



Who Do These Florida Parents Think They Are?

Published on *Show-Me Institute* (<https://showmeinstitute.org>)



By: Susan Pendergrass

Florida parents are just fancy people who think their kids are special and need a customized education that's tailored to their children's needs. Missouri parents, on the other hand, are okay with their kids being ordinary and getting an off-the-shelf education at their neighborhood school like they themselves did when they were young.

Does anyone really believe that? Of course not. Which is why I'm always surprised that Missouri parents don't demand access to educational programs like those that choice-rich states like Florida offer.

Last year, [nearly half](#) of all Florida parents chose something other than their child's assigned public school. And they have a wide range of options, both public and private. One of their newest programs gives parents of public school students who are struggling to learn to read \$500 per year to use on tutoring. The nearly \$10 million price tag for this program could have gone to grow reading budgets in districts, but the folks in Tallahassee operate from a place that the folks in Jefferson City do not. According to the chairman of their House Education Committee, "The parent is the most influential person in the child's life."

And guess what? While Missouri's scores on the Nation's Report Card have been [flat](#) for the last decade, Florida's have shown [improvement](#) across the board. We're seeing similar [results](#) in other vibrant education market places. How long are Missouri parents—especially those who

can't afford to spend a sizeable chunk of the family budget on private-school tuition—willing to wait to have some say over how their children are educated?

About the Author



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Susan Pendergrass was Vice President of Research and Evaluation for the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools before joining the Show-Me Institute. Prior to coming to the National Alliance, Susan was a senior policy advisor at the U.S. Department of Education during the Bush administration and a senior research scientist at the National Center for Education Statistics during the Obama administration. She earned a Ph.D. in Public Policy from George Mason University.

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