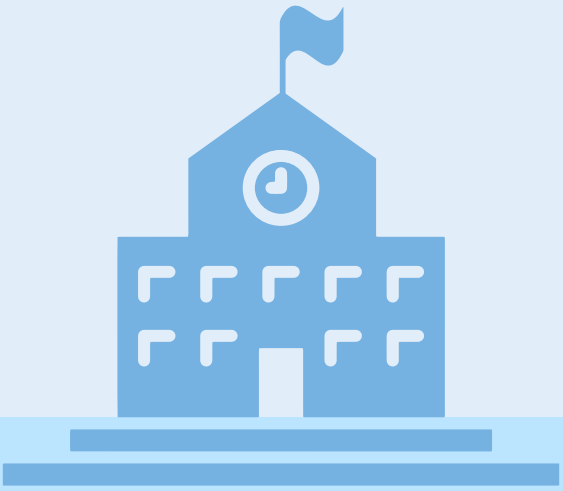


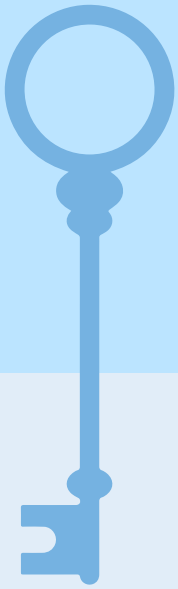
School Closures, School Choice, and Federal Funding

How the Pandemic Exposed Problems and Spurred Solutions in K-12 Education

Beacon
CENTER OF TENNESSEE

Key Takeaways

- Entering the third school year of the pandemic, some public school districts across the country still have their doors closed to in-person learning, although most private schools have been safely open throughout. These closures come despite billions of dollars in federal relief funds the public school systems took in to ensure a return to in-person learning.
- Twenty-two states created new educational choice programs or expanded existing ones in 2021—including Oklahoma and Arizona, which used relief funds to provide additional education options to families.
- Tennessee can follow other states that have expanded educational choice through the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund, which has approximately $67 million unspent.



Introduction

For the nearly one million school children in Tennessee, the pandemic brought a whirlwind of remote learning, uncertainty, and difficulty. The pandemic has caused monumental disruptions around the globe and in every corner of the country. For students and parents, public school closures meant virtual learning, looking for in-person options at private schools, homeschooling, or starting a learning pod/microschool. A survey released in October 2020 found one in five parents left their job or took a leave of absence in order to help their children learn from home.[1] In response to school and business closures, the federal government spent trillions of tax dollars, with $189 billion going to K-12 education over the course of 18 months—approximately three times what Congress normally spends annually on K-12 education—in the hope of safely reopening classrooms.[2] Meanwhile, as many public schools were shutting their doors, private schools were fighting to re-open safely.[3]

While Tennessee Governor Bill Lee did urge schools to close at the beginning of the pandemic, he did not impose such harsh restrictions as those elsewhere around the country.[4] For the 2020-2021 school year, Governor Lee made in-person learning an important promise to families, going so far as to only allow individual schools, not entire districts, to decide whether to go virtual.[5] Many families whose children attended schools that did close their doors then flocked to private schools that were safely open. Many parents in Davidson County, for example, "decided to remove themselves from the uncertainty of a public school system grappling with a pandemic and enroll their children at area private schools in hopes of a more predictable outcome—namely, having their children in school full time."[6]

Throughout the pandemic, many private schools innovated, adapted, and opened their classrooms well before public schools did. Even entering the third year of the pandemic, numerous teachers' unions have continued calling for classrooms to once again close. The billions of tax dollars meant to safely reopen public schools seem to have done little to help those students catch up and remain in the classroom.

Safety or Political Influence?

