

Buckeye Association of School Administrators



Suite 150, 8050 North High Street
Columbus, OH 43235
Phone: 614-846-4080
Fax: 614-846-4081
www.basa-ohio.org

Executive Director
R. Kirk Hamilton, Ph.D.

Chairman Jones and members of the House Bill 9 Conference Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today regarding Ohio's EdChoice Voucher system. I am Kevin Miller, Director of Governmental Relations for the Buckeye Association of School Administrators. BASA represents 800 superintendents and associate members from across the state. Previous to this position, I was a public educator for 37 years, with 16 of those as a superintendent, first at Hicksville Village Schools and most recently at Ottawa Hills Local Schools.

Throughout the testimony regarding Ohio's EdChoice Voucher system, there have been calls for increased accountability for private and parochial schools that accept public funds through the EdChoice voucher program. Unfortunately, recent legislative actions have done exactly the opposite, loosening up assessment practices and further eroding an already uneven playing field.

In the past, private and parochial schools were required to administer state assessments to all voucher students, the same assessments that traditional public school students took. Schools that had at least 65 percent of their total enrollment made up of voucher students were required to administer state assessments to all of their students.

However, included in HB 166, the budget bill, was a provision that lessened assessment requirements for voucher students. Now, private and parochial schools that enroll voucher students have the option to administer an alternative assessment to students in grades 3-8 instead of the state exams given to public school students. The law specifies that ODE will compile a list of alternative exams. It does not limit the department to choosing just one alternative. That means that private and parochial schools will have various assessments to choose from. Public schools will continue to be beholden to one state-required assessment in each subject area.

Legislation passed in 2015 made it possible for voucher and non-voucher students to bypass the state's extensive testing and graduation requirements with a mere single, alternative assessment. Finally, in private high schools that are accredited by the Independent Association of the Central States, non-voucher students are explicitly exempted from all state tests and state graduation requirements.

These changes and exemptions decrease accountability and increases the difficulty for the public to make apples to apples comparisons between the performance of public school students and their private and parochial school counterparts.

One questions the validity of such exemptions when considering the performance of voucher students in private and parochial schools. As an example, in 2018-2019, 38% of EdChoice voucher students in grades 3 through 8 tested as proficient in mathematics. The state average of public school students was 64%, 26 percentage points higher. In addition, 38% of EdChoice students in grades 9 through 12 tested as proficient in mathematics. The state average of public school students was 48%, 10 percentage points higher. A comparison of all subject areas is included at the end of my testimony. You can see that public school students outperform private

and parochial school voucher students in 6 of 7 tested areas; in elementary science by 32 percentage points.

Aside from testing requirements, consider the accountability and expense required of public schools through mandates such as College Credit Plus programming, required professional development and training in areas such as AED use, child abuse, substance abuse, violence prevention, human trafficking, suicide awareness, and Positive Behavior Intervention Supports, just to name a few; curriculum requirements in everything from financial literacy to dating violence; local professional development committees; emergency management plans; the resident educator program; the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System; the Ohio Principal Evaluation System; the RESA program for new teachers; special education programming; services for English Learners; cumbersome EMIS reporting requirements; conversion of financial reports to GAAP; asbestos inspection; county auditor fees; state audit fees; screening and identification of gifted students; election expenses, and so much more.

If these are important requirements for public schools, why aren't they important requirements for private and parochial schools who accept public funding? Remember that in addition to the \$4,650 or \$6,000 that voucher students receive, private schools in Ohio already receive \$1,300 per student from the state of Ohio to cover administrative costs.

We support the House's plan (SB 89) would phase-out district-paid, performance-based vouchers with new vouchers paid for by the state, increase income-based voucher eligibility from 200% to 250% of the federal poverty level, and require the state, instead of districts, to pay the voucher if a student is both income-eligible and building-eligible beginning in the 2021-2022 school year.

One important change that I would suggest is in the sunseting of territory transfer legislation that was placed in the budget bill at the last second. This law allows political subdivisions to transfer their property from one school district to another without the input and say of impacted stakeholders. This law has already cost the Plain Local School district upwards of \$500,000 to defend their right to keep property from transferring from their district to another district. SB 89 sunsets this law as of September 1, 2020; however, this allows property owners to take advantage of this ill-conceived legislation for the November ballot. Please consider sunseting the law immediately with the passage of emergency legislation.

Chairman Jones and members of the House Bill 9 conference committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide input regarding Ohio's EdChoice Voucher program. I am happy to address your questions.

2018-2019 Statewide Proficiency Rates Grades 3-8

	EdChoice Voucher Students	Public School Students
English/Language Arts	49.2%	63.65% (+14.45%)
Mathematics	38.3%	63.13% (+24.83%)
Science	34.6%	66.6% (+32%)

2018-2019 Statewide Proficiency Rates Grades 9-12

	EdChoice Voucher Students	Public School Students
English/Language Arts	54.2%	67.25% (+13.05%)
Mathematics	37.9%	47.65% (+9.75%)
Science	69.5%	73.7% (+4.2%)
Social Studies	79.1% (+1.2%)	77.9%

**Proficiency Rates--7 Years in Voucher Program
Grades 3 -8***

	EdChoice Voucher Students
English/Language Arts	48.1%
Mathematics	36.2%
Science	46.7%

*These students would be in grades 6 through 8 to have at least 7 years in the EdChoice Voucher Program

**Proficiency Rates--7 Years in Voucher Program
Grades 9-12**

	EdChoice Voucher Students
English/Language Arts	60.5%
Mathematics	40.5%
Science	73.0%
Social Studies	82.4%