



# Kids Don't Have a Few More Years

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Brian Lewis's [column](#) on HB808 illustrates just how much work advocates of parental choice still have to do in educating Missourians about how choice works and why it's important. Lewis says that "Taking kids out of bad schools and putting them in ones that aren't high-performing systems doesn't solve any problems" and that "You've got to fix the system first."

There are a couple of problems with this. In the first place, taking a kid out of a bad school and putting her into a better school *does* solve a problem: it gives that child a better education. It's downright bizarre that Lewis doesn't even acknowledge this. Even if all parental choice did was help a few kids get into better schools, that would seem like a major argument in favor. Helping some kids is better than helping no kids.

But in fact, the argument for choice is a lot stronger than that. Because choice *is* a way to "fix the system." The fundamental problem with "the system" is that public schools are monopolies, with no accountability to the vast majority of parents who aren't wealthy enough to take their children elsewhere. As anyone who has studied economics will tell you, monopolies routinely deliver an inferior product at high prices.

Lewis says that "to really turn things around would take a few years." What he doesn't point out is that pundits have been saying this for decades. Over and over again, the public school bureaucracy has insisted that if we just give them more money and "a few years," they'll turn things around. Over and over again, we've poured more money into urban schools, only to see things continue to get worse. "We just need more money and more time" might have been believable in the 1980s or the 1990s, but in 2007, it doesn't pass the straight face test.

Most importantly, the kids who are in failing schools today *don't have* "a few years" to spare. Every year we wait for the public schools to fix themselves is a year that tens of thousands of kids miss out on the opportunity to get a great education. Poor kids need help now, in 2007. Parental choice is one of the few reforms that promise to bring them help immediately, not at the end of yet another 5-year plan.

## About the Author



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[2] <http://www.springfieldnews-leader.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070307/COLUMNISTS13/703070310/1083/OPINIONS>

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