

The Truth About ESA's

Now, Pinocchio, it's time for all good boys to go to school."

"Pinoke!" Jimmy Cricket called. "Wait for me!" But Pinocchio ignored the voice of his little conscience.

Suddenly, Pinocchio was tripped by the sly old fox J. Worthington Foulfellow.

"Ha ha, Pinocchio," began Foulfellow, "you were going a little too fast and in the WRONG direction. Now I have a plan for you. Come..."

"But I'm on my way to school," said Pinocchio.

"Nonsense!" Said Foulfellow. "I have a much better plan. Come with me."

As they traveled, Foulfellow introduced Pinocchio to the wonders of a place called Pleasure Island where he could have all the candy he wanted and play all day without anyone telling them what to do.. Best of all, it was FREE. All he had to do was follow them and they would make sure he got everything he wanted.

Soon, they came to a great coach where the two scoundrels took a bag from a wicked-looking coachman. Pinocchio had just been sold for a few pieces of gold (or maybe it was thirty pieces of silver).

Jiminy knew this was not right and was frightened, but he had to protect Pinocchio so he hopped aboard the coach just as it was driving off.

The coach was pulled by six sad little donkeys and was full of boys of all sizes and ages. Pinocchio quickly made friends with the leader, Lampwick.

Soon, they arrived at Pleasure Island and it was wonderful – just as Foulfellow had said. Every day they played, ate ice cream and cake, and more candy. They rode rides drank koolade and thought they had everything they ever wanted and it didn't cost them one penny. Jiminy Cricket tried to get Pinocchio to turn back and go home, but the koolade just tasted so good and Pinocchio once again turned his back on his tiny friend.

"I can go back anytime," said Pinocchio. "Right now, I want to enjoy the rides!"

ESA's

First, the ESA's which are being pushed in every state right now are not true education savings accounts such as a 529 or Coverdell. They are nothing more than disguised government

vouchers because you cannot contribute personal monies to them and you have little or no control over them. A real ESA or Education Savings Account allows private contributions from parents or family members and is not controlled by the government.

Why all the fuss over money that should be mine to begin with? After all, my tax dollars are paying for these vouchers aren't they?

The majority of the funding for public schools comes from property tax. In Oklahoma for example, 59.22% of your property tax goes to education. If you have a home that has a taxable market value of \$50k, your property taxes would be about \$450 of which \$266.49 will go to education. Of your federal taxes, less than 3% would be directed toward education and only 0.3% goes to accelerate academics.

The schools, however, receive around \$8k/student/year with the average voucher/ESA recipient receiving around 50-60 and up to 90% of that \$8k on a debit card. Now multiply that by the number of children in your household and you will see that while your taxes do contribute to the public education funds, they don't come close to actually covering the cost.

You can have my money in the form of property tax, but you cannot have my children.

It seems that what the school choice advocates really want is choice as long as they get their "piece of government monies" to pay for it. What this boils down to is choice within the state/government controlled system – instead of freedom from the system.

We need to ask ourselves what is really at stake here and how will our decisions affect our culture and the homeschool community both now and more importantly, in the future?

Regulation

Sadly many do not understand the principle that with government money comes accountability which means mandates and control.

The mandates for those schools choosing to take government funded vouchers and ESA's are quite invasive in some states. For example, in GAO's (US Government Accountability Office) survey, 18 of 20 voucher programs and one of two operating ESAs reported that teachers must meet minimum education requirements, such as having a bachelor's degree. Similarly, 17 voucher programs and one ESA reported requiring schools to measure student performance with the same tests required for public school students. If required of private schools, these requirements will be enforced in the homeschool arena as well. In many states, home education is regarded as private school.

In a [2010 study](#) at Cato, Andrew Coulson looked at the question of whether school vouchers and tax credits increase regulation of private schools, and ultimately found that “vouchers, but not tax credits, impose a substantial and statistically significant additional regulatory burden on participating private schools.”

Voucher programs, Coulson concluded, are more likely to “suffocate the very markets to which they aim to expand access,” because state funds—which invariably invite state regulation—are directly transferred, in the form of vouchers, to parents to spend in an alternate education setting.

Increased Accountability

The DC-based Center for Education Reform says that ESA’s are a way to have “accountability” from homeschoolers.

Here is a quote from their Manifesto: “When money follows students, whether at a charter school, a traditional neighborhood school, a private school, or even for homeschooling cooperatives or courses at a community college, all parties are more accountable.”

Loss of Autonomy.

Vouchers/ESA’s grant government education jurisdiction over home education and gives definition to what a homeschool is. Once the government defines, it finds excuses to control and regulate, manipulating it into another publicly funded educational institution.

While Indiana has the largest school voucher program in the country, the [Center for Education Reform](#) finds the Hoosier State is “ranked as the second-worst state in the country at ‘infringing on private school autonomy’ due to our voucher program’s many suffocating and unnecessary regulations.”

In a 1999 article in *Practical Homeschooling*, Sam Blumenfeld stated, “But wouldn't a massive shift of public funds into the private schools merely make the private schools part of the public sector? That is one of the reasons why many concerned conservatives oppose tax-funded vouchers (ESA’s) for all parents, for that would give the middle-class a new government entitlement and strip them of the responsibility of paying for their children's education out of their own pockets. We don't need more citizens taking money from government. We need less.” ~

The mayor of Pleasure Island was pleased with how Pinocchio and the other boys were enjoying themselves and encouraged them to take more. "They are almost ready," the Coachman told the mayor.

"Pinocchio!" begged Jiminy. "Please leave this place and come back with me!"

"Go away, Cricket." Pinocchio said. "I am tired of listening to you."

Pinocchio looked over at Lampwick for approval and could not believe his eyes. Lampwick had turned into a donkey!

The coachman came running and quickly put a rope around Lampwick's neck and cried, "Look! Another donkey to sell to the man who runs the salt mines!"

He reached out for Pinocchio, because without him realizing it, Pinocchio was also growing ears and a donkey's tail. Jiminy shouted, "Run, Pinocchio! Run!"

Pinocchio finally listened to his tiny friend and they ran to the edge of the island and dived into the water to get away from that terrible place.