Vouchers: Everything You Never Wanted to Know... and More

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Public dollars should fund public schools

Founded in 1978, the National Coalition for Public Education supports public schools and opposes the funneling of public money to private and religious schools through vouchers, tuition tax credits, education savings accounts, and portability.
Presentation overview

- Defining vouchers and how much they cost
- Voucher arguments (myths vs reality)
- Voucher 2019 state legislative re-cap
- Voucher polling data
Why this presentation now?
Espinoza v. Montana Dept of Revenue

Question before the Supreme Court: Can a state be required to fund private religious education?

- In 2015 Montana enacted a state tuition tax credit program
- Montana’s Supreme Court struck the program down late in 2018, holding that it violated Article X, Section 6 of the Montana Constitution. That provision bars “any direct or indirect appropriation or payment from any public fund or monies … for any sectarian purpose or to aid any … school … controlled in whole or in part by any church, sect, or denomination.”
- If the U.S. Supreme Court reverses that decision, state constitutional provisions that curb aid to religious institutions may be weakened or overturned entirely. This could result in even more tax money being siphoned away from public schools and into voucher plans.
- Our view: Taxpayer dollars should never be used to fund private religious education, nor should states be required to underwrite religious education with taxpayer dollars.
- The Institute for Justice/voucher proponents have made clear that it wants to pave the way for private school vouchers not only in Montana but across the country by gutting the no-aid provisions that exist in the constitutions of nearly 40 states.
The Three Types of Private School Voucher Schemes

- **Traditional private school vouchers** provide public money to parents to pay for tuition at private schools (18 states) Total annual funding $1.2 billion

- **Education savings accounts vouchers** place public funding in an account for parents to use for education expenses (5 states) Total annual funding: $218 million
Tax credit vouchers provide tax credits to individuals and corporations that donate to organizations providing scholarships for students to attend private school (18 states)

Total annual funding: $1.2 billion
There are 29 traditional voucher programs in 16 states—Arkansas, Florida (2), Georgia, Indiana, Louisiana (2), Maine, Maryland, Mississippi (2), New Hampshire, North Carolina (2), Ohio (5), Oklahoma, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, Wisconsin (4)—and Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico.
Vouchers gained national prominence in 1990, with the creation of the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program. Two “voucher programs” existed prior to that (Vermont: 1869, Maine: 1873).

Indiana’s Choice Scholarship Program is also the nation’s largest voucher program in terms of participation (36,290 enrollees in 2018–19).

Douglas County, Colorado, was home to the only voucher program created by a public school district. In 2017, a newly elected school board rescinded the program.

Washington, D.C., has the only voucher program authorized by the U.S. Congress. It is 15 years old.

Vouchers—specifically Ohio’s Cleveland Scholarship Program—were declared constitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2002 (Zelman v. Simmons-Harris).
There are five ESA programs in five states: Arizona, Florida, Mississippi, North Carolina and Tennessee.
ESAs gained national prominence in 2011, when Arizona created the nation’s first such program. Florida followed suit in 2014. In 2015, Mississippi, Nevada, and Tennessee all created their own ESA programs.

Florida has the largest ESA program in terms of participation (11,917 enrollees in Fall 2018).

ESAs were essentially declared constitutional by the Arizona Supreme Court in 2014, when it deemed those challenging the program were unable to show harm. The Nevada Supreme Court declared its nearly universal ESA unconstitutional in 2016.

Credit: edchoice.org
There are 23 tax-credit voucher programs in 18 states—Alabama, Arizona (4), Florida (2), Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Montana, New Hampshire, Nevada, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania (2), Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota and Virginia.

Number of Tax-credit Scholarships Awarded

Credit: edchoice.org
Fast Facts about TTC vouchers

- Tax-credit vouchers gained national prominence in 1997, when Arizona created the nation’s first such program (after its voucher program was declared unconstitutional).

- Florida has the largest tax-credit voucher program in terms of participation (100,512 enrollees in Spring 2019).

