



## Arguments For and Against School Choice in 2017

*What are opponents saying about school choice in the Trump/DeVos era—and how does our team combat their flawed rhetoric?*

When it comes to lobbying to block school choice in the states, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the National Education Association (NEA) are the two biggest spenders. So what are they saying to turn teachers, parents and policymakers off to the idea of educational choice programs? And what are the best ways to refute those claims when you hear them? We've got you covered.

**AFT: "Private school vouchers offer false choices." Look at negative effects coming out of Louisiana, Ohio and Indiana.**

EdChoice: In one breath public school advocates say their schools and teachers should not be penalized based on students' test scores because there are so many more measures of educational success, yet in the next breath, they claim school choice should be stopped at all costs because a handful of studies show slight declines in students' test scores.

The truth is our opponents are cherry-picking a few instances where *some* children test poorly in their first years using school vouchers. They do not account for the adjustment period any child goes through when they switch school cultures and curricula. They don't mention that many of those students' scores improve in their second year. They leave out that these outcomes could be improved by simply changing how these programs are designed. Worst yet, they omit the fact that more than a dozen studies find vouchers result in better student performance, and 32 studies find that students who choose to stay in their public schools actually perform better when other students leave their schools to find a better fit using school choice programs.

**NEA: "Vouchers were not designed to help low-income children."**

EdChoice: School choice is designed to help all children, regardless of their income or neighborhood. The ZIP Code-based public education system has kept low-income kids out of quality schools, and studies have shown it also has contributed to—nay, exacerbated—socioeconomic segregation in public schools for decades.

**NEA: "A pure voucher system would only encourage economic, racial, ethnic, and religious stratification in our society."**

EdChoice: According to every single empirical study on the topic, school vouchers lead to more ethnic and racial integration in schools, so there is literally no evidence to support that vouchers, in practice, result in more racial or ethnic stratification. Moreover, vouchers break down the socioeconomic barriers to entry that have historically prevented many students from accessing schools that work best for them.

**AFT: “Private school vouchers lack accountability.”**

EdChoice: Private schools have been regulated by the federal, state and local governments for a long time—long before school vouchers ever existed. Private schools are held accountable for their fiscal health and student performance by parents. In the private sector where families have the freedom and means to choose, parents will leave a private school if it doesn’t serve their children well.

**AFT: “Vouchers take money away from neighborhood public schools.”**

EdChoice: This one is pretty easy. Education funding belongs to students, not a particular school type or building. When lawmakers allocate taxpayer resources for K–12 education, they do so on a “per-pupil” basis. If a family chooses a public school, the dollars follow the student to that school. That’s how it should work across the board.

**NEA: “There is no need to set up new threats to schools for not performing. What is needed is help for the students, teachers, and schools who are struggling.”**

EdChoice: Vouchers are not a threat to any school or schooling option that families want to utilize. If a school isn’t meeting the needs of those it serves, they will leave. For decades, though, they haven’t been able to leave unless they bought or rented a house located in a “good” school district. We’re breaking down those lines, making it clear that families should be in the driver’s seat, not bureaucrats drawing lines on maps.