

Vouchers

(continued from page 1)

schools. As long as parents are choosing public or private schools for their children, Sr. Addy says, they are educational consumers. And as consumers, they are entitled to a quality product.

"Schools must be held accountable for the quality of the education which they offer," Sr. Addy said. "REACH supports the educational voucher system in Pennsylvania because we believe that it will encourage both public and non-public schools to constantly improve their product through competition."

REACH members believe that parents of students attending non-public schools already pay double for education. In addition to school tuition, these families also pay taxes which are used to fund public education. By allowing families of non-public school students to use public money to pay private school tuition, the educational voucher system would eliminate this double taxation, they say.

"Research indicates that the non-public schools are actually saving the taxpayers money," said Sr. Addy. "According to our figures, approximately 20% of all school-age children in the state attend private schools. That's 300,000 students whose education the state does not have to pay for."

Opponents cite cost

Opponents of the proposed voucher system point to its possible cost.

The cost of vouchers is estimated at \$300 million in the first year alone according to state representatives George C. Hasay and Phyllis Mundy.

"These costs would probably explode once the program is implemented," Hasay said.

Mundy, a member of the House Education Committee has several problems with the bill. Among them: there are no tuition controls; private schools could theo-

retically increase their tuition as much as they wish, Mundy believes. And there are no income guidelines, so a wealthy family would receive the same subsidy as a low-income family.

Mundy adds that the vouchers would be federally taxable, shifting money from Pennsylvania to the federal government.

"Of the \$300 million, we heard almost \$84 million would go to the federal government," said Mundy. "I have a real hard time asking my constituents who are making minimum wage to pay extra taxes so that someone who is wealthy can send their children to private schools."

"And I would hate to see this disintegrate into a battle between public, private and parochial schools," added Mundy.

If the bill were to survive committee hearings and come to a vote as it's written now, both Hasay and Mundy said they would vote against it.

"I may vote for a version affordable to the state, with income limits," said Hasay. Hasay also thinks that a system which would give state tax credits to parents with children in private schools is worth investigating.

State Senator Charles Lemmond said that he hasn't yet decided if he's in favor of, or against the Senate version of the voucher bill. Lemmond said that Senate hearings on the proposal have just started.

United States Representative Paul Kanjorski is concerned that the proposed voucher system is inequitable. "We must make absolutely certain that we do not take funds from public education," he commented. "And we must avoid making the public school system a throwaway. I am in favor of some type of educational voucher system; however I feel that the present bills need reworking before they are enacted. Certainly some sort of income guidelines must be estab-

lished so that families who cannot afford private schools are not penalized."

Special ed and special needs

Another factor is special education. Not all private schools accept special-needs students. Janice Huntzinger, director of Wilkes Barre Academy, indicated that her school is not a cure for children with problems or special needs. All non-public schools in Luzerne County have access to the learning support services of Intermediate Unit #18, which provides teachers for students with various types of disabilities, she said.

The Pennsylvania State Education Association, the teachers' union, is among the many organizations opposing the proposed system. Marilyn Glogowski, president of the Lake-Lehman Education Association, commented, "We are definitely opposed to the voucher system. Tax money set aside for the public school system should remain with the public schools."

Dr. Dominick Graziano, the IU #18 superintendent representative to the Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators, agreed with Glogowski. "We are not against choice. But we definitely are against using public funds for private schools," Graziano said. "That's the real issue - is it proper to use public money to finance private schools? When people compare the per-pupil costs of public versus private schools, there is a lot that they don't see. For example, state money and local school districts provide the non-public schools with assistance in transportation, textbooks, drug education, remedial programs and materials."

According to Representative Hasay, the state presently spends \$70.5 million on non-public schools for remedial education, textbooks, transportation and supplies.



Private school populations could rise

Four of five non-public school administrators contacted by The Post believed that implementation of the voucher system could mean an increase in their enrollments. Only Wyoming Seminary felt that educational vouchers would not greatly affect them.

Like all Catholic schools, Gate of Heaven and Bishop O'Reilly are subsidized in part by the Scranton Diocese.

Mrs. Mary Tighe, principal of Gate of Heaven School in Dallas, explained that her school's per-pupil cost is \$1,750, half of which is funded by tuition and the rest by four supporting parishes, other contributing parishes, fund-raising activities and private donations. Non-Catholic students whose churches do not make up

the half of tuition normally picked up by the parishes must pay this amount themselves. Gate of Heaven's staff of 22 teachers (some part-time) are responsible for 410 students in grades kindergarten through eight.

At Bishop O'Reilly High School, the per pupil cost of educating each of the 326 students is \$3,707. The students are taught by 27 teachers. Tuition is \$2,190 for those students in a participating parish, \$2,430 for those without a participating parish. Students are required to sell calendars which deducts \$300 from that cost. Low income families may negotiate tuition at O'Reilly.

Wyoming Valley Montessori School, an alternative school which allows students to work at their own pace stressing hands-on learning and the development of basic thinking skills, houses 55 students in kindergarten through sixth grade, with a staff of six full-time teachers.

According to Jean Warrington, school administrator, the average tuition ranges between \$1,200 and \$3,500 per year, depending on the student's program, while the average per-pupil cost is approximately \$2,300.

"The question of educational vouchers is very complicated,"

than \$1 million in scholarships which we provided this year."

Tuition at Seminary ranges from \$3,300 a year for morning nursery school to \$7,500 a year for day Upper School students.

Warrington said, "Although our school has some financial aid available, I would anticipate an increase in our enrollment with the voucher system. Our school is still new, but we're growing more popular." Warrington added that she sees many Montessori concepts becoming popular in the traditional public school system.

Huntzinger of Wilkes Barre Academy explained that her school is very selective in admitting students. Tuition and per-pupil cost are \$2,400 at the academy, which employs seven teachers and houses 95 students. "Vouchers might help me to pay my teachers better," Huntzinger commented.

David Davies, Academic Dean at Wyoming Seminary, does not think vouchers will have much effect on his school. "While I am in favor of things that make schools examine themselves, I certainly don't see the voucher system as something that can make a difference. For Wyoming Seminary, a more important way to make us accessible to the lower and middle-class students is through the more

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