

BYLINE: ANDREA TORTORA

SOURCE: Gannett News Service

BODY:

WASHINGTON - Seven of 10 Americans oppose direct and substantial aid to private schools, while 57 percent support such aid when it takes the form of partial tax credits.

The annual Phi Delta Kappa-Gallup Poll released Tuesday finds Americans continue to prefer improving and strengthening public schools - 70 percent - to providing vouchers - 28 percent. Phi Delta Kappa is a professional education fraternity.

Citizens are split in their support of aid to private schools and confused about the options, said Jack Jennings, director of the Center on Education Policy.

This year's poll asked new (16 of 38) and more questions to explore perceptions of alternatives to public education. Support for aid to private schools varies if full payment for tuition or partial payment is proposed; whether it is at public expense or government expense; and whether it is a

4TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

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The Deseret News (Salt Lake City, UT)

September 7, 1999, Tuesday

SECTION: OPINION; Pg. A09

LENGTH: 719 words

HEADLINE: Florida school voucher experiment is elegant, but flaws are troubling

BYLINE: By William Raspberry

BODY:

WASHINGTON -- Florida has launched what has to be the most fascinating school voucher experiment the nation has seen. It is elegant in its simplicity, it speaks precisely to those parents who believe the public schools are failing their children, and it leaves in the hands of the public school system the power to put the program out of business.

The scheme (dubbed A+ Plan for Education by Gov. Jeb Bush) begins by testing all fourth-graders in reading and math. If too many youngsters in a particular school fail the test, the school itself is deemed a failure. If the school fails two years out of four, its students become eligible for up to \$4,000 in scholarships to attend private, parochial or other public schools of their choice -- if the new schools accept them.

If there were no failing schools -- or if failing schools get their act together quickly -- there would be no vouchers. Pro-voucher activist Clint Bolick calls the plan "the first money-back guarantee in the history of public education."

But for all the enthusiasm accompanying it, early implementation reveals some troubling flaws. The first two schools to receive the "F" have a combined enrollment of about 860 -- all of them eligible to apply for the vouchers. Parents of 92 of them signed up. Does that mean the others are satisfied? That they don't care? That they couldn't afford transportation or lunch? No one knows.

Of the 92 who did sign up, only 58 actually won scholarships in the lottery that is part of the plan.

Why? In Pensacola, where the failing schools are located, only four Catholic schools and one private school agreed to participate in the plan, which would require them to enroll lottery winners who apply. (The plan also allows students of failing schools to transfer to other public schools, with the school system providing transportation. Those who transfer to private or parochial schools have to furnish their own transportation and lunch.)

More ominous yet: While only a couple of schools have run afoul of the two-Fs-in-four-years provision, 79 schools (26 of them in Miami) have their first "F" -- not to mention a number of "D" grades that conceivably could slip.

SUPPORT EXISTING FEDERAL ANTI-DISCRIMINATION LAWS: OPPOSE H.R. 2724

The "Helping Empower Low-income Parents Scholarships Amendments of 1997," H.R. 2724, would change existing law to permit federal dollars to finance education programs without requiring any corresponding obligation to comply with federal anti-discrimination laws (Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Age Discrimination Act). H.R. 2724 would create new "voluntary public and private school choice programs" in which federal education dollars are funneled through parents to public and private schools, while specifically exempting these dollars from civil rights laws that prohibit federally-funded schools from discriminating on the basis of sex, race, national origin, ethnicity, disability, or age.

- The bill would permit federal dollars to support education programs that discriminate on the basis of race, sex, national origin, ethnicity, disability or age. Under current law, schools that receive federal funds in any form, including federal aid paid directly to students or parents for educational use, must abide by federal laws prohibiting discrimination in federally-funded education programs.¹ These laws protect students, and others, from discrimination on the basis of sex, race, color, national origin, disability and age in federally-funded education programs. H.R. 2724, however, rewrites the law to permit schools to receive federal dollars under this program unconditionally, without any corresponding obligation to comply with federal anti-discrimination laws.²
- H.R. 2724 allows private schools that receive federal funds to discriminate against students. Without the protection of the federal civil rights laws, private schools could receive federal funding under the newly created school choice program, yet discriminate against students in admissions, access to course offerings, guidance counselling, extra-curricular activities, facilities, and in other aspects of education, in ways long recognized to violate federal law. For example, under H.R. 2724, private schools could permit widespread and severe racial harassment of students in class, provide female students with inferior athletic facilities, and refuse to make any accommodations for disabled students. In short, federal funding to schools under this program would come with a free ticket to ignore the civil rights laws that have protected students in federally-funded education programs from harmful discrimination for decades.

¹Grove City College v. Bell, 465 U.S. 555, 563-70 (1984). While Congress subsequently overturned those aspects of the Court's decision in Grove City that restricted the scope of federal civil rights laws, it left intact the Court's ruling that a private college that did not otherwise receive federal aid had to comply with federal civil rights laws because it indirectly received such aid by enrolling students who paid their tuition with federal education grants.

²Public schools participating in the school choice program would still have to comply with federal civil rights laws as long as they received federal funds through other sources.

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Women's Legal Defense Fund
Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)

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Leadership Conference on Civil Rights

1629 K St., NW, Suite 1010
Washington, D.C. 20006
Phone: 202/466-3311
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TTY: 202/785-3859

Support Existing Anti-Discrimination Laws: Oppose the HELP Bill, HR 2724

October 29, 1997

The Honorable Sidney R. Yates
U.S. House of Representatives
2109 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Yates:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we urge you to vote against the Helping Empower Low-Income Parents (HELP) Scholarship bill (HR 2724). We strongly oppose exempting taxpayer-supported schools from federal civil rights laws.

The HELP bill would change existing law to permit federal dollars to finance education programs without requiring any corresponding obligation to comply with federal anti-discrimination laws (Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; and the Age Discrimination Act). Under current law, schools that receive federal funds, including federal aid paid directly to students or parents for educational use, must abide by federal laws prohibiting discrimination in federally funded education programs. However, HR 2724 rewrites the law to permit private schools to receive federal dollars and to allow them to discriminate on the basis of race, sex, national origin, ethnicity, disability, and age.

