

A IS FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

Or: How I learned to stop worrying and trust parents

Lindsey M. Burke, Ph.D., The Heritage Foundation

The image features the word "JEOPARDY!" in a large, bold, white, 3D sans-serif font. The letters are set against a dark, futuristic background with glowing blue and purple light trails and geometric shapes. The overall aesthetic is high-tech and dynamic.

JEOPARDY!

Government “Accountability”



\$ 13,119

Per-Pupil

United States Average



\$ 9,500

Per-Pupil

OECD Average



8th Grade Percent Proficient

Math (33%)

Reading (35%)

Not Internationally Competitive



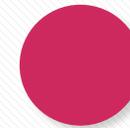
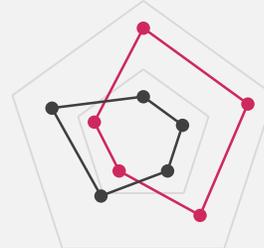
Worldwide Standing

40th

Math

24th

Reading



Combined federal, state, and local per-pupil spending has nearly tripled in real terms since the 1960s

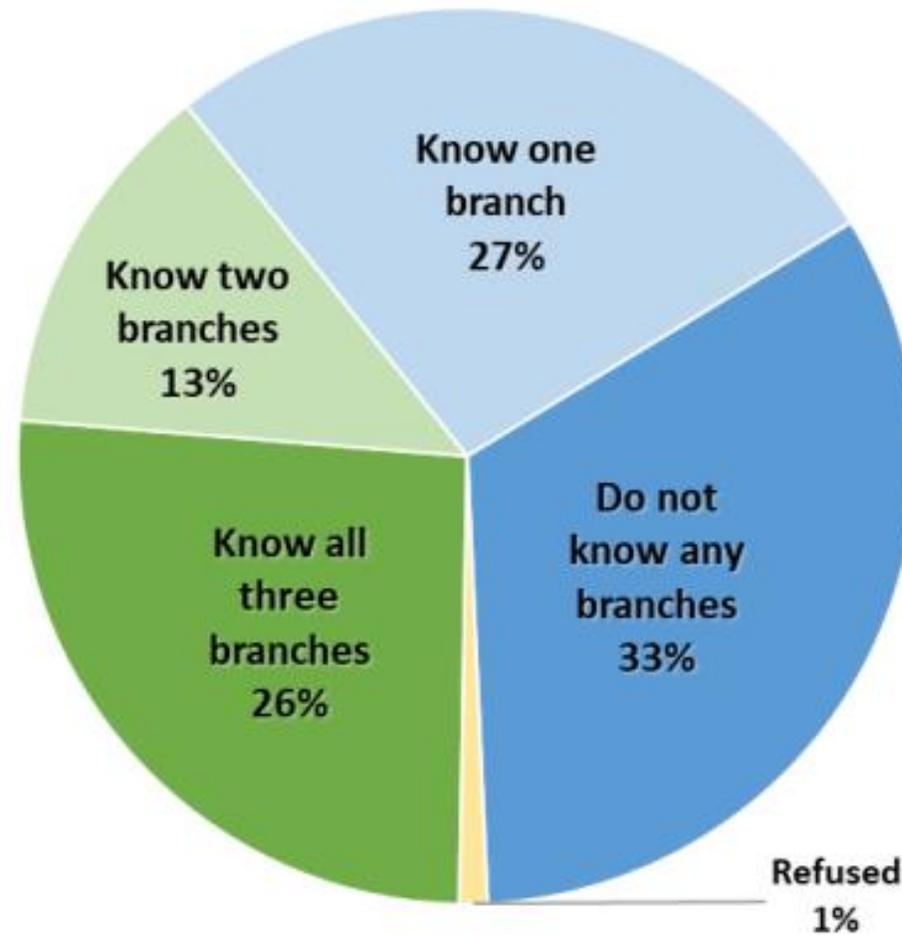


School math productivity declined 55 percent between 1970-71 and 1998-99



School reading productivity declined 73 percent over the same time period

% of people who can name the three branches of government



