



Teachers unions trapping children in unsafe, unhealthy environments

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The federal government just released a report about schools that concludes what anyone who has ever ridden a public bus, used a public bathroom or stood in line at the DMV could tell you: Private is better.

The survey, "[School Choice in the United States: 2019](#)," released by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), found, as the Cato Institute's Neal McCluskey put it so perfectly, "[School choice rules!](#)"

"Safety first" isn't just a sensible rule of thumb to heed before starting a construction project or hitting the ski slopes. It's also a primary element for children to be able to learn and thrive in classrooms. How can a student concentrate on math lessons when his or her mind is on the upsetting words the bullies said at lunchtime? Or how can a student focus on the intricacies of Shakespeare's prose when he or she is distracted by the fight the gang is having in the hallway?

Stressful school environments have repercussions that extend beyond a less-than-productive day of learning. Bullying affects children's mental and sometimes physical well-being. Even worse, the ensuing stress and anxiety can have long-lasting consequences that harm more than just their GPAs.

But there's good news: Children don't have to remain trapped in environments that cause them anguish. Data from the NCES survey show that "In 2017, a higher percentage of public school students ages 12–18 than of private school students in the same age group reported knowing of a gang presence at school (9 percent versus 2 percent), seeing hate-related graffiti at school (25 percent versus 6 percent) and being called hate-related words at school (7 percent versus 4 percent) during the school year."

In April, EdChoice [published a study finding](#) strong evidence suggesting that all else equal, private and charter schools had fewer discipline problems and expelled fewer students than traditional public schools.

Those are astounding differences in how safe and wholesome public schools are compared to private schools. Shouldn't parents have the option to send their children to schools where they don't have to worry about bullies, gangs and hate speech?

The nation's teachers' unions don't seem to think so.

Teachers unions are constantly fighting against charter schools and education choice programs. They do so by spinning a web of half-truths and falsehoods the progressive media repeats,

including the (false) claim that the intent of school choice is simply to “defund public schools” and “destroy teachers unions.”

They even have the audacity to proclaim that giving parents a say in where and how their children are educated somehow leads to reduced student achievement and a drop in “standards.”

Newsweek reported on NCES data from 2003 that showed similar math and reading scores from students at charter and other public schools.

Lisa Guisbond, executive director of Citizens for Public Schools, dismissed the data. “It’s not surprising to me,” Guisbond said. “There’s quite a lot of hype and mythologizing surrounding charter schools.”

Yet, Newsweek points out, “research done by Stanford University’s Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) ... found charter enrollment is ‘especially helpful’ for students in poverty, black students and English language learners. In 2015, a CREDO study found that charter schools also outperformed public schools in urban areas.”

In other words, charter schools help kids where kids most need help. Even better, charters have improved over time, because low-performing charter schools are eventually closed — something that doesn’t happen to poorly performing, traditional public schools. In fact, shoddy public schools tend to demand and receive more taxpayer dollars the worse they do.

Don’t believe the “hype” and “mythologizing” the teachers unions spread about schools of choice. Private schools are safer. Even the federal government acknowledges this fact. And how can schools where children are afraid and in danger expect to provide a better education than their safer counterparts?

Teachers’ unions dodge this fundamental question because unbiased data show there is only one answer: “School choice rules!” This inconvenient truth isn’t often repeated by many in government and elsewhere, because their primary concern is protecting bureaucrats and maintaining power, not addressing the needs of children suffering in unsafe classrooms.