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QuickPoint! – Shuffling Is for Playing Cards, Not School Kids

By Kathryn Hickok

Portland Public Schools is [redrawing the boundaries of more than a dozen schools](#) and reassigning 5,000 students, ten percent of its enrollment. According to *The Oregonian*: “To make sure no school ends up understaffed or overcrowded, students must be shuffled.”

In government-run school districts, kids are cards in a deck. The bureaucracy gets to deal, assigning students to school buildings based on their residences. And even when parents exercise choice by moving into a neighborhood, gaining access to special school-based programs, or enrolling in charter schools located in underused facilities, the district retains the right to shuffle and deal over.

When [Oregon enacted an interdistrict open enrollment law](#) in 2012, hundreds of Oregon parents chose schools outside their districts of residence [that better met the needs of their children](#). Empowering parents of every income level to choose schools through open enrollment, more charter schools, and private school choice programs would be more respectful of each student’s dignity—and a better way to address his or her educational needs—than a centrally planned system in which the odds always favor the district “house.” In most aspects of life, Oregonians expect parents to judge what is in the best interests of their children. When it comes to education, the stakes are too high to treat kids like playing cards.

Kathryn Hickok is Publications Director and Director of the Children’s Scholarship Fund-Oregon program at Cascade Policy Institute, Oregon’s free market public policy research organization.