Officials said school closures were the best way to keep children safe. Yet mounting evidence showed that schools were not super-spreader locations, and in-person learning could be safe, with studies in multiple states showing a return to the classroom did not lead to a spike in cases.[7] With data showing schools could return to in-person learning, officials at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) were ready to issue guidance and recommend that schools across the country get students back into the classroom. However, emails between the CDC and the American Federation of Teachers, one of the largest unions in the country, revealed that science and safety weren't the main concerns for opposing reopenings. The union influenced the CDC's guidance, which included adding special concessions for remote work and slowing down a full return to the classroom with little scientific basis.[8] An expert in infectious diseases, Dr. Monica Gandhi, commented that scientific guidelines should not be formulated by political groups for major public health organizations, stating, "This is not how science-based guidelines should work or be put together."[9] Union influence was not just limited to the CDC, however. One study showed that school districts with stronger teachers' unions were less likely to reopen than others.[10]

Once the science showed schools could return safely to in-person learning, local officials often sparred with teachers' unions and school administrators to make that happen. The city of San Francisco went so far as to sue the school district over failing to have a plan to get students back in classrooms.[11] While private schools were open in the city, the government-run schools sat empty. City Attorney Dennis Herrera said, "The Board of Education and the school district have had more than 10 months to roll out a concrete plan to get these kids back in school. So far they have earned an F."[12]

Though the data showed there was little health benefit to school closures, decisions to keep doors shut gave parents insight into their children's public education. Many parents witnessed how remote learning not only harmed their children academically, but their mental health as well.[13] It also revealed the power imbalance between parents and the school system. Around the country, parents and students attended school board meetings, pleading for schools to reopen—some after learning remotely for over a year.[14] In California, members of the Oakley school board were caught on video mocking parents, with the president of the board saying parents wanted schools to reopen because "they want their babysitters back."[15] One member went on an expletive-filled rant, and another suggested parents wanted their children out of the house so they could smoke marijuana.[16]

With parents feeling powerless against the school system, saddled with decisions, curricula, and mandates they did not agree with, public education leaders became the focal point of their concerns. This was nowhere more prevalent than in the 2021 gubernatorial election in Virginia, where the largest issue on the campaign trail, public education, grabbed the national spotlight. Of the two leading candidates, one supported parents having a voice in their child's education, and the other vehemently opposed such voices.[17] After the votes were cast and counted, the candidate who advocated for parents claimed victory. Analysis of the election suggested the victory was "an indisputable vindication of the values-based case for school choice and parental empowerment."[18]

But the trend of outsized power wielded by unions and districts has continued into the new year. In January 2022, the third largest school district in the country, Chicago Public Schools, announced through the Chicago Teachers Union that teachers would not be giving in-person instruction due to the virus.[19] Despite entering the third year of this pandemic, after billions of tax dollars had been spent on returning students to the classroom safely, and another $100 million given by the city for further safety precautions, the Chicago Teachers Union decided that was still not enough.[20] Mayor Lori Lightfoot pleaded with the group, saying, "What we want is for Chicago Teachers Union leadership to come to the table in good faith, stop moving the goalposts and forge an agreement."[21] After five days of canceled classes, Chicago public school students eventually were allowed back into their classrooms.

In response to the reopening, Lightfoot said, "some will ask who won and who lost. No one wins when our students are out of the place where they can learn the best and where they're safest."[22] Union leadership power has been on full display during the pandemic, pushing for political wins while students lose.

District Decisions Leaving Families Flustered

With school boards and unions seemingly playing politics with education, it is no wonder state leaders across the country have looked for ways to offer parents what they are crying out for: options. Tennessee received nearly $4.2 billion in federal relief funds for K-12 education, through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief funds (ESSER) package.[23] Governor Lee reserved $4.4 million of the package, the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund (GEER), to help create new charter schools. A statement from his office said, "Education is not one size fits all, and the pandemic showed us just how important it is to provide families with better access to high-quality school options."[24] These dollars would go on to offer other public options for students outside of the heavy-handed districts that could choose to close their schools. Although only 0.1 percent of the state's K-12 federal relief funds would go to support giving parents and students more public education options, the teachers' union cried foul, calling the spending an "insult."[25]

These criticisms come on the heels of the billions of state dollars that go to public education year after year. Yet, the public education establishment is still calling for more. During a Department of Education listening tour to discuss education funding in Tennessee, the conversation was dominated by calls for increased spending, with some claiming the funding formula was never fully funded.[26] Though recent analysis shows Tennessee's education spending has doubled—after inflation—since the formula was first adopted.[27] Additionally, a report by the Beacon Center showed only 53 percent of funding actually makes its way to the classroom, well below the national average of 60 percent.[28] Simply throwing more money to a system that is failing to meet the needs of students without systemic change will not solve education issues in Tennessee.

