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**Education Policy Center Newsletter**

**From The Independence Institute**

**March 27, 2013**

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**Center Proclaims Good News for DougCo from Appeals Court**

On February 28, Douglas County students and families [received great news from the Colorado Court of Appeals](http://education.i2i.org/2013/02/appeals-court-panel-renews-dougco-families%e2%80%99-hopes/), with a strong ruling in favor of the constitutionality of the Choice Scholarship Program. Pam Benigno [was quoted by the Associated Press](http://education.i2i.org/2013/02/denver-post-highlights-benignos-reaction-to-dougco-choice-program-ruling/) in the *Washington Post* and *Denver Post*, while Ben DeGrow [hosted an on-air radio conversation](http://education.i2i.org/2013/03/amy-oliver-show-appeals-court-brings-good-news-for-douglas-county-school-choice/) with Charcie Russell of Great Choice Douglas County. Pam and Ben both have been closely involved since the school board convened the Choice Task Force in 2010. As always, check out our [Douglas County vouchers web page](http://education.i2i.org/douglas-county-vouchers/) for an unrivaled source of news, commentary, audio, video, and key documents.

More from Ed Is Watching:

[Overcome with Excitement Today: Appeals Court Revives Dougco Choice Program!](http://www.ediswatching.org/2013/02/overcome-with-excitement-today-appeals-court-revives-dougco-choice-program/)

**Center Sheds Light on Anti-Reform Attacks in DougCo**

While the Choice Scholarship Program earns the bigger spotlight, the Center continues to help expose anti-reform attacks and dispel anti-reform misinformation directed at the DougCo school board. The district very recently had its transparency grade [improved to an A-minus](http://www.ediswatching.org/2013/03/transparency-in-dougco-school-district-toward-a-happy-ending-to-the-story/) by a national watchdog group. We also have [brought attention to HB 1257](http://www.ediswatching.org/2013/03/colorado-house-bill-1257-and-the-quest-to-stifle-local-education-innovation/) (a legislative bill aimed at thwarting Douglas County innovation), to a [new groundless union lawsuit](http://www.ediswatching.org/2013/02/latest-dougco-lawsuit-suggests-little-beyond-need-for-presidential-limelight/), and to [completely unfounded rumors](http://www.ediswatching.org/2013/02/dougco-board-opponents-crazy-real-estate-rumor-debunked-by-facts/) that the school board’s actions have harmed the local real estate market. Colorado Media Trackers also has shined the light on the so-called “parent-led” opposition group that [has been reading from union talking points](http://colorado.mediatrackers.org/2013/03/21/parent-led-strong-schools-coalition-broadcasts-union-talking-points/).

**DeGrow Tackles Big School Finance Reform Debate**

The big education news under the Golden Dome has been the debate over redesigning the School Finance Act, with changes tied to a $1 billion tax increase ballot proposal. SB 213 likely will continue changing as it works its way through the process, but evidence of any true reform has been weak. Ben DeGrow has shared his expert insights with numerous policymakers and citizen leaders, and has [“helped” little Eddie Tweet](https://twitter.com/EdIsWatching) about the extensive proceedings at the Capitol. Several Colorado newspapers also have published [his op-ed](http://completecolorado.com/pagetwo/2013/03/05/the-rest-of-the-story-on-school-funding-minorities/) clarifying some misused funding facts and calling for more substantive reforms.