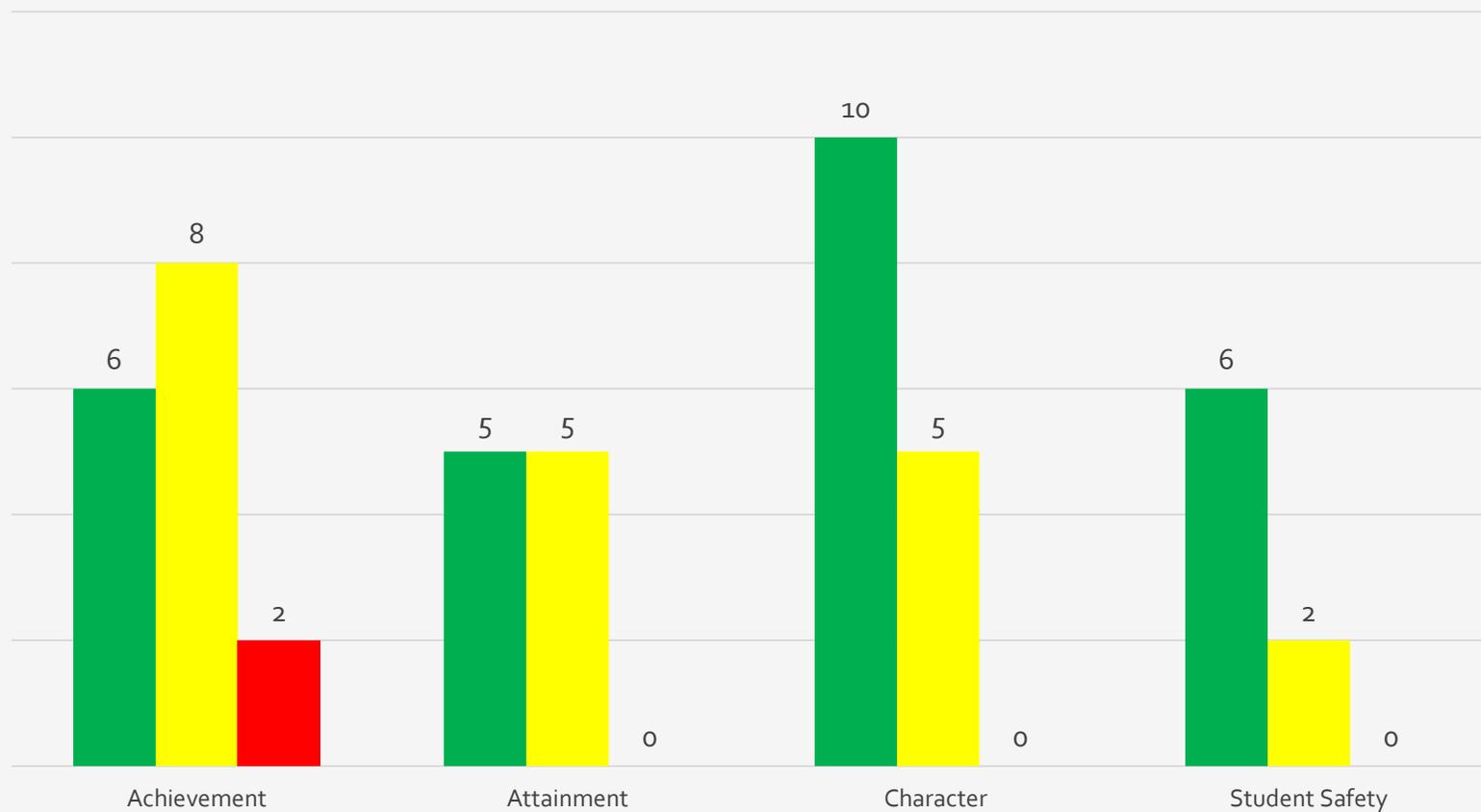
Source: Annenberg Constitution Day Civics Survey, August 9-13, 2017.
Annenberg Public Policy Center

Choice-Based Accountability: The Effect of Private School Choice on Math and Reading Test Scores

Study (16)	Location	Method	Outcome	Overall Result	
Wolf et al. (2013)	Washington, D.C.	RCT	Reading	Pos	6
Cowen (2008)	Charlotte, NC	RCT	Math and Reading	Pos	
Greene (2000)	Charlotte, NC	RCT	Math and Reading	Pos	
Greene et al. (1999)	Milwaukee, WI	RCT	Math and Reading	Pos	
Rouse (1998)	Milwaukee, WI	RCT	Math	Pos	
Howell et al. (2002)	Washington, D.C.	RCT	Math and Reading	Pos	
	New York	RCT	Math and Reading	Null*	8
	Dayton, OH	RCT	Math and Reading	Null*	
Barnard et al. (2003)	New York	RCT	Math	Null*	
Jin et al. (2010)	New York	RCT	Math	Null*	
Krueger and Zhu (2004)	New York	RCT	Math and Reading	Null	
Bitler et al. (2013)	New York	RCT	Math and Reading	Null	
Bettinger and Slonim (2006)	Toledo, OH	RCT	Math and Reading	Null	
Webber et al. (2019)	Washington, D.C.	RCT	Math	Null	
Mills and Wolf (2019)	Louisiana	RCT	Math	Neg	2
Abdulkadiroglu, Pathak, and Walters (2018)	Louisiana	RCT	Math and Reading	Neg	

