



AREN'T MOST PRIVATE SCHOOLS UNAFFORDABLE?

Utah's school voucher program brings private schools into reach for low-income families.

FACT: UTAH'S SCHOOL VOUCHER PROGRAM BRINGS PRIVATE SCHOOLS INTO REACH FOR LOW-INCOME FAMILIES

The Sutherland Institute conducted an independent survey of likely voucher-eligible private schools (those that are not residential treatment facilities, have a total enrollment over 40 students, and do not operate out of a residence) to collect annual tuition information. In all, 64 of the 88 schools surveyed provided their tuition information. The combined 2006-07 enrollments of these schools are 13,840 students, and their annual tuition charges range from \$1,600 to \$52,200.

Affordability is a very subjective term based on many budgetary factors. After removing the clearly unaffordable private schools (six above \$10,000), we're left with an adjusted average tuition of \$4,519.97 among remaining private schools. As shown in Chart 1, over six in 10 private schools fall into the range of affordability for low-income families in the school voucher program.

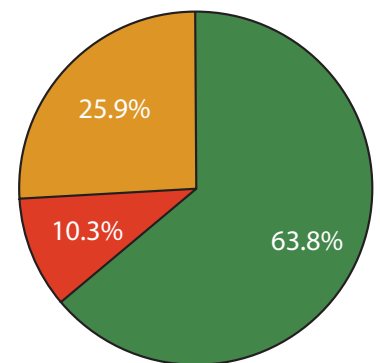
Consider this scenario: the maximum school voucher amount of \$3,000 per child applies to a Utah family of four with household income of \$38,000 or less. The difference between the average tuition rate and the maximum school voucher is \$1,519.97 per child annually, or \$127 per month. For two children in the program, that's \$254 a month (about the cost of a car payment), or about 6% of their household income.

Even these costs can be reduced with the help of private scholarships. Many private schools offer student scholarships to reduce this monthly burden. In addition, the local non-profit Children First Utah low-income scholarship program offers private tuition scholarships that, combined, could pay for the entire cost of private school tuition.

With these added scholarships, Chart 1 also shows how the number of affordable private schools increases by simply raising the tuition range to \$5,000. The pool of affordable private schools grows by 10 percentage points to 74.1 percent. Under this budget scenario, a voucher family would have to come up with \$166 per month per child, or \$332 per month for two children in the family – still around the cost of a car payment.



Private School Affordability



■ Below \$4500 ■ \$4500-\$5000 ■ Above \$5000