

Expand the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program (OSP)

Heritage Recommendation:

Expand school choice in the nation's capital in a budget neutral manner. Specifically:

- Expand the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program (OSP) with savings from other Heritage education recommendations not listed in this budget book.

Rationale:

Policymakers can advance the goal of growing school choice by expanding access to the D.C. OSP through existing funding authorized by the D.C. School Choice Incentive Act, most recently reauthorized as the Students for Opportunity and Results (SOAR) Act. These bills created and continued the D.C. OSP, which provides vouchers to children from low-income families in Washington, D.C., to attend a private school of choice. When the D.C. OSP was created in 2003, Members of Congress funded the new school choice option through what is known as the “three sector” approach: \$20 million in funding for the D.C. OSP; \$20 million in supplemental funding for D.C.’s public charter schools; and an *additional* \$20 million for the D.C. Public School System. Federal policymakers should shift a portion of the additional federal funding provided to traditional public schools in the “three sector” approach to fund additional vouchers for students to attend a private school of choice. As the District of Columbia falls under the jurisdiction of Congress, it is appropriate for the federal government to fund the D.C. OSP. Moreover, 91 percent of students who used a voucher to attend a private school of choice graduated high school, according to a study by the U.S. Department of Education—a rate 21 percentage points higher than a control group of their peers who were awarded but did not use a scholarship.

Additional Reading:

- Lindsey M. Burke, “The Value of Parental Choice in Education: A Look at the Research,” Heritage Foundation *Issue Brief* No. 4173, March 18, 2014, <http://www.Heritage.org/research/reports/2014/03/the-value-of-parental-choice-in-education-a-look-at-the-research>.
- Patrick Wolf et al., “Evaluation of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program: Final Report,” U.S. Department of Education, NCEE 2010-4018, June 2010, <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/20104018/pdf/20104018.pdf>.

Calculations:

The proposal shifts funding within the District of Columbia’s education budget, making it a budget-neutral recommendation.