



# **School Choice & Public Education**

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School choice is a word that can mean a variety of things. On the surface it sounds harmless and promising – who doesn't want to have choices?

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## A Little History on the School Choice Movement

- **The first big “school choice” movement began when schools were desegregated after Brown vs. Board of Education**
  - White conservative parents who did not want to desegregate put their children into private schools
  - At the same time, liberals and Black Nationalists saw choice as a way to educate poor children & children of color (ie: Freedom Schools)

## A Little History on the School Choice Movement

- In the 1980's, Ronald Reagan introduced educational “vouchers” which provided parents taxpayer funds to use for a variety of school options.
- In 2022, the Supreme Court ruled that states could not exclude religious schools from receiving public tax dollars used in voucher (and other) programs.

Keep in mind that public schools are required to ...

- **Serve all students**, regardless of learning level, citizenship, income, special education status, behavior, etc.
- **Hire teachers who hold teaching licensure that matches their state requirements;**
- **Provide a curriculum that is approved by their state education department or agency;**

Keep in mind that public schools are required to ...

- **Meet student learning accountability requirements as put forth by the state;**
- **Show where/how their allocated taxpayer funds are spent.**

**\*\*\*In a nutshell, there are requirements and oversight for public schools**

## Within the Public School System

**Educating every child means ...EVERY child**

- **A child with a learning disability? YES**
- **A medically fragile child? YES**
- **An accelerated learner? YES**
- **A child with anxiety? YES**
- **A child learning English? YES**

## Within the PRIVATE School System

**There are no requirements to educate/accept every child**

- **A child with a learning disability? Maybe?**
- **A medically fragile child? Maybe?**
- **An accelerated learner? YES**
- **A child with anxiety? YES**
- **A child learning English? Maybe?**



## What oversight is there for “choice” schools?

- They **ARE NOT** required to serve all students—and can exclude and expel students at their discretion;
- **Teachers ARE NOT required to hold a teaching license;**
- They **ARE NOT** required to use a curriculum that is tied to state approved standards;
- **They ARE NOT required to show student learning;**
- They **ARE NOT** required to show where/how their taxpayer funds are spent.

**So who is pushing “school choice” in Oregon?**

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**“Let Them Learn Oregon”**

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## From the “Let Them Learn” Website & the proposed Ballot Measure

- **“Is devoted to providing the freedom of schooling your child as you wish without state interference”**
- **Parents direct tax dollars out of public school (80%)**
- **Choose any other education option with that money**
- **Money goes into an account managed by a nonprofit of the parent’s choice (SCA)**

## From the “Let Them Learn” Website & the proposed Ballot Measure

- Private school tuition (in-person or online)
- Homeschool curriculum, books
- Educational therapy
- Tutors, computers (hardware & software)
- Transportation, uniforms
- And more

**\*\*\*Parents can use leftover money for other educational expenses**

# School Choice Goals about Homeschooling

- Families who choose to homeschool using a SCA will become “Constitutional Homeschoolers.”
- Will be protected from government control over their choice of curricula, creed, education practices, and teacher qualifications and credentials.
- [They] will be able to teach with the focus and in the manner that they believe is best for their children.
- Once the taxpayer education funds go from the State to the SCA at a nonprofit chosen by the parents, the funds STOP being public funds—legally severing the tie between the State and the funds.
- The funds may be used ... without control by the State; the State will not be able to attach “strings” or “shackles” to the use of the money.

**“School Choice” also  
appears in Project 2025**

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## Project 2025: Department of Education

**“Elementary and secondary education policy should follow the path outlined by Milton Friedman in 1955, wherein education is publicly funded but education decisions are made by families ...”**



## Project 2025: Department of Education

**“Ultimately, every parent should have the option to direct his or her child’s share of education funding through an education savings account (ESA), funded overwhelmingly by state and local taxpayers, which would empower parents to choose a set of education options that meet their child's unique needs”**

**Sample Schools ...**

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## St. Stephens (Beaverton)

- A “Classical Christian school”
- Very few licensed teachers
- Curriculum: “**Shaping Students with Godly Character & Wisdom**”

**“Our curriculum, informed by biblical truth, nurtures a knowledge and love of the Triune God and a deep understanding of human nature. The classical ideals of goodness, truth, and beauty, affirmed by Christian teachings, are at the heart of our academic pursuits...”**

**There is “A focus on memorizing factual material including geography, history, mathematics, poetry, and various Bible passages.”**

## Valor Christian School International (Beaverton)

- **Very few licensed teachers**
- **Openly states on their website that they have the right to exclude**
- **Curriculum focus:** “In educating students to serve the Kingdom of God ... Our Bible classes will be the foundation of our learning. These classes will incorporate servant leadership, being a person on mission, and discovering purpose in Christ.”

## A few thoughts ...

- Any school receiving public tax dollars should have to hire licensed teachers
- Students attending a school that receives public tax dollars should have to meet the same learning standards as students in traditional public school settings
- Research on voucher programs show that student learning actually declines.

**About 49.6 million  
children attended  
public schools in  
2022**

# Why public schools are important

- Are required to meet the needs of all students
- Are more diverse than private schools
- Provide an approved curriculum
- They are free for every student
- They provide lunches & other essential services for all children
- They provide enrichment (sports, music, arts)

**Not to ignore real concerns by parents & families ...**

**Parents commonly worry about bullying and school safety, about their children being left-behind or not being appropriately challenged.**



# What can we do to support our schools?

1. **Be a policy advocate**
2. **Counter-story tell: Make sure we talk about the positives of our schools**
  - a. **Encourage skeptics to go into their local schools!**
3. **Know what resources are available and help a student in your life advocate for the services they need**
4. **Volunteer at the school, show up for events, attend PTA**
5. **Join a school organization or a even a district-level committee**
6. **And, support teacher education programs to make sure we have highly qualified teachers EVERYWHERE**
  - a. **Ask me how –I love talking about supporting student teachers!**

**Main Action = Support  
Public Schools**

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Thank you!  
I'd love to hear your  
thoughts ...

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