



Education

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## Chalk Up Another Convert to School Choice

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When 3,000 parents rallied in Tallahassee this week to support school choice, one group went to the office of state Rep. Terry Fields of Jacksonville.

They asked Fields why he was opposed to a program that allows children from low-income families to escape failing schools.

Fields explained that he is a Democrat and not given to supporting everything the Republican governor and GOP majority favors.

The parents had another question to ask Fields.

Why does Fields send his own child to a private school?

He was not doing very well in public schools, Fields told them candidly. Neither are ours, the parents said.

Eventually, Fields said ~ three times ~ that he would support the corporate tax credit scholarship program, according to parents who attended.

One of the parents, Arlene Bethel of Jacksonville, said her daughter is attending Christian Academy on a scholarship, and is doing better than she was in a public school.

Her son attends a different public school.

Many voucher opponents send their own children to private schools. But, they don't see the need to give a helping hand to the children of parents who are less fortunate, even though it saves money for the taxpayers.

Leading Democrats have acknowledged that the party is on the wrong side of this issue, and the holdouts are beginning to peel away.

After years of opposition, for example, liberal politicians in Washington, D.C., recently switched and began supporting vouchers, which Congress then authorized for the district's miserable schools.

Fields should be commended for having the courage to do the right thing for his constituents.

Florida's choice programs are helping more than 25,000 children. But, powerful special interests are arrayed against them, hoping to maintain the public school monopoly by eliminating the competition. Tuesday's rally shows that parents who want a better education for their children can make it happen if they persevere. •

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