



2019

Position Statement on Vouchers, Tax Credits, & Scholarships

AAEA opposes any efforts to divert public funds to private schools without the same oversight and accountability

State policymakers should support public education as a means to grow local and state economies, and help create a well-educated citizenry. All children in all communities, large and small, should have access to quality public education. State policymakers should resist attempts to provide state funds for private school vouchers and their variants (scholarships), including tuition tax credits for private schools.

Voucher programs across the country are not shown to be successful in improving student achievement. Reports on the Cleveland and Milwaukee voucher programs have found "little or no difference in voucher and public school students' performance." A 2017 major study of the Louisiana voucher program found negative results in both reading & math achievement. A recent study of the Indiana school voucher program also reported dismal results. Indiana lawmakers originally promoted the state's school voucher program as a way for children from poor & lower middle class families to leave public schools that failed to meet their needs. But 5 years after the program was established, more than half of the state's voucher recipients have never attended Indiana public schools, meaning that taxpayers are now directly paying for private & religious school tuition for children whose parents had previously paid the cost. Many vouchers also are going to wealthier families, those earning up to \$90,000 for a household of 4. A 2018 evaluation of the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program from the U.S. Department of Education reaffirms these findings, reporting that D.C. students attending voucher schools performed significantly worse than they would have in their original public school.

A 2018 study found, on average, schools of choice are significantly less likely to provide information to families with students who have low grades, behavior problems, or an IEP. Vouchers leave behind many disadvantaged students because private schools may not accept them or do not offer the special services they need.

Voucher programs have no accountability.. Private schools are not held to the same standards and requirements as public schools, including student achievement, budget transparency, and open board meeting laws.

Rather than diverting public funds to private schools, state policymakers should focus on research-based sustained school improvement efforts coupled with support mechanisms to help all students achieve at higher levels and close achievement gaps. School improvement strategies should be built around using data to inform instruction, developing teacher and leader effectiveness through high-quality professional development and evaluation, reforming instructional strategies, and expanding learning time.

Talking Points:

- Public funds should not be diverted to private schools without the same oversight and accountability mandated for public schools.
- There is significant and compelling research showing that voucher programs do not improve student achievement.
- Vouchers leave behind many disadvantaged students because private schools may not accept them or do not offer the special services they need.
- Vouchers do nothing to improve equity and often times increase discrimination.
- Private schools are not held to the same standards and requirements as public schools, including student achievement, budget transparency, and open board meeting laws.

