

**From:** [Estela Perez](#)  
**To:** [connie@ceoastin.org](mailto:connie@ceoastin.org)  
**Subject:** Authorization of School of Choice  
**Date:** Thursday, August 23, 2012 10:33:20 PM

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To Whom It May Concern:

I want legislature to authorize school of choice because I want to be able to give my children the best education possible. I am not in favor of having legislation tell me where to send my children to school. The public school district where I live is not one of the best and I do not like to have my children attend public school. They have been in private school since Pre-Kinder and I will not change them now.

Thank you for hearing my opinion on this subject.

**From:** [Connie Sadowski](#)  
**To:** [Connie Sadowski](#)  
**Subject:** Connie Sadowski my testimony  
**Date:** Friday, August 24, 2012 12:57:28 AM

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My name is Connie Sadowski and I am an education consultant at the [Austin CEO Foundation](#), I write for [Heartland Institute's School Reform News](#). My husband and I have four kids in public middle school, high school, and college.

I recently traveled to [Cleveland, Ohio's 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary](#) celebration of the US Supreme Court decision ruling the Cleveland voucher program Constitutional. [I don't speak as an expert on vouchers, or to the specifics of current voucher programs, I speak as a mom and a consultant to dads and moms.](#)

Ohio politicians are willing to put partisanship aside for the sake of the children of their state. I call on Texas politicians to put aside partisanship, to work towards school choice options that will free children from sub-standard schools, [to work towards school choice options that will force all schools to get better.](#)

As I sat [listening](#) with 800 others, each speaker [at the celebration](#) spoke of their hopes and dreams for Ohio schoolchildren and bragged how the efforts to pass the voucher programs in Ohio brought Democrats and Republicans together for the good of the student. None spoke from a perspective of fear but of courage. Courage to do what was right for the teachers and children of their state. None spoke of [fear of what was lost](#) but all spoke of great gains.

I was most impressed with Ohio [Senator](#) Nina Turner a (D), of Cleveland she said Some politicians are driven by money; other politicians are driven by doing what is right. [She asked](#) that all folks join--whether R or D---in doing the right thing. It takes teamwork to make the American dream work, [she said](#). Parents: continue to stand up for your children. We don't run from doing the right thing. [She said](#) the morale and just thing to do is to make sure Lodi that Doti and [everybody](#) has access to their measure of the American dream and it starts with an education.

Ohio Rep. Bill Patmon a (D), said

Miss Fannie Lewis was his mother in politics and she taught him if you are in the middle of a lake and there are no boats around and a [boat passes by no matter what's in it](#) you gotta get in it. She [told him when you're fightin you don't care what you hit the other fella with](#). I loved her for all her sayings, [he said](#) but most of all she came to me with a message about vouchers and a message about children. [Patmon said he was died-in-the-wool](#) like most people are, presupposing and having strong opinions. But she grabbed [him](#) by the coat and gave her opinion about vouchers, she said we [must save who we can](#). She talked about how our kids need saving and whatever we [can](#) pick up and [fight for them with](#) we should. Rep. Patmon always wants to relate things to the Constitution. [Remember the US Supreme Court ruled 10 years ago that vouchers are constitutional]. [Patmon said when he](#) picks up the Constitution, he can find [choice nowhere](#) in it, but [what he does find is freedom](#). Freedom to choose. Freedom to choose for your child. Freedom to educate your child where they need to be educated. Freedom to [do it with](#) the same equality as the rest of the folks who get vouchers. So let me just say, [he warned](#) we have to do this now.

Everyday that we don't do it there are thousands of children who suffer who are not educated. We have to fight for them now, not tomorrow, not next year, but right now.

Ohio Speaker of the House William Batchelder a (R), said  
The work we do is for the children. And at the end of the day, these children will have opportunities that we never dreamed of and our state will be made greater by the ability they have to serve [whether in public service](#), or as [employees and workers in business](#). Children are a blessing. [The Speaker urged](#) Let us never forget that those who really carry this movement forward are the teachers who have been engaged in it and I thank God for them and the parents who seek out school choice, [he closed](#).

Chief Justice William Rehnquist, in his *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris* majority opinion said “In sum, the Ohio program is entirely neutral with respect to religion. It provides benefits directly to a wide spectrum of individuals, defined only by financial need and residence in a particular school district. It permits such individuals to exercise genuine choice among options: public and private, secular and religious. The program is therefore a program of true private choice,” [Rehnquist said](#).

Ohio politicians [are](#) willing to put partisanship aside for the sake of the children of their state, and I call on Texas politicians to [forget about party lines](#), to work towards school choice options that will free children from substandard schools, to work towards school choice options that will force all schools to get better.

[I don't speak as an expert on vouchers, or to the specifics of current voucher programs, I speak as a mom and a consultant to dads moms](#). We cannot operate in a mode of fear, but should act in a courageous manner to provide freedom to all children. [I urge members](#): our kids need saving and whatever we can pick up and [fight for them with](#) we should. [Thank you](#).

**From:** [Michelle Ellis](#)  
**To:** [connie@ceoaustin.org](mailto:connie@ceoaustin.org)  
**Subject:** Dear Legislator letter  
**Date:** Thursday, August 23, 2012 10:16:45 PM

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Dear Legislator,

We have chosen to homeschool our 4 children because the school that we live closest to is not an acceptable choice to us for our children. That is 4 children for whom AISD receives no federal money.

We strongly support school choice for many reasons. Here are the top ones:

**1. It Allows Parents to Choose Their Child's School.**

It is time for choice. It is time for parents to have a voice in their child's education.

**2. It Will Not Raise Property Taxes.**

If we fund vouchers like many other states have, instead of local taxes, the scholarships will be fully financed through state funding. Property taxes should not be directly affected by the voucher program.

**3. School Vouchers are Constitutional.**

The U.S. Supreme Court has upheld similar school voucher programs across the nation since the money is not directly given to religious private schools. The scholarship is given to parents who have the choice whether to send their child to a non-religious or religious school.

**4. It Will Boost Student Test Scores.**

Studies have confirmed that various school voucher programs across the nation have noticeably boosted test scores.

**5. It Will Help Children Rise From Poverty.**

School vouchers across the nation have allowed thousands of poor children to obtain a better education helping them become self-sufficient adults. A student who receives a voucher will be less likely to become dependent on government welfare programs.

**6. It Does Not Regulate Private Schools.**

If written correctly, the bill does not force private schools to do anything nor to

adopt a certain curriculum.

### **7. It Helps Remove the Teacher Unions' Grip on Our Schools.**

Special interest lobbyists are spending millions to defeat school choice/vouchers. Teachers unions oppose school vouchers mainly because they do not want to compete with other education options. This bill will move us in the right direction to break the teacher unions' monopoly of public school, teachers and students. With the vast amount of wealth and power that the unions have, it will be virtually impossible to do this overnight. The most realistic way of achieving our ideal goal is to pass legislation allowing school choice which will help to remove some of the teacher unions grip on our schools.

Thank you for considering school vouchers and school choice in Texas,

The Ellis family: c.b., Michelle, Nathan, Joshua, Enosh, and Jachin

**From:** [Tina Jackson](#)  
**To:** [connie@ceoastin.org](mailto:connie@ceoastin.org)  
**Subject:** Dear Legislator  
**Date:** Thursday, August 23, 2012 1:12:35 PM

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Dear Legislator,  
I would like to be able to choose my child's  
school and I would like my tax dollars to follow my child.  
Thank you  
Tina Jackson

**From:** [Heidi Woodsford](mailto:Heidi.Woodsford)  
**To:** [connie@ceoaustin.org](mailto:connie@ceoaustin.org)  
**Subject:** Family story for Meagan Woodsford  
**Date:** Thursday, August 23, 2012 1:11:54 PM

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Hello Connie.