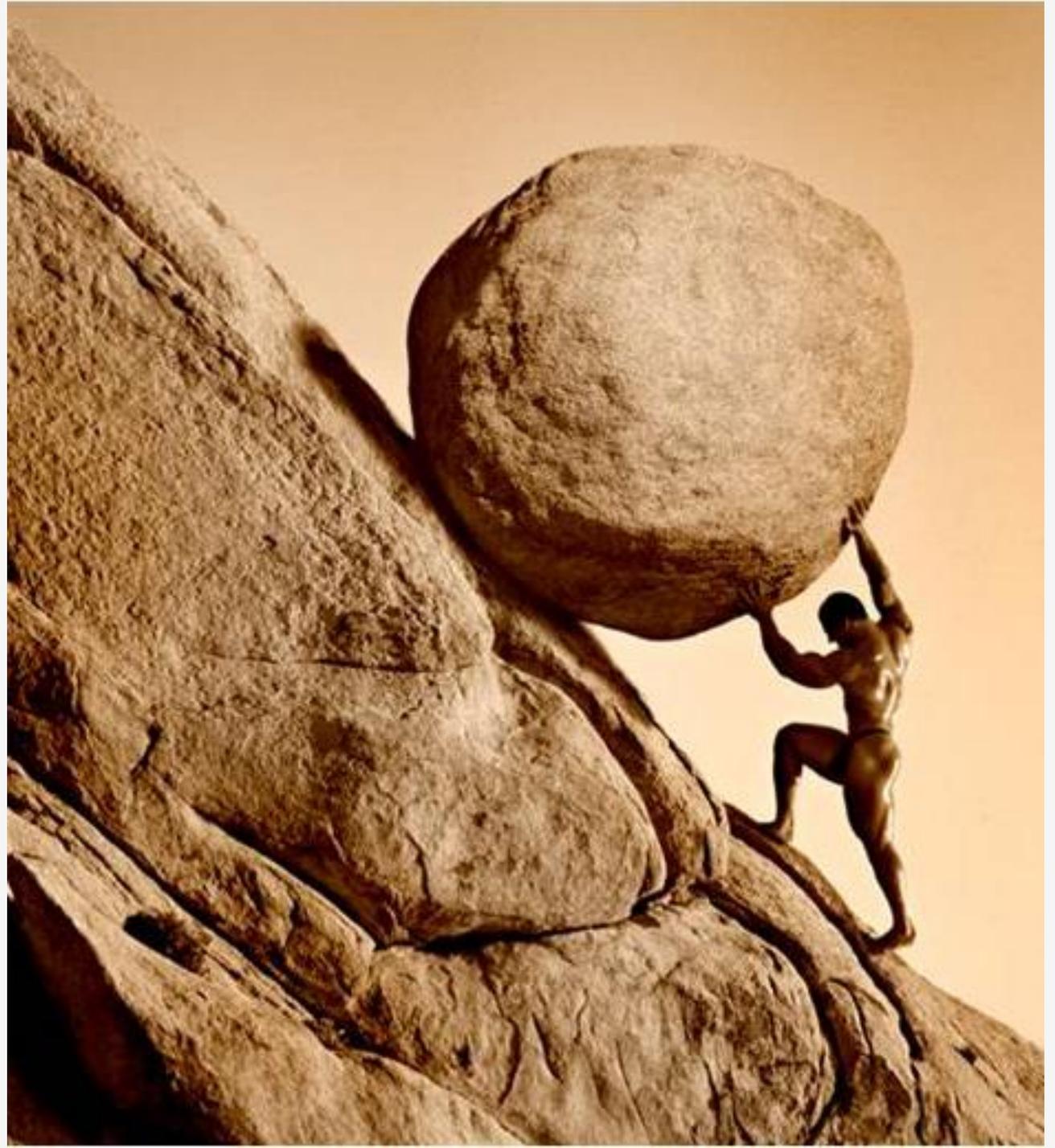
Empowering Families Changes the Game

Number of Studies on Impact of Choice and Their Findings



The Onus of Proof Should Rest with the Regulators

Despite the stark contrast in outcomes between government “accountability” in the public system and choice-based policies (achieved for a fraction of the cost!) – officials too often try to impose the government model of accountability onto private school choice options – an inappropriate and counterproductive approach to quality assurance.



