

# AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

## PRESS RELEASE 669#

Voucher Watch :Edd Doerr from the USA:

At <http://www.arlinc.org/newsletters.html>

Vouchers, charters hurt public education

- The normally pro-voucher Brookings Institution has been having second thoughts about the suitability of vouchers for improving student academic performance. Mark Dynarski wrote on May 26 in “On Negative Effects of Vouchers” for the Brookings “Evidence Speaks” series: “Recent research on statewide voucher programs in Louisiana and Indiana has found that public school students that received vouchers to attend private schools subsequently scored lower on reading and math tests compared to similar students that remained in public schools. The magnitudes of the negative impacts were large. These studies used rigorous research designs that allow for strong causal conclusions.”

He added that “Our historical understanding of the superior performance of private schools is no longer accurate.” National data of educational assessment from 1990 to 2011 found that “public schools improved relative to private schools.”

Dynarski concluded: “A case to use taxpayer funds to send children of low-income parents to private schools is based on an expectation that the outcome will be positive. These recent findings point in the other direction.”

- Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.), who is in a tight race for re-election, is trying to prevent the Department of Justice (DOJ) from investigating private voucher

schools for alleged violations of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Johnson inserted prohibitory language into an appropriations bill that would prohibit Justice from using federal dol-

lars to enforce Title II at private schools that receive public funds.

Title II, a federal provision, covers fair access to buildings for disabled children and requires interpretation programs for hearing-impaired students. The ACLU and Disability Rights Wisconsin filed a federal civil rights complaint in 2011, alleging that Milwaukee's voucher programs were denying admission to children with disabilities. The investigation continued for four years, until "the Obama administration quietly closed the probe in late 2015 without taking further action," according to Emma Brown, who writes about education for

The Washington Post

. Brown added on June 28, "The amendment is the latest turn in a long-running fight over whether private schools receiving voucher funds should be held to the same non-discrimination standards under ADA as public schools. More than half the states in the nation now have some kind of publicly funded program to pay for students' private-school tuition, programs that proponents hail as offering an escape from failing public schools, and that critics say are starving public schools of needed resources."

In 2013, says Brown, "DOJ officials told Wisconsin's state education department that the state's decision to pay for children's private-school education does not place those children 'beyond the reach of the federal laws' governing non-discrimination. DOJ also told state officials to make several changes to the program, including improving outreach to families of students

with disabilities and establishing a new procedure for filing complaints about disability-based discrimination.”

The Thursday [May 26] *Dispatch* editorial “charter schools’ purpose forgotten” was spot-on. The 2014 Stanford University CREDO study found that nearly 40% of charters nationwide are worse than regular public schools, while fewer than 20% are any better, and that is mainly because of their selectivity.

And it’s the same for voucher-aided private schools. Studies in Milwaukee, Washington, D.C., and elsewhere show they offer no improvement over public schools. University of Illinois education professors Chris and Sarah Lubienski spell this out in their 2014 book,

***The Public School Advantage: Why Public Schools Out-perform Private Schools.***

In short, vouchers and charters are part of a pernicious campaign to undermine and privatize the public schools that serve 90% of America’s kids. Further, vouchers tend to fragment the student population along religious, ethnic, class, and other lines. In 28 state referendum elections, voters have rejected diversion of public funds to private schools by 2 to 1.

— Edd Doerr, President, Americans for Religious Liberty

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