

# School Choice: Arguably a Fundamental Parental Right, but Mostly Seen as Just a Potential Problem-Solving Tool

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With the ongoing [School Choice Wars](#), and frenzied attempts to reform traditional public schools (TPS) [without school system reform](#) – without ending TPS’s public finance monopoly – it is easy to see school system reform as just a policy struggle. But as a speaker at the [4<sup>th</sup> Annual School and Reform International Academic Conference](#) reminded me, it is more than a struggle to define a policy objective and demonstrate that universal school choice orchestrated by market-driven price change is a key part of any strategy to meet that objective. Access to a menu of schooling options as diverse as our schoolchildren is [arguably a human right](#).

With United Nations recognition of such a right, we have another ‘freedom from’ (no barriers – government neutrality) vs. ‘freedom to’ (capacity) issue. Capacity to choose is sometimes construed as necessitating zero tuition cost to families so that expense does not restrict choices. But the implied ban on shared financing – not allowing topping off the taxpayer dollars with a private check – [severely constricts](#) current and future schooling options much more than a policy allowing shared financing funded at a level so that many options will have a zero tuition cost. ‘Freedom from’ is my preference. For K-12 schooling, government neutrality means non-discrimination; the government doesn’t favor any schooling providers. Whatever the taxpayers want to spend on a student should be available to support a child’s schooling wherever parents find the best fit for their children. If that best fit costs a bit more than what taxpayers are willing to spend, parents are free to top that off with their personal funds or 3<sup>rd</sup> party scholarship funding – shared financing – to gain access to the more costly instructional approaches.