I would like to share some information about my daughter Meagan Woodsford and the struggles our family has encountered in trying to ensure that she receives the best education possible to help her become a productive, educated member of society.

All of her teachers and my husband and I have been aware of the fact that she has had learning difficulties since she began Kindergarten. Her first official testing was done by the NEISD school district here in San Antonio in 2005, when she was in 3rd grade. It was determined at that time that she was below average in all categories except for in perceptual reasoning. She was determined to be borderline above average in this category. It was noted that nonverbal fluid and abstract reasoning was a strength and should be used to increase her learning ability. It was also determined that she had difficulties in writing. She was tested in 2006 by an independent Neuropsychologist. The results were consistent with the previous testing and also determined she was in the .3 - 1% percentile in her cognitive efficiency, processing speed, reading fluency, math fluency, and academic fluency. It was determined once again that her visual-spatial thinking was a definite strength. It was recommended that she receive Occupational Therapy for manipulative dexterity and a speech and language therapy consultation for help with her listening skills and communication. None of these were completed. She was tested again in 2008 by a different psychologist with many of the same results and recommendations. It was determined that her crystallized IQ was 81 (10th percentile) and her Fluid IQ was 116 (88th percentile). I met several times with the ARD committee provided the testing results and recommendations and was very disappointed in their ability to follow through with any of the recommendations. I was told they would use visual aides "when possible". Meagan continued to get further behind and was having some behavior issues also. Along with her learning disabilities she also has ADHD. In 7th grade she was placed in a regular reading class and I was told she would have an assistant in the class to help her. She had a 3rd grade reading level, ADHD, slow processing and dyslexia and they called me to tell me they were very disappointed that she did not complete her book report. They expected her to read the same 7th grade level book that the entire class was reading. I reminded them that she could not read nor understand the book, which they did not seem to believe.

It was very obvious that the public school system was not qualified to give my daughter the education she needed and deserved. They could only follow their protocols and not determine exactly how to help her and obviously did not have the tools to do it. They were modifying her work so much so that it appeared that she was doing well as far as the standardized testing was concerned. She received mostly A's and B's and passing scores on the standardized tests. How can you determine that the school is doing everything for my daughter that is necessary when she is in 7th grade and reads on a 3rd grade reading level and can not read a textbook to complete the schoolwork? I have kept a test that shows that she got 3 out of 20 multiple choice correct and received a passing grade of 70 because they were modifying it.

We enrolled her in River City Christian School at the beginning of 8th grade in 2010. RCCS specializes in learning disabilities. She was enrolled into their Powerline reading program where it was determined that she was at 2.7 for reading and 4.8 for comprehension. At the end of the second year in May 2012, it was determined that she is now 9.8 in both areas. Is that acceptable for a child to be in the school system from K-7 and be at a 3rd grade level when it was shown that with the right tools she can increase 7.1 grade levels in reading and 5 grade levels in comprehension in 2 years? I don't think that is acceptable. Our family now has to pay \$9000 a year to make sure our daughter gets the education she should be receiving from the school district that is receiving our tax dollars. Families should be able to take their tax money to a school that will make sure their children are educated the way they need to be if the public school can not provide the necessary services. Much emphasis is placed on ESL students needing to receive the proper education to become productive citizens. This is true but the same applies to ALL students. Many of the disabilities can be overcome or minimized with the proper tools and all students should have access to a proper education without placing an extreme hardship on the families.

Thank you,  
Heidi Woodsford  
210-867-8988

**From:** [Fran](#)  
**To:** [connie@ceoatx.org](mailto:connie@ceoatx.org)  
**Subject:** Hearing August 24th  
**Date:** Wednesday, August 22, 2012 3:25:49 PM

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Connie,

Unfortunately I can't attend but want to put in my support for school choice. As a family we are grandparents to 4 grandchildren, grades pre-school, 2,3 and 9th. We have been dedicated financially to seeing these kids attend a school with an environment of discipline and true educational goals. It is very difficult financially but we are united in the effort that all 4 children will be receive the best quality education we can provide. It would be a blessing if we could get help financially since we also pay school taxes. We are consistently told that our kids are so well mannered when in public and compared to other like grades our kids are usually 1 to 2 levels above public school.

We appreciate people that are able to take these issues to our legislature and pray the message reaches our leaders.

God bless you in your efforts.  
Fran Green

**From:** [Inga Cotton](#)  
**To:** [Connie Sadowski](#)  
**Subject:** letter from San Antonio mom in support of charter schools and school choice  
**Date:** Thursday, August 23, 2012 4:44:49 PM

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To whom it may concern:

Texas needs school choice. Families should have access to good schools no matter what neighborhood they live in.

In 1990, my family moved from Germany to San Antonio and I finished high school in Northeast ISD. Then, my parents bought a 1920s house in the Monte Vista Historic District (in San Antonio ISD). We spent years restoring it. I went to college at nearby Trinity University, then law school in Austin. I worked in New Mexico and Austin, then moved back to San Antonio in 2003. I met my husband and got married in 2005, and we rented a small rock house in Monte Vista. We have two children, Nicholas (5) and Annika (2).

As our kids grew up, we started researching schools. The San Antonio ISD schools that serve the Monte Vista neighborhood are simply not acceptable. Private schools are not affordable. Last summer, we decided to buy a house in the nearby city of Alamo Heights. Our son is starting kindergarten in Alamo Heights ISD this week. It's a great school system. But we miss our old neighborhood. My parents are in the process of restoring a different Monte Vista house now. My sister lives in that little rock house. We often go back to the playground at Landa Library to meet up with old friends. Our daughter still goes to preschool in Monte Vista.

Every year, more young families living in San Antonio's historic neighborhoods are facing the same tough decision. Many choose to leave and move to Alamo Heights ISD, Northeast ISD, Northside ISD, or farther afield (New Braunfels, Boerne, etc.). Monte Vista is being hollowed out as young families keep moving away.

There are some charter schools near the Monte Vista neighborhood, but my research showed that they were not a good fit for my kids. We are looking for an accelerated learning program to get our kids ready for college. There are excellent charter schools in other states that would be a very good fit for my family. But, those charter school organizations may be unable to get a charter in Texas because the number of charters is capped at an absurdly low number. The cap on the number of charters should be lifted.

There are several excellent private schools located in Monte Vista. If school vouchers had been available to us, that might have been a good solution: we could have stayed in the Monte Vista neighborhood and sent our kids to high-quality schools that we could afford. School vouchers should be made available to families so they can continue living in historic neighborhoods.

If school choice options -- a variety of high-performing charter schools and a robust school voucher program -- had been in place a few years ago, we would most likely still be living in the Monte Vista neighborhood that I called home for twenty years.

Sincerely,

Inga Munsinger Cotton

537 Abiso Avenue  
Alamo Heights, Texas 78209  
[\(210\) 725-1029](tel:(210)725-1029)  
[mail@sachartermoms.com](mailto:mail@sachartermoms.com)

**From:** [Danny Buentello](#)  
**To:** [connie@ceoastin.org](mailto:connie@ceoastin.org)  
**Date:** Thursday, August 23, 2012 11:59:10 AM

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Dear Legislator,

Please give the parents of Texas schoolchildren the power of choice in determining their future. Only through choice can parents hold schoolboards accountable to the children they serve. My wife and I pay dearly for local school taxes, yet we pay even more to send our daughter to a private school. The sacrifice is worth it because our private school works hard to give their students a quality education because they are held accountable to the community and the parents.

