



**April 9, 2018**

## **A Tale of Two Public School Systems**

**By: Joe Blankenship**

The most important responsibility a state has is the education of its children! When education is viewed as gaining knowledge, instead of just passing from grade to grade to graduation, its leaders recognize that every qualitative aspect of a society is determined by the success or failure of its educational system. Whether its economic progress, health and wellness, law and order, fiscal responsibility, social cohesion or participation in the democratic process, education sets the tone for how the society will prosper or fail.

Using the metaphor of Dickens "*A Tale of Two Cities*," the author compares the school systems of Arizona and Massachusetts. First is a comparison of the "grades" of the systems and then a comparison of the "policy" that produces the grades. The discussion provides a look at the process of getting to the current status of the two school systems. The author then concludes as to which state's leaders **VALUE** education and are willing to take **RESPONSIBILITY** for providing the environment for a quality education and which does not.

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One was the best of systems, one was the worst of systems,  
One was a system of wisdom, one was a system of greed,  
One created an epoch of promise, one created an epoch of failure,  
One introduced the spring of hope, one introduced a winter of despair,  
One would lead to everything before us, one would lead to nothing before us,

“..we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way -  
In short, the period led us to the present day, where some of its noisiest authorities insisted on  
being received, for good or evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only”.

The use of the opening of Charles Dickens, “*A Tale of Two Cities*,” makes good metaphor for the comparison I am going to make between the state school systems of Massachusetts (MASS) and Arizona (AZ). MASS has the best performing school system in the United States and readily compares itself to other nations as a model of international competitiveness. AZ’s school system regularly scores in the lower half of US state comparisons based on several statistical and quality measures. Currently advertisements are being broadcast that champion the “superlative improvements” in NAEP scores by Arizona schools, however, the current “improved” scores still keep Arizona below the national average. These advertisements are an expensive campaign that is funded by outside sources that want to ensure that AZ’s schools stay on a path to privatization, rather than improved to meet AZ Constitutional requirements of a quality education for all.

### ***Comparison of School Performance and School Policies and Implementation:***

In making comparisons of two school systems I look at the “grades” of the system, usually expressed numerically or with a letter grade. Then I look at the “policy” that produced the numerical grades. Numerical or letter grades are the result of the policies set in place. Policies define the goals of the system and how it will be structured, funded, monitored and held to account. This comparison will first reflect the recent grade and statistical performance of the two systems and then describe the essential parts of the policies that created the outcomes.

Who’s to be the judge in determining the grades? The proliferation of “school choice” has created a large number of organizations that claim to be the experts in determining the best and worst of operating school systems. Although there are some credible institutions that try to make objective evaluations of student achievement, some measures use very narrow information that creates bias toward a specific ideology or desired outcome. I have used comparisons from three national organizations that I deem credible in presenting objective results of student performance and state measures of economic and social support. Comparisons of policy positions are taken from state and institutional web sites and other periodicals that I gauge to be reasonably objective. (An issue: Arizona charter schools are not regulated as public schools and therefore would not fit into my description of public schools even though some of the scores will include test comparisons from charter schools.)

**A. School Performance Comparisons:**

*Grade Comparisons:*

**State Grades on K-12 Education  
Education Week Quality Counts 2018**

	<u>Overall Grade</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>National Rank</u>
Arizona	D+	68.7	44 <sup>th</sup> (of 51 counting D.C.)
Massachusetts	B+	86.3	1 <sup>st</sup>
U. S.	C	74.5	-

Measured on three grade indices: Chances for success (2018), School finance (2018), and K-12 achievement (2016). [www.edweek.org/qualitycounts-2018-state-grades](http://www.edweek.org/qualitycounts-2018-state-grades)

**National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 2015  
Average Score between Nation (public) and other jurisdictions**

	<u>Score and rank</u> <u>4<sup>th</sup> Grade Reading</u>		<u>Score and Rank</u> <u>8<sup>th</sup> Grade Reading</u>	
Arizona	215	#44	263	#37
Massachusetts	235	#1	274	#3
	<u>4<sup>th</sup> Grade Math</u>		<u>8<sup>th</sup> Grade Math</u>	
Arizona	238	#36	283	#26
Massachusetts	251	#1	297	#1
	<u>4<sup>th</sup> Grade Science</u>		<u>8<sup>th</sup> Grade Science</u>	
Arizona	149	#40	148	#41
Massachusetts	161	#5	162	#5

