

The Public Policy
and Civil Society

S E R I E S

THE FLORIDA TAX CREDIT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

by Victoria Bell



The R Street Institute's Public Policy and Civil Society Series is a collection of case studies that demonstrate how policy can be used to energize non-governmental bodies. Each report will spotlight how government leaders turned to a diverse array of individuals, community-based organizations, nonprofits and/or local businesses to solve a social challenge, which differs from the traditional approach of creating a new centralized initiative run by a government bureaucracy. In total, these studies show how a variety of policy tools—including reduced regulations, new enabling language, tax credits and competitive grant programs—can be used to activate non-governmental bodies, which create an array of solutions tailored to local conditions. We would like to thank the Walton Family Foundation for its support of this series.

FOREWORD

A risk of using policy to enliven civil society is that participating non-governmental bodies can become dependent on state dollars and therefore susceptible to government direction. This can then compromise the independence of, and the healthy variation among, those bodies. In this excellent report, Victoria Bell shows how Florida has used tax credits to engage individuals, businesses and private schools in the work of education reform. Those with a tax liability to the state can instead donate to nonprofit scholarship programs that enable students to attend non-public schools. Thanks to this policy mechanism, hundreds of millions of dollars flow annually from the private sector to a vast array of schools serving over 100,000 students—with none of these dollars ever hitting government coffers. Bell's study recounts the program's formation and evolution, and explains how a constellation of civil-society actors are now helping drive education improvement in the Sunshine State. Although the findings have much to say about schools, the policy device at the heart of this case study—state tax credits—could be utilized in countless ways. That is, Bell has found a strategy that policymakers can use to engage nonprofits in important work without the fear of heavy-handed government meddling.

— Andy Smarick



INTRODUCTION

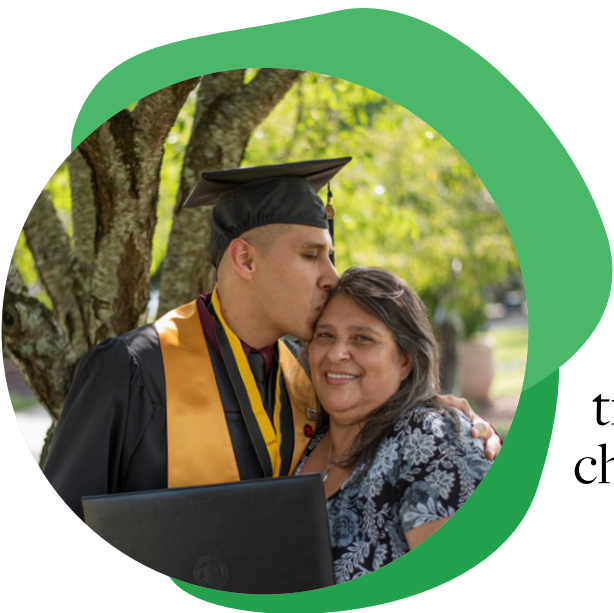
This paper demonstrates how the Florida Tax Credit (FTC) Scholarship Program expands educational opportunities to children of families with limited financial resources by activating civil-society entities such as the private school sector, local communities and private, voluntary contributors.

Two decades ago, the state of education in Florida was dire. In 1999, Florida students ranked near the bottom of the nation in achievement.¹ Under the leadership of Governor Jeb Bush, the state implemented a comprehensive set of reforms that combined high expectations, rigorous accountability and real choices for families.² The FTC program was a crucial part of these reforms and sought to address the social problem of an inadequate education system by ensuring all students had access to a high-quality education that best fit their needs.

¹ NOTE: The author would like to thank Howard Burke, Robert Futrell, James Herzog, Barbara Hodges, Mimi Jankovits, John Kirtley, Ron Matus, Adam Miller, Cara Candal, Sam Duell, Shan Goff, Patricia Levesque, Adam Peshek, Quentin Suffren and Claire Vorhees for their contributions to this project.

² "Florida in 1999 vs. Florida in 2019," Foundation for Florida's Future, 2019.

² Florida has since improved student achievement across the board: the state now ranks fifth in the nation in fourth-grade reading achievement and seventh in the country in fourth-grade math achievement. See "State Rankings," The Nation's Report Card, last accessed March 10, 2020.



Empowering students from low-income families with educational choice is part of a larger state-wide trend of empowering all families with choice.

The goal of the FTC program is clear: Empower students from low-income families with educational options by awarding them a scholarship to attend a private school of their choice. FTC scholarships are funded through private, voluntary contributions to nonprofit scholarship funding organizations (SFOs), and contributors receive a state tax credit in return for their contributions. Through this crucial collaboration among nonprofit organizations, private, voluntary contributors and local communities, thousands of students from low-income families across the Sunshine State are able to enroll in private schools of their choice.

The FTC program is one of many school choice programs the state offers. Empowering students from low-income families with educational choice is part of a larger state-wide trend of empowering all families with choice. In fact, Floridians are choosing educational environments that best meet the individual needs of their children more than ever before: 47 percent of Florida's PreK-12 students attended a school of their choice in the 2017-18 school year.³

The FTC program has been a particularly successful part of these reforms, in large part due to its activation and engagement of civil society. Since the creation of the program in 2001, the private school sector, local communities and private, voluntary contributors have worked in close partnership to expand educational opportunities to children from low-income families.

³ Of these students, more than 100,000 are enrolled in a private school using an FTC scholarship. See, e.g., [“The Florida Pre K-12 Education Landscape,” RedefinED, 2019.](#)

THE SOCIAL PROBLEM

In 1999, Florida's education system was failing to provide far too many students access to the American dream and the state's students ranked near the bottom of the nation in student achievement.⁴ Based on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the reading performance of nearly half of all fourth-graders was significantly below grade level, and half of all fourth-graders were performing below the national average in math. Only half of Florida students graduated high school on time. Outside of their residentially assigned schools, low-income families did not have access to a wide set of educational options.⁵

Today, Florida is a national leader in closing the achievement gap.⁶ The state ranks fifth in the nation in fourth-grade reading achievement, seventh in the country in fourth-grade math achievement, and the statewide high school graduation rate has increased more than 30 percentage points.⁷ Furthermore, regardless of their household income, Florida families are more empowered than ever before to choose educational environments that best meet the individual needs of their children: In the 2017-18 school year, 47 percent of Florida's PreK-12 students attended a school of their choice.⁸

This is a remarkable and notable shift in the trajectory of the state's educational system. So, how did Florida reverse a generation of decline in education? The next two sections explore how the Florida Tax Credit (FTC) program sought to expand educational opportunities to students from low-income families by activating and engaging civil society.

⁴ "State Performance Compared to the Nation," [The Nation's Report Card](#)," last accessed March 10, 2020.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Christy Hovanetz, "How does Florida compare on the 2017 NAEP?", [ExcelinEd](#), April 18, 2018.

⁷ "State Performance Compared to the Nation."

⁸ ["The Florida Pre K-12 Education Landscape."](#)



THE FLORIDA TAX CREDIT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

A series of political, legal and policy challenges—and a commitment by Florida’s leaders to leverage school choice—led to the creation of the FTC program. Before explaining the specifics of the policy, it is essential to understand the national and state contexts in which the program was created.

NATIONAL CONTEXT

In the 1990s, a handful of states engaged in revolutionary educational reform by passing private education choice programs. Wisconsin, Ohio and Florida established the first voucher programs, which allowed students to attend a private school of their choice using public funds.⁹ In 1997, Arizona created the first tax-credit scholarship program, which allows taxpayers to receive tax credits for their donations to nonprofit organizations that provide school scholarships to K–12 students.¹⁰

For years, policy analysts and educational experts have suggested tax-credit scholarship programs activate civil society and expand educational opportunity.¹¹ For example, in 1999's *Choosing Equality: School Choice, the Constitution, and Civil Society*, Joseph Viteritti wrote that “if properly constructed by policymakers, school choice can function to upgrade the educational opportunities of children, and [...] can strengthen the health of American democracy.”¹² Fifteen years later, Michael Q. McShane suggested policymakers need to “[lean] on civil society” and not on the “good intentions of government employees” in order for education choice programs to succeed. And, indeed, as private school choice programs have expanded, so has the role of civil society.¹³

Some also describe a “civil society approach” as necessary for the successful functioning of a public education system.¹⁴ In official testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives in 2002, Gerard Robinson, former commissioner of education for the State of Florida, reinforced this idea: “Tax credit plans [...] galvanize and strengthen civil society by giving individuals and companies new incentive to assist the educational dreams of their fellow citizens.”¹⁵

⁹ “What are School Vouchers?”, EdChoice, last accessed March 10, 2020.

