



Memorandum

To: American Federation for Children
From: Beck Research LLC
Date: January 18, 2018

Re: Fourth Annual School Choice Survey Research Results

Voters remain enthusiastic about school choice and back a broad range of educational choice programs. Our fourth annual national survey among likely 2018 November voters confirms that school choice maintains strong support across the nation, despite relentless attacks over the past year. The concept of school choice is supported by a wide 63%-to-33% margin and support for Education Savings Accounts is up for the second year in a row; three-quarters of voters (75%) support ESAs, up 6-points from last year. In addition, two-thirds of voters (67%) also back a federal scholarship tax credit and other school choice proposals continue to enjoy strong support.

- **Support for school choice remains strong with almost two-thirds backing choice.** When asked, "Generally speaking, would you say you favor or oppose the concept of school choice? School choice gives parents the right to use the tax dollars designated for their child's education to send their child to the public or private school which best serves their needs,"¹ fully 63% support school choice, including 41% who strongly support it.

Support for School Choice (Support – Oppose)	
January 2018	63% - 33%
January 2017	68% - 28%
January 2016	70% - 24%
January 2015	69% - 27%

On a national level, a broad coalition continues to back school choice. Latinos remain extremely supportive of school choice with 72% backing the broad concept of school choice and 26% opposed. A strong majority of whites (61%) and two-thirds of African-Americans (66%) support school choice.

¹ The definition of school choice was slightly altered in 2018. In previous years, we asked, "Generally speaking, would you say you favor or oppose the concept of school choice? School choice gives parents the right to use the tax dollars associated with their child's education to send their child to the public or private school which better serves their needs?"

Despite a divisive political environment, school choice maintains majority support across partisan lines. Three-quarters of Republicans (75%) and 62% of Independents support school choice. Democratic support remains steady with a majority of Democrats (54%) favoring school choice.

Support is high across age groups or generations; fully 64% of Millennials support school choice. Similarly, voters across different population densities back school choice, with support strongest among Fringe/Exurban² or rural voters where 68% support the concept. Parents, including those with children in traditional public schools, back school choice by a 2-to-1 ratio.

- **Almost all voters want private school choice in some form.** Over the past four years, we have probed who should receive publicly-funded vouchers, tax credit scholarships and Education Savings Accounts and, throughout the research, the vast majority of voters (86%) think some sort of vouchers and tax credit scholarships should be available in some form, including 31% who think they should be available to all students regardless of household income while 55% say the vouchers should be income based. Voters have consistently advocated for private school choice to be available to a wide audience.
- **Support for Education Savings Accounts is on the rise.** Support for Education Savings Accounts (ESA) has increased for the second year; 75% now support ESAs, up from 69% last year and 65% in 2016. Growth is strongest among Democrats and Independents while enjoying steady support among Republicans. Democrats now back ESAs by a wide 70%-to-23% margin compared to 61%-to-33% last year and Independent support has grown to 78%-to-19% from 69%-to-25%. Fully 81% of Republicans, 87% of Hispanics, and 73% of African-Americans support ESAs. Both Millennials (77% support) and Generation X (80% support) are strong proponents of ESAs.
- **Opportunities exist on the federal level.** This year's poll also explored support for a potential federal scholarship tax credit. Two-thirds support the federal scholarship tax credit (67% support, 28% oppose), which closely mirrors the more general posing of the question where 65% support and 30% oppose. Last year, 72% backed the federal proposal and 23% opposed. Despite the polarization of Congress, the federal scholarship tax credit earns bipartisan support with 55% of Democrats, 69% of Independents, and fully 80% of Republicans favoring the possible measure.
- **Special needs scholarships continue to have extremely strong support.** 83% support special needs scholarships, including a majority (55%) that strongly support these programs.

² Fringe counties are defined as those in an MSA that do not include a central city, has a population density less than 300 pers/sqm, and a total population less than 200,000. Fringe functions as exurban in the sense that it includes the counties that are between Suburban and Rural.

For the first time, we probed **education scholarships for children of active military members** and found that these are extremely popular (77% support, 20% oppose). Support for military education scholarships is higher among three target demographic groups (Latinos 82% support, Millennials 80%, and 81% Rural/Fringe voters).

Three-quarters continue to support public charter schools (72%) and three out of five back scholarship tax credits (65%). Voters continue to be divided when the term “school vouchers” is used; this year 47% support school vouchers and 49% oppose.

Support for Individual School Choice Proposals (Support – Oppose)				
	2015	2016	2017	2018
Special Needs Scholarships	83% - 14%	83% - 14%	83% - 13%	83% - 14%
Military vouchers	N/A	N/A	N/A	77% - 20%
Education Savings Accounts	66% - 29%	65% - 29%	69% - 24%	75% - 19%
Public Charter Schools	76% - 20%	75% - 22%	74% - 22%	72% - 25%
Scholarship Tax Credit	70% - 26%	74% - 23%	73% - 23%	65% - 30%
Virtual learning	N/A	55% - 42%	59% - 37%	55% - 40%
School vouchers	49% - 49%	53% - 46%	51% - 47%	47% - 49%

- Desire for “Major Changes” grows.** Two-thirds of voters (65%) agree that “We need to make major changes to the ways that public schools are run,” compared to 31% who believe “We only need to make minor changes to the ways that public schools are run.” Around two-thirds of African-Americans (77%), Latinos (69%), Millennials (67%) and Rural/Fringe voters (63%) see a need for major change. Support for major changes is relatively equal across partisan lines with 61% of Democrats, 62% of Independents, and 69% of Republicans agreeing that we need to make major changes. Last year, 58% saw a need for major change compared to 36% who thought only minor change was necessary.

Over the past year, school choice has become more of a hot-button issue. Despite sustained attacks, school choice has made significant progress on the state level and nationally support remains strong and consistent. We look forward to hearing your thoughts. Please let us know if you have any questions.

Methodology

The survey fielded January 8-13, 2018 among a total of 1,100 likely November 2018 voters. The national survey included a representative sample of 800 voters and was supplemented with 200 additional Latino voters and 100 additional Millennials. Millennials are defined as likely voters born after 1981. The 2016 and 2015 survey waves were among 2016 likely voters.

Interviews were conducted via live callers on landline and cell phones and in English and Spanish. 58% of the interviews were conducted via cell phone.

The base sample margin of error is +/- 3.5%.

Appendix A

School Choice Support by Key Demographics			
	2016	2017	2018
Total Likely Voters	70 – 24	68 - 28	63 – 33
Men	68 – 28	66 - 29	64 - 31
Women	71 – 22	69 - 26	62 - 34
Democrats	65 – 30	55 - 40	54 – 43
Independents	66 – 25	67 - 28	62 - 33
Republicans	80 – 17	84 - 13	75 - 21
Millennials	75 – 20	75 - 22	64 - 31
Generation X	68 – 28	69 - 26	60 - 37
Baby Boomers	71 – 25	64 - 33	64 - 33
Silent Generation	63 – 25	65 - 26	64 – 27
White	68 – 26	65 - 31	61-34
African-Americans	76 – 20	72 - 19	66-29
Latinos	76 – 21	75 - 19	72-26
Large Metro	N/A	65 - 28	56 -40
Small Metro	N/A	70 - 25	62 - 34
Suburban	N/A	68 - 29	64 - 31
Fringe/Exurban	N/A	68 - 27	70 - 23
Rural	N/A	67 - 30	67 – 28
Parents	74 – 23	74 - 23	64 - 33
Public School Parents	70 – 24	70 - 25	63 - 34