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Education puzzle needs solutions

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Education puzzle needs solutions

See Dick and Jane. Look! They go to school. See Jane go through the metal detector. The school policeman smiles. See Dick go through the metal detector. Oh no! Look, Dick has a gun.

Today's public school system is not that of our parents. Violence, poverty and apathy have made public education hazardous for American students.

President Clinton's domestic policy emphasis has thrust

likely alliance between the Republican party and many inner-city blacks. Both groups are demanding that taxpayer-funded vouchers for private school tuition be made available to families of any income. Many parents have written off the public education system entirely, believing that the solution is to save what few students we can. They want

ment in an open market. Supporters compare school choice to government deregulation in that the competitive atmosphere will serve as a catalyst and encourage each school to excel.

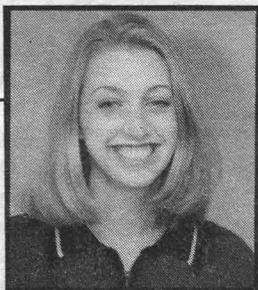
When I shake off a fog of 1950s nostalgia, I realize singing the school song at pep rallies and dancing at the hometown prom aren't valid reasons for loyalty to an inferior school in your neighborhood. Crepe paper and streamers can't disguise the fact that today's world is competitive and schools need to change with the times. A small-town high school with a guaranteed student population tends to become stagnant and lose sight of academics.

There is no question in my mind that school choice could improve the academic programs of public education. Unfortunately, school choice is deceptive. Although it solves public high school dilemmas, it may introduce in their place problems faced by universities. An average high school student shouldn't have to face the stress of being accepted to the "right" school at 14. High schools shouldn't be courting athletic abilities or grade-point averages with promises of preferential treatment, and principals and teachers cannot act under the constant threat that students displeased with rules or policies will transfer.

There is no clear solution to education issues, one plus one can equal an endless possibility of answers. The only absolute is that America's public education system is in danger of failing. We are the generation faced with the task of saving our schools. It's time to start paying attention.

Misty Edgcomb is a junior journalism and natural resources major, and is the news editor for The Maine Campus.

By Misty Edgcomb



difficult issues such as mandatory uniforms, national standards, single-sex classes and school choice to the forefront of national debate, yet his dedication to America's floundering public schools goes only so far. His daughter attended a prestigious private high school rather than brave the "blackboard jungle" of the Washington public system.

More and more, we are becoming a society stratified by education, and the untouchables are those who receive inferior schooling. The "haves" graduate from private religious or Montessori schools, attend an Ivy League college, then take their rightful place at the apex of society, to repeat the process with their own children. As a result, the governing class has no vested interest in public education. The "have-nots," who form the wide base of our societal pyramid, pay the price with schools that cannot afford paper because minimal government funds are being eaten by security cameras or counseling services.

Finding a solution to the education puzzle has forged an un-

to remove the best and brightest from dangerous situations that impede their education.

Parents instinctively cling to the selfish view that what matters above all else is their own child, but government officials can't be drawn into the emotional storm surrounding the voucher debate. We simply cannot afford to send every child who is motivated to learn to a private institution. A great number of intelligent students will be abandoned to the monsters plaguing public schools. And the problems will grow more complex as concerned parents remove their children and public schools lose not only funding but also their lobby.

To save America's students, we need to stop looking outside the system for answers or else our efforts will kill off public education. The eventual goal should be the abolition of private elementary and high schools. If the public system is up to par, alternatives won't be necessary.

School choice may prove to be the Rosetta stone. Schools would be forced to demonstrate capitalism, competing for enroll-