Under this bill federal dollars could be used to support discrimination in education. Without the protection of the federal civil rights laws, private schools could receive federal funds under HR 2724 yet discriminate against students in access to classes, guidance counseling, extra curricular activities, and other aspects of education. For example, private schools could permit widespread and severe racial harassment of students in class, provide female students with inferior athletic facilities, and refuse to make any accommodations for disabled students. In short, HR 2724 would allow private schools to ignore the civil rights laws that have long protected students in federally funded education programs.

Attached is more detailed information on why we oppose the HELP bill. If you have any questions, please contact Nancy Zirkin, American Association of University Women, at 202/785-7720, Debbie Brake, National Women's Law Center, at 202/588-5180, or Wade Henderson, Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, at 202/466-3311.

Sincerely,

Leadership Conference on Civil Rights
American Association of University Women
National Women's Law Center

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KEY POINTS ON PRIVATE SCHOOL VOUCHERS

- Vouchers undermine public education by shifting taxpayers' money from public schools into schools that can exclude students on the basis of their ability to pay, or their academic achievement. If vouchers are enacted, significant amounts of funds would be immediately drained from public schools.
- Moreover, vouchers would shift taxpayers' dollars into schools that are not accountable to the community, or to any public authority. They also undermine community control and responsibility for strong schools. Unlike charter schools and other public school accountability measures, there is no mechanism for accountability in private school voucher plans. Ineffective schools that do not meet community expectations and needs can be funded under voucher proposals. Opponents of the 1994 California voucher proposal pointed out the potential danger of even more extreme situations, given the eligibility under voucher plans of even "witch covens and the KKK" to start schools and receive public funds.
- Vouchers are not the best way to help parents and students escape ineffective and disorderly schools. Public school choice, charter schools, and mechanisms allowing parents to close and restructure failing schools can provide more effective alternatives, while preserving the concept of community-based public schools. Studies of voucher programs in Milwaukee and in England show no evidence that students who participate in private school choice programs do better academically than comparable students in public schools. Many studies of public school choice, and evidence from individual charter schools, show a positive effect on student achievement.
- Vouchers would undermine the time-honored notion of the American common school. It is our tradition of public schooling that creates a strong citizenry that can work together and get along with one another. Indeed, it is this kind of unity, strengthened by diversity, that sets our nation apart from countries that have disintegrated into ethnic conflicts and wars. That's why the public -- in a poll by Public Agenda -- by about 3 to 1 felt that public schools are more likely to provide an environment that teaches "how to deal with people from different backgrounds" than private schools.
- Vouchers would undermine private education. Inevitable abuses -- or even concerns about potential abuses -- under a voucher program would incite efforts to bring private schools under public regulation. This would effectively end the independence of this important alternative to public education in American life. Last year, even Pat Buchanan warned against the negative effect of vouchers on private schools.
- Due to these problems and others, vouchers polarize and politicize the public discussion about improving schools, draining away the time, energies, and hard work we all need to put into improving schools. Indeed, voucher proposals have prevented and delayed the enactment of promising and otherwise popular education reform measures.

To have real choice for parents, but to retain strong accountability, states should instead provide for public school choice and charter schools, challenge all public schools to raise their standards of discipline and achievement, and enact tough accountability measures for all public schools.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

THE SECRETARY

October 28, 1997

The Honorable William F. Goodling
Chairman, Committee on Education
and the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Goodling:

I understand that the House of Representatives may soon consider H.R. 2724, the Helping Empower Low-income Parents (HELP) Scholarships Amendments of 1997. This bill would permit States and local school districts to use funds that are otherwise available for the supplementary costs of education reform under Title VI of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to provide vouchers that could be used to pay the cost of a student's basic instructional program at a private school. If this bill were to reach the President, I would recommend that he veto it.

Every American child deserves a high-quality elementary and secondary education, and every State guarantees its children a free public education. I believe that targeting our limited Federal resources to build stronger public schools will help ensure that all our Nation's children receive the education they need to become productive citizens. Public schools serve approximately 90 percent of students in grades K-12 and currently face record-breaking enrollments. By focusing resources on public schools, we can leverage community investment to help parents, teachers, and administrators meet the important educational challenges they face in serving the vast majority of our children: meeting high standards for learning and discipline and providing a safe, drug-free environment for children. Federal funding of private school tuition would divert needed attention and resources from our public schools, and is a bad idea.

The Office of Management and Budget advises that there is no objection to the submission of this report from the standpoint of the Administration's program and that enactment of H.R. 2724 would not be in accord with the President's program.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Dick Riley", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Richard W. Riley

cc: Honorable William L. Clay

800 INDEPENDENCE AVE., S.W. WASHINGTON, D.C. 20202-0100

Our mission is to ensure equal access to education and to promote educational excellence throughout the Nation.

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a. Civil rights. Section 311(a) of the bill provides that the vouchers would not constitute "Federal financial aid or assistance" to the school attended by the child with the voucher, and only Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (barring discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin) would appear to apply to the school (see §310(a)(1)). Thus, there would be no Federal prohibition on discrimination on the basis of gender, disability, or age (see Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, respectively) by these schools. Instead, §310(b)(6)(B) and (C) appear to explicitly authorize certain forms of gender discrimination that Title IX would otherwise prohibit.

b. Children with disabilities. The bill fails to clearly ensure that children with disabilities who use vouchers to attend private schools continue to receive the free appropriate public education (FAPE) they are entitled to receive under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) when they attend public schools. Section 315 of the bill would provide that "[n]othing in this Act shall be construed to affect the applicability or requirements of part B of the [IDEA]", but the meaning of this deceptively simple statement is far from clear. The IDEA provides substantially less protection for children whose parents voluntarily place them in private schools (using their own funds) than for children in public schools or for children who are placed in private schools by public agencies in order for them to receive FAPE (compare IDEA, §612(a)(10)(A) and (C) to §612(a)(10)(B)), but the IDEA does not clearly address the rights of children attending private schools with publicly financed vouchers, or of the respective obligations of the private school and the local school district in that situation.

c. Participation of religious schools. The bill clearly provides that vouchers could be used at religious schools, raising serious concerns under the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment to the Constitution. (See §§305(b)(2) and (3), 309(a), 310(b)(3), and 311(d).)