- Tax-credit vouchers—specifically Arizona’s Corporate Tax Credits for School Tuition Organizations—were essentially declared constitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2011 (Arizona Christian School Tuition Organization v. Winn). The Supreme Court dismissed the case, ruling the plaintiffs did not have standing to challenge the program.
Pro-voucher arguments and how to rebut them

- Vouchers for education make sense
- Competition for vouchers improves public schools
- Voucher students perform better academically
- Voucher programs make sense for special education students
- Voucher programs help low-income students
- Voucher programs promote racial integration
- Voucher programs are accountable to the public
School voucher policy goes against American values

"My husband and I have decided the local parks just aren't good enough for our kids. We'd rather use the country club, and we are hoping state tax dollars will pay for it. We are advocating for Park Savings Accounts, or PSAs. We promise to no longer use the local parks. To hell with anyone else or the community as a whole. We want our tax dollars to be used to make the best choice for our family."

- More than any other institution, our country’s system of public education has provided the glue that holds our nation together.
- Today, 75 percent of American private school students attend religiously affiliated schools. These schools are not charged with promoting democratic values, or a common American identity, as public schools are, so there is good reason to reserve public funds for public schools.
- If you’re not happy with your city garbage collection should the city give you money to contract with a private garbage collection company?
Myth: Vouchers save taxpayers’ money

- “If a state spends $6,000 per student in public schools and offers a $5,000 voucher, every student who uses a voucher saves the state $1,000.”
- Vouchers save money much in the same way that governments would save money by disbanding police or firefighting departments and supplying some citizens with a smaller sum in the form of a voucher to help offset the costs for a private security firm or private firefighting insurance.
- The “savings” can be illusory, undermine a notion of the common and public good, and because the funding burden is shifted to individual families, such educational opportunities are often not available to all students.
- PLUS taxpayers are now funding two systems of education, only one of which is accountable to taxpayers.
Vouchers Take Money From Public Schools

- A 2018 report by Mississippi’s Legislature found that Mississippi’s ESA program is ineffectively managed and comes at a cost to taxpayers and cost the state nearly $725,000 in fiscal year 2018.

- A 2018 policy paper published by the Grand Canyon Institute found that the cost of a student in a voucher program is 75% higher than the cost of a public school student. The study also found a slight decline in private school enrollment since Arizona’s first voucher program was implemented in 1999. At the same time, "the amount spent on private school subsidies from the General Fund has increased nearly 50-fold from $3 million in 1999-2000 to $141 million in 2015-16."

- A 2017 policy memo published by the National Education Policy Center examined the fiscal impacts of the statewide Wisconsin private school voucher program on Wisconsin public school districts. Analysis showed that districts are at risk of losing a significant portion of their state aid as participation in the voucher program increases. The author concluded that Wisconsin demonstrates that statewide voucher programs can pose a significant risk to public school funding levels.
"We're not losing kids from our schools to vouchers. Now we’re having the state pay for kids who were never going to come to our schools anyway.”

In Indiana, the # of students using vouchers increased by 30,000 from 2011-2016. But the number of students in private schools increased by only 12,000.
Myth: Applying free-market principles to education makes sense—let competition work.

But aren’t more parents choosing public schools?

Since 1999 U.S. public schools added 3 million kids and private school enrollment declined.

Interestingly: The number and percentage of school-age students whose families choose homeschooling has doubled in the past 15 years to 1.7%
Some facts on private school enrollment

- There are 200,000 kids receiving traditional vouchers
- There are 289,260 kids receiving TTC vouchers
- There are 19,109 kids receiving ESA vouchers
- \(200,000 + 289,260 + 19,109 = 508,369\) in America who have their private school education partially or fully subsidized.

