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New Report Measures States on Parents' Power Over Their Children's Education

Analysis finds most improvements in state education laws and policies in decades.

May 7, 2024, Washington, D.C. – For the first time in two generations, programs and policies that give parents more power over their children’s education are accelerating across the United States, fueled not just by post-pandemic education concerns but a renewed understanding of the power of education opportunity and innovation, according to a new report, the **2024 Parent Power! Index**, from the **Center for Education Reform** (CER).

“Not since the beginning of the education reform movement when, between 1991 and 1999, states created 36 new laws providing parents power over their children’s education have we seen such a rapid expansion in an accelerated period of time for education innovation and opportunity,” said **Jeanne Allen, CER founder and CEO**.

In the three-year period beginning 2021 through April 2024, 26 new and expanded laws governing parental options, additional flexibility to innovate, and education transparency have been implemented. The result is at least another 600,000 students having access to a variety of learning approaches across all education sectors. The number is more than half the amount of the students who have, **according to research**, exited traditional public schools in the Covid era.

Recent U.S. migration trends show that three of the top five states in the **2024 Parent Power! Index** are also among the **top five states** where people are moving. These include Arizona, Florida, and North Carolina. As a result, more than one million students left public schools to pursue other education opportunities in states that have the policy environment that enables options for parents.

In addition, many other states responded to this movement of parents to other education opportunities by codifying those choices, which will continue to expand. This data is documented in The **Parent Power! Index**, which is the most authoritative guide and up-to-date assessment of learning opportunities and how to utilize them beyond those currently available in traditional public education.

For nearly three decades, CER has argued that parents are the most important ally in any effort for education. “Whenever parents are engaged, change occurs. Time and time again, we’ve seen that information in the hands of parents is power. When parents are able to make informed decisions about their children’s education, and states and communities are permitted to offer a myriad of pathways to enable those decisions, education works better for all students,” Allen said.

Florida (#1), Arizona (#2), and Indiana (#3) top the parent power charts. But the data shows that most states still do not create the optimal conditions necessary to ensure every child has access to the educational environment that best meets their needs. Some states that offer parents several options are still very limiting.

Overall, state rank and policy environments are improving, particularly in states that have tended to embrace education freedom in general, such as **Iowa, West Virginia, Ohio, and Arkansas**. While there are still only two A’s, today there are seven states with a B compared to two in 2022. Sixteen states have a C, compared to 18 in 2022. Seventeen states have D’s compared to 22 in the last ranking.

Three states—**Alaska, Nebraska, and Virginia**—moved up from an F, while three—**Connecticut, Kansas, and Maryland**—fell into the lowest category.

To measure how states provide parents with power this year, the **2024 Parent Power! Index** evaluates not just whether programs exist but the extent to which state education funding follows students, regardless of where they receive an education. States are scored for the degree to which students are not only eligible to participate but have access through whatever funding mechanisms the states create. Programs where a significant population of parents can access scholarships or vouchers to send their children to the school of their choice score higher than those that have limitations based on geography, income, and student eligibility constraints.

The **Parent Power! Index** derives its information from a variety of sources, including first and foremost from original research, secondly from respected organizations such as EdChoice, the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, the National Council on Teacher Quality, and finally from news reports.

The Parent Power! Index, including the interactive map, state rankings, and study methodology, can be found [here](#).

Working to advance education innovation and opportunity for nearly three decades, the **Center for Education Reform** also today administers the \$1 Million **Yass Prize** for Sustainable, Transformational, Outstanding and Permissionless Education that best demonstrates the STOP principles. In conjunction with the Yass Prize, the STOP Awards Initiative provides over \$16 million in support annually to honor educators who achieve excellence.

To schedule an interview with Jeanne Allen, or other members of the CER team, contact Kirby Eule at kirby@touchdownstrategies.com.