

Vote FOR 1

Put Utah Kids 1st

In February, Governor Huntsman and the State Legislature created the Parents Choice in Education Act. This program provides scholarships that allow parents to choose the school that is best for their children. Since then, there has been a lot of misinformation about this program from organizations that want to take that choice away from Utah families.

*Scholarship programs like this exist in many states across the country, and they have led to academic improvement for students who use them, and for students who choose to stay in public schools.¹ Let's look at the facts. **The facts prove it: Referendum 1 is good for families and good for public education.***

Myth: Public schools will be hurt

Facts: Referendum 1 helps public schools in three ways:

- 1. Increase per student funding in public schools.** This school year taxpayers will spend more than \$7,500 per student in public schools. The average voucher amount is \$2,000. That means that, when a student leaves with a voucher, \$5,500 stays in the local school increasing per pupil funding and lowering class size. That savings means more than \$1 billion for public school students over thirteen years, according to Utah State University.
- 2. Ease the burden of the coming enrollment crisis.** More than 150,000⁴ new children are projected to enter the public school system in the next ten years. Classrooms are already bursting at the seams with the largest class sizes in the country. Referendum 1 shifts some of that growth to private schools, where space already exists⁵, at a much lower cost to taxpayers. That leaves more money available for public schools, and will help them better handle thousands of new students.
- 3. Reduce class size and increase teacher pay.** Because public schools will have fewer students, with more money per student, schools will be able to reduce class size. A recent study from the Independent Women's Forum also found that programs like Referendum 1 lead to better pay and higher job satisfaction for teachers.

Myth: It's just a subsidy for the rich

Facts: Referendum 1 is targeted to benefit low- and middle-income families.

Wealthy families already have school choice. They can afford to send their kids to private schools without a scholarship, or to buy homes in neighborhoods with the best schools. Referendum 1 levels the playing field, giving all families the same choices and opportunities that kids from wealthier families already have.

Parental choice scholarships make those opportunities a reality for all families. Private schools in Utah are a lot less expensive than most people think. A study from Utah State University in 2004 found that average K-8 tuition in Utah private schools was less than \$4,000.⁵ Many private schools have tuition less than \$3,000, which is the scholarship amount for low-income children.⁶

And students who choose their local public school benefit, too. When students transfer from public schools, class sizes are naturally reduced. And since public schools keep funding for those students locally,² the students who remain get increased funding. **Referendum 1 is a benefit to all students in Utah.**

¹ Robinson, Gerard, Marquette University. See http://www.itlmuonline.com/_incoming/ITLSCSurvey2005.pdf

² Parents Choice in Education Act. See <http://le.utah.gov/~code/TITLE53A/htm/53A02055.htm>

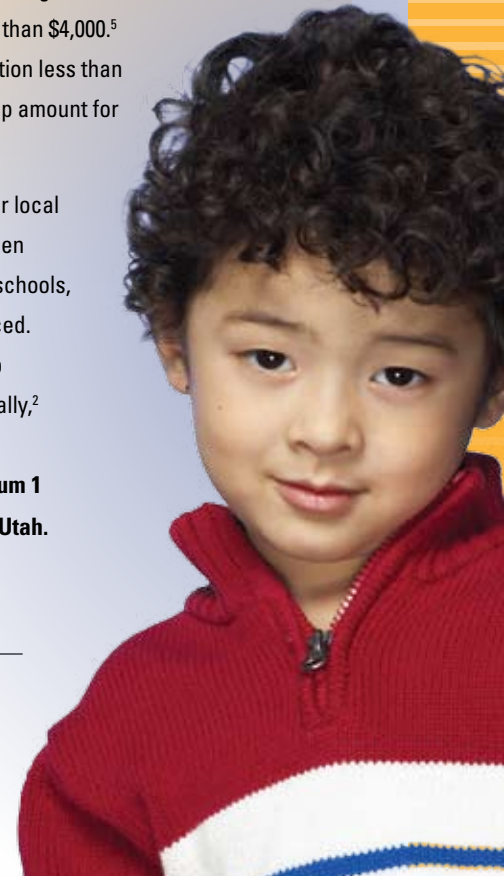
³ Data from Annual Financial Reports for Utah School Districts. Compiled by Utah Taxpayers' Association. See <http://utahtaxpayer.blogspot.com/2007/08/7500-per-utah-k-12-student-in-fy2008.html>

⁴ Utah State Office of Education Projections.

See http://www.schools.utah.gov/finance/other/AnnualReport/06ar/Statistics/STUDENTS/State_Enrollment_Projections.xls

⁵ Utah State University in "Estimating Demand and Supply Response to Tuition Tax Credits for Private School Tuition in Utah" final report to the Utah State Legislature. See <http://friedmanfoundation.org/friedman/downloadFile.do?id=22>

⁶ Parent Choice in Education Act. See <http://le.utah.gov/~code/TITLE53A/htm/53A02054.htm>



Myth: Private Schools have no accountability

Facts: Referendum 1 provides better accountability for both private and public schools by holding schools accountable directly to parents instead of bureaucrats.

Real accountability comes when parents have real choices, and are armed with facts and information. So, Referendum 1 requires participating private schools to:⁷

- ▶ Give a nationally recognized test every year and share the results with parents (public schools are required to do this only in third, fifth, and eighth grades)
- ▶ Go through an independent financial review to verify that they are financially stable, and that they track scholarship funds separately from other tuition
- ▶ Hire teachers with bachelors' or higher degrees, or other special skills, and publish those qualifications to parents
- ▶ Publicly disclose all the services they offer as well as their accreditation

Then, parents have the control. They get to choose the school that best meets their child's needs.

Referendum 1 also increases accountability between parents and local public schools. Local principals and administrators will answer to parents, instead of just bureaucrats. Wisconsin's scholarship program led to increased local control and parental involvement. Local principals now control 95 percent of their budget at the school level,⁸ so they can respond to the needs of local families. That's the accountability that bureaucrats try to avoid, but that parents deserve.

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⁷ Parent Choice in Education Act.

See <http://le.utah.gov/~code/TITLE53A/htm/53A02053.htm>

⁸ American Education Reform Council in "Milwaukee's Public Schools in an Era of Choice," October 2003.

See <http://www.cse.org/reports/031007choice.pdf>

⁹ See p. 22 http://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/deseg/Racial_Transformation.pdf

¹⁰ National Center for Policy Analysis.

See http://www.ncpa.org/sub/dpd/index.php?Article_ID=14796

Myth: Schools will be more segregated

Facts: Referendum 1 actually leads to less segregation in Utah schools.

Public schools are already segregated, largely by income.

According to the Civil Rights Project, Utah's public schools are among the most racially segregated in the country.⁹

- ▶ Schools in South Provo, Downtown Ogden, or on the west side of Salt Lake City have students that are almost entirely poor and minority.
- ▶ Schools in Alpine, Holladay and Bountiful's hills are almost entirely wealthy and white.

That's because students are assigned to schools based only on where they live rather than how schools perform or what children need. Where families live is mostly based on income. But when families choose schools, instead of having bureaucrats draw arbitrary boundaries, schools become less segregated.

Just earlier this year, statistics proved that students who use scholarships attended schools that were more diverse, not less.¹⁰

Wealthy families already have such choices. Governor Huntsman signed the scholarship program to level the playing field and provide those choices to all families.

Protect your right to choose the best school for your children — Vote FOR 1