[https://nces.ed.gov/nationalreportcard/state assessment](https://nces.ed.gov/nationalreportcard/state%20assessment)

**Best States Overall Ranking 2018  
U. S. News and World Report**

<u>State</u>	<u>Education</u>	<u>Economy</u>	<u>Opportunity</u>	<u>Overall</u>
Arizona	43	16	45	39
Massachusetts	1	9	14	8

Best States 2018: Ranking performance throughout 50 states. [www.usnews.com/news/best-states/ranking](http://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/ranking)

## Educational and Economic Statistics Arizona compared to Massachusetts

### *Economic Statistics – 2016 unless otherwise noted:*

<u>Measure</u>	<u>AZ - Rank</u>	<u>MASS – Rank</u>	<u>Difference MASS/AZ</u>
GDP/Capita	\$38,590 – #44	\$65,645 - #1	+70%
Personal Income/PC	\$39,156 - #43	\$62,603 - #3 (2015)	+60%
State Expenditure/PC	\$ 4,329 - #44	\$ 7,157 - #9	+65%
Gen Expend/\$1,000 PI	\$ 114 - #34	\$ 120 - #28	+ 5%

### *Educational Statistics – 2016 unless otherwise noted:*

	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Rank</u>	
Fall Enrollment	1,062,704 #14	952,156 #17	-10.4%
# of Instructional staff	50,064 #26	82,655 #13	+65%
# of Teachers/ADA	44,676 #25	72,309 #14	+62%
Instructional Staff Percent	12%	14%	+02%
Students/Teacher/ADA	21.5 #2	12.4 #40	-42%
Pub.School Rev/\$1000 of PI	\$32.90 #48	\$40.80 #32	+24%
Public School Rev/ADA	\$8,354 #49	\$18,393 #8	+120%
Avg. Teacher Salary	\$47,218 #51	\$76,981 #10	+63%
Avg. Teacher Salary National		\$58,353	+24%

National Education Association: (nea.org); NEA Research May 2017; Rankings and Estimates (2016 State and School statistics) PC=Per Capita; PI = Personal Income; ADA:DA = Average Daily Attendance.

### *Conclusions from Economic and Educational Statistics:*

From the above Economic and Educational Statistics, it is clear that a better education produces higher economic productivity. MASS's Gross Domestic Product at 70% above AZ's reflects the higher value industries and services that reside in MASS, compared to the economic makeup of construction and tourism that are prevalent in Arizona. The same can be said for Per Capita Personal Income: better education deserves better pay. The domino effect of higher productivity and income creates higher revenue for the state. The amount of state money available to be spent per capita is \$4,329 dollars for AZ and \$7,157 for MASS, or 65% more spending for services and capital improvements per citizen.

In trying to attract higher wage jobs to Arizona the Economic Development Department has been told by some prospective employers that they would not move to AZ because of the poor education environment. First, the employers want better schools for their own children, but the difficulty of attracting additional out-of-state employees would be heightened because of the poor condition of AZ public schools.

The bottom part of the Educational Statistics is particularly telling. Public school revenue per \$1000 of personal income is higher in MASS than in AZ, but not proportionate to the higher income; 24% of \$1,000 income for public school revenue vs. a per-capita income some 60% higher in MASS vs. AZ. Causation is evident, better education is equal to higher productivity which results in higher pay which means more money for education. MASS is willing to provide \$18,392 per student, measured by average daily attendance, or 120% of the \$8,354 provided by AZ using the same measurement.

Perhaps most shameful is the U.S. News Overall Ranking of States. Arizona ranks number 45 out of 50 for Opportunity for students. This implies that all students, from the best to the worst, have to leave the state if they truly want to succeed. It also states clearly that the policies and attitude taken by those who set education policy for Arizona are willing to cheat everyone in the State out of opportunity for better jobs and a more diverse economy on the basis of an ideological position that has not proven its premise; that “School Choice” makes all schools better.