September 2, 1997

Department of Education views on H.R. 1031 (S. 432), the
"American Community Renewal Act of 1997" (OMB LRM #REJ225)

1. The Department of Education strongly objects to Title III of the "American Community Renewal Act of 1997", introduced on March 12 of this year by Representative Watts (H.R. 1031) and Senator Abraham (S. 432), because it would authorize a program of federally funded vouchers that could be used at private elementary and secondary schools.
2. Title I of the bill would authorize the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to designate up to 100 localities with high poverty and unemployment rates as "renewal communities", enabling them to receive various tax breaks and related benefits. In return, these communities would make certain commitments, including a commitment to participate in the school voucher program for low-income children under Title III of the bill. Under that program, authorized at \$200 million for each of fiscal years 1998-2002, renewal communities would make federally funded "scholarships" available to children from low-income families to pay tuition and fees at the elementary or secondary school of their choice, including private schools.
3. While we otherwise defer to HUD, Treasury, and other agencies that would have a direct role in administering Title I, we object to the school voucher program and, thus, to community participation in that program as a condition of eligibility under Title I.
4. The President and the Secretary have consistently and repeatedly opposed the use of public funds to pay for the tuition of students at elementary and secondary schools, whether through the affirmative grant of those funds by voucher or scholarship or through other means such as tax credits and deductions. In his July 29 letter to the Speaker of the House on the then-pending tax reform bill (H.R. 2014), for example, the President wrote that "I would veto any tax package that would undermine public education by providing tax benefits for private and parochial school expenses". Diverting public resources to private schools will impair the ability of public schools to carry out their important tasks and reduce the quality of education for the vast majority of children who will remain in the public schools.
5. We note the following concerns with the particular approach outlined in H.R. 1031/S. 432, but emphasize that satisfactory resolution of these concerns would not alter our overall opposition to the use of Federal funds for school vouchers:



FAX TRANSMISSION

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Office of Legislation and Congressional Affairs
600 Independence Ave., SW, Room 6337
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(202)401-1028
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Office of:

From: *Sandra Cook*

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(202)401-0020

Comments:

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Support Existing Anti-Discrimination Laws: Oppose the HELP Bill, HR 2724

October 29, 1997



The Honorable [Redacted] First [Redacted] Last [Redacted] Suffix [Redacted]
U.S. House of Representatives
[Redacted] Address House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative [Redacted] Last [Redacted]:

On behalf of the 160,000 members of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), I urge you to vote against the Helping Empower Low-Income Parents (HELP) Scholarship bill (HR 2724). AAUW opposes the diversion of public funds to private or religious schools and believes that taxpayer-supported schools should not be exempted from federal civil rights laws.

School voucher programs fail to address the real needs of the public education system and would divert already scarce funds earmarked for school improvement away from public schools. AAUW believes that the appropriate strategy to improve school systems is to direct additional resources toward improving public schools rather than diverting public funds into private institutions.

The HELP bill would change existing law to permit federal dollars to finance education programs without requiring any corresponding obligation to comply with federal anti-discrimination laws (Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; and the Age Discrimination Act). Under current law, schools that receive federal funds, including federal aid paid directly to students or parents for educational use, must abide by federal laws prohibiting discrimination in federally funded education programs. However, HR 2724 rewrites the law to permit private schools to receive federal dollars and to allow them to discriminate on the basis of race, sex, national origin, ethnicity, disability, and age.

Under this bill federal dollars could be used to support discrimination in education. Without the protection of the federal civil rights laws, private schools could receive federal funds under HR 2724 yet discriminate against students in access to classes, guidance counseling, extracurricular activities, and other aspects of education. For example, private schools could refuse to provide female students with equal athletic facilities or to protect students from widespread and severe sexual harassment at school. In short, HR 2724 would allow private schools to ignore the civil rights laws that have long protected students in federally funded education programs.

Again, I strongly urge you to oppose the HELP bill. If you have any questions, please contact Nancy Zirklin, Director of Government Relations, at 202/785-7720, or Cindy Brown, Senior Legislative Associate, at 202/785-7730.

Sincerely,

Sandy Bernard
President

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The civil rights laws must not be sacrificed in the name of educational "choice." Parents should not have to sacrifice their children's civil rights in order to secure a quality education. It is not an acceptable "choice" to provide parents with federal dollars to spend on their child's education, while taking away the longstanding protections of federal civil rights laws. These laws are far too important to this Nation's history, and to our continuing obligation to ensure that no student is kept from reaching his or her potential because of unlawful discrimination, to exempt any federally-funded education program from coverage under the civil rights laws.

For additional information, contact:

**Deborah Brake
National Women's Law Center
(202) 528-5180**

**Nancy Zirkin
American Association of University Women
(202) 785-7720**

October 27, 1997

Acknowledgments

The authors acknowledge the comments and suggestions of the reviewers: Daniel Kasprzyk of the Elementary/Secondary and Libraries Studies Division, Marilyn McMillen (Chief Statistician), and Steven Kaufman of the Office of the Deputy Commissioner, Arnold Goldstein of the Assessment Division, and Bill Sonnenberg of the Early Childhood, International, and Crosscutting Studies Division, NCES; Michelle Doyle and Jack Klenk, Office of Nonpublic Education; Joseph McTighe, Council for American Private Education; Dale McDonald, National Catholic Educational Association; and Thomas Agnew, Oral Roberts Educational Fellowship. Thanks also to Carol Rohr and Allison Pinckney of Pinkerton Computer Consultants, Inc., for formatting the text and tables in this report.

Stephen Broughman was the NCES Project Officer for the Private School Universe Survey. The survey was performed under contract with the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. Steven Tourkin (Chief) and Lenore Colaciello of the Education Surveys Branch, Demographic Surveys Division, monitored the data collection and prepared processing specifications, the codebook, and the technical notes section of this report. Howard McGowan, Chief of the Consumer Expenditures Surveys Programming Branch, assisted by Stella Kim and Jennifer Peterson, supervised the data processing activities, including editing, imputing, preparing the final file, and producing the tables. Technical assistance, including specifications for sample selection and weighting, was provided by Dennis Schwanz (Chief), Corrette Cole, Betty Jackson, and Randy Parmer of the Longitudinal Surveys Branch, Demographic Statistical Methods Division.

