

PUSHING BACK ON THE LEFT

EDUCATIONAL FREEDOM MYTHS VS. REALITY

MYTH #1:

“Educational freedom will defund public schools!”

REALITY:

The only way public schools will lose a single dollar is if they fail to perform.

- ◆ “Dollars need to follow students rather than systems—and that could very well mean that dollars find their way into public schools. Remember, this isn’t just about choice for private schools but also expanding educational freedom for public schools as well. **If public schools are performing well and fit the needs of students, parents will continue sending them there and they will not lose a penny in funding.** But that should be up to Arkansas parents, not bureaucrats.
- ◆ The only reason any public school will lose a single dollar is if they are not performing and parents decide to send their kids elsewhere. All schools have to do to keep their funding is to serve kids and parents well.
- ◆ If you go to a restaurant in town and consistently get bad service and cold food, you’re probably going to go somewhere else to eat. How would you feel if you were forced to only eat at that restaurant? That’s what opponents of educational freedom want. Under our plan, if the restaurant (or school) provides good service, they don’t lose a penny. If they fail to perform but make a turnaround, they can easily reclaim their customers and their funding. **The days of a blank check to public schools without results are over.**
- ◆ What opponents of educational freedom are really saying with their defunding scare tactics is that, unless we continue to trap kids in failing schools, determined by arbitrary lines drawn by government bureaucrats, kids will leave in droves. Doesn’t this mean our current schools are failing—and people would leave if they could? Yet opponents want to keep them trapped there. This is wrong.”

MYTH #2:

“Government money shouldn’t go to Christian schools!”

REALITY:

All government money is taxpayer money and educational freedom is much bigger than just “Christian” schools.

- ◆ “This is a fallacy. Educational freedom isn’t just for private Christian schools—or even private schools in general. It’s for private, public, charter, homeschools, micro schools and more. **It’s about what school parents decide is best for their kids—period.**
- ◆ There is also no such thing as ‘government money.’ Any and all money that governments have comes from taxpayers. By definition, then, any educational freedom plan that allows students to use monetary resources to transfer to religious schools is not a transfer of government money—because government money doesn’t exist. Once again, this is also an open admission that people will leave the school they are at if they can.
- ◆ We already send government money to religious institutions all the time. Some of the state’s largest hospitals, Baptist Health, St. Vincent’s, Mercy Hospital, and NEA Baptist, are all religious organizations that get hundreds of millions of dollars in ‘government money’ every year. Opponents of educational freedom regularly advocate for more and more government funding of these institutions. Why is this transfer of ‘government money’ ok but educational freedom is not? You can apply this reasoning to other deeply religious organizations like the Salvation Army or other religious nonprofits local to Arkansas that help fight addiction and provide homeless care and meals. **If it’s only a problem for Christian schools to get ‘government funding,’ it’s simply cherry-picking.”**

MYTH #3:

"Educational freedom will create an uneven playing field between private and public schools."

REALITY:

Educational freedom will actually create a *level* playing field for *all* Arkansas kids.

- ◆ "We already have an uneven playing field in Arkansas: rich kids get to choose their school; families that can afford to move their kids to other schools do so. It's only the poor who suffer. **By expanding educational freedom, we can actually level the playing field** by giving all Arkansans the same opportunities and choices.
- ◆ What about poor kids in inner-city Little Rock? Or poor kids in Camden and Searcy? Why don't they get the same chance? They're stuck there just because government says they have to be.
- ◆ At the end of the day, this is about kids. Kids who might need smaller learning settings. Kids who need specialized teaching. Kids who have learning disabilities and need something different, but their parents can't afford it. It's about giving them the best chance possible to succeed and pursue their American dreams. What opponents of educational freedom are really saying is that they think the government knows what's better for their kids than parents. That's wrong."

MYTH #4:

"Educational freedom will close rural schools!"

REALITY:

It is extremely unlikely rural schools will close.

- ◆ "No. A lot of counties in Arkansas only have one or two schools. **In those instances, it is really impossible for kids to flee to other places.** But it is essential to remove the link between a student's zip code and that student's opportunity for education. If a parent wants to find a school that offers more opportunity for their kids, we should encourage that—not shame it.
- ◆ And there is nothing in state law now—nor should there be—to keep families from moving from rural areas into bigger or better school districts. This argument is once again focused on 1) the notion that the government knows best and 2) an admission that kids would leave public schools if they could. **We have to put students first.**
- ◆ Do we really believe that someone who has never met these kids knows their needs better than their parents? Many kids need extra help or attention at school and can't keep up in a traditional setting. **[Keep it human here//Insert story of kid who has struggled in traditional school setting.]** What about these kids? Why don't they get a chance?"

MYTH #5:

"Private schools are unaccountable!"

REALITY:

Educational freedom creates much-needed accountability for *ALL* schools

- ◆ "Educational freedom is what creates accountability—not from education bureaucrats, but from parents. In fact, **private schools are arguably much more accountable because they report directly to parents and are in touch with their needs**, instead of being controlled by special interests or faceless bureaucrats.
- ◆ Accountability is critically important. Unfortunately, we do not have enough of it today. That's why educational freedom is so important. It creates accountability for *ALL* schools, but from parents, not bureaucrats.
- ◆ In fact, **private schools are significantly MORE accountable than public schools because they report directly to parents.** And this is one of the reasons why they are so successful—they are in touch and responsive to parents' and students' needs, not controlled by special interests or faceless government bureaucrats. They are in direct contact with students and parents every single day.
- ◆ At the end of the day, educational freedom is not going to solve every single problem in our education system. There is much more to be done in terms of improving literacy, improving curriculum, making sure schools are transparent, and that we are rewarding our best teachers. But **educational freedom is an essential part of the formula** for where we need to go—and our kids need it yesterday."