If the education establishment is still clamoring for additional funding despite receiving billions in federal relief and Tennessee taxpayers spending more and more each year, is funding the real issue, or is it bureaucracy? With billions of tax dollars, school closures, and sub-par test scores, it is no wonder families were and still are upset with the public school system.[29] The data that was released showing how these funds were spent and their results will carry huge weight for the public school system in the years to come. As state Representative Mark White put succinctly, "If students are still performing at the same level after we spend all this money, then money's not the issue. It's leadership."[30] Local school leaders need to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars to make sure funding is actually helping students succeed.

In other states, governors and legislators have made plans to do just that by allowing funding to follow the student to a school of his or her choice.

Educational Choice is Expanding

State leaders around the country used a portion of their federal funding under the GEER to provide additional options to families as public schools were closing. In South Carolina, Governor Henry McMaster proposed a significant portion of the state's GEER funds to offer a one-time $6,500 scholarship for low-income students to attend a school of their choice.[31] Considering Palmetto State taxpayers spent just shy of $11,000 per student for FY 2019, $6,500 scholarships would save nearly $4,500 per student that took advantage of the opportunity.[32]

Though the relief fund scholarships provided significant savings in terms of the cost to educate a child, the public system railed against these educational options for low-income students. Unfortunately, the program was halted and these students were left with no options other than virtual public education when schools closed. [33]

But elsewhere, students and families saw victories for choice. In Oklahoma, Governor Kevin Stitt used a portion of the state's GEER funds to provide assistance to those already in private schools. The Stay in School program offered one-year tuition assistance to low-income families, reasoning that students leaving private schools due to financial hardship would likely enroll in public schools, causing greater strain on the public system.[34] The governor proved to be right, as a report from the Oklahoma Costs Accounting System found the program provided an average of $5,132 per student, where the cost of educating one student at a public school in the state was $12,069.[35] And Arizona families saw their governor respond by offering students new options if their public school closed through the Open for Learning Recovery Benefit program. The program set aside $10 million in relief funds to provide up to $7,000 per student for new educational options.[36]

These actions by governors followed the dozens of states around the country that made strides toward increasing educational freedom in 2021. Analysis by the American Federation for Children found nearly half of all states increased funding for existing educational choice programs or created entirely new ones.[37]

New Hampshire created a new program, called Education Freedom Accounts, which the state Department of Education estimates will save taxpayers $360 million to $393 million dollars over the next 10 years.[38] This adds a fiscal benefit for adults to the educational benefit the program offers students. State legislators in West Virginia passed the nation's broadest Education Savings Account bill in early 2021, offering educational options to thousands of families that would not otherwise have the opportunity to choose their schools.[39]
Governors and state legislators created or expanded these programs in response to families who were crying out for options. As public schools closed their doors and parents were forced to leave the workforce in order to become their child's tutor for virtual school, Americans were seeing private schools stay open while their tax dollars continued going to a system that was not providing what was promised.

A survey of private schools revealed that 35 percent of private schools had increased enrollment due to the pandemic and resulting actions. When excluding Pre-K, enrollment shot up over 47 percent.[40] However, some private schools did see declines, a portion of which can be attributed to low-income families who could no longer afford tuition during the pandemic and economic downturn.[41] These families had to make the difficult choice of leaving their school and enrolling in a public option that may have been completely virtual. State legislators around the country heard these families and sought to answer their concerns by offering taxpayers their dollars back, to be used at the educational institution that best served their children.

