UEA Issue Brief

Education Vouchers and Voucher-like Schemes

UEA believes Utah must equip every school with the resources to deliver quality education that prepares each child for a successful future. **UEA opposes school vouchers, tax credits, “backpack” funding, education savings accounts and “scholarship” programs** that funnel money intended for public education to personal student accounts or privately-run entities.

- A well-resourced public education system should benefit all students, no matter their background or zip code. Utah struggles to fund the education options we already have and must not shift more funds to private providers.

- Utahns value taxpayer accountability. Vouchers divert funds away from public schools to private providers with little or no taxpayer accountability. Additional voucher-like schemes will require increased government bureaucracy and administrative oversight when auditing, tracking and accounting for existing taxpayer funded options is already fraught with difficulty.

- Vouchers subsidize private school for affluent families along the Wasatch Front, at the expense of rural students and families unable to cover the difference in private school tuition.

- We value options that are open to all students. Private schools can deny a student admission for any reason and require parents to waive their federal IDEA (special education law) rights.

- Utah currently provides a robust range of taxpayer-funded K-12 education alternatives,¹ including:
  - Traditional neighborhood public schools with generous open enrollment policies;
  - Public charter schools;
  - Public online schools;
  - Dual enrollment (Public and private/home school); and
  - Special needs private school scholarships and 529 plan tax credits.

- Studies show providing parents with additional school options does not increase student achievement.²⁻⁴

- Data show parents are overwhelmingly satisfied with their neighborhood school.⁵⁻⁶

¹ “A summary of Utah’s education choice options”, Sutherland Institute (Sept. 16, 2021)
³ “Evaluation of the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program”, Center for Evaluation & Education Policy, p. 19 (Feb. 9, 2006)
⁶ “Civics Education in Utah”, Quantitative Data, Sutherland Institute (2021)