



WaPo Blogger Wrong About School Choice... Again

By Jason Bedrick

03/20/2014

Once again, the *Washington Post*'s education blogger, Valerie Strauss, failed to do her due diligence before posting a hit piece on school choice. A year ago, [she falsely claimed](#) that scholarship tax credit programs benefit corporate donors and wealthy recipients. In fact, donors break even at most and the best evidence suggests that low-income families are the primary beneficiaries even in the few programs that are not means-tested. Unfortunately, Strauss has still failed to issue a correction.

Now Strauss has posted an op-ed from an anti-school choice activist in Florida that contains numerous additional errors, which the good folks at RedefinED.org [have thoroughly debunked](#), including the following canard:

“Any way you look at it, private entities receive public tax dollars with no accountability.”

One can certainly debate whether there is sufficient accountability, but there is certainly more than none. All scholarship students take state-approved nationally norm referenced tests such as the Stanford 10 or Terra Nova. The gain scores are reported publicly, both at the state level and for every school with 30 or more tested scholarship students. Additionally, schools with \$250,000 or more in scholarship funds must submit independent financial reports to the state.

Not only did the op-ed's author fail to correctly explain the law, she failed to understand that [school choice is accountability](#). As explained in an [open letter](#) that the Cato Institute recently issued along with the Heritage Foundation, Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, and others: “True accountability comes not from top-down regulations but from parents financially empowered to exit schools that fail to meet their child's needs.”

Moreover, the claim that “private entities receive public tax dollars” is also false. The money flows from private donors to private nonprofits to private citizens to spend on their children's tuition at private schools. That the donors receive a tax credit does not transmogrify their donation into “public” money. Indeed, the U.S. Supreme Court [ruled](#) that this view erroneously “assumes that income should be treated as if it were government property even if it has not come

into the tax collector's hands. Private bank accounts cannot be equated with the ... State Treasury." Likewise, neither tax deductions for donations to a church nor the church's own property tax exemption mean that churches are therefore funded by "public tax dollars."

The *Washington Post* has an in-house fact-checking team. They should not have to rely on RedefinED.org or others to ensure the veracity of what their bloggers post.

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