



SHEBOYGAN AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Learning Today. Leading Tomorrow.

Vouchers Expansion Will Hurt Public Schools

As we head toward the November election, the debate over expansion of the state's private school voucher program is front and center. We, the members of the Sheboygan Area School District Board of Education, want to share some facts about why we oppose expansion of this costly program that lacks accountability for parents and taxpayers.

- The voucher program provides public tax dollars to private schools through vouchers given to parents. It is estimated that approximately \$212.5 million will be spent on Wisconsin's existing voucher programs this school year. Further expansion of the program could cost another \$700 million. We fear that public education will see more cuts to pay for this expansion.
- A state survey in 2014 found that 75 percent of the students who received vouchers during the last program expansion were students already enrolled in a private school. Why are public tax dollars being used to help families who can already afford to send their children to private schools?
- Recent reports have projected the state faces up to a \$1.8 billion deficit for the 2015-17 budget. How can the voucher program be expanded when the state faces such a large deficit? Again, we fear cuts to public education will pay for this expansion.
- The timing could not be worse for additional cuts. Despite using the tools available to the district under Act 10, changes in the law have not allowed SASD to keep up with the cost of inflation. Since Act 10 became law, SASD's revenue cap increases have averaged less than 0.5 percent. That's good for local taxpayers, but during the same time inflation has increased an average of 2.0 percent per year.
- SASD's teaching staff has been reduced by over 10%, while our student enrollment has held steady. We cannot continue to reduce funding to public schools - but that is what expanding the statewide voucher program appears poised to do.
- Vouchers eliminate public accountability. Wisconsin lawmakers have pushed for new rigorous standards for public schools, and we have embraced these measures. Private schools are not subject to the same level of accountability. How can parents make informed choices and how can taxpayers know their tax money is funding quality schools? Why

would some of the lawmakers who pushed for public school accountability now want to funnel more public tax money into schools that will not be held accountable?

We take very seriously our responsibility to educate each and every child. We encourage everyone who supports public education to contact their legislators and the governor and encourage them not to expand Wisconsin's voucher program. The ability of public schools to provide tomorrow's leaders with a strong 21st century education is counting on your involvement.

Submitted by: Sheboygan Area School District Board of Education

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