

THE WAY OF THE FUTURE

Why Bright Today Scholarships Are a
Win-Win-Win Policy Solution for RI



School Choice:

Better for Kids	Better for Taxpayers	Better for Public Schools
		

A compilation of key findings from multiple reports by the Center

WHY EXPANDED EDUCATIONAL CHOICE OPTIONS ARE NEEDED IN RI

Rhode Island students are being failed by a government-run public school system that yields one of the lowest taxpayer values in New England and across the nation.

With High Spending & Low-To-Moderate Student Achievement, in Rhode Island:

- The high school graduation rate is the worst in New England
- 4th grade reading & math scores are the worst in New England
- At-risk students – *low income, black, Hispanic, and students with disabilities* - especially suffer in our public schools

Sophia's Choice? A True Story

Sophia is a bright girl, about to enter kindergarten. But her mom doesn't believe the public school she was assigned to meets the academic standards she desires, so she requested an inter-district transfer. Instead she got the run-around and was left with little hope of placing Sophia on a better educational path. Disheartened, Sophia's mom pushed-back, but was finally told that *"it would be much easier if your daughter just went to the school she was supposed to go to."* RI families deserve better.

The rigidity of Rhode Island's public educational system gives Sophia's family few options; they cannot afford private school tuition or a family move, and they have little chance of winning the lottery at a nearby charter. Sophia's mom soon

No Choice for Sophia:

"It would be easier if your daughter just went to the school she's supposed to go to."

... public school administrator to Sophia's mom, who wanted a better educational path than the zip-code assigned school.

realized she has virtually no choice about her daughter's education.

Sophia's family, like thousands of other Ocean State families, feels their children are trapped in sub-standard schools just because of their zip code.

How can Rhode Islanders allow any child to be forced to receive a sub-par education?

The Solution

In order to have hope for a bright future, every child deserves a great education today!

Imagine a solution that costs nothing in new taxes, would give the Sophias of our state an education of their parents' choice, and would not adversely impact public schools. **Such a solution exists!**

The Report: go to RIFreedom.org/EdChoiceRI and select *"The Case for Educational Choice"*

Bright Today Educational Scholarships Improve Student Achievement Without Harming Public Schools!



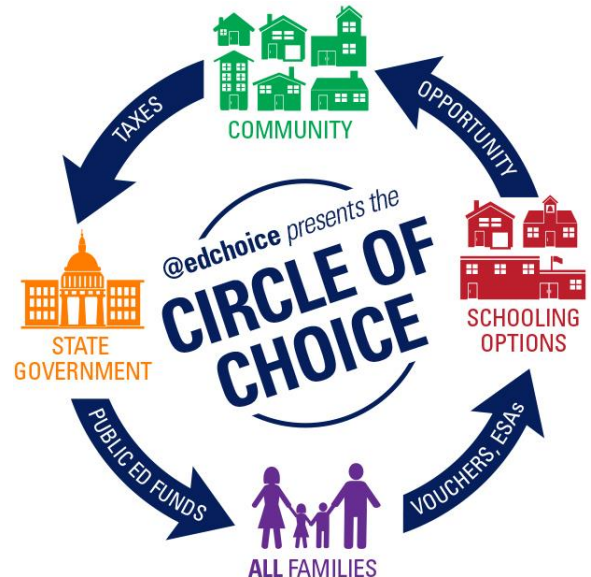
3. Meet the documented demand for school choice
4. Create a more competitive and accountable environment where public schools will improve academic outcomes
5. Increase available funding per pupil in public schools
6. Save money for public school districts
7. Keep 100% of local taxes for use in local school districts
8. Cost nothing to implement – no new taxes or fees required
9. Provide a higher value return for taxpayers
10. Improve statewide educational performance to be a boost to economic development

THE LEGISLATIVE SOLUTION

In 2015, bipartisan legislation has been introduced - in both the Rhode Island House and Senate - to empower parents with the choice to determine the best educational path for their children. The Bright Today Scholarship legislation not only creates new educational opportunities for families, but meets each and every one of its original ten policy objectives.

