

SCHOOL VOUCHERS: Top Five Facts You Need to Know

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✘ Vouchers Are New Tuition Hand-outs for Existing Private Families

Between 65% and 90% of voucher users have never been in public school—either because they were already in private school before voucher programs created, were homeschooled or began in kindergarten.

[Sources: <https://www.azmirror.com/2022/09/01/private-school-students-flock-to-expanded-school-voucher-program/>; <https://newhampshirebulletin.com/briefs/most-education-freedom-account-recipients-not-leaving-public-schools-department-says/>; <https://archive.jsonline.com/news/education/75-of-state-voucher-program-applicants-already-attend-private-school-b99274333z1-259980701.html/>; https://www.stltoday.com/news/local/education/missouri-lawmakers-look-to-expand-tax-credit-voucher-program-mostly-serving-religious-schools/article_ef0b7afb-6805-586b-a668-67b2d10ecd64.html; <https://www.edweek.org/policy-politics/most-students-getting-new-school-choice-funds-arent-ditching-public-schools/2023/10>]

✘ Vouchers Come in Way Over Budget—Costing Instead of Saving Taxpayer \$\$

Despite rosy projections from pro-voucher think tanks, vouchers typically exceed projected costs. Arizona’s voucher scheme cost 1400% higher than promised. In Iowa the actual cost is \$10’s of millions beyond the initial line item in School Aid. State per-child spending on vouchers becomes higher than state spending per public school student. [Sources:

<https://www.propublica.org/article/arizona-school-vouchers-budget-meltdown>; <https://cbs2iowa.com/news/local/the-state-could-be-forced-to-spend-more-as-16750-iowa-families-apply-for-esas>; <https://www.12news.com/article/money/do-arizona-school-vouchers-save-taxpayer-dollars/75-b8fb41ce-cbdc-42d5-a45f-6c6285881b56/>]

✘ Vouchers Bail Out Sub-Prime Schools that Raise Tuition Once Taxpayer Cash Comes In

Private schools accepting voucher payments tend to be financially distressed—often taking the voucher as a taxpayer bailout. Many schools raise tuition once the bailout arrives, prioritizing new revenue over affordability. [Source: <https://www.propublica.org/article/ohio-taxpayer-money-funding-private-religious-schools>; <https://educationresearchalliancenaola.org/files/publications/Sude-DeAngelis-Wolf-Supplying-Choice.pdf>; <https://hechingerreport.org/arizona-gave-families-public-money-for-private-schools-then-private-schools-raised-tuition/>]

✘ Vouchers Cause Pandemic-Sized Impacts on Student Learning

Independent studies in Indiana, Louisiana, Ohio and Washington DC have shown impacts on test scores on par with the COVID-19 or Hurricane Katrina’s effects on student achievement.

[Sources: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/pam.22086?casa_token=hW1MiwAu9y8AAAAA%3AKtaFnsC8tKPrF1ytH-fDQV7r1qABFz1cHHpLVWU6bWCNzK4_2Rjv-l-4ldxGNY_K2KCAp5vfmVL_yR9E; <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/app.20160634>; <https://fordhaminstitute.org/ohio/research/evaluation-ohios-edchoice-scholarship-program-selection-competition-and-performance>; <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/20084023/participation.asp>; <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2022/03/03/the-pandemic-has-had-devastating-impacts-on-learning-what-will-it-take-to-help-students-catch-up/>]

✘ Vouchers Give Schools—Not Parents—the Real Choice

Voucher schools can and do deny kids with disabilities, expel LGBTQ kids, and quietly remove other students who don’t fit the school’s moral or academic ideal. [Sources:

<https://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/education/os-ne-voucher-schools-anti-gay-trans-policy-20220825-nb3rvfabenbk7njfb5xsvqroq-story.html>; <https://www.chalkbeat.org/2017/8/10/21107318/choice-for-most-in-nation-s-largest-voucher-program-16-million-went-to-schools-with-anti-lgbt-polic/>; <https://archive.jsonline.com/news/education/feds-quietly-close-long-running-probe-of-milwaukee-voucher-program-b99644914z1-364068331.html>; <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2023/02/06/gay-fathers-confronted-at-arizona-religious-school/11198267002/>; <https://wisconsinwatch.org/2023/05/wisconsin-voucher-schools-discrimination-lgbtq-disabilities/>]