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*“The liberties of our country, the freedom of our civil constitution, are worth defending against all hazards:
And it is our duty to defend them against all attacks.”*
Samuel Adams

New Study Shows Adverse Effects of State-Funded Pre-K Program

A [new study](#) from Kelley Durkin, Mark W. Lipsey, Dale C. Farran, and Sarah E. Wiesen at Vanderbilt University shows that a state-funded universal pre-kindergarten program led to poorer student performance over time compared to students that did not participate in the program. The study is the second to look at student outcomes in the Tennessee Voluntary Pre-K Program (TN-VPK), a program that offers state-funded pre-K for four-year-old students from low-income families. The TN-VPK began in 1996 as a pilot program and went state-wide in 2005. Since then, two studies have looked at the outcomes of students participating in the program. The first study looked at the outcomes of students through grade three and revealed some negative results, although the differences were not statistically significant. This new study continues that research, following the same group of nearly 3,000 students through grade six to determine whether the adverse outcomes in grade three would continue or dissipate as the children grew older. The results of the study show that the negative effects not only persisted into sixth grade but actually grew worse for these students.

Students that participated in the Tennessee program performed worse academically and behaviorally compared to students that did not attend the state-funded pre-K program. Comparing state achievement test scores, the students that were in the state program scored lower in reading, math, and science than their peers, many of whom were cared for at home rather than attend pre-K. Interestingly, participating students’ scores improved at the end of their pre-K school year, but those gains gradually declined and turned into losses as students grew older. Another negative academic finding was that a higher percentage of participating students had an IEP (individualized education program) compared to nonparticipating students by the sixth grade. Aside from the poor academic findings, the study also shows the troubling trend that students enrolled in the TN-VPK experienced worse behavioral outcomes than non-participating students. These students had higher rates of major and minor school offenses, especially violations of school rules, than non-participants. The results echo other studies that show how students that attend pre-K experience higher rates of behavior problems such as higher aggression and impulsivity, less self-control, and greater occurrences of conflicts, traits that can eventually lead to even worse outcomes. The authors conclude, “Our results are robust and contrary to the claims made by many advocates for the universally positive effects of pre-K participation.” The results of this study should serve as a cautionary example for elected officials who are actively pursuing a universal, federally funded pre-K program. Despite the [promise](#) that universal pre-K “will lead to lifelong education and economic benefits for children and parents,” results from studies like this one reveal how such a program could subject all three- and four-year-old children that participate to negative academic and behavioral outcomes.

U.S. Secretary of Education Outlines Priorities

U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona [delivered a speech](#) last week in which he outlined the Biden administration's top four priorities for education. The priorities included supporting students through the pandemic, addressing achievement gaps, improving access to higher education, and ensuring higher education leads to healthy careers. In addressing the first priority of providing "support [to] students through pandemic response and recovery," Cardona emphasized the inclusion of social emotional learning and addressing the mental health of students who are suffering due to the school closures of the pandemic. In discussing the priority to "boldly address opportunity and achievement gaps," Cardona called for increased funding for Title I and IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act), and also stated his goal of providing "free, universal pre-K and affordable high-quality child care" for every family. This idea was part of President Biden's Build Back Better Agenda which failed in the Senate. However, there is speculation that Senator Joe Manchin (WV), the Democrat Senator primarily responsible for killing the bill, supports the idea of universal preschool, thus causing speculation that the Democrats will try to push the issue this Congress. During his speech, Secretary Cardona also mentioned the importance of listening to parents and "engaging families as core partners to educators." However, as [noted by Breitbart News coverage](#), "He continues to avoid stating that parents are the 'primary' stakeholders in children's education."

School Choice Saves Taxpayers Money

EdChoice has released an updated report which shows that South Carolina's school choice program, the Educational Credit for Exceptional Needs Children Fund, has [saved taxpayers](#) "between \$62 million and \$99.8 million through 2018." The data is part of the study titled [Fiscal Effects of School Choice](#) which examined 40 educational programs, including 18 tax credit scholarship programs, 19 voucher programs, and 3 education savings account programs. Combined, these programs "generated an estimated \$12.4 billion to \$28.3 billion in cumulative net fiscal savings for state and local taxpayers," which amounts to a per-student savings of \$3,300 to \$7,500. Interestingly, the study points out that for each dollar spent on the programs, approximately \$1.80 to \$2.85 was saved because the cost per student in the programs is not as much as the cost per student in public education. Given that a primary argument against school choice is that programs will take away money from public schools, the author of the study offers this conclusion: "While educational choice programs enroll just 2.3 percent of publicly funded K-12 students overall, these programs receive just 1.0 percent of total public spending. These basic facts provide important context for evaluating arguments that private educational choice programs harm students who remain in district schools. Given this context, it is difficult to see how expanding educational opportunities for families via educational choice programs could harm public school systems fiscally."

In Case You Missed It:

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

[Practical Legal Help for Christian Schools: ADF Ministry Alliance](#)

[Promise to America's Children](#)

[Parental Choice and Religious Liberty Are Inexorable Linked](#)

[Senators Seek Investigation into Biden Administration, National School Board Association, and NEA for Efforts to Silence Parents' Protests of School Policies](#)