

Participation in School Choice and Voucher Programs

- **Public school choice.** Approximately 11 percent of all U.S. students in grades 3-12 attend a public school that their families chose, according to a 1993 survey of parents.
- **Magnet schools.** The number of magnet programs has increased dramatically since the early 1980s, including approximately 2,400 magnet schools in 230 school districts as of 1991-92. These magnet programs enroll 1.2 million students nationwide (about 3 percent of all students enrolled in public schools). Magnet schools are primarily an urban phenomenon, most commonly found in large urban school systems with above-average levels of minority student enrollments. Half of all large urban districts currently offer magnet programs.
- **Charter schools.** Twenty-five states and the District of Columbia have enacted legislation authorizing charter schools. More than 450 charter schools are in operation during the 1996-97 school year, serving more than 100,000 students (based on an average school size of 287 students in 1994-95 reported by Medler and Nathan (1995)). Most of the nation's charter schools are currently located in California, Arizona, Colorado, Minnesota, Michigan, and Massachusetts.
- **Open enrollment.** Eighteen states have open enrollment policies permitting students to attend a public school other than their assigned school. In addition, some districts have instituted within-district open enrollment policies even where there is no statewide policy.
- **Postsecondary options.** Fifteen states have postsecondary options programs that allow high school juniors and seniors to take courses and earn credit in colleges, universities, or vocational-technical institutes.
- **Publicly-funded voucher programs.** Wisconsin and Ohio have enacted city-targeted voucher programs for Milwaukee and Cleveland. Milwaukee's program has been in operation since 1991, providing vouchers to more than 1,600 students. In January 1997, a Wisconsin trial court ruled unconstitutional an attempted expansion of the Milwaukee program to include religious schools and also disallowed an effort to raise the cap on the number of participants to 15,000; the state is likely to appeal. The Cleveland program began operations in September 1996, providing vouchers to 1,800 students; a state trial court ruled that the inclusion of religious schools was constitutional, but an appeal is pending.
- **Privately-funded voucher programs.** Voucher programs sponsored by private coalitions of businesses, foundations, and individual donors have been established in at least 23 cities, with six more due to begin operation in 1996-97. These programs share several common features: (1) students must be eligible for free or reduced-price lunch; (2) they must live within the boundaries of the participating school district; and (3) students receive vouchers for up to half the cost of tuition, up to a locally-determined limit, and (4) students may use the vouchers to attend any private school located within the school district, including religious schools. These programs collectively provide vouchers to about 10,000 students; two-thirds of these students are in the three cities with the largest voucher programs: Milwaukee, Indianapolis, and San Antonio.

KEY POINTS ON PRIVATE SCHOOL VOUCHERS

February 17, 1997

- ▶ A strong public education system has long been the cornerstone of our nation's democracy and our prosperity. Free public schools open to all children have helped generations of Americans reach the American dream. How many of us -- or our friends and neighbors -- would be where we are today had America not taken the unprecedented and courageous step of making available free public education for all children?
- ▶ The Clinton Administration is working very hard to support communities around the country doing what it takes to improve schools. We are supporting efforts to toughen academic standards, involve parents and communities in their children's education, support good teachers, make schools safe, disciplined, and drug-free, teach kids the basics like reading, and bring technology to every classroom in America.
- ▶ We need to stop making excuses and get on with the business of fixing our schools. If a school is bad and can't be changed, reconstitute it or close it down. If a principal is slow to get the message, find strength in a new leader. If teachers are burned out, counsel them to improve or leave the profession.
- ▶ We also support school choice within public education -- every parent should be able to choose what public school their child will attend. One size does not fit all. This administration has been providing support for communities to create all kinds of options within public education: schools-within-schools, magnet schools, career preparation schools, and publicly accountable charter schools founded by teachers, parents, and community groups. In fact, in his FY 1998 budget, the President proposed nearly doubling funding on public charter schools to \$100 million dollars, to help start 3,000 schools over the next several years.
- ▶ But this administration agrees with the American people: public taxpayer dollars should not be drained from public education to subsidize tuition at private schools. With student enrollment rising in public schools that already serve nearly 90% of America's children, draining funds from public schools simply doesn't make sense.
- ▶ We strongly support private and parochial schools -- they are an important part of the heritage and the future of American education. But vouchers would diminish the independence of private and parochial schools, making them less private and less parochial.