¹⁰ Tax-credit scholarship programs are a unique policy mechanism that activates civil society by energizing private, voluntary contributors; engaging nonprofit scholarship funding organizations; and empowering local communities. See, e.g., “Tax Credit Scholarship Programs Policy Overview,” *ExcelinEd Policy Toolkit*, 2019.

¹¹ See, e.g., Adam B. Schaeffer, “School Choice: Florida Can Add Momentum,” *Orlando Sentinel*, April 24, 2007.

¹² Joseph P. Viteritti, *Choosing Equality: School Choice, the Constitution, and Civil Society* (Brookings Institution Press, 2001).

¹³ Michael Q. McShane, “Helping School Choice Work,” *National Affairs*, Summer 2014. McShane also notes that policymakers could encourage private investment in private schools and strengthen civil society through policies such as tax deductions for charitable giving to nonprofit organizations (e.g., private schools) and tax-credit scholarship programs. See, e.g., Michael Q. McShane, “School Choice in Missouri: The Power Rankings,” Show-Me Institute, Sept. 9, 2015.

¹⁴ See, e.g., Gerard Robinson, “Point: Tax-credit Scholarship Programs Provide Options for Parents,” *The State Journal-Register*, Aug. 10, 2017.; Ashley Berner, “Expanding Access to Non-public Schools: A Research and Policy Review,” Institute for Education Policy, May 2017.

¹⁵ See, e.g., “Testimony of Gerard Robinson,” Hearing on Expanding Educational Opportunity Through School Choice, U.S. House of Representatives, 114th Congress (2016).

FLORIDA CONTEXT

In 1998, before Governor Jeb Bush assumed office, venture capitalist John Kirtley established the Children's Scholarship Fund (CSF) of Tampa Bay, a privately funded scholarship program that awarded private school scholarships to low-income children. Kirtley was inspired to establish the program after observing a private Catholic school in New York City with high demand among low-income families.¹⁶ He also took note of Virginia Gilder's philanthropic efforts to award private school scholarships to students attending Giffen Memorial Elementary School, a poorly performing public school.¹⁷ The Tampa Bay-based program, which initially offered 350 scholarships, was able to double the number of scholarships available thanks to the efforts of the national Children's Scholarship Fund.¹⁸ In just three months and with little publicity, the program received 12,000 applications for 700 scholarships.¹⁹

In 1998, Governor Bush campaigned on a platform of revolutionizing the state's education system with bold reforms. Soon after his election, Governor Bush met with Kirtley to discuss the scholarship program and the Governor's signature educational initiative: the A+ Plan for Education. The A+ Plan proposed to increase accountability by assigning letter grades to all schools, incentivizing improved student learning outcomes and expanding educational opportunity via the Opportunity Scholarship Program (OSP), which would award vouchers to students who were attending persistently failing public schools.²⁰ Recognizing overlapping interests in expanding educational opportunity, Governor Bush joined forces with Kirtley, Patrick Heffernan (Floridians for School Choice) and T. Willard Fair (Urban League).²¹

As a result of this partnership, thousands of families who had failed to receive a scholarship were mobilized to testify in front of the state legislature in favor of the A+ Plan. At one committee hearing, a senator from Miami criticized the proposed A+ Plan and claimed his constituents did not want more vouchers, but rather wanted more money for their public schools.²² A dozen of the senator's constituents were at that committee hearing and stated that they did, in fact, want vouchers. It was a clear and convincing public rebuttal to his claims.²³

¹⁶ Author interview with John Kirtley (telephone), July 23, 2019.

¹⁷ Peter Newcomb, "Follow Through," *Forbes*, June 15, 1998.

¹⁸ John Kirtley, "The Legacy of Ted Forstmann," *RedefinED*, Nov. 21, 2011.

¹⁹ Kirtley interview.

²⁰ Patricia Levesque, "Florida Celebrates 20 Years of the A Plan for Education," Foundation for Florida's Future, March 4, 2019.

²¹ Kirtley interview.

²² Kirtley.

²³ *Ibid.*



Ultimately, the A+ Plan, including the OSP, was signed into law by Governor Bush on June 21, 1999.²⁴ According to John Kirtley, private schools initially hesitated to participate in the OSP, citing concerns about governmental interference in their operations. However, CSF-Tampa Bay expanded its efforts to persuade private schools located near F-rated schools to participate in the OSP, and subsequently, private school participation increased.²⁵

LEGISLATIVE ORIGINS OF THE FLORIDA TAX CREDIT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Meanwhile, several internal and external factors combined to bring about the Florida Tax Credit (FTC) program. Student participation in Arizona's tax-credit scholarship program was on the rise, increasing from 128 students (1998) to 3,207 (1999) and then 15,081 students (2000).²⁶ While there was no personal income tax in Florida, Florida leaders were taking note of the innovative policy in Arizona and the resultant student participation. Ultimately, a group of Florida leaders came up with the idea for a corporate tax-credit scholarship program.²⁷ House Speaker Tom Feeny expressed support for the proposal and made it a priority for the legislature.²⁸

According to Patricia Levesque, CEO of ExcelinEd, the opposition surrounding the FTC proposal was similar to the debate over the OSP,²⁹ but there were favorable legislators in office at the time, and the FTC proposal passed both chambers.³⁰ In 2001, Governor Bush signed the FTC program into law.³¹

²⁴ F.S. § 381, ch. 2002-387; § 24, ch. 2008-235; § 13, ch. 2010-22.

²⁵ Kirtley interview.

²⁶ "Arizona - Original Individual Income Tax Credit Scholarship, EdChoice, last accessed July 15, 2019.

²⁷ This group included Patrick Heffernan, T. Willard Fair and John Kirtley. For information about the scholarship program see "Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program," Florida Dept. of Revenue, last accessed March 11, 2020.; HB 271, Corporate Income Tax Credit (2001).

²⁸ Office of Speaker Tom Feeny, "Promises Made, Promises Kept," Press Release, March 9, 2001.

²⁹ Author interview with Patricia Levesque (telephone), June 18, 2019.

³⁰ Kirtley interview.

³¹ F.S. §1002.395 (2001).

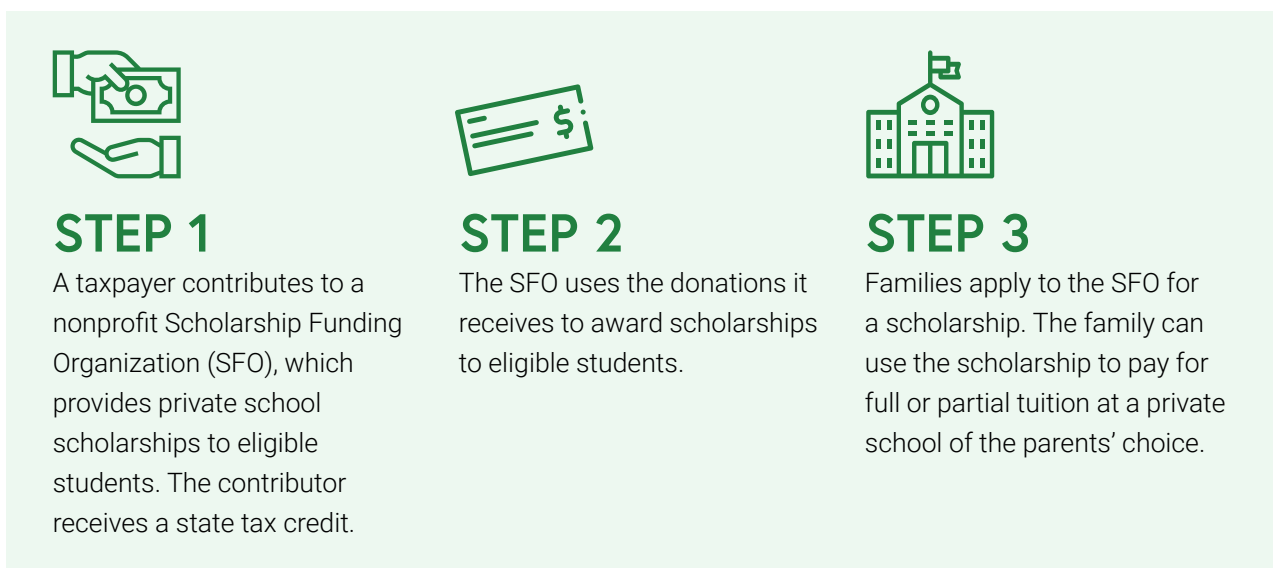
FTC PROGRAM POLICY DETAILS

The FTC program follows a three-step process (Fig. 1).³²

In Step 1, the program encourages private, voluntary contributions by taxpayers to nonprofit scholarship funding organizations (SFOs).³³ In return for their contribution to an SFO, private, voluntary contributors can receive a dollar-for-dollar state-tax credit, up to 100 percent of their state-tax liability for corporate income, insurance premium, alcoholic beverage excise, direct pay sales, oil and gas severance, and commercial lease taxes.³⁴

