

School Voucher Programs Changing Student Lives

(NAPSA)—Five years ago, Walter Woodard was like many middle school students in Ohio. He earned Cs, Ds and an F, and teachers said he was a constant behavior problem.

“They wanted me to put him on medication, but the problem was he was just bored and wasn’t challenged,” said Walter’s mom, Traci Woodard, of Groveport, Ohio. “In public school he was just a number and really didn’t get the attention he needed.”

Today, Walter’s life is a completely different story. He is one of the more than 13,000 Ohio students who are enrolled in private school thanks to a voucher program enacted in 2005 that gives scholarships to children in chronically failing schools. It allows them to transfer to the private school of their choice.

Walter, 16, is now a sophomore at Tree of Life Christian School, makes good grades and wants to pursue a career as a motivational speaker. “They encourage me and help me to see there are so many things I can do,” he said. “It has helped me grow so much in a positive way.”

Walter’s mom attributes the change to the smaller school with more caring teachers. And she says it shows that voucher programs do work.

Evidence shows Walter is not the only one who benefits. A new report released by The Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice reviewed 10 “gold standard” research studies that evaluated school voucher programs during the last 20 years. Nine of those 10 studies showed that



Ohio’s EdChoice program is proving to be a win-win with public schools and voucher students.

vouchers contributed to academic improvements for most students who used them—such as Walter. Nineteen other studies included in the Friedman report looked at voucher effects on public schools; 18 of those (plus another study released this summer) found vouchers improve public schools as well.

The report, “A Win-Win Solution: The Empirical Evidence on School Vouchers,” reviewed studies including research conducted by Harvard University, Stanford University, Cornell University, Princeton University and the Federal Reserve Bank, among other respected research institutions.

School voucher programs allow families to use a portion of the tax money already allocated for their child’s education and redirect it to pay for tuition at the private school of their choice.

With vouchers, public schools feel competition to improve, according to Greg Forster, a senior fellow with The Friedman Foundation who wrote the “Win-Win” report.