

Roger Williams and the Separation of church and State

Roger Williams, through both word and action, advocated for free exercise of religion at a moment where Church and State were often indistinguishable from one another. William believed in the idea that religion was a matter of individual conscience, not to be regulated or supported by a government. His ideas on the separation of church and state were reflected in the foundational documents of the United States like the *Declaration of Independence* and *The Bill of Rights* and are referenced in numerous Supreme Court rulings.

In this upper high school level lesson which takes five days, students examine both sides of the issue of a proposed Rhode Island bill that would provide tax supported school vouchers for private schools. The students will research the issue using primary and secondary sources and then participate in a debate as to whether or not this bill is a violation of the separation of church and state. A visit to the Speaker's Corner at Roger Williams National Memorial to conduct the debate is an optional culminating activity.

Content Objectives

Learning Objectives

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<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explore Williams' beliefs about the separation of church and state.• Explore the influence these words had on foundational government documents.• Investigate historic and contemporary debates over the separation of church and state.	<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analyze primary and secondary source documents. Identify the main idea and summarize the supporting evidence.• Use information from primary and secondary source documents to take a stand on the issue through a debate activity.• Identify bias in the source materials by realizing how the writers' personal circumstances can affect their ideas.

Enduring Understanding:

The beliefs and principles of key individuals help shape a nation's founding documents and continue to influence the application of those principles today.

Essential Question:

Do school vouchers violate the principle of the separation of church and state?

Common Core State Standards for ELA & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects.

Reading Standards for Informational Texts 11-12

#1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

#2 Determine two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to provide a complex analysis; provide an objective summary of the text.

#6 Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute the power, persuasiveness, and beauty of the text.

#7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

#9 Analyze 17th, 18th and 19th century foundational U.S. documents of historical and literary significance (including the Declaration of Independence, the Preamble of the Constitution, the Bills of Rights, and Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address) for their themes, purposes, and rhetorical features.

Writing Standards 11-12

#1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence. (1a-e)

#7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to narrow a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

#8 Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strength and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following the standard form of citation.

Speaking and Listening Standards 11-12

#1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively. (1a-d)

#2 Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g. visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.

#3 Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis and tone used.

#4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

RI Grade Span Expectations for Social Studies

C&G 3 (Ext) (9-12)

#1a Evaluating, taking, and defending positions on provisions found in the *Bill of Rights*

#2a Evaluating, taking, defending a position regarding a policy at the school, local, state, national, or international level that affects individual rights

C&G 4 (9-12)

#1c Analyzing and interpreting sources (print and non-print discourse/media) by distinguishing fact from opinion, and evaluating possible bias/propaganda or conflicting information within or across sources

#1e Analyzing multiple perspectives on an historical or current controversial issue

ROGER WILLIAMS AND THE SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE

ESSENTIAL QUESTION –

Do school VOUCHERS violate the principle of the SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE?

Day 1

Pre-Launch

1. The teacher prepares 2 handouts.

Handout #1 is a copy of the beginning of House bill #6131 – Parental Choice Scholarship Program Act.

Handout #2 contains two primary and two secondary source quotes on Roger William’s beliefs on the Separation of Church and State.

2. Students are placed in pair groupings. Each pair receives one of the handouts.
3. After reading the handout and depending on which handout it has received, each group prepares to answer one of the following questions:

What is Roger Williams’ philosophy on the separation of church and state?

What is the Parental Choice Scholarship Act?

4. After 10-15 minutes, the groups report their findings to the class, leading to a class discussion defining Roger’s views and the voucher act.

Homework – Distribute Handout #3 which contains two articles on opposing sides of the issue. Have the students fill out Handout #4 which is a graphic organizer identifying three points for each side. Then students, on the back of the handout, answer the question concerning bias.

