



NC SCHOOL VOUCHERS: USING TAX DOLLARS TO DISCRIMINATE AGAINST STUDENTS & FAMILIES

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“Every student must adhere to these standards, whether they are on school property or away from the campus, during the school year or summer break. Maintaining a Christian environment can only be accomplished when students who manifest poor testimonies or contribute to negative peer pressure are disallowed the privilege of attending HCS...HCS students must consistently observe the following standards: Faithful church attendance to a Bible believing church...Refrain from listening to music and attending dances with violent or vulgar lyrics, Refrain from fornication, homosexuality, transgender activity, and immoral practices.”

— Hilltop Christian School, Fuquay-Varina, Parent/Student Handbook (\$4,827,369 in total voucher funding)

Introduction

In North Carolina, hundreds of millions of dollars are spent each year on two school voucher programs that use taxpayer funds to pay private school tuition (see our [fact sheet](#) for details). Unlike public schools, these voucher programs require virtually no accountability for how the funds are spent, whether the schools provide adequate instructional programs, or whether they discriminate against groups of students or their families. As a result, North Carolinian taxpayers are left with no real understanding of the private schools benefiting from the vouchers while hundreds of millions of tax dollars are diverted from public schools that are highly regulated, transparent, and serve all students.

At the core of public education is the belief that a free, universal education system benefits society as a whole. The fact that every child is entitled to a quality education, free of discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, lifestyle, and income improves our economic and social wellbeing. This report sheds light on the vast amount of public money directly funding institutional discrimination within recipient private schools during the 2025-2026 school year and provides recommendations to correct gaps in the current voucher program administration and oversight.

Unless lawmakers change the current trajectory, North Carolina’s taxpayers will soon be spending **nearly a billion dollars each year** on private school tuition vouchers. Every dollar spent on private school vouchers could instead be spent on improving and strengthening public schools — schools legally required to educate **all students** who enter their doorways.

In this report, we highlight discriminatory policies used by NC private schools to determine which students they choose to educate, and which to exclude.

The policies range from exclusions based on the religious beliefs of students and family members, to academic performance, disability status, and whether an applicant or family member is part of the LGBTQ+ community. Some schools also require students and families to sign a “lifestyle policy” that extends to activities and behaviors of family members and associates. Not meeting the requirements may result in a rejected application or the student being expelled from the school. **And unlike public schools, private schools are not required to provide a process for questioning or appealing these decisions.**

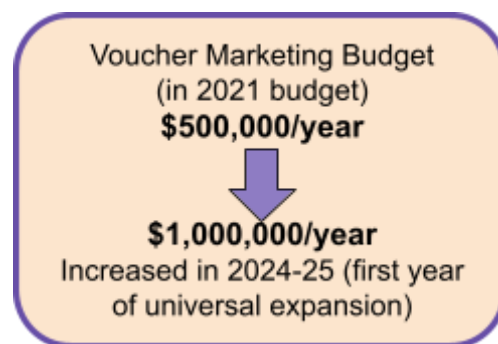
Background on Vouchers

The Opportunity Scholarship (OS) voucher program is the largest of the state's two voucher programs. In 2025-26 it made up 90% of all voucher funds distributed. The program was launched in 2014-15 to provide low-income families who wanted to leave their public school with funding to use at a private school. Families apply for a voucher and the funds are distributed directly from the state to the private school after the school confirms the student is enrolled and verifies the tuition rate.

The OS program was underutilized from launch, but instead of scaling back, lawmakers increased funding and made it easier for people to qualify for the vouchers by raising family income eligibility and reducing prior public school enrollment requirements. Shortly after the voucher program launched, lawmakers changed state law so unused funds roll over each year instead of reverting to the general fund – money that could otherwise support public schools.

In the 2021 state budget, lawmakers also added a marketing budget for the voucher program to increase demand for the still-underutilized program.

They allocated \$500,000/year to hire an organization to bolster enrollment and increased this marketing effort to \$1,000,000/year in the 2023-25 budget.



