

students would qualify for the vouchers if the program took effect today, though two of those are slated for closing.

But Christine Wolff, a CPS spokeswoman, said that data is flawed.

"We don't think that many of our schools should be on that list," she said. A preliminary review found five schools, including Pleasant Ridge and Pleasant Hill, that should not have been considered as persistently failing, she said.

Flawed or not, Warner said the voucher program is a poor way to spend state education dollars.

"I'm not sure it gets at the heart of making education better for poor children," she said.

Newell is concerned the \$3,500 voucher won't help underprivileged students if private school tuitions exceed that amount. She is collecting data about the cost of private schools in Cincinnati, she said.

Board members were also unsure of the potential financial impact on the district.

"I don't know how many people will choose it," she said.

Newell pointed out that in Cleveland, the voucher program might not have been as big a problem for public schools as some had anticipated.

A study from 2001 conducted by public policy research institute Ohio Policy Matters revealed that only one in five voucher students left public schools for private schools. Of the 3,741 students in the program that year, 1,706 had enrolled in private schools as kindergartners, 1,234 had attended private schools and 801 had attended Cleveland public schools.

The statewide expansion plan, however, is open to students who have attended a persistently failing public school for one year.

The Associated Press contributed to this story.

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