In short, let the schools compete for the good of all of us. Especially the poor!

Danny Buentello  
Lake Jackson, Texas

**From:** [Corinna Walls](#)  
**To:** [connie@ceoastin.org](mailto:connie@ceoastin.org)  
**Date:** Wednesday, August 22, 2012 8:42:18 AM

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I remember the first week of kindergarten when the teacher called and said that my son would not make it in school if he didn't participate. This shocked me because he liked doing things with others. I noticed with the homework packets that I would have to explain everything very slowly and more than once so he would know what to do. At the parent teacher conferences I explained that he had had hearing problems as a baby and toddler, but after 4 surgeries he hears fine. We would discuss that he is a little behind emotionally and scholastically.

The first two years went by ok but in the second grade, his learning challenges really began to show. Every night, we would work on homework or reading from 3:30pm to almost 9:00pm. I had to teach him everything that he should have learned in school. When I spoke with the teachers, they would help by giving him extra help and sending him to reading and math specialists. But the little bit of work they sent home was still 4-5hrs worth to Kevin.

In the fourth grade, they tutored him to pass the TAKS test. I still had to explain to him the basics that he should have gotten from the teachers directions. I began to realize that at home he did not comprehend directions that were spoken at normal conversational speed. When the fifth grade began, the kids he had been in school with were calling him dumb and stupid. I learned that he cried almost every day because he did not understand what he was supposed to be doing. This form of bullying was never addressed by the school. When I asked about it, they said that is how kids play. I asked for help from the school and met many times with teachers, administrators and counselors. They said things like he just doesn't want to try or he needs to be medicated. I asked about the specialists he used to go to and was told it was no longer in the budget. I asked for accommodations and was told that they would help him and that I didn't need to go thru the school board.

Then I was told about a school that specially teaches kids who learn differently. I withdrew Kevin from the public school and they didn't mind at all. He has learned and achieved so much more than I had expected in the five months that he has been at River City. He does his work on his own because he understands the directions. He has self esteem and knows that he is smart. It just took a little extra that could not be provided by the public school.

Would Kevin have flunked out if he had been kept in public school? No, because I would have done the best I could to explain and teach him. But in the fourth grade, he was so frustrated because he didn't want to cry in school and he didn't know why the wouldn't explain things to him that on the way home from school he told me he didn't want to live anymore. I immediately sought a counselor and they said that it was the school environment that needed to be changed. I thought about home schooling but as a single mom not receiving support from his dad, I could not . I went to the school as often as I could to encourage him. I had no other choice for the welfare of my son to pull him from public school and put him in a private school that could supply his needs. He is just as smart as other children but his brain processes info slower. He needs a little extra explanation.

As a tax payer, I really liked the idea of free education. Now I am paying for public school for my son but because of their failure to provide for my son's needs, I am also having to pay for private school. I think it is only fair that we do not get penalized for doing what is right.

Sincerely, corinna walls

**From:** [Margaret Leija](#)  
**To:** [connie@ceoastin.org](mailto:connie@ceoastin.org)  
**Date:** Monday, August 20, 2012 9:30:50 PM

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I have a 15 yr old you child with a learning disability. I would like to have had the choice that other parents have not to send my child to public schools. They really do not know how to teach this kids and Texas should be aware that this kids are really being left behind, I could not go to the special needs Ceo of the school in our area because my child did not go to the public school, so they the school could not help me or my child, so, I had to pay out of my pocket to send her to a school that would and could help her.

thank you  
a loyal tax payer,  
Margarita Leija

 sara/margaret 


**From:** [Regina Carmona](#)  
**To:** [connie@ceoaustin.org](mailto:connie@ceoaustin.org)  
**Subject:** My School Choice  
**Date:** Wednesday, August 22, 2012 3:46:38 PM

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I would like to submit my story to be read in favor of a choice for my sons' school!

Making the choice to remove my children from their public school was not an easy one. When my oldest began kindergarten, I was torn between placing him into private or public schools because I had heard the horror stories from elementary teachers who are friends of mine. I decided that it was worth registering my son in the local public school, which is very highly rated, to see if its really that bad. His Kinder year went fine and he loved school, but by the middle of his 1st grade year, he was very hesitant to go to school and the only way I could get him there was to ensure him that I was looking for another school for him to start for 2nd grade. My list of complaints with that school was extensive from mishandling of the kids and inadequate class room environment to teachers/administrators unwilling to address the bully situations. I can honestly say that I didn't even know what the principal of the school looked like and I am very involved. My husband and I (both public school educated) decided that this was not the kind of environment we wanted him to learn in.

After enrolling him at his current private school, he had a whole new attitude. Now he enjoys school and is not afraid to be himself. This is his 3rd year and he remains an all "A" student. I can only imagen how his education could have suffered if I had chosen to leave him at the public school. His little brother joined him this year as a Kindergartner and he too enjoys his classes. Teachers enjoy their job and work with the parents to give our kids the best education. They are required to hold conference/tutoring hours after school and encourage the students take advantage of the time. The principal is out on the campus grounds greeting the families every morning and sending the kids off in the afternoon. He even knows each kid in the school by name and what grade/teacher they have. It may sound too good to be true but this is what I remember school to be like and I am so grateful that my kids are able to experience it. Their school is not a large one, nor the most technological advanced, but they get the job done and students learn!

It has not been easy to come up with the funds to send them to school however. The economy caught up with me and after 13 years, I lost my job the month before school started in 2010. I had to work 3 part-time jobs to be able to keep him in school. My youngest is special ed and we are having a hard time getting assistance from the school district for his speech therapy. Parents should not be forced to have to choose between their children's education and paying the monthly bills. If all families had the chance to choose what school their kids could attend instead of just excepting what is available, everyone's kid could reach their potential instead of just getting pushed through the system. Schools would improve as they would do their best to keep their students. For the sake of Texas' children, I hope that politics can be pushed aside and we can finally get a system that works! Let us have a choice!

Regina Carmona  
San Antonio, TX

**From:** [Katy O'Brien](#)  
**To:** [connie@ceoaustin.org](mailto:connie@ceoaustin.org)  
**Subject:** my story as to why I have needed private school in Texas  
**Date:** Sunday, August 19, 2012 10:23:32 AM

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My name is Dr. Katharine O'Brien, I am a product of public school - graduated in San Diego California 1983 - pre-testing culture. Went to Jr. College for two years, then on to UCSD for Chem Eng - never remediated a single class, worked one year in Environmental clean up, then to medical school and here I am.

I have three children. My oldest was in a private French preschool, and in her kindergarden year I realized (not through my training, I had none in learning issues) that she was not on track with her letters. In first grade, at the French school - her issues continued, the teacher (an out of retirement EANES school teacher) told me I could go to my public school to get her evaluated. When I went to meet with the principal of Brykerwood Elem in AISD - Principal Artie Artsie (? spelling) he told me that in AISD they don't like to test before the child is in 2nd grade, but if I really pushed hard I could probably get an evaluation. I know that it is human nature to not do your best work when being pushed to do something you don't want to do - so I walked out disgusted; and had my child privately evaluated. She was indeed profoundly dyslexic; at which point I enrolled her in Rawson-Saunders (\$18,000/yr) for 2 - 5th grade. During those years, she was in school from 7:30 - 2:30 (as public) had PE every day, two recesses EVERY day, art or music twice a week, NO homework except 20 minutes of reading and one project a year - that was appropriate for her to do, not my busy work. From 5th grade I moved her to Paragon Prep an intense private middle school - she kept up with the non-dyslexic kids like a champion.

