

Just the **FACTS:** An NEA-NH Factsheet

Five Talking Points on Vouchers

“What have you got against private school vouchers?” you’re asked. Next time someone puts you on the spot, use these talking points to debunk the most popular voucher claims.

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.

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. The absence of public accountability for voucher funds has contributed to rampant fraud, waste and abuse in current voucher programs.

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. Reductions in state aid to public schools to pay for the vouchers results in substantial increases in property taxes.

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.

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The Truth About Vouchers

NEA-NH believes in a strong and inclusive public education system that ensures all students can succeed.

Vouchers, education savings accounts, and tuition tax credits harm students, communities, and undermine the public schools that educate 9 out of every 10 students in New Hampshire.

Here are six things to remember about vouchers and to include in messages and conversations:

Point 1: Don't be fooled. Vouchers mean tax dollars end up paying private school tuition, ultimately reducing the revenue available for public education and raising local property taxes to pay for students to attend non-public schools.

Point 2: There is no valid evidence that such schemes improve the performance of either the students receiving vouchers or those left behind in de-funded public schools.

Point 3: We believe in a strong and inclusive public education system that ensures that all students can succeed. Vouchers, education savings accounts, and tuition tax credits harm students, communities, and undermine the public schools that educate 9 out of every 10 students in New Hampshire

Point 4: The simple fact is, vouchers take dollars from our public schools to fund private schools at taxpayer expense.

Point 5: Tax credit vouchers and education tax credits are just the latest in a long list of schemes that have diverted attention from what our children and our schools really need— programs and funding to recruit, train, and retain the best teachers; smaller classes so they can devote enough attention to each child; high-quality early childhood education programs so children come to school ready to learn; tutoring to ensure that those who fall behind aren't left behind, and the active involvement of parents and the community. **All students have the right to a great public school, and it is with these kinds of investments—not education tax subsidies—that we will achieve this goal.**

Point 6: Contact your elected officials often asking them to oppose SB193 and all efforts to de-fund New Hampshire's public schools. We shouldn't be spending taxpayer money on vouchers when there are many proven ways to improve public schools.

Regardless of what they are called, vouchers, education savings accounts, tuition tax credits, and other related initiatives rob public schools of vital funding and resources at a time when the majority of Granite Staters believe schools need more funding to help prepare our students for the future.

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Do charter schools and school vouchers “hurt” public schools?

Yes. Charter schools, vouchers, and other “choice” options redirect public money to privately operated education enterprises, which often operate for profit. That harms our public schools by siphoning off students, resources, and funding, and reducing the ability of public schools to serve the full range of student needs and interests.

This is why.

The idea that “the money should follow the child” (called portability) when students leave a public school for other options is a bad financial decision. **It leaves the public schools underfunded.**

Schools have “stranded costs.” When a public school loses a percentage of students to charter schools or a voucher program, the school can’t reduce costs by an equivalent percent.

The school still must pay the same utility, maintenance, transportation, and food services costs. The school must still carry the salary and benefit costs of administrative staff, custodial services, and cafeteria workers.

The school may not be able to reduce teaching staff because the attrition will occur randomly across various grade levels, leaving class sizes only marginally reduced.

Students aren’t a “one-off” expense. The cost to educate each individual student varies a lot. Students with disabilities or who don’t speak English as their first language often cost significantly more to educate. So as a school loses students, it often finds itself left with a larger percentage of its highest cost students to educate with less money.

When schools lose students, they have to cut services. Because schools can’t reduce expenses incrementally, they cut support staff – such as a reading specialist or librarian – and courses – such as art and music – that engage the diverse needs and interests of students.

High needs schools will be most at-risk for depleted funding.

What Privitizers Believe	What We Believe
Money should follow the child, portability.	Children should not have a price tag.
Portability does not hurt public schools.	Portability costs public school students services and programs.
School governance should be private and corporate.	Schools receiving public funds should be governed by the community and elected school boards.

Bottom Line

In any policy discussion of education, the goal should be to provide the best possible system for all children, given the resources available. While alternatives to public schools may provide better options for some children, on the whole charter and voucher schools perform no better than the public school system, and often worse. At the same time, they have a negative fiscal impact on existing public schools and are creating a parallel school system that duplicates services and costs. The idea that funds should follow the child (portability) will seriously reduce public school services.

Let’s stop draining our public schools and work together to strengthen them.



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Do school vouchers help kids in “struggling” schools?

No. Vouchers, often misleadingly called “scholarships,” divert tax dollars meant for public education to private schools that are not accountable to the public and generally do not serve the interests of struggling, low-income students.

This is why.

Vouchers are a “coupon program” for private education.

Families who already send their children to private schools are often those who apply for and get the vouchers.

Vouchers don’t expand education opportunities for low income students.

The amount of money contributed by the voucher is hardly ever enough to pay for full private school tuition. Private schools are not obligated to take vouchers. Often those that do are under enrolled and struggling.

Vouchers promote discrimination.

Despite receiving tax dollars, private voucher schools are often free to turn away students who are gay or transgender and students who don’t subscribe to a religious doctrine.

Vouchers violate separation of church and state.

