



Parents Know Their Children Best

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, parents across the country have seen their tax dollars funding schools that are failing their children—and locking parents out from knowing what’s going on in the classroom. Schools have actively prioritized ideology over academics, and the results are impossible to ignore: Per the 2024 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), only about 31% of fourth-graders read proficiently.¹

No wonder only 35% of Americans are satisfied with K-12 education!²

This erosion of confidence directly shapes family decisions, making education reform key to any pro-family agenda. Parents need to be able to trust their children’s schools will respect their rights as parents and place academics first. They also need access to robust school choice options, especially when their locally assigned school is not serving their children’s needs.

BACKGROUND: How We Got Here

Even before the pandemic, NAEP scores showed stagnant or declining trends, but COVID-era closures exacerbated these academic losses. During this period, districts shifted focus toward ideological content regarding gender, race, and sexuality, sacrificing core academics. Worse, schools withheld details about

curriculum from parents, even socially transitioning students without parental consent. Consequently, public school enrollments declined.

The lack of educational options creates real costs for parents, including chasing expensive housing in select neighborhoods with better public schools. Accessing quality education should not depend on a zip code.

Because K-12 education remains primarily a state and local responsibility, many families feel captive to restrictive district boundaries. While federal funding provides leverage, it cannot fully address the root problems of educational monopolies or the critical lack of accountability in our current public school systems.