Legislative Objectives:

1. Establish RI as a national leader in educational reform
2. Empower RI parents with immediate choices for access to a quality education for their children



The Report: go to RIFreedom.org/EdChoiceRI and select “Policy Brief - The Way of the Future”

THE PUBLIC SUPPORTS EDUCATIONAL CHOICE

They say so in public opinion polls, and they prove it in their behavior.

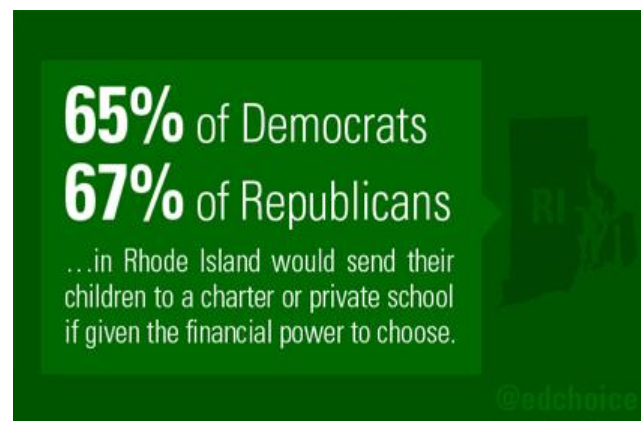
Rhode Islanders Want School Choice

Results from a major 2013 public survey released by the Center in cooperation with the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, show there is broad support among Rhode Islanders for empowering parents with more choices when it comes to their children's education:

- 60% overall and 80% of blacks rate RI public schools as “poor” or “fair”
- Strong majorities across the board favor policies that allow parents to choose schools other than traditional public schools
- If they had the means 68% would select as their first choice a school other than a traditional district school
- 55% favor voucher-type programs like Bright Today Educational Scholarships

Is not a Partisan Issue

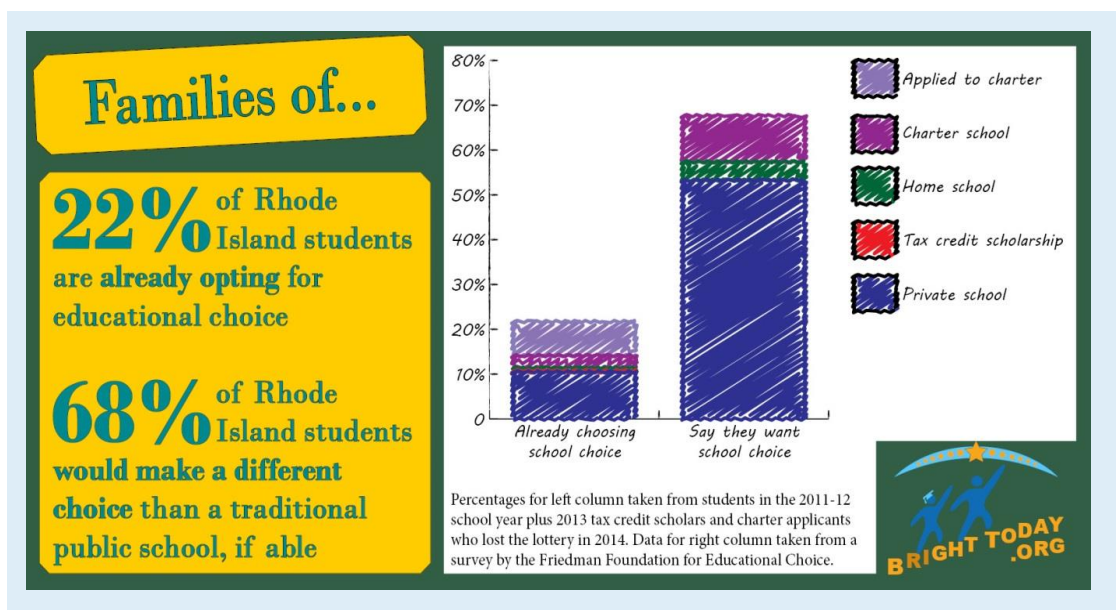
Education choice supporters span the political spectrum, both in Rhode Island and nationally.