Private school enrollment in prekindergarten through grade 12 was lower in fall 2015 (5.8 million students) than in fall 1999 (6.0 million students)

So if we weren’t subsidizing the education of 500,000 kids, there would be a 12% decline in private school enrollment since 1999.
Myth: They improve academic achievement

Vouchers do not improve student achievement and, in many states, lead to a decline in achievement. Recent studies of the Louisiana, Indiana, and Ohio voucher programs have revealed that students who used vouchers perform worse academically than their peers. In addition, studies of voucher programs in Alabama, Milwaukee, Cleveland, and the District of Columbia found that students offered vouchers showed no improvement in reading or math over those not in the program.

- A 2019 study on the academic effects of the Louisiana voucher program found that after four years, students using the vouchers to attend private schools “performed noticeably worse on state assessments than their [public school] control group counterparts.” The data showed “large negative effects” on assessment results, especially in math. A 2019 companion study found that participation in the Louisiana voucher program did not improve rates of college enrollment.

- A 2018 study of academic achievement of Alabama’s tax credit voucher recipients during the 2016-2017 school year found that, “On average, over time, participating in the scholarship program was not associated with significant improvement on standardized test scores.” The results of the state-mandated evaluation showed that “scholarship recipients generally performed below the average U.S. student at their grade level.”
Voucher Research: They Don’t Improve Academic Achievement OVER TIME

- A 2018 longitudinal study of the Indiana Choice Scholarship Program found significant losses in academic achievement for Indiana students who used a voucher to move from public to private school. It also found that low-income students who switched from public to private school using a voucher starting in the 2011-12 school year experienced, on average, an achievement loss of 0.15 standard deviations in mathematics on the statewide standardized assessment during their first year of private school compared to matched students who remained in public schools. This loss remained consistent regardless of the length of time spent in private school, therefore contradicting the claim that loss in achievement is the result of student adjustment to private school.

- A 2016 study of the Ohio private school voucher program found voucher students "have fared worse academically compared to their closely matched peers attending public schools...Such impacts also appear to persist over time, suggesting that the results are not driven simply by the setbacks that typically accompany any change of school."

Is this a good ROI? Is this a successful education reform strategy?
A 2016 report conducted by the U.S. Government Accountability Office report found that of all the voucher programs across the country, only four required private schools to accept all students with vouchers, space permitting.

The other programs allowed private schools to deny students admission or grant preference to certain students for many reasons including disciplinary history, academic achievement, and religious affiliation.
How do vouchers open the door to discrimination?

- First, federal law defines discrimination differently in public and private spaces.
- Second, state legislatures have largely neglected issues of discrimination while constructing private school voucher laws.
- Third, because private schools are free to determine what programs to offer, they can attract some populations while excluding others.
- Fourth, vouchers predominantly fund religious schools which often have exemptions from civil rights laws.
Voucher schools less likely to take SWD

Most voucher programs also permit schools to discriminate in their admission policies and do not have to accept a student with a disability. As a result, students with disabilities are systematically excluded from voucher programs.

- Most private schools in the Milwaukee voucher program “lack the full complement of educational programs that students with disabilities are entitled to if they receive their education in the public sector,” and as a result, students with disabilities have been discouraged or excluded from participating.

- The final U.S. Department of Education report on the Washington, DC voucher program showed that a main reason why students didn’t use a voucher offered to them was that they were unable to find a participating school with services for their learning or physical disability or other special needs.
  - 21.6% of parents who rejected a voucher that was offered to their child did so because the school lacked the special needs services that their child needed, and,
  - 12.3% of the parents who accepted a voucher for their child but then left the program cited a lack of special needs services at the school they had chosen.