We are interested in your reaction to the information presented here about the Private School Universe data collection system. We welcome your recommendations for improving our survey work. If you have suggestions or comments or want more information about this report, please contact:

Private School Universe Survey
National Center for Education Statistics
555 New Jersey Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20208-5651

Introduction

This report on the private school universe presents data on schools with grades kindergarten through twelve by school size, school level, religious orientation, geographical region, community type and program emphasis. The numbers of students and teachers are reported in the same categories. The number of students is also reported by race-ethnicity, gender, and grade level.

Tables present data by three classification schemes: private school typology (tables 1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, and 21), religious orientation (tables 2, 5, 6, and 9), and association membership (table 15). The private school nine-category typology is based on methodological work completed at the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Each of the primary divisions (Catholic, Other Religious, and Nonsectarian) is subdivided into three additional categories: Catholic into parochial (parish), diocesan, and private order; Other religious into Conservative Christian, Affiliated with a national denomination or other religious school association, and unaffiliated; and nonsectarian into regular program, special emphasis, and special education.¹

The Private School Survey (PSS) is designed to collect data from all private schools in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. This survey, conducted in 1997–98 by the U.S. Bureau of the Census for NCES, is the data source for this report. The counts presented here are estimates derived from an area frame as well as a census of lists; an estimate of the total undercount is given on page 38. The survey design is described in the Technical Notes section of the report, pages 28–42. Although, beginning in 1995, the PSS definition of a school was expanded to include those schools for which a kindergarten was the highest grade, referred to as kindergarten-terminal (k-terminal) schools, all estimates presented in this report, unless otherwise stated, will be for schools (traditional schools)

meeting the more restrictive pre-1995 PSS definition of at least one of grades 1 through 12.

Selected Results

Schools. In the fall of 1997, there were 27,402 private elementary and secondary schools in the United States, a total not statistically different from the 27,686 schools counted in the fall of 1995.² Among these schools there was considerable diversity as to orientation and affiliation. Of the three primary types of private schools, Catholic, other religious, and nonsectarian, other religious schools were the most numerous, followed by Catholic schools, and then nonsectarian schools, representing 48, 30, and 22 percent of all private schools, respectively (table 1 and figure 1). Parochial schools were the most numerous type of Catholic schools, followed by diocesan and then private order schools. Among the three categories of other religious schools, conservative Christian, affiliated, and unaffiliated, there were fewer affiliated schools than conservative Christian schools or unaffiliated schools. Of the nonsectarian schools, regular schools were the most numerous, followed by special emphasis schools and then special education schools.

Regions with the most private schools were the Midwest (27 percent) and South (30 percent); the region with the fewest was the West (20 percent). Ninety-one percent of private schools offered at least some elementary grades, with 61 percent offering elementary grades, and 30 percent offering a combination of elementary and secondary grades; the remaining 9 percent offered secondary grades only. Most private schools (82 percent) emphasized a regular elementary/secondary program. The other program emphasis categories, Montessori, special emphasis, special education, vocational/technical, early childhood, and alternative, each contained fewer than 10 percent of private schools.

¹ For a description of the typology see the definitions in the Technical Notes section of the report, page 28.

² U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Private School Universe Survey, 1995–96*, NCES 98-229 (Washington, DC: 1998)

Figure 1.—Percentage distribution of private schools, by typology

NOTE: Details may not sum to 100.0 percent due to rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Private School Survey, 1997–98.

Enrollment. Approximately 5 million students were enrolled in the Nation's private schools in the fall of 1997, a total not statistically different from that of 1995.³ Private school students represent approximately 10 percent of the total elementary and secondary students in the United States.⁴

In contrast to the number of schools, more students were enrolled in Catholic schools than in other religious schools, 50 and 35 percent of total private enrollment, respectively (table 1 and figure 2). Like the number of schools, enrollment in nonsectarian schools, representing 16 percent of all private students, was less than that of Catholic or other religious schools. That Catholic schools represent approximately one-third of all private schools while containing half of private school students is an indication that the distribution of schools by size is not the same for the three types of schools. In fact, the percentage of schools which are small (less than 150 students) is over three times greater for other religious (72 percent) and

nonsectarian (76 percent) schools than that of Catholic schools (19 percent) (table 13). The pattern of enrollment for the three categories of Catholic schools mirrored that of the number of schools; more students were enrolled in parochial schools, followed by diocesan schools and then private order schools. Among the three categories of other religious schools, the enrollment pattern did not mirror the number of schools. Enrollment was greatest in conservative Christian schools, followed by affiliated schools, and then unaffiliated schools. Of the nonsectarian schools, regular schools had more students, followed by special emphasis schools and then special education schools.

Approximately 56 percent of private school students were enrolled in elementary schools, 16 percent were enrolled in secondary schools, and 29 percent were enrolled in combined schools (table 1). Ninety-two percent of private school students were enrolled in schools with a regular elementary/secondary program emphasis, while fewer than 5 percent of private school students were enrolled in schools featuring any one of the other categories of program emphasis.

³ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Private School Universe Survey 1995–96*, NCES 98-229 (Washington, DC: 1998).

⁴ Public school enrollment source is the Common Core of Data, State Nonfiscal Survey, 1997–98.

Figure 2.—Percentage distribution of private school students, by typology

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Private School Survey, 1997–98.

About three-quarters (78 percent) of private school students were white, non-Hispanic; while 9, 8, 0.5, and 5 percent were black, non-Hispanic; Hispanic; American Indian/Alaskan Native; or Asian/Pacific Islander; respectively (table 16).⁵ Almost half of all private school students attended schools that were located in urban areas, approximately forty percent attended schools that were located in an urban fringe or a large town, while only 12 percent attended rural schools (table 1).

