



Ambassador for Education – Vouchers

TOP EIGHT CONCERNS ABOUT VOUCHERS FOR PRIVATE SCHOOLS:

- 1) Tennessee has spent five years and will spend \$500+ million in Federal Race to the Top funds creating the national gold standard in accountability for public education – vouchers for private schools abandon these efforts. Private schools and private school teachers are not held to the same high standards Tennessee requires of public schools and public school teachers.
- 2) Tennessee has been on the forefront with education reform, e.g. Race to the Top, revamping tenure, eliminating collective bargaining, increasing standards, and increasing the rigor of curriculum. All of these changes need time to be implemented, and diverting money to private schools will only cause our reforms to stall.
- 3) After changes approved by the General Assembly during 2009, 2010 and 2011, Tennessee now has one of the most expansive laws for charter schools – we should give this opportunity for school choice time to produce results before making such a radical change in education policy in Tennessee.
- 4) While proponents claim that voucher programs create another avenue for school choice, the choice lies with the private schools, not parents or students. Private schools determine who is accepted or not.
- 5) Enrollment in religious schools has dropped dramatically in the last ten years, primarily due to the economy and parents' inability to pay for private school tuition. One reason vouchers are being proposed is to help religious schools stem their losses and reclaim their lost enrollment.
- 6) A voucher program in Tennessee would be unconstitutional: the Constitution of the State of Tennessee (as amended in 1978) requires that the Tennessee General Assembly “provide for the maintenance, support and eligibility standards of a system of free *public* schools,” with no mention of the maintenance or support of private schools.
- 7) Vouchers are politically unpopular. Since 1972, voucher proposals have been overwhelmingly rejected or repealed by voters in the following states: California, Colorado, Maryland, Michigan, Oregon, Washington and Utah.
- 8) Tennessee is 49th in per pupil funding compared to other states. Since we are already at the bottom in funding public education, how can we afford to begin spending public money on private tuition?