- Most voucher programs provide limited or no disability-related services. When parents place a child in a voucher program, it is a gamble that they will find better services for their child, if they find any services at all.
Differences in Key Provisions in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for Eligible Children with Disabilities in Public and Private Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IDEA PROVISIONS</th>
<th>SWD IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS</th>
<th>SWD IN VOUCHER PROGRAMS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FAPE</td>
<td>FAPE and sped services are provided at no cost to parent</td>
<td>“Equitable services” (NO FAPE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sped teacher certification requirements</td>
<td>Public schools sped teachers must meet state sped teacher certification requirements</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LRE</td>
<td>LRE</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline procedures</td>
<td>Manifestation determination, change in placement 10-day rule Services continue</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due Process</td>
<td>Due process complaint/hearing</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Even Voucher Programs Designed for SWD Fail Them

- Findings from U.S. GAO report from 2016-2017:
  - 83% of students enrolled in a [voucher] program designed specifically for students with disabilities were in a program that provided either no information about changes in IDEA rights or provided information that ED confirmed contained inaccuracies about these changes.
  - Only 5% of the disability voucher programs provided parents with information about whether teachers were trained to serve students with disabilities.
  - 10% of disability voucher program administrators provided inaccurate or misleading information to parents about receiving special education services delivered by a public school, even though they were not eligible.
  - No more than 53 percent of private schools in voucher programs designed for students with disabilities provided disability-related information on their websites.
  - 1/3 of voucher programs required teachers to have any credentials demonstrating they were qualified to educate SWD
- A 2006 study looked at Ohio's voucher program, which exclusively serves students with autism, and found that the program excluded students with more severe disabilities, students unable to pay costs above the amount covered by the voucher, and students based on religion.
Examining Costs for SWD Voucher Programs

- There are 21 voucher programs aimed at SWD
- 13 states have voucher programs for SWD
- Average scholarship amount for SWD is $7,871
- 73,408 SWD receive a voucher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Average Voucher $</th>
<th>Sample tuition at private school for SWD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>$6,003</td>
<td>$14,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>$5,614</td>
<td>$25,450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>$6,146</td>
<td>$20,790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>$9,794</td>
<td>$29,192</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From NCLD.org
Private school vouchers do not adequately serve low-income students because the cost of tuition and fees at schools that accept vouchers generally exceeds the amount of the voucher, making voucher schools unaffordable for most low-income families.

A 2016 Government Accountability Office report found that 13 out of 22 voucher programs it surveyed did not place a cap on private school tuition, allowing private schools to charge more than the voucher award.

Thus, only families with the money to cover the cost of the rest of the tuition, and additional expenditures such as uniforms, transportation, books, and other supplies can use the vouchers. In the end, the families most likely to use a voucher are the ones who could already afford to send their kids to private schools.

Average Traditional voucher: $5,848
Average TTC voucher: $3,035
Average ESA voucher: $8,693

Average cost of private school tuition K-8: $9,638
Average cost of private school tuition for high school: $14,522
Vouchers Exacerbate Segregation

National data shows that private schools tend to be more segregated than similarly situated public schools and enroll higher populations of white students compared to public schools. For example, a 2016 study found that Louisiana’s voucher program had a negative impact on integration in private schools. Similarly, in Milwaukee a study found that 85% of African American students in the voucher program attended “intensely segregated” schools, as opposed to around 77% of those in public schools. A 2010 study of Georgia’s tuition tax credit program revealed that while only 10% of white students in public schools attended “virtually segregated” schools, in private voucher schools the percentage rose to 53%. And, a study of Cleveland’s voucher program found that minority students were much more likely than their peers to have never entered a voucher program or left their voucher program and returned to public schools.

A 2018 working paper, entitled “Washington, D.C.’s Opportunity Scholarship Program: Civil Rights Implications” found that student enrollment in the program has declined and become white in the past 15 years. The author found that 70% of participating voucher students were enrolled in heavily segregated schools with 90% or more minority students, and 58% were enrolled in all-minority schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>American Indian/Alaskan Native</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Latinx</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Multiracial</th>
<th>Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011-12</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>24.11</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>20.30</td>
<td>46.38</td>
<td>7.34</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-13</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>20.30</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>19.02</td>
<td>51.47</td>
<td>7.18</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>17.03</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>18.42</td>
<td>56.40</td>
<td>6.45</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>14.35</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>16.68</td>
<td>61.05</td>
<td>6.17</td>
<td>0.09</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015-16</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>13.21</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>18.22</td>
<td>60.85</td>
<td>6.06</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016-17</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>12.40</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>19.37</td>
<td>60.28</td>
<td>6.07</td>
<td>0.08</td>
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<tr>
<td>2017-18</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>12.17</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>20.38</td>
<td>59.28</td>
<td>6.05</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018-19</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>12.01</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>21.29</td>
<td>58.05</td>
<td>6.05</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source:* Data come from the Indiana Department of Education’s Choice Scholarship Program annual report on participation and payment data for 2016 and 2019.
Voucher Programs Lack Accountability to Taxpayers