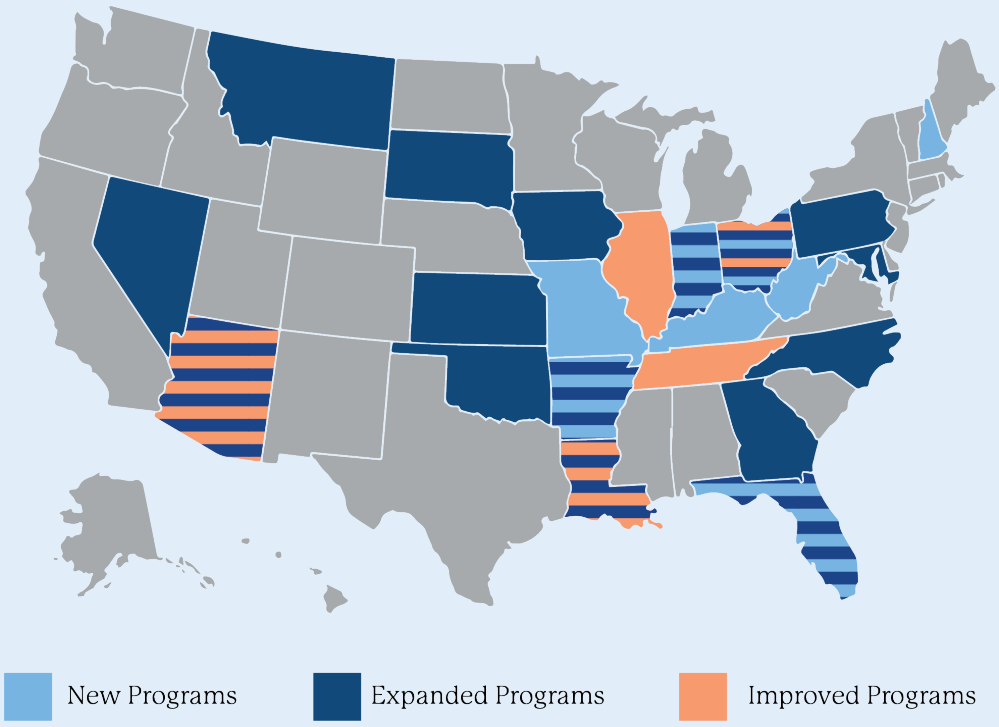


Figure 1: State legislators in 2021 responded to parents' concerns about school closures and rules, leading to multiple states passing legislation to offer students choices for the education that suits them best.[42]

Although 2021 was dubbed the "Year of Educational Choice," education freedom legislation doesn't seem to be slowing down in 2022.[43] State legislators have listened to the concerns of parents and students for the last two years and are seeking to provide answers. The new year saw a tidal wave of choice legislation entering state assembly chambers. In Pennsylvania, a bill was proposed to use the influx of federal funds to provide $7,000 grants to students to attend a school of their choice, dubbed the Pandemic Education Savings Account Fund.[44] Another bill introduced seeks to offer "Lifeline Scholarships" to students in the lowest performing districts.[45] These bills are popular; the most recent polling shows 73 percent of Pennsylvania parents of school-age children support education savings accounts.[46]

The Keystone State is the tip of the iceberg for education freedom legislation. Similar bills are in play in dozens of states—including Alabama, where one legislator described it as the "ultimate" educational choice bill.[47] Here in Tennessee, legislation titled the MOST Act, More Opportunities for Students in Tennessee, was introduced which would provide up to $3,000 in micro-grants for low-income K-8 students to assist in tutoring, therapy services, and other approved educational expenses.[48] If last year is any indication, more states will likely introduce legislation to expand choice for students who currently have no options when their government school closes its doors or cannot meet the needs of students.

