

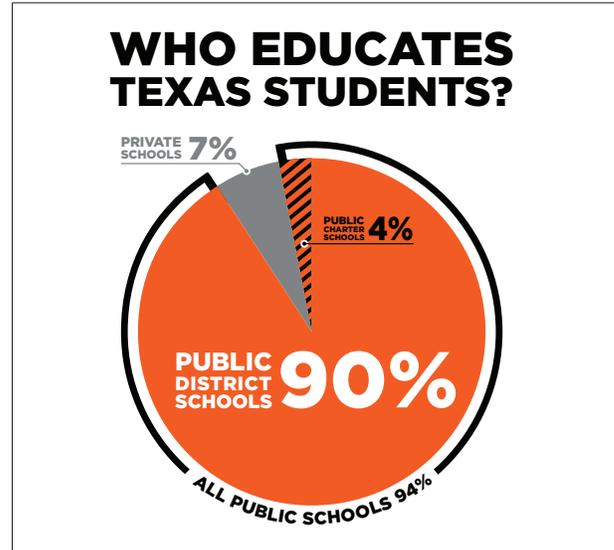
**Vouchers are not a solution.  
They are a distraction.**

Texas public schools educate 94% of school-age children, and they deserve our full attention to realize world-class educational opportunities for all students and a strong future economy for our state.

**Why Vouchers Won't Work for Texas  
Families and Taxpayers:**

- **Vouchers are taxpayer-funded subsidies** for private schools with **no accountability** and **restrictive admissions policies**.
  - Private and religious schools are not required to comply with statewide academic standards, open record laws, or the state accountability system.
  - Unlike public schools, private schools have no obligation to serve students with disabilities or other learning needs.
- **Vouchers do not deliver better academic outcomes** for students.
  - Research on a decade of vouchers nationwide concludes: *"Vouchers have had no clear positive effect on student academic achievement, and mixed outcomes for students overall."*
  - Contrary to the rhetoric, vouchers do not help students "trapped in failing schools." With no accountability for student performance, it is impossible to know whether vouchers result in academic achievement gains.
- **Vouchers do not help children in poverty.** The amount of the voucher is far less than the cost of tuition at most accredited private schools.
- **Voucher "savings" result from a budgetary shell game.** The "taxpayer savings grant" would have the State of Texas reimburse parents for private school tuition at 60% of the average M&O expenditures per student. But in most cases, the state only pays 45%, on average, and often far less, with the remainder coming from local property taxes. This is in addition to an average loss to the state of \$1,000 per student in federal funds caused by the voucher for each student who leaves the public school system.
- **The costs are too great.** Any "savings" promised by voucher proposals come in the form of reduced funding for local public schools, leaving remaining students with less funding support for their teachers, transportation and other vital needs.

**For more information about vouchers, read the Raise Your Hand Texas policy brief, *The Case Against School Vouchers: The Texas Miracle Depends on Strong Public Schools, Not Unproven Gimmicks* at <http://www.raiseyourhandtexas.org/Vouchers-Policy-Brief>.**



\* Percentage total greater than 100 because all percentages are rounded up to the next whole number

## We support school choice benefiting all Texas students.

Everybody agrees parents and students need choices, both because students have unique needs and talents, and because a small subset of Texas public schools are consistent underperformers. Fortunately, the Texas public school system already provides a myriad of choices for parents and students.

### Public School Choice for Texas Parents and Students

#### Charter Schools

While subject to fewer state laws than traditional public schools, charter schools must follow the same fiscal and academic accountability policies as school districts. The majority of charter schools in Texas are open-enrollment charters operated by non-profit corporations, universities or other governmental bodies. Open-enrollment charters serve students from a defined geographic area and are open to any student residing in that area.

Charters are subject to an enrollment cap set in the charter, which may be increased by the Commissioner. More than 200,000 students attend public open-enrollment charter schools in Texas. State law also allows for the local creation of campus charters by school districts with the same type of flexibility. Campus charters operate under an agreement with the local school board and remain part of the school district.

#### Open Enrollment Policies

Many school districts allow students living within the district to choose to attend any school with capacity. Some open enrollment policies may also apply to students residing beyond district boundaries.

#### Magnet Schools

Magnet schools typically focus on specialized curricula such as science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), the arts, or International Baccalaureate (IB). Students must apply to attend, and there are typically eligibility requirements. Magnet schools are not assigned students residing in a specific geographic zone within a district, and some magnet programs allow students residing outside the district to apply. According to an unofficial tally, more than 250,000 students in Texas attend magnet schools.<sup>9</sup>

#### Virtual Schools

Students enrolled in public schools in any district (grade 3 and above) may enroll in an online course through the Texas Virtual School Network (TxVSN), operated by the Texas Education Agency (TEA). In addition, there are currently seven host district/charters operating nine full-time online schools. Over 10,000 students were enrolled in full-time virtual schools in Texas in 2013-14.

#### Students with Multiple District Options

State law allows students to enroll in a district based on the residence of a grandparent or divorced parent even if the student does not reside in the district. A grandparent must provide a substantial amount of after-school care for the student as determined by the school board.

#### Special Needs Transfers

State law requires school boards to allow individual students, via parental request, to transfer to a different campus within the district based on specific needs defined in state statute: bullying; having a member of the family attending special education services at a different campus; or students involved in sexual assault.

#### Parent Petition

Under state law, parents may apply to transfer their child from their assigned neighborhood school to a different school in the district. The school board is required to hear the request and must grant it unless the board determines there is a reasonable basis for denial.

#### Public Education Grant (PEG) Program

Under state law, students in underperforming schools may transfer to a different school in their district or to a school in another district. The school funding system provides incentives for districts to accept PEG students from other school districts.

#### No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Transfers

Under federal law, students in schools not meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) were allowed to transfer to another campus within the district. Due to the NCLB waiver Texas was granted, this law currently applies only to those students granted transfer status prior to the 2013-14 school year. Also under NCLB, students who are in school environments defined as unsafe may move to a different school within the district.