



The Florida Tax Credit Voucher Program

Democrats believe public education is one of the bedrocks of our democracy. Republican private school voucher proposals are devoid of oversight, accountability, and protections for students and families. Studies show that voucher programs do not improve educational achievement, and exacerbate educational inequity by defunding public schools that serve over 90 percent of the nation's students. Recently, the Trump Administration has pointed to Florida as a model for school choice. While Florida currently operates three voucher programs, the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship has received the most attention. This program has faced many problems, including constitutional challenges in the courts, vast opposition by parents and civil rights organizations, fraud, and corruption. In light of these issues and the increased attention on the program, the following information provides key facts and statistics about the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship.

The Florida Tax Credit Scholarship is a voucher program that promises a high-quality education to all students, but does not cover the full cost of tuition.

- The maximum amount of an award under the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship in [2016-2017 was \\$5,886](#) while the [average cost of private school tuition](#) in Florida is \$7,864.
- Parents who receive the maximum amount of the award may still pay over \$2,000 a year in tuition for their child to enroll in the private school.
- Parents are responsible for any costs beyond tuition, which typically does not cover transportation, books, uniforms, and extracurricular activities.
- Many private schools do not offer bus transportation. Parents are responsible for transporting their child to and from school, which may not be feasible with a full time job or if they do not have daily access to a car.

The Florida Tax Credit Scholarship voucher program is an unregulated catalyst for corruption, fraud, and waste of taxpayer funds.

- Parents and students report schools such as South Florida Prep changed locations multiple times throughout the year including a location in a strip-mall above a liquor store.
- Another private school was reported using corporal punishment on students, which has been banned in the local public school district [for over three decades](#).
- According to a 2014 issue brief by the Florida School Boards Association, "participating private schools do not have to be accredited, teachers do not have to be certified, curriculum does not need to be aligned with Florida's state standards, and dismissal and discipline policies [do not need to be consistent with local, state, or federal policies and guidelines](#)."
- There's currently one scholarship funding organization in Florida to administer scholarships: Step Up for Students. This organization may retain 3 percent of the voucher revenues each year for staff salaries and administrative fees. [The president is currently paid approximately \\$230,000 a year](#).

Students participating in private schools through Florida's Tax Credit Scholarship Program are not required to take state accountability assessments under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

- Private school choice programs are marketed as offering a better education to students. This is an unfair comparison when the private schools accepting publicly funded scholarships are not required to participate in any accountability metrics.
- Students participating in the Tax Credit Scholarship Program are not required to take statewide assessments. Thus, [there is no reliable or valid measure to compare](#) private school and public school outcomes.