Vouchers Lack Accountability & Fund Poor Quality Schools

Most voucher programs lack accountability measures, and according to studies of voucher programs, many also lack proper oversight to ensure they meet even the minimal standards that do exist.

- Many voucher schools are permitted to take taxpayer money without implementing any requirements for teacher qualifications, testing, or achievement. Some states do not even require private school teachers to hold bachelor’s degrees. In addition, only 11 states require accreditation for private schools, thus, taxpayer-funded vouchers are regularly used to pay for tuition at unaccredited schools.

- Voucher programs also frequently fail to enforce the minimal standards required by law. For example, US Government Accountability Office reports from both 2007 and 2013 document how the Washington, DC voucher program has repeatedly failed to meet even the most basic, statutorily required accountability standards, such as maintaining certificates of occupancy and adequate financial records. In 2013, the head of the organization running the DC program even admitted that “quality oversight of the program as sort of a dead zone, a blind spot.”

- In Florida, voucher schools took public funds for kids not even attending those schools. And in Wisconsin, the taxpayer-funded voucher program paid $139 million to schools that failed to meet the state’s requirements for operation.

Because voucher programs lack accountability and oversight, vouchers often fund poor quality schools, including those that employ teachers with no credentials, operate in dilapidated buildings and lack proper facilities, and teach questionable curriculum.

- Schools in the Wisconsin program, for example, have employed teachers with no education background or teaching credentials and have been housed in old factories, strip malls, or car dealerships. Likewise, an investigation of voucher schools in the District of Columbia revealed serious problems, including that one was “run out of a soot-stained storefront,” another, unaccredited school was “supported by the Nation of Islam and was run out of a rowhouse” where “the bathroom had a floor blackened with dirt, a sink coated in grime and a bathtub filled with paint cans and cleaning supplies.”

- The curriculum taught is also often troubling. In Washington, DC, a private school, where 93% of its students were voucher students, used a “learning model known as “Suggestopedia” – an obscure Bulgarian philosophy of learning that stresses learning through music, stretching and meditation.” And, in states like Louisiana, students using vouchers are taught creationism in science classes.
Private School Choice Programs Are Growing and Can Complicate Providing Certain Federally Funded Services to Eligible Students 24 (2016).

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