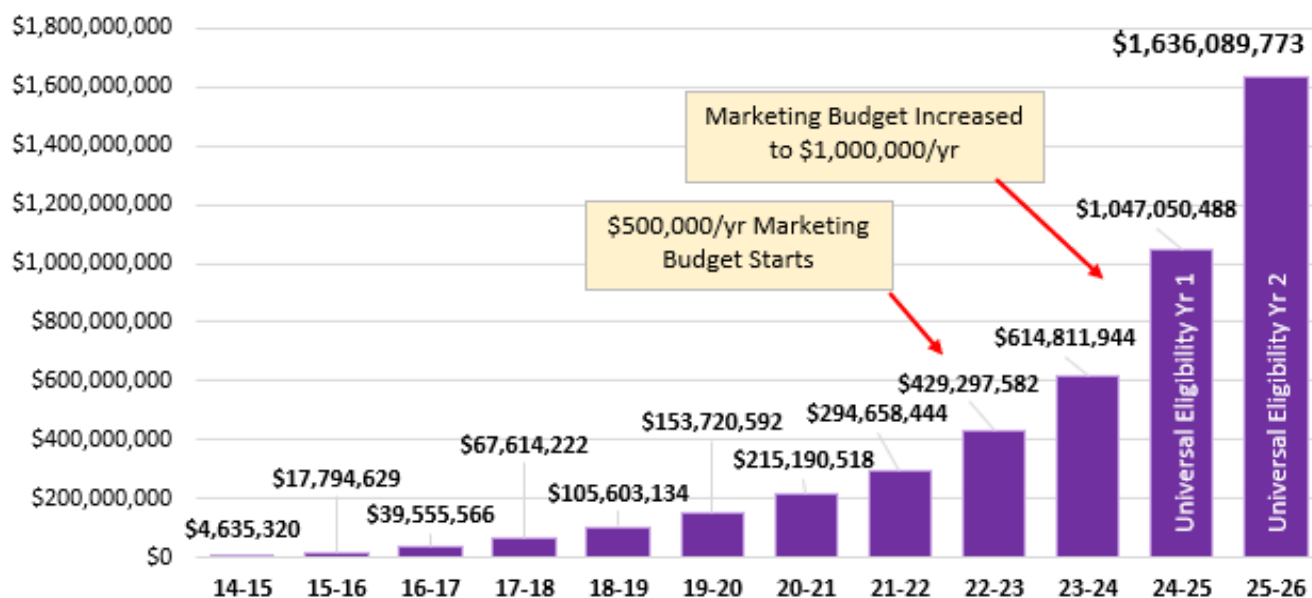
In the 2023 state budget, lawmakers took the final steps to make OS vouchers universally available to all families by eliminating income caps and any requirement for prior public school enrollment.

Table 1. OS Voucher Expansion 2014-15 through 2025-26 School Year

Policy	2014-15	2025-26
Prior Public School Enrollment	Required for grades 2-12	Not Required
Income Eligibility as Percent of Federal Free/Reduced Lunch Eligibility	133%	None
Max Voucher Paid per Student	\$4,200	\$7,686
# Vouchers	1,260	106,867
\$ Spent on OS Vouchers	\$4.6 M	\$589.0 M
\$ Allocated to Market Vouchers	\$0	\$1,000,000/yr

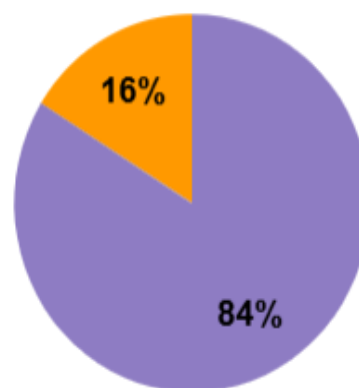
Expanded eligibility for vouchers and ever-growing appropriations has caused voucher spending to balloon in recent years. Cumulative spending on OS voucher payments to private schools reached \$1.6 billion in 2025-26.

Figure 1. Cumulative OS Voucher Spending 2014-15 through 2025-26.

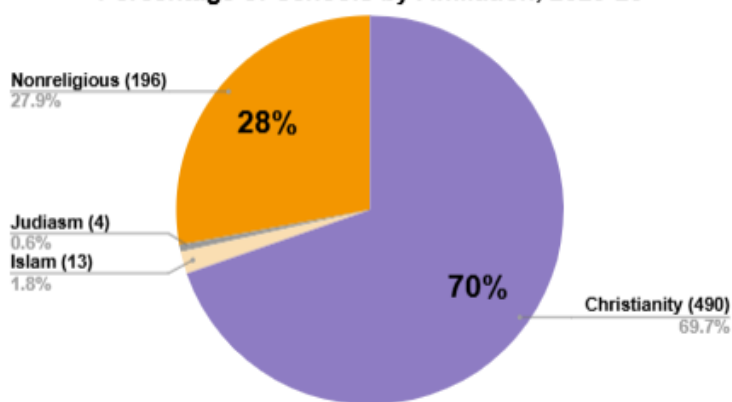


In 2025-26, 72 percent of the voucher-accepting private schools in North Carolina were religious schools, but the percentage of voucher funds flowing to the religious schools is far greater, at 84 percent. Based on the July 2026 update by NCSEAA, religious voucher-accepting schools received \$493,907,851 (84%) in state funds in the 2025-26 school year, while nonreligious schools received \$95,131,434 (16%).

Percentage of Voucher \$ Sent to Religious, Nonreligious Private Schools 2025-26



Percentage of Schools by Affiliation, 2025-26



Since the program was launched in 2014-15, religious schools have received nearly \$1.4 billion, representing 87% of the \$1.6 million total OS voucher spending.

