

Sportscaster knows the score when it comes to vouchers

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Leave it to a TV sports reporter to see through muddled logic offered by opponents of school choice in Kentucky.

Reporter Dave Baker gets it because he's also a parent.

Baker, a sports anchor, reporter and account executive at WKYT-TV, the CBS television affiliate in Lexington, does not buy the tomfoolery offered about school choice by editorial writers of the state's two largest newspapers. And Baker said so on a recent edition of Kentucky Educational Television's "Comment on Kentucky."

Courier-Journal editor and columnist David Hawpe droned on about the need to use expanded-gaming revenues in order to "fund education properly." Lexington Herald-Leader editorial writer Jamie Lucke said, "theoretically, competition sounds great" but it "wouldn't help very many people." Lucke offered no support for her position.

Baker questioned both those calls by the referees for the editorial pages.

He responded this way when asked how he would campaign on education if running for governor: "I'd be a vouchers guy."

For those who primarily read only Hawpe or Lucke, we should clarify: "Voucher" is not a dirty word. Rather, vouchers equal government-issued certificates – much like the "GI Bill" does for military veterans.

Vouchers allow parents to choose better schools. And they work – not only in America but in other countries, too.

In Sweden – not exactly a Mecca of free-market fervor – all parents, regardless of income, can receive vouchers to place students in public or independent schools of their choice.

Before school-choice reform took hold in Sweden, few independent schools existed. But the number of children attending independent schools in Sweden rose from 15,000 in 1993 – when vouchers became available – to 100,000 in 2004. Research also indicates that mathematics grades and test scores for Sweden's *public-school students* continue to improve as competition increases.

School choice represents a rising tide that lifts all boats.

Besides, if using a school-choice policy wouldn't "help very many people," why not allow the few that would benefit to receive vouchers? Of course, that would negate Hawpe's "call" that vouchers would "destroy the public schools, which are the legacy in our state."

Sometimes the "official" makes the bad call, and the sportscaster gets it right.