Social experiments like vouchers are hailed by some as quick fixes, but they really offer only false hope and distractions to communities trying to roll up their sleeves and do the hard work of improving their schools together.

Private School Voucher Programs and Proposals

Milwaukee and Cleveland are currently the only communities in the United States to provide publicly-funded tuition vouchers. Publicly-funded vouchers have been proposed in at least 11 other states. Voucher programs that are funded from private sources are operating in 23 cities.

Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In operation since 1991, this program provides vouchers worth the equivalent of Milwaukee's per pupil state aid (about \$3,600 in 1995-96) to about 1,600 low-income students to attend any state-certified non-sectarian private school. In January 1997, a state trial court declared invalid under state constitutional grounds the legislature's efforts to extend the program to allow participating students to use the vouchers to attend religious schools. The judge also disallowed the state's attempt to raise the cap on the number of participants from 1,500 to 15,000, finding that the Wisconsin state constitution bars the inclusion of "local bills" like the Milwaukee expansion from being attached to budget bills. The state will likely appeal to a higher court. Since the current number of participants in the voucher program exceeds the earlier (and now mandatory) cap of approximately 1,500 students, some vouchers may have to be withdrawn, unless attrition over the summer brings the number of participants down to the permissible level.

Cleveland, Ohio. This pilot program, which includes religious schools, began issuing vouchers in August 1996 despite continuing litigation over the constitutionality of the program. In July 1996, an Ohio state court found the voucher plan constitutional, and although the ACLU and the Ohio Federation of Teachers have appealed, the Ohio Court of Appeals declined to issue an injunction halting the program pending its decision. About 1,800 low-income students are using the vouchers to attend private schools for the 1996-97 school year; about one-third of these students were already attending private schools. So far 49 private schools are participating, including 39 religious schools; tuition at these schools ranges from \$710 to \$3,640, and the voucher covers up to \$2,500 of this cost.

State voucher proposals. During the most recent legislative sessions, voucher proposals appeared on legislative agendas in at least 11 states, including Arizona, California, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Maryland, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. Proposals ranged from pilot projects serving a limited number of students in one school district to statewide programs open to all low-income students in the state.

Privately-funded voucher programs. Voucher programs sponsored by private coalitions of businesses, foundations, and individual donors provide vouchers to about 10,000 students in 23 cities, with 17,000 students on waiting lists. These programs typically provide vouchers for up to half the cost of tuition, up to a locally determined limit, to students who are eligible for free or reduced price lunch.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY

January 15, 1997

Ms. Jen Morris
7431 College Parkway
Box 526
Fort Myers, FL 33912

Dear Ms. Morris:

Thank you for your call requesting information on private school vouchers. I am sending you the following materials:

- A summary of participation in public school choice and voucher programs across the country.
- A description of currently existing private school voucher programs and proposals.
- Some materials that explain why the Clinton Administration supports improving education by raising academic standards and expanding public school choice (for example, through publicly accountable charter schools), but opposes publicly-funded private school voucher programs.

Most of these materials were prepared in late summer, but they are still fairly up-to-date.

I hope this information is helpful to you. Please contact me if you have further questions.

