

North Carolina Association of Educators

## Vouchers and Privatization Harms, Not Reforms PreK-12 Education



NCAE supports a system that adequately funds public schools so that every child can receive a quality education. The Association will continue to fight a system of vouchers, tax credits and privatization that erodes public education funding, resources and staffing necessary for student success.

In the 2008 General Assembly, a bill was introduced to provide tuition tax credits for parents who opt to send their children with special needs to private schools. Although the legislation targeted exceptional children, it was widely viewed as the opening round in an effort to implement tuition tax credits/vouchers for all children in North Carolina. NCAE stopped the bill in the House.

The end goal for tuition tax credits is the same as vouchers. Tax credits are just a different way to achieve the same end. Tax credits give parents/guardians a “tax credit” for part of the expense of sending their child to private school. A voucher is a mechanism for the government to assist (with taxpayers’ money) the payment of tuition at a private school.

Public schools have faced nearly a billion dollars in budget and discretionary cuts for the fourth consecutive year. Allowing vouchers and tax credits would further drain funds from school districts and would severely impact and limit student learning and achievement. Tuition tax credits/vouchers force all taxpayers to subsidize the personal choices of individual parents who would prefer to send their children to private schools, including parochial schools. Lawmakers are elected to use public dollars to fund public schools, not divert those public funds for private school usage.

In short, vouchers (and tax credits) are funded by reducing dollars available to provide great public schools for every child, reducing government services in other areas, including health, transportation, and public safety, and/or by increasing taxes. A strong, vibrant public school system must always be the priority of our public policy. NCAE is committed to this goal and will work during the 2013 legislative session to protect much needed public dollars from further erosion for private use. Additionally, the Association will work to restore funding to the K-12 public school budget and eliminate all discretionary budget cuts imposed on local school districts.

Voucher systems are touted as reform, but there is no conclusive evidence that they improve student achievement. Private school students are not included in state assessments, and are not required to disclose the qualification of their teachers, denying both parent and taxpayers vital information. Private schools “select” the students they teach; public schools have open doors and welcome all students regardless of ability or circumstances. If individual students are identified as behaviorally or academically challenged in private school settings,

they are returned to the public schools where adequate resources are lacking due to diverted funding caused by vouchers/tuition tax credits.

Vouchers are the wrong choice. The right choice is real education reform, with the following guarantees:

- Ensure there is a qualified teacher in every classroom.
- Provide quality professional development for teachers.
- Implement policies that attract and retain the best teachers.
- Provide high-quality early education so every child arrives at school ready to learn.
- Promote supervised before- and after-school programs that offer safe, extended learning opportunities.
- Provide more quality tutoring and mentoring.
- Increase parental involvement through regular parent-teacher conferences and better communication between teachers and parents to help improve student achievement.
- Enhance the curriculum to ensure that students are prepared for the changing economy.
- Increase resources for the public schools to enable them to meet the needs of students.

NCAE will fight any efforts or circumstances to divert money from North Carolina's state budget that would pay to fund a private school education. Recent legislation mandates more accountability on teacher effectiveness and student performance. NCAE will work with lawmakers to ensure that ample resources, supplies, textbooks, and other teaching aides are available to achieve these goals. Every school district still has to meet every school's need for staffing, maintenance, utilities, transportation, and other costs. Our commitment to protecting K-12 public school funding is a top priority of this association, halting further diverting of public dollars from funding private education.

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