To hedge against perceived inequalities created through systems of choice, regulators argue that four specific regulations—at a minimum—are needed to govern school choice programs:

- **First, the government must intervene to ensure that private schools enroll disadvantaged children.**
 - Require private schools that accept vouchers to adopt open-enrollment policies
- **Next, they argue, even if guaranteed admission to a school, choice is meaningless without the ability to pay for it.**
 - Prohibit private schools that accept vouchers from charging families more than value of the voucher.
- **Third, even if guaranteed a fully subsidized seat at a school, choice lacks value if available options are low quality.**
 - Insist upon private schools obtaining accreditation before receiving students using vouchers.
- **Finally, because accreditation alone is insufficient to guarantee quality, regulators require standardized testing.**
 - Support single standardized test, tying it to a threat of lost program participation.

What's the Net Effect? Reduced Likelihood of Participation and Negative Impacts on Achievement

The Effect of Regulations on Private School Choice Program Participation: Experimental Evidence from California and New York

Corey A. DeAngelis, Ph.D., Lindsey Burke, Ph.D., & Patrick J. Wolf, Ph.D. (2019)

- 4,825 private school leaders in CA & NY (8.24% response rate)
- Open-enrollment is a deal-breaker (~60% ↓)
 - School leaders 60% less likely to participate
- State standardized tests (~29% ↓)
 - School leaders 29% less likely to participate
- Prohibition of parental co-payment – no significant effect

The Effects of Regulations on Private School Choice Program Participation: Experimental Evidence from Florida

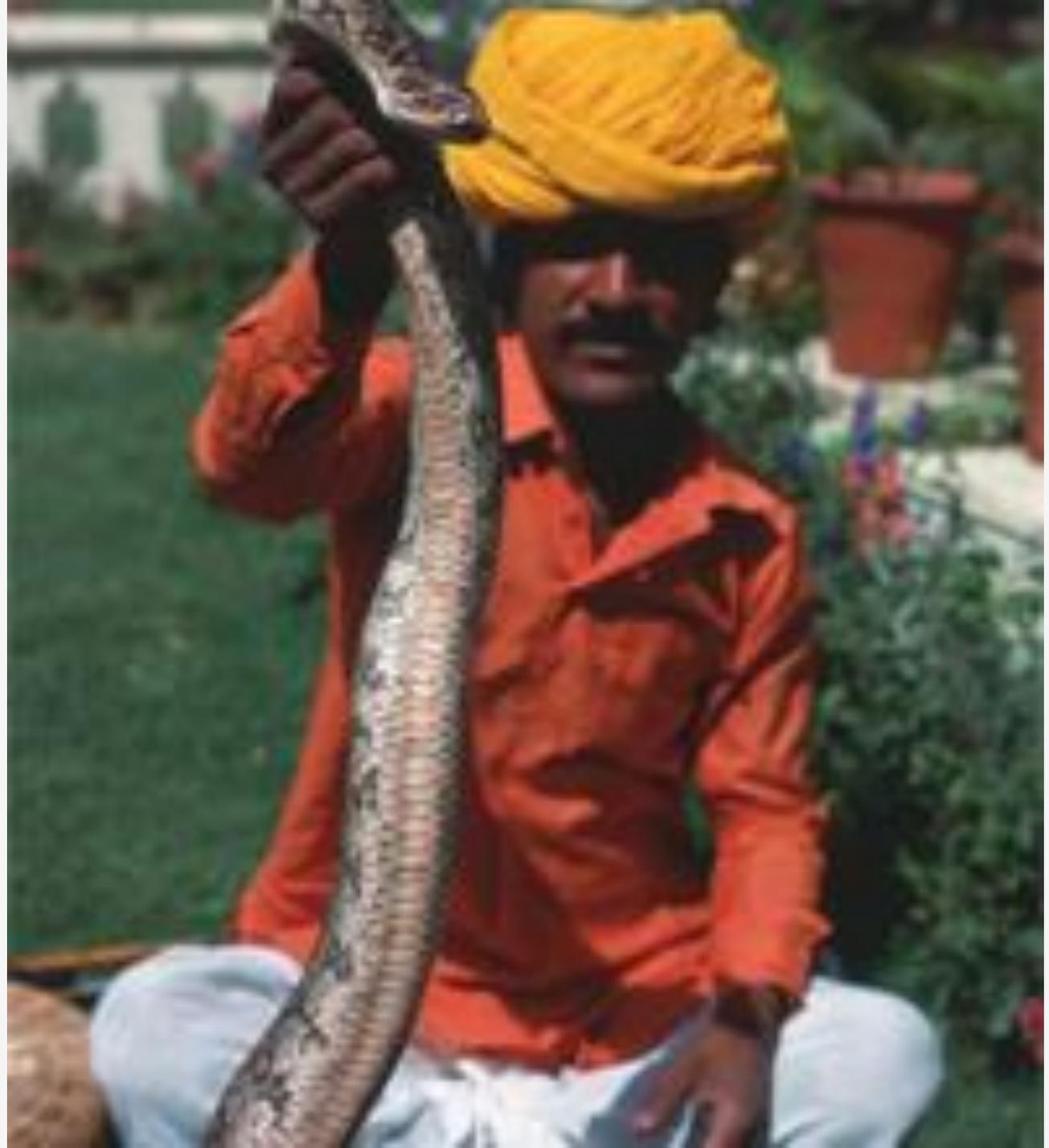
Corey A. DeAngelis, Ph.D., Lindsey Burke, Ph.D., & Patrick J. Wolf, Ph.D. (2018)

