

The Power of School Choice

By Shawnta S. Barnes – May 3, 2017



May 1-5 is National Charter School Week. This week highlights the power and benefits of choice. Marie A. Wright believes enacting this choice is not only a parent's right, but the reason her children have been academically successful and able to have access to great opportunities.

Choice is not about sending all your children to a charter school over your boundary school. Choice is about picking the right school for each child. All of our children went to different schools. For one child, the best fit was private and for the other two, the best fit was charter. Those children did not attend the same charter school.



Our oldest child, Timothy V. Wright Jr., attended school in both Pike and Franklin Township, but he graduated from Indianapolis Metropolitan High School, a charter school, where he was his class valedictorian. He attended IUPUI on a full academic scholarship.

Our middle child, Taylor Byers, attended The Oaks Academy, a private school that offers a classical Christian education, from 1st to 6th grade. She completed 7th-12th grade at Cardinal Ritter, a catholic high school. She just completed her freshman year at Tennessee State University and she was on the dean's list the entire year.

Our youngest, Morgan Wright, is a 7th grader attending Tindley Collegiate Academy, an all girls school. It's a charter school where the motto is, "College or Die." Prior to attending Collegiate, she was a student at Avondale Meadows Academy, also a charter school.

Choice isn't without sacrifice. My children did not know the kids in our neighborhood as well because they didn't have a shared school experience. We have a 40 minute commute to get Morgan to school each day. We also have to sacrifice time and be involved in our children's education. Tindley and other charters have been given a bad wrap, but I don't understand it. They are holding your child accountable and not settling for mediocrity. They expect you to be involved. When you enroll your child, you are entering into an agreement with the school that you are going to be an active participant to help your child excel.

What I have loved about the charter schools my youngest has attended is the consistent communication from 1st grade on. They have worked with her on her strengths and weaknesses. They are there to make sure she is thriving. The education is rigorous and challenging to her. She excels on her tests including the standardized tests. Most importantly the school holds both my child and our family accountable for her educational outcomes.

My advice to parents considering choosing a school is do real research, not he said she said research. Don't listen to your friends at the beauty shop. You have to go see the school for yourself. Visit the school. Observe what is going on and consider your child, each individual child. It's worth the sacrifice. We know that choosing the right school for each of our children was the right decision and we know they are going to be prepared for the future.