



GEORGIA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

POSITION STATEMENT: School Vouchers

GASP Position- Adopted during Fall Conference -October 2004

The Georgia Association of School Psychologists is opposed to the establishment of a school voucher program for the students of Georgia. School vouchers are a method of partially funding private education with public school funds. The basis of this formal position is that removal of funds from the public schools and their redirection toward private school programs constitutes a severe disservice to all of Georgia's students. Vouchering diverts funds allocated by federal and state governments from the students attending public schools.

A number of organizations have provided a great deal of information about the issues of school vouchers and, as a result, have taken stands in opposition to school voucher proposals. These professional educational organizations include: Council for Exceptional Children, Georgia Association of Educators, National Coalition for Public Education (representing 37 national and state level education oriented groups), National Education Association, National School Boards Association, and Professional Association of Georgia Educators.

The Georgia Association of School Psychologists has specific concerns about the impact of school vouchers on students. These areas of concern are summarized as follows:

Funds diverted from public schools and their programs jeopardize general educational services available to all students by:

- limiting the funds available to design and improve the public education programs
- limiting the amount of money available on a per student basis to provide instructional materials, including textbooks, equipment, technology, and other instructional aids
- placing a disproportionate burden on the public school systems in providing appropriate educational services to all enrolled students
- resulting in different achievement standards for children enrolled in the public and private settings



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Access to federal and state programs for low income, disadvantaged students:

- would not be assured since supplemental and remedial programs are not legally mandated in nonpublic school settings not receiving federal and state funds
- would not independently guarantee access to nonpublic school settings as it is likely that the value of the voucher would be insufficient alone to allow enrollment in a nonpublic school setting

Exceptional students identified and served by the public schools might have their IEP mandated services jeopardized. Since private schools are not legally required to meet all of the service and support requirements established by the reauthorization of IDEA, it is a concern that such students might:

- not be accepted by the private schools and therefore place a more disproportionate burden of services for these students remaining in the public school setting but with an overall reduction in available funds

or

- if enrolled, not receive appropriate direct and related services as determined by a student's Individual Educational Program

or

- if enrolled and under the current provisions of IDEA, would provide appropriate services but based on funds provided by the public school systems in addition to school voucher funds, also serving to limit funding to meet the student's IEP goals

Student Achievement

- there is no consistent evidence from the several programs using a school voucher model in the United States (e.g. Wisconsin, New York, Ohio, Florida) that indicated significantly improved student achievement

Accountability

- private schools are currently under no consistent method of public accountability; while subject to scrutiny and question by their constituents, public schools do have public accountability and standards (including curriculum and staff certification)



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On the basis of these concerns, the Georgia Association of School Psychologists takes a position in opposition to the establishment of a school voucher program in Georgia. With this position, the Georgia Association of School Psychologists joins many professional educational organizations in reaching this decision. The Georgia Association of School Psychologists urges that solutions to concerns in the public schools be addressed from within the public school programs rather than by steps which serve to remove vital funds needed by all of Georgia's students.

Supporting Documentation/ Research:

Hadderman, M. (2000). Educational Vouchers. ERIC Digests, Number 137.

Kahlenberg, R. (2002). The problem of taking private school voucher programs to scale: the next issue in the voucher wars. In *The century in brief series*. New York: Century Foundation Press.

MacIver, M. A. (2000) Seeking justice in educational opportunity: an analysis of the evidence on school vouchers and children placed at risk. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 5(4), 397-412.

Study: voucher students perform same as public school peers. (2004) *Black Issues in Higher Education*, 20 (24), 8.

Summary/ Opinion:

Simplicio, J. (1996) School vouchers: panacea or Pandora's box. *Education*, 117, 213-216.

Latham, A. S. (1998) School Vouchers: Much debate, little research. *Educational Leadership*, 56 (2), 82-83.

Other Position Statements:

National Education Association (2002). NEA on Vouchers: Opposed
<http://www.nea.org/lac/vouchers/vouchposition.html>

Position on School Vouchers and IDEA Reauthorization. (2003). Council for Exceptional Children 2003 Policy Manual, 139.