FIGURE 1: HOW A TAX-CREDIT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM WORKS

Source: [Author](#)



In Step 2, the SFOs then award private school tuition scholarships to eligible students from low-income families.³⁵ The law defines eligible students as children from households with annual incomes below 260 percent of the federal poverty level or students who are in foster care.³⁶ Scholarship amounts are based on the student's grade level and account for the school district in which the student resides. Scholarships are calculated as 95 percent of the funds per unweighted, full-time equivalent in the Florida Education Finance Program.³⁷ For example, a student in Miami-Dade county would have been eligible for an \$8,778 scholarship in 2018-19.³⁸

³² "Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program," ExcelinEd, 2018.

³³ F.S. §1002.395(5).

³⁴ F.S. §1002.395(14).

³⁵ F.S. §1002.395(11).

³⁶ Based on the 2019 federal poverty guidelines, 260 percent of the federal poverty level is \$66,950 for a family of four. See "2019 Poverty Guidelines," U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, May 22, 2019. See also F.S. §1002.395(3)(b).

³⁷ F.S. §1002.395(11)(a)2.

³⁸ "2018-19 Funding for Florida School Districts," Florida Department of Education; F.S. XLVIII, ch. 1002, § 8.

In the final step, participating families can use an FTC scholarship to pay tuition and fees at a participating private school of their choice.³⁹ A private school must notify the Department of Education of their intent to participate in a scholarship program and agree to fulfill certain requirements, such as submitting student results on state-approved norm-referenced examinations and meeting other basic safety requirements.⁴⁰ The Department then verifies the eligibility of private schools that meet specific requirements identified within respective scholarship program laws, and other provisions of state law that apply to private schools. Private schools must submit a completed application no later than March 1 in order to participate in the state assessment program for the subsequent school year. Applications are evaluated, and eligible schools selected, subject to contractual cap limits. A family of an eligible student may also receive a \$750 transportation scholarship if the family chooses to send their child to a public school that is different from their assigned school (both in-district public schools and public schools outside of the district in which the student lives.)⁴¹

The law sets clear definitions around what makes a private school eligible to participate in the program. Major requirements include demonstrating financial viability; meeting state and local health, safety and welfare codes and rules; and providing the state with documentation about participating students.⁴²

It also requires prospective and existing SFOs to fulfill certain obligations, including a demonstration of financial viability and ensuring that scholarship recipients meet all eligibility guidelines, as well adherence to the obligations of existing SFOs.⁴³

At the time the program was created, no existing nonprofit organizations were set up to administer it. There were, however, privately funded organizations, such as Floridians for School Choice and CSF-Tampa Bay, as well as other Florida-based CSF affiliates. In the first year of the program, a total of seven nonprofits were created to administer the program, four of which were CSF-affiliates.⁴⁴ This is a good example of how a tax-credit program can not only catalyze private giving but also spur the creation of other nonprofits.

³⁹ F.S. §1002.395(6)(d)1.

⁴⁰ F.S. XLVIII, ch. 1002, §8.

⁴¹ F.S. §1002.395(6)(d)2 and F.S. §1002.395(11)(a)3.

⁴² F.S. §1002.395(8).

⁴³ F.S. §1002.395(15) and F.S. §1002.395(6).

⁴⁴ "Scholarship Funding Organizations," Florida Dept. of Education, last accessed March 11, 2020.

Initially, Floridians for School Choice was the primary nonprofit organization and administered FTC scholarships to about half of all participating students. Eventually, CSF-Tampa Bay absorbed the operations of the other CSF affiliates and became Step Up For Students (SUFS), while Floridians for School Choice ceased operations. The program's design led to this change: Unlike other scholarship programs that receive personal contributions, Florida's program relies on corporate donations. This means that it receives larger sums of money from fewer entities, rather than smaller sums of money from many individuals. In the beginning, to ensure that SFOs were all able to support students, one SFO might receive a large donation and then give parts of it to others. Over time, however, it became clear that this process was inefficient: fewer well-run SFOs were able to raise and award money and streamline processes.

KEY CHANGES OVER TIME

- » **2001:** The legislature established the (previously named) Corporate Tax Credit (CTC) Scholarship Program, setting a \$50 million annual expenditure cap as a means to limit enrollment and spending in this initial phase.⁴⁵
- » **2006:** The legislature added accountability measures such as background checks on private school employees, financial audits, annual reports and norm-referenced testing requirements.⁴⁶ These requirements ensure student safety and provide more transparent information about the quality of participating private schools.
- » **2008:** The original program statute did not allow SFOs to use any portion of the funds raised for administrative expenses.⁴⁷ The 2008 legislature authorized SFOs to use three percent of the contributions for administrative expenses.⁴⁸ SFOs can only receive the administrative fee after operating in the program for three years with clean audits from the Auditor General. This is because the state wants to know that SFOs are efficient enough to operate without taking what is, in essence, a nominal fee. All SFOs are audited every year by the Auditor General.

⁴⁵ Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice, "Corporate Tax Credit Scholarship Program Fact Sheet," Florida Dept. of Education, August 2008.

⁴⁶ "History," Step Up For Students, 2017.

⁴⁷ F.S. §220.187 (2001).

⁴⁸ F.S. §220.187(6)(i). Some states like Pennsylvania allow scholarship organizations to use up to 20 percent of funds for administrative expenses. See, e.g., "Pennsylvania - Education Improvement Tax Credit Program," EdChoice, last accessed Feb. 4, 2020.

- » **2009:** The legislature renamed the program the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program and expanded it to include a new revenue source for tax credits to incentivize greater participation: insurance premium tax liabilities.⁴⁹
- » **2010:** After multiple years of increasing the cap through the legislative process, the legislature added an automatic escalator provision, which allowed the tax credit cap (\$118 million annually)⁵⁰ to automatically increase by 25 percent as long as demand for tax credits meets 90 percent of the existing cap in the prior fiscal year.⁵¹ The legislature also expanded the program to include tax credits for alcoholic beverage excise, direct-pay sales and use, and oil and gas severance tax.⁵² In exchange, participating schools were also required to disclose test score gains and financial information.⁵³ Taken together, these provisions help to ensure greater access to the program; obviate the need for annual legislative debates on the cap; and provide greater transparency of school operations.
- » **2014:** Legislation removed the requirement that students attend a public school before applying for a scholarship, which allowed qualifying homeschoolers and students already enrolled in private schools to benefit from the credit.
- » **2019:** The transportation scholarship was expanded to allow parents to use it for transfers *within* a school district, in addition to transfers to a public school *outside* of a child's residentially assigned district. This change enables parents to access transportation to a wider variety of schools.


⁴⁹ See, e.g., "Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program: Insurance Premium Tax," Florida Dept. of Revenue, last accessed March 11, 2020.

⁵⁰ F.S. §1002.395(5)(a)2. See also, "Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program Fiscal Year 2008-09 Fiscal Impact," The Florida Legislature Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability, March 1, 2020.

⁵¹ "History."

⁵² "2017-18 Step Up For Students Annual Report."

⁵³ "History."



If properly constructed by policymakers, school choice can function to upgrade the educational opportunities of children, and [...] can strengthen the health of American democracy.

