

## Lecture on Multiculturalism 2005

### Dr. Fuller: The Impact of School Choice on Student Learning and Development

#### The 11th Annual Lecture on Multiculturalism

Tuesday, March 29, 2005

7:30pm-9:30pm

Edwards Auditorium, Edwards Hall

[URI Press Release](#) | [Campus Flyer \[pdf\]](#)

Howard Fuller (full bio available from [Marquette University](#)), one of the nation's most influential advocates for school choice and other educational reforms, will deliver the University of Rhode Island's Eleventh Annual Lecture on Multiculturalism on Tuesday, Mar. 29 at 7:30 p.m. in Edwards Hall, 64 Upper College Road, Kingston Campus. Originally scheduled for Tuesday, Feb. 8, the talk was postponed because of Dr. Fuller's leadership in the legislative campaign to raise the number of low-income students participating in school choice in Milwaukee. The talk on "***The Impact of School Choice on Student Learning and Development***" is free and open to the public.



Surviving legal challenges in the state courts up to the U.S. Supreme Court after its inception in 1990, Milwaukee's Parental Choice Program, the nation's oldest and largest public scholarship program for low-income families, has established school choice as an integral part of the institutional landscape. Last week, thousands of school choice supporters - including parents, teachers, and students at several schools - gained a temporary victory by rallying at the state Capitol in support of a bill that would raise the enrollment cap for Milwaukee's school voucher program for one year. Raising the enrollment cap would enable about 15, 000 low-income families to send their children to private schools using state funds for tuition. After passing both the Republican-controlled State Assembly and State Senate, the bill now heads to Democrat Governor Jim Doyle, who is expected to veto it unless agreement is reached regarding some of his own educational priorities.

Despite decades of research and analysis, the impact of school choice on student learning and development remains one of the most contentious issues on the American educational reform agenda. Supporters insist that the present educational system has too often resulted in mediocre learning outcomes, especially for students in segregated, low-income communities, while opponents argue that choice would devastate public education, helping only a select few while abandoning those left behind.

Once considered the primary adherents of school choice, ethnically diverse families, especially African-American, Latino, and Asian-Americans living in urban school districts, have increasingly begun to explore alternatives to public schools, such as charter schools, magnet schools, and public and private voucher plans, in their quest for quality education. Their decisions have often opposed the views of organizations and politicians that have traditionally championed their interests.

A distinguished professor of education at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Fuller also directs the University's Institute for the Transformation of Learning, a national research and policy forum to increase options for parents in adapting the governance, curricula, and teaching methods of kindergarten through grade 12 education to the needs of children.

As superintendent of the Milwaukee Public Schools from 1991 through 1995, Fuller was one of the earliest supporters of school choice, receiving national prominence for his implementation of a variety of reform measures, including a rigorous curriculum, decentralized decision-making, site-based budgeting, immersion academies, voucher plans, and educational standards for incorporating diversity

as well as accountability for student performance. The reforms helped to increase student reading and standardized test scores and lowered absenteeism. Through his advocacy, Fuller has assembled a broad based coalition of elected officials, student, parents, educators, business leaders, community organizers, church officials, and philanthropists.

Seeking to expand national awareness of school choice as a strategy for promoting quality education, Fuller and his allies founded The Black Alliance for Educational Options, which has become the most visible organization of school choice activists in the African-American community. From approximately 50 members in 1999, it now numbers 3,000 members in 30 cities over 20 states and the District of Columbia. Recently it was awarded a \$4 million grant from the Gates Foundation to create 15 new schools.

Fuller earned his bachelor's degree in sociology from Carroll College, a master's degree in social administration from Case Western Reserve University, and a doctorate degree in education from Marquette University. From 1995 to 1997, he was a senior fellow at the Annenberg Institute for School Reform, based at Brown University.

Currently, he serves on the boards of the Johnson Foundation, the Dorothy Danforth Compton Fellowship Program for Graduate Study, the Crusade to Save Our Children, and the TransCenter for Youth.

Sponsors of the lecture include URI's Multicultural Center, the Office of the President, the Division of Student Affairs, the Honors Program, and the African and Afro-American Studies Program.

More about Dr. Fuller:

- Guest appearance on *Newshour with Jim Lehrer*, June 27, 2002.  
[Full Reports \(including video/audio segments\)](#)
- Dr. Fuller named senior fellow at Annenberg Institute for School Reform.  
[The Brown University News Bureau](#)