

FLORIDA AND INDIANA LEAD ON SCHOOL CHOICE

Policymakers who wish to offer a preferential option for the poor should mirror recent legislation passed in Florida and Indiana, two states that have demonstrated the effectiveness of school vouchers.

Recently, Florida has expanded its existing school choice vouchers making them available for more families. Already one of the most ambitious voucher programs in the country, last academic year the state offered more than 36,000 students an average of \$7,000.

Additionally, Florida created special-needs scholarships for about 20,000 students. These scholarships are similar to education savings accounts that families can use for tutoring and related purposes. But perhaps one of the best elements of this is that it offers Florida students already enrolled in Catholic or charter schools eligibility for these vouchers.

Indiana, too, has recently expanded its decade-old voucher program. Indiana will now offer vouchers to 48,000 students a year. Families making \$145,000 a year would be eligible for vouchers amounting to 90 percent of tuition support levels. Like Florida, the Hoosier State would establish education savings accounts for children with special needs. Further, Indiana's budget increases per student grants for charter schools.

In a recent interview, former Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels, who signed Indiana's first school voucher bill into law, reflected on the success of the program. "Providing poor and minority families the same choice of schools that their wealthier neighbors enjoy is the purest example of 'social justice' in our society today."