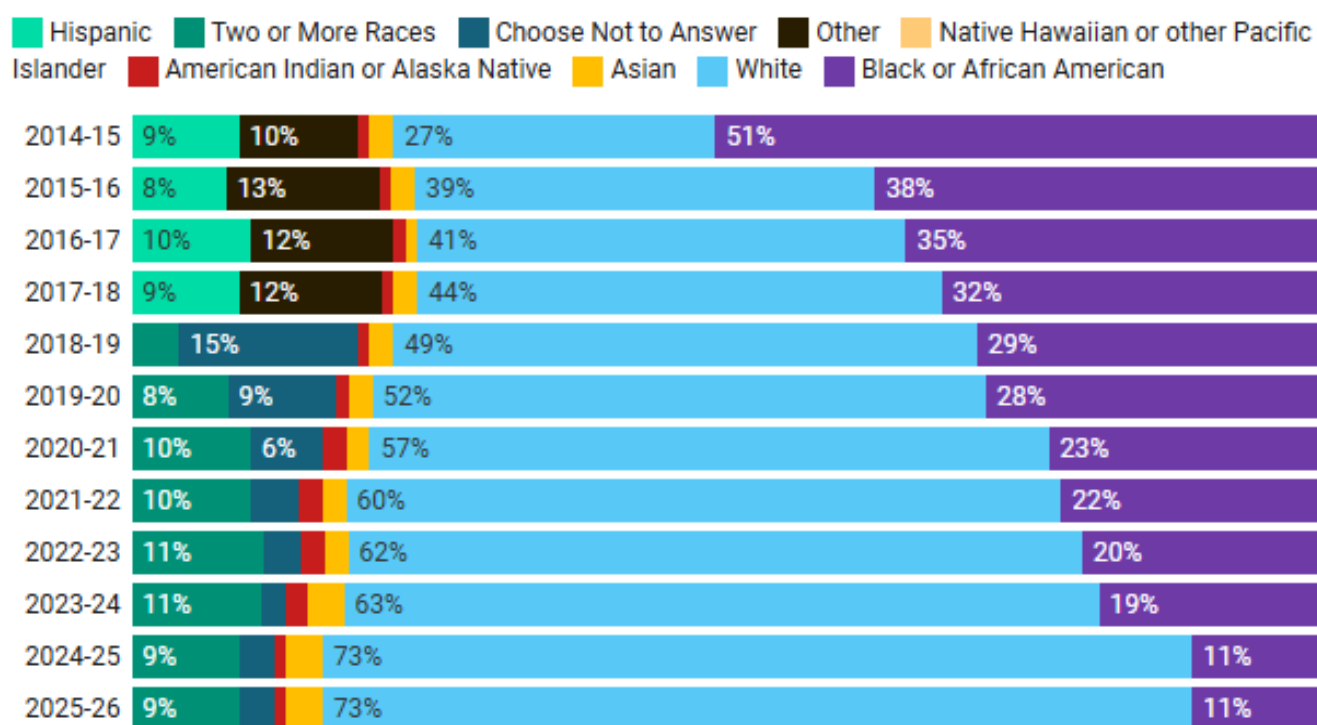
Christian schools made up 97% of the religious schools that received voucher funds in 2025-26.

When analyzed as a portion of all 703 voucher-accepting private schools (religious and nonreligious), Christian schools make up 69.7% of the total (490 schools), Nonreligious schools make up 27.9% (196), Islamic schools are 1.8% (13) and schools affiliated with Judaism just 0.6% (4).

North Carolina law requires private schools to follow [the provisions](#) of Title VI, 42 USC § 2000d (Civil Rights Act of 1964) that **prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin**. As a result, many private schools feature a nondiscrimination policy on their website that specifies race, color, and national origin. However, North Carolina's OS voucher recipients have become increasingly segregated by race.

When the program launched, a majority of students (51%) were Black or African American and 27% were white. By the second year, the proportions had reversed, with 38% Black or African American students and 39% white students. As funding and eligibility expanded, the gap grew. In 2025-26, white students made up 73% of voucher recipients and Black or African American students just 11%. Hispanic students made up 11% of voucher students (Race and ethnicity are tracked separately by NCSEAA). **In comparison, during the 2025-26 school year, the public school student population was made up of 41% White, 24% Black, and 23% Hispanic students.**

Figure 2. Percentage of Opportunity Scholarship Voucher Recipients by Race from 2014-15 through 2025-26



The history of state-funded private school tuition dates back to segregation academies founded in the wake of *Brown vs Board of Education*. Many of these academies [still operate in North Carolina](#) and receive millions in voucher funding.

Despite documented segregation occurring in North Carolina's voucher-accepting private schools, **the state does not yet prohibit private schools from practicing additional forms of discrimination outlined in North Carolina and federal laws** (e.g., Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Title IX). As a result, many private schools in North Carolina have policies that explicitly discriminate against various groups, while others have policies that open the door to discrimination through less obvious language. Many schools also use application/selection processes that are effective in excluding certain students.

Types of Discrimination

This report focuses on the types of explicit and implied discrimination most identified in admissions policies and procedures or in documents such as parent/student handbooks. These include discrimination based on academics, disability, LGBTQ+ status, lifestyle, religion, and “right fit”. Public Schools First NC researched the admissions policies of all **703 voucher-accepting private schools that received taxpayer funds** through the OS voucher program during the 2025-26 school year. All schools are listed in the appendix. For each, the school’s name, county, voucher dollars received, discrimination type (if applicable), example text, and a link to the source of the example are provided. Only explicit statements or policies are included. The appendix notes where a school did not have admissions information available online or did not provide enough information to adequately evaluate policies.

