



A Publication of the American Association of Christian Schools

The Washington Flyer
August 9, 2019

“I have been driven many times upon my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had no where else to go. My own wisdom and that of all about me seemed insufficient for that day.”
Abraham Lincoln

New Report Shows School Choice Has Positive Effect on College Attendance and Completion

The Urban Institute recently released a report which shows that school choice programs can have a positive effect on graduation rates and degree attainment. The [study](#), titled “The Effects of Means-Tested Private School Choice Programs on College Enrollment and Graduation,” tracked students in Florida’s Tax Credit scholarship program (FTC), the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP), and the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program (OSP) and compared their educational achievements after high school with those of their public school peers. The FTC provides school choice to over 100,000 students, serving as the nation’s largest school choice program. The study found that 57% of students who participated in the FTC attended college, while only 51% of non-participants attended college. The data also showed that 12% of FTC students earned a college degree, compared with 10% of their peers who were not part of the program. Students participating in the Milwaukee program showed similar results with an increase in the rates of college attendance and completion for students receiving the vouchers. The MPCP provides vouchers to almost 29,000 students and has been in operation since 1990 (the oldest modern school choice program in the country). College enrollment for MPCP students was 4 to 6 percentage points higher than their peers who did not participate in the program, and degree attainment was 1 to 3 percentage points higher for MPCP students. A previous similar study of the MPCP had shown a significant increase in college enrollment for participating students but not necessarily for degree attainment; so, this new data [revealed better results](#) from the program with “statistically significant positive effects on both college enrollment and attainment for MPCP students.” The data for the OSP, however, did not show any significant difference in the rates of college attendance and achievement between students who participated in the program and those who did not. The OSP serves just over 1,600 students in Washington, D.C., who are chosen to participate in the program through a lottery system. The authors of the research note in their [conclusion](#) that even though the results from the OSP differed from the positive findings from the FTC and MPCP, the data was an “important addition to the research” because of the differences in the programs. They also note that the rates for college graduation among students from low-income families—those who generally qualify for school choice programs—also tend to be quite low, even when the college enrollment rates for this group may be increasing. For these reasons, the authors suggest further research would provide useful information on how to help choice programs offer even greater success and opportunities for students.

Ohio Passes Education Bill Including School Choice

In Ohio’s recently [passed budget bill](#), school choice programs and charter schools were given greater flexibility to serve more students in the state. The bill does much to incentivize high quality charter schools and to keep more of those schools open and operational by relaxing the requirements for automatic closures of charter

schools and giving them more flexibility to hire teachers. While still enforcing strict accountability standards for traditional and charter schools, the bill sets aside \$30 million each year for two years as additional aid to help ensure that high-performing charter schools continue to offer excellent services to students, distributing the money in per-pupil allotments based on students' income levels. The bill also focuses on provisions to bolster the state's already robust school choice program. The bill expands eligibility for the income-based EdChoice scholarship program so that students in all grades can participate, instead of only those students in K-7th grades, and also allows parents to apply for EdChoice scholarships year-round. Additionally, the bill mandates that the total number of available scholarships must automatically increase once the number of applications exceeds 90 percent of the limit. These provisions [and others](#) aim to increase the effectiveness of successful school choice programs and also expand those opportunities to more families in need of better education options for their children.

Department of Justice Files Statement of Interest in Case for Vermont Students

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) recently filed a [statement of interest](#) in support of Vermont students who are being denied participation in a state dual enrollment program due to their attendance at religious schools. The [Alliance Defending Freedom](#) (ADF) is representing the Vermont students in the case *A.M. v. French*. Vermont started its dual enrollment program in 2013, allowing high school students in public, secular private, and homeschools to take college courses with state funds but excluding religious school students from participating. According to ADF legal counsel Christen Price, the Supreme Court decision in *Trinity Lutheran v. Comer* shows that "a state cannot discriminate against students by excluding them from generally available public benefits simply because they attend a religious school." The DOJ statement of interest in the case explains that "the United States has an interest in the proper interpretation of the Free Exercise Clause, and more generally in enforcing the various protections for religious freedom." The DOJ argues that the students' exclusion from the program is discriminatory against religious exercise. It also finds that Vermont fails to meet the strict standard of scrutiny in discriminating against religious students, and that allowing religious students to participate would not violate the Constitution's Establishment Clause. Arguments took place on August 2 in a federal district court in Vermont.

In Case You Missed It:

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

[Abortion is the Dismembering of a Living Child, Supreme Court Justice Says](#)

[Students Brushed Aside as Christian School Cut from Voucher Program](#)

[New Report: School Choice and Crime: Evidence from Milwaukee](#)