



Don't Challenge My School Choice

By Educator Barnes – January 31, 2020

Saying the words 'school choice' could start a fight. Let's get real; it will start a fight. We should have never found ourselves in a place to judge the rights of other people to make choices and decisions about their families, but here we are. Who are we to judge the choices of others? What makes us the authority on what's right for someone else? As my mother says, "People need to stay in their lane and mind their own business."

I don't know any families who have children or who want children that did not consider schooling in their decision on where they wanted to live. There are eleven districts in Indy. When my husband and I purchased our first house 12 years ago, we only looked for houses in Lawrence, Washington, and Pike Township. We both grew up within the boundaries of IPS, but we were bused out to Lawrence Township. Based on our experiences as students, we wanted it to be an option.

We both lived on the line in IPS between the students that got bused to Lawrence and the students that had to go to IPS. Based on our friends' experience in school we knew we weren't going to live in IPS including any housing that was within walking distance of the highly coveted magnet schools. This meant turning down my uncle who was living in a home on Arsenal Ave, where Arsenal Technical High School is. That was my grandmother's house and then my uncle's house. He wanted to keep the house in the family, but for us, it was in the wrong district. We landed in Washington Township and lived in our first home for 12 years.

Two years ago, we decided we wanted a different house. We loved our house, but we wanted a different layout, and I wanted a bigger yard for my gardening. At this point, our sons were already attending school in Washington Township. We decided to not only look for a house within the district, but we also wanted to stay within the boundaries of our elementary school. The district threw a wrench into our plans. An eighth elementary school was opening which shrank the boundary of students who could attend each elementary school. Although Washington Township allows students to attend the schools in the district when they don't live within the boundaries, the school's principal told us there probably would not be any extra enrollment slots for the grade our twin sons would be entering.

After almost two years of looking, we were going to pause our search until our boys reached middle school. Then last year, on the day after my birthday, we finally found a house we both agreed on. (It took us three years to agree on a fridge, so we are making progress on coming to a mutual agreement.) When I think about all the efforts we put in to find a house that we both liked that was also within a certain boundary, how could we turn up our noses and judge the school choice of others?

We know parents who homeschool their children. Although my husband wanted me to homeschool our children, (and don't even bring this up to him cause I'm not trying to go rounds with him right now on this topic), that wasn't the choice we went with; however, it was the right choice for others. I have cousins who attended public charter schools. That is not the

choice we made for our children. But my cousins were happy, and they were learning. I should not judge their parents. I have former students who left the school where I was teaching to attend virtual school. Even though we didn't make that choice for our children, who are we to judge?

Clearly, I could go on, but I won't. For every extreme story about how school choice is wrong and how every kid should attend traditional public school, I can see the face of a child whose parents chose a different path. Moreover, that path worked. Until traditional public schools begin serving all students well, don't fix your lips to condemn school choice.