

# What Everyone Should Know About Private Schools That Accept Vouchers

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**A school voucher does not automatically grant students access to any private school in the state.** This is true for any program that provides public funds for students to attend private schools, such as vouchers, education savings accounts, or tax credits. Only certain private schools choose to opt-in to these programs and enroll students using a voucher.

## What do we know about the types of schools that accept students using a voucher?

### 1. **They often lack long-term financial viability and close quickly.**

- a. **So-called “voucher schools” or “pop-up schools” have rapidly grown in states with voucher programs. These schools often don’t have the financial stability to sustain long-term operations and close within a few years, disrupting students’ education and forcing them to switch schools.**
  - I. A [25-year study](#) of Milwaukee’s voucher program found that 41% of all private schools accepting vouchers closed.
  - II. The average amount of time schools created in response to a voucher program stay open is just [4 years](#).
- b. **This alarming rate of school closures due to financial instability harms students.**
  - I. School closures harm students by forcing them to change schools, which has been shown to [negatively impact](#) students’ development, social and emotional health, and academic performance. Students who move schools frequently have lower test scores and are less likely to graduate high school.
- c. **The investment of public funds through vouchers into private schools which quickly close is a waste of taxpayers’ dollars.**
  - I. In Milwaukee, [one study](#) found that 12% of all public funds spent on the city’s school voucher program went to schools that ended up closing.
  - II. These funds could have been spent on the well-established public schools that hold strong ties to the community.

## **2. They are often not required to follow the same safety, accountability, and transparency rules as public schools, resulting in a lower-quality educational experience.**

- a. This lack of oversight, regulation, and accountability can result in students attending schools that are failing to prepare them for college or career.
  - I. For example, states like [Arizona](#) don't require all private schools to:
    1. Hold an accreditation from the State Board of Education
    2. Employ certified teachers
    3. Ensure all school staff pass a background check
    4. Follow state-based curriculum standards
- b. As a result of opening quickly to capitalize on new public funds, as well as the [lack of regulations](#) for educational facilities, private schools may not have the necessary infrastructure, such as libraries or gyms, that are crucial for a well-rounded education.

## **3. They are overwhelmingly religious.**

- a. Almost [all](#) students using a voucher attend a religiously affiliated school. These schools often have a curriculum that integrates faith-based teachings, and they may require students to participate in religious activities.
  - I. In Ohio, 91% of students using a voucher in 2024 attended a religious school. In Indiana, 98% of students did.
- b. The most common religious schools participating in voucher programs are Catholic or a denomination of Christianity. This means students of other faiths may be denied admission or forced to adhere to religious customs they do not practice in order to attend. It also means students who identify, or who have family members who identify, as LGBTQIA+ may be discriminated against. There have already been reports of faith-based schools [expelling](#) or refusing to admit students from these communities, and many [require](#) students to sign declarations of faith that explicitly reject homosexuality.

## **4. They disproportionately serve white students.**

- a. Private schools educate a far greater share of white students than any other type of school. ([Sixty-five percent](#) of private school students are white, compared with 47% of public school students.)
  - I. Private schools are more likely to have a student body that is over 90% white. This creates an environment in which students of color often feel [unwelcome](#) and excluded.
  - II. This is likely due to a multitude of factors but can be linked to the rapid [increase](#) in private school enrollment following Brown v. Board of Education, when white parents enrolled in private schools to prevent their children from having to attend recently integrated public schools.
- b. School vouchers are unlikely to make private schools more diverse, as the [majority](#) of students using these programs were already previously enrolled in private schools.

## **What does this mean for students?**

While some students may use a voucher to attend a high-quality school that better serves their needs, this is not the case for all students. The private schools that students can apply to using a voucher are rarely, if ever, the selective, well-established and well-resourced schools families may think of. **Instead, these schools may offer a lower-quality educational experience that does not set students up for success.**