LAUNCH

DAY 2

1. Distribute a copy of Handout #5 which is the First Amendment of the Constitution.
2. Discuss ideas from the homework assignment. (Read 2 opposing articles on Vouchers and fill out the graphic organizer on Handout #4.) Be sure to include in the discussion the necessity to evaluate all sources for possible bias.
3. Distribute and review Handout #6 on Vouchers from the National Council on State Legislatures. Read and discuss with the class.
4. Create 6 debate teams – 3 arguing that school vouchers violate separation of church and state; 3 arguing that school vouchers do not violate separation of church and state. Use a lottery system to assign students to a side.

Homework – Find 3 articles supporting your team’s view. (Included in this packet are some sample articles)

DAYS 3 & 4

1. The students will research and develop arguments on the essential question, **Do school VOUCHERS violate the principle of the SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE?**
2. Distribute and have each student complete Handout #7 which is a graphic organizer illustrating the points of his/her argument.
3. Distribute and review the Rubric on Evaluating the Debate Performance, Handout #8.

DAY 5

1. Each debate team selects a spokesperson.
2. Pair each group of the pro side with a group of the con side.
3. Have each pairing debate and then have the rest of the class choose the winners, using the rubric, Handout #8.
4. After hearing all the debates, each half of the class should choose the points they want to use in their argument and also choose their spokesperson who will go to the Roger Williams National Memorial for the final debate.
5. Call Roger Williams National Memorial to book a time and date for the debate at the Speaker’s Corner.

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LC02558

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2013

A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- PARENTAL CHOICE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM ACT

Introduced By: Representatives E Coderre, and Corvese

Date Introduced: May 16, 2013

Referred To: House Finance

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Title 16 of the General Laws entitled "EDUCATION" is hereby amended
2 by adding thereto the following chapter:

3 CHAPTER 100

4 PARENTAL CHOICE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM ACT

5 16-100-1. Short title. -- This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Parental
6 Choice Scholarship Program Act."

7 16-100-2. Definitions. -- The following words and phrases when used in this chapter
8 shall have the following meanings unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

9 (1) "Adequate funding" means the amount of money defined as adequate funding per
10 student, as determined by applicable law for the academic year that the scholarship is utilized.

11 (2) "Department" means the Rhode Island department of education. The general assembly

12 reserves the right to transfer oversight of this program from the department of education to
13 another body, to be chosen by the general assembly, if it determines that program success would
14 be better facilitated by removal from the department of education.

15 (3) "Eligible student" means any elementary or secondary student who was eligible to
16 attend a public school in Rhode Island in the preceding semester or is starting school in Rhode
17 Island for the first time.

18 (4) "Home school" means a school provided by a parent or legal guardian for his or her
19 own child. LC02558 - Page 2 of 10

1 (5) "Parent" means a biological or adoptive parent, guardian, custodian, or other person
2 with the authority to act on behalf of the child.

3 (6) "Parent choice scholarship award" means the amount of money that follows the child
4 to the school which the parent selects for their education.

5 (7) "Participating school" means either a public school outside of the resident school
6 district, a charter school, magnet school, alternative school or a private school that provides
7 education to elementary and/or secondary students and has notified the department of its intention
8 to participate in the program and comply with the program requirements.

9 (8) "Program" means the parental choice scholarship program created in this chapter.

10 (9) "Resident school district" means the public school district in which the student
11 resides.

12 16-100-3. Elements of program. -- (a) Any parent of an eligible student shall qualify for
13 a scholarship for their child to enroll in and attend a participating school.

14 (b) An eligible student means a student who:

15 (1) Is a member of a household whose total annual income does not exceed an amount
16 equal to three (3) times the income standard used to qualify for a reduced price lunch under the
17 national free or reduced price lunch program established under 42 USC Section 1751 et seq.

18 (c) The scholarship is the entitlement of the eligible student under the supervision of the
19 student's parent and not that of any school.

20 (d) A participating school that has more eligible students applying than spaces available

21 shall fill the available spaces by a random selection process, except that participating schools may
22 give preference to siblings of enrolled students.