Increased educational options is not a partisan issue, and the pandemic showed increasing favor for such programs. With school closures, mandates, and ever-changing rules, the option for families to take their education dollars to a school of their choice became more enticing. Two professors from the University of California-Berkeley—hardly a bastion of conservative values—recently wrote an op-ed published in the *Wall Street Journal* calling for those on the left to understand that choice is a way to level the educational field: while more well-off families were able to pivot their children's education and send them to in-person private schools, those stuck in the public education system suffered immensely through school closures and virtual learning.[49] A large majority of those across the political spectrum seem to agree. A national poll recently revealed that 82 percent of self-described Democrats approve of programs that allow funding to follow the student to their school of choice.[50]

This response was based on mandates in some school districts that parents opposed. For parents who wished to return their children to the classroom but whose public schools allowed if only if they wore masks, school choice programs offered options. On the other end of the spectrum, for those families worried about curricula taught in public schools, the ability to take their education funds to a school more in line with their deeply held values is welcomed.[51]

There is still hope for these relief funds to truly help Tennessee students. The state has the opportunity to make bold initiatives in expanding educational freedom through remaining GEER funds. The most recent reporting by the U.S. Department of Education shows that the Volunteer State still has not spent 73.3 percent of the GEER funds. With the total state fund being $91.4 million, that means the administration could direct nearly $66.9 million toward helping students gain an education that fits their unique needs.[52]

The pandemic has shown that government school districts have choices to make: whether to close a school or not, whether to teach a certain curriculum or not, whether to impose certain mandates or not. However, parents have not had much of a choice in those decisions. With new educational choice programs now operating all over the country, thousands of families will now have real choices in their children's education and not be stuck with the choices made by government school leaders.

Conclusion

The influx of federal relief funds to the states provides never-before-seen opportunities to help students succeed and to get an education that works for their individual needs. Unfortunately, many students across the country saw their opportunities decreased despite those funds; some still don't even have the option to enter the classroom. Even in 2022, entering the third school year of the pandemic, schools are still closing their doors to students while still taking in tax dollars meant to support in-person learning.

Federal relief funds have provided little visible benefit to the majority of students, showing once again that money is not the answer to the problems in public education. While some states expanded education opportunities through new or enhanced programs, Tennessee only saw 0.1 percent of these federal funds go to expanding a public option—new charter schools. With the billions of funds for public schools that came to the state, the majority of it controlled by local school districts, Tennessee lawmakers and the public should have a vested interest in determining how their tax dollars are being spent, and demand districts listen to the people those dollars were sent to help.

References

[1] Meghan McCarty Carino, "1 in 5 parents quit job or took leave to deal with remote school." Marketplace Morning Report. October 23, 2020. https://www.marketplace.org/2020/10/23/remote-school-online-learning-parents-quit-jobs-take-leave-of-absence/.

[2] "Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund." U.S. Department of Education. https://oese.ed.gov/offices/education-stabilization-fund/elementary-secondary-school-emergency-relief-fund; "Revenues and Expenditures for Public Elementary and Secondary Education: FY 19." National Center for Education Statistics at IES. June 2021. https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2021/2021302.pdf

[3] Mark Sherman and Piper Hudspeth Blackburn, "High Court Denies Kentucky Religious School's Plea to Reopen." U.S. News. December 17, 2020. https://www.usnews.com/news/politics/articles/2020-12-17/high-court-denies-kentucky-religious-schools-plea-to-reopen; Christine Pitawanich, "Private school sues Oregon over in-person learning restrictions." KGW-TV. October 21, 2020. https://www.kgw.com/article/news/education/private-school-sues-state-of-oregon-over-in-person-learning-restrictions/; Mark Hicks, "Religious, private schools sue Michigan health official over COVID restrictions." The Detroit News. December 8, 2020. https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/michigan/2020/12/08/religious-private-schools-sue-michigan-health-official-over-covid-restrictions/6486654002/.

[4] "Governor Lee Issues Statement Regarding Statewide School Closure." Office of the Governor of Tennessee. March 16, 2020. https://www.tn.gov/governor/news/2020/3/16/governor-lee-issues-statement-regarding-statewide-school-closure.html.

