

The Truth About School Vouchers

In states where school choice measures have passed, taxpayers are footing the bill for unaccountable voucher and tax credit programs that are bankrupting their states, largely to pay tuition for children who already were attending private schools. In Mississippi, private schools have opposed direct voucher payments, fearing accountability and pressure to admit students they don't want. Instead, they favor tax credits, which essentially are money laundering for private schools. Parents get dollar-for-dollar tax credits for "donations" (tuition payments) to private schools, and the schools avoid any public scrutiny. All of these programs take money from the state budget, reducing the funds available to chronically underfunded public schools.

Arizona's voucher program is expected to cost taxpayers \$900-million in 2024.

Source: [Save Our Schools Arizona](#) & [Arizona Republic](#)

In states with broad voucher programs, the [majority go to children who already attended private schools](#) (were never enrolled in public schools).

- In the first year of Arizona's universal voucher program, the majority of vouchers went to children who were already attending private school
- In Iowa, 60% of voucher participants never attended public school
- In Florida, 69% of applicants to the voucher program were already attending private school
- In the first year of Arkansas's voucher program, [less than 5% went to children who had attended public school](#)

Because private schools charge more than vouchers cover, most vouchers go to wealthy zip codes.

- 75% of Arizona's vouchers went to [children in wealthy zip codes](#)

[Studies of voucher programs](#) in Indiana, Alabama, Ohio, Louisiana, and Wisconsin showed that voucher students who move from public to private schools experienced persistently lower achievement and learning loss.

Since Mississippi's ESA voucher program was implemented in 2015, only 38.8% of the vouchers assigned have been used. [Parents told the PEER committee](#) they couldn't use the voucher because:

1. Private schools would not admit their children
2. They couldn't afford the tuition and fee balance that the voucher doesn't cover
3. They couldn't find a private school that could serve their children

Private voucher schools have no public oversight and are not subject to state academic standards or assessments, providing no accountability for the taxpayers who are footing the bill.

Voucher programs in other states fund questionable expenses that parents claim are "education-related":

- Florida vouchers [paid for](#) TVs, kayaks, and trips to Disney World
- Arizona vouchers [paid for](#) Ninja training, ski resort passes, and pianos
- Oklahoma vouchers [paid for](#) gaming consoles, electric fireplaces, and outdoor grills

Where Mississippi public schools are thriving, local communities are thriving. Diverting state investments to private education will harm communities, economic development, and local property values.