This year, I am trying public with her again. Austin High. I will not hesitate to pull her out if it is inadequate.

My second daughter, 8 years old, I enrolled in Brykerwood for Kindergarden, so happy to not pay private tuition. That year 2009-2012, AISD had placed a fascist principal to lead the school - Mrs. Nancy Hobbs. We arrived at her second of three years. Half way through Mrs. Hobbs first year, about half of the parent body started petitioning to have her taken out of our school. Then we arrived in her second year. She was dictatorial, expected 5 year olds to act like 10 year olds - i.e. she had no concept of them learning appropriate behaviors; and guided her newer teachers to send the little guys to the office for all and any infractions. This lead to a dynamic where kids were turning on the kids being publicly reprimanded; a dynamic that can't be undone. Mrs. Hobbs even left me a phone message where she accused my daughter of pulling down someones skirt (although NO adult witnessed it, and it was a case of two five year olds telling opposite stories). Mrs. Hobbs left a message with Grace listening saying " Grace what do you want to tell you mother, I'm so disappointed you won't tell the truth" It was horrific. When I tried to get mediation at AIS District. I was in the room waiting for Mrs. Hobbs to arrive, and while sitting there, the mediator walked out of the room to greet Mrs. Hobbs and gave Mrs. Hobbs a hug before she came in. You can be sure I expected nothing unbiased out of this meeting. And indeed, nothing came out of it. After the meeting they said basically - will you stop complaining if we allow you to transfer? I said yes, I'd like to transfer to Guelett - but the response two weeks later was - no, not Guelett and they gave me a list of elementary schools on the East side of town we could transfer to. I am not a bigot, but I don't pay taxes for Central Austin to go to school in the worst schools of AISD. So, I moved Grace to Redeemer Lutheran, and my third child I didn't even bother, he just started Redeemer Lutheran this week for Kindergarden.

I will also tell you; that Mrs. Hobbs just went MIA for a couple of months of her third year at Brykerwood and came back with a lame story of 'my back was bad'. That is not the story on the streets, I had several AISD teachers tell me her 'disappearance' was a known scandal in AISD, and the district was just trying to get her through her last three years to get FULL retirement. I would propose, if a principal is that awful, they don't deserve being kept around long enough to get "FULL" retirement.

My estimated portion of property for AISD is \$6473.39 on my home and \$3818.99 on a second house I bought for my mother. This year will be the first of 10 that my eldest child has been in school that I have used the public system, and 2 of 4 my middle child, on 0 of 1 my youngest has used. Total school years 15, of which I will have used 3 years of the school time in public school.

Any questions, or for a transcription of the message left on my phone by Mrs. Hobbs please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely

Dr. Katharine O'Brien  
512-689-0659

**From:** [Charles Lee](#)  
**To:** [Connie Sadowski](#)  
**Subject:** Re: FW: Austin CEO  
**Date:** Thursday, August 23, 2012 7:30:56 PM

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Hope this is what you are asking for...

Dear Legislator,

In life, we make many important choices - where to live, who to marry, which career path to take, where to go to college, which politician to vote for, etc. Yet, we do not have much of a choice when it comes to educating our children. I support school choice for many reasons. I will mention 4 of them.

One is social. There are kids that I dont want our children associating with. All loving parents have such standards. I dont believe it is discrimination. Rather, it is good parenting. When it comes to public education, there are too many kids that are there that dont want to be there. Thus, they have the capacity to negatively influence our children. They regularly speak profanity, disrespect teachers and other adults, have a warped view of whats cool, promote sexual immorality, belittle education, and the list goes on and on.

Two is physical. They are safety issues in the public education system. There are fights and bullying that go on regularly, and the administrators cannot do much to combat the problem. Discipline is all but nonexistent. To be honest, I am afraid to send our three young boys to the public school system.

Third is academic. It is undeniable that the public school system is failing in so many ways. We hear reports regularly of how the public education system does not adequately prepare kids for college. Enough said.

Four is financial. As citizens, we pay school taxes. And yet, we cannot utilize these funds to send our children to a school of our choice. If we choose to send our kids to a private school, we are forced to pay twice (one through taxes and the other through tuition). Though many people with finances choose to do so anyway using their out-of-pocket funds including the president of the United States and vast majority of the US legislators, we do not have such luxury. Why cant an average family use vouchers to have the same opportunities as the rich? Why should this opportunity be limited to a small portion of the population?

Please consider supporting school choice (vouchers). It is my conviction that choices in education can only further the quality of education. More money in the public education system will not solve the problem. Doing the same thing and expecting different results is insane. We must look to school vouchers and allow competition to drive the quality of education in our society.

Regards,  
Charles J. Lee  
600 Stansted Manor Dr.

Pflugerville, TX 78660  
cagrtr@gmail.com  
(512)670-2757

On 8/23/2012 4:56 PM, Connie Sadowski wrote:

> Will you copy and paste the attachment into the body of a brand new email to me, please?

>

> Thank you SO much!

>

> -----Original Message-----

> From: Charles Lee [<mailto:cagrtr@gmail.com>]

> Sent: Thursday, August 23, 2012 4:57 PM

> To: Connie Sadowski

> Subject: Re: Austin CEO

>

> Hey Connie,

>

> I am attaching the letter. Let me know if it's okay.

>

>

> Charles

>

>

>

From: [Grant\\_and\\_Julie\\_Nichols](mailto:Grant_and_Julie_Nichols)  
To: [connie@ceoastin.org](mailto:connie@ceoastin.org); [jane@ceoastin.org](mailto:jane@ceoastin.org)  
Cc: [ccastillo@rivercitychristianschool.com](mailto:ccastillo@rivercitychristianschool.com)  
Subject: Re: School Choice  
Date: Tuesday, August 21, 2012 12:30:36 AM

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sent to the CEO foundation

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To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter in regards to my deep concerns as a parent and as an educator of eleven years concerning the issue of school vouchers. I'll start by saying that I'm grateful for the public school system and state waiver programs for children with disabilities because they do provide some relief and support for disabled children and their families, including our own family. However, I have significant concerns about parents that are trying to make life-preparative choices for their children with disabilities.

I have two sons in private schools that would qualify for Section 504 and Special Education in the public school system. The son that would qualify for 504 has ADHD and dysgraphia. His mild conditions need minor accommodations such as less stress, more attention, smaller classes, and copies of teacher notes, but not a modified curriculum. The other son with Autism has received years of intensive therapies and interventions costing tens of thousands dollars out of our family's financial resources as we've struggled to provide for him from a middle class budget. Regardless, we've been happy to provide what we can for him because we want him to be successful in life. Both of our sons have been in the public school system before, but I did not feel that their needs were met. This lack of success was not due to poor teaching. Their needs weren't met because of strict federal/state regulations, high stakes testing, funding issues, and social stresses. I found this to be the case when I taught special education in the public school system, but I will address this in the next paragraph. Since the state testing and other regulations have been lifted by placing our sons in private school settings that receive significantly less funding than public schools, our sons are functioning much higher than they were in the public schools system. My son with Autism had serious documented bullying problems in the public school system that were part of his underachievement. He was functioning academically well below his ability level after recent private testing that proves his true abilities. As soon as his placement changed from public education to a private special school, his overall achievement and self-esteem levels rose significantly when I made a change to private education in May of 2012 to protect his safety immediately. I believe this increase in achievement for my Autistic son was due to lower stress levels, smaller classes, correct placement (instead of full inclusion), a more gentle student body, and less-stressed, happier teachers. My Autistic son needs near grade level curriculum with life skills training. He would not qualify for this in the public school system because he is not on an alternative curriculum. Only children on alternative curriculum or significantly modified curriculum qualify for life skills training in the public school system. This would only account for 1-2% of the special education population. I know this from my prior teaching experience as a special education inclusion teacher in the public school system. Our family also had to wait five years for a Medicaid waiver program for our Autistic son because he didn't qualify due to a low income need. We are very grateful to have the waiver program for him now, but we had to start completely over financially to pay for his expenses. In April of 2012, an article in the San Antonio newspaper addressed the issue of unprepared Autistic graduates (aged out students) because they didn't receive FAPE (Free and Appropriate Public Education).

