

Do charter schools and voucher programs promote racial segregation?

Yes. Charter schools and voucher programs tend to worsen the racial and economic segregation in our education system.

This is why

Private school choice originated in America's racially segregated past. White lawmakers created programs for redirecting public money to private institutions so that white families didn't have to send their children to schools with their Black peers.

Charter schools and vouchers create more "white flight" and "bright flight" schools. Often, white parents use these options to flee schools with higher percentages of non-white students. And choice options tend to lure the more motivated and compliant students away from public schools.

Segregation is not inevitable. Several public school districts—Wake County (Raleigh), North Carolina; Jefferson County (Louisville), Kentucky; Lansing, Michigan; and Cambridge, Massachusetts—have been successful in their efforts to integrate students. Charters and choice will undo such efforts. This is happening in Wake County today.

Charter schools and voucher programs often lead to double segregation. Both increase segregation by race and income.

Look at the facts

During the Jim Crow era in the South, state and local laws enforced racial segregation in schools. Still, as the federal government and U.S. Supreme Court increased pressure to desegregate public institutions, white families flocked to private academies. In 1954 when the *Brown v Board* decision banned racially segregated schools, **southern legislatures enacted laws** that allowed the re-direction of public resources to benefit private schools, including providing vouchers

for students to attend private schools and setting up tax credits to build and finance private school systems.

School choice programs create a particularly strong dynamic for **Black-white segregation**. **An analysis on high schools** in the 100+ largest U.S. public school districts found a positive correlation between districts' propensity to offer school choice programs and the degree to which their high schools were racially imbalanced for Black and white students.

A **national** study of the trends in the racial makeup of nearly every school district in the U.S. found that **charter expansions made segregation worse** within school districts. The authors softened the impact of their findings by calling the charter school impact on segregation "quite small" – 5 - 7%. But that begs the question of why education policy should adopt any ideas – no matter how "small" – that worsen segregation.

A **2018 study** of **Washington, D.C.'s** voucher program found that 70% of voucher students were enrolled in heavily segregated schools with 90% or more minority students, and 58% were enrolled in all-minority schools. Since its inception in 2003, participation in the program has declined and become whiter.

An analysis of national enrollment data of charter schools, conducted by the **Associated Press** in the school year 2014-2015, found more than 1,000 of the nation's 6,747 charter schools had minority enrollment of at least 99%, and the number has been rising steadily.

A **national analysis** found **70% of Black charter school students attend intensely segregated minority charter schools** – double the share of intensely segregated



Black students in public schools. Half of Latinx charter school students attended racially isolated minority schools.

An analysis of federal data found that at all levels—national, state, and local— double segregation, by race and class, is higher in charter schools, and higher

percentages of charter students of every race attend intensely segregated schools. In most states, at least half of Blacks and a third of Latinx are enrolled in intensely segregated charters, and in urban schools, higher percentages of charter students attend intensely segregated schools.

WHAT PRIVATIZERS BELIEVE	WHAT WE BELIEVE
Because public schools are already mostly racially segregated, Black families need privately-operated alternatives.	Privately operated schools of choice will only exacerbate racial segregation. The only way to address racial segregation and inequity is to take on the racist forces that have kept our public system segregated.
Parents should be able to choose whether they want their children to attend a racially integrated or segregated school.	If parents want to separate their children from children of other races, they should pay for it themselves. The best choice for America is a racially integrated public system.

Bottom line

Systemic racism was foundational in developing the U.S. public school system and education policies, but erecting a parallel education system of publicly supported charter schools and voucher-funded private schools does nothing to address racial inequity and, in fact, only makes it worse.