*Finally, Arizona teachers, with the lowest pay in the nation for elementary teachers, has the second highest student/teacher ratio in the nation. Meaning they work harder for less pay than in all other states in the Union. Is there any wonder that Arizona currently has a shortage of 2,000 teachers?*

## **B. Comparative Policies that Determine Educational Outcomes:**

Grade comparisons are numbers or letters which imply some objectivity. Policy comparisons are descriptive and are subject to value analysis. The policy comparisons between MASS and AZ public school systems clearly reflect the value differences between state administrators and legislators. Ultimately it is the voters who elect, and delegate the responsibility for determining the policy decisions that form the public education systems in their respective states.

The words “value” and “responsibility” have been chosen carefully to reflect what is clearly a distinction between philosophy and world view between the two states in this comparison. The aim is to show the distinction between the two states, both in values and responsibility for providing a quality education for its citizens. Since value and responsibility are subjective terms, the conclusions I make here are subjective and will be viewed differently by those whose worldview differs greatly from mine.

## **B1. Massachusetts's Goal for Public Education: A Quality Education for every student.**

“The mission of the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) is to strengthen the Commonwealth's public education system so that every student is prepared to succeed in postsecondary education, compete in the global economy, and understand the rights and responsibilities of American citizens.”

“BESE's responsibilities include approving learning standards, voting on charter school applications, deciding when to intervene in the state's lowest-performing districts, and hiring the commissioner. The Board includes the secretary of education, a student (the president of the State Student Advisory Council), and nine members appointed by the governor. Those members must include a parent representative, a labor representative, and a business representative.” (1)

The state school board hires a professional educator to be the Commissioner of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). The Commissioner is the CEO of planning and implementing the policies established by the board for all public schools, including charters. The Commissioner and the Board develop a strategic plan that outlines the priorities for action in the years ahead. The current strategic plan priorities are:

**Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment:** *Provide every educator with the tools necessary to promote and support student achievement.*

**Promote Educator Development:** *Ensure that every classroom in the Commonwealth is staffed by an effective educator and that schools and districts are organized to support student achievement and success.*

**Support Social-Emotional Learning, Health, and Safety** *Promote systems and strategies that foster safe, positive, healthy, and inclusive learning environments and address students' varied needs in order to improve educational outcomes for all students. Key levers in this work include safe and supportive school climate and culture, and effective family engagement.*

**Accountability and Assistance:** *Strengthen every district's capacity to raise student performance and close proficiency gaps, with a focus on explicit, monitored standards and accelerated improvement in the lowest performing schools and districts*

**Technology and Data:** *Use technology and data to support teaching and learning helping schools access technology tools and expertise to support digital literacy.*

When the charter school movement began in 1993, MASS enacted its Education Reform Act to incorporate school choice. This law included a commitment to:

1. More funding for schools in need.
2. Higher learning standards for all.

3. More accountability for schools and educators.
4. Additional school choice for families.
5. Rigorous student testing through the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS).

In 1998 the state began to administer the MCAS exams with the new standards that had been developed. In 2015 the MASS Board of Education voted to develop a computer-based, next generation MCAS to ensure students are meeting college-and-career learning standards. In 2017 school districts across the state begin to administer the next generation MCAS exams.

To tout progress toward meeting its objectives MASS presented the following evidence on its March 2018 Web site:

1. Number One in the nation in reading and math on National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). (2015)
2. The highest ACT scores in the nation. (2016)
3. The highest Advanced Placement scores in the country. (2017)
4. Number One in the world in reading on PISA, an international assessment of 15-year-old students. (2016)

The MASS Education Reform Act called out a commitment to school choice. The alternatives include attending public schools outside your home district; charter schools; vocational education programs; Metco, an opportunity for minority students in urban schools to attend suburban school districts surrounding Boston; Commonwealth Virtual Schools, internet or computer-based methods of learning; Massachusetts Academy of Math and Science, a independent public high school providing advanced courses focused on science and math for eleventh and twelfth graders; and of course, private and parochial school as well as home schooling.

