

Why Oppose School Vouchers and Tuition Tax Credits

Multiple, independent studies show no achievement gain

Three reviews of all voucher research conclude "No gains"

1. After looking at all the evidence on voucher and tuition tax credit programs, researchers at Duke, Stanford, Columbia and Princeton Universities in June 2003 unanimously concluded:
 - a. **"On average, there is no significant difference in achievement between children participating in the voucher programs and those who remain in public schools."**
 - b. **The evidence "fails to show that vouchers have a significant competitive effect on public school districts in which parents have a choice of vouchers for their children. Private schools that accept vouchers do not force an increase in quality in public schools despite strong claims to the contrary."**
2. Levin and Belfield at the National Center for the Study of Privatization in Education at Columbia University, after their review of existing research state: "No study has found any substantial difference in student achievement." (June 2004)
3. In his recent review of research on choice and vouchers summarized in his article "Data Don't Matter? Academic Research and School Choice," Kevin Smith of the University of Nebraska states: "Choice is unlikely to have anything but a trivial effect, negative or positive on student achievement" and cites a recent meta-analysis of 18 studies that found **"no significant effect of vouchers on academic performance."** (2005)

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: Vouchers preserve status quo

The *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel* published a series of articles in June 2005 based on its investigation of the results of 15 years of vouchers in Milwaukee. Here are their findings from "Lessons from the voucher schools" and other articles in the series:

- **"Overall, it [vouchers] has preserved the status quo in terms of schooling options** in the city more than it has offered a range of new, innovative or distinctive schools."
- **"The voucher schools have not provided a real solution to the problems confronting inner-city youth."**
- **"The voucher schools feel, and look, surprisingly like schools in the Milwaukee Public Schools district. Both MPS and the voucher schools are struggling in the same battle to educate low-income, minority students."**
- **"There is little evidence that giving Milwaukee parents an extraordinarily broad power to choose a publicly supported school for their children is, in itself, driving higher-quality education."**

5 separate studies of Milwaukee's voucher program find "No gains"

The Milwaukee school voucher program has been put forth as a model by those in favor of vouchers and tuition tax credits. However, five separate, independent studies found no gain in student achievement or in public school performance

1. The State of Wisconsin commissioned Dr. John Witte of the University of Wisconsin to research the performance of the Milwaukee voucher program. The final report of his five-year study concluded: "there is no reliable evidence that voucher students achieved more than comparable public school students. If anything, there was a possible advantage for public school students on reading but no differences on math." (2000)
2. Additional study by Dr. Cecilia Rouse of Princeton University found mixed results. In addition Rouse found that public schools serving low-income populations that have small class sizes and receive additional state funding did as well as voucher students in math and substantially outperformed them in reading." (1998)
3. A study by the United State Government Accountability Office concluded: "There was no consistent evidence that Milwaukee's voucher program had positively or negatively affected student achievement." (2001)
4. Frederick M. Hess (now of the American Enterprise Institute) found that vouchers in Milwaukee had not had any systemic effects on teaching and learning. (2000)
5. A second five-year study of the Milwaukee voucher program by researchers at the Public Policy Forum, an independent, non-partisan research institution in Milwaukee found the following: "The theory that a competitive education marketplace will improve public school performance has not proven accurate. In Milwaukee, the voucher program does not result in increased achievement of public schools."

Researchers at the Public Policy Forum go further and state "**the evidence in Milwaukee does not support the arguments for the voucher program...The result is that in Milwaukee neither voucher nor public school parents appear to be receiving the promised educational benefits from the voucher program.**" (2003)

14 Other independent studies also show no gain from vouchers

Voucher programs in other communities and countries have also been studied. Here is a partial list of the many studies that have found no increase in student achievement and/or no improvement in public school performance.

- A five-year study of the Cleveland school voucher program by researchers at Indiana University
- A second study of Cleveland school vouchers by the U.S. Government Accountability Office
- A study of the New York City private voucher program by researchers at Harvard University together with a study of African-American children in the program by researchers at Princeton University
- A study of the Dayton private voucher program by researchers at Harvard University
- A study of private voucher programs in Dayton, New York City and Washington, D.C. by the U.S. Government Accountability Office
- A study of the voucher program in Chile by researchers at the University of Illinois and Stanford University
- A second study of the voucher program in Chile by researchers at Princeton University and Cornell University

- A study of the voucher program in New Zealand by researchers at Duke University
- A study of the effect of private schools on public school performance by researchers at Georgia State University.
- A study by Duke University researchers on the impact of voucher programs on low-performing public schools at the University of Texas and at Duke University
- A study by researchers at the University of Texas on the impact of voucher programs on low-performing public schools
- A study by Daniel Goldhaber using data from the National Educational Longitudinal study found “In no case is there a positive statistically significant sectoral effect favoring private schools.”
- A 2006 study of scores on the 2003 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) by researchers at the University of Illinois found that **after controlling for demographic differences, public school students generally score better than their private school peers. Furthermore, Conservative Christian schools, the fastest growing private school sector, are the lowest performing private schools. The study concludes, "The presumed panacea of private-style organizational models—the private school advantage—is not supported."**
- A comprehensive study released on July 14, 2006 by **the U.S. Department of Education confirmed the results of the University of Illinois study** finding that **students in public schools perform as well or better than their private school peers** in three out of four NAEP scores (mathematics and reading) when test scores are adjusted for race, socioeconomics and other factors.

New voucher schools are the worst performers

Research shows not only that voucher and tuition tax credit programs fail to improve student achievement, but also that **the new private schools created in response to vouchers or tax credits will be among the worst performers.**

- The study by an Indiana University researcher of the Cleveland voucher program found that “Students who used vouchers to attend new private schools—those established as a result of the voucher program—scored significantly lower than their peers in both public schools and existing private schools on all academic tests in all subjects.”
- In their study of the voucher system in Chile, researchers at Stanford and the University of Illinois found that students at the new private schools (those created as a response to vouchers) performed worse than students in the public schools.

Vouchers allow poor schools to continue to operate

- The five-year study of the Milwaukee voucher program by researchers at the Public Policy Forum found that **the voucher program subsidizes the operation of poor schools.** “The voucher program makes it possible for a school that is unable to attract enough tuition paying students to continue operation by opening its door to voucher students. Voucher schools seek to obtain a transfer of wealth from the government instead of competing for wealth in an open market. **That schools on a path to closure can remain open by deciding to take taxpayer-funded vouchers in lieu of tuition thwarts the idea that only good schools thrive in the education market. The Milwaukee voucher program does not operate as a free market, but rather as a government subsidy.**”