

Public Schools Are Performing



Peggy Buffington, Ph.D.

We must stop diverting precious public funds to charters and vouchers.

While public education has been the cornerstone of our democracy, the state of Indiana has been increasing the funding for the privatization of education. Charter schools and vouchers are being given taxpayer dollars at the expense of public schools. Indiana now has a three-tiered education system: 1. private religious schools, 2. charters, and 3. public schools. Should there be a three-tiered taxpayer-funded education system? Can taxpayers fund all three tiers, and why should they?

Why should taxpayers pay for charter schools to replicate services of the public schools? Why should taxpayers pay for private, religious education? Why legislators are favoring and giving priority to charters and private education is a question every voter should be asking. When they say public schools are not performing and privatizing schools is the solution, ask for the facts.

Public schools are performing better all the time. Steady improvement over the past 20 years in Indiana's public

maintaining in law that a child does not have to attend school until 7 years old.

Second, the state should provide adequate funding so that schools have enough counselors to provide interventions for the social/emotional needs of children and their families. College and career counselors should be increased to match the Indiana 2020 goal of post-secondary attainment.

Third, interventions should be funded and be readily available at every level. Children come to us with different degrees of developmental awareness and academic needs. Literacy is one of the most vital things we can give a child.

Also, funding should be increased for science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). Career and technical education funding should be increased so as to open enrollment for more classes, which fill and close quickly. Funding to increase certification and college classes in high school is necessary. Career pathways and exploratory electives are critical for students to know whether they truly want to pursue a profession. Early college in high school means less remediation in college and graduating college on time.

In order to have a world-class education system in Indiana, we need our state to restore and properly fund public education, which means we need to stop giving away precious public education dollars to charters and vouchers. The truth is that public schools are performing in Indiana! Fully funding public education is critical. Splitting taxpayer dollars with charters and vouchers weakens the public schools in their capabilities to operate and deliver a world-class education system. **EQ**

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Words such as "competition," "reform" and "school choice" are used to promote the privatization of schools in Indiana. These words sound appealing to anyone who wants the best for children. The truth is that these are political catchphrases that do little to enhance education. Politicians also say "put more money in the classroom," yet they continue to divert more money away from public schools to more charters and vouchers. In 2009, when the governor was calling for consolidation to reduce overhead and administrative costs, there were 294 school districts. Conversely, charter schools were encouraged to open, and now today there are more than 370 school districts. With more districts to serve, there are fewer dollars to allocate. The outcome is less money to the public schools as increased coveted tax dollars go to charters and private institutions.

schools has been clearly documented. Currently, Indiana's public schools stand at or near their highest marks in history on attendance rate, SAT math, ACT, National Assessment of Educational Progress, ISTEP+, and percentage earning Academic Honors diplomas and Core 40 diplomas.

How are charter schools performing? Charter schools are not performing well in Indiana. Many are being closed. The success of a few cannot justify the taxpayers' expense.

What could public schools do with the funding that is being given away to charters and vouchers?

First, early education that provides for the development of social and academic achievement of a child is critical and should be fully funded. Preschool education should be the norm for every child. If Indiana is committed to raising academic achievement, it must mandate full-day kindergarten instead of