



Pay to Play in Education

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By: Susan Pendergrass

While Missourians clutch their pearls and are scandalized to find out that people with the means to simply pay for college admission do just that, they readily accept that it's the way K-12 education works here. As Derrell Bradford of 50CAN rightly [pointed](#) out, pay to play in K-12 education is done through mortgages, rather than photoshopping pictures of athletes.

I've had numerous conversations with parents of young children in St. Louis County who are trying to figure out where and how to buy a house before their child enters kindergarten. And it matters. A 1,900 square foot [home](#) with three bedrooms and two bathrooms built in 1990 will cost \$240,000 in Florissant, while a similar [home](#) would cost \$389,900 in Frontenac. Sure, schools aren't the only difference between the two communities, but they're certainly factored into that \$150,000 premium.

I don't think I even need to convince anyone of this point—parents who can will pay more money for the same house to get their kids into a school they want. Parents who don't have the money to do that are stuck. The idea of celebrities buying a spot at USC shocks us in a way that a family scraping together the money to move to a smaller house because it's in Webster Groves doesn't.

The quality of a child's education shouldn't be connected to the real estate industry. Every parent, regardless of their background or their neighborhood, should have access to an array of

choices when it comes to their child's education.

About the Author



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Susan Pendergrass was Vice President of Research and Evaluation for the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools before joining the Show-Me Institute. Prior to coming to the National Alliance, Susan was a senior policy advisor at the U.S. Department of Education during the Bush administration and a senior research scientist at the National Center for Education Statistics during the Obama administration. She earned a Ph.D. in Public Policy from George Mason University.

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[1] <https://showmeinstitute.org/blog/school-choice/pay-play-education>

[2] <https://www.the74million.org/article/bradford-when-the-cost-of-admission-is-paying-off-a-college-americans-are-outraged-but-when-its-the-price-of-a-house-near-a-good-school-theres-silence/>

[3] https://www.zillow.com/homes/for_sale/house,condo,townhouse_type/2607752_zpid/3-_beds/1.5-_baths/1500-2000_size/1985-1985_built/globalrelevanceex_sort/38.834627,-90.232773,38.633768,-90.560989_rect/11_zm/0_mmm/

[4] https://www.zillow.com/homes/for_sale/house,condo,townhouse_type/2761948_zpid/3-_beds/1.5-_baths/1500-2000_size/1985-1985_built/globalrelevanceex_sort/38.834627,-90.232773,38.633768,-90.560989_rect/11_zm/0_mmm/

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