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Private School Productivity Off the Charts

Posted by [Andrew J. Coulson](#)

A new study of Florida's tax credit scholarship program was [announced yesterday](#), reporting test scores both for private school students in the program and for low-income public school students. The report notes that scholarship kids were much more disadvantaged than even the low-income public school students, and it wasn't able to control for those differences, so it produced no really meaningful findings. In other words, it didn't have the data to find out what impact the scholarships are having academically.

By reporting the unadjusted test scores (and the lack of a significant difference between them for public and private school kids) it has raised some eyebrows. [Jay Greene](#) has a good explanation of why we should just wait until the study's author, David Figlio, has some meaningful data before getting too excited.

For me, a key point is that the scholarship kids are receiving a maximum of \$3,950 while Florida public schools spent upwards of \$11,150 per pupil in 2007-2008. Public schools are spending nearly three times as much per pupil and have nothing to show for it. Is Florida doing so well economically that they can afford to blow tens of billions of dollars for no reason at all? Every year? I had no idea....

Incidentally, I calculated the per pupil spending figure myself from the published [spending](#) and [enrollment](#) data on the Florida DOE's website. The *St Petersburg Times* story by Ron Matus quotes a public school figure of \$7,000 per student, which is one of those make believe numbers that politicians and officials come up with that only represents a fraction of what is spent. I'd be surprised if the Times keeps reporting that number in the future, given how detached it is from reality.

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