



Virtual School May Become Some Parents' Permanent School Choice for Their Children

By Educator Barnes – January 29, 2021

For years, I have stated I am unapologetically pro-school choice. I believe that children should be able to attend the school of their choice that best suits their needs. Earlier this school year, I was able to attend a professional development provided by the IDOE and led by Dr.

Anthony Muhammad called "Overcoming the Achievement Gap." During this professional development, a participant asked Muhammad where he stood when it came to school choice. He responded by challenging the framing of the question.

Muhammad stated that he was pro-child. He said the focus should be on the child and not the school type. This reframing is needed in the school choice conversation. Parents should not fear selecting a school based on stigma around the school type.

Some parents who had not considered their school choice options previously were forced to think about those options due to the pandemic. The fact is school buildings were forced to close across the country and learning moved online. There was no choice in that decision.

There has been story after story from teachers, parents, and students who despise online learning and wish to return to learning in-person permanently. On the other hand, there were families who found online learning a better choice for their children even though the option was forced into their laps at first.

Online schools existed way before the coronavirus pandemic took place; however, some had a bad reputation due to student outcomes. Online learning takes discipline and motivation. When students don't have those skills, online learning can result in learning loss. For the students who have thrived because they focused better at home, avoided discipline issues, and learned better in this format, this option should still be available during the next school year.

If a school will not continue this option in the future, then parents will be faced with a choice on whether to switch to an online school. National School Choice Week focuses on the many options available and is an opportunity for parents to learn more about how to identify the educational option that is best for their children.