From the perspective of a professional, it may be difficult for you to believe what I'm about to tell you. Due to No Child Left Behind, only 3% of the total special education population can be on a modified/alternative curriculum. When I taught special education as an inclusion special education teacher in the public school system, nearly all students were placed in the regular education classroom even though the regular classroom content was more than two grade levels above some of their ability levels just for the sake of "inclusion." We were required to operate this way. This was also due to the NCLB demands that "all children will perform on grade level" which is

not possible for some special education students. I do believe in accountability for all children, but rate of growth assessments and self-paced curriculums in my opinion are much more appropriate for some of the more involved special education students which some special schools provide. Many of these children do not progress at the same rate as their nondisabled peers even when the best instruction is provided. Special education teachers now have larger caseloads due to changes in funding. At one time, I had 38 students on my inclusion caseload in public school, including children with severe cognitive disabilities. This made it very difficult to serve the students properly. I had to make many requests over months for an additional special education teacher before one came to our school's aide.

I now serve children with dyslexia and related disorders in small groups as a private Academic Language Practitioner. I plan to obtain the therapist level certification this spring and also licensure through the Texas Department of State Health Services as a Licensed Dyslexia Therapist. Some parents are trying to have their medical insurance cover this type of help so they aren't paying these costs out of pocket, but few are successful. I feel strongly in providing this therapy as an alternative to public school services so parents have another choice for their children.

In conclusion, The Texas Legislature needs to know that many parents like myself are looking for alternatives to public education. We have very limited options such as a few special schools and home schooling. Most parents cannot afford the cost of quitting work to homeschool or the cost of a special school. The least expensive special school costs \$8,000/year in San Antonio, TX. This is actually a bargain for this type of school that my Autistic son is attending now, River City Christian School. I'm grateful this school exists, and there are teachers willing to educate my son and others like him in a manner that is best for him. My family will also have to pay for life skills summer training that our son's Medicaid waiver program doesn't cover. I ask that you consider school vouchers for parents like us. We only want our son to earn a high school diploma, have options of post secondary education, obtain a real vocation or career, and become a productive member of society without depending on government help if possible.

Sincerely,

Julie Nichols, MEd

Mother of three, two with disabilities

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**URGENT: Please forward this to all school staff and each school family. We may not have all the non-public schools in your area, if you have their addresses will you please forward this email?**

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR ALERTS AT [WWW.CEOAUSTIN.ORG](http://WWW.CEOAUSTIN.ORG)

**COMING FRIDAY**

The CEO Foundation wants you to have this information about an important Texas Senate hearing on school choice coming this Friday, and we hope you will share this info with your school families! We hope all who can rearrange their schedules last minute will. If you can't attend, please email me your story why you want the Legislature to authorize school choice like many other states



[Redacted area]

already enjoy. Send emails  
to [connie@ceoastin.org](mailto:connie@ceoastin.org).

Senate Public Education Committee Hearing on Friday, August 24 at 9 a.m.

Texas Capitol (map below)  
1201 Congress Avenue  
Austin, TX 78701

Day of hearing questions? Contact Connie Sadowski  
of the Austin CEO Foundation [512-461-0185](tel:512-461-0185) who will try to help you.

**Read on for purpose of this hearing.**

WHAT can I do?

- 1) **Go to Room E1.028 (ask for directions) and sign up to speak.** Sign up to tell your family's story to the committee explaining why your family wants to choose your child's school. Your child is can talk, too. You will only have 3 minutes, don't be nervous--you are a great spokesperson for your children.
- 2) Listen quietly to testimony (no cheer or booing please, you will hear this some, but please don't participate. Remain respectful of the Committee rules.)
- 3) While you wait, you may take free tour of the Capitol or visit your Senator or State Rep, find out how a bill becomes a law on our website.
- 4) If you can't attend, please email your school and family's story to [connie@ceoastin.org](mailto:connie@ceoastin.org) and she will deliver for you. You can watch the hearing live or watch it later at [www.ceoastin.org](http://www.ceoastin.org). We urge schools to have the hearing running during the day in the reception area and available to students so they can see their government in operation.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS for this hearing:

How do I get to the Capitol? See map below.

Where do I park? Parking information on our website

How long will it take? Most of the day. Arrive when you can, sign up to speak and ask clerk if they can give you idea of when you will be called. Of course, this is based on how many sign up.

Do I have to bring anything? If you want the committee to have a copy of your family's story, bring 25 copies. We suggest you bring a snack, lunch, or plan to eat in the cafe.

What is the purpose of this hearing? The Senate is not in session, but the Lt. Governor gave Interim Charges to each committee. Before the session starts in January 2013, the committee will give report to the entire Senate. The Education Committee charges are on page 7 and 8 read here on our website.

What is school choice? Find out about taxpayer savings grant, vouchers, tax credits on our website.

What do I wear? Business casual is appropriate.

What happens at 9 a.m., I can't get there until later? The chair will open the meeting, the members will come and go during the day. The meeting is recorded and available live and will be archived. (Check our website for link.) The committee chair invites experts to testify first, then opens it for public comment. The chair can alternate for and against, chairman's choice. Arrive when you can, listen in and come and go if needed, we find the hearings hard to leave.

I can't go, what then? Assign some fun homework: watch the testimony live or archived and write a report. (Email it to us!); Go to the Senate Kids webpage and learn about the process <http://www.senate.state.tx.us/kids/>; Plan a field trip to the Capitol.

GO TO [WWW.CEOAUSTIN.ORG](http://WWW.CEOAUSTIN.ORG)

**From:** [Rose Guajardo](#)  
**To:** ["connie@ceoastin.org"](mailto:connie@ceoastin.org)  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent message from CEO Foundation  
**Date:** Monday, August 20, 2012 9:48:37 AM

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Ms. Sandowski,

I am unable to attend, however, I did want my voice to be heard.  
I am a mother of five beautiful kids. Ranging in ages from four to eighteen.  
I have had many years of Involvement in both public and private schools.  
My children have experienced the pros and cons of public school based on residential requirements, and were also fortunate enough to experience the pros and cons of private school.  
I am very concerned about the changes in our educational system over the past two decades.  
I firmly believe that every child regardless of income, residential area, language status, disability or lack thereof, or religion, deserves a quality education.  
I also believe that the selection of a child's school should be the parent's choice.  
I believe that choosing your child's educational environment is a part of parenting, and that this should not be dictated by any level of Government.  
I believe that it is in the best interest of our children for the Legislature to authorize school choice in Texas.