[5] Marta W. Aldrich, "Tennessee governor says no again as some school leaders clamor for remote learning." Chalkbeat. August 25, 2021. https://tn.chalkbeat.org/2021/8/25/22642233/tennessee-governor-says-no-remote-learning.

[6] Hollie Deese, "Pandemic flight lifts private enrollment." The Nashville Ledger. October 2, 2020. https://www.tnledger.com/editorial/Article.aspx?id=134027.

[7] Tanya Lewis, "Schools Can Open Safely during COVID, the Latest Evidence Shows." Scientific American. April 15, 2021. https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/schools-can-open-safely-during-covid-the-latest-evidence-shows/.

[8] Jon Levine, "Powerful teachers union influenced CDC on school reopenings." New York Post. May 1, 2021. https://nypost.com/2021/05/01/teachers-union-collaborated-with-cdc-on-school-reopening-emails/.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Corey DeAngelis and Christos Makridis, "Are School Reopening Decisions Related to Union Influence?" SSRN. September 1, 2020. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3684867.

[11] Maura Dolan, "San Francisco, amid school renaming flap, sues school district to reopen during pandemic." Los Angeles Times. February 3, 2021. https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-02-03/sf-sues-its-schools-to-reopen-during-coronavirus-pandemic.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Erin Einhorn, "Covid is having a devastating impact on children - and the vaccine won't fix everything." NBC News. December 15, 2020. https://www.nbcnews.com/news/education/covid-having-devastating-impact-children-vaccine-won-t-fix-everything-n1251172.

[14] Kristen A. Graham, "'We are not learning enough': In marathon meeting, Philly school board gets an earful." Philadelphia Inquirer. March 18, 2021. https://www.inquirer.com/education/philadelphia-school-district-board-reopening-20210319.html.

[15] Antonia Noori Farza, "School board members bash pandemic-weary parents as potheads who 'want their babysitters back.'" The Washington Post. February 19, 2021. https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2021/02/19/oakley-union-parents-babysitters/.

[16] Ibid.

[17] The Editors, "Terry McAuliffe's War on Parents." National Review. October 1, 2021. https://www.nationalreview.com/2021/10/terry-mcauliffes-war-on-parents/.

[18] Lindsey M. Burke, "Virginia Election Outcome Was About Education. Here Are 4 Actions Youngkin Should Take to Address Parents' Concerns." Heritage Foundation. November 5, 2021. https://www.heritage.org/education/commentary/virginia-election-outcome-was-about-education-here-are-4-actions-youngkin.

[19] Brad Dress, "Chicago schools closed for third-straight day amid heated negotiations." The Hill. January 7, 2022. https://thehill.com/regulation/labor/588709-chicago-schools-closed-for-third-straight-day-amid-heated-negotiations.

[20] Adam Sabes, "Chicago Public Schools closed despite receiving nearly $2.8B in federal COVID funding." Fox News Business. January 8, 2022. https://www.foxbusiness.com/politics/chicago-public-schools-closed-despite-billions-federal-covid-funding; Ibid.

[21] Brad Dress, "Chicago schools closed for third-straight day amid heated negotiations." The Hill. January 7, 2022. https://thehill.com/regulation/labor/588709-chicago-schools-closed-for-third-straight-day-amid-heated-negotiations.

[22] Bill Hutchinson, "Chicago public school students returning to classrooms amid COVID surge." ABC News. January 11, 2022. https://abcnews.go.com/US/chicago-public-school-students-returning-classrooms-amid-covid/story?id=82195856.

[23] "TDOE Receives Approval of State Spending Plan from U.S. Department of Education for Historical Federal Funding for K-12 Education." State of Tennessee. July 15, 2021. https://www.tn.gov/education/news/2021/7/15/tdoe-receives-approval-of-state-spending-plan-from-u-s--department-of-education-for-historic-federal-funding-for-k-12-education--.html.

