



## School choice opponents are full of double standards

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The education landscape has changed tremendously over the past several years, as school choice policies that fund students instead of systems have spread rapidly since the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Importantly, most of this increase has been with education savings accounts that can be used for a variety of educational expenses, not just tuition. This gives parents the ability to customize their children's education to ensure their specific needs are met.

As policymakers debate school choice, they're consistently met with opposition from entrenched interests who benefit from the status quo. Most prominent among these are teachers unions, school district administrators, and others who earn their livings off the current system. Curiously, the charges they level against school choice policies don't seem to be of concern in other areas.

School choice opponents claim there isn't accountability when you let parents choose their children's educational path. Considering the lack of accountability in public schools today — in some school districts, reading and math proficiency are in the single digits — this is an interesting criticism of school choice.

Beyond that, do these critics lob similar complaints at other public programs? Taxpayer funds provide voucher-type programs to subsidize preschool and college, but school choice opponents do not call for ending these programs. Instead, they're often lobbying for increased government money in both sectors without stipulating private schools be excluded or need additional accountability provisions.

Similarly, do school choice opponents call for health tests to ensure Medicaid or Medicare recipients are spending their funds effectively? Or body mass index tests to make sure food stamp recipients are spending their money on healthy food? How about spot checks of Section 8 housing to see if recipients are keeping their homes up to snuff?

The answer is "no" to all of these. Is there really something so unique about K-12 education that it requires government-imposed accountability measures? No. Plus, those measures are significantly less effective than the accountability that comes with parents being able to pull their children — and their tuition dollars — out of a school. Anyone who really cares about accountability should favor school choice over the current system.

Another common claim from school choice opponents is that public dollars shouldn't be spent at private or religious institutions. Yet again, this claim is seemingly only made with regard to K-12

education. Public — i.e., taxpayer — dollars are used at grocery stores, hospitals, doctors' offices, preschools, and colleges. Medicare and Medicaid are used at religious hospitals. School districts themselves use public dollars to purchase curriculum and supplies from private businesses. Why are public dollars flowing to private or religious entities OK in all these spaces but not when it comes to school choice?

“We shouldn't subsidize private schools for rich kids” is another frequent claim against school choice. But “rich kids” can attend public schools for \$0 tuition — just like all other children. Why don't school choice opponents protest wealthy students attending public schools for “free” if they're against them participating in school choice programs?

The reality is that K-12 education isn't some rare anomaly. Like these other sectors, K-12 education isn't one-size-fits-all. The consumers — parents on behalf of their children — are best equipped to evaluate options and make decisions. While certain entrenched interests fight tooth and nail against school choice, it is winning in many states. As parents see other parents regaining control of their children's education, the push for school choice is likely to spread.

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