

“Why Our Kids Don’t Learn”

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By Star Parker

RESTON, Va.—Included in the 2025 One Big Beautiful Bill Act is a dollar-for-dollar tax credit, up to \$1,700, for contributions to “Scholarship Granting Organizations” that parents can access and use toward paying for private-school tuition and fees and other educational expenses.

The provision is constructed such that states must choose to opt in to the program, which begins January 2027.

As of this writing, per the IRS, 28 states have opted in. Of those 28, 25 are red states and three are blue—Colorado, New Hampshire and Virginia.

This partisan imbalance is no accident.

The nation’s two major teachers’ unions—the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association—are cash machines for the Democratic Party. And the last thing they want is parents having any say where their child receives their K-12 education.

The unions have published an “Open Letter to our Democratic Governors” urging them to “say no to the Trump private-voucher scheme.”

Per the leaders of these two unions, the signatories of the letter, “Public education . . . is the foundation of a thriving democracy,” and vouchers are a betrayal.

Amid the celebration of our nation’s 250th birthday, with recitals of the defining words our founding Declaration—our rights to “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”—the leaders of the teachers’ unions declare it un-American that parents should have the right to choose how and where to educate their children.

We all should justifiably shudder that minds like this influence the majority of our nation’s children.

The results speak for themselves.

The Programme for International Student Assessment, administered by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), tests 15-year-olds in 80 countries in math, science and reading.

In the latest available scores, the top five countries are Singapore, China, Japan, Taiwan and South Korea. The United States ranks 18th behind Poland, the Czech Republic and Denmark.

Per the OECD, U.S. education spending per student in 2025 was \$20,387 compared to the OECD average of \$15,022. U.S. education spending as a percent of GDP was 5.8 percent compared to the OECD average of 4.7 percent.

Per the World Bank, education spending as percent of GDP in Singapore, the country with the highest Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) score, was 2.2 percent in 2024, less than half that of the U.S.

Analysis done at the Cato Institute shows inflation-adjusted spending per student in the U.S. increased 140 percent from 1971 to 2019, while over the same period test scores in math and reading for 17-year-olds barely moved.

A May 2026 study by the Network Contagion Research Institute and the Gevura Fund, which have affiliations with Rutgers University and the University of Maryland, reports: "Combined NEA spending on political activities, lobbying, and contributions to outside organizations totals approximately \$175 million in FY2025, nearly four times the \$45 million spent on direct member representation. PAC records show that 90 percent of NEA candidate-directed spending and nearly all of AFTs, has gone to Democrats consistently across decades."

A casual glance at the website of the NEA and the AFT barely turns up a hint about reading, math and science. Both are poster boards for the progressive political agenda.

It is no wonder that scholarships and vouchers, tickets for parents and children to education freedom, is a nightmare for the teachers' unions, which are about control, not freedom.

A recent study by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute ranks states by the strength and influence of their teachers' unions. Among the top 25 states rated with the strongest teachers' unions, only two—Ohio and West Virginia—have opted into the new tax-funded scholarship program.

Why are so many of our youth embracing socialism and turning away from the principles of our founding? Look no further than the vise grip unions have on our public schools.

Education freedom is vital to America's future. The new tax-funded scholarship program is a major step in the right direction.