Teachers. The Nation's private school students were taught by approximately 377,000 full-time equivalent (FTE) teachers (table 1) in 1997, representing an increase over the number of FTE teachers employed in private schools in 1995.⁶ In contrast to enrollment, Catholic schools (38 percent), and other religious schools (38 percent)

employed approximately the same number of FTE teachers, while both employed more than nonsectarian schools (24 percent) (table 1 and figure 3). The pattern of teacher employment for the three categories of Catholic schools mirrored that of the number of schools and students; more FTE teachers were teaching in parochial schools, followed by diocesan schools and then private order schools. For other religious and nonsectarian schools, the number of FTE teachers followed the same pattern as enrollment. Among the three categories of other religious schools, conservative Christian schools employed the most teachers, followed by affiliated schools and then unaffiliated schools. Of the nonsectarian schools, more FTE teachers were employed by regular schools, followed by special emphasis schools and then special education schools.

Nearly one-half of FTE teachers (48 percent) were teaching in elementary schools, roughly one-third (36 percent) in combined schools, and about 16 percent in secondary schools. Almost 88 percent of private school FTE teachers were teaching in schools with a regular elementary/secondary program emphasis. As in the case of students, fewer than 5 percent of private school FTE teachers were

⁵ For comparisons of the racial-ethnic composition of private school enrollment with that of public schools from the 1987–88, 1990–91, and 1993–94 Schools and Staffing Surveys, see U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Private Schools in the United States: A Statistical Profile, 1990–91*, NCES 95-330 (Washington, DC: 1995) and *Private Schools in the United States: A Statistical Profile, 1993–94*, NCES 97-459 (Washington, DC: 1997).

⁶ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Private School Universe Survey 1995–96*, NCES 98-229 (Washington, DC: 1998).

Figure 3.—Percentage distribution of private school FTE teachers, by typology

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Private School Survey, 1997–98.

teaching in schools featuring any one of the other categories of program emphasis.

Kindergarten-terminal schools. Since 1995, schools for which a kindergarten was the highest grade have been included in the PSS. In the fall of 1997, there were 6,493 of these schools enrolling 103,061 students and employing 14,816 FTE teachers nationwide (table 1B). When the kindergarten-terminal schools are combined with the traditional PSS schools, the total number of schools becomes 33,895 with 5,179,181 students and

391,360 FTE teachers (table 3B). Almost seven out of ten of the kindergarten-terminal schools were nonsectarian (69 percent), 28 percent were other religious, and 3 percent were Catholic (table 1B).

By definition, all of these schools were classified as elementary and almost all of them enrolled fewer than 150 students. Approximately 80 percent of these schools emphasized an early childhood program, 18 percent emphasized a Montessori program, and fewer than 5 percent each emphasized any one of the other program emphases.

The Deseret News (Salt Lake City, UT) September 7, 1999, Tuesday

Could the state afford the \$4,000 scholarships for the scores of thousands of students who could become eligible in the next few years? Would there be other schools willing to take these students, even with their scholarship money in hand?

It might also be argued that the parents most likely to take advantage of the school-switching opportunity are those parents who have been most involved in the failing schools -- doing what they can to help with tutoring, fund raising and the other things all schools need. Take these parents away, and the schools become infinitely worse for those left behind.

True, but who could demand that these activist parents leave their own children in a failing school when they have a chance to do better? I couldn't. Whatever the flaws of the Florida plan, it does seem to offer an escape hatch for these parents.

What it does not offer is a cure for the failing schools. Indeed it seems, by my lights, to misread the failure as almost willful. The assumption seems to be that if a school is put on notice of its failure and then given a little extra money, the staff can get itself in gear and turn the school around.

My guess is that the tests used to determine which schools are good and which awful are in fact measures of the homes and neighborhoods the children come from. I believe most of the failure -- and a good deal of the success of the top-ranked schools -- happens before the children ever get to school.

If Florida wants to stop the school failure that is driving Jeb Bush's fascinating and innovative scheme, let it start with failing parents. Most parents, even in the poorest neighborhoods, want their children to do well in school. The problem is, they don't know how to help them do well.

So let's teach them. Let's have training programs to teach parents of preschoolers how to get their children ready for school learning. In fact, given the latest findings on brain development, I'd start years earlier than preschool.

Even with the cleverest of voucher schemes, schools can't do it all.

William Raspberry's e-mail address is: willraspfwashpost.com

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: September 7, 1999

51ST STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

Copyright 1999 The Cincinnati Enquirer
The Cincinnati Enquirer

August 25, 1999, Wednesday

SECTION: NEWS (WIRE, PAGE 1), Pg. A06

LENGTH: 426 words

HEADLINE: Most oppose full school vouchers

Poll: Partial tax credits OK, though

BYLINE: ANDREA TORTORA

SOURCE: Gannett News Service

BODY:

WASHINGTON - Seven of 10 Americans oppose direct and substantial aid to private schools, while 57 percent support such aid when it takes the form of partial tax credits.

The annual Phi Delta Kappa-Gallup Poll released Tuesday finds Americans continue to prefer improving and strengthening public schools - 70 percent - to providing vouchers - 28 percent. Phi Delta Kappa is a professional education fraternity.

Citizens are split in their support of aid to private schools and confused about the options, said Jack Jennings, director of the Center on Education Policy.

This year's poll asked new (16 of 38) and more questions to explore perceptions of alternatives to public education. Support for aid to private schools varies if full payment for tuition or partial payment is proposed; whether it is at public expense or government expense; and whether it is a voucher or tax credit.

The poll of 1,103 adults over 18 was conducted in May and June. For most questions, the margin of error is plus or minus 4 percentage points.

Some 55 percent oppose letting students and parents choose publicly funded private schools, an increase in opposition from 1998. Some 41 percent favor it.

A larger number (51 percent for, 47 against) support the government paying all or part of such tuition.

Respondents were split, 47 percent for, 48 percent against, on the question of whether all tuition should be paid for by vouchers. There is more support for partial vouchers, 52 percent for, 45 percent against.

Support was voiced for giving full tax credits to parents who send kids to private or parochial schools - 57 percent for, 41 percent against. Partial tax credits were even more popular, 65 percent for, 34 against.

