

## FLORIDA EDUCATION MONTHLY: NOVEMBER 2004

A Project of The James Madison Institute

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### WELCOME!

The James Madison Institute is proud to unveil its newest school reform project, Florida Education Monthly. As a Madison Policy Digest subscriber, you'll receive this exciting new public policy resource on the first Friday of every month.

We're confident that Florida Education Monthly will become your go-to source for the latest education news from the Sunshine State and across the nation. Each issue will be packed with best practices, insightful research, and engaging examples on the power of choice in education.

JMI is committed to educating Floridians on practical free-market solutions to public policy problems—and we think Florida Education Monthly is the perfect tool to do just that. As always, you can count on JMI to deliver candid, straightforward information that you can use to impact public policy in Florida.

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### STATE NEWS

- \* When Schools Compete: The Effects of Vouchers on Florida Public School Advancement
  - \* Competition Passes the Test in Florida
  - \* From Ryder to “Renaissance”: Driving Quality in Education
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### WHEN SCHOOLS COMPETE: THE EFFECTS OF VOUCHERS ON FLORIDA PUBLIC SCHOOL ADVANCEMENT

[http://www.manhattan-institute.org/html/ewp\\_02.htm](http://www.manhattan-institute.org/html/ewp_02.htm)

This study, by Manhattan Institute Senior Fellow Jay P. Greene, Ph.D., and Research Associate Marcus A. Winters, analyzes the effect of Florida's A+ Program on public schools.

Under the A+ Program, Florida's high-stakes test is used to grade schools on a scale from A to F. If a school receives two F grades in any four-year period it is considered to be chronically failing and its students become eligible for vouchers they can use to attend other public or private schools. Proponents of school vouchers have long argued that competition for students and the funding they generate will give public schools powerful incentives to improve.

This study shows that schools in direct competition with vouchers, or threatened by the prospect of vouchers, are making educational gains greater than those of other low-performing schools that aren't facing voucher competition.

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### COMPETITION PASSES THE TEST IN FLORIDA

<http://www.educationnext.org/20043/66.html>

Do public schools respond to competition from private schools by improving the quality of instruction? This is one of the key questions in the voucher debate. Advocates of vouchers believe that public schools facing the threat of losing students and funding to private schools will take the measures necessary to raise student performance. Opponents worry that vouchers will

actually leave public schools worse off by draining them of funds and encouraging the best students and the most involved parents to flee a failing school.

This study, by Manhattan Institute Senior Fellow Jay P. Greene, Ph.D., and Research Associate Marcus A. Winters, analyzes the impact of Florida's A+ Program on public schools. Comparing the performance of schools that were threatened with vouchers and the performance of those that faced no such threat gives a measure of how public schools respond to competition.

The results showed that schools that were either voucher-eligible or threatened by vouchers made the largest gains in both test scores and genuine learning. This study yields solid evidence that public schools will react positively to being forced to compete with private schools for students and the dollars they carry.

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#### FROM RYDER TO "RENAISSANCE": DRIVING QUALITY EDUCATION

<http://www.ed.gov/news/newsletters/innovator/2004/0920.html>

The U.S. Department of Education recently highlighted Florida's first-in-the-nation status in allowing businesses to open charter schools that target employees' children.

Renaissance Elementary Charter School (formerly known as Ryder Elementary School) was created in August 1999 as a charter school for the children of Ryder employees in Miami. It also became the first charter school in the American workplace.

Now that the school is established, it is no longer affiliated with Ryder, but continues in the tradition of providing quality education in a workplace environment. Its downtown, industrial location attracts children whose parents work for other companies in the area. Close proximity during the day makes it possible for parents to join their children for lunch, volunteer at the school, or quickly check on their children if they become sick.

While attracting an economically, socially, and racially diverse enrollment of 500 students, Renaissance was ranked as an "A" school by the state of Florida in the 2003-2004 school year and is one of the highest performing elementary schools in Dade County.

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#### NATIONAL NEWS

\* Where Do Public School Teachers Send Their Kids to School?

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#### WHERE DO PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS SEND THEIR KIDS TO SCHOOL?

<http://www.edexcellence.net/foundation/publication/publication.cfm?id=333>

A recent Thomas B. Fordham Foundation study asks – does it matter where public-school teachers send their own children to school? If so, how and why? What can we learn from them?

What we are grappling with here is the question of connoisseurship. Stock analysts, for example, watch carefully when corporate directors buy or sell the stock of companies on whose boards they serve.

Similarly, we can assume that no one knows the condition and quality of public schools better than teachers who work in them every day. If these teachers are more likely than the general public (which may not have nearly as much information or expertise in these matters) to send their own daughters and sons to the public schools in which they teach, it is a strong vote of confidence in those schools.

In this study, the data show that urban school teachers are more likely than either urban households or the general public to send their children to private schools. Across the states, 12.2% of all families send their children to private schools, but urban public school teachers send their children to private schools at a rate of 21.5%, nearly double the national rate of private school attendance.

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