



VOUCHERS

FLORIDA PTA POSITION

Florida PTA opposes education voucher proposals for public and non-public preschool, elementary and secondary school students.

Background

Florida's A+ Education Plan provides vouchers to parents of students in schools that are ranked as failing based on the results of the FCAT. These vouchers may be used to transfer students in these schools to another public school or to private/ parochial schools. In addition Florida's McKay Scholarships program allows students with disabilities to transfer from any public school (regardless of its rank) to a private/ parochial school. In both programs public tax dollars are used to pay for private/ parochial school tuition.

Vouchers do not provide accountability, since private/ parochial schools are not required to follow the state standards for curriculum content, achievement measures, teacher certification, or instructional materials. Private schools are not required to report test or enrollment data, discipline records and practices, or other basic information.

A St. Petersburg Times (February 23, 2003) report states "that the law provides almost no standards for private McKay schools. They do not have to be accredited and their teachers don't even need high school diplomas. Why should the state send students, and tax dollars, to a school with no credentials? Are there enough checks and balances to prevent fraud? The law says that each voucher check must be signed by the parent and the school, but some schools have used a power of attorney to sign hundreds of checks for parents."



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Talking Points

- Vouchers divert money from public schools, which are accountable to the public to private schools, where there is no public oversight of how the dollars are spent, while doing nothing to improve public education
- Vouchers are NOT mechanisms for parental choice. The private school ultimately makes the choice about admissions, not the parents. Parental choice extends only to determining to which private school they will apply.
- There is no strong evidence that voucher programs improve student achievement.
- Ballot referendums on vouchers have been consistently defeated in several states and public opinion polls in Florida have shown that the people of this state do not support vouchers.
- Vouchers, which divert public dollars to private schools, do nothing to raise academic standards for all children, provide safe learning environments, improve teacher quality or increase parent involvement in public schools.

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