

Keep the Public in Public Education

An investment in public education is an investment in the community. And the best way to strengthen public education and community is by strengthening public schools.



IDRA Stands

- Public money must have public oversight and must not be diverted to private interests.
- There must be no further expansion of charter schools and limited public funds for facilities should not be siphoned off for charter schools.

Decades of Neglect Have Given Us Decades of Underachievement

Texas has over 1,000 public school districts serving over 5 million students. Texas has a long history of failing to support all of its public schools, and over 20 years ago, it decided to go in a different direction by investing in privately-controlled “public” charter schools. After more than 20 years of the Texas charter school experiment, the results show that charter schools don’t offer much of a choice at all.

The 2016 state accountability ratings show a continuing trend, with approximately twice as many charter campuses receiving “improvement required” ratings (10 percent) compared to traditional public schools (5.1 percent). This, despite the state increasing funds for charter schools from \$200 million to \$2 billion over the last 10 years.

Texas must commit to reinvesting in its traditional public schools. **Every child should have a right to attend a strongly supported neighborhood school.** Texas students cannot afford to suffer in market-based charter schools or other privately-operated schools that fail to make the grade.

Gill, B., & P.M. Timpane, K.E. Ross, D.J. Brewer, K. Booker. (2007). *Rhetoric Versus Reality: What We Know and What We Need to Know About Vouchers and Charter Schools* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation).
 Epple, D., & R. Romano, M. Urquiola. (2015). “School Vouchers: A Survey of the Economics Literature.” *National Bureau of Economic Research*.
 Jabbar, H., J. Holme, M.A. Lemke, A.V. LeClair, J. Sanchez, E.M. Torres. (2015). *Will School Vouchers Benefit Low-Income Families? Assessing the Evidence* (Austin: Texas Center for Education Policy).
 Hernández, L.M., & G. Worthington (2016). Testimony before the Texas Senate Education Committee (Austin: Texas Center for Education Policy).
 Kahlenberg, R.D. (2016). *Why Private School Vouchers Could Exacerbate School Segregation*. The Century Foundation.

Public Dollars for Public Education

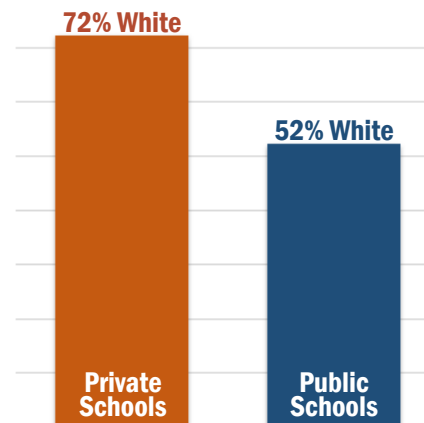
Despite an aggressive promotional campaign, Texas has repeatedly defeated school privatization efforts that would reduce the resources flowing to its neighborhood public schools. When public funds are diverted to private educational options through vouchers and neo-vouchers, pressures on local communities rise through increased property taxes and reduced resources. Research shows that school privatization is not a wise state investment as vouchers and charter schools have been shown to lead to more racially segregated schools and do not lead to overall improved student performance (Gill, et al., 2007; Epple, et al., 2015; Jabbar, et al., 2015).

Vouchers and neo-vouchers – such as tuition tax credits, educational savings accounts (ESA) – also undermine transparency and accountability because those private schools often do not publicly report on student demographics and performance or financial disclosures, and they are not subject to the state’s accountability and testing system.

Private and charter schools tend to undermine democratic participation and civil rights. They are not subject to a publicly-elected governing board. Private schools can require students and parents to check their constitutional rights at the door and may discriminate against students with little or no regard for due process. Indeed, many private schools do not serve, and are not prepared to serve, all students groups, such as English learner students and special education students.

Private schools can also raise tuition and charge students for any number of items that exceed the amount of a voucher or ESA, thereby being cost-prohibitive for many Texas families. Indeed, reports indicate that many “top-rated” private schools charge tuition well in excess of

Voucher programs have exacerbated segregation and stratification in the past.



“In 43 out of 50 states, White students in private schools are more likely than those in public schools to attend schools with at least 90% White enrollment.”

Kahlenberg, 2016

local and state funds. Even the average annual tuition statewide for private schools is \$9,561, a full \$1,700 in excess of the recommended ESA state funds per student (TCEP, 2016). Consequently, vouchers and ESAs do not benefit all children and parents, but instead operate more like subsidies for wealthy parents whose children are already sending their children to private schools. This hardly meets the state’s constitutional obligation of providing an efficient system of free public schools.

Unlike traditional public schools that accept all students, private schools get to choose which students they will enroll. In the end, school privatization is more about the school’s choice than the parent’s choice.

Resources...

- IDRA’s Keeping the Public in Public Schools website
- Infographics, statements, testimony and more

<http://budurl.com/IDRApol17>