- Randomly assigned a hypothetical voucher program participation offer to 3,080 private school leaders in Florida in 2018 (11.05% response rate).
- Open-enrollment mandates reduce the likelihood that private schools are certain to participate in a choice program by about 17 percentage points, (~70% ↓)
- State standardized testing requirements reduce the likelihood that private schools are certain to participate by 11 percentage points, (~44% ↓)
- Prohibition of parental co-payment – no significant effect

Our results suggest that costly regulations tend to reduce the quantity and quality of private schools that elect to participate in school choice programs.

The law of unintended consequences

Regulations are like the Delhi, India
Cobra bounty program: they might
seem like a good idea on the surface,
but will come back to bite you.

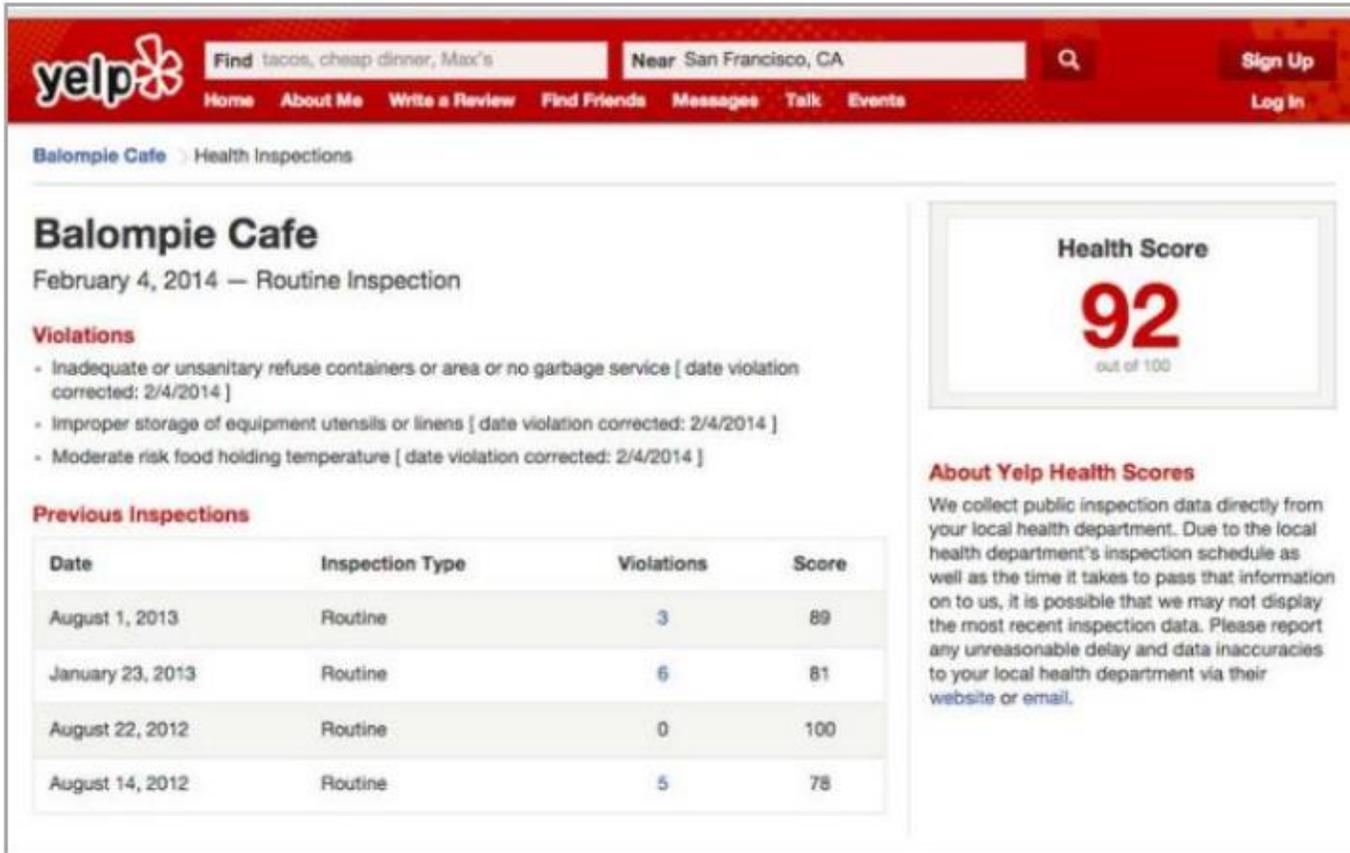


Parental Control Matters

		On Whom Spent?	
		You	Someone Else
Whose Money?			
Yours		Category 1: Strong incentive both to economize and to maximize value	Category II: Strong incentive to economize; weak incentive to maximize value
	Someone else's	Category III: Weak incentive to economize; strong incentive to maximize value	Category IV: Weak incentive either to economize or to maximize value

