THE WASHINGTON FLYER

A Publication of the American Association of Christian Schools

The Washington Flyer
March 13, 2026

"If virtue and knowledge are diffused among the people, they will never be enslav'd. This will be their great security."
Sam Adams

Study Shows School Choice Helps Public School Outcomes

A recent study by the American Federation for Children found that school choice programs improve academic outcomes for public school students, in addition to the benefits to participating private school students. The study, titled "School Choice Competition vs. New Education Spending: Estimating the Academic Benefits for Public School Students" and authored by Patrick Graff, examined results from multiple studies, including a 2023 report that analyzed outcomes from the Florida Tax Credit (FTC) program and a 2024 meta-analysis reviewing 31 studies on the relationship between education spending and student achievement. "The results are striking: scaling the tax credit scholarship program from 15,000 to over 100,000 students produced achievement gains for public school students that were—conservatively—over 11x larger than if that same funding had been used to increase state K-12 education budgets instead," stated Graff.

Graff also pointed out that critics of the FTC argued that expanding the tax credits for the scholarships would hurt public schools, but added, "the best evidence we have suggests otherwise." The authors of the 2024 meta-analysis found that increased funding for public education gave a slight boost to student achievement, and they concluded that an increase of $1,000 per pupil would equate to approximately 5-6 more days of education per child. The 2023 report, which examined the FTC program over 15 years, found that "students in schools with above-median competition were 120 days of learning ahead in reading." Low-income students were 140 days ahead. Florida has invested $2.8 billion in the FTC program; Graff argued that if that money had been spent directly on public education rather than the FTC, the gains would have been much lower. Furthermore, following the conclusion of the 2024 meta-analysis, Graff noted that Florida would have needed to invest approximately $31.8 billion in public schools to achieve the 120-day gain in learning.

Graff pointed to several factors that account for the positive outcomes for public school students in areas with school choice programs. Competition often prompts principals to make instructional and policy changes in order to improve their schools. Additionally, choice programs allow more movement of students to different schools. Graff noted that these factors do not mean the choice programs are "'cream skimming' the best students from public schools and leaving the harder to educate students behind," but rather that parents are able to choose the school that best helps meet their children's needs. Graff had concluding advice: "Policymakers in states considering how to effectively allocate education dollars should view school choice not only as a way to create options for students who need them, but also as a system-level intervention which improves outcomes for all students across the state."

Supreme Court Upholds Parental Rights Over Schools' Gender Secrecy Policy
The U.S. Supreme Court has released a preliminary ruling that protects families from policies that force schools and teachers to hide information about a student's perceived transgender status from the student's parents. In 2023, two teachers sued the Escondido Union School District in California after the district required them to hide this information from parents unless a child agreed to share it. The teachers, along with several affected parents, also sued the California Department of Education over its policy. The district court issued a class-action permanent injunction. However, the teachers and parents filed an emergency motion with the U.S. Supreme Court after the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals blocked that injunction. Last week, the Supreme Court reinstated the injunction for the parents in an unsigned opinion as the case continues. The court found that the parents are "likely to succeed on the merits of their Free Exercise Clause claim" and cited the *Mahmoud* case that protected the right of religious parents to opt their child out of public school content that opposes their faith. Although the Supreme Court did not rule on the merits of the California case, the opinion is being hailed as a landmark step to protect children. "No more can bureaucrats secretly facilitate a child's gender transition while shutting out parents," said Peter Breen, executive vice president at Thomas More Society, which litigated the case. He added, "This groundbreaking ruling will protect parents' rights to raise their children as they see fit for years to come."

Indiana Court Ruling Blocks Pro-Life Law, Protecting Abortion Under the Guise of Religious Freedom
A district court has blocked a 2022 Indiana law that protects prenatal life. The law prohibits abortion except in certain cases of a lethal fetal anomaly, pregnancy because of rape or incest, or to save the life of the mother. However, two individuals and the American Civil Liberties Union of Indiana sued, claiming that the law violates Indiana's Religious Freedom Restoration Act, or RFRA. Indiana's RFRA requires the government to prove that laws that substantially burden a person's religious exercise further a compelling government interest in the least restrictive means possible. In the class action lawsuit, the plaintiffs distorted RFRA and claimed that some women's religious beliefs could require them to obtain abortions. One anonymous woman believed in a "universal consciousness" that could require her to obtain an abortion if "another child would not allow her to fully realize her humanity." The district judge ruled that the law failed to meet the RFRA standards and issued a permanent injunction for the plaintiffs. The judge specifically noted that the law should allow exceptions for those with a RFRA claim because the law allows other exceptions for abortion, such as for rape or incest. Pro-life advocates are speaking out against the decision. "Indiana's Religious Freedom Restoration Act was never intended to equate taking the life of an unborn child with religious expression in our state," said Mike Fichter, president and chief executive officer of Indiana Right to Life. Indiana Attorney General Todd Rokita has already appealed the ruling.

In Case You Missed It:

Weekly Market Update provided by Jeff Beach of the AACS Investment Team at Merrill Lynch

Practical Legal Help for Christian Schools: ADF Ministry Alliance

Education Resource: The Heritage Guide to Historic Sites

School Choice Programs Are Only Scratching the Surface of Demand

Number of Americans with Biblical Worldview Remains Critically Low

Rise of Religious "Nones"

Jamison Coppola: Government Relations Director
Olivia Summers: Government Relations Assistant
Maureen Van Den Berg: Policy Analyst
Washington Office, 119 C Street SE, Washington, DC 20003