- **Academics:** There is a clear statement of academic requirements. To be admitted and to maintain enrollment, the student must show evidence such as performing at grade level, achieving minimum grades, having a specific GPA, IQ, or other test scores.
- **Disability:** There is a clear statement indicating that the school admits/doesn’t admit students based on a disability status related to their specific learning, physical, or behavior needs. Some schools specifically state that they provide no services to meet IEP or 504 requirements.
- **LGBTQ+:** School policies/admissions include a clear statement that LGBTQ+ students and/or students not adhering to the beliefs of the school/faith statement (if it includes anti-LGBTQ+ language) are not admitted.
- **Lifestyle:** School policies/admissions include a clear statement that outside-of-school behaviors must align with the school’s beliefs. Lifestyle criteria include those indicating that parental beliefs or conduct influence admission or enrollment decisions. Lifestyle policies are noted when they are supplemental to the other types of discrimination listed in the appendix.
- **Religion:** There is a clear expectation that the student or parent/guardian is a practicing member of a religion and/or must sign a statement agreeing to a statement of faith or the beliefs of a religion. Religious discrimination is also noted where application policies give preference to students of specific religions or faith organizations and where a pastor recommendation is a required part of the admissions process.
- **“Right Fit”:** This label is applied when a school requires an interview, tour or testing prior to acceptance. While these requirements do not necessarily result in discriminatory practices, school staff and acceptance committees may use them to selectively accept or reject applicants based on whether the student is deemed a “right fit”. In this context, “right fit” can obscure discrimination based on one of the other types listed. This label is also applied when a school refuses to admit a student due to prior discipline issues at another school or when a school requires a non-refundable application fee of **\$200 or more** that is not explicitly applied to school tuition/fees if the student is accepted.

Findings

Public Schools First NC examined the policies of the **703 voucher-accepting private schools that received taxpayer funds** through the OS voucher program during the 2025-26 school year. Our investigation was limited to public-facing online materials published by the school. Because schools often do not publish their detailed admissions criteria online, and many discriminatory practices are never written down at all, we believe our findings, while very troubling, underrepresent the true scope of the discriminatory policies and practices of North Carolina's voucher-accepting private schools.

When researching policies for the current report, we found that a number of schools had changed their public-facing admissions policies since we published previous reports. Some schools had removed their specific admissions criteria from their website and now required an email inquiry before details or a parent/student handbook would be provided. Others had adjusted their language to make it sound less exclusionary. The two examples of evolving language below (highlights added) are from schools that together have received *more than \$25 million* in taxpayer-funded tuition vouchers since the program started. Although their explicit language has changed, it is unlikely that their discriminatory admission practices have changed.

Metrolina Christian Academy, Indian Trail (\$13,012,102 in tuition voucher funds received)

2024-25: We are **unable to accept** students with failing grades and/or discipline issues.

Current: We **may not be able to accept** students with failing grades and/or discipline issues.

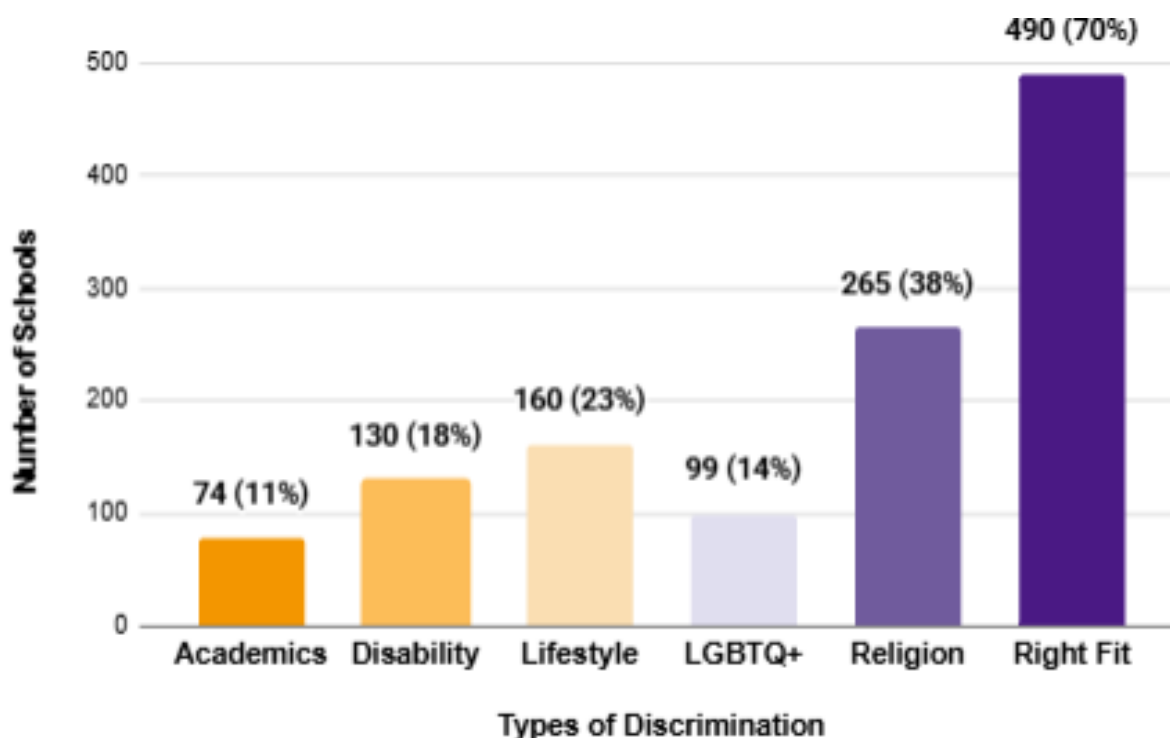
North Raleigh Christian Academy, Raleigh (\$12,992,636 in tuition voucher funds received)

2024-25: Acceptance Policy: Students **must score on grade level** and complete the application process to be eligible for enrollment. Generally, stanine scores **must be in the 4 or higher range** in reading and math. Students with IQs of 90 or less **are not accepted** because of the difficulty they will have being successful in our academic program. NRCA does not enroll students whose learning, behavioral, or physical needs cannot be met. **Traditional IEPs are not accepted** or available at NCRA.