23 (e) If a student is denied admission to a participating school because it has too few
24 available spaces, the parent of that eligible student may transfer his or her scholarship to a
25 participating school that has spaces available.

26 (f) An eligible student may attend a participating school until his or her graduation from
27 high school or twenty-first (21st) birthday, whichever comes first.

28 (g) Eligible students that enroll in a participating school may, at the parent's discretion,
29 participate in fine arts and sports programs available through their child's resident school district
30 at no cost, if the participating school does not offer a similar program.

31 (h) The department shall adopt rules consistent with this chapter regarding:

32 (1) The creation of notification methodologies and timelines that will maximize student
33 and public and private school participation;

34 (2) The creation of a simple and straightforward scholarship application procedures for



He was the first American to advocate and activate complete freedom of conscience, dissociation of church and state, and genuine political democracy. ~ Cyclone Covey

- **"The most fascinating figure of America's formative seventeenth century," Roger Williams has now gained general acceptance as a symbol of a critical turning point in American thought and institutions. He was the first American to advocate and activate complete freedom of conscience, dissociation of church and state, and genuine political democracy.** From his first few weeks in America he openly raised the banner of "rigid Separatism." In one year in Salem he converted the town into a stronghold of radical Separatism and threw the entire Bay Colony into an uproar. Banished for his views, after being declared guilty of "a frontal assault on the foundations of the Bay system," he escaped just as he was to be deported to England.

He settled in Providence with thirteen other householders and in one year formed the first genuine democracy, as well as the first church-divorced and conscience-free community in modern history. **Williams felt that government is the natural way provided by God to cope with the corrupt nature of man. But since government could not be trusted to know which religion is true, he considered the best hope for true religion the protection of the freedom of all religion, along with non-religion, from the state.**

- Cyclone Covey in *The Gentle Radical: Roger Williams* (1966)

- **All civil states with their officers of justice in their respective constitutions and administrations are proved essentially civil, and therefore not judges, governors, or defenders of the spiritual or Christian state and worship.**
- I observe the great and wonderful mistake, both our own and our fathers, as to the civil powers of this world, acting in spiritual matters. **I have read ... the last will and testament of the Lord Jesus over many times, and yet I cannot find by one tittle of that testament that if He had been pleased to have accepted of a temporal crown and government that ever He would have put forth the least finger of temporal or civil power in the matters of His spiritual affairs and Kingdom.**
Hence must it lamentably be against the testimony of Christ Jesus for the civil state to impose upon the souls of the people a religion, a worship, a ministry, oaths (in religious and civil affairs), tithes, times, days, marryings, and buryings in holy ground...
- The civil state is bound before God to take off that bond and yoke of soul oppression, and to proclaim free and impartial liberty to all the people of the three nations to choose and maintain what worship and ministry their souls and consciences are persuaded of; which act, as it will prove an act of mercy and righteousness to the enslaved nations, so is it of a binding force to engage the whole and every interest and conscience to preserve the common freedom and peace; however, an act most suiting with the piety and Christianity of the Holy Testament of Christ Jesus.

The SMITH HILL REPORT



PUBLISHED BY THE RHODE ISLAND FEDERATION OF TEACHERS & HEALTH PROFESSIONALS/AFT, AFL-CIO

Voucher Bill Heard

On Tuesday, June 11, 2013, the House Finance Committee held a hearing on a school voucher bill introduced by Representatives Coderre and Corvese. There were many Catholic school children, their parents, and other proponents throughout the State House that afternoon in support of the voucher bill. The bill, [H6131](#), was modeled after legislation prepared by the corporate-funded group the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC)

RIFTHP Field Representative James Parisi testified against the bill. He argued that there have been many cuts in public school programs and services, a situation that would be exacerbated by the state subsidizing tens of thousands of private and parochial school students. He informed the Committee that the expense would necessitate huge tax increases for Rhode Islanders.

