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“I believe with all my heart that standing up for America means standing up for the God who has so blessed our land. We need God’s help to guide our nation through stormy seas. But we can’t expect Him to protect America in a crisis if we just leave Him over on the shelf in our day-to-day living.”

Ronald Reagan

School Choice Victory in Tennessee

The school choice movement is [praising a decision](#) by the Tennessee Supreme Court which ruled in favor of the state’s newly created Tennessee Education Savings Account Pilot Program. The school choice program was created in 2019 for low-income students in the Metro Nashville and Shelby County school districts and allowed for scholarships of \$7,300 to be used for a variety of educational expenses, including tutoring, textbooks, and tuition. The [primary challenge](#) against the program claimed it violated the state’s Home Rule Amendment that prohibits laws which are “applicable to a particular county . . . either in its governmental or its proprietary capacity.” However, as [explained](#) by the Institute for Justice (IJ) which represented the defendants in the case, “The ESA program applies to school districts, not counties, and it neither affects nor reduces any county’s ability to govern itself.” The decision by the state supreme court also sends the case back to the lower chancery court to consider other issues which were part of the challenge against the program but not given a ruling. These [issues include claims](#) that the program will affect public school funding and that the program violates the education clause which requires “substantially equal educational opportunities to all students in the state.” In a recent [podcast](#) hosted by EdChoice, Leslie Hiner, Vice President of Legal Affairs at EdChoice, offered an analysis of this case and noted that one of the first issues addressed may be the preliminary injunction that was placed against the program to keep it from moving forward until litigation is finalized. The ESA program allows for up to 15,000 families to participate. IJ attorney David Hodges remarked that the supreme court’s ruling will allow “thousands of Tennessee parents . . . the chance to choose the school that works best for their children.”

Funding and equal opportunities are also the main challenges against school choice programs in a few other states. In [West Virginia](#), a lawsuit has been filed against the newly created Hope Scholarship Program by an organization called Public Funds Public Schools charging the program is unconstitutional because it takes away funding from public schools. However, as [explained](#) by the Institute for Justice which is representing the defendants in the case, “The lawsuit ignores the fact that the Hope Scholarship Program does not use any funds set aside for public schools and is funded by an entirely separate process.” The Institute for Justice is also defending school choice programs in [Kentucky](#), [Ohio](#), and [North Carolina](#). Probably the most watched school choice case is case before the U.S. Supreme Court, [Carson v. Makin](#), which will decide whether families can use a school choice program in Maine to access religious education for their children. A decision on this case is expected to be announced this month.

Study Connects Rise in Youth Suicides with Transgender Procedures

A new [report](#) by Jay Greene at the Heritage Foundation finds that, in contrast to LGBT activists’ claims, administration of cross-sex hormones and puberty-blocking drugs on children actually has a negative effect on their mental health. A common [argument](#) from supporters of these so-called gender-affirming treatments claims

that the procedures are necessary for children’s wellbeing and that children who are not “affirmed” for their chosen gender have higher rates of suicide and self-harm than children who are “affirmed.” According to the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH), “Withholding puberty suppression and . . . hormone therapy is not a neutral option for adolescents” because refusing to transition children leads to “psychiatric distress.” However, this new report finds that suicide rates are higher in states that allow minors to access medical procedures without their parents’ consent. The report further shows that those higher suicide rates did not exist prior to 2010, when puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones began to be widely prescribed to children struggling with their gender identity. Despite emerging evidence that these procedures cause enduring harm, the Biden administration has repeatedly called for the expansion of transgender medical procedures for children. On Wednesday, President Biden issued an [executive order](#) which expands mandates requiring transgender medical procedures in the states and also instructs federal agencies to actively oppose “conversion therapy,” therapy that aims to reconcile a child’s identity with his sex. Unfortunately for many children, these efforts will only further exacerbate feelings of alienation from their sex rather than reconcile their feelings with their biology.

COVID-19 Learning Loss Expected to Continue

A perfect storm of factors, including teacher shortages and lowered expectations, could mean the COVID-19 learning loss will continue into the next several years, according to an [analysis](#) published by the Fordham Institute. Author Mike Goldstein points that while over-reliance on technology and lost in-person instruction in 2020 initially set many students behind, the lingering effects of the interrupted education could trickle down throughout the next few years, showing up in lower test scores. A labor shortage of teachers and less student self-motivation seem to be at the [heart of this issue](#). With strained resources, some teachers and administrators are struggling to cover the basic core of classroom learning, much less make up what an article from *The Atlantic* reveals is [upwards of 22 weeks](#) of lost instruction in most public schools, depending on the poverty level in the school district. Additionally, the teacher shortage from pandemic retirees changes an already disrupted classroom culture, and easily distracted students accustomed to remote learning are not getting the academic challenges they need to thrive. Instead of pushing students to succeed, [some schools](#) continue to allow students to turn in assignments late or adjust guidelines to help students pass. These relaxed standards hinder a student’s path to success because students are not being taught the skills and tools necessary for later grades and life. Students are struggling from learning loss related to COVID-19, and they may not rebound from these accumulated elements as quickly as expected. While suggestions vary, many schools are taking a hard look at their programs to get to the root of the issue. *(by AACS intern Olivia Summers)*

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](#)

[Promise to America’s Children](#)

[Powerful New Videos Change Minds from Pro-Abortion to Pro-Life](#)

[New Study Shows Sweden’s Decision to Keep Schools Open Was All Gain, No Pain](#)