[24] Geoff Mulvihill, "Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee, other governors use federal virus aid to expand school choice." Tennessean. August 21, 2021. https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/politics/2021/08/21/tennessee-gov-bill-lee-other-governors-use-federal-covid-aid-expand-school-choice/8217875002/.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Meghan Mangrum, "Hundred attended eight town halls across Tennessee. Here's what they said about how to fund schools." Tennessean. December 3, 2021. https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/education/2021/12/04/tennessee-education-funding-town-halls-formula-basic-education-program/8723807002/.

[27] Mandy Pellegrin, "A Short History of K-12 Education Funding in Tennessee." The Sycamore Institute. September 30, 2021. https://www.sycamoreinstitutetn.org/history-k12-education-funding.

[28] Ron Shultis and Jason Edmonds, "A Little Less Conversation…A Lot More Spending." Beacon Center of Tennessee. https://www.beacontn.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/BCN_K-12-EduBrief_2021_JL.pdf. August 25, 2021.

[29] "Tennessee Releases 2020—21 Spring TCAP State-Level Results." Tennessee Department of Education. August 2, 2021. https://www.tn.gov/education/news/2021/8/2/tennessee-releases-2020-21-spring-tcap-state-level-results-.html; Malik Jackson, "Being torn between taking care of their children, and their employment | Parents upset with KCS decision to cancel schools last minute." WBIR-TV. September 27, 2021. https://www.wbir.com/article/news/education/being-torn-between-taking-care-of-their-children-and-their-employment-parents-upset-with-kcs-decision-to-cancel-school-last-minute/.

[30] Marta W. Aldrich, "How Tennessee school leaders spend billions in federal relief funds will carry huge steaks, both practically and politically." Chalkbeat. March 23, 2021. https://tn.chalkbeat.org/2021/3/23/22347554/how-tennessee-school-leaders-spend-billions-in-federal-relief-funds-will-carry-huge-political-stakes.

[31] Seanna Adcox and Anna B. Mitchell, "McMaster to spend $32M of federal COVID-19 aid on private school vouchers." Post and Courier. July 20, 2020. https://www.postandcourier.com/health/covid19/mcmaster-to-spend-32m-of-federal-covid-19-aid-on-private-school-vouchers/article_ab04b1e4-ca8f-11ea-8a8e-a3712f363d9f.html.

[32] "Revenues and Expenditures for Public Elementary and Secondary Education, FY 2019." National Center for Education Statistics. June 2021. https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2021/2021302.pdf.

[33] Heather Gale, "SC Supreme Court again says no public money for private schools." ABC 15 News. December 9, 2020. https://wpde.com/news/local/gov-mcmasters-use-of-public-funds-for-private-schools-struck-down-again.

[34] "Stay in School Fund." OPSAC. https://www.opsac.org/sisfund.html.

[35] "Stay in School Fund Program Report." OPSAC. December 2020. https://www.opsac.org/uploads/1/1/1/3/111330333/sis_report__print.pdf.

[36] Kevin Stone, "Ducey's voucher program if Arizona schools close classrooms is now open." KTAR News. January 14, 2022. https://ktar.com/story/4843447/duceys-voucher-program-if-arizona-schools-close-classrooms-is-now-open/.

[37] "School Choice Victories." American Federation for Children. https://www.federationforchildren.org/school-choice-victories/.

[38] "New Hampshire Department of Education Publishes Fiscal Analysis of Education Freedom Accounts." New Hampshire Department of Education. January 20, 2021. https://www.education.nh.gov/news/new-hampshire-department-education-publishes-fiscal-analysis-education-freedom-accounts.

[39] Brad McElhinny, "Justice signs nation's broadest education savings accounts bill." MetroNews. March 29, 2021. https://wvmetronews.com/2021/03/29/justice-signs-nations-broadest-education-savings-accounts-bill/.

[40] Neal McCluskey, "Survey: Private Schools Appear to See Rising Enrollment, This Year and Last." Cato Institute. October 28, 2021. https://www.cato.org/blog/survey-private-schools-appear-see-rising-enrollment-year-last.

[41] Darla M. Romfo, "When private schools lose funding, low-income kids lose too." The Hill. July 9, 2020. https://thehill.com/opinion/education/506617-when-private-schools-lose-funding-low-income-kids-lose-too.