Sincerely,

Bill Kincaid
Special Assistant

(202) 205-0704

Participation in School Choice and Voucher Programs

September 6, 1996

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- **Magnet schools.** The number of magnet programs has increased dramatically over the past decade -- as of 1991-92, there were approximately 2,400 magnet schools in 230 school districts. These magnet programs enroll 1.2 million students nationwide (about 3 percent of all students enrolled in public schools). Magnet schools are primarily an urban phenomenon, most commonly found in large urban school systems with above-average levels of minority student enrollments. Half of all large urban districts currently offer magnet programs.
- **Charter schools.** Twenty-five states and the District of Columbia have enacted legislation authorizing charter schools. Roughly 250 charter schools were in operation during the 1995-96 school year, serving an estimated 72,000 students (based on an average school size of 287 students in 1994-95 reported by Medler and Nathan (1995)). According to a 1995 GAO report, **California has approved the most charter schools, with large numbers of charter schools also operating in Colorado, Massachusetts, and Minnesota.**
- **Open enrollment.** Eighteen states have open enrollment policies permitting students to attend a public school other than their assigned school. In addition, some districts have instituted within-district open enrollment policies even where there is no statewide policy.
- **Postsecondary options.** Fifteen states have postsecondary options programs that allow high school juniors and seniors to take courses and earn credit in colleges, universities, or vocational-technical institutes.
- **Publicly-funded voucher programs.** Wisconsin and Ohio have enacted city-targeted voucher programs for Milwaukee and Cleveland. Milwaukee's program has been in operation since 1991, providing vouchers to up to 1,400 students (although a court has recently lifted an injunction against a substantial expansion). The Cleveland program has been in court, but is beginning operations in September 1996, providing vouchers to up to 2,000 students. The Milwaukee plan is currently restricted to non-religious schools, although both the Milwaukee and Cleveland voucher laws authorize the participation of religious schools; final court decisions are still pending in both cases.
- **Privately-funded voucher programs.** Voucher programs sponsored by private coalitions of businesses, foundations, and individual donors have been established in at least 23 cities, with six more due to begin operation in 1996-97. These programs share several common features: (1) students must be eligible for free or reduced-price lunch; (2) they must live within the boundaries of the participating school district; and (3) students receive vouchers for up to half the cost of tuition, up to a locally-determined limit, and (4) students may use the vouchers to attend any private school located within the school district, including religious schools. These programs collectively provide vouchers to about 9,900 students; two-thirds of these students are in the three cities with the largest voucher programs: Milwaukee, Indianapolis, and San Antonio.

Private School Voucher Programs and Proposals

Milwaukee and Cleveland are currently the only communities in the United States to provide publicly-funded tuition vouchers, but privately-funded voucher programs are operating in 23 cities and voucher proposals are being debated in at least 11 states.

- **Milwaukee, Wisconsin.** In operation since 1991, this program provides vouchers worth the equivalent of Milwaukee's per pupil state aid (about \$3,600 in 1995-96) to about 1,400 low-income students to attend any state-certified non-sectarian private school. In August 1996, a state trial court declined to lift an existing injunction against participation of religious schools, pending its hearing of the case, but did allow a substantial expansion of the program to allow more students to receive vouchers to attend non-religious schools. The timetable for hearing the case is uncertain at this time; whatever the outcome, the losing party is expected to appeal.
- **Cleveland, Ohio.** This pilot voucher program, which includes religious schools, began issuing vouchers in August 1996 despite continuing litigation over the constitutionality of the program. In July 1996, an Ohio state court found the voucher plan constitutional, and **although the ACLU and Ohio teacher's union have appealed, the Ohio Court of Appeals declined to issue an injunction halting the program until pending its decision.** Vouchers of up to \$2,500 are being issued to about 2,000 low-income students for the 1996-97 school year; about one-third of the applicants were already attending private schools. So far 49 private schools are participating, including 39 religious schools; tuition at these schools ranges from \$710 to \$3,640.
- **Privately-funded voucher programs.** Voucher programs sponsored by private coalitions of businesses, foundations, and individual donors provide vouchers to about 9,900 students in 23 cities, with 16,580 students on waiting lists. These programs typically provide vouchers for up to half the cost of tuition, up to a locally determined limit, to students who are eligible for free or reduced price lunch.
- **State voucher proposals.** During the most recent legislative sessions, voucher proposals appeared on legislative agendas in at least 11 states, including Arizona, California, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Maryland, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. Proposals ranged from pilot projects serving a limited number of students in one school district to statewide programs open to all low-income students in the state.