Joseph Viteritti

LEGAL CHALLENGES

In 2006's *Bush v. Holmes*, the Florida Supreme Court ruled that the OSP, the state's voucher program, was unconstitutional.⁵⁴ The court found vouchers violate the state constitution's provision requiring a "uniform" system of public schools, since private schools are neither the same as one another nor the same as public schools.⁵⁵ Given this ruling, some opponents of school choice claimed the FTC was created as an illegitimate successor to OSP.⁵⁶ However, the court ultimately decided that the Appellants had failed to allege that they suffered any special injury as a result of the operation of the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program and failed to establish that the Legislature exceeded any constitutional limitation on its taxing and spending authority when it authorized the program.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ "Opportunity Scholarship Program," Florida Dept. of Education, 2020.

⁵⁵ Alan Richard, "Florida Supreme Court Finds State Voucher Program Unconstitutional," *Education Week*, Jan. 6, 2006.

⁵⁶ See "Initial Brief of Appellants," *Joanne McCall et al. v. Rick Scott*, District Court of Appeal of Florida First District, 2015, p. 1.

⁵⁷ *Citizens for Strong Schools, Inc., et al., v. Florida State Board of Education, et al.* (2019).



EVIDENCE THE FLORIDA TAX CREDIT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM ACTIVATED CIVIL SOCIETY

There is strong evidence the FTC program activated the power of civil society to expand educational opportunity for hundreds of thousands of students from low-income families, as seen through the engagement of the private school sector, the activation of local communities and the energy of private, voluntary contributors.

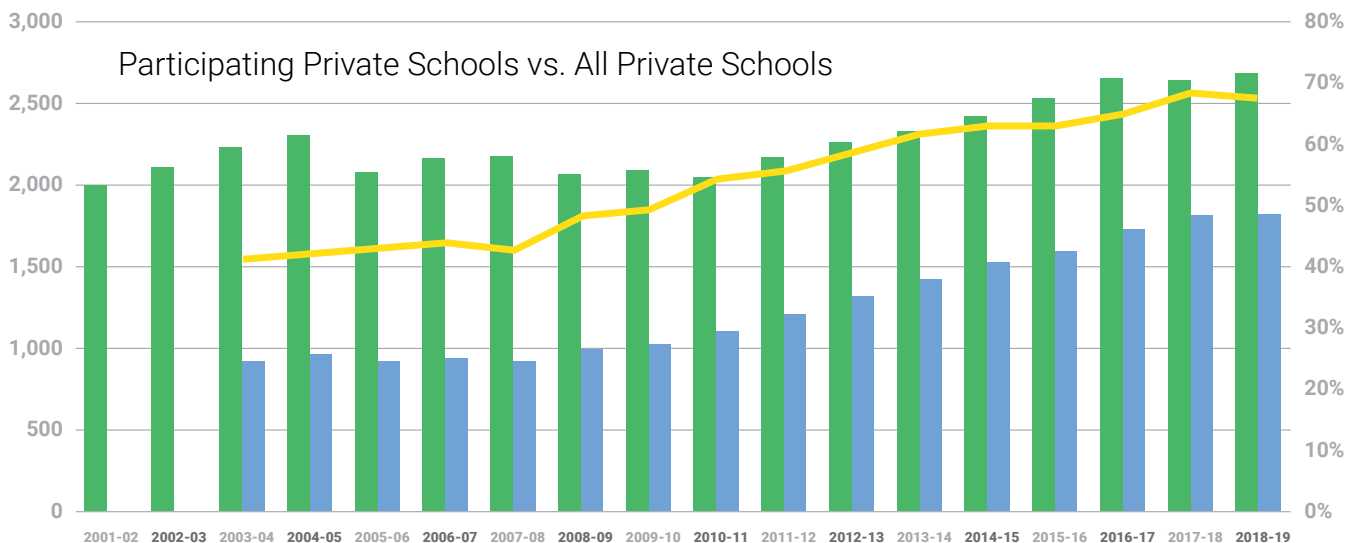
PRIVATE SCHOOL SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

PRIVATE SCHOOL PARTICIPATION

During the 2017-18 school year, 1,802 schools participated in the Tax Credit Scholarship program. Serving 106,649 students. Of those schools, 1,174 were religious affiliated with 191 of those being Catholic schools, 42 Jewish schools, 20 Islamic schools; 444 schools were Success Partner Schools (these schools participate in a comprehensive research-based professional development program) and 208 were Math Assessment Project (MAP) Participating Schools.

Since the inception of the FTC program, the participation rate of Florida's private schools in the program has increased from approximately 40 percent to nearly 70 percent (Fig. 2).

FIGURE 2: PRIVATE SCHOOL PARTICIPATION IN THE FLORIDA TAX-CREDIT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM



Source: Data compiled from [Florida Dept. of Education](#) and [the Office of Program Policy Analysis & Government Accountability](#).

As shown, although there were occasional, temporary declines in the total number of private schools in Florida (due to macro factors such as the 2008 recession), the participation of private schools in the FTC program has consistently trended upward.

In fact, district-level data reveals the participation rate of private schools has more than doubled in 20 of Florida's districts (Appendix 1), across a mixture of rural and urban districts, with as few as three participating schools and as many as 446 participating schools.

As with the OSP, private schools were initially reluctant to participate in the FTC program because they wanted to protect their autonomy and were concerned about government interference in their operations. According to Ron Matus, Director of Policy and Public Affairs at SUFS, over time, more private schools are opting to participate in the program because they are satisfied with the balance between the state's accountability requirements (norm-referenced examinations, for example) and their own ability to maintain operational autonomy.⁵⁸

The program has also activated civil society in other ways. For example, Adam Miller, former Executive Director of the Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice at the Florida Department of Education, notes that the FTC program gives non-governmental actors a vehicle to do some of the mission-driven work in which they are already interested and empowers them to expand their reach.⁵⁹

Randy Fullerton, administrator of the school at Glendale Baptist Church, reports that this year, 135 students attended the school using an FTC scholarship. Fullerton said they have intentionally kept tuition low so more low-income students can receive the maximum tax-credit scholarship to cover most of the cost.⁶⁰ Barbara Hodges, Executive Director of the Florida Council of Independent Schools and President of the Florida Association of Academic Non-public Schools, also explains that the FTC program allows schools to expand their financial aid budgets to open their doors to more students. According to Hodges, the schools participating in the FTC program are committed to increasing access to a high-quality education for students from low-income families.⁶¹

In 2005, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops announced a renewed commitment to Catholic elementary and secondary schools: "It is the responsibility of the entire Catholic community—bishops, priests, deacons, religious, and laity—to continue to strive towards the goal of making our Catholic elementary and secondary

⁵⁸ Author interview with Ron Matus (telephone), June 19, 2019.

⁵⁹ Author interview with Adam Miller (telephone), June 4, 2019.

⁶⁰ Laurence Reisman, "Christian School Faces Challenges, Opportunities as it Plans Indian River County Expansion," *TCPalm*, July 05, 2019.

⁶¹ Author interview with Barbara Hodges (telephone), June 20, 2019.



schools available, accessible, and affordable to all Catholic parents and their children, including those who are poor and middle class.”⁶² Moreover, James Herzog, Associate Director for Education at the Florida Conference of Catholic Bishops, notes that the FTC program perfectly complements this national re-commitment to ensuring a Catholic education is available, accessible and affordable to all students who desire it, especially students from low- and middle-income families.⁶³ Herzog explains that their goal is to ensure the cost of tuition is not the driving factor and parents can select a Catholic education for their child, if that is their preference.

The FTC program has helped sustain private schooling options that are disappearing in other states. For example, Matt Ladner details how private schools (both religious and non-religious) are closing at an alarming rate in states like Michigan, and national private school enrollment is on the decline.⁶⁴ In particular, Catholic schools across the country are closing: Elementary schools declined by 37 percent between 1970 and 2010.⁶⁵ However, these national trends have not borne out in Florida; the private school sector remains strong and stable.⁶⁶ According to Herzog, the FTC program helped fuel the recovery of Catholic schools after about half a dozen closed during the 2008 recession. As an example, The Saint James Catholic School in North Miami has tripled its enrollment in the past two decades.⁶⁷ In the 2018-19 school year, 196 Catholic schools participated in the program.⁶⁸

⁶² “Renewing Our Commitment to Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools in the Third Millennium,” United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005.

⁶³ Author interview with James Herzog (telephone), June 4, 2019.