Current: Acceptance: Student applicants complete admissions testing or a kindergarten assessment as part of the admissions process to **determine academic readiness and appropriate grade placement**, ensuring each child is positioned for success within NRCA's program. Admission decisions are based on whether a student's learning, behavioral, or physical needs **can be appropriately supported** and whether the school can responsibly meet these needs within the scope of its existing programs, resources, and staff. NCRA **does not implement traditional public-school IEPs**, but provides academic support within the framework of its college-preparatory program.

Our investigation found that 80% (564) of the voucher-receiving private schools showed some evidence of discriminatory practice and/or right fit policies. Many had more than one discriminatory policy. We found that 490 schools (70%) had a Right Fit policy. Discrimination based on Religion was found in the policies of 265 (38%) of the schools. Discrimination based on lifestyle was found in 160 schools (23%) followed by disability (130 schools, 18%), LGBTQ+ affiliation (99 schools, 14%) and academics (74 schools, 11%).

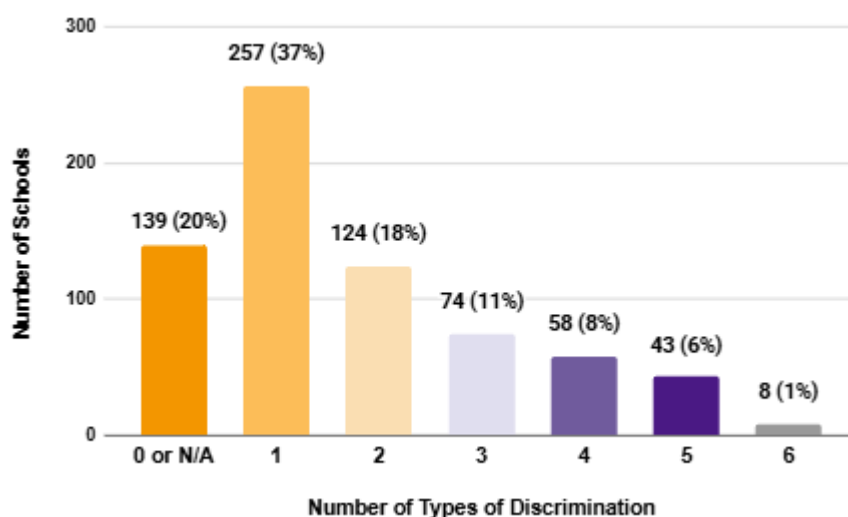
Figure 3. Number of Schools Showing Each Type of Discrimination



Discriminatory policies frequently occurred in combination rather than isolation. These schools impose multiple barriers to admission or continued enrollment. Of the schools reviewed, 183 schools (26%) had policies that aligned with three or more discrimination categories, while 51 schools (7%) exhibited five or more categories.

The largest number of schools (257, 37%) had one discriminatory policy, followed by 124 (18%) with two.

In some cases, the school provided insufficient information to evaluate. These schools had minimal admissions criteria or policies on their website, had only a Facebook page, or didn't even have a website or



Facebook page. Only two schools had no evidence of discriminatory policies or right fit requirements listed online. We combined the 137 no information and 2 no evidence of discriminatory policies into the 0 or N/A category with 139 schools.

Fifty schools had no website and although more than half of the schools without a website (26) did have a Facebook page, the Facebook pages contained no substantive information about the schools. **Together, these 50 schools received \$9,949,784 million in taxpayer-funded tuition from North Carolina in 2025-26.** These schools represent a clear example of the lack of public accountability for use of tax dollars in the voucher program. There is literally no way for the general public to learn about the schools receiving millions of dollars in public funding each year unless they call or visit. We found that a school's Facebook page usually listed an address and phone number. Information on the 24 schools with no website and no Facebook page is completely hidden.

A few examples of each discriminatory category are shown below. **The total amount of Opportunity Scholarship voucher funds received by the school since the program started is noted in parentheses after the school's name followed by the source of the example and a link to the source.** See the appendix for a list of all schools along with the voucher funding, type of discrimination found, example, and source.

Discrimination Based on Academics

Academics are a point of pride for many private schools. To ensure high achievement, some refuse to accept students who fail to meet a specific academic standard.

"New students are admitted on a 30-day probationary period. Sixth and seventh grade students must maintain a 2.0 grade point average to remain enrolled at St. Catherine of Siena. Students who do not meet academic and behavioral expectations as determined by the school administration will be asked to seek other educational situations."