Thank you,

Sincerely-A Concerned Parent

*Rose Y. Guajardo*

**Sent:** Saturday, August 18, 2012 6:07 PM  
**To:** Rose Guajardo  
**Subject:** Urgent message from CEO Foundation

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Austin, TX 78701**

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of the Austin CEO Foundation 512-461-0185 who will try to help you.**

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- 3) While you wait, you may take free tour of the Capitol or visit your Senator or State Rep, find out how a bill becomes a law on our website.
- 4) If you can't attend, please email your school and family's story to [connie@ceoaustin.org](mailto:connie@ceoaustin.org) and she will deliver for you. You can watch the hearing live or watch it later at [www.ceoaustin.org](http://www.ceoaustin.org). We urge schools to have the hearing running during the day in the reception area and available to students so they can see their government in operation.

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**GO TO [WWW.CEOAUSTIN.ORG](http://WWW.CEOAUSTIN.ORG)**

Mailing Address:  
Austin CEO Foundation  
3300 Bee Cave Road  
Suite 650 Box 1156  
Austin, TX 78746  
US

Contact Name: Connie Sadowski  
Telephone Number: (512) 461-0185

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**From:** [diana.ruiz](mailto:diana.ruiz)  
**To:** [connie@ceoastin.org](mailto:connie@ceoastin.org)  
**Subject:** Sacred Heart Catholic school /choice of school  
**Date:** Tuesday, August 21, 2012 4:02:40 AM

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*To whom it may concern,*

*We are the parents of two children ages 6, and 10 and are currently enrolled in Sacred Heart Catholic School of Conroe, Texas. We believe strongly that the foundation to a good education starts during a child's early childhood years. A foundation that requires not only a strong academic curriculum that provides the necessary tools for academic achievement but one that promotes spiritually as well. These life long skills taught at home but often not acknowledged in a public school setting. As parents we have a moral and spiritual obligation to teach our children to have values that show respect for human life. Unfortunately, many families today don't have a choice of what school they want their child to attend. In considering the state of our economy today many families are working longer hours and at times spend less time during the day to encourage their children to practice these values at school on a daily basis. My point is when our children go to school we hope that these values we instill in them will be promoted while in school as well.*

*Our society today brings many challenges to young minds and I strongly believe that more private schools, like Sacred Heart Catholic School should be readily accessible to anyone. We currently reside in Montgomery County and commute approximately one hour a day in order for our children to attend the school. Currently the public school system lacks not only the financial strength, particularly here in the great state of Texas, but also the spiritual environment that promotes mutual respect for one another. The great country of the United States honors the right to freedom of religion, and I strongly believe a spiritual component must exist in a child's life both inside and outside a classroom setting. My children have attended a public school in the past and I can see that a void does exist and is often not fulfilled by just trying to teach our children how to read and write. Our country needs the type of leaders that will not only be academically successful but also have honor and respect for human life.*

*Regards,*

*Diana and Sam Elzaim.*

**From:** [Connie Sadowski](#)  
**To:** [Lara Morgan](#); [Connie Sadowski](#)  
**Subject:** school choice  
**Date:** Thursday, August 23, 2012 10:48:36 PM

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**From:** Lara Morgan [mailto:lmorgan@smcaustin.org]  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 23, 2012 3:09 PM  
**To:** connie@ceoastin.org  
**Subject:** school choice

Dear State Legislature,

I would like to share with you my story about Catholic Schools in Texas.

I went to Catholic school as a child, and then transitioned to public high school and attended L.C. Anderson High in Austin. While Anderson was a great high school with high standards, the differences in beliefs which affect every day decisions for a teenager were immense.

For this reason, I currently sacrifice half of my salary to send my children to Catholic school. We have sold our house to buy a smaller, less expensive one, so that we can afford to send our three children to Catholic School. Why would we make such a sacrifice, as we continue to pay property taxes for public education?

The answer is simple. We want our children to learn about God and our faith daily, just as any other subject in school. We believe that our life on earth is preparing us for heaven, and learning about God is vitally important on our journey to heaven. But it's more than that... Catholic school students achieve higher test scores, are more likely to go to college, and less likely to drop out. Plus, children that pray together every day, and at the beginning of every class, are less likely to shoot each other. With recent shootings in schools and in other public places, I not only fear for my children's lives in a large public school, but I wonder what kind of society we have that places such little value on life. Kids with no conscience that can randomly kill people have not been raised to love each other, forgive each other, and respect differences and diversity. All of those qualities are taught in a Catholic school, and avoided in public school.

My children attended Pond Springs elementary in Round Rock for two years. The programs were excellent, as my child was in speech in PPCD. The teachers were wonderful. Yet at Christmas, we were not allowed to have a Christmas tree in the class room, candy canes, or even call it a Christmas party. It was a "holiday party". We were, however, allowed to learn about Jewish and Islamic traditions. I felt as though the Christians were purposely not allowed to recognize their traditions at all, and I had a real problem with that. When they were debating whether or not to take "God" out of the pledge, I decided it was time to put them in a place where God was welcome.

I now work at a Catholic Church and school and I see so many families that want to send their children to our school, but cannot afford tuition. We have about 46% of our students on financial aid. Some of these are inner-city kids with broken homes, or kids that come from the Safe House. This school is the only stability they have in their lives, where they are loved and cared for by all the teachers and staff. They are not "lost in the shuffle" and do not "fall through the cracks," because we are a small school with love and God as our focus.

I am lucky that I could still afford Catholic school after selling my home and downsizing. But some families are not that lucky so they don't have the choice. It's about letting parents and guardians choose what is best for their child. I still have faith in our public schools in Texas, and will be forever grateful to Pond Springs Elementary for their help with my special needs child. But I want my child to be able to go to a school where you can speak about God and Jesus without feeling bad about it. I want my child to be allowed to pray at school. I want my child to attend a school where other parents are as involved and concerned as I am.

I want my child to attend a school that is close to my work. I want my child to attend a school where they don't have to worry about their peers carrying a gun to class. I want my child to attend a school where they are not just a number, but an actual person that the teacher knows and gets to know their parents. I want to be able to choose the school and have my allotted funds that I pay through my taxes go to that school. And more than anything, I want those that can't afford it to have the same opportunity to make that choice. Other states have programs where you can get vouchers for private schools. Please consider this for our education system in Texas. I think Texas is unique in that we still have more rights in our state than others. Please help us all to have the right and means to send our children to the school that fits our needs. Maybe Catholic school isn't for everyone. Public school isn't for everyone, either. But that choice should be ours.

Thank you,  
Lara Morgan  
5901 Trabadora Cove  
Austin, Tx 78759  
512-413-7279

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**From:** [Cathy Yanas](#)  
**To:** [connie@ceoastin.org](mailto:connie@ceoastin.org)  
**Subject:** School Choice  
**Date:** Monday, August 20, 2012 12:14:31 PM

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I have chosen to send my son to Catholic school for the last 5 years due to a few reasons. The class sizes are smaller, he receives a faith based education and there is more one on one instruction and tutoring available. I don't think that I should have to continue to pay public school tuition because I chose to send my child to a private school. Parents should have the choice of sending their child to public or private school and should not be "double charged" by having to pay public school taxes in addition to tuition fees.

**Cathy Yanas**  
**San Antonio**

**From:** [Helen Morales](#)  
**To:** [connie@ceoaustin.org](mailto:connie@ceoaustin.org)  
**Subject:** School Choice  
**Date:** Monday, August 20, 2012 9:57:49 AM

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Dear Committee Members,

I have lived the impact of the decision of having my children in Catholic School. I worked and sacrificed alot just to be able to continue to send my children to a catholic school. Why is it that if it costs less to pay or allow the funds for our child's education to go to a catholic school it isn't being done? Even the savings it would generate would be better than creating more taxes charges to conserve funds elsewhere. After all this is America and aren't we free to seek opportunities and the choice of where are children are educated should be our choice without having to put our lives in jeopardy. By this I mean I have sacrificed our home mortgage ,cutting back on my grocery preferences, doing without so many things just to be able to allow them to be in Catholic Schools, and to top it off I am funneling (paying school taxes) monies into district education I'm not using. If I work for it then I should be able to have the choice.