All of these school choice alternatives must be approved by the BESE, the same board that oversees district schools. More importantly, all of these school choices, including private and parochial schools, must meet the same educational standards as the district schools. The BESE delegates to the DESE the responsibility of monitoring academic performance, based on MCAS standards and to require and approve a school's financial capability to sustain the academic and economic conditions for operation. The Board can suspend or withdraw a charter or license to operate if the required standards are not met. As shown above, a strategic initiative of the Board is the continued development of professional teachers, principals and administrators of the system. The teachers in MASS are given the same professional regard as doctors, lawyers, ministers or business managers.

The 1993 Act called for a specific number of charter schools to be approved with minimum additions every year. A requirement is that a charter school must produce positive results within five years or its charter will be revoked. The school is reviewed in depth every five years using the same criteria as public schools (MCAS) before its charter can be renewed. Charter schools

are given a modest occupancy allowance and if that allowance is used to purchase a building, the building will revert to the state if the charter is revoked.

In 2016 the Massachusetts Charter Public School Association supported a ballot referendum to expand the number of allowable charter schools in the state by 12 schools per year. The Governor, Charlie Baker, campaigned extensively in favor of the measure and it was supported by tens of millions of dollars in advertising from charter proponents from outside the state. The citizens of MASS defeated the referendum with a vote of 62% against and 38% for, indicating their full support of public district schools. (2)

At the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year MA had 80 charter schools in operation and two charters granted but not yet open. Maximum enrollment allowed by current authorized charters was 53,318 vs. 42,602 students attending in 2016-2017. This represented 4.5% of the 2016-2017 PK-12 public school population. (3)

### ***Finance and Funding:***

In recent years, Massachusetts has invested approximately \$16 billion a year in public schools through a mixture of federal, state, and local contributions. Since 2007, even during the Great Recession, education spending increased steadily. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's budget alone is a little more than \$5 billion, and 99 percent of that goes directly to districts in the form of grants, local aid, and special education reimbursements.

The school choice program allows parents to send their children to schools in communities other than the city or town in which they reside. Tuition is paid by the sending district to the receiving district. Districts may elect not to enroll school choice students if no space is available. School districts pay tuition for resident pupils attending Commonwealth charter schools. There are two programs that directly offset this tuition, Chapter 46 aid and Facilities Aid. Facilities Aid is a specific per-pupil capital needs component that is included in the charter school tuition rate. For fiscal year 2018 that amount is \$893. Charter schools are not eligible for state financing for school construction. A for profit business or corporate entity is not eligible for a charter.

### ***Professional Administration and Centralized Monitoring:***

MASS has one administrative organization that oversees the policy positions for all educational institutions in the state. The Superintendent of DESE is responsible for developing and implementing learning standards; assessing all district schools and providing resources (money and talent) when a school is falling behind; approving charters; periodic review of both academic and financial conditions of the charters to insure compliance with standards, and the authority to pull a charter if the conditions are not being met.

A key responsibility for the Superintendent is the development of teachers, principals and district administrators to do their jobs adequately to meet the State's educational goals. Emphasis is



given to skills, knowledge and leadership so that the full State system will have talent to carry out the educational mission for all students.

To be sure of coordination by the legislative branch of the State policies, there is a joint educational committee of the House and Senate. They are also responsible for being sure the Superintendent and his/her staff are adequately funded to properly carry out their responsibilities.

## **B2. Arizona's Goal for Public School Outcome: Maximize School Choice**

“The mission of the Arizona Department of Education is to serve Arizona’s education community, ensuring every child has access to an excellent education.” (4)

Arizona adopted statutes in 1994 that allowed charter schools and open enrollment among district schools. The first charter schools were opened in 1995, with 70 school sites opened in the first year. Early on the State became the “Poster Child” for school choice. Compliant state elected officials and legislators, encouraged and supported by Libertarian foundations and policy institutes which favored limited government and lower taxes, set out on a path of creeping measures that rapidly built the state into the largest charter school proponent in the nation and the largest provider of tax credits to support student Scholarship accounts.

The following timeline is presented to show the vigor and persistence in the goal of maximizing school choice:

1997: Legislature passes income-tax credits that allow individuals to receive tax credits for contributions to private-scholarship funds.

1998: Arizona legislature passed a law allowing four schools to pilot online programs.

2000: Cap removed on the number of charter schools that can be allowed in a single year.

2005: The number of charter schools reach 500, with a dozen new charter schools typically opening each year.

