require independent private schools that accept scholarship students to implement the Common Core standards and gather "big data" student information.

But what happens if independent private schools adopt the Common Core and their students outperform those students in public schools?

In an Educational Opportunity Society, an increasing number of low- and middle-income parents will choose to send their children to independent private schools.

Thus, an increasing number of students and their families will no longer need the services provided by those who benefit from the existence of the Educational Operating System.

U.S. Department of Justice "solution"– make states prove that their school choice (i.e., voucher, tax credit scholarship) programs do not discriminate against minority students.

In 2013, U.S. DOJ sued to block Louisiana's school voucher program, arguing that letting students leave for private schools can disrupt the racial balance in public school systems covered by desegregation orders.

Proposed USDOJ "settlement"- at least 45 days before awarding vouchers to students, Louisiana must submit detailed information about voucher students and the schools they are leaving and attending, with the federal government having veto power over the awarding of vouchers.

In Georgia, 75 school districts remain under a court desegregation order.

Louisiana's counter-filing in rebuttal to proposal:

"[The] United States apparently believes that the State should restrict the choices made by families participating in the Scholarship program based on their race and the racial composition of the schools they wish to attend . . ."

Bottom line:

Educational Opportunity Society vs. Educational Operating System

In summary:

There is an increasing desire on the part of policymakers, public officials, and the business community to use student information and computer networking to centralize and nationalize K-12 education so that student outcomes can be measured and compared and "big data" can be provided to "consumers," who can attempt to tailor educational offerings and social interventions accordingly.

Independent private schools can present parents with an alternative to the Education Operating System.

Independent private schools should:

- Determine and focus on their core mission
- Institutionalize, celebrate, and publicize that mission in their school communities and beyond
- Inform potential families that their schools promote a safe, disciplined, and orderly school and classroom environment, teach religion and/or character, emphasize personalized attention to students, and prepare students for college
- Organize for political resistance to the Educational Operating System.

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