



Education

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Growing Weaker

As more proof of the success of school choice comes in, opponents continue raising objections but seem to be losing steam.

This week, the news was that 10 of 34 voucher schools are not accredited, which could "possibly" be a violation of the law.

Probably, it is not a violation of the law.

Whether the Legislature intended to require accreditation is murky.

Toni Jennings, the lieutenant governor, was president of the Senate when the bill was written.

She said the Legislature did not intend to require private schools that take vouchers to be accredited.

If it had, all three voucher programs would have had the requirement. Instead, there is one vague clause in the Opportunity Scholarships legislation that opponents have seized upon.

Regardless, wouldn't it be pertinent to point out that 2,250 public schools in Florida are not accredited? That's more than 40 percent of the schools.

Furthermore, 64 percent of the public schools that have been rated F either once or twice are accredited. Apparently, accreditation is no guarantee of excellence.

One reason for grasping at straws may be that another researcher has looked at choice -- specifically, the Opportunity Scholarships -- and has determined the students who have been given vouchers are doing better academically than they were in public schools.

Also, the Pensacola News-Journal reports "astounding academic growth" among the Panhandle city's voucher students.

The education establishment is fighting vouchers tooth and nail, and losing -- largely because of such ineffectual arguments.

These are the relevant facts on vouchers:

- Vouchers are giving thousands of poor, inner-city and disabled children a chance to escape failing schools and get an education.
- Vouchers are saving Florida taxpayers millions of dollars.
- Vouchers are creating more space in the public schools, which need it to meet the classroom size reduction mandate.

Choice opponents in Florida are distraught, angry and upset that these things are occurring, and they are doing all they can to stop the progress.
