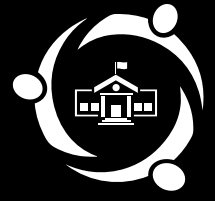


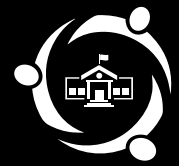
# 10 Shocking Facts about School Choice and Education Funding in Indiana



- 1** Our tax dollars pay for students to attend private schools in Indiana via government vouchers — over \$1 billion of sales, use, and income taxes since 2011. Originally designed to help “rescue” poor kids from failing schools, vouchers increasingly go to students who are white, suburban, and middle class.
- 2** Hoosiers never voted for school choice—vouchers, charters, educational scholarship accounts, tax credit scholarships. But organizations backed by billionaires helped legislators pave the way for school choice in Indiana with the goal of pushing more and more public dollars to private institutions.
- 3** State dollars for private schools and charters come out of the same budget that pays for public schools. **No additional funds were added to help pay for more schools.** Instead, in Indiana, the “money follows the child.”
- 4** Even though we are sending tax dollars to charters and private schools, when adjusted for inflation, **the state government has allocated less and less funding towards K-12 education over the past decade**—\$600 million less in 2019-2020 compared to 2009-2010.
- 5** Does your school district have an operational referendum, large class sizes, limited course selections, and/or has it closed one or more of its schools in the past decade? It’s most likely due to an **overall funding shortage from the state** in addition to public dollars going to charter and private schools.
- 6** **Almost all private schools receiving vouchers in Indiana are religious.** Unlike public schools, private schools are not required to make their budgets, curriculum, hiring practices, or teacher qualifications public. State funds to private schools mean a loss of accountability to the public for how education funding is spent.
- 7** Inadequate oversight of charters opens the door to for-profit schemes and fraud. **Recently, two Indiana virtual charter schools defrauded the state of over \$86 million.** No one has been charged and the \$86 million has never been paid back to the state educational fund.
- 8** **Our tax dollars are being used to perpetuate segregation** when they fund private and charter schools. These schools can’t and some won’t serve all. Private schools can discriminate based on religion, disability, and sexual identity. Charter schools serve a limited number of self-selected families. However, public schools must serve all.
- 9** **Teachers in charter and private schools do not have to comply with the same Indiana education licensure standards to teach** as public school teachers.
- 10** In the 2021 legislative session, the state created educational scholarship accounts (ESAs) and also increased the income level for vouchers (for example, a family of 4 earning as much as \$147,000 can qualify for a voucher) affirming that **vouchers are government subsidies for private religious schools.**

School choice has been marketed as a method to increase access to educational options. This argument begins to break down, however, when you ask the questions, Access for whom? And to what? Are we further fragmenting our communities? Is it possible to afford more schools on less funding?

# 10 Reasons Why Public Schools Are the Best Choice



- 1 Public schools are the heart of the community.** They do so much more than just teach students. Football, basketball, musicals, emergency shelter, community events, and traditions all happen at your local public schools.
- 2 Public schools are a community investment.** Strong public schools are the backbone of a community, preparing students year after year to become good citizens who make positive contributions. Businesses and people seek to settle in communities with strong public schools.
- 3 Public schools have more educational choice.** Almost 90 percent of students in Indiana attend public schools. And the majority of districts are larger than any private or charter school. Size allows them to offer a broad array of academic and extracurricular choices.
- 4 Public schools are accountable to the public.** They are represented by a publicly elected school board. They must publicly report their finances.
- 5 Public schools are dependable.** They can't close at a moment's notice unlike charters and private schools.
- 6 Public schools are diverse.** They must accept all students and legally are not allowed to discriminate. There are over 290 languages spoken by students in Indiana's public schools.
- 7 Public teachers are highly qualified educators.** They must be certified by the state and continue their certification and advanced degrees throughout their career.
- 8 Transportation is free.** Public schools offer free transportation to get your child to the school they are attending.
- 9 Free and reduced lunch.** Almost 50% of all Hoosier students receive free and reduced lunch in public schools.
- 10 Best value for your money.** Public schools are funded using state, federal and local funds. Funds are pooled and distributed to serve all students in the school—from gifted and talented to special education, from gym and art to music and library, from therapists and reading specialists to nurses and custodians.

## Terms

**Charter School:** A school that operates on a contract and is authorized by an entity such as a mayor's office or university. The authorizer need not be local. A charter school receives state funding but operates independently of the local public school. As of 2021, a charter school cannot receive local property tax dollars as they are not accountable to the public—their school boards are private, they are not publicly elected.

**Education Scholarship Accounts (ESAs):** A taxpayer-funded account for parents who withdraw their child from public school. Participating parents can receive an estimated \$5,000 to \$7,000 per child per year to spend on participating schools and services.

**Homeschool:** Education provided at home by a caregiver using private funds.

**Private School:** A school founded, conducted, and maintained by a private group rather than by the government. There are accredited and non-

accredited private schools in Indiana. Accredited private schools can accept vouchers.

**Public School:** Community schools that must, by law, accept all students in their geographic boundaries. In Indiana, they are publicly funded using a combination of state, federal, and local tax dollars. They are governed by their local community most often via an elected school board.

**Tax Credit Scholarship:** Private funding that helps a student attend a private school. It is collected via nonprofit scholarship granting organizations (SGOs). Indiana offers tax credits to donors allowing them to claim 50% in their tax returns. Some of the largest SGOs in Indiana are religious organizations.

**Voucher:** A government subsidy for students to attend an accredited private school. In Indiana they are called Choice Scholarships., the majority of which are used to attend religious schools.

