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Education Policy Research Unit (EPRU) at ASU  
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**\*\*\*NEWS RELEASE--FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\*\***

**SCHOOL CHOICE SERIES SHOWS POTENTIAL AND PITFALLS**  
**Series of 10 briefs looks at research evidence on school reform**

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TEMPE, Ariz., and Boulder, Colo. (March 20, 2008) — While advocates of school choice offer it as a certain path to school reform founded on free-market principles and opponents warn of serious unintended consequences, a close examination of research on the topic finds a decidedly mixed picture of choice’s benefits and shortcomings.

*School Choice: Evidence and Recommendations*, a collection of 10 policy briefs on specific topics under the umbrella of choice, brings together some of the top scholars in the field and presents a comprehensive overview of the best current knowledge of these important policies. Together, the briefs offer reason to believe that choice policies can further some educational goals, but they also offer many reasons for caution. The series is edited by Gary Miron, Kevin G. Welner, Patricia H. Hinchey, and Alex Molnar.

The series of briefs examines choice in its various forms: charter schools; home schooling and “virtual” schooling; voucher plans that allow students to use taxpayer funds to attend private schools; tuition tax credit plans that provide a public subsidy for private school tuition; and public school intra- and interdistrict choice, such as magnet schools.

“School choice is a reform ideal that consistently has been debated and contested,” according to Gary Miron, the lead editor of the book. “This contentious debate arises, in part, because choice means so many different things to different people. But the debate often overlooks the diversity within the broad realm of school choice and the differences in how specific types of school choice are legislated and implemented.”

Miron says that a “key aim of *School Choice: Evidence and Recommendations* is to facilitate a more nuanced understanding of school choice.”

Indeed the expected outcomes of choice—usually presented as improved student achievement and instructional innovation as competition spurs all schools to do a better job of educating students—have thus far not been borne out on a large scale.

Each of the 10 briefs that make up *School Choice: Evidence and Recommendations* zeroes in on particular aspects of choice and offers research and policy-making recommendations:

**In Negotiating Public and Private: Philosophical Frameworks for Understanding School Choice**, Terri Wilson examines the underlying philosophical assumptions that undergird choice proposals, including varying and sometimes conflicting understandings of public and private realms of action.

**In How Legislation and Litigation Shape School Choice**, Julie Mead traces the history of battles in the courts and the legislature over choice proposals, including legal rulings on school segregation that helped set the stage for some of the early public school choice measures, offered as tools for school integration.

**The Impact of Advocacy Funding on the School Choice Debate**, by Wendy C. Chi, documents the spending of ideologically based donors who fund communication and political action for and against choice policies.

**School Choice and Accountability**, by Gregg Garn and Casey Cobb, find evidence that undermines the common assumption that choice programs are by their nature more accountable to families or communities than traditional public schools.

**In Funding Formulas, School Choice, and Inherent Incentives**, Clive Belfield reviews the way particular approaches to paying for choice programs can influence their outcomes.

**Teacher Qualifications and Work Environments across School Sectors**, Marisa Cannata presents original research that compares the qualifications and working conditions of teachers in various school settings.

**Educational Innovation and Diversification in School Choice Plans**, by Chris Lubienksi, examines and critiques the oft-held belief that choice schools will drive innovation.

**School Choice and Segregation by Race, Class, and Achievement**, by Roslyn Mickelson, Stephanie Southworth, and Martha Bottia, points to ways in which choice programs may be increasing segregation and stratification among schoolchildren rather than expanding diversity, more than 50 years after the U.S. Supreme Court outlawed school segregation.

**In The Competitive Effect of School Choice Policies on Public School Educational Outcomes**, David Arsen and Yongmei Ni test—and find little

current evidence for—the claim of school choice advocates that choice plans will also spur improvement in traditional public schools.

Finally, in **The Impact of School Choice Reforms on Student Achievement**, Gary Miron, Stephanie Evergreen, and Jessica Urschel review evidence for and against claims that schools of choice inherently contribute to greater achievement by students.

*School Choice: Evidence and Recommendations* is being jointly released by the Education Policy Research Unit (EPRU) at Arizona State University, the Education and the Public Interest Center (EPIC) at the University of Colorado at Boulder, and the Great Lakes Center for Education Research and Practice, which provided funding for the project.

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