RI Parents Already Choosing Private Schools

Recognizing the greater value of a private education as compared with public school, among high SAT-taking states, RI students have:

- 2nd highest attendance rates at private schools
- 1st highest attendance rates at religiously affiliated schools



The Reports:

Go to
RIFreedom.org/EdChoiceRI
and select

“Public Survey Results”

and

“RI Parents Lead Nation”

THE TRUTH ABOUT EDUCATIONAL CHOICE

The Myth: Opponents of educational choice argue that empowering parents to choose the best educational path for their children will harm the public school system.

The Truth: School choice not only leads to increased outcomes for scholarship students, but usually leads to enhanced public school performance:

- In 20 of 22 major national studies, where strong educational choice programs exist, performance in those public schools actually increased. In the other two studies, no adverse impact was found.
- The truth is that public schools benefit from the increased competition and accountability to parents ... because they have to!



Ed Choice Is Economic Development!
Enhanced student performance & higher graduation rates lead to a more qualified workforce.

School Choice

Myths VS Reality

Click here for the full infographic; click a myth to see its reality.

1 Myth: School choice will hurt state and local budgets and drain funds from public schools.

Reality: Educational choice means more money for our children, not less.

2 Myth: School choice is just a tax break for the rich and will result in economic segregation of students.

Reality: Educational choice gives all students more equal opportunity.

3 Myth: School choice will enable private schools to "cream-skim" the best students from public schools.

Reality: Educational choice lets free students who can do better.

4 Myth: Private schools are not sufficiently regulated or held publicly accountable.

Reality: Educational choice makes all schools more accountable to students.

5 Myth: School choice violates the separation of church and state.

Reality: Educational choice gets government out of religion, not into it.

6 Myth: Parents will use the wrong measures to choose schools for their children and are not equipped to make such decisions.

Reality: Educational choice leaves decisions to those who care most.

7 Myth: Teacher pay will fall because there will be more private schools, and they pay less than public schools.

Reality: Educational choice will increase teacher pay and satisfaction.

The Report: go to RIFreedom.org/EdChoiceRI and select "Public Survey ... Dispelling Common Myths"

BRIGHT TODAY SCHOLARSHIP ACCOUNTS ARE THE WAY OF THE FUTURE

The Bright Today Scholarship bills are an evolved form of school vouchers called **Education Savings Accounts (ESAs)**. RI's innovative and cutting-edge legislation is modeled after the landmark ESA law in Arizona, and now the law in at least four states.

What Are ESA's?

Designed to provide more flexible choices for parents, RI's Bright Today Educational Scholarship Account legislation includes the following features:

1. *State funds flow directly into a debit account controlled by parents*
2. *Funds can be spent on tuition or other approved educational services*
3. *Unspent funds can be saved and rolled over for future K-12 educational expenses*

Also, per the 2015 legislation:

No new funding or taxes required. All scholarships are funded via existing state revenues

Universal eligibility. Every RI K-12 student would be eligible (includes grandfathering of current private & home school students)

Approved educational expenses include: private school tuition, home school curriculum, fees for online or post-secondary learning programs, educational therapies for special-ed students