Sincerely,

***Mrs. Helen Morales***

Development Special Projects Assistant  
Holy Cross Community Services  
Holy Cross of San Antonio

**HOLY CROSS OF SAN ANTONIO**  
**SHINING FOR THE REST OF THE WORLD**

426 N. San Felipe Street | San Antonio, TX 78228 | 210.433.4502 | FAX: 210.438.1068  
E-mail: [hcadvancement@hotmail.com](mailto:hcadvancement@hotmail.com) | [helen.morales@holycross-sa.gaggle.net](mailto:helen.morales@holycross-sa.gaggle.net) | [www.HolyCross-sa.org](http://www.HolyCross-sa.org)

**From:** [Sheila R. Moore](#)  
**To:** [connie@ceoastin.org](mailto:connie@ceoastin.org)  
**Subject:** school choice  
**Date:** Thursday, August 23, 2012 2:39:59 PM

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Hello Connie,

My name is Sheila Moore and my 2 daughters go to Holy Rosary Catholic School in Rosenberg, Texas. I am writing because I am unable to travel to Austin for the hearing this Friday, August 24<sup>th</sup>. I want the right to choose to send my daughters to a school of my choice, without being penalized for doing so. I feel this should be my right as a parent to choose the school I want my children to attend.

I was shocked the first year that my oldest attended private school, that we were unable to claim this expense on our income tax. When I attended this same school for 8 years(1974-1982), my parents were very poor. They were able to send me and my sister due to the ability to claim the expenses. I am proud to say I attended 8 years and of those 8 years, I remember all but 1 teacher and it has been over 30 years. I have very fond memories of my 8 years at HRCS. I also remember my close net family and friends and I still have most of them today in my life. I want that connection and memories for my children.

There are numerous personal reasons of why we want our children to attend Holy Rosary. We are not rich and we struggle working side jobs to afford both to attend.

We want the right to choose the school our children attend!

**From:** [Harold Gentry](mailto:Harold_Gentry)  
**To:** [connie@ceoastin.org](mailto:connie@ceoastin.org)  
**Subject:** School choice  
**Date:** Sunday, August 19, 2012 11:00:55 AM

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Dear Legislator,

This celebration notice from Cleburne ISD was in our local newspaper which I think shows that we are the perfect poster child for school choice.

Celebrations are certainly in order as Cleburne ISD improved in many areas, said Tammy Bright, an assistant superintendent of the Cleburne schools. In the student achievement areas of reading and math, Cleburne had 98 separate indicators that were measures. Of these 98 indicators, 17 saw a slight decrease, nine remained the same, and 72 showed an increase.

Reading scores at Irving and Santa Fe elementary schools disqualified them to meet AYP. Coleman Elementary missed AYP in math, while Gerard and Cooke elementary schools missed standards in both math and reading.

Because Cooke has missed standards for two years, the school qualifies for the Stage 1 School Improvement Plan. Wheat Middle School now qualifies for Stage 2, having missed standards three years in a row.

Smith Middle School met AYP but missed in 2010-11 and will be in Stage 1 through the end of the 2012-13 school year.

Did I fail to mention we were investigated by the Texas Education Agency for 18 months in 2006 and were fined \$362,000 for federal fund misuse? From 2003 to 2006 CISD received over 11 million in federal funding and only one million of that was looked at by TEA with 44% having been found misused. CISD was assessed a high risk, put under sanctions and assigned a monitor. What about the other 10 million? Estimates given to the district were that the fine could have been 4.5 million if all funds were examined.

For the past two years Cleburne high school has missed AYP and we have joined the current lawsuit against you and Texas taxpayers because as usual there is simply not enough money.

Educators today are more concerned about their contracts, their perks and their retirement check than they are about the kids. They are making sure that No Educator is Left Behind first. And sports parents have hijacked the schools and instead of paying for their child's college education they want you and me to provide them with a sports scholarship first because who really needs a diploma?

If the money travels with the child then public schools will either straighten up or go out of business. At present they are accountable to no one and that includes you, me and the children of Texas.

So what happened to all the folks responsible for the federal fund misuse? They had a sudden revelation and retired after much thought and prayer but of course with a check for the remainder of their contract. If this were the real world and not that fairy tale land called Public Education I would be writing you this letter from Huntsville prison instead of the \$250,000 home I built for myself on Lake Brownwood.

If you want to do something for the kids give them the choice over their future and stop listening to the edu-crats.

Sincerely,

Harold Gentry  
604 Prairie Avenue  
Cleburne, Texas 76033  
817.888.2699

Sent from my iPad

**From:** [Marshall D Tiner](#)  
**To:** [connie@ceoastin.org](mailto:connie@ceoastin.org)  
**Cc:** [Susan Tiner](#)  
**Subject:** School Choice  
**Date:** Monday, August 20, 2012 9:35:21 AM

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Connie,

We can't attend the hearing.

Here is our story:

1) We are Bible believing Christians. We do not believe man evolved from apes. That is a theory, not supported by observational science, and is being taught as fact in the public schools. We do not believe the earth is millions of years old. That too is a theory, not supported by observational science; however it is being taught as fact in the public schools. We see homosexuality as a sin. While we love sinners too, we do not condone their actions. The public schools support this as a "lifestyle" rather than the sin it is. The schools are clearly trying to define a popular morality, that is not the role of the school system regardless of what you believe.

2) We live on a small farm outside Austin. The local schools score very poorly academically. Our kids deserve a fair chance at a good college education. This requires a good grade school and a good high school education. The private schools provide that and are our only choice. We can't get the kids into Westlake as we don't live in that district. We use absolutely no resources from the local school system; however, we pay as much in local school tax as we pay for a private school education.

The Amish can legally not participate in the Social Security system due to it conflicting with their beliefs. How is this any different? Islam is allowed not to participate in the new Health care system as it is conflicts with the beliefs of their religion. How is this any different ? Why must I continue to fund a failing school system I can't use?

Marshall

**From:** [Sabra Grainger](mailto:Sabra.Grainger)  
**To:** [connie@ceoastin.org](mailto:connie@ceoastin.org)  
**Cc:** [ccastillo@rivercitychristianschool.com](mailto:ccastillo@rivercitychristianschool.com); [toddagrainger@aol.com](mailto:toddagrainger@aol.com); [hannah.loveland@unitedlendingusa.com](mailto:hannah.loveland@unitedlendingusa.com); [wereguppy@gmail.com](mailto:wereguppy@gmail.com)  
**Subject:** School Choice: Ian's Story  
**Date:** Tuesday, August 21, 2012 1:42:13 AM

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To: The Senate Public Education Committee

Re: Hearing dated 8/24/12

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our son, Ian, is bright, funny, athletic, artistic, and articulate. He is also dysgraphic.

"Dysgraphia is a neurological disorder characterized by writing disabilities. Specifically, the disorder causes a person's writing to be distorted or incorrect. In children, the disorder generally emerges when they are first introduced to writing. They make inappropriately sized and spaced letters, or write wrong or misspelled words, despite thorough instruction. Children with the disorder may have other learning disabilities; however, they usually have no social or other academic problems... In addition to poor handwriting, dysgraphia is characterized by wrong or odd spelling, and production of words that are not correct (i.e., using "boy" for "child"). The cause of the disorder is unknown, but in adults, it is usually associated with damage to the parietal lobe of the brain."

