

# Access to Textbooks

Currently parents who choose to enroll their children in private schools have to pay into a state education system, yet receive no assistance for their children to attend private schools.

Textbook loan programs for children in non-public, accredited schools, have been implemented in several states with great success.

## Church teaching

- ★ Parents have the right to freely choose schools or other means necessary to educate their children in keeping with their convictions. Public authorities must ensure that public subsidies are so allocated that parents are truly free to exercise this right without incurring unjust burdens. Parents should not have to sustain, directly or indirectly, extra charges which would deny or unjustly limit the exercise of this freedom. (*Charter of the Rights of the Family*)
- ★ The task of educating belongs fundamentally and primarily to the family. The function of the State is subsidiary: its role is to guarantee, protect, promote and supplement. Whenever the State lays claim to an educational monopoly, it oversteps its rights and offends justice. It is parents who have the right to choose the school to which they send their children and the right to set up and support educational centers in accordance with their own beliefs. The State cannot without injustice merely tolerate so-called private schools. Such schools render a public service and therefore have a right to financial assistance. (*Instruction on Christian Freedom and Education*)
- ★ Parents have the right to educate their children in conformity with their moral and religious convictions, taking into account the cultural traditions of the family which favor the good and the dignity of the child; they should also receive from society the necessary aid and assistance to perform their educational role properly. (*Charter of the Rights of the Family*)
- ★ Parents who have the primary and inalienable right and duty to educate their children must enjoy true liberty in their choice of schools. Consequently, the public power, which has the obligation to protect and defend the rights of citizens, must see to it, in its concern for distributive justice, that public subsidies are paid out in such a way that parents are truly free to choose according to their conscience the schools they want for their children. (*Pope Paul VI, Declaration on Christian Education*)

## Resources

- ★ **Texas Catholic Conference** Education page ([www.TXcatholic.org/ed.asp](http://www.TXcatholic.org/ed.asp))
- ★ **National Catholic Education Association (NCEA)** The NCEA provides leadership and service to American Catholic Educators ([www.NCEA.org](http://www.NCEA.org))

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## Textbook Loan Programs

The Texas Catholic Conference supports the right of parents to freely choose which schools their children attend. We therefore support textbook loan programs that enable parents who enroll their children in private elementary and secondary schools to defray the cost of private school by eliminating the cost of purchasing textbooks. Many states, including Florida, Illinois, Iowa, and Minnesota have programs that cover textbook costs for students in private schools.<sup>i</sup>

## Facts on School Choice and Specific Impact in Texas<sup>ii</sup>

A study conducted by the Friedman Foundation shows that school choice programs that help parents choose schools for their children can benefit all Texas children.

- School districts with more students in private schools have higher public school graduation rates. All Texas children would benefit from increased competition from private schools.
- The beneficial effect of private school competition on public schools is large enough that even a modest school choice program, one that increased private school enrollment by fewer than 5 percentage points, would reduce the number of Texas public school dropouts by 8,720 to 17,440 students per year, saving Texans between \$27 million and \$53 million in tax revenue, Medicaid costs and incarceration costs every year. The total savings from preventing these students from dropping out, over an expected lifetime of 50 years, would be between \$1.4 billion and \$2.8 billion.
- Introducing more competition into K-12 education in Texas would significantly improve public high school graduation rates. Competition provides a compelling and cost-effective method for improving the productivity of public schools, and would bring about a large reduction in the public costs associated with dropouts.
- School choice programs, rather than benefiting individuals at the expense of the public, provide large public benefits that probably exceed the benefits realized by students participating in the program.

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<sup>i</sup> "School Choice." National Catholic Education Association. <<http://www.ncea.org/public/SchoolChoiceInitiatives.asp>>.

<sup>ii</sup> "The High Cost of Failing to Reform Public Education in Texas" by Friedman Foundation Senior Fellow Brian Gottlob. 2007.