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“A battle lost or won is easily described, understood, and appreciated, but the moral growth of a great nation requires reflection, as well as observation, to appreciate it.”
Frederick Douglass

Administration Discusses Educational Priorities and School Safety at CPAC

Last week, Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos spoke of her priorities at the Department of Education during the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC), an annual event held in Washington, D.C., which highlights conservative leaders and ideas. In a [conversation](#) with Kay Coles James, the new president of the Heritage Foundation, DeVos described herself as “an advocate for all kids . . . for the opportunity to have a great future and a great education.” Regarding her agenda at the DOE, she explained that the top priority is implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act, referencing the many opportunities the law provides for states to offer educational choices for families. She stated that “if states take the opportunities afforded them through the act, [it] will bring many more opportunities and much more flexibility for schools to meet students’ needs and to address the needs of individual students.” She immediately followed this with a recognition that most education policy happens at the state level, and that many states are taking steps to offer educational options to families in their states. She emphasized, “I am urging and encouraging states to even double down on that and for those who have not yet taken those steps, to do so.” Regarding federal involvement in school choice, she hinted at future opportunities to partner with states in offering choice and also expounded on offering school choice for military families through education savings accounts. She reiterated her passion for school choice, stating, “The core issue is that we need to embrace, as a country, education freedom and that allows us to think more broadly about what education should be.” Notably, CPAC was just over a week after the terrible tragedy in Parkland, Florida, and the Secretary began her comments leading a moment of silence in honor and memory of the victims and their families. [President Trump](#) and Vice President Pence also spoke at CPAC and expressed their deep sympathy to the victims’ families and emphasized their commitment to strengthen school safety across America. [Vice President Pence](#) pointed out the steps the administration has already taken to make the safety of schools and students a top priority. He stated, “I can ensure you all of this, President Trump and our entire administration will continue to take strong action to make our schools safe and to give law enforcement and our families the tools they need to deal with those struggling with dangerous mental illness.”

Report Shows How Families Benefit from Florida’s ESA Program

Results from a recent EdChoice study, [Personalizing Education: How Florida Families Use Education Savings Accounts](#), show that families that participate in Florida’s education savings account (ESA) program often use

the funding for educational expenses beyond private school tuition. Authored by Lindsey Burke and Jason Bedrick, the report examines the educational choices of nearly 1,000 families that participate in Florida's Gardiner Scholarship program, an ESA program open to special needs students. Generally speaking, ESA programs provide parents with a portion of the educational funds that would normally be allotted for that student in a public school; the parents are able use the funds for a variety of educational expenses including private school tuition, curriculum, tutoring, or other educational services. The results for the EdChoice study show that over a two-year period, a large percentage of parents (35.4% one year and 44.6% the second year) used the funds to customize their child's education beyond private school tuition, and over half of those parents used the funds exclusively for educational materials outside a traditional classroom (55.3% one year and 51% the second year). The authors concluded, "When given the chance, parents will seize the opportunity to educate their children using a variety of services and products."

Opportunity for Christian School Participation in President's Education Awards Program

Started in 1983, the [President's Education Awards Program \(PEAP\)](#) is designed to honor students who have made exceptional academic achievements or improvements and is open to Christian schools that want to participate. The program allows graduating elementary, middle, or high school students to receive a certificate, signed by the President and the Secretary of Education, for their achievement. To qualify for the President's Award for Educational Excellence, students must meet a minimal grade point average or letter equivalent and either succeed in state or national standardized testing (such as SAT or ACT) or receive two nominations from teachers. To qualify for the President's Award for Educational Achievement, students must meet criteria laid out by their school, usually involving overcoming some challenge or obstacle in order to succeed, and be selected by their principal. The awards can be ordered online for free, with options for lapel pins, folders, or medallions at a charge per item. PEAP is a way to recognize students who work hard and value learning with a meaningful token of achievement. A list of the 30,000 schools that participated last year can be viewed [here](#). Principals interested in participating in this program can [visit here](#) to create an account and order awards. Details on qualifications can be found [here](#), or by calling 1-877-897-4784 for ordering information.

In Case You Missed It:

[Weekly Market Update](#) provided by Jeff Beach of the [AACCS Investment Team at Merrill Lynch](#)

[Book Review - The Education Invasion: How Common Core Fights Parents for Control of American Kids](#)

[10 Tips for School Security](#)

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