

Voucher impact logic by a school district's official is puzzling

District Situation

- A major portion of the district's budget is funded by property tax and the district residents voted down 2 levy proposals recently.
- Board members have been lobbying for more state funds, they say.
- The district had a 729% increase in vouchers from fiscal year 2023 to fiscal year 2024.
- District enrollment is stable.

District Leadership Response to The Voucher Expansion Scenario

- More concerned about how the state funds public schools than lost enrollment to private schools.
- No problem at all with the state policy awarding voucher eligibility to all.

Analysis of the Matter

Voucher advocates are on a mission to expand the voucher by Tuition Tax Credits, Education Savings Accounts (ESA's) and taxpayer funding of private school facilities as a means of further eroding the public school enrollment. The endgame for these privatizers is to eliminate the public common school system.

The percentage of the state budget being allocated to school districts is declining due to the privatization frenzy. School districts will depend more heavily on property tax as privatization schemes escalate. With less school district residents vested in the public school system, the harder it will be to pass levies. Further, the greater the exodus of students, the less political support there will be for state funding of public school districts.

Vouchers are funded out of the same state budget line-item that provides basic aid for school districts. Currently, there is no cap on vouchers; thus, if there is a budget shortfall, school districts will bear the loss—not private schools!

Some school districts are in the throes of closing buildings due to declining enrollment. The privatization movement is the cause of some of this dilemma; hence it is extremely inefficient for the state to start funding facilities for the private sector when school districts are decommissioning under-enrolled school buildings.

An issue that is not yet being given serious consideration is the effect that diverting public money to private schools has on public retirement systems. For each dollar school districts spend, the equivalent of \$.20 or more ends up in STRS. In the case of private school expenditures, none to STRS.