

Short of buying a new home, parents currently have only one way to escape a failing public school: Send the kids to private school. But there is another alternative, one that would keep much-needed tax dollars inside the public school system while still reaping the advantages offered by a voucher program. Local governments could enact meaningful reform by enabling parents to choose from among *all* the public schools in a locale, with no presumptive assignment based on neighborhood. Under a public school voucher program, parents, not bureaucrats, would have the power to pick schools for their children—and to choose which schools would get their children's vouchers. Students would be admitted to a particular public school on the basis of their talents, their interests, or even their lottery numbers; their zip codes would be irrelevant. Tax dollars would follow the children, not the parents' home addresses, and children who live in a \$50,000 house would have the same educational opportunities as those who live in a \$250,000 house.

Children who required extra resources, such as those with physical or learning disabilities, could be assigned proportionately larger vouchers, which would make it more attractive for schools to take on the more challenging (and expensive) task of educating these children. It might take some re-jiggering to settle on the right amount for a public school voucher, but eventually every child would have a valuable funding ticket to be used in any school in the area. To collect those tickets, schools would have to provide the education parents want. And parents would have a meaningful set of choices, *without* the need to buy a new home or pay private school tuition. Ultimately, an all-voucher system would diminish the distinction between public and private schools, as parents were able to exert more direct control over their children's schools.⁶⁵

Of course, public school vouchers would not entirely eliminate the pressure parents feel to move into better family neighborhoods. Some areas would continue to have higher crime rates or better parks, and many parents might still prefer to live close to their children's schools. But a fundamental revision of school assignment poli-