

## **Oppose the D.C. Private School Voucher Program**

Since 2003, taxpayers have given more than \$250 million to D.C. voucher schools. Congress should not continue to allocate tens of millions of taxpayer dollars a year to a program that is ineffective, unaccountable to taxpayers, and poorly managed. Public dollars should fund public schools that serve all students, not private schools.

### **D.C. Vouchers Have Led to a *Decrease* in Academic Achievement:**

- Multiple Congressionally mandated Dept. of Education studies of the D.C. voucher program have demonstrated that the program does not improve the academic achievement of participating students. In fact, two recent studies demonstrate that students using vouchers perform *worse* academically than their peers who are not in the voucher program. This negative impact on student performance is similar to the learning loss attributed to Hurricane Katrina.

### **D.C. Vouchers Fail to Provide Students with Better Educational Opportunities:**

- Students in the D.C. voucher program are less likely to get the same educational resources as students not in the voucher program. For example, they have less access to ESL programs, learning support and services for students with disabilities, and counselors. The D.C. voucher especially harms students with disabilities, who often attend private schools with fewer services, and schools that do not have to follow each student's IEP.
- Beyond test scores, the most recent Dept. of Education study found that the voucher program has no effect on parental satisfaction, perceptions of safety, or involvement. And a study from the Urban Institute found that receiving a voucher does not increase D.C. students' college enrollment rates.

### **D.C. Vouchers Strip Students of Civil Rights Protections:**

- Private schools participating in the D.C. voucher program do not abide by the same civil rights laws and public accountability standards as public schools, including those in Title V and Title IX of the Civil Rights Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), and the D.C. Human Rights Act.
- Students who attend private schools with vouchers are stripped of their First Amendment, Due Process, and other constitutional and statutory rights provided to them in public schools.

### **D.C. Vouchers Lack Accountability to Taxpayers:**

- A prior administrator of the program admitted that “quality oversight of the program [w]as sort of a dead zone, a blind spot.” A program with such repeated and serious oversight problems should not continue to be funded by taxpayers.
- According to two GAO reports, the D.C. voucher program has repeatedly failed to meet basic and even statutorily required accountability measures.
- A *Washington Post* investigation found that participating private schools lack even basic quality controls: these schools were sometimes operated out of run-down storefronts or homes without proper amenities like restrooms and gymnasiums. For example, at one school where 93% of the students had vouchers, students were taught from a “learning model known as ‘Suggestopedia,’ an obscure Bulgarian philosophy of learning that stresses learning through music, stretching, and meditation.”

See NCPE’s most recent letter for [citations](#).