

Vouchers Don't Support English Learners and Their Families

Private school voucher programs, also known as “education savings accounts” or “tax-credit scholarships,” provide public tax dollars for students to attend private schools. Supporters argue that vouchers provide families with more educational choices, but in reality, they [leave many families behind](#) and harm the public schools that provide the most support to English learners and their families. Here's why:

- 1. Public schools educate every student — private schools don't have to.** Public schools accept all students, regardless of where they are from or what language is spoken at home. Private schools can [deny admission](#) to students for any reason, even if they have a voucher. Some voucher programs even turn away students based on their immigration status. Vouchers also rarely [cover](#) the full cost of attendance at a private school, forcing families to pay thousands of dollars in extra expenses.
- 2. Public schools offer special programs to support English learners — private schools don't have to.** Federal law requires public schools to have specially trained teachers and academic supports for English learners to help them succeed. Private schools aren't required to offer these services, and many don't. For example, in [Washington, D.C.](#), two-thirds of private schools participating in the D.C. voucher program did not have any specialized services for English learners, making it harder for the [16%](#) of all public school students in the District who are English learners to participate in the program.
- 3. Public schools are required by federal law to use translation services to help families engage in their children's education — private schools don't have to.** Public schools must utilize translation services to ensure that all families can actively engage in their children's education. Private schools do not have to communicate with families in their primary or preferred language. This can harm families' ability to participate in activities like parent-teacher conferences or understand materials the school sends home, such as information about course offerings or tutoring programs. This makes it harder for multilingual and non-English-speaking parents to ensure their children are thriving in school.
- 4. Public schools must share information about how students are doing — private schools don't have to.** Public schools must report data on how well they are educating English learners. The government tracks this data to ensure the school is providing students with a high-quality education equal to their native English-speaking peers. Private schools are not required to report this data, making it harder, if not impossible, for multilingual families to know if their students' school is supporting them.

- 5. Public schools must teach students the knowledge and skills they need as adults — private schools aren't required to.** Public schools are required to follow state academic standards, which ensure that students receive the skills and information they need to succeed as adults. In most cases, private schools don't have to teach in alignment with these standards, which can mean students are less prepared for their future. In fact, English learners who use a voucher to attend private school don't do better, and [may](#) do worse, academically.

- 6. Voucher programs hurt the public schools that serve English learners.** Voucher programs [drain money](#) from public schools, leaving our nation's schools with less money for English language learning services. This may force public schools to offer lower-quality services for students. Vouchers especially harm public schools in [rural](#) and low-income communities.

All schools should be safe and welcoming for every child, no matter what language they speak at home or where they are from. Private school vouchers threaten this goal. They do not make it easier for English learners and their families to access elite schools; they take away the opportunity to receive a quality public education. To learn more about voucher programs, visit edtrust.org/vouchers.