Op-Ed Argument

Fall 2013

<center>Pence + charter schools=penniless public schools</center>

Your daughter wants a cookie, but the funny thing is she's already had two. You've told her no, but for some reason she still doesn't get it. She persists that it isn't fair.

When "no" just doesn't satisfy them, you know it's time to drop the bomb.

"Life is not fair."

Yes we've all heard it before, that classic parental justification for just about every scenario. That is, until now.

According to the Journal Gazette, Indiana governor, Mike Pence, wants to expand the realm of charter schools and virtually extend the "life is not fair" justification to public schools.

The Indiana Charter School Board, defines a charter school as a public school that offers unique, innovative educational learning opportunities under a contract with the school's organizer and authorizer. The funding of these schools is very similar to that of public school system, where the amount of money the schools receive is based upon the number of pupils. Like public school districts, charter schools, too, cannot discriminate against disability, ethnicity, race, gender, origin, religion, or ancestry. Or can they?

When at maximum enrollment, charter schools appoint qualifications for new students. Since the No child Left Behind Act was implemented in 2001, federal and state governmental funding is now based upon students' academic performance on nationwide tests. Unlike public school, charter schools now have the ability to accept students based on academic assessment.

If these charter schools are admitting the more academically talented students, then obviously these schools will receive a higher grade (in comparison to the other Indiana public schools) and receive more funding.

Is this not essentially social and economic discrimination?

Granted, the No Child Left Behind Act has unintentionally formed an unfair system, but allowing these charter schools to subtract the funds from the public schools that desperately need them is not helping fix the flawed system.

Charter schools are classified as a public school, but they do not have to follow all of the same standards as public schools. As stated by the Indiana Charter School board, "In Indiana, an individual charter school is considered to be its own local educational agency (LEA)". Perceived as its own school corporation, charter schools are exempt from particular state regulations.

As long as the school meets the requirements of its charter and the accountability of the state it can remain open to receiving funding.

Yet ironically, the charter requirements are not established by the state board of education, but through the school's organizer. The funny thing is the schools' founders range from the "regular Joe" to a private organization.

The charter schools do not have to meet the same fundamental standards as a basic public school. How is it fair that they should be in the same competition for funding with the public schools that actually do strive to meet the national standards? Education is supposed to be the stair steps to success, but this competition for funds between the public and charter schools is not allowing the ladder to be built.

An institution that is privately run, sometimes even for profit, should not be publicly funded.

Yes, charter schools might seem like the golden key towards enhancing our nation's education system, with their lofty claims of state-of-the-art learning facilities and their commitment to the development of character and individuality. Perhaps they truly do an honest job in enlightening young minds with their smaller teacher to student ratio.

However, if we are to improve our nation as whole, then it is essential that those who strive to meet their state and federal educational standards be rewarded with just compensation and a level playing field.

Governor Pence, while your policy can be justified by life's injustice, (drum roll) life can be made fair. So go ahead, increase the number of charter schools, but just know life has a sneaky way of working out the kinks. Cheap education has a high price.