— St. Catherine of Siena Catholic School, Wake Forest (\$4,437,069) [Admissions](#)

"To be considered for admittance, a student should perform at or above grade level and reflect character and behavior consistent with Christian standards. The following criteria is used when evaluating student applications:

Aptitude and/or academic achievement in the average to above average range

Age-appropriate development, socially and emotionally

Amenable to instruction and correction"

— Gaston Christian School, Gastonia (\$10,623,814) [Admissions Standards](#)

"Students applying for Kindergarten through eighth grades will be required to meet MGCS' promotion requirements for their prospective grade and have passing grades of "C" or better on grade-level work in all major subjects...An entrance test on reading and math will be required. Student test scores should be on grade level or above. Students applying to second through eighth grades should score in the 40th percentile or above on the reading and math sections of our Standardized Test in order to be considered for admission."

— Myrtle Grove Christian School, Wilmington (\$2,815,978) [Admission Standards](#).

"The Executive Director and admissions committee may refuse to admit a student with disciplinary or psychological problems, or any student who they determine has spiritual, behavioral, or academic needs that cannot be met by the school. All new students will be on probation for a period of one year. However, the Executive Director and admissions committee reserve the right to dismiss a student from their enrollment at any time for any reason."

— North Hills Christian School, Salisbury (\$10,506,681) [Admissions Policy](#).

"We are unable to accept students with failing grades and/or discipline issues." (note: "unable" was changed to "may not be able to" in the 2026-27 admission process.)

— Metrolina Christian Academy, Indian Trail (\$13,012,102) [Steps to Admissions](#).

"Copy of Current High School Transcript with a GPA of 2.5 or higher (for prospective students entering 10th, 11th, and 12th grade)"

— Grace Christian School, Raleigh (\$2,582,969) [Steps to Apply](#).

Discrimination Based on Disability

Because students with disabilities often require more resources, private schools may put up barriers to admission to limit enrollment to students who are easier and cheaper to educate. Public schools are obligated under federal law to accept and educate all students.

"Union Grove Christian School is not equipped to handle children who require special services and does reserve the right to deny admission to any student whom we do not believe we have the ability to provide an appropriate and adequate education."

— Union Grove Christian School, Lexington (\$8,467,500) [Discrimination Policy](#).

"Cape Fear Christian Academy is a private educational institution and therefore has no federal mandate to provide special education and related services to disabled students. The Academy requires that students continue to work on grade level in order to remain eligible for continuing enrollment at the Academy. Public schools are subject to the mandates of the "Individuals with Disabilities Education Act" (IDEA) and can provide such programs and services."

— Cape Fear Christian Academy, Erwin (\$5,861,307) [Student Handbook](#)

"Seventh-day Adventist schools have not been established for the purpose of offering special education; therefore, they are unable to accept students who have serious physical, scholastic, or behavioral problems."

— Mills River SDA, Mills River (\$1,058,087) [Handbook](#)

"Higher Fees for Special Ed. Services: Remedial Intervention Program (RIP): Assessment Results: National Percentile Rank = 5 to 8.; \$500 annually, per subject, will be added to the Regular General Education Program (GEP) Tuition. Special Education Program (SEP): Assessment Results: National Percentile Ranks = 0 to 4.; Recipients of Disability Grants do not pay out-of-pocket for SEP; If your child does not have the Disability Grant, then the out-of-pocket \$1,500 annually will be added to the Regular GEP tuition."

— Intellicor International Academy, Charlotte (\$9,141,997) [Tuition and Fees](#)

"A student can be exempt from enrollment based on intelligence and/or disabilities (ADD, physical, mental, etc.). Students with I.Q.s of 90 or less are not accepted because of the difficulty they will have being successful in our program. AHOP reserves the right to interviews, testing, and selective enrollment. No student has a right to acceptance. To attend AHOP is a privilege, not a right."
— AHOP Christian Leadership Academy, Chapel Hill (\$212,358) [Handbook](#).

Discrimination Based on LGBTQ+ Status

Many religious schools that accepted voucher students in 2024-25 have faith statements explicitly prohibiting same-sex relationships, and many refuse to accept students who are members of the LGBTQ+ community. Some schools also extend the prohibition to parents, other family members, and friends. When a school extended adherence to its faith statement or similar statements (e.g. statement on sexuality) to students and families, it was included as evidence of discrimination.

"On those occasions in which the atmosphere or conduct within a particular home is counter to or in opposition to the biblical lifestyle the school teaches, the school reserves the right, within its sole discretion, to refuse admission of an applicant or to discontinue enrollment of a student. This includes, but is not necessarily limited to, living in, condoning, or supporting sexual immorality; homosexual acts or sexual orientation; promoting such practices; or otherwise the inability to support the moral principles of the school."
— Millersville Christian Academy, Taylorsville (\$5,354,444) [Admissions Process](#)

"Students will be expelled if they...Conduct their selves [sic] immorally by participating in lesbianism/homosexuality or sexual activity with the opposite sex. WBCS believes that lesbianism/homosexuality and premarital sex is sin and will not condone such actions by its students."
— Woodland Baptist Christian, Winston-Salem (\$4,883,164) [Student Handbook](#)

"For the student's personal and social development Faith Christian Academy aims...To develop both good and proper attitudes toward marriage and the family; and to develop the knowledge and understanding needed to establish homes that honor God. To teach that the Bible views homosexuality as a sin, and that marriage is between one man and one woman, and they become one flesh.."
— Faith Christian Academy, Goldsboro (\$7,473,067) [Handbook](#)