- Many voucher schools are permitted to take taxpayer money without implementing any requirements for teacher qualifications, testing, or achievement. Some states do not even require private school teachers to hold bachelor’s degrees.

- Only 11 states require accreditation for private schools, thus, taxpayer-funded vouchers are regularly used to pay for tuition at unaccredited schools.

- Voucher programs also frequently fail to enforce the minimal standards required by law. For example, US Government Accountability Office reports from both 2007 and 2013 document how the Washington, DC voucher program has repeatedly failed to meet even the most basic, statutorily required accountability standards, such as maintaining certificates of occupancy and adequate financial records.

- In Florida, voucher schools took public funds for kids not even attending those schools. And in Wisconsin, the taxpayer-funded voucher program paid $139 million to schools that failed to meet the state’s requirements for operation.
Voucher Trends and Polling

- 2 voucher programs for students who are harassed and bullied (FL, PR) as well as “school safety” vouchers proposed
- 3 Universal Eligibility programs (every child, no restrictions): AZ, GA, MT
- Title I Portability
- Pre-K
- Hybrid voucher programs
- What the polling data really says
Title I Portability

Title I dollars
Federal Government → States → School Districts → Public Schools

Title I Portability
Federal Government → States → Follows the child to school

YOUR STATE FUNDING FORMULA?
A closer look: tying “vouchers” to pre-K

- Politically popular to support pre-K expansion; appeals to parents from all demographics and political parties
- We already have “vouchers” in Pre-K at federal level via CCDBG—just expanding it further
- Vouchers can be used for:
  - Tuition and fees at a preschool of a family’s choice;
  - Transportation to a preschool provider;
  - Homeschool, cooperative or community-based preschool education expenses, including specialized preschool curriculum and educational materials;
  - Programs and services that support transition to kindergarten; and
  - Programs and services that complement and expand existing special education programs and services for preschool children with disabilities, including access to high-quality inclusive programs
In February 2019, Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos announced a new initiative called the Educational Freedom Scholarship and Opportunity Program to create a federal tax credit voucher program that would provide donors a dollar-for-dollar tax credit for donating to organizations that provide vouchers to students to attend private schools.

- $5 billion dollar a year program
- Individuals or businesses could receive a tax credit, but it would be capped at 10% gross income or 5% business taxable income
What Makes the Devos Program Special? Flexibility.

Vouchers can be used on:

- Tuition and fees at a private school, including independent and faith-based private schools;
- Summer and after-school education programs offered by private schools;
- Tutoring offered by private school teachers to public and private school students;
- Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and honors courses;
- Academic enrichment courses like art, music, or world languages;
- Online courses offered by private schools and teachers to students, regardless of geography;
- Special education and related services for students with disabilities or unique learning needs;
- Remedial education services to assist students who are struggling academically;
- Educational technology to enhance instruction and support student learning;
- Internship, corporate work-study, and apprenticeship programs; and
- Home education expenses, including curriculum and other instructional materials.
DeVos’ voucher program “helps” public schools

States can have tax credit voucher program focused on expanding access to education programs and services for public school students enrolled in:

- District public schools, perhaps focusing on low-performing schools, or those in specific regions, such as urban or rural areas;
- Out-of-district public schools;
- Magnet schools;
- Public virtual schools; and
- Public charter schools.