2006: Arizona lawmakers create two voucher programs, one for special-needs students and another for foster children. These programs are declared unconstitutional by the Arizona Supreme Court in 2009 on the basis that they violated a constitutional ban on appropriating public money for private or religious schools.

2006: The Legislature allows businesses to get tax credits for donations to school-tuition organizations.

2009: The recession of 2009-2010 severely affected the state budget of Arizona and school funding was a primary target for reduction.

2009: Legislature removes cap on the number of online schools, allowing districts and charters to start online programs that can serve any student in the state. Students can enroll with more than one online course provider at the same time.

2010: A coalition of school districts and educational associations sued the state to force the Legislature to comply with the inflation funding mandate established when voters approved Proposition 301 in 2000.

2010: A report, “School Reenrollment: Choosing to Stay,” finds the majority of Arizona elementary students, 85 percent, stayed enrolled in the same school they attended the previous year regardless of how well the school performed. The report authors concluded that educators should not overemphasize school choice as a way to reform public education.

2011: Arizona begins allowing a school-voucher-type program where parents of special-needs students get debit cards with 90 percent of the state per-student money that district or charter schools would receive to educate their children. Parents can spend the money, dubbed “Empowerment Scholarship Accounts” on schooling options, including private-school tuition. The scholarships survive a court challenge based on ESAs being earmarked for parents to use state funds for qualifying students to purchase educational services.

2012: Empowerment accounts are expanded to include foster children who are being adopted, children of active-duty military families and students in schools receiving a school grade of D or F.

2013: The Arizona Supreme Court in September 2013 ruled that the state was violating the law by not providing inflation adjustments mandated by the voter approved Proposition 301.

2014: In July, Maricopa County Superior Court Judge Katherine Cooper ruled the state must immediately adjust funding for students by \$336 million – an amount equal to what funding would have been each year had the state provided inflation during the years 2010-2014. Judge Cooper has yet to rule on the cumulative funding not provided during the same period, which may be as much as \$1.3 billion.

2015: Governor Ducey announced a spending plan that would inject \$1.8 billion into K-12 schools over five years – without disrupting the state budget or raising taxes on Arizonans. The new proposal would increase the distribution formula for State Land

Trust to 10% for five years, from the current 2.5%, and to 5% for the five years after that. The adjustment would require a vote by the public to amend the Constitution.

2015: Arizona has 526 charter school sites, with over 500 charters issued. Empowerment scholarships are expanded to include students who live on Indian reservations.

2016: Based on Governor Ducey's statement that he would not support a tax increase for school funding, the School Coalition agreed to settle the lawsuit and accept the proposed distributions from the State Land Trust. In May of 2016, voters approved the amendment to the Constitution to allow adjusted distributions from the State Land Trust.

2017: The Legislature enacted an expansion of the Empowerment Scholarship Accounts, (ESA) often referred to as a school voucher program. The expansion has a complex formula for adoption. By 2012-2022, all K-12 students would be eligible, with a cap at 0.5 percent of the total number of students enrolled in school districts and charter schools.

2018: Save our Schools Arizona conducted a campaign to get a referendum placed on the ballot to overturn the 2017 ESA expansion. That campaign was successful and fended off a court challenge to its inclusion of the ballot. The Arizona Supreme Court ruled in March that the voter referendum could continue to the ballot.

2018: Disregarding the citizens desire to slow or stop the expansion of State funding to vouchers or tax credit scholarships, the Senate introduced a bill to expand tax credit scholarships. As of this date, March 18, 2018, the bill has passed the Senate and is awaiting action in the House of Representatives. It is expected to pass and be signed by the Governor, even after approval of a ballot initiative to stop expansion of the voucher program is scheduled.

March 27, 2018: A federal judge rules that the funding scheme used by Governor Doug Ducey using State Land Trust money (123) to increase aid to schools is unconstitutional. The judge says the federal Enabling Act that made Arizona a state allows the state to use only the interest off the money earned. To be continued...

