

BAEO Answers Your School Choice Questions



Kaleem Caire, president and CEO of the Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO), recently hosted a live online forum about school choice at WashingtonPost.com.

The 90-minute forum generated questions from throughout the country. For a transcript, go to www.schoolchoiceinfo.org/hot_topics/?ID=5. Here is a sampling of questions and Caire's answers.

Washington, D.C.: You say that it's a matter of choice, but don't the schools have most of the power to do the choosing? How can you say vouchers help poor and minority students if these schools can discriminate?

Caire: In Milwaukee's Parental Choice Program, students are admitted to the program through an open lottery. State law also prohibits participating private schools from discriminating on the basis of disability or race/ethnicity. This system of laws and regulations prevents private "choice" schools from picking and choosing students. Similar laws govern the Cleveland and Florida voucher programs.

Tulsa, OK: Most public school educators take the position that they need more funding per student and smaller class sizes. How would voucher programs affect public schools in those two areas?

Caire: Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) spending grew three times faster than enrollment during the first decade of the Milwaukee voucher program. According to MPS, if the 10,000 students now using vouchers went back to MPS, the school district would have to find an additional \$70 million in operating funds. In addition, MPS would need to borrow \$70 million more or abandon its class size reduction program.

Washington, D.C.: I realize that you work for a black organization, but why don't you run ads for school

choice that focus on white, Latino, or Asian students? Low-income families can be of any race.

Caire: As an organization, we have struggled to address this issue. BAEO does not believe that Black children should be the only benefactors of choice programs, but we do understand that far too many Black children are failing educationally. So we made a conscious effort to stand up for our children, but do so in ways that other children will also benefit. That is why we focus on low-income families, a status that applies to many more children than just African Americans.

Visitors to [SchoolChoiceInfo.org](http://www.schoolchoiceinfo.org) are always welcome to submit school choice questions at <http://www.schoolchoiceinfo.org/contact/>.

**Parental School Choice
is Widespread —
Unless You're Poor.**



Black Alliance for Educational Options

For more information go to: www.schoolchoiceinfo.org