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School Choice as Charter Schools: SB196  
Senate Education Committee Hearings  
March 7, 2013  
1:30 PM

*Members of the Committee:*

*People want to use their strengths.*

The data show this throughout the lifespan: our strengths drive our interests & our career choices. The problem is school curriculum needs people to be average across many areas (instead of saying, "since you're at the 99<sup>th</sup> %ile in math, it's okay if you're at the 20<sup>th</sup> %ile in reading:) ... so there's an undercurrent of state/Feds dictating what's taught – all of which you know far better than I!

1) The elementary level has a glaring need for schools to specialize in teaching students with dyslexia – since dyslexics are 10-15% of the population - & we already know how to identify them & even how to teach them (that's the only consistent & real finding in "learning style" – dyslexics learn a certain way, & we know how to teach them that way)!

I'm avoiding arguments re: Special Ed (IDEA) & its FAPE laws (as in - they have that under control - which they don't, etc.) & I'm avoiding all arguments re: Colleges of Ed should teach teachers how to teach reading to struggling readers (once again - as in they have that under control - which they don't, etc.)

2) For middle school & above, choices from real-world data on ability suggest some school options should lean more toward science, technology, engineering & math (STEM). Magnet schools supposedly do this, but public schools live in a dream world where everyone has the same ability & can achieve the same (sadly, that belief is patently & demonstrably false)! Those whose brains are preset to gravitate toward & grasp STEM concepts have above average ability - typically with strengths in math & spatial ability.

3) Other valid choices for middle school & above would be for those with above average ability whose verbal skills are higher than their math & spatial. This would steer them toward in-depth study of Humanities, English, Literature, Classics, Languages, Theater, Social Science, etc.

4) There should be more options for those at the high end of ability, because those in the top end can gain so much faster than others. (I'm not talking about "gifted" – whether special education or not – gifted should not be part of the equation – "global" gifted shouldn't even be tested for! – but rather just figuring out who can benefit from specific honors/advanced classes – some may take them in every area, some only in their strength

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area, others should not take them at all).

From such a school, one student might graduate with a STEM-heavy curriculum, while another student may graduate with a Humanities-heavy curriculum, having read & translated the works of Cicero, etc. So, even without separate school options offering specialized curricula, choice *within* a school could include advanced/honors classes in all areas. Conversely, those for whom math is a weakness, should be offered alternatives ("everyday math," "banking account/checkbook math," "statistics," instead of algebra, etc. – so choice expands to course substitutions/waivers, etc.)

The internet offers schools the beginnings of support toward #4 above. That's all I know about school choice!

That, & the fact that if we measured everyone's IQ/abilities at age 6 or 7, then randomly sent them to all manner of schools, then re-measured their IQ/abilities at age 18 – the school would've had no effect (or miniscule effect at most) on their IQ.

Respectfully,

Brian Stone, Fundamental Learning Center practicing psychologist and testing specialist