⁶⁴ Matthew Ladner, “Charter Schools without Private Choice Killing Private Schools in Michigan,” *RedefinED*, June 10, 2019.

⁶⁵ Richard J. Murnane et al., “Who Goes to Private School?” *Education Next* 18:4 (Fall 2018), p. 64.

⁶⁶ Patrick R. Gibbons, “Florida’s Private Schools Are Growing at a Faster Rate,” *RedefinED*, June 21, 2017.

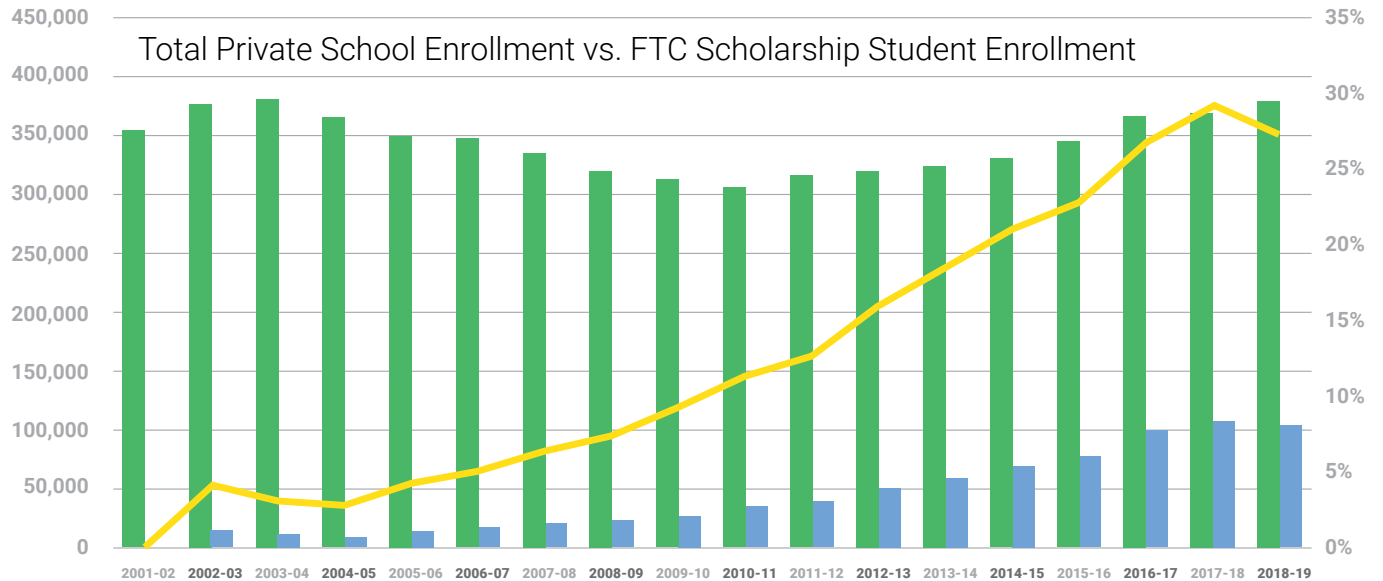
⁶⁷ Ron Matus, “Florida Catholic schools hold their own in sea of choice,” *RedefinED*, Jan. 28, 2019.

⁶⁸ James Herzog, “Participation in state scholarship programs by Florida Catholic Schools During 2018-2019 School Year,” *Florida Conference of Catholic Bishops*, 2019.

INCREASING PRIVATE SCHOOL SCHOLARSHIP ENROLLMENT

Over time, Florida private schools have also enrolled an increasing percentage of FTC scholarship students (Fig. 3).

FIGURE 3: FLORIDA FTC SCHOLARSHIP STUDENT ENROLLMENT IN PRIVATE SCHOOLS



Source: Data compiled from Florida Dept. of Education and the Office of Program Policy Analysis & Government Accountability.

Today, more than a quarter of all students attending a private school in Florida are doing so through the FTC program. In 18 Florida school districts, the percentage of students enrolled in private schools via the FTC program has increased more than ten-fold since schools in the districts first started participating (Appendix 2). These districts tend to be urban, though there are a few rural district outliers such as the Taylor and Levy districts.⁶⁹

In fact, according to a 2017 study of private school enrollment in Florida:

The number of students attending schools where most students are on scholarships increased by about 49,000 between 2010 and 2016, a period when total participation increased by 65,000 students. The percentage of FTC students attending majority-FTC schools doubled over this period (from 30 to 60 percent). Put another way, about 76 percent of the growth in FTC enrollment over this period occurred at majority-FTC schools.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Notably, many of the districts enrolling higher percentages of scholarship students (Appendix 2) are distinct from the districts with high rates of private school participation (Appendix 1).

⁷⁰ Matthew M. Chingos, "Are low-quality private schools on the rise in Florida?", Brookings Institution, Nov. 30, 2017.

Moreover, Robert Futrell, a member of The Coalition of McKay Scholarship Schools, reports that diversity of the private school population has increased with current student enrollment more closely matching the state's demographics.⁷¹ Some Florida private schools primarily serve students in the local community who are from low-income families. According to Barbara Hodges, whose organization accredits some of these schools, there are outstanding examples of children's lives being impacted, and she sees these students graduating from high school and college and becoming contributing members of society in a way they might not have before without this opportunity.⁷²

CREATION OF NEW PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Given the robust private education choice environment in Florida with multiple programs in operation, it is difficult to establish a causal relationship between the implementation of the FTC program and the creation of new private schools. The anecdotal evidence and general trends in data, however, suggest a relationship between the FTC and the growth, diversity and sustainability of Florida's private school sector.⁷³ Based on data provided by the Florida Department of Education, hundreds of new private schools are created each year and, on average, only a few dozen private schools close (Appendix 1).

Anecdotally, Mimi Jankovits, the Executive Director of Teach Florida, explained how many of the schools in her network are at capacity due to increasing demand, in large part because more people can afford it as a result of the FTC program. She also noted new schools are opening to serve the increasing demand, and existing schools are expanding their operations (e.g., the grades they serve) to provide access to more families. Some of the schools within her network even have dedicated staff to help families through the FTC scholarship application process.⁷⁴

According to Ron Matus, seeing new schools pop up is one of the most exciting things about being involved with the program.⁷⁵ Matus has also documented examples of how the FTC can empower public school educators to establish unique private schools based on their interests and expertise.⁷⁶ In fact, one school, the Williston Central Christian Academy in rural Williston Florida, started out with 39 students in

⁷¹ Author interview with Robert Futrell (telephone), July 16, 2019.

⁷² Hodges interview.

⁷³ Nicole Stelle Garnett, "A Winn for Educational Pluralism, The Yale Law Journal 121: 31 (May 26, 2011).

⁷⁴ Author interview with Mimi Jankovits (telephone), July 15, 2019.

⁷⁵ Matus interview.

⁷⁶ Ron Matus, "School Choice Gave This Teacher Freedom," RedefinED, March 27, 2017.

grades K-6; it now serves 85 students in grades K-11. More than a third of these are recipients of the FTC scholarship and 31 use tax-credit scholarships for low-income students.⁷⁷ The founding of these types of schools reflect vigorous engagement by civil society to serve disadvantaged students. They represent the communities they serve and highlight the ability of individual community members to come together and solve social problems.

ACTIVATION OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES

HIGH DEMAND FOR SCHOLARSHIPS LEADS TO NEW CHOICE PROGRAM

The FTC program is the largest private-school choice program in the country, with more than 100,000 students participating each year, and there continues to be high demand for the scholarships: approximately 13,000 families are on the scholarship waitlist.⁷⁸ Such demand far outpaces the supply of existing scholarships. The FTC program has been so successful and highly demanded by low-income families that in May 2019, the Florida Legislature established a new means-tested, state-funded private school choice program (Family Empowerment Scholarship) to serve some of the students on the waitlist for the FTC program.⁷⁹

EMPOWERMENT AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT OF FAMILIES

SUFS formed Florida Voices for Choices (formerly the Florida Parent Network) to organize families and advocates in support of the state's school choice programs.⁸⁰ In 2016, the group organized 10,000 advocates to march in Tallahassee in support of the FTC program and in opposition to *McCall v. Scott*, the lawsuit against the program.⁸¹ As noted above, the state supreme court dismissed the lawsuit in January 2017.

