

# Anti-School Choice Nonsense

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August 15, 2016

I try to be nice. I do everything I can think of to see a reasonable basis for opposing viewpoints, and I usually succeed. But I'm running out of patience with authors and editors willing to write and print nonsensical acts of self-delusion aimed at protecting turf at the expense of millions of children and the future of our country.

This *San Antonio Express-News* [Op-Ed](#) is the latest case in point. It contains this nonsense about an Education Savings Account (ESA) proposal likely to be considered in Texas' next legislative session: "What ESAs amount to is another effort to spend public money on narrow private interests and convert traditional public schools into businesses." Sadly, similar nonsense is said and printed fairly often.

You can be a public school system supporter without imagining that, despite its broad public interest, the system adequately serves all children. That may be its noble aim, but despite a tripling of inflation-adjusted per pupil funding in the last 50 years, the system has utterly failed to improve generally, or no longer leave behind a lot of children. If it were serving all children, or making major strides in that direction, the federal role in K-12 education would not have grown so much in the last decades, and we wouldn't be issuing '[Nation at Risk](#)' reports, periodically, or passing legislation about once a decade pledging, henceforth, this time, we really mean it, 'No Child Left Behind' (2001) and 'Every Student Succeeds' (2015). That was after pledging great things would follow, that didn't, from the passage (1994) of the Goals 200 Act.

Attempts at school choice expansion, such as the forthcoming Texas ESA proposal, aim to provide affordable alternatives to the assigned public school so that 100% of our school-children can derive maximum education opportunity from the school taxes extracted from 100%

of the citizens. The only ‘narrow’ interest pursued by private schooling providers is instruction that is a better fit for some of the taxpaying families than what was available from the assigned public school. We know from the long [‘failed’ public school](#) lists that many public schools have lost their ability to earn their well-over \$10,000/pupil public funding for any of its assignees. But most public schools provide a good to acceptable fit for a lot of children, and the passage of the ESA proposal will not prevent that from continuing. If anything, when an ESA policy removes distracting misfits, the ESA will make public schooling more effective for those choosing it, and I don’t mean ‘misfit’ negatively. Some children are just not engaged by mainstream curricula or pedagogy. One size does not fit, and never will, even at America’s most acclaimed public schools. I’m not a great believer in the ability of government-run operations having a huge, productive response to competitive pressures, so if school choice through ESA yields competitive responses, anyway, that will be a serendipitous effect on top of the finding-the-best fit effects I know we will get.

Mamas, please don’t let your babies grow up to be political hacks for bad, hopeless causes!!