

School Board Supports Private School Choice

(NAPSA)—Some may be surprised to learn that in one community, the public school district offers students and their parents a variety of educational options to choose from—including private schools.

In 2011, Colorado’s Douglas County school board became the only school board nationwide to approve school vouchers.

Although 304 students enrolled in private schools using vouchers, a Denver judge later rescinded the program in 2012 in response to a lawsuit from the ACLU. The school district appealed the ruling and, earlier this year, won. Opponents have since asked the state’s Supreme Court for a hearing. But, for now, the voucher program is back.

A Constitutional Choice

The story of Douglas County, however, is not whether vouchers are legal or illegal. Vouchers were declared constitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2002. What is noteworthy about the “DougCo” school board’s decision is that it runs counter to the reaction of many school boards to vouchers.

According to the National School Boards Association, for example, vouchers “abandon public schools,” “waste taxpayer money” and “leave behind many students.”

The Douglas County school board president disagrees.

Promoting Variety

“The Choice Scholarship Program strengthened public schools,” John Carson told the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, a pro-voucher organization. “The Board of Education is committed to publicly funded education, and its members believe that



A public school district in Colorado became the only such entity nationwide to create a voucher program so its students can access local private schools.

the system operates best for kids when a variety of schools—neighborhood, charter and private—all have the opportunity to provide the publicly funded education.”

Carson also called the voucher program a “financial win” for his district. Board members estimated that vouchers would save their district \$400,000. They also concluded the resulting competition would help their schools and residents.

Embracing Competition

“I’m not afraid of the competition because I believe I have some of the most amazing schools in the country,” Elizabeth Fagen, Douglas County’s superintendent, said. “I believe our schools can compete with any schools. But if parents truly believe—and they know their children well—if they truly believe that a school outside of my district is going to be the school that offers a child the opportunity to maximize his or her full potential, I don’t want to be in the way of that. I actually want to help them get there.”

With its most recent court victory, this fall, the Douglas County school board will again have its chance to do exactly that.