The RIFTHP reminded the Committee that teachers are frustrated, morale is low, and that teachers do not support the current direction of education in our State. Parisi urged the Committee avoid pressure to subsidize private and parochial school education and instead work to improve public schools.

Others who testified or offered formal opposition to the bill include the School Committee's Association, the Superintendent's Association, AFSCME Council 94, NEA/RI and the ACLU. Proponents included representatives of the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice based in Indianapolis, the Catholic School Parents Federation, and numerous private school parents and students. Also supporting the bill was the Tea Party and the Center for Freedom and Prosperity.



EDITORIAL

All leaders must stand tall for educational choice

5/30/13 12:00 am

President and Mrs. Obama have made an educational choice for their children. They have chosen the tony Sidwell Friends School for their daughters Malia, and Sasha.

Sidwell is a private academy that educates many of the children of Washington, D.C.'s elite including Vice-President Biden's grandchildren and former first-daughter, Chelsea Clinton. Rhode Island's junior senator, Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, and Governor Lincoln Chafee have also made the choice to enroll their children in elite, private schools. What do they all have in common? They all were able to make such a choice because they can well afford the high cost of tuition at these elite schools.

This isn't true for much of the nation or state of Rhode Island as the working poor and hard-working middle class families struggle to make ends meet in the sluggish economy. They're educational choice is non-existent and they must depend upon a public school system that is often underfunded and at times failing to provide adequate education for children. What the president, senator and governor also share is their disdain for educational choice for low-income families as they continue to oppose scholarship tax-credit programs and school vouchers. Thankfully, in the State of Rhode Island there is much support for these programs in both the state Senate and House of Representatives.

In the next weeks, as the General Assembly continues to negotiate the state's budget, there is an opportunity to increase the current Tuition Scholarship Tax-Credit program in order to allow more of Rhode Island's low-income, struggling families the support they need to access school choice for their children. This tremendous program over the years has allowed hundreds of children from economically disadvantaged families to attend the Catholic, parochial and private schools of their choice. We hope the leadership sees fit to do what Governor Chafee failed to do once again in proposing his budget and increase the \$1 million cap on the program and allow hundreds more families the educational choice that justice demands.

Directions: Read each article on the following sheet. Fill in three of the points that each side made.

Article A Against School Vouchers

Evidence from Text #1	Evidence from Text #2	Evidence from Text #3

Article B For School Vouchers

Evidence from Text #1	Evidence from Text #2	Evidence From Text #3

Question: Answer on the back of this sheet. Considering the group that wrote each article, what could be the reason for their opposing positions. What is their bias?

[[Home](#)] [[Up](#)]

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof"



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SCHOOL VOUCHERS



School vouchers, also referred to as opportunity scholarships, are state-funded scholarships that pay for students to attend private school rather than public school. Private schools must meet minimum standards established by legislatures in order to accept voucher recipients. Legislatures also set parameters for student eligibility that typically target subgroups of students. These can be low-income students that meet a specified income threshold, students attending chronically low performing schools, students with disabilities, or students in military families or foster care.

History

The practice of state support for private school education has existed in Maine and Vermont for nearly 140 years. They have ongoing programs that provide public funding to private schools for rural students who do not have a public school in close proximity to their home. However, it was economist Milton Friedman's 1955 paper, "[The Role of Government in Education](#)", that launched modern efforts to use public dollars to pay private school tuition in hopes that competition among schools will lead to increased student achievement and decreased education costs.

