

MYTHS *or* FACTS?

Donald Trump on Education

Appearing at a charter school in Cleveland on Sept. 8—a school that has received failing marks from one of the least-robust state education oversight systems—Donald Trump offered his most specific education proposal to date: Taking \$20 billion of existing federal dollars to establish a block grant for states to use to fund private school voucher programs.

Vouchers may be a sound bite Republicans love, but it's a failed educational strategy. A new report from the nonpartisan Government Accountability Office, which studied private school voucher programs in Arizona, Indiana, Ohio and Wisconsin, confirms this. The GAO found that voucher schools directly take money from public schools, do not improve educational opportunities for disadvantaged students, have lower standards for teacher education requirements, are neither transparent nor accountable for the public dollars expended, and complicate efforts to implement education services effectively.

As Trump doubles down on his flawed education ideology, it's worth checking his facts.

Claim

Trump says his \$20 billion program would provide vouchers for 11 million students to attend the schools of their choice.

Reality

Trump's plan would harm 10 students for every 1 student it covers. The average cost of a K-12 private school is [\\$13,640](#) per student, per year. Only a few states offer state-funded vouchers, so Trump's program would have to carry the full cost in most states. As a result, it would serve as few as 1.4 million students while stripping funding from 10.5 million children or more.

To fund his \$20 billion voucher program, Trump would have to cut all Title I funding and another \$5 billion in other federal education programs. **The Title I cuts alone could strip critical federal funding from [up to 56,000 public schools](#) serving more than [21 million children](#).**

Here is the likely impact of this massive Title I cut:

- Losing tens of thousands of highly qualified teachers and classroom aides, increasing class sizes and decreasing students' access to one-on-one attention.
- Cutting curriculum improvement programs and professional development for educators.
- Slashing resources for extended learning time and tutoring for kids who need extra help.
- Firing counselors and ending counseling programs that help at-risk kids stay in school.
- Cutting programs that increase parent participation and involvement.
- Firing school nurses and ending in-school medical and dental care for students.
- Cutting funding for classroom technology, school supplies and other critical materials for high-needs students.

In addition to ending Title I support, Trump would need to take roughly \$5 billion more from other priority areas to reach \$20 billion. This could mean cuts to federal support for preschool, Pell grants, and crucial resources that help low-income students, students with disabilities and English language learners.

The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of 1.6 million professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

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PRESIDENT

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Claim

Vouchers boost student achievement by allowing families to choose private schools.

Reality

Trump's proposal could have a devastating impact on student achievement. According to studies of voucher programs in the [District of Columbia, Milwaukee and Cleveland](#), and most recently in [Indiana and Louisiana](#), students offered vouchers do not perform better in reading and math than students in public schools. Voucher programs also fail to offer participating students greater educational resources. [Department of Education studies](#) of the D.C. voucher program show participants are less likely to have access to English as a Second Language programs, learning support and special needs programs, tutors, counselors, and school nurses than students not in the program.

Claim

Vouchers improve opportunities for kids from low-income families.

Reality

Vouchers rarely cover the cost of tuition or other mandatory fees for private schools. In Wisconsin, the state Department of Public Instruction found that [67 percent of voucher applicants were already enrolled in private schools](#). Under most voucher programs, a private school can take taxpayer money but [still deny admission to any student](#). In contrast, public schools, which serve 90 percent of American students, do not turn children or families away.

Conclusion

Trump's education proposals would put millions of students at risk, help far fewer students than he promises and devastate public schools. No surprise from a man whose only foray into "education," Trump University, was a scam so brazen that multiple states launched investigations. While Trump faces ongoing lawsuits in California and New York, campaign contributions by Trump to attorneys general in Florida and Texas—both of whom declined to prosecute—have raised questions about possible pay-to-play.

Claim

"I'm not cutting services, but I'm cutting spending. And I may cut the Department of Education."

Reality

In addition to his brazen voucher scheme, Trump's promise to cut the Department of Education would slash services to those students most in need. This is the impact of his rhetoric on real people:

- [8 million students](#) every year would lose Pell grants.
- 490,000 or more teacher positions would be eliminated.
- [5 million](#) children and students with disabilities would lose [\\$12.7 billion](#) used every year to ensure that they receive a high-quality education.
- [750,000](#) or more students from military families, Native American students, students living in U.S. territories, and students living on federal property or Native American lands would lose [\\$1.1 billion](#) per year for their schools.
- [4,000](#) or more rural school districts would lose more than [\\$175 million](#) used annually to help improve the quality of teaching and learning in many hard-to-staff schools.
- [\\$700 million](#) used by states to support the [5 million](#) English language learners currently in public schools—representing close to 10 percent of all students—would be cut.