"Homosexual or transgender conduct, defined as acts or identifying statements, is incompatible with enrollment at the Christian school and is a basis for dismissal."
— Lee Park Preparatory School, Monroe (\$2,377,501) [Handbook](#),

Discrimination Based on Lifestyle

Private schools sometimes have policies that dictate student and family behavior during time away from the school. Even after a student is admitted, the student may be expelled if the school discovers behavior by a student (or even family/friend) that does not align with the beliefs/conduct promoted by

the school. There are a few schools that even include dress code policies that are linked to certain cultures such as a ban on dreadlocks or twists. Some schools require participation in specific activities such as attending church regularly or attending a Bible-believing church.

"Any student who has been pregnant or caused pregnancy (full term, abortion, or miscarriage) is not eligible for admission to Mount Zion Christian Academy."

— Mount Zion Christian Academy, Durham (\$5,453,699) [Handbook](#)

"NTA reserves the right, within its sole discretion, to refuse admission of an applicant or to discontinue the enrollment of a student on the basis of, but not necessarily limited to, the inability to support the moral principles of the academy and/or the inability to maintain a lifestyle consistent with the NTA foundational documents and any related policies and procedures" (p. 10).

— Northwood Temple Academy, Fayetteville, (\$11,162,695) [Admission policies](#)

"ACS admits students from families that attend a Bible-preaching church that also subscribes to our statement of faith. Any application for admission to ACS that does not adhere to these standards will be reviewed by the Board of Directors on a case-by-case basis... We believe that God has established marriage as a lifelong, exclusive relationship between one biological man and one biological woman only. We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a biological man and a biological woman who are married to each other...it is imperative that all...who serve as volunteers, students, and families agree to abide by the school's statements and policies on Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality."

— Alamance Christian School, Graham (\$7,224,920) [Handbook](#)

"Hair should not be in the student's eyes. Dreadlocks or mohawks are not permitted. The following will not be tolerated in any form and will constitute grounds for expulsion: any action or identifying statements concerning fornication, adultery, homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, or pornography."

— Shining Light Academy, Greensboro (\$5,166,205) [Handbook](#)

"Students are expected to abide by the following standards throughout their enrollment, whether at home, school, or elsewhere and regardless of whether or not school is in session...Avoid participation in worldly activities such as swearing or indecent language; inappropriate online or social media content; body piercing...involvement in occult; gambling; stealing; pornography; premarital sex; promoting or participating in a gay, lesbian or homosexual lifestyle or other lifestyles contrary to Scripture."

— New Life Christian Academy, Rocky Mount (\$2,626,599) [Handbook](#)

"On those occasions in which the atmosphere or conduct within a particular home is counter to or in opposition to the biblical lifestyle the school teaches, the school reserves the right, within its sole discretion, to refuse admission of an applicant or to discontinue enrollment of a student."

— Lincoln Christian Academy, Lincolnton (\$1,066,363) [Handbook](#)

Discrimination Based on Religion

In the 2025-26 school year, religious schools made up 72% of the total number of schools that received voucher funding, but they received more than 86% of the voucher dollars. Many of the religious schools explicitly limit enrollment to students from families actively engaged in their **specific faith community**. Others offer admissions preference or lower tuition rates to students who meet specific religious criteria.



The student and at least one parent or legal guardian with whom the student resides must be in agreement with the Fayetteville Christian School Statement of Faith.

The parent and student must profess faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and be actively involved in regular fellowship at a local Christian church.

— Fayetteville Christian School, Fayetteville (\$15,340,418) [Admissions](#)

"Vandalia Christian School is primarily in the ministry of edifying saved individuals for the cause of Christ in support of the Christian home. As such, the following are general guidelines for admission: At least one of the parents must be a born-again Christian. High school students must be born-again Christians. Students in elementary school do not have to be born again to be admitted, however they will receive the training and encouragement to accept Christ as Savior."

— Vandalia Christian School, Greensboro (\$5,978,395) [Admission Requirements](#)

"CCA stands without apology for the ageless gospel of Jesus Christ and the highest standards of morality and Christian behavior. We request that all our students be in church with their families weekly."

— Carolina Christian Academy, Thomasville (\$3,240,911) [Handbook](#)

"Recommendations from your student's pastor and teacher(s) are a required part of the admissions process."

— Carmel Christian School, Matthews (\$7,558,047) [Admissions Process](#).

Discrimination Based on "Right Fit"

Private schools often require prospective students to participate in tours, interviews, or shadow days as part of the admissions process to assess whether the applicant is a good fit for their community and culture. While these requirements may not lead to discriminatory practices, in practice, they could. They could be used as a subtle way to screen out students or families that fall short of the school's standards, whether academic, religious, behavioral, or other.

"All students wishing to attend Pungo Christian Academy in grades 6–12 will be required to meet before the Board of Directors to receive acceptance into PCA."

– Pungo Christian Academy, Belhaven (\$2,978,729) [Handbook](#)

"How do I enroll my child? Step 1 – Inquire to receive additional information. Step 2 – Schedule an interview appointment."