The parent group has also played a role in educating families about where political candidates stand on issues. For example, the Democratic candidate for governor in 2018, Andrew Gillum, promised to end the tax-credit scholarship program. Based on exit-poll data, some speculated Gillum's loss could be attributed to the clear differences on school choice between him and then-Congressman Ron DeSantis

⁷⁷ Ron Matus, "School Choice in Flyover Country," RedefinED, July 2019.

⁷⁸ Patrick R. Gibbons, "Applications for Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Remain Strong," RedefinED, March 1, 2019.

⁷⁹ Manny Diaz, Jr., "New Scholarship Will Continue to Strengthen Public Education in Florida," Miami Herald, May 31, 2019.

⁸⁰ "About," Florida Voices for Choices, 2019.

⁸¹ Catherine Durkin Robinson, "New Name, Same Family-focused Mission," RedefinED, July 2, 2019.

(a vocal advocate for education choice).⁸² SUFS has also worked closely with the Florida African American Ministers Alliance for Parental Choice and the South Florida Hispanic Ministers Association.⁸³

For her part, Mimi Jankovits says the FTC program has also been a crucial part of supporting student access to Jewish day schools in Florida. She further explains that removing the public-school attendance requirement made it possible for families that desired a Jewish day-school education to get the financial support they needed to afford it. Jankovits notes there is a strong grassroots movement engaged with the program wherein “schools are involved, synagogues are involved, and families are involved.”⁸⁴

Barbara Hodges and Robert Futrell both agreed the FTC program has increased the agency of communities across the state. Hodges cited how a local private school took over an abandoned public-school building in a poor community, and now local families have a high-quality private school option they can access via the FTC program. According to Hodges, the FTC program has given voice to groups of people who did not have one before. Families have also become more involved in schools by volunteering, schools are staying open later to help students with homework and there is a renewed interest in serving students—even outside academic hours.⁸⁵ Futrell reflected on community gatherings where FTC scholarship recipients would share their experiences and noted that community members have witnessed firsthand how the FTC program has changed the life trajectory of students.⁸⁶

⁸² See, e.g., William Mattox, “School Choice Moms’ Tipped the Governor’s Florida Race,” *Wall Street Journal*, Nov. 20, 2018.; The Editorial Board, “The School Choice Election Bonus,” *Wall Street Journal*, Nov. 13, 2018.

⁸³ See, e.g., “2015 Member List,” Florida African American Ministers Alliance for Parental Choice, 2015.; Diane Rado, “Pastors in FL Differ on Views on Vouchers, with a New Group Supporting Public Schools,” *Florida Phoenix*, March 27, 2019.

⁸⁴ Jankovits interview.

⁸⁵ Hodges interview.

⁸⁶ Futrell interview.

EVIDENCE OF EXPANDED OPPORTUNITY

A 2018 brief by ExcelinEd summarizes the evidence showing how the FTC program has expanded opportunity.⁸⁷ In the 2018-19 school year, the FTC program empowered more than a hundred thousand students from low-income families to access educational environments that best meet their individual needs (Appendix 3). In the 2018-19 school year, the average family income of participating students was \$25,731.⁸⁸ Over two-thirds of participating students were Hispanic or Black,⁸⁹ and more than half were from single-parent homes.⁹⁰ Average scholarships were \$6,519 (K-5), \$6,815 (6-8) and \$7,111 (9-12).⁹¹ The program has served more than 784,000 students from low-income families since its inception in 2001.⁹²

The most recent annual report of the program showed participating students continue to make academic gains.⁹³ And, they are more likely to have transferred from low-performing public schools that have comparatively high rates of violence than their peers who were eligible but chose not to participate in the program. Before participating, scholarship students also tended to have lower math and reading scores in their public schools.⁹⁴ Despite these disadvantages, participating students made academic gains *similar to all students* nationally (not just students from low-income families) in both reading and math.⁹⁵ A February 2020 study of the FTC program also found that public school students living in areas with more private school options had more significant gains on standardized tests than students living in areas with fewer private options nearby.⁹⁶

⁸⁷ "Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program," ExcelinEd, 2018.

⁸⁸ "Florida Tax Credit Scholarship," Step Up for Students, September 2018.

⁸⁹ "Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Quarterly Report," Florida Dept. of Education, February 2019.

⁹⁰ "Basic Program Facts About the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship (FTC)," Step Up For Students, 2017.

⁹¹ "Florida Tax Credit Scholarship," Step Up for Students.

⁹² "Florida Scholarships for Lower-Income Families," Step Up For Students, 2017.

⁹³ Zahid Kisa et al., "Evaluation of the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program Participation, Compliance and Test Scores in 2017-18," Florida State University, June 2019.

⁹⁴ See, e.g., Cassandra Hart, M.D., "Contexts Matter: Selection in Means-Tested School Voucher Programs," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 36:2 (2014), pp. 186-206.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ David N. Figlio et al., "Effects of Scaling Up Private School Choice Programs on Public School Students," National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper No. 26758, February 2020.



The FTC program empowered more than a hundred thousand students from low-income families to access educational environments that best meet their individual needs.

Such successes extend into the future, as well. According to a 2019 study by the Urban Institute, students who participated in the FTC program are more likely than their peers to enroll in college and earn a degree.⁹⁷ An earlier study by the Urban Institute found that participating students were 15 percent more likely to enroll in a Florida-based public college than their public-school peers, and participating students who spent more than four years in the program were 43 percent more likely to attend college.⁹⁸

Moreover, broader benefits have also been demonstrated. In 2008, the nonpartisan Florida Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability found the state saved \$1.49 for every \$1 in foregone tax revenue through the FTC program.⁹⁹ Additionally, Florida's Revenue Estimating Conference projected the program saved the state \$57.9 million in 2012-13.¹⁰⁰ EdChoice's Martin Lueken also found positive fiscal effects for the program.¹⁰¹ And parents are happy too: A 2018 survey of families participating in the FTC program found that 93 percent are satisfied with it.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ Matthew M. Chingos et al., "The Effects of the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program on College Enrollment and Graduation: An Update," Urban Institute, February 2019.

⁹⁸ Matthew M. Chingos and Daniel Kuehn, "The Effects of Statewide Private School Choice on College Enrollment and Graduation: Evidence from the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program," Urban Institute, September 2017.

⁹⁹ Steve Harkreader and Kimberly Barrett, "The Corporate Income Tax Credit Scholarship Program Saves State Dollars," Office of Program Policy Analysis & Government Accountability, December 2008.

¹⁰⁰ Legislative Office of Economic and Demographic Research, "Revenue Estimating Conference," State of Florida, 2012.

¹⁰¹ Martin F. Lueken, "The Fiscal Effects of Tax-credit Scholarship Programs in the United States," *Journal of School Choice* 12:2 (April 2018), pp. 181-215.

¹⁰² Jason Bedrick and Lindsey Burke, "Surveying Florida Scholarship Families: Experiences and Satisfaction with Florida's Tax-Credit Scholarship Program," EdChoice, October 2018.



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The goal of the FTC program is clear: Empower students from low-income families with educational options by awarding them a scholarship to attend a private school of their choice.

CONCLUSION

The FTC program is a successful example of public policy and civil society combining to solve a problem. More Florida students than ever before have access to educational environments that are equipping them with the skills they need to pursue the American dream, regardless of their socioeconomic status or ZIP code.¹⁰³ The FTC program and the resulting activation of civil society are key drivers of this change.

The driving purpose of establishing the FTC program was to solve a critical social problem: expanding educational opportunities for children of families with limited financial means. By engaging and activating civil society, the FTC program has been successful in expanding opportunities to an ever-increasing number of low-income children. Since 2001, the FTC program has served more than 784,000 students from low-income families,¹⁰⁴ with an average household income of \$25,731.¹⁰⁵ Today, more than a quarter of all students attending a private school in Florida are doing so through the FTC program (Fig. 3).

There is clear evidence of the engagement and activation of civil society in the private school sector, and local communities. For nearly two decades, this program has generated a wide spectrum of activity outside the government to expand educational opportunity for hundreds of thousands of low-income students across Florida. Private schools are increasingly opting to participate, and many of these schools are choosing to serve higher percentages of scholarship students. Community leaders are starting new schools to serve low-income students, parents are marching on Tallahassee to protect the program and scholarship demand is exceeding supply.