KEY POINTS ON PRIVATE SCHOOL VOUCHERS

September 6, 1996

- ▶ A strong public education system has long been the cornerstone of our nation's democracy and our prosperity. Free public schools open to all children have helped generations of Americans reach the American dream. How many of us -- or our friends and neighbors -- would be where we are today had America not taken the unprecedented and courageous step of making available free public education for all children?
- ▶ The Clinton Administration is working very hard to support communities around the country doing what it takes to improve schools. We are supporting efforts to toughen academic standards, involve parents and communities in their children's education, support good teachers, make schools safe, disciplined, and drug-free, teach kids the basics like reading, and bring technology to every classroom in America.
- ▶ **We also support school choice within public education -- every parent should be able to choose what public school their child will attend. One size does not fit all.** This administration has been providing support for communities to create all kinds of options within public education: schools-within-schools, magnet schools, career preparation schools, and publicly accountable charter schools founded by teachers, parents, and community groups.
- ▶ But this administration agrees with the American people: public taxpayer dollars should not be drained from public education to subsidize tuition at private schools. With student enrollment rising in public schools that already serve nearly 90% of America's children, draining funds from neighborhood public schools simply doesn't make sense. And it certainly doesn't build a bridge to the 21st century.
- ▶ We strongly support private and parochial schools -- they are an important part of the heritage and the future of American education. But vouchers would diminish the independence of private and parochial schools, making them less private and less parochial.

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY

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FOB-10, Room 5164
Washington, DC 20202-8100

Telephone Number: (202) 205-0704
Alternate: (202) 401-3389

FAX Number: (202) 401-4353
Alternate FAX: (202) 401-3095

FAX COVER SHEET

TO: Kevin Parker

FAX: 225-1992

FROM: BILL KINCAID

THIS FAX INCLUDES THE COVER SHEET PLUS 3 PAGES.

IF YOU DID NOT RECEIVE THE COMPLETE FAX, PLEASE CALL (202) 205-0704.

MESSAGE:

As discussed, re: public school choice
vs. private school vouchers.

Please let me know if you need additional
information

[This piece was circulated by Scripps-Howard and a version was published by the Washington Times on August 18, 1996 (p. 4-B).

Vouchers Undermine Public Education, Divide Communities

Marshall S. Smith

While we have many miles still to go before reaching our ambitious National Education Goals, Americans may be pleasantly surprised to learn that, in some crucial areas, our schools are actually improving. Dating back to the 1983 report, A Nation at Risk, States and local school districts have engaged in the most sustained school improvement effort in U.S. history, and we have taken some important strides as a result:

- The proportion of high school graduates taking the core courses recommended in A Nation At Risk (4 years of English, 3 years of social studies, 3 years of science, 3 years of math) increased from 14 percent in 1982 to 52 percent in 1994.
- Between 1978 and 1992, performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in mathematics improved for all three age groups tested, with the largest gains made by 9- and 13-year-olds. The improvement was equivalent to at least one grade level. Likewise, NAEP science performance rose from 1982 to 1992 in all three age groups.
- In the latest international assessment of reading, American 4th graders outperformed students from all other participating nations except Finland.
- The combined verbal and math scores on the SAT increased 17 points from 1982 to 1995, while at the same time the numbers and diversity of test-takers increased.

Americans should be especially encouraged that these gains have occurred while U.S. schools are serving more students from more diverse backgrounds than ever before. In 1950, much of the country had legally segregated schools, and barely more than one-third of adults had a high school education, while many students with disabilities were shut out of school altogether. By 1994, however, the overall drop-out rate for 16- to 24-year olds had fallen to 10.5 percent and over 80 percent of adults had completed four years of high school or more schooling. Today fifty-seven percent of youth with disabilities are competitively employed within five years of leaving school, compared to only 33 percent of older people with disabilities, the latter having had more limited educational opportunities growing up.

