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Gradebook

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Demand outstrips supply of Florida corporate tax credit scholarships

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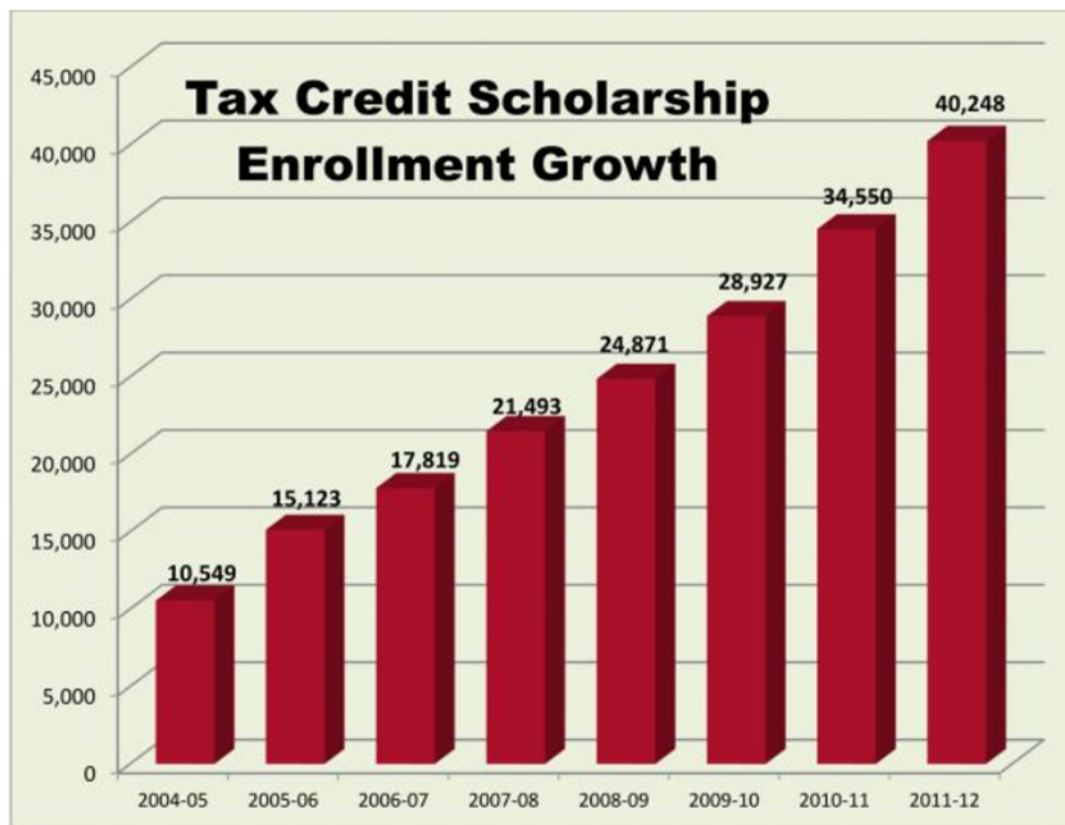
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When state Rep. Richard Corcoran [proposed](#) increasing the cap for Florida's corporate tax credit scholarship, to allow another 9,000 children into the program, many Democrats decried the move as taking money away from the public schools.

Poor Florida parents don't seem to have the same concerns.

In fact, as Corcoran predicted, the number of applications continued to rise for the vouchers to attend private schools using state money. Step Up For Students, which manages the program, reports that it closed applications for 2012-13 on Friday because it had so many more families seeking support than spots available.

The program has approved 50,134 students already for the new school year, with thousands more in the pipeline, policy vice president Jon East told the Gradebook. More than 87,000 families started applications this year, compared to 69,000 a year ago.

For last year, the Florida Department of Education reported that 40,248 low-income students took advantage of the program. That's up from 10,549 in 2004-05. If nothing else, it's clear the demand is there. And it's not only minority students. The ethnic breakdown of the participants last year was 25 percent white, 35 percent black, 34 percent Hispanic, and 6 percent others.

In the Tampa area, nearly 4,000 students received the vouchers in 2011-12, which they could use at more than 170 private schools in the the four county region including Hernando, Hillsborough, Pasco and Pinellas. By county, the breakdown was:

Hernando - 293 students, 10 schools

Hillsborough - 1,798 students, 71 schools

Pasco - 484 students, 21 schools

Pinellas - 1,435 students, 70 schools

So while the school choice and voucher policy debate remains heated, it appears clear that at least some parents know they want more options than the public neighborhood schools they've been offered.

[Chart from Step Up For Students, based on data from the Florida Department of Education]

Posted by Jeff Solochek at 10:54:43 am on August 09, 2012 in [School Choice](#) [Vouchers](#) | [Permalink](#) |