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## Giving students options helps pave way for education equality

June 20, 2014 12:00 am • Kate Casas

4



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### Decision on Normandy schools was a good first step



On June 16, the Missouri State Board of Education voted to nonaccredit the

new Normandy Schools Collaborative. The Missouri Charter Public Sch... [Read more](#)

### Essentially, nothing changes in Normandy district

As the old saying goes, "If it walks like a duck, if it quacks like a duck, then it must be a duck." Personally, taking a look at what members... [Read more](#)

### Normandy School District seeks restraining order against the state



The district seeks to save itself from lapsing, and to stop

the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education from squashing its l... [Read more](#)

### Parents hoping to transfer students out of troubled St. Louis County districts seek answers

Throughout the past year, the Children's Education Alliance of Missouri and StudentsFirst worked tirelessly to ensure that all Missouri children receive the quality education they deserve — now — not next year or 10 years from now but now. By not accepting the status quo, we helped pave the way for education equality — a system under which ZIP codes don't determine futures. Key to that ultimate goal are education options.

When the Missouri Supreme Court upheld the transfer law that allowed families to leave unaccredited schools last summer, it gave students in failing school districts options. In an effort to help families navigate the tangled web of transfer requirements set forth by the sending and receiving school districts, we engaged hundreds of parents and let them know that their children matter, that they were not doomed to be trapped in failing districts. We provided them with the information and tools they needed to make the best possible decisions for their children's education future.

These decisions did not come without sacrifice. Some parents committed to driving their children across the region so that they could have a better education. Many students were so intent upon getting a quality education that they elected to spend hours each day on buses that would take them to and from schools far from home. It soon became evident that for many the long distances were true hardships.

Senate Bill 493, which passed both the Missouri House and Senate this legislative session, would have allowed students in unaccredited schools to attend a better school in their home district. But for Gov. Jay Nixon's veto, it would have ensured students in Normandy, Riverview Gardens, Kansas City and future failing school districts have immediate access to the high-quality education they deserve, closer to home. And yes, that would have included public charter schools and a very limited number of private, non-sectarian schools.

To the Post-Dispatch editorial board that heralded the governor's veto for paving the way for progress in Normandy, we ask you to consider this: The situation in Normandy is not new. In fact, the Normandy School District squeaked by with provisional accreditation for 20 years before finally losing its



Supportive group urges pressure on Gov. Nixon not to veto bill that offers limited options. [Read more](#)

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**Section of school transfer bill ignores interests of the students**

As a conservative, I found myself on the opposite side of two issues last week. The first was the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to overturn Fl... [Read more](#)

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Bill McClellan's column "Transfer 'fix' is a bad bill, lacking honesty" (May 30) is spot-on but did not attach an option that is possibly viab... [Read more](#)

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**Editorial: 'The failure is Missouri's.' State is right to take over Normandy**



The success or failure to educate the children who show up for school there is now, very literally, an entire state's responsibility. [Read more](#)

accreditation altogether. That went largely unnoticed for decades. For a lot of people — particularly a lot of education administrators, politicians and the governor — that was very convenient. For a lot of students, that was devastating.

Twenty years is a long time. Tens of thousands of students passed through that district throughout the course of 20 years and received subpar educations. Where was the public outcry for them? Today, they are adults who simply did not receive the quality education they deserved. Tell them of this progress you speak. Tell them how vetoing legislation that would have provided access to high-quality educational options closer to home, that would have provided tutoring services, that would have allowed districts to keep lower classes is cause for celebration.

We don't believe it is Gov. Nixon's place — or anyone's place — to pick and choose which Missouri children have access to a high-quality education. Propelled by this belief, our commitment to school choice and quality education options for all Missouri children is fueled with renewed vigor, because 20 years from now, we don't want to still be having this same debate.

*Kate Casas is state director of the Children's Education Council of Missouri.*



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**Tags** Missouri, Normandy, Jay Nixon, Missouri Supreme Court, Studentsfirst, Kansas City, Riverview Gardens, Normandy School District, Kate Casas

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