Despite these successes, everyone agrees we need to accelerate progress dramatically; a world-class education is more important than ever before in today's competitive, high-tech economy. That's why the Clinton Administration has worked so hard to help states and school districts raise academic standards, make schools safe and disciplined, get parents more involved in their children's education, support high-quality, well-trained teachers, and better integrate technology into the classroom. But one proposed "solution" would put our Nation's

progress in real jeopardy: quick-fix voucher schemes that use taxpayer funds to pay for private elementary and secondary school tuition.

The Clinton Administration has strongly supported increasing competition and options for parents within public education, through expanding public school choice, magnet schools, and charter schools. In fact, we have awarded grants for seed capital to start innovative new public charter schools in eleven states, and states can also use funds under the Goals 2000: Educate America Act for this purpose. Using public funds for *private school vouchers*, however, is the wrong way to go:

- Voucher controversies polarize communities and distract them from working together on common-sense reforms to improve our public schools.
- Vouchers siphon off taxpayer dollars from the neighborhood public schools that serve the vast majority of America's schoolchildren, diverting them instead to private schools that can pick and choose whom to admit. Indeed, under some voucher schemes, millions of dollars could pay tuition for students *already attending* private schools, creating a massive drain on public funds without a single child changing classrooms. This is especially troubling given that public school enrollments are **projected to rise dramatically through the turn of the century, part of the "Baby Boom Echo."**
- Vouchers erode the critical role that public education traditionally plays in this country, bringing together a diverse nation and instilling common democratic values. Rather than building community, vouchers foster balkanization.
- Vouchers diminish the independence of private and parochial schools, making them less private and less parochial. Private schools are an important part of our national heritage, serving the same percentage of schoolchildren (just over 11%) in 1994 as they did in 1889. However, if public funds are used to support the basic costs of such schools, we will see increased calls for private schools to become regulated and more directly accountable to public officials, fundamentally altering the nature of private schooling.

The Clinton Administration has made an unprecedented commitment to supporting grassroots, State and local efforts to strengthen all of our Nation's schools; it is this commitment that has won the President overwhelming support among educators nationwide. And it is consensus education improvements, such as higher expectations, greater accountability, and more choice within public schools, *not* divisive voucher schemes, that can help secure the future for our children.

Marshall S. Smith is the Acting Deputy Secretary, U.S. Department of Education. Formerly Dean of the Stanford University School of Education, Smith in charge of coordinating policy and budget matters for the Department.

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY

December 19, 1996

Mr. Adam Feick
629 Columbus Ave.
Sandusky, OH 44870

VIA FAX: (419) 626-4414

Dear Mr. Feick:

Attached is some background information on public school choice and vouchers, including an explanation of the Department's position. Most of these materials were prepared in September, but they are still fairly up-to-date.

I hope that this reaches you in time to be helpful with your paper. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Thanks for your interest.

Sincerely,

Bill Kincaid
Special Assistant

(202) 205-0704

Attached
materials
from
Time
Rite
(some)

**Adam Feick
629 Columbus Ave.
Sandusky Ohio 44870
Phone 1-419-626-9290
Fax 1-419-626-4414**

December 10, 1996

**Education Department
Goal 2000
1250 Maryland Ave. SW #4000
Washington D. C.
1-800-872-5327
Fax 1-202-205-0303**

To whom it may concern,

I am writing a paper on the Voucher System for my high school, senior History class. I would appreciate any information that you could send that would give me provide the pros and cons of this issue. I am particularly interested in the parochial school option.

I have contacted the Ohio Department of Education regarding their pilot program in Cleveland, Ohio. Thank you for any assistance that you can give or articles that you could send.

Sincerely,

Adam Feick