

Guest column

Don't impose your agenda on my kids

point
of view

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The Step Up For Students scholarship program has provided extremely supportive aid to my family.

I have three children, two of whom utilize Step Up For Students to go to private schools.

One of the two has been a recipient for the last two years after I withdrew her from the public sector school system.

I have experienced the carelessness, lack of interest and nonchalant attitudes of the public sector school system for years. If you are not a parent involved on a consistent basis, your child will get left behind.

Every year, the public schools discontinue essential aid for students and their families.

Every year, the budget is cut.

As a result, students in Duval County Public Schools are not obtaining the substantial education required to remain competitive in the global economy.

I mention this because the Florida PTA recently announced it would fight the Step Up For Students scholarship program.

The Florida Legislature is trying to expand the program so it can help more low-income families. But the Florida PTA says there is a lack of accountability requirements and taxpayers have no knowledge of how money is being spent.

Now I know for fact that this is dubious and fabricated information.

Even with the Step Up For Students scholarships, I am still required to pay a portion of my children's tuition. So believe me, I make sure that I am aware of where additional funds are being applied.

The schools have no problem with providing me with this information.

I also know what tests are being administered to my children and what the tests measure. After these tests are taken, I am provided with the results.

I cannot recall this happening with any of my children, outside of the FCAT, when they attended public schools.

And the teachers in the private sector have no problem with providing your child with tutoring or extra one-on-one time if needed.

They are delighted to have a conference or reply to emails in a timely manner.

They are genuinely concerned about the welfare of your child.

If more children in "low-income" families were permitted to attend the more prominent local public schools, maybe outcomes would be different.

But I had several incidents where I had to contact the Duval School Board regarding academic concerns that weren't being addressed in a timely manner — if at all.

I am always vocal when it comes to my children's well-being and education.

So I have a message for the Florida PTA:

Don't try to force me to put my children back in a class environment where the ratio of students to teachers is unrealistic and overcrowded, where there is less control and where the general atmosphere is more aggressive.

I'm sorry, Florida PTA, but you do not speak for all "low-income" families.

You definitely do not speak for mine.

Terriya Washington is a Jacksonville resident and local school parent.

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