



# Billboards, Moving Vans, and School Choice

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*By: Susan Pendergrass*

Wait, what? One of the largest local school districts in St. Louis is buying [billboards](#) , sending mailers, and making videos to convince parents to move there because they overbuilt and have a bunch of empty seats? Imagine billboards saying, “Move to Chesterfield . . . because the Chesterfield Mall has lots of empty storefronts!” Or, “Move to the City of St. Louis—we built too many houses!”

A system that allows parents to exercise school choice only if they move is inefficient at best. That said, parents with means learn the rules quickly and willingly blend their real estate and education decisions together. So, it’s unlikely that Hazelwood has some secret gems in its education portfolio that parents have yet to discover. Hazelwood built schools based on real estate trends that didn’t materialize. Hazelwood property owners are paying for schools with empty seats.

It’s time to break the connection between real estate and education. Parents should be free to choose a school that is a good fit for their child without moving. Schools should appeal to parents for what they offer—and if it works well for enough parents, the seats will be filled.

Luckily, we can shop at the Chesterfield Mall (or what’s left of it) and enjoy the restaurants and entertainment in the city without moving. And both of those activities pale in comparison to a child’s only shot at getting an education.

## About the Author



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[1] <https://showmeinstitute.org/blog/school-choice/billboards-moving-vans-and-school-choice>

[2] [https://www.stltoday.com/news/local/education/hazelwood-built-new-schools-for-a-wave-of-kids-that/article\\_f1b3d044-7567-5c81-85eb-487e6117cf80.html#tracking-source=home-top-story](https://www.stltoday.com/news/local/education/hazelwood-built-new-schools-for-a-wave-of-kids-that/article_f1b3d044-7567-5c81-85eb-487e6117cf80.html#tracking-source=home-top-story)

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