

WHO IS SERVED BY CLEVELAND SCHOOL VOUCHERS?

The U.S. Supreme Court will soon decide whether to uphold a 2000 federal appeals court declaration that Cleveland's voucher program is unconstitutional based on First Amendment separation of church and state.

It's a good time to evaluate the five-year-old program, not only for constitutionality, but also to see if Cleveland vouchers have served those they promised to serve: students of the city's struggling public schools. Recent studies on Cleveland vouchers show the program has minimally involved these students, and has directed most of its funds into religious education.

■ **This year, 99.4 percent of Cleveland's voucher students were enrolled in religious schools. This is an increase from the 96 percent cited by the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals in its decision against the program. Religious enrollment has grown steadily since 1996-97 (the program's first year), when 76.8 percent of participants attended religious schools. Only 25 students out of 4,202 voucher students now attend non-religious schools.**

Where the Students Go, Hanauer, Policy Matters Ohio, www.policymattersohio.org/voucherintro.html

■ **Only three non-religious schools now participate in the program, down from 11 in 1998-99.**

Where the Students Go, Hanauer, Policy Matters Ohio

■ **In 2001, just one out of five voucher students had attended a Cleveland public school just before they began receiving vouchers. One out of three participants had already been enrolled in private school the year prior to becoming a voucher student. Most of the rest entered in kindergarten.**

Where the Students Come From, Schiller, Policy Matters Ohio, www.policymattersohio.org/voucherintro.html

■ **Those students who did transfer out of public schools to enroll in voucher schools were more likely to come from a high-performing public school, a magnet school, or a school with test scores better than the district average.**

"Better district schools lose students to vouchers," Scott, Catalyst, www.catalyst-cleveland.org

■ **A smaller number of African-American students receives voucher money than their proportion in the Cleveland public schools. Last year, black students were 71 percent of Cleveland's public school students, but they were only 53 percent of voucher students. Black students are also less likely to live close to a voucher school than white or Hispanic students.**

Policy Matters Ohio is a state-wide research institute, funded primarily by the George Gund Foundation. Visit our website to view all our publications on local policy issues www.policymattersohio.org/voucherintro.html.