Source: Milton Friedman, *Free to Choose*

The Power of Information



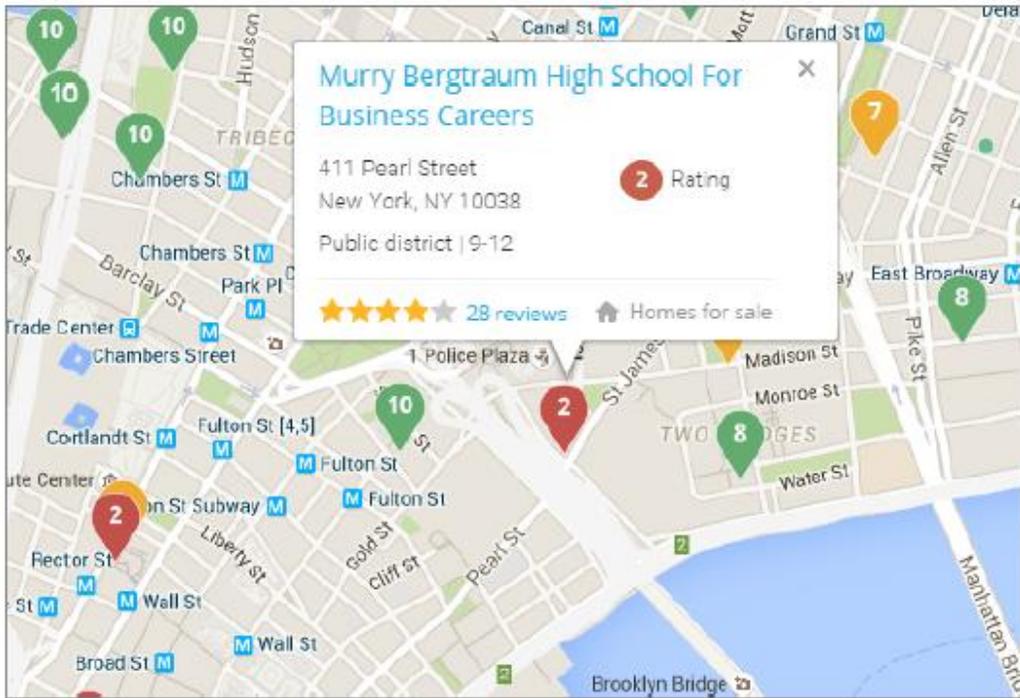
The screenshot shows the Yelp interface for Balompie Cafe. At the top, there is a search bar with "Find tacos, cheap dinner, Max's" and "Near San Francisco, CA". Below the search bar, there are navigation links: Home, About Me, Write a Review, Find Friends, Messages, Talk, Events. On the right, there are "Sign Up" and "Log In" buttons. The main content area is titled "Balompie Cafe" and "February 4, 2014 — Routine Inspection". Under "Violations", there are three items: "Inadequate or unsanitary refuse containers or area or no garbage service [date violation corrected: 2/4/2014]", "Improper storage of equipment utensils or linens [date violation corrected: 2/4/2014]", and "Moderate risk food holding temperature [date violation corrected: 2/4/2014]". To the right, a "Health Score" box displays "92 out of 100". Below this, there is a section "About Yelp Health Scores" with a disclaimer. At the bottom, a table titled "Previous Inspections" shows the following data:

Date	Inspection Type	Violations	Score
August 1, 2013	Routine	3	89
January 23, 2013	Routine	6	81
August 22, 2012	Routine	0	100
August 14, 2012	Routine	5	78