More than three-fourths of Americans, 77 percent to 21 percent, think private schools that receive public funding should be held accountable in the same way public schools are.

And 74 percent think publicly funded private schools should accept students from a wider range of backgrounds.

Public voucher programs now operate in Cleveland, Milwaukee and Florida. The issue of vouchers and tax credits is being debated as several states and Congress continue discussing education reforms.

In Ohio on Tuesday, a federal judge halted Cleveland's voucher program while he considers a lawsuit challenging its constitutionality.

Most public opposition to vouchers comes from the unions. Sandra Feldman, president of the American Federation of Teachers, said this year's poll shows citizen support for public schools.

LOAD-DATE: August 31, 1999

77TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

Copyright 1999 Stuart News Company
The Stuart News/Port St. Lucie News (Stuart,FL)

August 21, 1999, Saturday

SECTION: A Section; Pg. A3

LENGTH: 235 words

HEADLINE: FAILED SCHOOLS TO GET MONEY FOR CLASSES

BYLINE: BRIEF

BODY:

PENSACOLA - The state has found \$ 300,000 to help the only two critically low-performing public schools that have lost students to Florida's new voucher program.

Education Commissioner Tom Gallagher said Thursday that the money will be available to the two Pensacola elementary schools for expenses associated with a longer school year, including teacher and support staff salaries and transportation.

"I'm always pleased when someone who makes a promise follows up on it," said Escambia County School Superintendent Jim May. "He's not just talking the talk, he's walking the walk, and I'm proud of him for that."

May had anticipated having to use local money for the extended school year because Gov. Jeb Bush had vetoed a \$ 40 million statewide allocation for that purpose.

Spencer Bibbs Advanced Learning Academy, a technology-based magnet school, and A.A. Dixon Elementary last month began a year-round calendar. It expands the school year from 180 days to 210 days as part of an effort to improve academic achievement.

Fifty-seven students from the two schools are attending private and parochial schools at public expense under Florida's first-in-the-nation statewide voucher program.

The students qualified for vouchers because Bibbs and Dixon are the only schools in the state that received an "F" two years in a row on their state report cards based on student achievement tests.

LOAD-DATE: August 23, 1999

79TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

Copyright 1999 Chicago Sun-Times, Inc.
Chicago Sun-Times

August 19, 1999, THURSDAY, Late Sports Final Edition

SECTION: FIN; Pg. 52

LENGTH: 804 words

HEADLINE: School vouchers find fans in Florida

BYLINE: BY GEORGE A. CLOWES

BODY:

First-grader Brenisha McShane said she could "hardly wait" for school to start this week in Pensacola, Fla., a surprising attitude considering that Brenisha lives in one of Pensacola's worst districts.

But Brenisha won't be attending public school.

Instead, her mother, Brenda, was among the first parents to take advantage of Florida's two-month-old tuition voucher program to pull her daughter out of a failing government school and enroll her at the private Montessori Early School.

Florida Gov. Jeb Bush signed the nation's first statewide voucher program into law June 21.

The law gives students at failing public schools the option of transferring to private or religious school.

"We're going to give parents other options when their schools . . . don't work for their needs," the Republican governor said.

Out of some 800 eligible students at two failing Pensacola schools, more than 38 transferred to other public schools, and another 62 opted to use vouchers -- worth an average of \$ 4,000 -- to attend private schools.

Brenisha's mother could have used the voucher at any private school in Florida, including parochial or religious schools.

The Florida program is unusual in that the vouchers can be used in faith-based schools, and it's unique because it's the first statewide voucher program in the United States.

The recent educational and legal successes of voucher programs in states such as Florida and Ohio are giving new impetus to school-reform efforts nationwide,

many of them led by private-sector businesses.

Opponents argue that vouchers violate state and federal constitutional prohibitions against using public funds to support religion.

But school-choice partisans successfully have argued that public funds for Florida's opportunity scholarships are not spent on schools.

The money is given to parents, and schools are only an indirect beneficiary of the public funds.

Programs similar to Florida's already have been deemed constitutional in cases heard by the U.S. Supreme Court and by state supreme courts in Ohio and Wisconsin.

Despite the courts' decisions, however, teachers unions and other voucher opponents still are fighting to bar school-choice programs, arguing that parents are not entitled to spend their education taxes at private schools.

Businesses are more comfortable with the idea of using competition to lift quality and lower costs.

In Florida, a wide range of business organizations helped support the governor's education reform package, and in Ohio, the Business Roundtable praised the voucher program as "a model for positive change."

Patrick J. Heffernan, president of Floridians for School Choice said: "The voucher idea says to government: Let the family choose the school. It also gives the same message to business: Let the families choose the school. That's going to be the wisest use of your money."

Meanwhile, in Ohio, legislators approved scholarships worth up to \$ 2,250 for low-income families in Cleveland four years ago. Since then, the program has grown from 3,700 students from 2,000.

The vouchers may be used towards tuition at secular or religious private schools.

Ohio voucher-using parents and students experienced a roller coaster of constantly changing news about the scholarship program:

On May 27, the Ohio Supreme Court ruled that the program did not violate the constitutional separation of church and state.

But the court invalidated the program because of a legislative error.

On June 24, lawmakers repaired the procedural error, and voted to reauthorize the program.

But on July 20, opponents filed a lawsuit to halt the program immediately.

Although school starts this week, no ruling has been handed down on whether to halt the program.

"If the special interests groups prevail, this will wrench more than 3,000

Chicago Sun-Times, August 19, 1999

youngsters out of the only good schools they have ever attended," said Clint Bolick, litigation director for the Institute for Justice, a Washington, D.C.-based law firm that is defending school choice cases across the country.

Defenders of voucher programs note that states already spend millions of tax dollars on private programs run by religious institutions.

For example, the Florida Department of Children and Family Services will spend \$ 43 million this year for social service work performed by Catholic, Baptist, Jewish, Lutheran and other faith-based organizations.

The state also finances juvenile justice programs carried out by religious institutions and provides nearly \$ 8 million in grants for students to attend church-affiliated colleges.

"There is no logical distinction between these existing programs and the opportunity scholarship," said Bush's general counsel, Carol Licko.