Vouchers can cover allowable public education expenses such as:

- Advanced courses (AP/IB)
- Elective courses, like art, music, or world languages;
- Credit recovery or other remedial courses;
- Tutoring services;
- Special education services and therapies not required by a student’s Individualized Education Program;
- Purchasing educational technology, including learning software or hardware.
- Transportation to education providers outside of a family’s zoned school;
- Open or dual enrollment allowing high school students to earn college credit; and
- Fees for summer education programs and specialized after-school education programs.
Since 2001 PA has had a tax credit voucher program that allows public schools and private schools to set up foundations/SGOs that collect funding.

The program offers corporations tax credits for donating to organizations that provide low- and middle-income families private school and prekindergarten scholarships, as well as organizations that support innovative public school programs.

PA school districts have set up foundations in connection to their district which allows them to be eligible for tax credits.

Bulk of $ still going to private schools.
Legislative Action in 2019

KEY

- No new voucher legislation introduced
- New legislation to create or expand vouchers introduced, but failed to become law
- Significant voucher legislation passed into law (any expansion of existing programs and/or new voucher programs)
- Hybrid: significant voucher legislation passed into law, and other voucher legislation failed to become law

*Voucher legislation on this map includes bills about traditional private school vouchers, Education Savings Account (ESA) vouchers, and tax credit vouchers.

**NC session had not concluded at time of print.
2019 Legislative Session

Highlights

- Bipartisan majorities in Georgia, Kentucky, and West Virginia rejected voucher proposals supported by those states' newly elected governors.
- Although 22 states have full Republican control, only Florida and Tennessee were able to pass legislation creating new voucher programs in votes largely along party lines.
- In Nevada, just a few years after the nation's most expansive Education Savings Account (ESA) voucher law was passed, a new governor signed a bill repealing the program, which had never been implemented.

Lowlights

- Tennessee passed a new private school voucher program, though it is limited to two counties.
- Florida added yet another voucher program to the state’s existing voucher system.
- Other states increased funding for their previously enacted programs, including Indiana and Iowa.
Arkansas: For the second consecutive legislative session, rural Republican lawmakers teamed with Democrats in a bipartisan effort to defeat legislation that would have created new school voucher programs. Proposals for a tax credit voucher and a traditional voucher were defeated.

Georgia: Despite a new Republican governor who supports private school vouchers, voucher legislation failed in the State Senate. Six of the 13 Republican senators who represent rural areas of the state voted against the bill. Most of these legislators cited the lack of funding for public schools or the need to address inequities in the state funding formula as their primary reason for opposing the bill. Others raised concerns about cost, accountability for private schools, and the fact that the new program did not restrict eligibility to low-income students.

North Dakota: A bill that would have authorized a “school choice” study, including of ESA vouchers, passed in the House of Representatives but failed in the Senate.

Tennessee: Governor Bill Lee (R) signed a law to establish an ESA voucher program. Concessions were made to rural Republican legislators in order to pass the bill, including limiting the program to the state’s two largest school districts and capping it at 15,000 students per year.

Texas: State leadership, including Republican legislators from rural counties and the governor, did not include vouchers among their education priorities in 2019.
What arguments work for rural legislators?

- They’re impractical
  - While 92% of urban families have access to one or more private schools within five miles, only 34% of rural families have access to such a choice.
  - Nearly 9,000 sparse school districts that have four or fewer schools where voucher proposals are highly unlikely to work and could decimate the public system.
  - Another 2,200 average school districts that have five to eight schools where vouchers may not work and risk harming existing schools’ ability to serve millions of students.

- Transportation is challenging--could require long, costly commutes to/from school.

- Lower enrollment rates means rural schools encounter diseconomies of scale- one or two students makes a difference for the whole system.

