

WALL STREET JOURNAL SCORES ON SCHOOL CHOICE

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on an editorial in the July 10th edition of the *Wall Street Journal*:

There is no newspaper in the country that consistently tracks school choice programs better than the *Wall Street Journal*. Its latest editorial on this subject is no exception: it reports on two updated studies on school vouchers in Indiana and Louisiana.

The initial studies found that after two years of implementing a school voucher program, academic performance in English and math were not encouraging. But when tested after three years, there was much improvement: the disparity in test scores in Louisiana had been erased; in Indiana, voucher students fared better than their public school cohorts.

The newspaper aptly notes that it takes time for students to adjust to a private school, but that is not its most important observation. It says it is “a mistake to judge a voucher program entirely on standardized tests. There are many other indicators—from personal safety, to discipline, graduation rates and specialty curricula.”

When I taught at a Catholic elementary school in Spanish Harlem in the 1970s, African-American and Puerto Rican parents told me that while they appreciated the curriculum, as well as the emphasis on Catholic values and discipline in the classroom, the number-one reason they sent their children to St. Lucy's was safety: they felt assured that when they picked their children up after school, they would be unharmed. By contrast, violence in neighborhood public schools was out-of-control.

This cannot be said enough. Rich urban whites, and their

middle class suburban counterparts, have no idea how important the safety variable is for minorities, especially in the inner cities. That alone justifies school choice programs.

Kudos to the *Wall Street Journal* for giving this the attention it deserves.