

A Lot of Children are Left Behind, but Not Just by Failed Schools

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Our key school system problem is NOT that some public schools work poorly for everyone assigned to them (truly “failed schools”). The key problem is that one size does not fit all; that every traditional public school is a poor fit for a lot of the children assigned to them. [Lance Izumi](#) documented that for [Texas](#). Even the most highly touted neighborhood public schools leave a lot of children behind.

Still, [schools officially deemed unacceptable](#) are abundant. In the relatively high-performing, desirable Northside Independent School District (NISD), [34 out of 110 NISD](#) schools are ‘failed schools’ according to the state, via the Federal No Child Left Behind (NCLAB) law. That, sadly, is relatively high-performing. For example, adjacent to NISD is the San Antonio Independent School District with 75 of its 97 schools deemed failing. In between, Texas’ failing school rate is 48.6%. That’s what over \$10,000/pupil buys (with the federal definitions of per pupil spending, it is over \$13,000). According to a lawsuit filed by Texas school districts, the official statewide average of \$9981 (in 2012-13) is not nearly enough. The districts say we can’t expect acceptable performance until we spend a lot more. By the way, NISD with 2012-13 revenue per pupil of \$9497 is a party to the lawsuit, and [as we know](#), NISD Superintendent Brian Woods can’t imagine that some children will be better served by an alternative to the assigned NISD school. His view is that public money earmarked for schooling belongs to school districts, not children.