– Faith Christian School, Durham (\$1,220,783) [Admissions](#)

"Our Admissions team will reach out to schedule assessments once we are able to move forward with an applicant – based on review & available seats. K-5 grade students will have a 1-1 assessment and 6-12 grade students will take an assessment exam with a proctor. The next step is an interview with the respective principal."

– Wake Christian Academy, (\$9,910,210) [Admissions Process](#)

Summary

The examples in this report represent a small sample of the discriminatory policies of private schools that have received millions of tax dollars through the school voucher program. **See the appendix for the complete list of schools and their policies.** Some schools have clearly documented discriminatory policies. Others use vague language, and others bury their discriminatory practices behind the private application, interview, and selection process. For example, Grace Christian Academy in Sanford, which has received **\$18,937,628 voucher dollars** since the program began, requires all prospective families to [tour the school](#), stating that, "We love getting to know our families personally, and a tour is a great way to ensure your family and our school are a good fit for one another." The school also [requires all families to apply](#) for the OS voucher as part of their application process.

While private schools can turn away students due to their disabilities, faith traditions, lifestyle, identification with the LGBTQ+ community, or academic and disciplinary records, public schools cannot. **Public schools are open to all students and are funded using our tax dollars.** Public schools serve the common good in every community as they offer the constitutional right of public education to every child in North Carolina. This is not true in private schools, including those receiving tax dollars for private school tuition.

Diverting public school funds to private schools damages our public school system. Across North Carolina, especially in numerous rural communities, public schools are already struggling to provide needed programs and services due to inadequate and inequitable state funding. Shifting more funds from public to private schools may have a devastating impact on the local economies, causing public schools to close and lay off employees. Public schools are one of the top three employers in 91% of North Carolina's counties, so these changes could have an immediate negative effect on communities.

In addition, **no state-funded education program should exist or be expanded without proper measures in place to review academic outcomes for students or ensure accountability for the taxpayers who fund it.** Investigations have revealed [financial fraud](#) in the voucher program. As the eligibility for the

voucher program expanded, many private schools increased tuition to maximize the funds they could receive from state coffers. In sharp contrast to public school accountability requirements, there are no accountability measures in place to ensure that the private schools receiving vouchers are providing a sound, basic, education.

Recommendations

North Carolina taxpayers deserve to know how their tax dollars are spent. Public schools are guided by strict laws governing financial transparency, discrimination policies, disciplinary procedures, curriculum content standards, and more. Private schools that accept state dollars should have similar requirements. Minimally, to reduce discrimination and shed light on where tax dollars are going, Public Schools First NC recommends that lawmakers require all private schools that accept tax-funded vouchers to adopt the following practices:

1. Follow all federal and state nondiscrimination laws.
2. Provide clear online admissions criteria, tuition and fees.
3. Charge the same tuition, fees, etc. rates for all students and end reduced rates for preferred groups or religious affiliations.
4. Establish admissions policies that do not give preference to students from preferred groups such as those attending a specific church or practicing a particular religion.
5. Limit nonrefundable application fees to less than \$50.00.
6. Publish online all disciplinary policies and procedures along with steps families can take to dispute decisions.
7. Publish enrollment data by year and grade online.
8. Retain all records associated with student disciplinary actions including short-term suspensions, long-term suspensions, and exclusions/expulsions. Make records available to state authorities upon request.

Conclusion

Some state officials say there is little they can do about private schools that discriminate. However, they do have the power to ensure that students have unambiguous and explicit anti-discrimination protections codified in voucher legislation and all state laws that govern private schools.

Further, they can withhold funding from private schools that violate federal anti-discrimination laws. Taxpayer funds should be used to promote discrimination in private schools. The laws and policies that prevent discrimination in public schools should also apply to voucher-accepting private schools.

The best solution for North Carolina is to end all state funding for private school vouchers and focus on fulfilling the state's constitutional requirement to support and improve our public school system.

Selected Resources

Public Schools First NC Resources:

- [The Facts on School Vouchers](#)
- [Comparing Requirements for Public vs Private Schools in NC](#)
- [Opportunity Scholarship Voucher Demographics](#)
- [North Carolina School Privatization Timeline](#)
- Curriculum Report
- Voucher Report
- [Important Research and Resources](#)

[Opportunity Scholarship Program Recipient Disbursements by Nonpublic School](#), NCSEAA

[2023 Appropriations Act](#), North Carolina General Assembly

[How School Voucher Programs Hurt Students](#), April 2023, Cowen, J., Michigan State University

[New analysis shows many private schools in N.C. have more vouchers than students](#),

June 2023, Nordstrom, K., N.C. Justice Center

[Opportunity Scholarships](#), North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority (NCSEAA)

[School Vouchers in NC 2014-2020](#), May 2020, Wettach, et al., Duke Children's Law Clinic

[The Fiscal Consequences of Private School Vouchers](#),

March 2023, Abrams, S. Koutsavlis, S., Public Funds Public Schools

Appendix

The appendix can be viewed as a downloadable document on our website ([Reports](#)) and also viewed through an [online searchable database](#) where you have the option to order by voucher funding received and to search by county or school.

[Learn More About School Vouchers](#)

<https://publicschoolsfirstnc.org/know-the-issues/school-vouchers/>