The program, however, is not without challenges. It may have reached a ceiling in terms of how much money can be raised each year, and a new revenue source may need to be defined before the program can further expand.¹⁰⁶ Regardless of these challenges, the FTC program has been so successful—and highly demanded by low-income families, that the state created a new state-funded program (Family Empowerment Scholarship) to help serve the same population of students.

¹⁰³ Patrick R. Gibbons, “Private School Population Increasing with or without Benefit of Scholarships,” [RedefinED](#), July 11, 2019.

¹⁰⁴ “Florida Scholarships for Lower-Income Families.”

¹⁰⁵ “Florida Tax Credit Scholarship,” [Step Up for Students](#).

¹⁰⁶ [Kirtley interview](#).

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APPENDIX 1

FTC Participating Schools x Florida District

BLUE indicates that the number of participating schools has more than doubled (>100%) since schools first started participating

ID	District Name	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	% Change
1	ALACHUA	14	13	11	17	19	20	19	17	20	20	19	20	20	22	57%
2	BAKER	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	200%
3	BAY	3	4	4	5	4	5	5	6	6	5	6	6	6	6	100%
4	BRADFORD	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	0%
5	BREVARD	34	36	35	41	42	44	47	49	48	49	51	53	56	54	59%
6	BROWARD	65	73	73	81	84	93	101	113	124	136	140	155	155	158	143%
7	CALHOUN	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0%
8	CHARLOTTE	8	5	7	8	7	7	10	10	10	10	9	9	9	9	13%
9	CITRUS	7	8	6	7	7	7	7	6	6	6	6	7	7	7	0%
10	CLAY	11	14	16	13	12	14	16	17	18	17	17	16	16	14	27%
11	COLLIER	9	6	7	10	11	11	10	11	12	13	13	13	15	14	56%
12	COLUMBIA	4	5	4	4	3	5	5	7	8	9	11	11	11	11	175%
13	DADE	141	150	153	167	174	195	221	275	317	364	387	424	441	446	216%
14	DESOTO	N/A	1	1	N/A	1	N/A	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0%
15	DIXIE	N/A	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	100%
16	DUVAL	80	85	85	86	85	91	92	101	106	107	113	113	117	112	40%
17	ESCAMBIA	14	14	13	14	15	15	18	19	19	21	21	24	25	26	86%
18	FLAGLER	2	2	2	2	2	4	4	5	5	4	3	3	3	4	100%
19	FRANKLIN	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0%
20	GADSDEN	2	2	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	5	5	3	50%
21	GILCHRIST	N/A	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	100%
22	GLADES	N/A	1	N/A	N/A	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0%
23	GULF	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	0%
24	HAMILTON	1	1	1	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	100%
25	HARDEE	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	-50%
26	HENDRY	N/A	1	1	1	1	2	3	3	4	4	4	4	3	3	200%
27	HERNANDO	8	7	7	7	8	7	10	10	10	10	13	14	13	13	63%
28	HIGHLANDS	6	7	8	9	9	8	8	7	8	8	8	9	9	8	33%
29	HILLSBOROUGH	56	67	66	61	62	65	71	71	72	72	76	84	90	96	71%
30	HOLMES	N/A	2	2	1	1	N/A	1	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	-100%
31	INDIAN RIVER	N/A	4	5	7	7	9	8	8	9	9	9	9	9	9	125%
32	JACKSON	N/A	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	50%
33	JEFFERSON	N/A	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	3	4	3	3	200%
34	LAFAYETTE	N/A	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0%
35	LAKE	13	14	14	17	17	18	20	20	18	20	21	28	31	33	154%

APPENDIX 1

FTC Participating Schools x Florida District

BLUE indicates that the number of participating schools has more than doubled (>100%) since schools first started participating

ID	District Name	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	% Change
36	LEE	22	22	19	21	22	22	23	25	27	27	30	29	29	28	27%
37	LEON	19	20	18	18	20	16	16	17	17	20	19	21	25	23	21%
38	LEVY	1	2	2	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	300%
39	LIBERTY	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0%
40	MADISON	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	N/A	N/A	-100%
41	MANATEE	13	12	12	13	14	13	13	15	14	15	19	21	21	19	46%
42	MARION	15	15	13	15	18	21	24	23	24	26	29	30	31	30	100%
43	MARTIN	7	6	6	7	7	6	6	6	5	6	5	6	6	7	0%
44	MONROE	2	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	3	4	5	150%
45	NASSAU	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	6	5	6	6	6	8	7	133%
46	OKALOOSA	6	6	6	5	6	6	6	7	8	8	8	8	10	8	33%
47	OKEECHOBEE	N/A	1	1	1	1	2	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	300%
48	ORANGE	86	86	79	82	84	93	96	106	112	122	127	139	135	133	55%
49	OSCEOLA	17	17	17	18	20	19	22	24	26	32	35	40	44	45	165%
50	PALM BEACH	33	36	36	36	37	42	44	45	48	49	51	59	66	65	97%
51	PASCO	15	17	18	19	16	19	21	23	24	26	29	33	34	34	127%
52	PINELLAS	49	49	47	51	59	63	70	74	75	75	75	82	83	85	73%
53	POLK	31	33	34	33	34	34	37	38	41	44	46	53	60	61	97%
54	PUTNAM	4	5	5	6	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	25%
55	ST. JOHNS	3	4	4	4	4	5	5	7	9	10	11	11	14	17	467%
56	ST. LUCIE	8	7	6	5	6	8	8	11	15	17	17	19	26	28	250%
57	SANTA ROSA	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	2	2	3	4	4	5	5	4	8	8	300%
58	SARASOTA	11	14	14	17	17	21	22	22	24	26	24	23	27	28	155%
59	SEMINOLE	25	26	23	24	26	28	28	31	34	35	36	39	43	43	72%
60	SUMTER	N/A	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	N/A	0%
61	SUWANNEE	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	33%
62	TAYLOR	N/A	1	1	1	2	1	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	100%
63	UNION	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	1	1	1	1	1	N/A	0%
64	VOLUSIA	26	24	25	24	26	31	36	39	40	43	44	44	47	50	92%
65	WAKULLA	N/A	1	1	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	200%
66	WALTON	N/A	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	300%
67	WASHINGTON	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	100%
TOTAL		895	948	933	996	1,033	1,114	1,216	1,338	1,429	1,533	1,602	1,733	1,818	1,825	

SOURCE: Data compiled from [Florida Dept. of Education](#).

APPENDIX 2

FTC Students x Florida District

Blue indicates that FTC student enrollment has increased by >1000% since students first started participating.

