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Summary:

It's time to expand the role of parents choosing—and the market delivering—better education for Oregon's children through educational choice. Education Savings Accounts for Oregon parents are a life-changing education solution whose time has come.

Word Count 455

“A scholarship is not a five-year plan or a power point.... It's a ticket to the future, granted today, for a child trying to shape his or her own destiny in the here and now....”

An Education Solution Whose Time Has Come

By Kathryn Hickok

Derrell Bradford has spent his adult life passionately advocating for education reform through parental choice. Derrell grew up in southwest Baltimore and received a scholarship to a private high school. Better than anyone, he knows the power of educational choice to unleash a child's potential.

“A scholarship is not a five-year plan or a power point....,” Derrell explained recently. “It's a ticket to the future, granted today, for a child trying to shape his or her own destiny in the here and now....”

Choices in education are widespread in America, unless you are poor. Affluent families can move to different neighborhoods, send their children to private schools, and supplement schooling with enrichment opportunities. Lower- and middle-income families, however, are too often trapped with one option: a school in need of improvement assigned to them based on their home addresses. Families deserve better.

January 22-28 is [National School Choice Week](#), the world's largest celebration of parental choice and effective educational options for all children.

Students have different talents and needs and learn in different ways. The landscape of options to meet those needs is more diverse today than ever. These options include traditional public schools, charter schools, magnet schools, online learning, private schools, and homeschooling.

Oregon's 2012 “Mother of the Year” and parental choice activist Bobbie Jager says, “The word ‘choice’ in our home means, ‘of high quality and carefully selected,’ as our children's education and schools should be. As parents, we need to be able to make these choices for each of our children.”

It's time Oregon took a serious look at the diversity of options parents now have in [61 school choice programs across the country](#), including privately or publicly funded scholarship programs, charter schools, education tax credits, vouchers, and Education Savings Accounts.

Parents—not public school bureaucracies—should be in the educational “driver's seat.” To really empower Oregon families, the Legislature should enact Senate Bill 437 during this year's upcoming legislative session. This law would give parents



who want to opt out of a public school that is not meeting their child’s needs a portion of the per-student state funding for spending on their child’s education in other ways. With this “Education Savings Account” (analogous to a debit card for qualifying education expenses), parents can choose the schools or services that will meet their children’s learning needs.

Oregon has a history of bold experimentation in other policy areas. It’s time to expand the role of parents choosing—and the market delivering—better education for Oregon’s children through educational choice, because every child deserves a ticket to a better future right now. Parental choice is the way of the future, and Education Savings Accounts for Oregon parents are a life-changing education solution whose time has come.

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