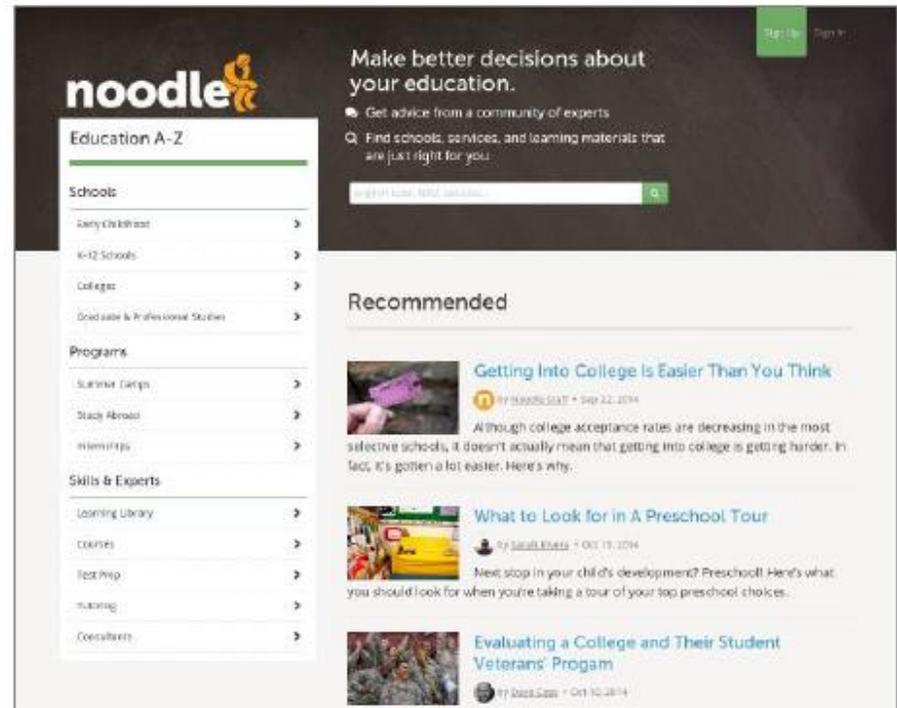
Study: Using Yelp’s reviews data and past health inspection records, Profs. Michael Luca (Harvard Business School) and Yejin Choi (Stony Brook University) were able to successfully predict future inspection scores for restaurants 82 percent of the time.

GREAT!SCHOOLS

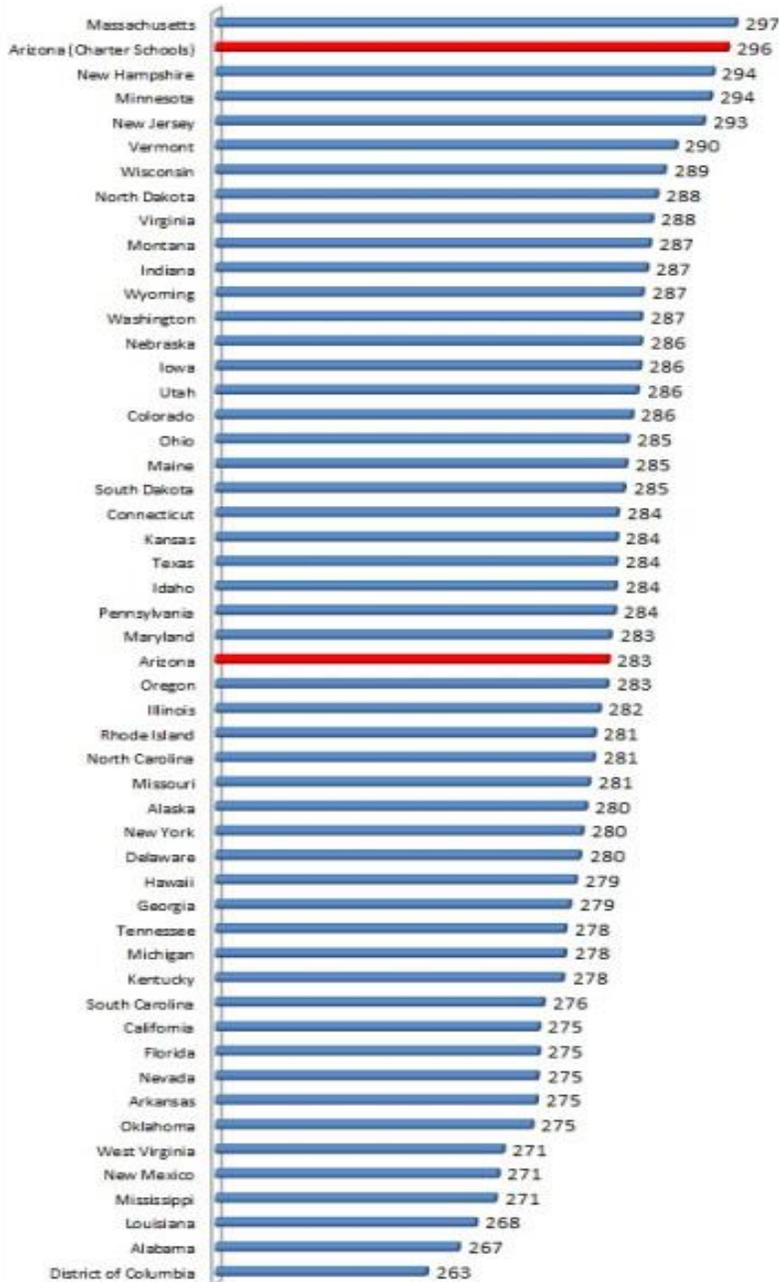
Using parent ratings and objective metrics to help parents navigate school choice.