The numbers reflected in the Department of Education for Arizona for the 2016-2017 School year are as follows:

Average Daily Attendance:	Districts	917,987
	Charters	<u>179,669</u>
	Total	1,097,656
Charter students % of total		16.4%
Higher than any other state in America		

Online Instruction – ADA	Districts	1,051
	Charters	<u>15,594</u>
	Total	16,645
Charter students % of total Online participants		93.7%
Total Expenditure – Millions (5)	Districts	\$8,776.0
	Charters	<u>\$1,531.3</u>
	Total	<u>\$10,307.3</u>
Per Student – ADA	Districts	\$9,560.0
	Charters	\$8,522.9

Arizona Tax Credits Hit \$1.0 billion (6)

***Arizona: Decentralized and Uncoordinated Administration***

Instead of quality, the first declaration of responsibility for the **Arizona State Board of Education** is “regulating the conduct of the public-school system.” With the exception of the Superintendent of the Public Instruction, an elected position, the board of 11 members is appointed by the Governor with the consent of the Senate. The appointed board must include the president of a state university or state college, a president of a community college district, an administrator or owner of a charter school, a superintendent of a high school district, a county school superintendent, a classroom teacher and four lay members. Since the State Board has a limited staff, most of the administrative work for the Board is conducted by the **Arizona Department of Education (ADE)**. The web site for the State Board of Education does not list the backgrounds and expertise of the State Board members, particularly the lay members, one of which is the President of the Board.

At the end of 2016, the ADE announced new Standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics. The ADE makes it clear in its introduction, the standards are NOT curriculum or instructional practices. The standards set by the state allow school districts and charter schools to select their own curriculum and instructional resources. However, since many of these school “choices” have separate administration, there is no way that Arizona can insure the quality of education provided in each district. Further, the state, in adopting its own standards, has rejected Common Core standards. Groups like Common Core were formed to encourage each state to adopt standards which would put the students in that state on a path to be able to compete with students in states like Massachusetts in college and in graduate programs.

The ADE is responsible for administering the **Empowerment Scholarship Account (ESA)** program, also called vouchers. The basic rules for ESA accounts were set up by the legislature, with the direct participation of the Goldwater Institute, one of the non-state actors I will discuss later. The recipient of an ESA voucher is supposed to use the money for home-based education,

private schools or other alternative educational services. In exchange for receiving state money for private purposes the recipient cannot be enrolled in a public school, including charter schools, or receive any tax credit scholarships concurrently in the same year.

The Arizona Republic did its own review of voucher participant's receipts submitted under the program and found substantial misuses and outright fraud. The Republic reported funds from the voucher going to 529 college-savings accounts and some parents taking ESA money while sending their children to public schools. ADE cannot say how much money or how many students go to private schools.

While the ADE is supposed to get five percent of the voucher amount for administration, the legislature has not always appropriated that amount so the staffing for monitoring the use of voucher funds has been totally inadequate.

Another program that gets little to no oversight is **Tax Credit Scholarships (TCS)**. Arizona started the move toward TCS programs in 1997 and today has the most robust program in the nation. Annual contributions are approaching \$100 million. The cumulative amount exceeded over one billion dollars in 2016. Because some of the proceeds were going to religious schools there was a court challenge but eventually the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that plaintiffs did not have standing to sue because tax credits are not a form of government spending and donations to **School Tuition Organizations (TSO)** are voluntary. The TCS program is administered by the Arizona Department of Revenue (DOR), which certifies TSOs and requires all requests be submitted on an approved TSO form. Once the money is dispersed to the TSO, which is supposed to pass 90% of the proceeds to the educational institution, there is no further monitoring of the use of the TCS amount.

The largest authorization and administration of school choice for Arizona parents and students is the **Arizona State Board for Charter Schools (ASBCS)**. The expected enrollment for the 2017- 2018 school year was over 180,000 students and funding under the estimated budget would be more than \$1.1 billion. Arizona has the largest percentage of K-12 students in charter schools than any other state in the union. The ASBCS has the authority to authorize charter contracts and the responsibility to oversee academic performance and financial and contractual performance. ASBCS has completely different rules for operation and administration than for the district schools. One big difference between AZ and MASS is the length of the charter contract. The AZ initial contract is for 15 years with a possible 20-year extension. MASS is an initial 5-year charter contract with an extensive review and evaluation after that period and renewal is for another five years. The long contract period in Arizona has attracted property developers that use the charter as a means of buying and developing properties. If, under any circumstance the charter is not renewed or the charter is surrendered, the land and buildings remain the property of the charter holder. In MASS, if a charter is discontinued and the holder has used state funds to acquire a property, upon dissolution of the charter, the property reverts back to the state.