George A. Clowes is a Chicago writer who specializes in education issues.

GRAPHIC: See related story page 52.

LANGUAGE: English

LOAD-DATE: August 19, 1999

80TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

The Associated Press State & Local Wire

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August 17, 1999, Tuesday, BC cycle

SECTION: State and Regional

LENGTH: 505 words

HEADLINE: Florida begins nation's first statewide school voucher program

BYLINE: BILL KACZOR, Associated Press Writer

DATELINE: PENSACOLA, Fla.

BODY:

Parents and nuns beamed as the nation's first statewide school voucher program took effect, but opponents derided its debut as a violation of the principle of separation of church and state.

"One child getting a better education makes our world a little bit better," said Sister Robert Ann, principal of St. Michael Interparochial School, where 20 of the state's 58 voucher students began classes on Monday. "And if they have a little bit of religion, all the better."

The program, launched Monday at four Roman Catholic schools and a private school, allows students in Florida's worst public schools to receive vouchers of up to \$ 3,389 a year to pay for a private or parochial school education at taxpayer expense.

Under a law championed by Republican Gov. Jeb Bush, only children in schools deemed failures by the state are eligible. So far, student test scores have labeled only two schools, both in Pensacola, as failing. Florida has 2 million public school students.

"I've had other children attend the public school system and right now, academically, they're having some really hard times," said Brenda McShane, whose 6-year-old daughter Brenisha has begun classes at Montessori Early School.

But while voucher supporters declared Monday a historic day, opponents of what Bush calls "opportunity scholarships" contend the program violates the constitutional principle of separation of church and state.

Lawsuits challenging the program have been filed by the NAACP, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, teachers unions and others.

Under the program, voucher funds are taken from public education. Parents who participate do not have to pay the difference between the voucher amount and the

tuition the private schools charge. Private schools that charge more must absorb the costs.

Only five private schools have agreed to take voucher students. Some administrators are afraid of lowering academic standards, and others want to see how the program works the first year.

Smaller voucher programs are in effect in other cities, including Milwaukee and Cleveland.

Voucher students must attend religion classes and Mass with their classmates regardless of their religion, said Sister Mary Caplice, superintendent of Pensacola's Catholic schools.

Although she is a Methodist, Mary Smith decided to enroll her children, first-grader Antonio Held, 7, and fifth-grader Angela Atwood, 10, at St. John the Evangelist Catholic School.

"I believe if they put prayer back in school that they'll see a change," she said.

At St. Michael, boys in dark slacks and girls in plaid skirts gathered on Monday morning for the daily flag-raising and prayer to the school's patron saint, the voucher students indistinguishable from other classmates.

Teachers have not been told which students are on vouchers, said St. Michael's principal, Sister Robert Ann.

"They're more interested in saying, 'Here's my new children, what can I do to help them read and write and spell and do everything well?'" she said.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: August 17, 1999

82ND STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

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THE BALTIMORE SUN

August 17, 1999, Tuesday ,FINAL

SECTION: TELEGRAPH ,4A

LENGTH: 424 words

HEADLINE: Florida gives vouchers to send 58 youngsters to five private schools; Several groups challenge statewide system paying up to \$3,389 a year

SOURCE: ASSOCIATED PRESS

BODY:

PENSACOLA, Fla. -- The nation's first statewide school voucher program began yesterday with 58 youngsters starting classes at four Roman Catholic schools and another private school at taxpayer expense.

"I've had other children attend the public school system and right now, academically, they're having some really hard times," said Brenda McShane, whose 6-year-old daughter Brenisha started at Montessori Early School.

Under a law championed by Republican Gov. Jeb Bush, students in Florida's worst public schools can get vouchers of up to \$3,389 a year to pay for a private or parochial school education.

Only children in schools deemed failures by the state are eligible. So far, only two schools, both in Pensacola, have gotten a failing grade, based on student test scores. Florida has 2 million public school students.

While voucher supporters declared yesterday a historic day, opponents of what the governor calls "opportunity scholarships" contend the program violates the constitutional principle of separation of church and state.

Lawsuits challenging the program have been filed by the NAACP, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, teachers unions and others.

Smaller voucher programs are in effect around the country in such places as Milwaukee and Cleveland.

"Why should we trap kids in schools that aren't working?" Bush asked during a visit to the two failing Pensacola schools Friday. He said the wealthy often choose to send their children to private schools, and added, "What about people in poverty?"

The money for the vouchers is taken out of public education. Parents who participate do not have to pay the difference between the voucher amount and the tuition the private schools charge. Private schools that charge more must absorb the costs.

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The Baltimore Sun, August 17, 1999

administrators are afraid of lowering academic standards, and others want to see how the program works the first year.

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Sister Mary Caplice, superintendent of Catholic schools in Pensacola, said non-Catholic children, whether on vouchers or paying tuition, must attend religion classes and Mass with the rest of the students.

"We've explained all of that to the parents," she said.

GRAPHIC: PHOTO(S) Education: Some of Florida's first voucher students join their new classmates at St. Michael, a Roman Catholic school in Pensacola.

LOAD-DATE: August 19, 1999

88TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

Copyright 1999 Newsday, Inc.
Newsday (New York, NY)

August 17, 1999, Tuesday NASSAU AND SUFFOLK EDITION

SECTION: NEWS; Page A08

LENGTH: 429 words

HEADLINE: SCHOOL OPENS WITH VOUCHERS IN FLA.

BYLINE: THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BODY:

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS Pensacola, Fla. - The nation's first statewide school voucher program began yesterday with 58 youngsters starting classes at four Roman Catholic schools and a private school at taxpayer expense.

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Newsday (New York, NY), August 17, 1999

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"We've explained all of that to the parents," she said.

LANGUAGE: English

LOAD-DATE: August 27, 1999

1ST STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

Copyright 1999 The Detroit News, Inc.
The Detroit News

September 13, 1999, Monday

SECTION: Metro; Pg. Pg. C1

LENGTH: 1257 words

HEADLINE: Voucher group seeks diversity: Coalition pushes for public tax money for private schools.

