

## The undermining of public schools in North Carolina

*Letter to the editor, [Brunswick Beacon](#), 05.09.24*

One of the most important investments that we as taxpayers make is funding our public school system. Education helps determine whether children become successful, productive citizens or become dependent on taxpayer-funded “safety-net” programs. Well-educated workers are also vital for companies investing in local job creation.

North Carolina was once a leader in public education. Unfortunately, the Republican takeover of the NC General Assembly spurred the erosion of public school support and diversion of funding to private schools through school voucher programs. The NC Supreme Court in *Leandro v. State of North Carolina* recognized a constitutional obligation to provide all children a sound basic education with competent and well-trained teachers and sufficient resources.

Originally created as a response to desegregation efforts by white families who preferred school segregation, today vouchers are often “sold” as a means for minority and low-income children to opt out of their local, high-poverty, under-resourced schools. Vouchers shift taxpayer dollars from public schools to largely unregulated private entities and subsidize families that don’t need assistance. Meanwhile, scarce tax dollars are drained from already underfunded public schools.

There is also no evidence that private or religious schools offer a higher quality education for voucher students than public schools. Unlike public schools, private school teachers need not be licensed or pass criminal background tests.

A study of voucher effects by the Economic Policy Institute concluded that providing parents with expanded public school programs would produce much higher gains for students than voucher programs. Such programs include early childhood education, after-school and summer programs, teacher pre-service training, and improved student health and nutrition programs.

The vast majority of North Carolina’s 1.43 million students are educated in our public schools. We must better serve those students instead of shifting funds from the public educational system to a selective private school system that is damaging to our communities across the state.

Robert Bannerman  
Supply