Since Arizona has one of the longest histories of a significant number of charters, the state also has the greatest experience with closures, leaving children scrambling for another school in the middle of the school year. As recent articles from the Grand Canyon Institute have noted, one-third of the now existing charter schools are financially deficient, and the near-term danger is that many more will cease to exist. The burden of taking in those students will then be shifted to the district schools, probably long after the annual per-student payments have been made to the charter schools.

The ASBCS has a limited budget and a staff of 14 people to oversee over 500 charter schools. With this limitation, there is minimal oversight and problems are left to build until it is too late for corrective measures. By law there is a minimal financial oversight of charter schools, of which the preponderance are run as businesses, not as an educational institution.

### ***Finance and Funding:***

Funding has long been a source of contention within Arizona schools. As is evident, not only are less funds allocated to education than in most other states, but teacher pay lags as well. Building maintenance is not being performed in many districts due to lack of funds. While the legislature and governor of Arizona have provided additional funds in the last few years, those funds are not adequate to close the gap. As a policy matter, the proliferation of charter schools combined with complete lack of oversight of those schools, have drained critical funds from school districts thereby reducing opportunities for public schools to provide quality education.

It is clear that the structure of education in Arizona cannot guarantee, or in many cases, provide the quality of education demanded today. The ASBCS has made it abundantly clear who holds the responsibility: “As a parent, you are making a conscious choice to consider participating in the education marketplace.” (7) Therefore, it is the parent’s responsibility to ensure that they have the knowledge to make a proper choice about their child’s education, the ability to pay any additional fees the charter or private school may require and the means to transport their child to the school that may be outside your neighborhood. For most Arizona parents, no real choice exists.

### ***Non-State Actors Setting Arizona Policy:***

I would be derelict in not identifying the non-state actors that are influencing, if not dictating, the policy decisions about education being enacted by Arizona’s legislature and administration. Most actively involved is the local **Goldwater Institute** which was instrumental in formulating and helping to enact the ESA program. Assisting in the lobbying and promotion was the **American Federation for Children**, which was founded by the now U.S. Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos. AFC now has an Arizona subsidiary, **Arizona Federation for Children**, so that it can have a constant presence in AFC’s greatest success story in the United States. The AFC has been instrumental in helping to elect many of the Republican legislators voting on the bills. In

the 2016 election, the web site for the AFC boasted of spending \$290,000 in the Arizona legislative election.

Always present and active in promoting their school choice agenda is the **American Legislative Exchange Council** (ALEC). Arizona republicans are among the most active state participants in the nation for activities and retreats of ALEC. Arizona state Senator Debbie Lesko received special recognition in the ALEC newsletter the month she introduced the ESA expansion, now heading for a state referendum in November. ALEC has spawned a subsidiary organization to make local inputs in city and county affairs. **The American City County Exchange** (ACCE) is now affecting local elections, including school boards, to promote its school choice agenda.

ALEC provides its own report card on public education. Its focus is on private school choice and charter schools so Arizona ranks #1 with a grade of A- while Massachusetts ranks #21 and a grade of C-. Academic performance doesn't enter the equation.

Then, there is the money source for most of the non-state actors mentioned above: **Americans for Prosperity** (AFP). AFP is the Koch Brothers principle vehicle for influencing elections and candidates. AFP provided between \$3.5 million and \$5.0 million for the 2014 election of Doug Ducey for Governor and Ducey is a regular attendee at the Koch Brothers retreats and policy briefings. At the last retreat in December, the Washington Post reported Ducey's remarks about the upcoming referendum on the ESA campaign: "I didn't come here to play small ball," referring to the fight he is going to marshal to defeat the proposition. Ducey will be particularly attentive to the desires and wishes of the Koch brothers to attract funding for his 2018 reelection campaign. Why would he put the wishes of the Koch Brothers over the educational aspirations of Arizona students? Because being governor is just an audition for the next job: Senator? President of the United States?

