

Council for American Private Education

CAPE outlook

Voice of America's private schools

Andrew Coulson

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On March 11, 1999, in a luncheon address at the National Press Club, the then 31-year-old Andrew Coulson launched his brilliant book, *Market Education*, and his distinguished career as a preeminent scholar on education policy. The former software engineer from Microsoft said government schools are not “the one and only means” of advancing public education. Indeed, the “path to educational excellence” is to empower parents to “take control of their children’s education.”

In the course of his short but magnificent life, Andrew let facts lead where they may. At a House committee hearing in 2011, he offered an eye-opening statement claiming that a 40-year record of federal education policy had shown the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program to be the “one federal education program that has been proven to both improve educational outcomes and dramatically lower costs.”

The state CAPE community had the good fortune of learning from Andrew directly during their summer retreat in Seattle in 2014, where he argued that scholarship tax credits were the best way to “reduce financial discrimination against private schools” and stem the tide of transfers to charter schools.

Andrew’s passing last month, after a battle with brain cancer, has left an unmistakable void in the world of education policy scholarship. Colleagues have penned plentiful tributes. “There is no one else besides Andrew Coulson that you must read to discover what reforms we need in education and why they will work,” wrote Adam Schaeffer, adjunct scholar at the Cato Institute, where Andrew served as senior fellow. Others lauded Andrew as “provocative, learned, and engaging,” “an almost impossibly sunny colleague,” “a kind, brilliant man.” The school reform movement has lost a genuine giant.