

Steve Jobs's Belief in School Choice

Posted By [Rachel Sheffield](#) On October 11, 2011 @ 2:52 pm In [Education](#) | [No Comments](#)

The death of Steve Jobs last week captured the attention of people not only around the nation but around the globe.

While Jobs and his products are known worldwide, less well known, as [Lori Drummer](#)^[1] of the Independent Women's Forum writes, was this innovator's "passion" for educational opportunity via school choice.

As Jobs noted in a [1995 interview](#)^[2] with the Smithsonian Institution: "Equal opportunity to me more than anything means a great education." He added that "the customers of education" are ultimately "the parents" and that "what we need to do in education is go to the full voucher system."

He [stated](#)^[3]:

I believe very strongly that if the country gave each parent a voucher...several things would happen. Number one[,] schools would start marketing themselves like crazy to get students. Secondly, I think you'd see a lot of new schools starting.... I believe that they would do far better than any of our public schools would. The third thing you'd see is...the quality of schools again, just in a competitive marketplace, start to rise.

Jobs reported that, if his own educational experience hadn't been positive, "if it hadn't been for Mrs. Hill in fourth grade and a few others, I would have absolutely ended up in jail."

Unfortunately, far too many students today are not so lucky. Stuck in underperforming and all too frequently violent schools, students are left with little hope for a promising future.

And it isn't just students in the inner cities who are affected by underperforming schools. [A study](#)^[4] released just two weeks ago by Jay P. Greene and Josh McGee reveals that many schools in even the most affluent districts perform at only an average level compared with students around the world.

However, school children who have had the opportunity to receive a voucher and leave their underperforming neighborhood schools say that school choice has made a big difference in their lives. For example, Ronald Holassie, a recipient of the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship—a voucher program for low-income children in Washington, D.C.—[testified](#)^[5] in 2009:

The D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program has changed my life and has made me the successful young man standing before you now.... The program gave me a chance to...be in a different high quality learning environment.... My study habits increased, I had better grades, I began to know my high expectations academically and I began to soar to success.

More state leaders are catching the school choice vision shared by not only Steve Jobs but education reformers and families around the country. These leaders understand that solving the nation's education problems is not impossible, but as Jobs noted in 1995, although "we fall *far* short," currently, "we do know how to provide a great education."

Americans mourn the loss of a great innovator whose creativity and ingenuity impacted millions around the world. Let's not be left to mourn the loss of the unfulfilled potentials and dreams of children around the nation who are so in need of educational opportunity.
