



## Research & Commentary: Education Saving Account Program Would Be Timely And Much-Needed Compliment To Louisiana's Education Choice Programs

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Program Would Be Open To Children In Foster Care And The Children Of Active Duty Military Members

Legislation introduced in the Louisiana House of Representatives would establish an Education Savings Account (ESA) Program open to any K–12 student who is the child of an active duty military service member, or in foster care, or “was enrolled in a [public] school that did not offer an option for students to receive one hundred percent of instruction continuously in person for at least one semester” during the previous school year.

With an ESA, state education funds allocated for a child are placed in a parent-controlled savings account. Parents then use a state-provided debit card to access the funds to pay for the resources chosen for their child’s unique educational program. Under the proposed program, ESAs could be used to pay for tuition and fees at private and parochial schools, as well as textbooks and other instructional materials, and tutoring services.

Copious empirical research on school choice programs such as ESAs finds they offer families improved access to high-quality schools that meet their children’s unique needs and circumstances, and that these programs improve academic performance and attainment and deliver a quality education at lower cost than traditional public schools. Additionally, these programs benefit public school students and taxpayers by increasing competition, decreasing segregation, and improving civic values and practices.

Research also shows students at private schools are less likely than their public school peers to experience problems such as alcohol abuse, bullying, drug use, fighting, gang activity, racial tension, theft, vandalism, and weapon-based threats. There is also a strong causal link suggesting private school choice programs improve the mental health of participating students.

It is probably for these reasons, and also because teacher unions have repeatedly played politics with school closings during the COVID-19 pandemic in direct conflict with students’ best interests, that ESAs are more popular with parents than ever before. Polling done by EdChoice released in December 2020 found 81 percent support for ESAs among the general public and 86

percent among current school parents, the highest level of support the program has received in the organization's eight years of polling on the issue. This represents a 4-percentage point increase over 2019. These findings are mirrored in the American Federation for Children's seventh-annual National School Choice Poll, released in January 2021, which saw 78 percent support for ESA programs.

The Education Savings Account Program would be the perfect compliment to the Louisiana Scholarship Program, the School Choice Program for Certain Students with Exceptionalities and the Tuition Donation Credit Program. The goal of public education in the Pelican State today and in the years to come should be to allow all parents to choose which schools their children attend, require every school to compete for every student who walks through its doors, and make sure every child has the opportunity to attend a quality school. There has not been a time when providing these opportunities has been more urgent and more needed than right now. Legislators should recognize that and allow families as many options as possible to get their children the education they need and deserve.

The following documents provide more information on education savings accounts and education choice.

### **The Effect of the Louisiana Scholarship Program on Student Achievement after Three Years**

<https://www.heartland.org/publications-resources/publications/the-effects-of-the-louisiana-scholarship-program-on-student-achievement-after-three-years>

This paper from the School Choice Demonstration Project at the University of Arkansas on the Louisiana Scholarship Program found test scores for voucher recipients have pulled even with their public school peers, suggesting the longer students stay in a voucher program, the more their outcomes improve.

### **How Has the Louisiana Scholarship Program Affected Students? A Comprehensive Summary of Effects after Three Years**

<https://www.heartland.org/publications-resources/publications/how-has-the-louisiana-scholarship-program-affected-students-a-comprehensive-summary-of-effects-after-three-years>

This *Policy Brief* from the School Choice Demonstration at the University of Arkansas summarizes the findings of three of its prior technical reports on the Louisiana Scholarship Program.

### **Making Sense of New Evidence on Private School Vouchers**

<http://www.urban.org/events/making-sense-new-evidence-private-school-vouchers>

This Urban Institute panel discusses the latest results from the Louisiana Scholarship Program and what those results mean for the future of private school vouchers around the country.

Panelists include Matthew Chingos, director of the Education Policy Program at the Urban Institute; Douglas Harris, director of the Education Research Alliance for New Orleans; John White, Louisiana state superintendent of education; Patrick Wolf, professor and 21st Century Chair in School Choice at the University of Arkansas; and Beth Blaufuss, president of Archbishop Carroll High School in New Orleans.

