

## Letters: Keep in mind taxpayers fund public education

Sorry, [Al Neuharth](#). It is stupefying that such an accomplished man as Neuharth would believe that "public schools are free" ("[Column: Which Father's Day role is most important?](#)").

Sadly, it's a belief shared by many that if they don't pay directly for goods or services such as public education, health care, food stamps, heating oil, transportation and so much more, then they conclude they are free.

But the fact is that the cost of educating every one of the millions of public school children in America in 2009 was [as much as \\$27,000](#) depending on the city, according to the [Cato Institute](#). Free? Certainly not to the tens of millions of hardworking Americans whose incomes are in large part confiscated by our various taxing authorities to pay for these often inefficient or unnecessary services.

Kent Lillie; Sandestin, Fla.

### **Let parents choose schools**

In DeWayne Wickham's recent criticism of [Mitt Romney](#)'s trip to a west Philadelphia charter school last month, the writer conflates what he calls a strategic blunder on Romney's part with a full-on criticism of the broader principle of parental choice ("[Column: Romney stubs toe in flawed education pitch](#)").

Despite Wickham's claims to the contrary, parental choice is not about partisan politics, except when its true value is sullied by either side in the pursuit of political gain — and at the expense of our children. Choice is fundamentally about putting the power back into the hands of parents.

To claim that black voters won't be responsive to these reforms — the kinds that overwhelmingly serve minority populations in urban areas where black voters are most likely to reside — is to miss the sad reality of the current American education crisis, in which the black dropout rate is nearly twice that of whites.

An embrace of parental-choice programs that have proved to increase graduation rates is not an indictment of other education reforms, but is instead about giving kids the opportunities they deserve. In an election year, it's expected that issues will be discussed through the prism of partisan politics, but parental choice is simply the right thing to do.

Kevin P. Chavous; Washington, D.C.

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