BYLINE: Mark Hornbeck / Detroit News Lansing Bureau

BODY:

LANSING -- The coalition behind the movement to put a school voucher issue on the ballot next year is a marriage of conservative school choice backers and religious leaders whose parochial schools would benefit if public tax money can be used for private education.

They're spearheading the campaign to gather 300,000 petition signatures over the next six months and raise at least \$ 5 million to sell a plan that would give parents in struggling school districts so-called "vouchers" of up to \$ 3,100 to pay annual tuition at private schools.

Kids First! Yes! was launched by a Republican activist with help from Detroit ministers who have pushed for parental choice. They've joined forces with the Michigan Catholic Conference, the Michigan Chamber of Commerce and others.

"It's natural that the coalition would attract at the outset those who have long advocated education reform," said Matt Latimer, former press secretary to U.S. Rep. Nick Smith, R-Addison, and the new spokesman for Kids First! Yes! "But we're determined to make this a broad-based coalition."

Justin King, executive director of the Michigan Association of School Boards, said he questions the altruism of voucher proponents whose private schools would benefit under the proposal.

"It smacks of being a little self-serving," said King, who is a leader of the voucher opposition group.

King said he's also skeptical about conservatives' claims that they're backing vouchers mainly to open up educational opportunities for poor children in failing urban schools.

"Voucher programs amount to nothing more than elitism," he said. "Only those kids lucky enough to be picked by the private schools will benefit. If this group really wants to help the majority of kids, they should focus on a plan to shore up the system we've got."

The list of leaders includes no educational establishment types or prominent Democrats, except former House Speaker William Ryan. Those groups -- including teachers' unions, the Michigan PTA, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the American Civil Liberties Union -- are banding together to form the voucher opposition forces. They also plan to spend more than \$ 5 million to defeat the voucher proposal.

Among those who have come to the forefront early in the voucher campaign:

-- Dick DeVos, president of Amway Corp., well-known Republican Party benefactor and husband of Michigan GOP Chairwoman Betsy DeVos. He's the founder of Kids First! Yes! and has long been a proponent of school choice. He's committed to spending some of his personal fortune to help bankroll the effort.

He and his wife head the Education Freedom Fund, which awarded over 3,700 school choice scholarships to low-income children this year.

-- The Rev. Eddie Edwards, CEO of the Joy of Jesus Church in Detroit. He's vice-chairman of the private Cornerstone Schools and has been pushing school choice and voucher issues for two decades.

-- Jeff Timmer, campaign manager for Kids First! Yes! His last job was political adviser to the Senate Republican caucus and he has managed campaigns for several GOP candidates.

-- Richard McLellan, a Lansing lawyer and Gov. John Engler confidante. McLellan drafted the voucher proposal and petition language with Patrick Anderson, a former Engler appointee, term limits leader and he was right-hand man for retired businessman and Republican tax limitation guru Richard Headlee.

-- Sister Monica Kostielney, CEO of the Michigan Catholic Conference. The Catholic Church operates 346 schools in Michigan, serving about 95,000 students, or nearly half of all private school students in the state. No group would benefit more from the voucher plan than Catholic parents.

The Catholic Conference helped deliver parishioners to the polls to defeat the assisted suicide proposal on last November's ballot.

"We'll work just as hard as we did on the assisted suicide issue," Kostielney said. "We see educational choice as a civil right, a matter of economic justice and human dignity."

-- James Barrett, president and CEO of the Michigan Chamber of Commerce. The chamber also has been a backer of charter schools and schools of choice under the rationale that the education system, like the marketplace, will benefit from competition.

-- Michael Harris, executive director of the Michigan Family Forum, a conservative Lansing-based interest group that has opposed casino gambling and lobbied for school choice and no-fault divorce reforms.

-- Anita Nelam, an education reform activist from Detroit who was an administrator for the Friends School, a Quaker school in the city.

-- Joseph Overton, senior vice president of the Mackinac Center for Public Policy, a free-market think tank founded by Engler and other conservative Republicans. The Center initially espoused a tuition tax credit ballot proposal, but deferred to the voucher group when the Kids First! Yes! campaign was started.

Conspicuous by his absence from the list is Engler, the state's leading advocate of school choice. Engler stopped short of saying he opposes vouchers, but said he wouldn't be a parade leader and wouldn't sign a petition to put the proposal on the ballot.

Observers say Engler is concerned about the unpredictable impact that a voucher ballot question would have on other races next year.

Voucher plan

Kids First! Yes! is circulating petitions to place a school voucher proposal on the November 2000 ballot that would:

- * xRepeal the 1970 ban on using public tax dollars to pay for vouchers or other subsidies to nonpublic schools.

- * Automatically give vouchers to parents in school districts where less than two-thirds of students graduate. The vouchers are worth one-half the per-pupil expenditure in public schools, or about \$ 3,100. These vouchers can be used to pay tuition at private and parochial schools.

- * Allow voters or school boards to start a voucher program in districts that graduate more than two-thirds of their students.

- * Require regular teacher testing in public schools and in private schools that accept tuition vouchers.

- * Guarantee that state and local revenues in all public schools will never fall below those paid in the 2000-01 school year.

Status of programs in other states

Milwaukee: Under the 8-year-old program for some 6,000 students from low-income families, parents get state vouchers of \$ 4,900 to pay tuition at 86 private or parochial schools. Surveys show parents are happy with the plan. Separate studies of state test results offer conflicting conclusions on whether voucher students are achieving at higher levels than students in public schools.

Cleveland: A federal appeals court last month suspended the city's 3-year-old voucher program, saying it likely violates constitutional church and state separation guarantees. But the judge a few days later modified his order to say it does not affect the 3,900 students previously enrolled in voucher schools. It only blocks 800 new students from enrolling while he considers a final ruling on the program's constitutionality. Under the plan, students get about \$ 2,250 in state support to attend private schools.

Florida: The nation's first statewide voucher program started last month. Students in Florida's worst public schools can get vouchers worth up to \$ 3,400 a year to pay for private or parochial school tuition. Children in schools deemed "failing" based on state test scores are eligible. So far, only two schools, both in Pensacola, qualify.

GRAPHIC: Harris

LOAD-DATE: September 13, 1999