

NATIONAL REVIEW

The *Washington Post*'s Crusade Against School Choice

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Welcome back to Forgotten Fact Checks. This week, we look at the *Washington Post*'s reporting on school choice, and cover more media misses.

Vouchers Aren't to Blame

The *Washington Post* reported last week that “Public schools are closing as Arizona’s school voucher program soars.”

But as the Goldwater Institute first pointed out, the *Post*'s decision to link the school closures to the state’s Empowerment Scholarship Accounts (ESA) program is disingenuous.

The story zeroes in on the Roosevelt Elementary School District in Phoenix, which has closed several schools due to declining enrollment. But despite what the *Post* would have readers believe, that declining enrollment is not a result of students with ESAs leaving the district for private schools.

More than 8,500 students have left the district — but only 102 of those students left for an ESA, according to Arizona Department of Education data. The rest have enrolled in public schools not operated by Roosevelt. It’s not hard to figure out why parents are pulling their kids out of Roosevelt schools en masse: Just 10 percent of students in the district scored proficient in math and just 17 percent scored proficient in reading on the 2024 state tests.

The *Post* did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The Arizona story, which looks to put down the state’s program that has successfully helped nearly 90,000 students choose schools that better suit their needs, is just one in a series of anti-school choice articles the outlet has published in recent years as the issue has surged to the forefront of public attention.

Last year, the *Washington Post* reported on the “unexpected explanation for why school segregation spiked.” The alleged explanation? You guessed it. School choice.

As Daniel Buck wrote for NR at the time:

According to the [Washington Post](#), a new study from two professors at Stanford University and the University of Southern California finds that segregation in schools is on the rise, and [school choice](#) is to blame. Quite a damning accusation, except that it's not true.

To begin, there are discrepancies in these newly reported statistics on the supposed increase in segregation, ranging from [25 percent](#) to over [one-third](#), depending on who's citing the study and when. The researchers, Sean Reardon and Ann Owens, [published](#) their conclusions earlier this month to commemorate the anniversary of Brown v. Board of Education but have yet to release an official paper.

Buck goes on to explain that the “actual story of integration in American schools is far more complicated than the media outcry suggests,” and notes the research claims that in “districts where the charter sector expanded most rapidly in the 2000s and 2010s, segregation grew the most”:

Because the full report has yet to be released, it's frankly unclear if this statement is meant to be causal — that is, if the researchers are claiming the charter schools caused the increase in segregation. Was racial isolation increasing or decreasing in big districts before the charters' arrival? Are the worst traditional public schools concentrated in the most racially isolated neighborhoods and so parents there are more likely to opt into charter schools?

The 2024 article wasn't even the first time *WaPo* tied school choice to segregation. In 2021, [the outlet published a story that claimed](#), “School choice’ developed as a way to protect segregation and abolish public schools.”

“The rhetoric of ‘choice’ and ‘freedom’ stands in stark contrast to the true goals of school choice advocates,” the outlet reported at the time.