More from Ed Is Watching:

[Guess No “Vouchers” in SB 213, Really Not Much Backpack Funding, Choice at All](http://www.ediswatching.org/2013/03/guess-no-vouchers-in-sb-213-really-not-much-backpack-funding-choice-at-all/)

[Lobato Case Returns: We Need School Finance Reform, Not Constitutional Crisis](http://www.ediswatching.org/2013/03/lobato-case-returns-we-need-school-finance-reform-not-constitutional-crisis/)

[Let’s Figure Out How PERA Can Fit Into Colo. School Finance Reform Debates](http://www.ediswatching.org/2013/02/lets-figure-out-how-pera-can-fit-into-colo-school-finance-reform-debates/)

**From Online Learning to K-12 Scholarships: Catch the Latest Podcasts**

In the latest edition of Ben DeGrow’s weekly radio segments, he [hosted a conversation](http://education.i2i.org/2013/03/amy-oliver-show-falcon-49-proposes-initiative-to-enhance-online-learning/) with Falcon 49 school board member Chris Wright about the district’s latest innovative initiative to support students in online learning through a Digital BOCES. Other radio topics covered include [private foundations rewarding local beat-the-odds schools](http://education.i2i.org/2013/02/amy-oliver-show-private-funds-honor-14-successful-denver-area-schools/), [citizens pushing for transparency](http://education.i2i.org/2013/02/amy-oliver-show-open-union-negotiations-coming-to-thompson/) in the Thompson School District, and [Colorado’s low rating on teacher preparation policies](http://education.i2i.org/2013/02/amy-oliver-show-how-can-colorado-improve-teacher-preparation/). For those Spanish language speakers, recent episodes of the Raaki Garcia Show have included interviews with representatives of two local scholarship organizations—[ACE Scholarships](http://raakigarcia.com/2013/03/03-05-13-raaki-garcia-show/) and the [Challenge Foundation](http://raakigarcia.com/2013/02/02-12-13-raaki-garcia-show/). Follow the links to listen to any of the podcasts you may have missed.

More from Ed Is Watching:

[A Colorado Digital BOCES? Leave the Creative Ideas to Innovative Falcon 49](http://www.ediswatching.org/2013/03/a-colorado-digital-boces-leave-the-creative-ideas-to-innovative-falcon-49/)

[Transparency and a Collaborative Mirage: A Tale of Three Colorado School Districts](http://www.ediswatching.org/2013/02/transparency-and-a-collaborative-mirage-a-tale-of-three-colorado-school-districts/)

**Eddie Excited by National School Choice Developments**

Looking beyond Colorado our young blogger Eddie has been enthusiastic with the chance to cover [a major victory in the Indiana Supreme Court](http://www.ediswatching.org/2013/03/indiana-supreme-court-ruling-a-true-lasting-march-madness-victory-for-kids/) and [powerful research showing the success of KIPP charter schools](http://www.ediswatching.org/2013/02/hip-kipp-hooray-major-research-shows-big-learning-gains-for-challenged-students/), as well as to be completely [blindsided by a new choice program in Alabama](http://www.ediswatching.org/2013/03/bama-tax-credit-surprise-status-quo-blindsided-by-win-for-needy-kids/). Other recent blogging highlights you may have missed:

[Heartbroken by Choice Bill Defeats, Hoping for Some Scholarship Tax Credit Love](http://www.ediswatching.org/2013/02/heartbroken-by-choice-bill-defeats-hoping-for-some-scholarship-tax-credit-love/)

[Non-Union Kansas Teacher Groups Try for Equal Snow Fort–Er, School–Access](http://www.ediswatching.org/2013/02/non-union-kansas-teacher-groups-try-for-equal-snow-fort-er-school-access/)

[Court Upholds Teacher Removal: Adams 12 Board Vindicated, Taxpayers Pay](http://www.ediswatching.org/2013/03/court-upholds-teacher-removal-adams-12-board-vindicated-taxpayers-pay/)

[New Digital Learning Report Card Charts Familiar Path for Colorado to Improve](http://www.ediswatching.org/2013/03/new-digital-learning-report-card-charts-familiar-path-for-colorado-to-improve/)

[Rick Hess Slam Dunks for Colorado with Call for Cage-Busting Can-Do](http://www.ediswatching.org/2013/02/rick-hess-slam-dunks-for-colorado-with-call-for-cage-busting-can-do/)

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