



LEGISLATIVE POSITION MEMO

Philadelphia Federation of Teachers
Jerry T. Jordan, President

JUNE 26, 2023

TO: Members of the General Assembly

CC: Hon. Governor Josh Shapiro, Hon. Secretary of Education Dr. Khalid Mumin

FROM: Jerry T. Jordan, President

RE: Additional Voucher Research

To provide additional context for the memo I shared last week in opposition to Lifeline Scholarships (SB795, HB1432), and in the wake of the introduction of new EITC expansion bill (HB1513), I wanted to provide additional research that outlines many of the concerns we have with any form of vouchers.

Hart Research Poll: In January, AFT released a Peter Hart survey of parents and voters that found: "Just 20% of voters prioritize giving parents more choice over which schools their children attend, including private school education, while 80% say that improving the quality of public schools is the higher priority. Public school parents echo this view by an identical four-to-one ratio (80% to 20%)."

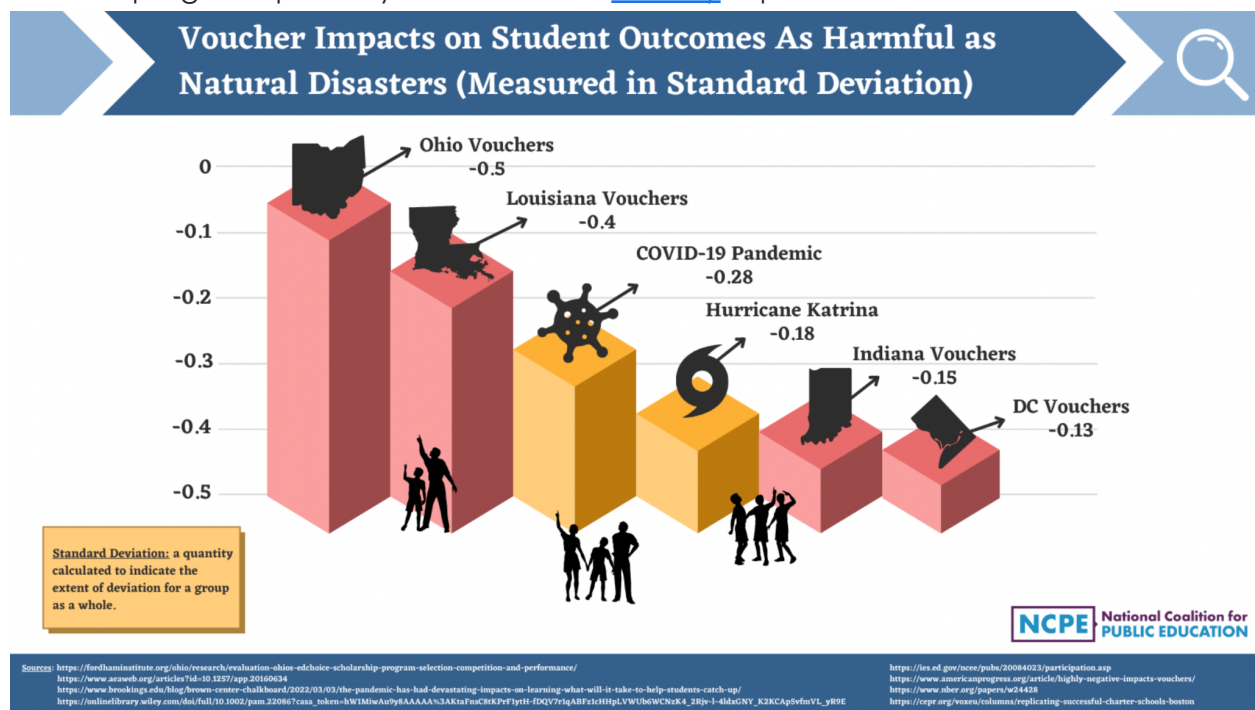
The poll has a great deal of other useful information about parents and voters' priorities that indicate that the public and parents agree that the right wing's focus on a culture war doesn't address the real issues facing schools. Those issues include expanding access to career and technical education, helping schools address shortages of qualified teachers, guidance counselors, social workers and nurses, reducing class size, expanding literacy and reading programs for struggling students, increasing teacher salaries and improving and modernizing school buildings. (For more information, see our [press release](#), [toplines](#), and [slides](#).)

Voucher Expansion Really Does Drain Valuable Resources From Public Schools: A new [report](#) by the Columbia University professors for the Education Law Center and Southern Poverty Law Center looks at the long term impact of diversions of public dollars to voucher programs in Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Louisiana, Ohio, and Wisconsin, which have the longest voucher track records. Overall, they find that between 2008 and 2019, as voucher programs expanded there was a reduced effort to fund public

schools in these states. The authors measure this by looking at public education spending as a share of state gross domestic product. For example, Wisconsin went from spending 4 percent of its GDP on K-12, to spending 3.4 percent. Similarly, Indiana went from 3.7 to 3.2 percent. They also find that over this time, public education funding in the other 43 states grew by an average of 10.7 percent. In six of the seven voucher states they examined the average funding increase lagged that of the non voucher states.

Looking at a more recent proposal, the Florida Policy Institute [finds](#) that the DeSantis universal voucher expansion would drain \$4 billion from public schools.

Updated National Coalition for Public Education Toolkit: NCPE has updated their [toolkit](#) on vouchers, which provides a helpful overview. NCPE has also created two infographics based on work with Josh Cowen that look at how recent voucher results compare to the [impact](#) of disasters like COVID-19 on student performance and how voucher programs primarily serve students [already](#) in private schools.



We should use every dollar to pay for the things we know students, parents, and communities need: smaller classes, better and safer facilities, and a host of issues we have outlined in our legislative platform (pft.org/platform2023).