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## **NATIONAL CENTER ON EDUCATION AND THE ECONOMY TO RECEIVE ENDOWMENT**

*Proceeds From Sale of America's Choice to Fund Expanded Research Efforts*

***[NB: Supporting quotes from education leaders immediately follow release]***

WASHINGTON--The National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE) announced today the creation of an endowment for the not-for-profit organization, funded by the sale of its for-profit subsidiary, America's Choice, Inc. (ACI) to Pearson. This endowment will provide an estimated \$3.6 million per year to help support NCEE's growing education research, policy development and technical assistance programs.

Since 1989, NCEE has been researching the countries that, year in and year out, lead all others in the quality of their education systems when the performance of their students is compared to the performance of students in other countries. The U.S. typically comes in between the middle and the bottom of the range of performers in these studies. This new endowment will enable NCEE to engage some of the world's leading scholars in research intended to identify the world's best practices on key issues such as teacher quality, school finance, standards, curriculum, instruction, accountability, low performing schools and a host of others. With that information in hand, the United States will know what it needs to do to match the performance of the highest performing countries in the world.

The endowment also will allow NCEE to accelerate implementation of the ground-breaking agenda offered in its 2006 report, *Tough Choices or Tough Times*.

Building on a key recommendation in *Tough Choices*, NCEE has most recently assembled a 12-state consortium committed to using the world's best instructional systems and examinations in their high schools. All of these instructional systems and examinations will be adapted to reflect the new Common Core State Standards. The states involved include Arizona, Connecticut, Kentucky, Maine, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Vermont.

NCEE created the program that became America's Choice in 1989, based in part on NCEE's extensive research on the countries with the best-performing education systems. The idea was to create a design for American schools based on how the best performing schools in the world operate. In time, NCEE focused on building the standards, instructional systems, teacher and principal training, educational

materials and technical advice and assistance that would be needed to enable low-performing U.S. schools to greatly improve their performance by implementing these high performance standards and school designs. America's Choice grew quickly in the 1990s, gaining a reputation as the most effective of all of the comprehensive school reform programs.

For its first 15 years, America's Choice was supported by grants from government and foundations. But, by 2004, although America's Choice had earned many accolades from the research community for the quality and effectiveness of its program, the benefits were reaching only a tiny portion of the students they were designed to help. NCEE did not have access to the kind of professional management it needed to operate at a larger scale and private foundations did not have the funds to greatly expand the program's reach. So NCEE reorganized ACI as a for-profit organization and turned to the private sector for investors and professional management. ACI's mission did not change. During the following five years, the organization was able to build a much wider and deeper array of instructional systems and an organizational infrastructure that enabled it to considerably increase the number of students, including poor and minority students, it was able to reach. By summer 2010, America's Choice had worked with more than 2,000 schools and reached more than a million students.

But even those numbers are small compared to the number of schools and students who need the resources America's Choice has developed. America's Choice will now have the management and infrastructure to fully realize NCEE's original dream of bringing truly world class school designs and instructional systems to students all over the country. With the acquisition by Pearson, the largest education company in the world, America's Choice will have the funding, the management capacity and the platform needed to reach tens or even hundreds of thousands of children each year with its powerful, effective instructional systems.

"What we have managed to do is leverage the original foundation and government investment in comprehensive school reform into a much larger and more powerful instrument for school reform than the original foundation and government investors could ever have imagined possible," said former Secretary of Labor Ray Marshall, Co-Chair of the Board of Trustees of NCEE. "By marrying public and private investment in this way, we have been able to extend the reach of philanthropic and government research efforts far beyond what is normally achieved. We have been able to take a good idea to scale and have produced a much more robust return for every dollar the government and the foundations initially invested than is usually the case."

Marc Tucker, NCEE's president added that, "We are deeply grateful to the foundations and government agencies that contributed the original seed capital to start this program years ago. We have not only been able to achieve far more for many more students than those foundations and government agencies expected, but we also will be able to plow the proceeds from the sale right back into the very kind

of work we were originally set up to do: research on the countries with the most effective education systems and the application of that research for the design of superior education systems here in the United States. And this endowment will greatly enhance our ability to pursue the agenda we laid out in our 2006 report, *Tough Choices or Tough Times*.”

Sue Stewart, the other Co-Chair of NCEE’s Board of Trustees, believes that this strategy could be more widely used to make sure that more investments in education research and development pay off in improved education for large numbers of American students. “Public-private partnerships like this one,” she said, “have been used by the United States in a wide variety of industrial sectors to make the United States uniquely competitive in high technology. There is no reason why the same techniques should not be used to vault our schools forward in much the same way.”

#### **Additional Quotes from Education Leaders:**

“The additional resources provided by NCEE’s endowment will give a real boost to its school improvement efforts,” said **John Wilson, Executive Director of the National Education Association**. “NCEE’s recent work with the NEA in building board examination systems in cooperation with several states, for instance, will transform high school instruction, vastly better prepare students for college work, and create pathways to post-graduate success for every student. I’m delighted that programs like this stand to benefit from an infusion of funds.”

“The focus of foundations like Carnegie Corporation of New York is to help give life to brilliant new ideas and innovative solutions,” said **Michele Cahill, Carnegie Corporation Vice President of National Programs**. “There is always concern that good ideas will never get very far beyond the hothouse. NCEE, over the years, has given birth to many promising ideas and projects. And NCEE acts on its commitment to do the hard work required to scale them up so they can improve the lives of thousands of young people. I applaud today’s announcement of the NCEE endowment.”