

## Vouchers Do Not Save Taxpayer Money

In voucher programs, the public schools from which students leave for private voucher schools are spread throughout a school district. The reduction in students attending a public school, therefore, is usually negligible and does not decrease operating costs of those public schools. Many of the costs to educate students in public schools are fixed, and therefore less malleable to changes in student enrollment. As a result of voucher programs, public schools receive less funding, leading to a decline in available programs and services for their students. That is one of the reasons why some voucher programs have resulted in multi-million dollar deficits and tax increases.

Proponents often claim that vouchers produce savings because the cost to educate each student in private schools is generally less than the state's per pupil expenditure for each student in public schools. This, however, does not mean that the state will save money. For instance, any potential savings are undercut when students who would have been enrolled in private schools even without a voucher accept and use a voucher.<sup>1</sup>

In addition, the per-pupil expenditure for public school students does not directly translate into the private school setting. Expenditures in public and private schools cannot be easily compared. Public schools serve all students regardless of ability or expense to educate, including students with disabilities and students who are English learners, and serve higher concentrations of students needing greater resources. According to data from the National Center for Education Statistics, although public schools serve 90% of K-12 students overall, they serve 95% of students with special needs.<sup>2</sup> Public schools also serve higher concentrations of students from households below the U.S. Census Bureau's poverty threshold.<sup>3</sup> When some students receive vouchers to attend private schools that can pick and choose which students to accept, often the students who remain in public schools are those with the greatest needs and the most expensive to educate.

In Indiana, the state ran a \$53 million deficit during the 2015-2016 school year to support the voucher program.<sup>4</sup> In Milwaukee, which has been disproportionately burdened in a statewide voucher funding scheme, the city has had to raise property taxes several times in order to

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<sup>1</sup> See Kevin Welner, Nat'l Educ. Policy Ctr., [How to Calculate the Costs or Savings of Tax Credit Voucher Policies](#) (Mar. 2011); see also *Southern Educ. Found.*, [A Failed Experiment: Georgia's Tax Credit Scholarships for Private Schools](#) (2011) (noting that students in Georgia were enrolling in public schools in order to be eligible for the tax credit voucher program without any intent on actually attending public school).

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Dep't. of Educ., Nat'l Center for Educ. Statistics, NCES 2020-009, Digest of Education Statistics, Ch. 2 (2018).

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> Claire McInerney, [School Voucher Program Cost State \\$18 Million More Than Previous Year](#), State Impact (July 18, 2016).



The **National Coalition for Public Education** comprises more than 50 education, civic, civil rights, and religious organizations devoted to the support of public schools. Founded in 1978, NCPE opposes the funnelling of public money to private and religious schools through such mechanisms as tuition tax credits and vouchers.

ensure adequate funding for the city's schools.<sup>5</sup> In Arizona, the cost to send students to private schools using vouchers was about 75 percent more per student than the cost of public school and cost taxpayers approximately \$62 million per year.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Erin Richards, [MPS Blames Voucher Program for Tax Levy Increase](#), Milwaukee J. Sentinel (Oct. 31, 2012).

<sup>6</sup> Dave Wells, Grand Canyon Inst., [\\$10,700 Per Student: The Estimated Cost of Arizona's Private School Subsidy Programs](#) (Sept. 5, 2018).