



SCHOOL CHOICE Advisor

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Election: Education Reformer Wins the Day

Education reform candidate Barbara Horton, a strong backer of Milwaukee's school choice program, has won a decisive special election victory to the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) Board of Directors.

The election was hotly contested because the MPS Board is divided 4-4 between those who support Superintendent Spence Korté and his reform initiatives and those who do not. Horton is a reformer with a proven track record of success as a school principal and MPS district administrator.

Horton's victory margin of 58-42% came in a high turnout April 2 contest that coincided with the primary election for a new Milwaukee County Executive. Horton's opponent, Annie Wacker, had announced her opposition to school choice. Wacker was endorsed by a dozen labor unions, including national and local affiliates of the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association.

Horton's sizeable win also repudiated an unprecedented \$50,000 in "independent" spending by a retired Milwaukee businessman, Jack Rosenberg, who launched a negative personal campaign against Horton. Rosenberg explained to the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* that he opposed Horton because of her support for school choice.

While Rosenberg's effort was spurred by his opposition to school choice, he steered clear of that issue and instead used last-minute personal attacks against Horton. This approach reflects a growing sense among political observers that school choice opponents will have difficulty winning elections using that issue.



Barbara Horton with students of D.L. Hines Academy.

As for Wacker, while she made it clear that she opposes vouchers, she did not emphasize the issue in joint appearances with Horton.

Rosenberg's personal attacks on Horton reflected a change from his 1999 strategy against school board member John Gardner. In that campaign, Rosenberg spent \$20,000 attacking Gardner for support of choice. Gardner won with 60% of the vote, up from 54% in 1995.

Horton is executive director of the Darrell Lynn Hines College Preparatory Academy of Excellence. The City of Milwaukee has granted charter status to Horton's school for the 2002-03 school year. On Wisconsin's 3rd grade reading test, 88% of students at Horton's school score at the basic level or above. This compares with 78% of MPS students. One of Horton's major priorities is to increase reading scores for all Milwaukee students. 📖

Milwaukee's Choice Program Fosters More Integration

A new study finds that religious schools in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP) are more racially integrated than the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS).

Howard Fuller, Ph.D., says a survey of MPCP schools and MPS schools shows that 54% of MPS students attend a racially isolated school, compared to 42% of

students in religious MPCP schools in 2001-2002.

Some voucher critics had claimed that expanding the MPCP to religious schools would increase segregation. Fuller's new report, the third in a series he has issued on this topic, demonstrates that this criticism is not valid.

The report will be posted at SchoolChoiceInfo.org later this month. 📖



News and Views*

Milwaukee Leads the Nation in Charter School Innovation — Wisconsin charter school efforts have prompted the U.S. Department of Education to hold its 2002 Charter School National Conference in Milwaukee in June.

Milwaukee has attracted national attention following the 1997 vote by the Legislature allowing the City of Milwaukee, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM) and MATC to charter schools. This provided an incentive for the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) to expand its own charter efforts.

Since 1997, MPS has chartered 15 schools, UWM has chartered three schools, and the City of Milwaukee has chartered four schools. Enrollment in city and UWM charters will exceed 3,500 next year.



Students study at Highland Community School, Milwaukee's first charter school.

The 1997 law has led to partnerships among business, education, and community groups. For example, the Medical College of Wisconsin has partnered with Edison Schools to operate the Milwaukee Academy of Science. The Milwaukee Urban League, through a charter granted by UWM, operates the Urban League Academy of Business and Economics. The Central City Cyberschool is a partnership between Johnson Controls and the Housing Authority of Milwaukee. The YWCA operates the YW Global Career Academy.

Investor's Business Daily Praises MPS Improvement — In a recent editorial, *Investor's Business Daily* lauds MPS efforts to respond to educational options such as vouchers and charter schools. Citing a report by citywide MPS Director John Gardner, the paper said, "[s]chool choice backers have long held that the competition for students would force public schools to improve. They were right."

The newspaper noted Gardner's credentials as a liberal activist and union organizer, stating, "Most school choice backers hail from the right side of the political spectrum. But Gardner, a parent himself with kids in the Milwaukee system, was willing to look at the facts on the ground and come to his reasonable conclusion."

MPS Touts District Improvements in Radio Ads — MPS' responsiveness to parents can be heard on Milwaukee radio stations. One ad features State Rep. Antonio Riley (D-Milwaukee) speaking on behalf of MPS. The commercial says:

"'Listen to your parents.' At MPS we tell the kids that all the time. So we decided we should practice what we teach. We asked Milwaukee parents what you wanted from your schools, and you told us. And you said, 'We want our kids to go to school closer to home. Give them more options and smaller class sizes. More before-and-after school programs and full days for K4 and K5 kids.'

"...You talked. We listened. Parents, community partners, and MPS are working together to create a place where children live and learn. Together we can give our kids safer schools and a better learning environment."

Washington Post Supports Constitutionality of Cleveland Voucher Program — Following the U.S. Supreme Court hearing of the Cleveland voucher case, the *Washington Post* argued that the Cleveland program passes constitutional muster. "The money is given to parents, not directly to schools, and it flows to schools only as a function of parental choices about where to send their children. In this sense, vouchers are not all that different from other programs the court has already upheld." The editorial highlighted the "longstanding and unacceptable inequity" between the wealthy, who already exercise school choice, and the poor, who are currently stuck in failing systems, as the reason for supporting "creative experimentation in search of solutions." 🏠

* Links to full documents can be found at www.SchoolChoiceInfo.org



Perspectives – Why Blacks Support Vouchers

The *New York Times* recently published an op-ed commentary ("Why Blacks Support Vouchers") by Emory University visiting professor Michael Leo Owens. Excerpts follow:

Urban black America favors school vouchers, but its leaders don't. Vouchers transfer authority over the use of a portion of government education funds from bureaucrats to parents, who then may use their grants to send their children to the schools, secular or religious, they believe will best educate their kids....

