

Just the **FACTS:** An NEA-NH Factsheet

Five Talking Points on Vouchers

“What have you got against private school vouchers?” you’re asked. Next time someone puts you on the spot, use these talking points to debunk the most popular voucher claims.

Fact: There’s no link between vouchers and gains in student achievement.

There’s no conclusive evidence that vouchers improve the achievement of students who use them to attend private school. Nor is there any validity to claims that, by creating a “competitive marketplace” for students, vouchers force public schools to improve. In fact, the most dramatic improvements in student achievement have occurred in places where vouchers do not exist — such as Texas, North Carolina, Connecticut and Chicago. Instead, those states and communities focused on teacher quality and extra help for students who need it.

Fact: Vouchers undermine accountability for public funds.

Private schools have almost complete autonomy with regard to how they operate: who they teach, what they teach, how they teach, how — if at all — they measure student achievement, how they manage their finances, and what they are required to disclose to parents and the public. The absence of public accountability for voucher funds has contributed to rampant fraud, waste and abuse in current voucher programs.

Fact: Vouchers do not reduce public education costs.

Actually, they increase costs, by requiring taxpayers to fund two school systems, one public and one private. Reductions in state aid to public schools to pay for the vouchers results in substantial increases in property taxes.

Fact: Vouchers do not give parents real educational choice.

Participating private schools may limit enrollment, and in many cases may maintain exclusive admissions policies and charge tuition and fees far above the amount provided by the voucher. Unlike public schools, private and religious schools can — and do — discriminate in admissions on the basis of prior academic achievement, standardized test scores, interviews with applicants and parents, gender, religion, income, special needs, and behavioral history.

Fact: The public disapproves of vouchers.

By overwhelming margins, Americans prefer improving their public schools to spending scarce tax dollars on voucher programs. Since 1966, vouchers or voucher-related measures have been placed before voters in 13 states and the District of Columbia 22 times. With the lone exception of South Dakota — which approved the provision of textbooks to parochial schools in 1986 — voters have rejected public aid to private and religious schools every time. In those 22 elections, nearly two out of three voters cast “no” votes.