ID	District Name	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	% Change
1	ALACHUA	125	134	181	194	234	306	298	336	410	481	539	765	849	1,121	797%
2	BAKER	N/A	N/A	N/A	<11	N/A	16	30	34	42	55	53	93	101	92	475%
3	BAY	19	37	32	39	24	27	42	52	84	103	132	184	180	176	826%
4	BRADFORD	52	67	72	94	174	203	173	204	185	200	205	205	213	190	265%
5	BREVARD	422	531	671	732	887	1,056	1,203	1,506	1,665	1,880	1,994	2,494	2,669	2,478	487%
6	BROWARD	815	1,018	1,233	1,534	1,998	2,641	3,168	4,052	4,837	6,036	7,065	8,978	10,099	9,832	1106%
7	CALHOUN	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	<11	<11	N/A	N/A	N/A	<11	<11	0%
8	CHARLOTTE	30	49	84	81	105	132	170	231	270	317	344	452	464	465	1450%
9	CITRUS	99	102	122	154	177	212	238	275	317	398	436	559	602	612	518%
10	CLAY	104	160	186	150	159	171	254	314	388	453	468	528	621	569	447%
11	COLLIER	47	39	48	53	82	121	184	284	312	359	399	448	479	475	911%
12	COLUMBIA	51	81	131	103	85	131	167	192	223	256	318	459	490	489	859%
13	DADE	3,060	4,323	5,041	6,032	7,374	8,752	10,242	13,220	16,006	18,552	20,923	25,088	26,272	24,362	696%
14	DESOTO	<11	<11	<11	N/A	N/A	N/A	29	28	51	70	87	118	128	95	228%
15	DIXIE	N/A	<11	14	30	42	40	61	60	53	54	52	68	72	69	393%
16	DUVAL	1,616	2,092	2,538	2,655	2,859	3,185	3,521	4,311	4,778	5,317	5,714	7,328	8,126	7,738	379%
17	ESCAMBIA	223	250	300	335	447	557	589	763	842	1,065	1,221	1,732	1,932	1,813	713%
18	FLAGLER	28	26	41	35	51	87	198	280	303	358	359	478	501	480	1614%
19	FRANKLIN	18	<11	<11	13	20	17	22	29	40	32	34	34	36	36	100%
20	GADSDEN	53	75	118	130	150	152	209	255	282	299	290	384	434	434	719%
21	GILCHRIST	N/A	<11	15	26	27	53	39	46	37	52	47	47	70	51	240%
22	GLADES	N/A	<11	N/A	N/A	N/A	19	15	22	32	33	26	30	27	22	16%
23	GULF	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	<11	<11	<11	23	31	38	41	32	39%
24	HAMILTON	13	15	20	27	32	30	64	69	59	68	65	86	103	93	615%
25	HARDEE	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	23	21	<11	<11	<11	12	37	37	61%
26	HENDRY	<11	<11	<11	16	24	24	74	91	129	168	168	203	227	224	1300%
27	HERNANDO	61	95	106	121	195	226	293	376	453	546	670	911	950	895	1367%
28	HIGHLANDS	23	38	87	118	155	163	187	198	236	240	292	492	590	603	2522%
29	HILLSBOROUGH	657	788	1,021	1,166	1,398	1,597	1,798	2,176	2,643	3,066	3,560	4,631	5,199	5,605	753%
30	HOLMES	<11	<11	<11	<11	N/A	N/A	<11	<11	15	15	22	29	27	22	47%
31	INDIAN RIVER	<11	14	23	52	80	118	116	153	155	190	231	328	368	341	2336%
32	JACKSON	<11	19	32	18	18	16	24	42	59	62	84	120	152	116	511%
33	JEFFERSON	<11	<11	<11	<11	18	16	14	35	36	41	70	92	78	76	322%
34	LAFAYETTE	N/A	<11	<11	18	30	33	20	29	34	37	35	39	53	35	94%
35	LAKE	150	182	224	270	315	437	567	703	799	951	1,178	1,587	1,762	1,721	1047%

APPENDIX 2

FTC Students x Florida District

Blue indicates that FTC student enrollment has increased by >1000% since students first started participating.

ID	District Name	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	% Change
36	LEE	132	166	192	238	302	372	445	575	660	818	940	1,186	1,254	1,294	880%
37	LEON	310	419	443	424	451	438	377	397	385	454	482	615	715	700	126%
38	LEVY	14	30	23	27	31	45	88	111	137	153	176	224	233	233	1564%
39	LIBERTY	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	<11	N/A	<11	N/A	N/A	<11	<11	<11	0%
40	MADISON	26	24	31	36	45	N/A	22	20	22	17	13	18	18	14	-46%
41	MANATEE	114	141	134	149	211	217	302	380	405	530	629	779	911	916	704%
42	MARION	176	284	363	373	521	712	875	1,067	1,233	1,419	1,605	2,001	2,101	2,115	1102%
43	MARTIN	55	58	72	80	103	171	144	184	203	236	278	340	358	313	469%
44	MONROE	22	12	<11	<11	14	24	42	61	93	110	116	147	124	113	414%
45	NASSAU	23	24	37	43	57	68	74	101	117	154	168	189	245	237	930%
46	OKALOOSA	87	144	180	153	194	186	161	216	261	312	334	432	493	446	413%
47	OKEECHOBEE	<11	<11	13	20	19	46	51	75	93	123	139	165	166	173	1231%
48	ORANGE	2,518	2,725	3,119	3,173	3,618	4,003	4,459	5,583	6,423	7,170	7,818	9,570	10,566	10,047	299%
49	OSCEOLA	543	768	934	966	1,034	1,226	1,393	1,696	2,036	2,464	2,847	3,658	3,983	3,893	617%
50	PALM BEACH	303	495	587	582	728	969	1,153	1,623	1,814	2,130	2,464	3,058	3,384	3,258	975%
51	PASCO	104	158	212	208	278	311	484	665	849	1,021	1,103	1,468	1,657	1,538	1379%
52	PINELLAS	443	459	489	612	798	1,089	1,435	1,836	2,169	2,634	2,935	3,732	4,011	3,787	755%
53	POLK	305	417	548	596	755	881	1,074	1,500	1,772	2,071	2,372	3,426	3,878	3,961	1199%
54	PUTNAM	53	81	127	118	122	170	171	188	190	255	275	339	404	414	681%
55	ST. JOHNS	27	27	45	85	115	154	190	253	283	303	294	425	527	472	1648%
56	ST. LUCIE	100	97	131	118	197	271	411	555	745	989	1,297	1,702	1,961	1,907	1807%
57	SANTA ROSA	N/A	N/A	N/A	15	25	28	59	84	95	150	168	219	396	393	2520%
58	SARASOTA	62	71	98	116	184	256	304	396	434	525	596	689	729	715	1053%
59	SEMINOLE	431	429	480	517	586	754	611	748	891	937	1,040	1,328	1,475	1,416	229%
60	SUMTER	<11	23	<11	<11	31	47	67	51	34	76	91	113	123	102	343%
61	SUWANNEE	48	74	108	126	151	151	185	231	221	263	270	370	452	455	848%
62	TAYLOR	<11	<11	<11	<11	<11	12	31	50	69	85	125	167	180	167	1292%
63	UNION	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	16	26	30	31	35	57	56	39	144%
64	VOLUSIA	439	554	739	860	1,127	1,339	1,462	1,839	2,166	2,509	2,668	3,145	3,414	3,278	647%
65	WAKULLA	<11	<11	<11	13	35	36	36	48	65	76	95	106	105	93	615%
66	WALTON	<11	<11	<11	<11	<11	<11	39	40	45	58	55	65	62	69	77%
67	WASHINGTON	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	<11	18	45	76	94	95	118	160	157	124	156%
TOTAL		14,061	17,819	21,493	23,887	28,927	34,550	40,248	51,075	59,822	69,950	78,664	98,936	108,098	104,091	

SOURCE: Data compiled from [Florida Dept. of Education](#)

APPENDIX 3

Overview of the Florida Tax-Credit Scholarship Program

School Year	Program Cap	Maximum Scholarship Amount	Student Participation	Legislative Action
2001-02	\$50M	\$3,500	--	Corporate Tax-Credit Scholarship Program (CTC) established.
2002-03			15,585	
2003-04			11,550	
2004-05			10,549	
2005-06	\$88M	\$3,750	15,123	Program cap raised to meet scholarship demand.
2006-07			17,819	Scholarship amount increased. New accountability requirements.
2007-08			21,493	
2008-09	\$118M	\$3,950	23,887	Program cap raised. Scholarship amount increased.
2009-10			28,927	Program renamed the Florida Tax-Credit Scholarship (FTC). Expanded to include tax credits for insurance premium tax liabilities.
2010-11	\$140M	60% of unweighted FTE* funding amount	34,550	New tax credits: alcoholic beverage excise, direct-pay sales and use, and oil and gas severance taxes. The legislature added an automatic escalator, which allows the program to grow automatically every year, as long as 90 percent of the prior funding cap is reached.
2011-12	\$175M	\$4,012	40,248	
2012-13	\$229M	\$4,335	51,075	
2013-14	\$286M	\$4,880	59,822	
2014-15	\$358M	\$5,272	69,950	Income eligibility changed to include more lower-income levels. Removed requirement that students attend a public school before applying for a scholarship.
2015-16	\$447M	\$5,677	78,664	
2016-17	\$559M	\$5,886	98,936	
2017-18	\$698M	\$7,208	108,098	The Florida Supreme Court upheld the FTC program in a constitutional challenge.
2018-19	\$873M	\$7,250	104,091	The decrease in enrollment is a result of a reduction in revenue, not a decline in demand for the scholarships. Per the Florida Department of Education's June 2019 FTC Quarterly Report, \$645M was awarded in scholarships in the 2018-19 school year.

SOURCE: Data aggregated by author from 2017-18 Step Up For Students Annual Report (link unavailable); and the Florida Dept. of Education's [Quarterly Reports](#) and 2018 [Fact Sheet](#).

*Note: FTE denotes full-time equivalent.