

Education News

Scholarship Plan Offers Substitute To “Race To The Top”

(NAPSA)—While 11 states and the District of Columbia divvy up \$4.35 billion in Race to the Top funds to attempt to fix the nation’s public schools, a new proposal is being floated to use the same amount of money to offer students a chance to attend the school of their choice.

Known as “Passport Scholarships,” the plan would create a similar \$4 billion fund in unspent federal stimulus dollars and allocate it to all 50 states to create scholarship programs to award children tuition grants to attend a school that best meets their needs.

The idea is one penned by economist Brian Gottlob, a senior fellow with The Foundation for Educational Choice. The plan is an alternative to the current Race to the Top proposals that have drawn headlines nationwide.

“Race to the Top may just turn out to be another big fat check toward more of the same education spending that does nothing to help students,” said Robert Enlow, president and CEO of The Foundation for Educational Choice. “Why not use the money to do something different? Give parents more power. Give them school choice.”

Under Gottlob’s proposal, as many as 630,000 students could earn scholarships over five years. It would help save states as much as \$1 to \$1.6 billion annually as children transfer to private schools. This is based on scholarship awards of about \$2,000 to \$2,250 per student, under Gottlob’s plan.

“State budgets are in a real pinch right now and they certainly could use the savings,” Gottlob said. “If it comes down to pouring more money into untested education programs or giving kids school choice, a Passport Scholarship model will yield more parental satisfaction and better student outcomes.”

Gottlob said he would divide the \$4 billion among states based on population. The 12 largest states offering Passport Scholarships would see annual budget savings in their state budgets

alone ranging from \$24.3 million in Georgia to \$166.1 million in California.

The U.S. Department of Education has already drawn \$4.35 billion in federal stimulus funds for Race to the Top. Federal education officials have said they would like Congress to

appropriate another round of stimulus funds for the program. Instead, Enlow said, the Passport Scholarship concept would be a much more effective use of federal dollars.

“While states are trotting out ideas such as grading teachers and other accountability programs, in the long run they will do little to move the needle when it comes to improving student achievement,” Enlow said. “Use Race to the Top funds for scholarships and you will see much quicker improvement. Kids will get a chance at a better education immediately. Not maybe, or in ‘due time,’ but immediately.”

The 12 Biggest Winners

	TOTAL # Scholarships Available Per Year	TOTAL \$ Scholarship Awards Per Year (millions)	TOTAL \$ State Benefits/Savings Per Year (million)
California	52,791	\$118.8	\$166.1
New York	26,729	\$60.1	\$119.0
New Jersey	11,784	\$26.5	\$43.5
Michigan	14,102	\$31.7	\$42.0
Texas	35,193	\$79.2	\$41.2
Ohio	15,849	\$35.7	\$35.0
Minnesota	7,232	\$16.3	\$29.6
Pennsylvania	16,878	\$38.0	\$29.0
Washington	8,878	\$20.0	\$26.9
North Carolina	12,581	\$28.3	\$26.3
Florida	23,917	\$53.8	\$26.3
Georgia	13,652	\$30.7	\$24.3

(Assumes Federal Funding Years 1-4 and \$2,250 Scholarship Value; State Funding Starts in Year 5)