Criminal prosecution for misuse or fraud

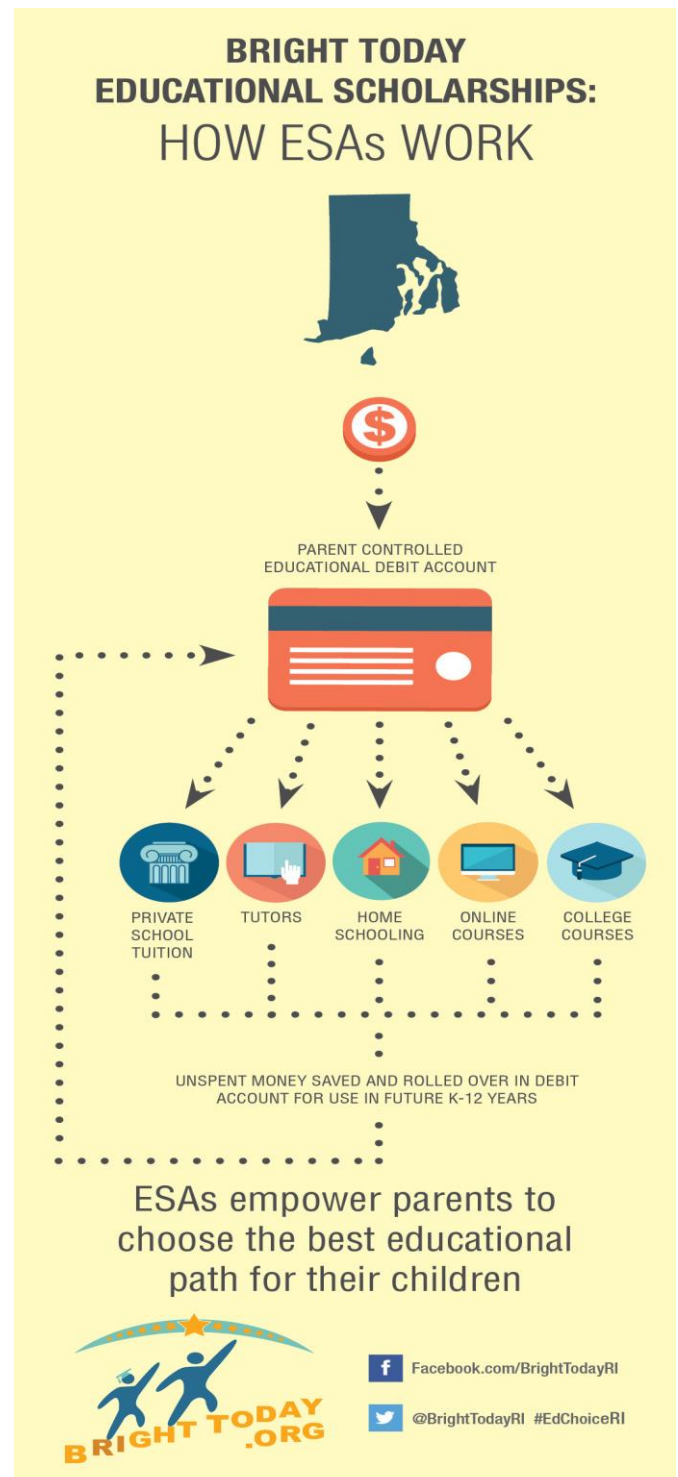
Income-adjusted scholarship awards, with a \$6,000 cap

The Report: go to RIFreedom.org/EdChoiceRI and select "Policy Brief - The Way of the Future"

Funding formula. Scholarship students are still counted towards the school district's enrollment

Prohibition of government control over private or home schools

Separate open-enrollment provision in the legislation allows transfers to other public schools



Bright Today Educational Scholarships Lead to Net Savings for Public Schools!

THE MATH OF EDUCATIONAL CHOICE

Empowering parents with the choice to determine the best educational path for their children is not only morally just, but also results in a positive fiscal impact for public school districts. Under 3% of public school students are projected to accept scholarships.

*Unlike charter school funding ...
with ESAs, 100% of local taxes remain
for use in local schools!*

Different from Charter School Math

The math of Bright Today Scholarships is very different from charter school math, as only state funds are used to fund scholarships. As a result school districts actually improve their bottom lines.

