

Is 2015 the new ‘year of school choice?’

Travis Pillow

September 24, 2015

The school choice movement has already set a new high-water mark this year.

The Wall Street Journal labeled 2011 the “year of school choice,” after states either created or expanded 13 school choice programs. But 2015 has surpassed that tally, and then some.

Jason Bedrick of the libertarian-leaning Cato Institute has been doggedly keeping track.

“As of my last update in early July, there were 17 new or expanded choice programs in 14 states. On Friday, North Carolina lawmakers finally passed a long-overdue budget that expanded the state’s two school voucher programs for low-income and special-needs students, bringing the total number to 19 new or expanded programs in 15 states.”

Bedrick labels this the year of educational choice advisedly. The label fits because many of the movement’s biggest wins this year went beyond voucher or scholarship programs that let students attend their choice of school.

Florida’s Personal Learning Scholarship Accounts*, which got a big boost in the state budget passed this summer, are part of the tally, as is Nevada’s first-of-its kind education savings account program. Mississippi and Tennessee also created new education savings accounts for students with special needs.

In 2015, thousands more parents received new resources allowing them not only to choose a school for their child, but to build a fully customized educational program. For them, “school choice” is becoming passé.