

**General Statement:** Expanding Wisconsin's private and religious school voucher program will undermine the quality of our children's education. At the same time legislators are proposing this, they are planning to cut nearly \$1 billion from public schools and to reduce school district revenue limits— resulting in an additional loss of \$1.68 billion in allowable revenue authority. This extreme plan is designed to push a political ideology and is wrong for Wisconsin.

**Quick hits:**

- **This is hypocrisy.** It insults Wisconsin parents and taxpayers. How can you invest in these at the same time you're cutting \$1 billion from public schools?
  - Milwaukee, the longest-running voucher experiment in the nation's history, has consistently shown not to produce any different results than Milwaukee's public schools.
  - Vouchers are proven not to improve test scores, not to spur public schools to do better, and not to have any different results for children. We should focus on improving one school system instead of creating two.
- **Using taxpayer money to support private and religious schools is wrong.**
  - More than 80 percent of existing vouchers are religious schools.
  - Public education is a founding principle of our state and is a key part of Wisconsin's Constitution. Expanding private schools at taxpayer expense takes Wisconsin backward.
- **They want to do away with public schools.** This isn't about helping poor children. If our governor was interested in that, he wouldn't be proposing extreme cuts to BadgerCare and Medicare, cutting \$1 billion from public schools and ending programs that help struggling families like school breakfast and at-risk programs to help kids graduate.
- **The state's most vulnerable children are being used to advance Walker's extreme political ideology.** It's another move to make sure he stays the sweetheart of the national corporations that fund him and his plan to dismantle our public schools.

**Related research:**

- [Great Lakes Education Foundation](#)

**Experts/spokespeople:**

- Bob Peterson, Rethinking Schools, Milwaukee
- Barbara Miner, journalist with 20 years experience writing about vouchers, Milwaukee

**Related links:**

[WEAC Resource Page on Vouchers](#)

**FACT SHEET**

**Background:** There are a lot of myths out there about private school vouchers, which are frequently floated by supporters of privatizing schools. Here are some quick facts to help you out the next time you're approached with the question of "So, what do you have against school choice?"

- **Fact: There's no link between vouchers and gains in student achievement.** There's [no conclusive evidence](#) that vouchers improve the achievement of students who use them to attend private school. Nor is there any validity to claims that, by creating a "competitive marketplace" for students, vouchers force public schools to improve. In fact, the most dramatic improvements in student achievement have occurred in places where vouchers do not exist — such as Texas, North Carolina, Connecticut and Chicago. Instead, those states and communities focused on teacher quality and extra help for students who need it. Repeatedly in Milwaukee, where the longest-running experiment in this fake fix continues, independent research shows students at these schools perform about the same as their public school peers.
- **Fact: Vouchers undermine accountability for public funds.** Private schools have almost complete autonomy with regard to how they operate: who they teach, what they teach, how they teach, how — if at all — they measure student achievement, how they manage their finances, and what they are required to disclose to parents and the public. They aren't required to have licensed teachers or accept all students.
- **Fact: Vouchers do not reduce public education costs.** Actually, they increase costs, by requiring taxpayers to fund two school systems, one public and one private.
- **Fact: Vouchers do not give parents real educational choice.** Participating private schools may limit enrollment, and in many cases may maintain exclusive admissions policies and charge tuition and fees far above the amount provided by the voucher. Unlike public schools, private and religious schools can — and do — discriminate in admissions on the basis of prior academic achievement, standardized test scores, interviews with applicants and parents, gender, religion, income, special needs, and behavioral history.
- **Fact: The public disapproves of vouchers.** By overwhelming margins, [Americans prefer improving their public schools to spending scarce tax dollars on voucher programs](#). Since 1966, vouchers or voucher-related measures have been placed before voters in 13 states and the District of Columbia 22 times. With the lone exception of South Dakota — which approved the provision of textbooks to parochial schools in 1986 — voters have rejected public aid to private and religious schools every time. In those 22 elections, nearly two out of three voters cast "no" votes.

**Additional facts on the latest Milwaukee research:**

- In MPS about 18-20% of students are identified as having special needs. This compares with about 3% in the choice schools. When comparisons are made between public and voucher school students, the fact that the students come from similar neighborhoods does not mean that there are equal proportions of special needs students in the two samples.
- When voucher schools tout higher graduation rates, it does not mean that a higher quality of education has been provided. It may be an indication of weaker graduation standards.
- The fact that there are no significant differences between MPCP and MPS in student achievement is not surprising. This is because the strongest predictor of how a child does in school is the family, in particular, the mother's level of education. More than anything else, comparisons of public and voucher school students speak to the difficulty that schools have in overcoming the effects of family. Simply put, the schools cannot do it alone.

**In the News:**

Just say no to voucher expansion *March 2011*

Former head of L.E.A.D.E.R. Institute accused of fraud, money laundering *Jan. 2011*

It's time for transparency in vouchers *May 2010*

**More Materials:**

<http://www.weac.org/protected/pdfs/TalkingAboutVouchers0311.pdf>

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