Interactive search tools, community advice, and expert reviews to find the right tutor, school, or education service.



2015 NAEP 8th Grade Math Scores



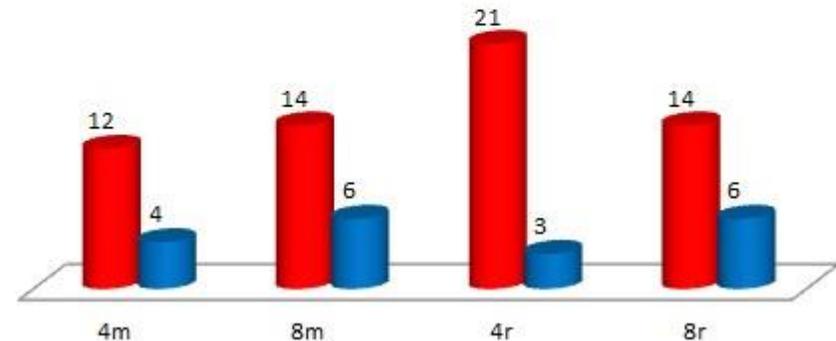
Parent-Driven Accountability

- Arizona charter schools that closed down did so, on average, after four years
- Arizona's charter law grants 15-year charters

So what?

- Arizona parents close down bad charter schools before state officials do, and are extremely adept at doing so
- This “Darwinian competition” (Ladner, 2014) has worked wonders.

AZ NAEP Gains by **Charter** and **District**, 2007-2015



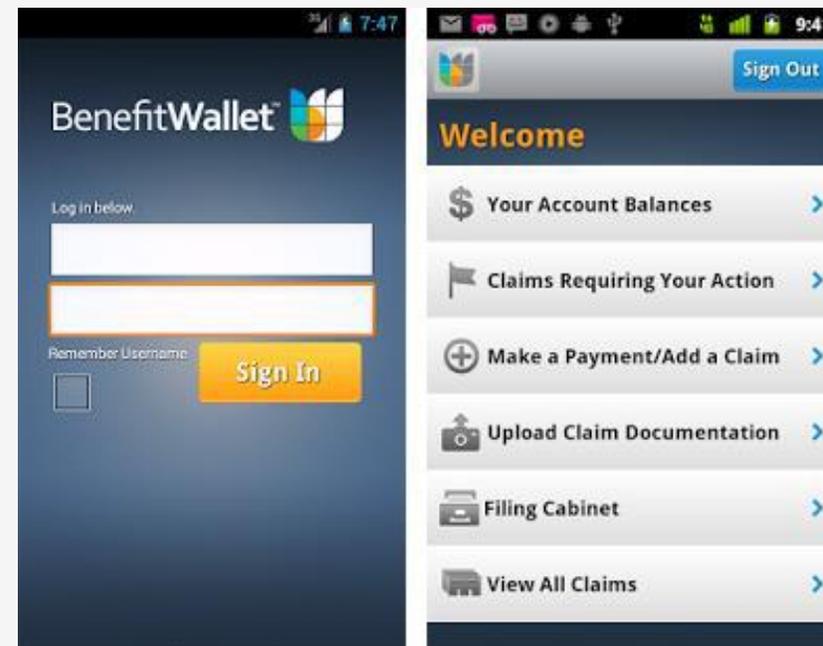
Financial Accountability

Ensuring funds are only used
for their intended purpose
(McShane, 2019).



AZ's Department of Education “has prevented and identified misspending of [ESA] program monies.”

- Less than 1 percent of funds misspent.



Academic Accountability

Ensuring that students are in the learning environment best suited to their particular learning needs (McShane, 2019).

What Parents Value in Education



Source: *More Than Scores: An Analysis of Why and How Parents Choose Private Schools*, EdChoice (2013).

<https://www.edchoice.org/research/more-than-scores/>

The Accountability Equation



When thinking about accountability ask yourself: accountability for what and to whom?

Fiscal accountability → taxpayers

Acad accountability → parents

Accountability means being answerable to those who bear the consequences of your performance.

Parents have a variety of legitimate views about education that are best served by a system with lots of choices.

