

7 Reasons Why Public Dollars Should Stay with Public School Students and Should NOT Be Diverted To Help Private Schools

- 1) **PUBLIC SCHOOLS ARE OPEN TO ALL** - Public schools proudly take every student who comes to enroll. Private schools can pick and choose among applicants and can reject any student without an explanation. The inclusiveness of public schools requires support and resources.
- 2) **PUBLIC SCHOOLS ARE THE BEDROCK OF DEMOCRACY** - Public schools have been the key institution responsible for teaching about and perpetuating our democracy. Public schools are required by law to provide good citizenship instruction (IC20-30-5-6), to display the flag, and to “provide a daily opportunity to for students of the school corporation to voluntarily recite the Pledge of Allegiance in each classroom”, while in private schools, these matters are optional and unregulated.
- 3) **PUBLIC SCHOOLS NEED FINANCIAL STABILITY** - Public schools need stable support to maintain and improve programs. Any incentive created by the General Assembly to use public funds to attract students to private schools will mean less money for the public school since the money follows the child. This dollar drain undercuts the stability of public school programs.
- 4) **PUBLIC SCHOOLS ARE CENTERS OF THE COMMUNITY** - Public schools bring the entire community together. Shifting to a publicly funded set of small private schools will fragment the community along religious and philosophical lines.
- 5) **PUBLIC SCHOOLS SERVE ALL INCOME LEVELS** - Claims that vouchers are being directed to low income families ring hollow; the private school tax credit enacted in 2009 provided scholarships to families earning up to \$81,586 for a family of four. House Bill 1003 would raise that limit to \$101,982 for a family of four. Few would consider this to be “low-income.”
- 6) **PUBLIC SCHOOLS HAVE STEADILY IMPROVED** - Claims that Indiana’s public school performance is declining are simply untrue. Steady improvement over the past 20 years in Indiana’s public schools has been clearly documented. Currently, Indiana’s public schools stand at or near their highest marks in history on attendance rate, SAT math, ACT, National Assessment, ISTEP+, and percentage earning Academic Honors diplomas and Core 40 diplomas. Indiana outperforms Florida on 4th & 8th grade math, 8th grade reading, and 4th & 8th grade science on the National Assessment. Of course, more improvement is needed to meet global economic competition, but outsourcing students to private schools will undercut support and hamper further improvement in public schools. Parents who press leaders to fund improvements for their public schools will simply be told to take their child to a private school if they don’t like their public school.
- 7) **PUBLIC SCHOOLS ARE NOT SECTARIAN** - Regarding school choice, of course many families would choose religious schools for their children for religious reasons. Taxpayers, however, should not be obligated to send students to parochial schools even if that is the choice of the parents. That is why the Indiana Constitution says: *“No money shall be drawn from the treasury, for the benefit of any religious or theological institution.”* Our public policies must avoid financial entanglements with religious schools. School choice should be offered within the arena of public schools, through neighborhood schools, magnet schools, tuition transfer to nearby districts, virtual schools and the 62 charter schools now available.