

# Act Now for Our Future 2019 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

#ActNowForOurFuture



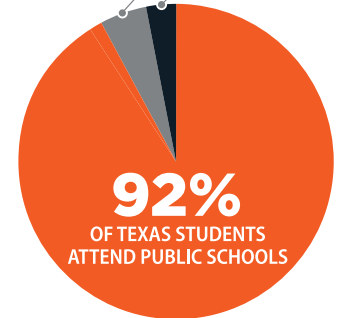
#VOUCHersHurt

## INVEST

### Keep Public Dollars in Public Schools

Vouchers are taxpayer-funded government subsidies for private schools and vendors with no accountability for results. Vouchers reduce fair access to educational opportunity, weaken rights for students with disabilities, and expose taxpayers to fraud. Instead, the state should strengthen investments in public schools, the only system with the capacity to educate the large and diverse student population of Texas.

5% PRIVATE SCHOOL 3% HOMESCHOOL



#### Why should we keep public dollars in public schools?

Only public schools can deliver on the promise of quality school choice with transparency and accountability in the use of public dollars. From dual-language and STEM to internships and early college programs, public school districts across Texas offer families innovative choices to personalize education. These programs engage students, leading to higher achievement and postsecondary success.

Legislative action has brought greater autonomy to our public schools, allowing them to customize education based on student, community, and industry needs. Private school vouchers are a failed experiment in educational autonomy. Research shows vouchers do not deliver improved outcomes or educational innovation, and they lack transparency both in the use of taxpayer dollars and public accountability for educational outcomes.

#### What is a voucher?

A voucher refers to public tax dollars diverted from public schools to subsidize private school tuition or other products and services from private vendors. School vouchers come in many forms, but in all cases students receive taxpayer dollars to attend private schools with no state accountability for student outcomes.

#### Types of Vouchers

	<b>Education Savings Account:</b> This type of voucher enables parents to receive money to leave the public school system and enroll in a private school.
	<b>Tax Credit Scholarship:</b> With this type of voucher, the state gives tax credits to corporations or individuals who have donated to funds that would pay for students to attend private schools.
	<b>Traditional Vouchers:</b> This type of voucher would allow parents to apply directly for grants that they could use for their kids to attend private schools.

#### Public School Choice & Opportunity

MAGNET SCHOOLS

DISTRICT TRANSFERS

OPEN ENROLLMENT POLICIES

EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOLS

CHARTER SCHOOLS

#### Who really uses vouchers?

Vouchers are advertised by proponents as financial support intended for low-income families seeking higher-quality options. Research on voucher programs across the nation tell a different story. Vouchers are often used by higher-income families to attend private schools—schools parents would have selected even without the availability of a voucher. Many private school tuitions are much higher than voucher amounts, making it hard for lower-income families to supplement the difference.

## WHICH OPTION OFFERS CHOICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY?

A comparison of district schools, charter schools and private school vouchers

	Public Schools	Private School Vouchers
Required to accept all students	✓	✗
Require annual assessment aligned to state curriculum to track student progress	✓	✗
Reporting and accountability for use of public funds	✓	✗
Public reporting and accountability for student performance	✓	✗
Require closure or state management for multiple years of low performance	✓	✗
Comply with federal protections for students with disabilities	✓	✗

### What does the latest research say about the effectiveness of voucher programs?

Studies continue to show vouchers either have no significant effect on student academic performance or in some cases cause significant harm.<sup>1,2,3</sup>

Dr. Robert Pianta, co-author of a recent voucher study, said, "Despite the arguments in favor of the use of vouchers or other mechanisms to support enrollment in private schools, ostensibly as a way to help vulnerable children

and families access a quality education, this study finds no evidence that private schools, exclusive of family background or income, are more effective for promoting student success."<sup>4</sup>

Another recent study of the D.C. voucher program found math scores were 10 percentage points lower for students who used vouchers compared to students who applied for a voucher, but were not accepted through a lottery process.<sup>5</sup>

### What tactics have voucher proponents used to create such programs in other states?

Voucher proponents have used small targeted programs, including ones crafted specifically for students with special needs, or for students whose families meet certain income requirements, as the camel's nose under the tent for years. What starts as a small, controlled program quickly balloons into a more expansive and costly one. And often, as in the case with Arizona's "Empowerment Scholarship Accounts" program, vouchers end up often being used by wealthy families.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, vouchers for targeted populations do not always provide the support students and their families need. Research shows, for example, that vouchers for students with special needs have resulted in families losing their rights to transparency, accountability, oversight, and an inclusive setting.<sup>7</sup>

### Policy Recommendations

- ▶ Support quality school choice and innovative programs within the public school system.
- ▶ Oppose any form of taxpayer subsidy to private schools and vendors, such as: Tax Credit Scholarships, Education Savings Accounts, and vouchers for students in special education.



### References

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