[42] "2021 School Choice Victories." American Federation for Children. https://www.federationforchildren.org/school-choice-victories/.

[43] Jason Bedrick and Ed Tarnowski, "How Big Was the Year of Educational Choice?" Education Next. August 19, 2021. https://www.educationnext.org/how-big-was-the-year-of-educational-choice/.

[44] Victor Skinner, "Proposal uses federal money to fund school choice for Pennsylvania families." Courier Express. January 13, 2022. https://www.thecourierexpress.com/proposal-uses-federal-money-to-fund-school-choice-for-pennsylvania-families/article_1dabd264-6a33-59da-b9f7-faf508c72e7d.html.

[45] Victor Skinner, "Lawmaker proposes school choice for Pennsylvania students in poor-performing districts." Center Square. January 18, 2022. https://www.thecentersquare.com/pennsylvania/lawmaker-proposes-school-choice-for-pennsylvania-students-in-poor-performing-districts/article_1d5a0bd8-78a2-11ec-9862-53bfcc268d6c.html.

[46] "EdChoice Public Opinion Tracker - Pennsylvania." EdChoice. January 12, 2022. https://edchoice.morningconsultintelligence.com/reports/pennsylvania.pdf.

[47] "Active legislation map." Educational Freedom Institute. http://efinstitute.org/legislation-map/; Trisha Powell Crain, "Alabama lawmakers eye creation of 'ultimate' parent choice, education savings legislation." AL.com. January 31, 2022. https://www.al.com/news/2022/01/alabama-lawmakers-eye-creation-of-ultimate-parent-choice-education-savings-legislation.html.

[48] "SB 2389/HB 2774." Tennessee 112th General Assembly. https://wapp.capitol.tn.gov/apps/BillInfo/Default.aspx?BillNumber=SB2389.

[49] Mark Brilliant and Steven Davidoff Solomon, "Covid Should Revive School Vouchers as a Liberal Cause." Wall Street Journal. January 3, 2022. https://www.wsj.com/articles/covid-should-revive-school-vouchers-as-a-liberal-cause-education-equal-access-11641242963.

[50] "New Poll: Democrats Support School Choice as Mask Debates Grow." American Federation for Children. August 31, 2021. https://www.federationforchildren.org/new-poll-democrats-support-school-choice-as-mask-debates-grow-august/.

[51] J.D. Tuccille, "The Critical Race Theory Debate Wouldn't Matter if We Had More School Choice." Reason Foundation. June 28, 2021. https://reason.com/2021/06/28/the-critical-race-theory-debate-wouldnt-matter-if-we-had-more-school-choice/.

[52] "Education Stability Fund - Tennessee." - U.S. Department of Education. January 31, 2022. https://covid-relief-data.ed.gov/profile/state/TN. Accessed March 7, 2022.

Beacon
CENTER OF TENNESSEE

About Beacon

The Beacon Center empowers Tennesseans to reclaim and protect their freedoms, so that they can pursue their version of the American Dream. The Center is an independent, nonprofit, and nonpartisan research organization dedicated to providing expert empirical research and timely free market solutions to public policy issues in Tennessee.

Guarantee of Quality Scholarship

The Beacon Center of Tennessee is committed to delivering the highest quality and most reliable research on Tennessee policy issues. The Center guarantees that all original factual data are true and correct and that information attributed to other sources is accurately represented. The Center encourages rigorous critique of its research. If an error ever exists in the accuracy of any material fact or reference to an independent source, please bring the mistake to the Center's attention with supporting evidence. The Center will respond in writing and correct the mistake in an errata sheet accompanying all subsequent distribution of the publication, which constitutes the complete and final remedy under this guarantee.

Ron Shultis • Director of Policy and Research • ron@beacontn.org

Jason Edmonds • Research Associate • jason@beacontn.org

615-383-6431 | BeaconTN.org | /BeaconTN | @BeaconTN | @Beacon_TN