School Districts Actually Save Money

Projected financial results by RI-DIMES, the Center's custom fiscal modeling tool:

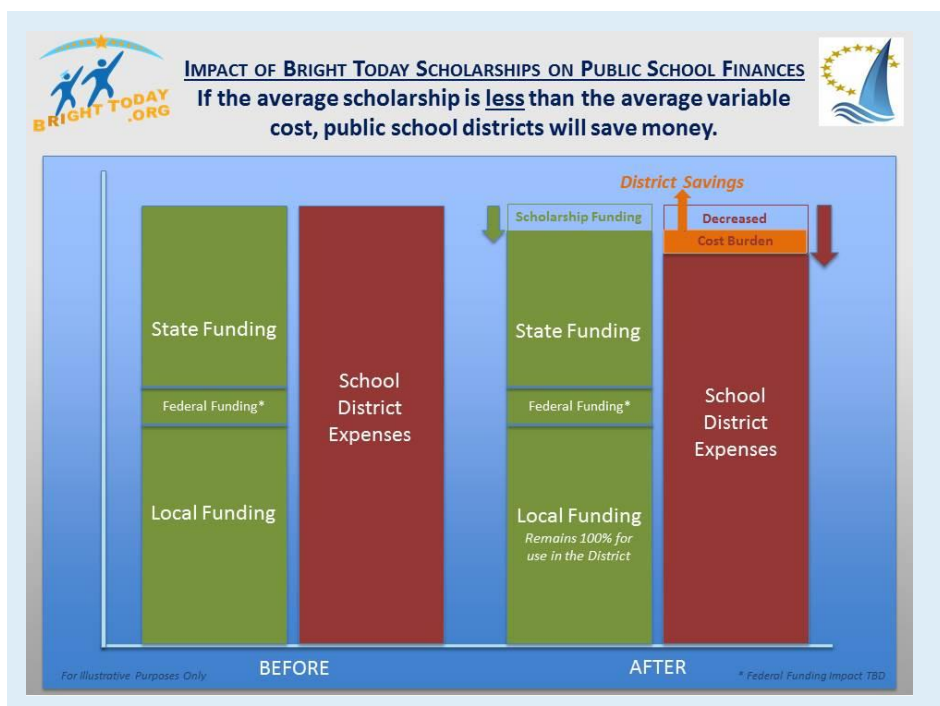
Increased funding per student in public school districts across the board (+\$316 statewide average)

Net fiscal savings in 33 of 36 schools districts; almost \$4 million in Providence and over \$17 million statewide (*core scholarship scenario*)

Increase in total spending on education in RI by \$17.2 million (*public and private*)

How so? Because scholarship students are still counted in the district's funding formula, if the total amount of scholarships paid is less than the expense savings because there are fewer students to educate ... *the school district will actually save money.*

The 2015 Bright Today Scholarship legislation was designed to meet this condition.



The Math Report

To determine how much your local school district will save, and for more details, go to:

RIFreedom.org/EdChoiceRI
and select

"The Math of Educational Choice"



The Rhode Island Center for Freedom and Prosperity is the Ocean State's premiere free-enterprise think tank.

Our mission is to return government to the people by opposing special interest public policy and advancing proven free-market solutions that can transform lives through economic competitiveness, educational opportunity, and individual freedom.

Our vision is to see Rhode Island as a destination of choice to raise a family and build a career; with a thriving business climate, abundant jobs, and a world-class education system.

The Center never accepts public funding and relies exclusively on the generosity of private individuals and foundations for support. As an IRS-approved 501-c-3 nonprofit organization, all personal and corporate donations to our Center are tax-deductible.

For more information on Bright Today Scholarships please visit: BrightToday.org
[Facebook.com/BrightTodayRI](https://www.facebook.com/BrightTodayRI) | [Twitter: @BrightTodayRI](https://twitter.com/BrightTodayRI)