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Opinion Roundup: Choice in K12 Education

Florida's parents are making choices every day in the education of their children.

Even in the most poverty-stricken neighborhoods, parents are finding other options than nearby schools.

That is why the public school system must continue to expand choices if students are to remain in this system.

Statistics provided by Step Up for Students, the group promoting tax credit scholarships, tell the tale.

- More than 4 in 10 Florida K-12 students attended a school of choice in the 2014-2015 year.
- 279,850 took advantage of open enrollment options.
- 251,083 students were in charter schools that are privately run under contract with school districts.
- 230,749 students were in choice and magnet programs.
- 230,685 are paying their own way in private schools.
- 153,850 students are in career academies.
- 84,096 are studying at home, reporting results to school districts.
- 69,950 are taking advantage of tax credit scholarships designed for low-income students attending private schools.
- 34,149 receive McKay Scholarships, vouchers for special needs students to attend private schools.
- 13,596 receive full-time instruction through virtual schools.

That's not all, but the bottom line is that over 1.5 million Florida students out of the 3.5 million total attended some school other than their neighborhood school.

In a digital world in which choice is increasing at an increasing rate, it makes sense for the Duval County school system to welcome this as an opportunity rather than a threat.