Once money leaves the public system, there’s no public accountability for what the school teaches to students, including religious doctrine such as biblically inspired explanations for the origin of the universe and life and views of American history that distort the truth about slavery and the importance of civil disobedience in a democracy.

Vouchers don’t improve opportunities for struggling students.

Private schools can cherry pick who they want to educate by limiting services for students with learning disabilities and enforcing strict academic or discipline entry requirements.

What Privitizers Believe	What We Believe
School vouchers increase education opportunities for students.	School vouchers create opportunities for private, unaccountable schools to obtain tax dollars.
School vouchers provide students a pathway out of poverty.	School vouchers provide those families who already have the means to attend private schools a government subsidy.
School vouchers are a solution for families in need of better schools	School vouchers lower the quality of education for all students and diminish the capacity of the entire education system.

Bottom Line

Voucher programs, in all their many forms, are not a solution for struggling students and families who want better education opportunities. The overall negative effects of vouchers on public school communities, especially the least well-served communities, negate any positive effects vouchers may have on an isolated family or small population of students. What’s needed instead are policies that address inequities in our public education system and provide more education opportunities for all students. Vouchers are a gift of taxpayer funds to private and religious schools that if expanded will cost American taxpayers billions of dollars.

Let’s stop draining our public schools and work together to strengthen them.

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Do charter schools and school vouchers save money?

No. Charter schools and vouchers increase education costs to taxpayers because they have become a parallel school system that drains money from what's available to serve all students. School voucher programs can add extra layers of administrative costs and make education funds less transparent and accountable. The result of both programs is more money going to more service providers instead of directly to students and classrooms.

This is why.

Charter schools and vouchers expand education bureaucracy.

Charter school administrative staffing adds another expensive layer of management to school systems. Money to pay for more executive salaries often comes at the expense of resources for classrooms. Vouchers often use public money to reimburse private school expenses formerly borne solely by the private school.

Charter and private school costs are often charged to the public. When students transfer to charters and private schools, the costs to provide those students transportation, free or reduced-priced lunch, and special education are often charged to the public schools or become parents' responsibilities.

Charter and voucher schools can hide their costs. Many charter and voucher schools receive substantial private dollars they either don't have to report or keep hidden from view.

Charter schools and vouchers are a financial burden on public school systems. These programs drain available funds that school districts could use to serve all students and often make it more difficult for public school districts to borrow money and maintain debt.

A national voucher program could add as much as \$73 billion per year to the cost of education nationwide.

Much of the additional cost is due to the shifting of private education costs, currently shouldered by parents, to the state.

What Privitizers Believe	What We Believe
Charter schools and vouchers make fiscal sense.	Charter schools and vouchers are a significant drain on public school budgets.
Charter schools and vouchers are more cost efficient.	Charter schools and vouchers add to education bureaucratic bloat.
Charter schools operate like a sustainable business.	Charter schools need propping up from private foundations, wealthy individuals, and government vouchers.

Bottom Line

Charter schools and vouchers are not a way to get better education on the cheap. Because each school or network of schools is its own financial entity, they don't have the economies of scale that public schools have. So charters and private schools supported with vouchers have to continually find more ways to tap into public school budgets or generate funds from the private sector. This drain on resources threatens the capacity of public education budgets to serve all students.

Let's stop draining our public schools and work together to strengthen them.

Vouchers and Similar Schemes Leave Students Behind



NEA believes in a strong and inclusive public education system that ensures that all students can succeed. Vouchers, education savings accounts, and tuition tax credits harm students, communities, and undermine the public schools that educate 9 out of every 10 students. There is no valid evidence that such schemes improve the performance of either the students receiving them or those left behind in public schools.

- ▶ **Regardless of what they are called, vouchers, education savings accounts, tuition tax credits, and other related initiatives rob public schools of vital funding and resources.**
 - **Vouchers take dollars from our public schools to fund private schools at taxpayer expense.**
 - **Education savings accounts (ESAs) divert taxpayer dollars into accounts parents can use for educational purposes, including private and religious school tuition.**
 - **Tuition tax credits (TTCs) authorize tax credits for donations that are used to fund vouchers. Ultimately, these schemes reduce the revenue available for public education.**

- ▶ **These programs ultimately deprive students of the rights and protections guaranteed in public schools.**
 - **Despite receiving public money, private and charter schools that participate in vouchers programs are not subject to the same civil rights laws, and do not face the same accountability and transparency standards that must schools must meet, including those in Title VI, Title IX, and IDEA.**
 - **Students with special needs who use vouchers lose many rights granted by the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and may not have the protection of an individualized education plan.**

- ▶ **Vouchers harm students who are most in need by taking critical resources away from our neighborhood public schools.**
 - **Vouchers do not create choice for parents, but rather choice for private schools — they can reject students based on economic status, academic achievement, disabilities, English proficiency, immigration status, sexual orientation, or even gender.**
 - **Vouchers do not reduce education costs.** Rather than reduce government spending on education, vouchers, ESAs, and TTCs vouchers create a dual system in which the taxpayer supports one public and accountable system and another private and unaccountable one.
 - **As public schools are starved of resources they lose support and the ability to provide great public schools for every student regardless of ZIP code is threatened.**