

The Right and Wrong Ways to Improve School System Performance

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In the spirit of hope for a *Happy* New Year, we need to take account of how school systems differ in terms of students' happiness. Among other things, such differences tell us there are good, bad, and questionable ways to improve academic outcomes of school systems. For example, the U.S. system is among the bad ways. Our system is low performing and [U.S. students average less happiness](#) about going to school than the OECD average. On the [PISA exam administered to 15-year-olds](#), South Korea scores at #1. South Korea is also #1 in terms of unhappiness about schooling and student suicides. So, apparently, the Korean system achieves the world's best performance on the PISA exam through high expectations and relentless pressure. The experience is allegedly so unpleasant that it [registers as a noteworthy determinant](#) of South Korea's world's lowest birth rates.

And since ['best' in the world is still pretty bad](#), there has to be a better way to improve school system performance; much better than the Korean system in terms of the academic performance outcomes and students' happiness. Of course, the better school system is the one that will result from eliminating public schools' monopoly on subsidy funding, and eliminating devastating pricelessness by allowing shared financing of tuition when the tuition price is higher than the per pupil subsidy. Free enterprise unleashed, informed by dynamic price change, and disciplined by competition for footloose customers will yield a dynamic menu of schooling options that is as diverse in pedagogy and subject themes as how students learn and what engages them in the process. Students enrolled in schools that teach by the method that works best for them, and/or with subject themes (recall the ['Sports' theme school of choice example](#)) that interest them will produce happy students and significantly improved academic outcomes.