

The SB 276 Wars are Dredging up all of the Usual Fallacies

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The apologists for the school system status quo are willing to repeat nonsense if they think some people will believe it. It is fair enough to call Texas' [SB 276](#) a voucher bill. The savings grants accrue to families that opt out for private alternatives to traditional public schools. But to claim that no savings will be generated is ludicrous, especially in growing Texas. More on that shortly. A *San Antonio Express-News* [Op-Ed](#) by Northside Independent School District (NISD) Superintendent Brian Woods also imagines that a law allowing the departure of children for whom the one-size-fits-all 'business plan' of the public school system is not working is a plan to benefit the few at the expense of the many!? What? Let's look at academic achievement facts absent from Mr. Woods' Op-Ed. According to the most recent [Nation's Report Card](#), 20% of Texas 8th graders are ***below basic*** in math; 24% of 8th graders are ***below basic*** in reading. 'Below basic' essentially means illiterate/innumerate. Only 38% of Texas 8th graders are proficient in math, and only 31% are proficient readers. ***Despite billions of dollars, annually, and the dedicated efforts of Supt Woods and tens of thousands of school district employees, the system is not working for a lot of children.*** By the way, according to data available from the [Texas Education Agency](#), Mr. Woods' NISD is only five percent better than the statewide averages. The way to make the system (all of the schools) work better for all of the children is to let families find what works best for them. SB 276 will allow them do that. The families that keep their children in their assigned public schools benefit from the departure of the children that were a poor fit for the public school instructional approaches. Then, public school teachers have less learning style diversity to contend with, which they [typically contend with, in vain](#).

And then there is Mr. Woods' ludicrous claim that taxpayers will not reap savings when families that opt out of their assigned public school take with them only 60% of the state money earmarked for their child's public school district; none of the local money. Mr. Woods uses the standard fixed costs claim, which is an absurd fallacy in all but not-growing districts that lose so few children that they cannot cut any expenses. In fast-growing places like Texas, and especially Mr. Woods' NISD, departures to private schools rarely yield empty seats. Typically, departures only slow public school district enrollment growth. So, the use of SB 276 savings grants would provide districts huge savings from avoided construction, and related personnel recruiting costs. Slower district enrollment growth and less new school construction also reduces the need to re-draw attendance zone boundaries; hated by both administrators and families forced out of schools they thought they had chosen through their home purchase.

It is amazing that some people love the current, persistently low-performing system enough to peddle proven nonsense in an attempt to derail reforms that would benefit all of the children, and especially those now left behind. Even the adults that may be inconvenienced by the transition to a menu of schooling options that better addresses the diversity of our children should support the much-needed change. They've dedicated their lives to serving children. The stakes are [high](#). Our ['Nation at Risk'](#) needs SB 276 to launch the spread of the benefits of parental choice, nationwide, one state at a time.