### **C. Conclusions:**

It is clear that MASS VALUES education and is willing to take full **RESPONSIBILITY** at both the state and local level for providing a world class education for the students of the state.

This comparison clearly illustrates that Arizona's policy is not intended to guarantee an excellent education to its students. While the rhetoric is espousing excellence and improvement, the actions taken by the Arizona Governor and Republican legislators drive the institutions of learning of Arizona further and further away from achieving what the policy makers profess to value. The best expression of the conclusion for of a bad situation is stated in a recent review of the book, *Enlightenment Now*, by Steven Pinker. "Marriage counselors often say that relationships can weather anger, misunderstanding, jealousy, fundamentally different values—even the occasional bout of hatred. But they can't survive contempt, which has become the signature political emotion of our age. Trying to make a state more like a community doesn't mean making it more homogeneous or even more harmonious. Instead, the problem for

enlightenment now is how to establish a background of trust and commitment that allows conflict without contempt.” (8)

In Arizona educational excellence is not discussed as a key goal by state government. The discrepancy between the outcomes of a state like Massachusetts and Arizona should provoke Arizona’s state government to plan for significant improvement in process. Unfortunately, the response is to lower the standards, not to raise them. The Administration and Legislators neither **VALUE** nor take **RESPONSIBILITY** for educating the children of Arizona.

All actions are toward expanding “choice” instead of promoting “excellence.” That is why the frequency of expanding vouchers, tax credits, digital learning and charter schools. This policy is developed, promoted and insisted upon by non-state actors. These practices continue even though all evidence indicates that there is not an overall improvement in school performance due to these “competitive” choices for learning. The purpose, then, can only be seen as the complete privatization of the educational system.

As much as the local district school boards, superintendents, principals, teachers and administrators have tried to keep quality in the class room, poor pay and lack of resources will eventually diminish their resolve. The Koch Brothers, Betsy DeVos, Bill Gates, the Walton family and other multi-billionaires favoring school choice have the resources to wait it out. Meanwhile, hundreds of thousands of children will not have the preparation or education to achieve their greatest potential, and all of the people of Arizona will be the poorer.

Why do the foundations and policy institutes pour millions of dollars and significant effort into trying to dictate what education policy should be for Arizona? The answer is simply – **POWER**. They feel that their ideology of school privatization is superior to any concern for public education that American parents might have.

### **What Can you do to improve the prospects of public schools in Arizona?**

**Vote:** Be sure the Senator and Representatives in your district support excellence in education and is willing to do what’s necessary to fund our schools.

**Select a progressive School Board for your district:** Be aware of candidates supported by some of the non-state actors mentioned above and support candidates that will respect the wishes of the community.

**Know the status** of schools in your district, including Charter Schools. Help to insure that teachers and principals have the support, and encouragement, of the community to help children succeed.

**Assess, what’s in your best interest** in having an excellent school system in Arizona:  
Local property values; Opportunities for realization of potential by all students;  
Economic growth for the state; Less Crime; Healthier communities.



This conclusion brings us right back to the original text we used to start this metaphor – *A Tale of Two Cities*. We end with the Marquis’ principles of aristocratic superiority:

“Repression is the only lasting philosophy. The dark deference of fear and slavery, my friend” observes the Marquis’ “will keep the dogs obedient to the whip, as long as this roof” looking up to it, “shuts out the sky.”

(Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*, 2003, p.128, Book 2, Chapter 9.)

- (1) <http://www.doe.mass.edu/bese/>
- (2) <https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2016/11/08/mass-voters-consider-expanding-charter-schools>
- (3) Massachusetts Charter School Fact sheet - Sept 2017
- (4) Arizona Department of Education Website <http://www.azed.gov/adeinfo/>
- (5) <http://www.azed.gov/finance/reports/>
- (6) [Alia Beard Rau](#), The Republic | azcentral.com Published 7:00 a.m. MT Aug. 18, 2017
- (7) <https://asbcs.az.gov/parent-resources>
- (8) The Atlantic

Two appendices are available upon request that take sections of the web sites for: (1) Arizona School Boards and Departments: (2) Massachusetts School Boards and Executive Departments, and (3) The foundations and policy institutes that I call non-state actors.