

Michael Stewart

School Choice: Sabotaging Public Education

The intended audience of this piece would be educators, parents, and anyone thinking of investing in education.

Public education has been a staple in educating the students of the United States of America. The mid to late 1800s started the reform for public education that eventually led to progressive education, educating a student to reach their full capacity to be a productive member of society. During this time and the years to follow afterwards, public education was about providing an equal opportunity for everyone to be successful. Let's fast forward to current times in public education where there is a millionaire by the name of Betsy DeVos, who has no educational experience, but is somehow the Secretary of Education. One of the staples of her educational reform is school choice. School choice allows tax money to follow the student to any school of their choice. This is a huge blow to public education. School choice is a crooked plan that allows for-profit companies to exploit students for funds and further weakens the public educational system.

In the rise of this school reform are charter schools. These schools are funded through public money but has the flexibility to somewhat mirror a private school. Charter and voucher schools take away funds to accommodate a child "personally". They take tax money for a school that is technically public in their name but is ran like a private institution, resulting in the privatizing our public schools. Many people do not realize that these choice schools are for-profit. These for-profit schools often cut the quality of the school, meaning less technology, overcrowded classrooms, underqualified teachers, and old literature. This along with cutting services allows the school to make a profit, leading to fraud and mismanagement of funds. The Washington Post mentions a case in Texas where Annette and Alsie Kluff were arrested for stealing 2.6 million from their charter schools; one of the many cases of this caliber for this system.

School choice does not solve the problems of public education which are the high poverty level of the students and the lack of funding. School choice allows the privatized, for-profit schools to dip into the money of those ran publicly. According to many testing reports, charter and voucher schools do not outperform their public education peers. Many of the students on both sides take hits to the quality of their education. Why? Because running parallel school systems that are all taking from the same money pot can be very expensive. How can they expect several systems to take out of one pot, when one system was barely getting by? Somebody is getting the leftovers in that pot: public education.

Public education grants an all-inclusive way for students to get a free education that would guarantee equal opportunities for all students. Public education schools are required by law to serve all students. Students that many labeled as un-teachable due to their diagnosis of ADHD and many other disorders often attend public schools. They are obligated to give these students the best education. Selectiveness is not a luxury for public schools. Public education offer diversity throughout their schools because of this. Many privatized schools have a specific type of student, sometimes for-profit purposes. Public education provides an opportunity to people from any type of ethnic or financially background to have an equal shot at education. Students' parents did not have to pay to make sure their child received the best education.

Some people would say that school choice shows more academic growth while saving tax dollars. It is known for a fact that charters receive tax money but get to keep what's left over at the end of the school year for a profit, leaving the students missing many of the services and tools needed. They might say that it reduces racial segregation due to the vouchers that can be used at private schools. It also

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needs to be noted that these private schools pick and choose who they want. A token of ethnicity is not enough to say that the school is diverse. Many often justify the rape of public educational funds by presenting the mindset that “competition leads to superior results”. This is clearly failing seeing how public schools still outscore most charters on standardized testing according to reports published by Nancy Kober.

Public schools give each student the tools they need to be successful. It does this without bias and when properly funded, with flair. Further privatizing education is weakening education for everyone except for the people that can pay for it. We must fight school choice to give ALL students an equal chance at the opportunities that will make them great citizens of the future.