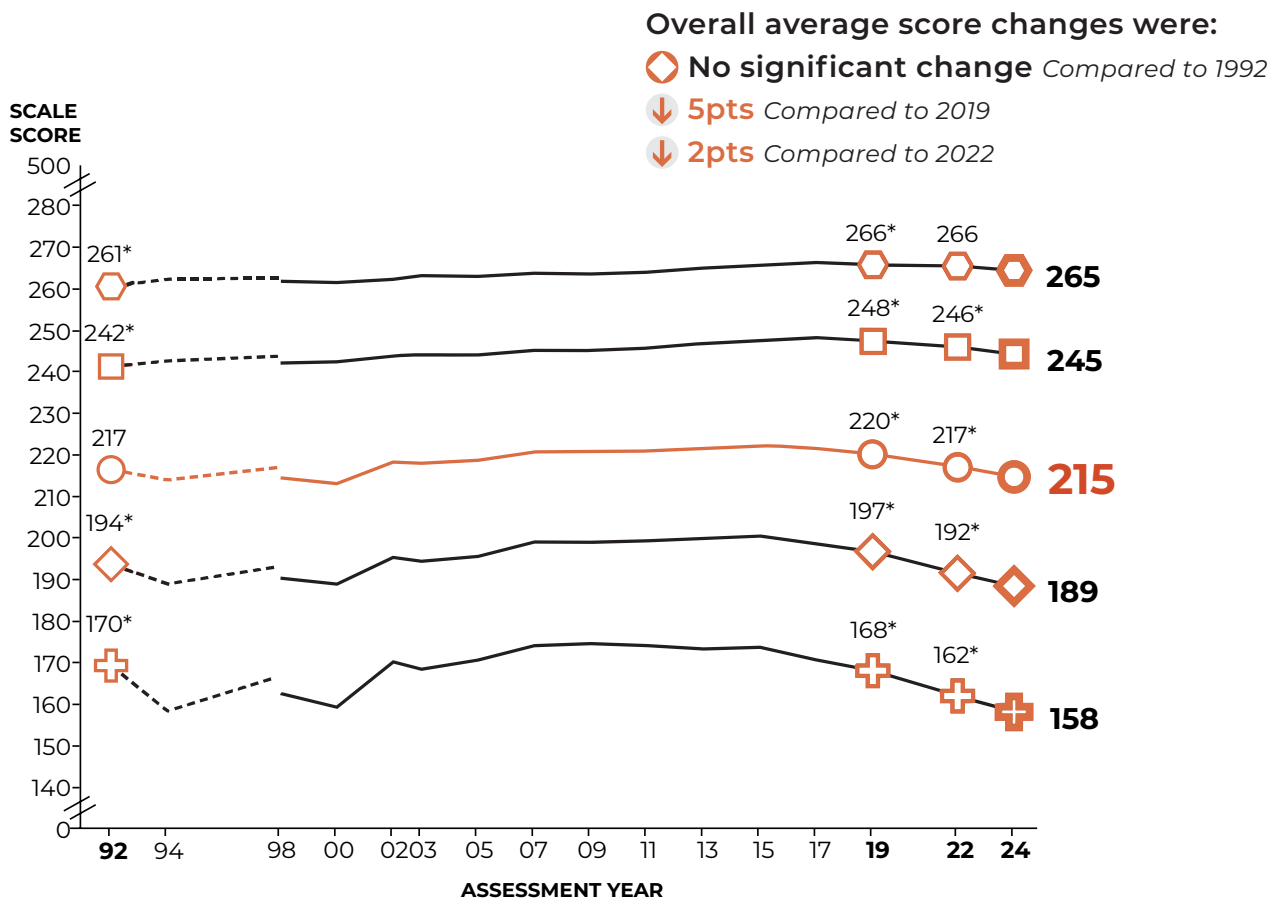
SOLUTIONS: *Paths Forward*

States should enact comprehensive parental rights laws, which guarantee curriculum transparency, timely notification and opt-out rights on sensitive topics (including gender identity), and easy access to student records. At the federal level, Congress can condition certain funding on parental consent requirements and advance legislation applying strict scrutiny to government interference in parental educational decisions. Moreover, states should expand school choice options—from vouchers to charter schools—and those that haven't yet should opt into the Federal Tax Scholarship Credit from the One Big Beautiful Bill.³ States should also continue strengthening early literacy initiatives, transparent school accountability systems, and policies that give excellent teachers greater freedom to teach. These reforms empower families, reduce the need to change zip codes, and signal to parents raising children that there are reliable, trustworthy education options.

LIST OF SPECIFIC BILLS

- * **Families' Rights and Responsibilities Act (H.R.650):** Establishes strict scrutiny protection for parents' fundamental right to direct their children's education.⁴
- * **Stopping Indoctrination and Protecting Kids Act (H.R.2616):** Requires parental consent for gender-related changes in schools receiving federal funds.⁵
- * **Mississippi Educational Freedom Program Act (H.B.2):** Establishes Education Savings Accounts and public accountability dashboards, and expands charter schools and reading and math tutoring, among other reforms.⁶

NAEP Reading Proficiency Rates for 4th Grade (2024)



◊ 90th Percentile ◻ 75th Percentile ○ Average Score ◇ 25th Percentile
 + 10th Percentile - - - Accomodations Not Permitted — Accomodations Permitted
 * Significantly Different ($p < .05$) from 2024

Source: "NAEP Report Card: Reading." *The Nation's Report Card*, 2024. https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reports/reading/2024/g4_8/.

Parental Support for Education Savings Accounts

Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) allow families to use a portion of public education funding to cover approved educational expenses.

MAGA
Supporters

77% SUPPORT

Liberals and
Progressives

75% SUPPORT

Source: Alli Aldis and Colyn Ritter. "End of School Year Survey: Parents Divided on Technology and Student Preparation for Life After Graduation." *EdChoice*, Jun. 9, 2026. <https://www.edchoice.org/2026-parents-divided-on-technology-and-student-preparation-for-life-after-graduation/>.

MISPERCEPTIONS VS. FACTS

MISPERCEPTION: School choice drains money from public schools and hurts students who remain.

FACT: Per-pupil funding typically follows the student; studies and state experiences show public schools often improve under competitive pressure while overall system resources remain stable or increase. Additionally, charter schools, which educate 7.2% of American children and are part of the school choice portfolio, are themselves public schools.⁷

MISPERCEPTION: Parental rights laws ban books or censor classroom discussion.

FACT: These laws require transparency so parents can review materials and consent to age-inappropriate or ideological content, while ensuring schools are accountable to the public and focused on academics.

MISPERCEPTION: School choice only benefits wealthy families.

FACT: Many programs are now universal, and some are even heavily targeted at lower-income students. In fact, school choice programs primarily benefit students who are from lower-income families as well as special needs students.⁸

MISPERCEPTION: Parents already have enough say in their children's education through existing public school channels.

FACT: Widespread reports of withheld curriculum, secret social transitions, and resistance to parental input demonstrate real barriers; choice and rights laws directly address these accountability gaps.

BOTTOM LINE

Families flourish when they have the freedom to choose the best education for their children. Policymakers should respect parents' authority through school choice, parental-opt-out for curriculum on sensitive topics, and access to records.

ENDNOTES

- 1 "What percentage of students in the US are proficient in reading?" *USAFacts*, accessed Jul. 16, 2026. <https://usafacts.org/answers/what-percentage-of-students-in-the-us-are-proficient-in-reading/>.
- 2 Megan Brennan. "Record-Low 35% of Americans Satisfied With Education Quality." *Gallup*, Sept. 17, 2025. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/695174/record-low-satisfied-education-quality.aspx>.
- 3 Neeraja Deshpande. "A Philanthropic Path to Educational Freedom." *Independent Women*, Jan. 31, 2026. <https://www.independentwomen.com/2026/01/31/a-philanthropic-path-to-educational-freedom/>.
- 4 Virginia Foxx. "H.R.650 - Families' Rights and Responsibilities Act." *119th Congress*, 2025. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/650>.
- 5 Tim Walberg. "H.R.2616 - Stopping Indoctrination and Protecting Kids Act." *119th Congress*, 2025. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/2616/all-info>.
- 6 "House Bill 2: What It Does, What It Means, and Where Mississippi First Stands." *Mississippi First*, Jan. 20, 2026. <https://www.mississippifirst.org/house-bill-2-what-it-does-what-it-means-and-where-mississippi-first-stands/>.
- 7 Colyn Ritter "2026 EdChoice Share." *EdChoice*, Jan. 6, 2026. <https://www.edchoice.org/2026-edchoice-share/>.
- 8 "Who Uses School Choice Programs?" *EdChoice*, accessed Jul. 16, 2026. <https://www.edchoice.org/resources/faqs/who-uses-school-choice-programs/>.