### **Supplying Choice: An Analysis of School Participation Decisions in Voucher Programs in DC, Indiana, and Louisiana**

<https://www.heartland.org/publications-resources/publications/supplying-choice-an-analysis-of->

### [school-participation-decisions-in-voucher-programs-in-dc-indiana-and-louisiana](#)

This paper from the School Choice Demonstration Project at the University of Arkansas examines the impacts of private school regulations on the supply side of voucher programs. The researchers found independent private schools that are forced to endure substantial regulations from the state are likely to be financially distressed and more willing to change their educational model. The paper also found states with higher regulatory burdens are less likely to have schools participating in voucher programs than states with lower regulatory burdens.

### **Special Education Identification in the Louisiana Scholarship Program**

<https://www.heartland.org/publications-resources/publications/special-education-identification-in-the-louisiana-scholarship-program>

This paper from the School Choice Demonstration Project at the University of Arkansas examines the impact of enrollment in the Louisiana Scholarship Program on special-education identification and de-identification.

### **The 123s of School Choice**

<https://www.edchoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/123s-of-School-Choice.pdf>

This report from EdChoice is an in-depth review of the available research on private school choice programs in America. Areas of study include: private school choice program participant test scores, program participant attainment, parent satisfaction, public school students' test scores, civic values and practices, racial/ethnic integration and fiscal effects.

### **A Win-Win Solution: The Empirical Evidence on School Choice (Fourth Edition)**

<http://www.edchoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/A-Win-Win-Solution-The-Empirical-Evidence-on-School-Choice.pdf>

This paper by EdChoice details how a vast body of research shows educational choice programs improve academic outcomes for students and schools, saves taxpayers money, reduces segregation in schools, and improves students' civic values. This edition brings together a total of 100 empirical studies examining these essential questions in one comprehensive report.

### **The Public Benefit of Private Schooling: Test Scores Rise When There Is More of It**

<https://object.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/pubs/pdf/pa830.pdf>

This *Policy Analysis* from the Cato Institute examines the effect increased access to private schooling has had on international student test scores in 52 countries. The Cato researchers found that a 1 percentage point increase in the share of private school enrollment would lead to moderate increases in students' math, reading, and science achievement.

### **The Effects of School Choice on Mental Health**

[https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3272550](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3272550)

This study from Corey DeAngelis at the Cato Institute and Angela K. Dills of Western Carolina University empirically examines the relationship between school choice and mental health. It finds that states adopting broad-based voucher programs and charter schools witness declines in adolescent suicides and suggests that private schooling reduces the number of times individuals are seen for mental health issues.

### **Child Safety Accounts: Protecting Our Children through Parental Freedom**

<https://www.heartland.org/template-assets/documents/publications/CSAccountsPB.pdf>

In this *Heartland Policy Brief*, Vicki Alger, senior fellow at the Independent Women's Forum and research fellow at the Independent Institute, and Heartland Policy Analyst Tim Benson detail

the prevalence of bullying, harassment, and assault taking place in America's public schools and the difficulties for parents in having their child moved from a school that is unsafe for them. Alger and Benson propose a Child Safety Account program, which would allow parents to immediately have their child moved to a safe school – private, parochial, or public – as soon as parents feel the public school their child is currently attending is too dangerous to their child's physical or emotional health.

Nothing in this *Research & Commentary* is intended to influence the passage of legislation, and it does not necessarily represent the views of The Heartland Institute. For further information on this subject, visit *School Reform News*, The Heartland Institute's [website](#), and *PolicyBot*, Heartland's free online research database.

The Heartland Institute can send an expert to your state to testify or brief your caucus; host an event in your state; or send you further information on a topic. Please don't hesitate to contact us if we can be of assistance! If you have any questions or comments, contact Heartland's government relations department, at [governmentrelations@heartland.org](mailto:governmentrelations@heartland.org) or 312/377-4000.