- Schools aren’t just schools– they are the hub of the community.
Failed Voucher Bills

- **Arizona:** Months after voters overwhelmingly rejected the 2017 expansion of the state’s ESA voucher program, legislators introduced a number of bills to again expand the program. Two of these bills passed out of relevant committees but were not taken up by the House or Senate. The remaining expansion bills did not advance, and a bill that slows the growth of tax credit vouchers passed into law.

- **Louisiana:** a bill creating a “reading voucher” for public school students to use for private tutoring and other private uses passed the House but did not make it out of the Senate Finance Committee.

- **Missouri:** Bills to create a tax-credit-funded ESA voucher program were not acted upon before the legislative deadline.

- **Pennsylvania:** Governor Tom Wolf (D) vetoed a major expansion of the state’s tax credit voucher program passed by the Republican-led legislature. The bill would have nearly doubled the amount that could be diverted to the program, included automatic annual expansions, and significantly raised the income limit for participating families.

- **South Carolina:** Two bills were introduced in the legislature to establish an ESA voucher for students with disabilities. Both were referred to their chamber’s education committee, with no action taken by the legislature.

- **West Virginia:** After a nine-day teachers’ strike in 2018, educators went on strike again, closing all but one of the state’s 55 county public school districts, to protest bills to allow charter schools and to create an ESA voucher program. The voucher bill did not pass during the regular session. Vouchers were again considered, but the program did not pass, during a special session on education legislation.
Florida: Governor Ron DeSantis (R) signed Florida’s latest private school voucher plan, the “Family Empowerment Scholarship Program,” into law. This program will divert an estimated $130 million to private schools over the authorized period and will make vouchers available to middle class families earning up to $80,000 a year.

Tennessee: Passed the first Education Savings Account. Under the law, starting no later than 2021, eligible families can receive up to $7,300 in public funds each year to spend on private school tuition and other private education expenses, such as transportation and curriculum. A number of concessions to legislators who were concerned about the impact on public schools, including rural Republicans, were made in order to pass the bill.

Indiana: Governor Eric Holcomb (R) signed legislation to increase funding for Indiana’s existing tax credit voucher program by almost 15% over the next two years. The legislation also increases the voucher amount for eligible families.

Iowa: Governor Kim Reynolds (R) signed legislation to increase the cap for Iowa’s existing tax credit voucher program by $2 million over the next two years.
Nearly six in ten Americans are favorable of a tax credit for donations that pay for scholarships to help low-income parents send their children to private school.

A proposal has been made to offer a tax credit for individual and corporate donations that pay for scholarships to help low-income parents send their children to private schools. Would you favor or oppose such a proposal?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Oppose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
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<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
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<tr>
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<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latinx</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Somewhat support   | Strongly support | Somewhat oppose | Strongly oppose

Public support for school choice

Americans have expressed support for public school choice and public charter schools many times, but they draw the line at sending public dollars to support private schools.

• 73% agree with the statement we should NOT take away public funds from our public schools to fund private, religious, and home school education.

• 64% of voters are much less likely to vote for an elected official who supports taking away funds from public schools to give to private schools, including 47% who would be much less likely to do so.

NSBA POLL (2020)

Digging deeper

Traditional public schools don’t command vast loyalty. If cost and location were not issues, just 1/3 of parents would choose a traditional public school.

If public funds covered all tuition, 54% of public school parents would still choose a public school — but if the voucher covered just half of private or religious school tuition, 72% of parents would stick with a public school.

Support for vouchers

Source: PDK Poll of the Public’s Attitudes Toward the Public Schools. pdkpoll.org
How do we increase support for Public Schools?

PUBLIC SCHOOLS WEEK 2020

Public Schools Week 2020, to be held Feb. 24-28, 2020, celebrates our nation’s public schools, our students and the many school professionals who work to help students achieve their greatest potential. A broad group of 10 million parents and educators — administrators, teachers, specialists, teacher educators, and school board members — will mark the week with events and outreach to their communities. In Washington, D.C., a bipartisan group of lawmakers will speak on the importance of a strong public education system for our country’s future economic strength.
Questions? Comments?

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