

VOUCHERS COULD HURT OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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When I was little I really loved fourth grade at my public school. For fifth grade my parents talked about transferring me to a private school so “I could get a better education,”--- so they thought. That’s when I started thinking about the schools for the rich kids, and the schools for everyone else. I didn’t see why a private school should be any better than a regular public school. Public education is an aspect of American society that is fundamental. It has been around since the 1800s, but has often been underfunded. Especially recently during the recession, public schools have struggled to get enough money to pay their entire staff, and to get the newer technology for their schools. If vouchers are introduced in Florida, I believe they will deal a harsh blow to public schools that could really weaken public schools, which brings us to this very important question: Should private-school vouchers be made available to all Florida children? My answer is a definite no. We can examine this through three points.

- First, public schools will lose even more money.
- Second, there will be no central overseer for schools.
- Last, more religion will be more integrated into schools.

First let’s look at the area of public vs. private schools. According to the Gainesville Sun from 12-26-10, if vouchers are introduced, most parents will want their children to go to private schools, with hopes for a better education. Kids will still have to pay to get a private education,

but the price will be reduced. Many kids will then be able to afford to get a private education; only the impoverished will be left to go to public schools. This will deal a harsh blow to public schools. They will lose a large amount of money, and the impoverished will not be able to get the good education that they deserve. Although the wealthy and middle classes may be receiving better educations, the poor will receive worse ones, and will continue to get poorer. Instead of helping the upper class kids get even richer, we should be focused on trying to help the poor kids get out of poverty.

Next, let's look at the area of a central overseer. Public schools in Alachua County, for example, have an elected school board, which oversees all of our public schools and sets standards for them that help all students at all schools receive similar educations. It also gives colleges a standard to judge students by. Private schools however are not overseen by a public school board; they are all just managed by their own private boards. There is no standard to compare all students. Students that go to different private schools could be receiving entirely different educations. Furthermore, colleges will have a hard time deciding which students to accept into their schools because they have no standard for comparison. Under the School Board of Alachua County, if someone who goes to Buchholz gets an "A" in Honors English, it means about the same thing for a student who goes to GHS, or Eastside. With private schools, this is not necessarily true. Parents and students might be cheated if they take their voucher to a non-public school.

Finally, let's look at the area of religion. According to virtual town hall meeting responses, if the bill for vouchers passes, religion could be much more integrated into children's

education. Many private schools are religious, and when they start getting more and more students, and more and more money, they will continue to teach religious topics. Religion could gradually become a central theme in much of education. Students are definitely entitled to practice their own religions, but some parents may feel that since public schools are extremely underfunded, they will send their children to a religious high school, just so that they can receive a good education. This new integration of religion is wrong, and may be forced upon children who only hope for a better education.

Remember in the beginning when I was telling you how public schooling is a fundamental aspect of American Society? Well public education may be harmed if vouchers are passed. Public schools will lose much of the money allocated to them and many of the students that keep them strong. If students stop going to public schools, there will be a lower standard for education for the financially less fortunate, and there will be a greater integration of religion into education. For all these reasons vouchers are a bad idea. Instead of helping the rich get richer, we should focus on helping those students who really need it. I hope that someday kids that are well off and kids that live in poverty will have equal opportunity for a good education.

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