If the Supreme Court rules ... that the Cleveland voucher program is constitutional, the decision will help some families, but it will not expand the educational opportunities of all black children. Even so, such a result is likely to increase black support for vouchers. It will also show how far out of touch the black governmental class is with its black constituency.

A 1999 survey by Public Agenda, a non-partisan research group, found that 68 percent of blacks favor vouchers. A similar poll by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, a nonpartisan think tank, showed that the percentage of blacks supporting school vouchers rose to 60 percent in 1999 from 48 percent in 1996.

Support is particularly strong among ... those between [ages] 26 and 35. And support exists broadly among women and men, liberals and conservatives, the poor and the prosperous.

The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies found, however, that 69

percent of black federal, state and local elected officials do not support a voucher plan like Cleveland's.... Amazingly, almost three-fifths of black politicians rate their local public schools as excellent or good, while by nearly the same percentage other black adults rate their public schools as poor to fair.



Why do I and other African Americans support vouchers over the advice of black politicians? ... [W]e are desperate for decent education for our children. And people in my generation and those younger doubt the ability of black government leaders to influence public education policies in ways that would benefit our children. Our support for vouchers is essentially a critique of politicians' ineffectiveness.

In the post-civil rights era, the number of blacks sharing power and responsibility for urban public education has grown dramatically....

Unfortunately, black bureaucratic enfranchisement has yet to affect black

educational achievement. Test scores in the elementary schools in Atlanta's black neighborhoods are substantially worse than scores in public schools located in majority white neighborhoods.

This is very disheartening, for it suggests that even in a city of black electoral empowerment and black wealth, black children have a tough time learning and performing well. This is why so many black parents ignore the counsel of black politicians on how to improve education.

My generation knows that vouchers have serious limitations. We recognize that no voucher program can save a failing public system....And vouchers can't end the resistance of many suburban schools to black enrollment.

But they offer the only hope available to many poor students trapped in the nation's worst schools. For a limited number of children, they may make a crucial difference. That possibility is enough for black parents to take a chance. 🎓

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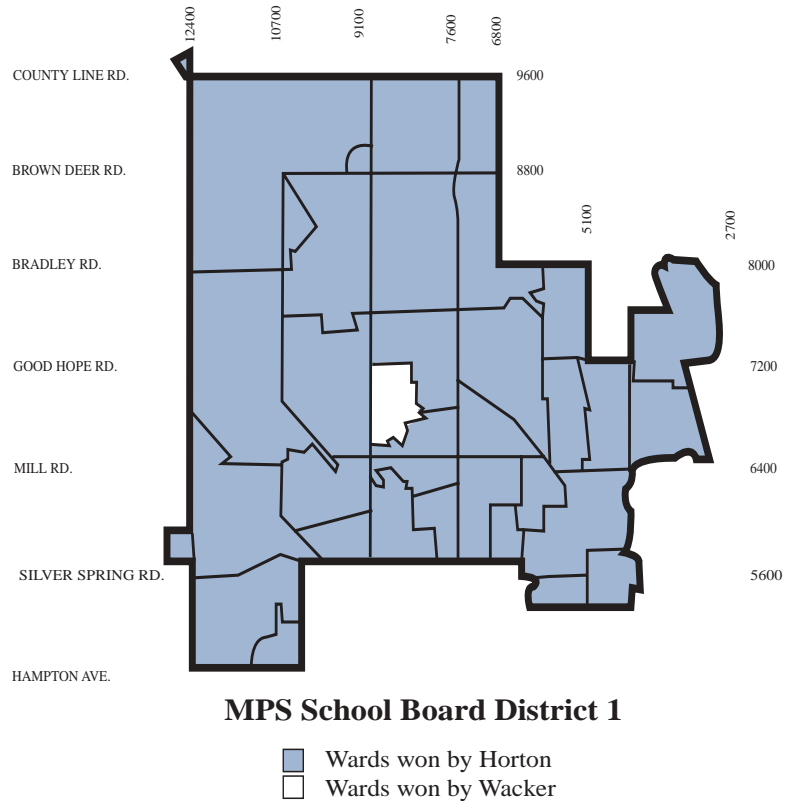
School Choice Facts – at a Glance

School Reformer Rout Opponent in MPS Race

School reform candidate Barbara Horton handily defeated Annie Wacker in an election victory that the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* said "gave a crucial boost...to the school board faction that has remade Milwaukee Public Schools over the past three years."

Horton swept 35 of the district's 36 wards (*see map*), winning 58 percent of the vote with 5,185 ballots in the April 2 election. Wacker garnered 42 percent of the vote with 3,708 ballots.

Located on the far northwest side of Milwaukee, Horton's school board district is located in the State Assembly districts of Reps. Johnnie Morris-Tatum, John LaFave, Shirley Krug, and the Senate districts of Sens. Gwen Moore and Peggy Rosenzweig. 🎓



Source: Milwaukee Elections Commission

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