<http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/dysgraphia/dysgraphia.htm>

Ian's diagnosis was completely unexpected. We were a home schooling family, and Ian, our sixth child, was easy going and eager to learn. After three years of trying one reading program after another, we began testing. We hoped he was a "late bloomer." Some boys are like that, but it was clear that his processing was not working properly. There seemed to be "less than normal" cross over activity through the corpus callosum between the two hemispheres of the brain. (for more info: <http://www.ncld.org/ld-basics/ld-aamp-language/writing/dysgraphia> ) About that time, we learned of an intensive gross and fine motor skills training program through Busybodies here in San Antonio. It was expensive, but after the first week, our ten year old son wrote for the first time on his own...a single word, "dun".

After finishing Busybodies program and developing the motorskills for handwriting, we moved him to River City Christian School. The tuition is almost \$800 / month, but we have never regretted the sacrifices made to put him there. The accommodations and training have continued to bring him along. When he began at RCCS, his reading was 1st grade 3rd mo. and his handwriting was preschool. This year he will begin his 7th year as a Junior, and he is reading at grade level, his comprehension and vocabulary are college level. His writing skills will always be less than ideal, but his computer skills help compensate. Today, Ian is happy, well-adjusted, well-loved and respected at his work and at school. He is a TCAL state track champion, a student council officer, and a hard-working young man of integrity. He has "bright hope for tomorrow."

WHY am I telling you all of this? Because, while there are many wonderful teachers in the public education system, I have seen too many students left to languish in school situations that were not helpful academically or psychologically. They are beaten down socially and emotionally. They are angry or withdrawn, and many of them believe what has been implied or said outright as classmates quickly move past them...I am stupid...I am messed up...I am worthless. These are lies that destroy their "bright hope for tomorrow" and lead to underachievement, discipline problems, and potential dropout.

My heart breaks for children with learning differences who are stuck in public schools, because their parents cannot afford an educational setting that accommodates their learning differences, encourages their soul, and gives them the opportunity to achieve their full potential, go forward, and make a

positive impact on our world.

WE NEED EDUCATION VOUCHERS that allow parents to use our own tax dollars allocated for education to educate their children in whatever way best meets their needs instead of trying to educate them in the way that best meets the needs of the state.

Vouchers should be able to be used in public, private, parochial, charter, or home school educational settings.

Vouchers should not come with "separation of church and state" fine print that effectively blocks the teaching of religion in schools that accept "state vouchers." Besides the fact that it ("separation...") is a spurious argument, the funds being collected from the people and then apportioned through the state budget are still the PEOPLE's funds. Since all forms of schooling mentioned above are legal, tax payers should have the right to spend their money on any one of these forms of education without "strings attached" in the form of restrictions or regulations imposed on schools that choose to accept the vouchers.

Given the opportunity, we will choose wisely for our children!

Thank you for your consideration.

Connie,

We did not find out about the Senate Public Education Committee Hearing on Friday, 8/24 until today. I do not think we can come, so I wanted you to have our story. We are just one family, but we represent so many more who are earnestly seeking "...a bright hope for tomorrow" for ALL of our children. Thank you for making us aware of this hearing and for giving us a voice before this committee.

Sincerely,  
Sabra Grainger

**From:** [Alejandro\\_Toledo@UNIFIRST.COM](mailto:Alejandro_Toledo@UNIFIRST.COM)  
**To:** [connie@ceoastin.org](mailto:connie@ceoastin.org)  
**Subject:** School Choice: Let the Texas Senate Hear Your Story  
**Date:** Monday, August 20, 2012 1:17:22 PM

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Good Morning Connie,

My story is like many others that pay homeowners Tax. Due to the poor Education, and violence in public schools today, we have no choice "BUT" to send our children to a private school. I don't think it's fair that our Tax dollars go to pay public schools. While our kids get no benefits. We should at least get some type of a tax credit. I find it hard to believe that even tax day is after our children have already return to school. We can't even take advantage of that! and we are the once paying for our children's education. The way I see it, "We" pick up the whole bill. We pay for FREE lunch for public school kids. Our kids have to pay their own lunch. We pay for free bussing for public school kids. "We" have to drive our kids to school. I just would like to know? Where is the fairness, for us that pay the bill?

**PS**

**I would like Legislature to authorize school choice like many other states already enjoy Texas Tax. Payers should enjoy the same.  
COMING FRIDAY**

**The CEO Foundation wants you to have this information about an important Texas Senate hearing on school choice coming this Friday, and we hope you will share this info with your school families! We hope all who can rearrange their schedules last minute will. If you can't attend, please email me your story why you want the Legislature to authorize school choice like many other states already enjoy. Send emails to [connie@ceoastin.org](mailto:connie@ceoastin.org).**

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**Subject:** Senate Public Education Committee Hearing  
**Date:** Thursday, August 23, 2012 7:03:27 PM

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Hi Connie,

My name is Stephanie Ely. Two of my children attend Sacred Heart Catholic School. It would make our financial burden so much easier if the Legislature were to authorize school choice. We are willing to basically pay double, to make sure that all of our children attend Catholic School from Kindergarten thru High School. My husband and I have always wanted our children to go to Catholic school for many reasons, that include; daily teaching of our Religion, the quality of education that our children receive, the class size and the quality of life that we teach our children at home is reinforced at school.

My husband's job transferred us from out of state to the Houston area in 2005, this was before any of our children were old enough to attend school. When our oldest turned 3 yrs. we enrolled her in the Mother's Day Out Program at Sacred Heart Catholic School. It was there that we learned so much about the school and planned that this would be the school our children would attend. However, we moved a little bit further South so my husband's work commute would not be as long. When we moved into a new neighborhood, we thought we would go ahead and start our oldest at the public school down the street. We had hoped that she would make some neighborhood friends and then after a year or two we would move her back to Catholic School. In Kindergarten she was in 1 of 10 classes each consisting of 20 some students. Same situation for 1<sup>st</sup> grade. The curriculum appeared to be solely based on an annual standardized test. All of the homework that would come home would be how to teach this assignment for the standardized testing. I have no problem with standardized testing, I feel that is a great way to gauge how a student is learning. However, if that is the only things that the child is learning is how to take a standardized test, it some subjects needed more attention. For instance, after moving our oldest to Sacred Heart Catholic School, she seemed to be behind in her math skills. At Sacred Heart Catholic School they teach the children, beginning in Kindergarten, personal responsibility and accountability. The students learn that they are responsible for their school career, not just their parents. This is a long life skill that every human being must know to succeed. This most definitely was not taught at the public school. We teach this at home and love that it is reinforce at Sacred Heart Catholic School. One other thing that cemented our decision to move our children to Sacred Heart School, was the administration. We had some instances of not knowing where our child was at school dismissal and a few other issues. The administration appeared to just blow us off. We were not the only parents who had this type of experience in dealing with the administration. I believe this is due to they know that it is very hard for most families to pay the property taxes that go towards public schools and afford to pay for a private school tuition, their enrollment is not in jeopardy so therefore their school is not in jeopardy. After having the experience of public school, my husband and I decided that we would do whatever it took to make sure that our children went to catholic school, we decided that Sacred Heart was the best place for our children. In addition to the tuition we pay for 2 of our children, we drive a total of 70 miles every day to get them to school. I know that we are also paying for public school in our property taxes.

We would ask that school choice would make it to the Legislature this session. I know that this was attempted in the last session but did not gain any steam. We hope that would not be the case again this session.

Respectfully,  
Dan and Stephanie Ely

Spring, TX