



## Voucher Talking Points

### Private School Voucher Expansion Will Siphon Resources Away from Public Schools

- If children leave their resident school district to attend a private school with a voucher, the local school district will lose the state revenue limit and state aid on those children leaving the children who remain in the public schools with fewer resources and fewer educational opportunities.
- About 75% of the children in the Wisconsin Parental Choice Program (WPCP) were previously attending private schools. Therefore, the state is now paying more than \$7,000 each to educate kids for whom it was previously paying nothing. If the programs were to expand, it would then increase the impact on the state budget. There are only so many tax dollars that will be spent on PK-12 education. If more is spent on voucher expansion, there will be less to spend on the 850,000 children attending traditional public schools in Wisconsin.
- For every dollar the state of Wisconsin spends on an ineffective educational program like vouchers, it loses the opportunity to invest that dollar on programs that are proven to be effective at improving teaching and learning for all students.
- **The bottom line is:** Expansion of taxpayer-funded private school vouchers = diminishing educational opportunities for Wisconsin public school children.

### Voucher Expansion is the Beginning of a Growing Taxpayer-Funded Entitlement

- The ultimate objective of private school voucher proponents is “a voucher in every backpack.” About 75% of children in the WPCP were previously attending private schools. And, Governor Walker and other GOP leaders have expressed their desire to remove the income eligibility requirements for vouchers.
- If Wisconsin raises the voucher cap and removes the income requirements, what could this growing entitlement end up costing Wisconsin taxpayers? In 2013-14, there were 93,000 students enrolled in a Wisconsin private school but not receiving a voucher. In 2014-15, the voucher payment increased to \$7,210 for K-8 students and \$7,856 for high school students. Using these two dollar figures, if all 93,000 private pay students received a voucher, the ultimate taxpayer cost would be somewhere between \$670,530,000 and \$730,608,000 per year and in excess of \$7 billion over a decade.
- **The bottom line is:** We simply cannot afford two systems of education in Wisconsin.

## **Vouchers Do Not Improve Student Achievement**

- The voucher program was started in Milwaukee in 1989 with the premise that if we allowed parents to choose between public and private schools the result would be higher levels of student learning.
- Numerous studies from across the country have shown that students offered vouchers do not perform better in reading and math than students in public schools.
- In 2011, the Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau released a five-year longitudinal study, which concluded that students in Milwaukee using vouchers to attend private schools perform no better on standardized tests than their counterparts in public schools (see the study here: <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/lab/reports/12-14full.pdf>).
- **The bottom line is:** If your objective is to improve student achievement for all Wisconsin school children, private school vouchers simply don't work.

## **Private Voucher Schools Lack Public Accountability**

Requirements for voucher schools stand in stark contrast to the strong controls imposed on public schools. For example, consider the following facts:

- Private voucher schools do not have to comply with the state's Open Meetings and Open Records laws.
- Voucher schools are not required to meet the federal standards of hiring "highly qualified" teachers. In fact, voucher schools can hire teachers who are unlicensed.
- Private voucher schools are not bound by most state instructional and graduation requirements.
- Voucher schools do not have to accept all students, nor do they have to provide students with the same due process protections afforded students by public schools.
- Voucher schools are not required to evaluate their teaching staff.
- Finally, voucher schools in Milwaukee have been involved in scandal and fraud due to the lack of public accountability inherent to the private school voucher program.
- **The bottom line is:** Voucher schools lack fundamental standards and accountability necessary to protect students and taxpayers.

## **Special Needs Vouchers Threaten Both the Disabled Students Who Would Use the Vouchers to Attend Private Schools and the Students Who Remain in Public Schools**

No statewide disability group in Wisconsin has endorsed special needs vouchers. Consider the following:

- Special needs vouchers take tax dollars out of public schools, hurting the students with disabilities who remain in those schools.
- Voucher schools would have no obligation to accept any given student with disabilities. Special needs vouchers would go to students with mild disabilities, thereby leaving public schools with reduced special education funding to serve the needs of children with moderate and severe disabilities.
- Voucher schools are not required to employ special education teachers or therapists, and have no obligation to meet a student's specific needs.
- Families who use special needs vouchers would give up their child's rights and protections guaranteed by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), including the right to an enforceable Individualized Education Program (IEP).
- **The bottom line is:** If your objective is a high-quality education for all students with disabilities, special needs vouchers simply don't work.