



NEWS

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Poor U.S. Test Scores Make Case For Vouchers

New study shows U.S. tops in school spending, not scores among industrialized nations.

WASHINGTON – Among more than 25 industrialized nations, no country spends more money per student than the United States, according to an annual survey by the Paris-based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Yet, despite the highest levels of spending, U.S. test scores fall behind those of students in much of the rest of the industrialized world.

While this news seems to be nothing but bad, it is a valuable opportunity for voucher proponents to advance meaningful school reform.

Grover Norquist, president of Americans for Tax Reform (ATR) in Washington D.C., notes: **“Conservatives have always had a glass-half-full approach to life and always strive to find the good in any situation. While it is regrettable that so many children in America are not receiving a quality education, this OECD review confirms what more and more people are coming to realize, and that is that lack of funding has not been the problem.** We believe the problem is, in large part, a lack of school choice, a problem that vouchers will help to correct.”

According to the OECD report, the U.S. spent \$10,240 per student from elementary school through college in 2000, whereas the average spending among the more than 25 industrialized surveyed was \$6,361. While American 15-year olds had average math performance, high school graduation rates were below average. Concerning reading proficiency, U.S. fourth graders were among the top scorers in 2001 but the report indicates that reading proficiency declines steadily as students make their way through school.

To address just such problems, the House of Representatives earlier this month passed an amendment that authorized funding for a voucher program in Washington D.C., the first federally-funded voucher initiative in the nation. The amendment would provide scholarships of up to \$7,500 per student for low-income children in the district. Parents could then use that money on any school of their choice. The teacher unions, including the National Education Association (NEA), opposed the plan and oppose vouchers, which they say divert badly needed funds from public schools.

Concluded Norquist: “If the teacher unions were genuinely concerned about education, they would support vouchers. For them, the issue is not education and is more than just money. It is power, and in their quest for it, the teacher unions continue to sacrifice the educations of millions of American children.”

Americans for Tax Reform (ATR) is a non-partisan coalition of taxpayers and taxpayer groups who oppose all federal, state and local tax increases. For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact Jonathan Collegio at (202) 785-0266 or at jcollegio@atr.org.