- In 1989, the Wisconsin legislature passed the nation's first modern school voucher program targeting students from low income households in the Milwaukee School District.
- In 2001, Florida enacted the John M. McKay Scholarships Program for Students with Disabilities becoming the first state to offer private school vouchers to students with disabilities.
- In 2004, the first federally funded and administered voucher program was enacted by Congress in Washington, D.C. It offered private school vouchers to low income students, giving priority to those attending low-performing public schools
- In 2007, the Utah legislature passed legislation creating the first statewide universal school voucher program, meaning it was available to any student in state with no limitations on student eligibility. A petition effort successfully placed the legislation on the state ballot for voter approval. In November 2007, the ballot measure was voted down and the new voucher program was never implemented. Utah's existing special needs voucher program was not affected by the vote.
- In 2011, Indiana created the nation's first state-wide school voucher program for low income students

Arguments For and Against

What the Proponents Say: Private school choice [proponents contend](#) that when parents can choose where to send their child to school, they will choose the highest performing options. Those schools performing poorly will be forced

to either improve or risk losing students and the funding tied to those students. While public school choice policies like charter schools serve a similar purpose, private schools have more flexibility in staffing, budgeting, curriculum, academic standards and accountability systems than even charter schools. This flexibility, [supporters argue](#), fosters the best environment for market competition and cost efficiency.

>**What the Opponents Say:** Opponents of private school choice raise a [number of concerns](#). They argue shifting a handful of students from a public school into private schools will not decrease what the public school must pay for teachers and facilities, but funding for those costs will decrease as students leave. Some also see government incentives to attend private religious schools as [violating the separation of church](#) and state. Others believe the positive effects of school competition on student achievement are overstated by proponents.

What the Research Says

When compared to similar public school students, voucher recipients have generally performed at the same level on reading and math assessments according to the [Center on Education Policy's](#) review of school voucher research, though some gains have been found among low income and minority students who receive vouchers.

Other research has found voucher recipients are more likely to graduate from higher school than their public school counterparts. School competition was also found to slightly improve student achievement in some Milwaukee schools that lost students to school vouchers and under [Florida's tax credit scholarship program](#), although other researchers have questioned the ability to tie these improvements to school vouchers rather than other school reforms.

What States Have Done

There are 13 states plus the District of Columbia and Douglas County School District in Colorado with school voucher programs. Of those, eight states offer vouchers to special needs students, four states plus D.C. offer them to low income students or students from failing schools, and two offer them to certain rural students. Louisiana and Ohio have programs for both low income and special needs students.

Compare how each state has approached their school voucher laws including which students qualify, how private schools are regulated, and the size of each state's voucher by visiting the [State-by-State Comparison of Voucher Laws](#) webpage.

Introduce the topic or issue:	
My opinion on the topic is:	
4 Reasons why I believe my opinion is right	Explain how it supports your argument
<u>Reason 1:</u>	<u>Quote 1:</u>
<u>(Transition)</u> <u>Reason 2:</u>	<u>Quote 2:</u>
<u>(Transition)</u> <u>Reason 3:</u>	<u>Quote 3:</u>
<u>(Transition)</u> <u>Reason 4:</u>	<u>Quote 4:</u>
<u>Conclusion and restate your opinion:</u>	

Directions: Use this rubric to rate each group in every category on a scale of 1 to 4.

Rubric for Evaluating Debate Performance				
	4	3	2	1
Organization	The student presented an exceptionally well organized argument.	The student presented a well organized argument.	The student presented an adequately organized argument.	The student presented an unorganized argument.
Supporting Facts/Details	The student provided 4 or more logically ordered reasons to support the argument.	The student provided 3 logically ordered reasons to support the argument.	The student provided 1 or 2 logically ordered reasons to support the argument.	The student provided no logically ordered reasons to support the argument.
Persuasiveness	The student was totally convincing in stating the argument.	The student was convincing in stating the argument.	The student was somewhat convincing in stating the argument.	The student was not convincing in stating the argument.
Conclusion	The student came to a conclusion that exceptionally supported the argument.	The student came to a conclusion that successfully supported the argument.	The student came to a conclusion that adequately supported the argument.	The student did not come to a conclusion that supported the argument.
Presentation Skills	The student was exceptionally clear, fluent, and confident.	The student was clear, fluent, and confident.	The student was somewhat clear, fluent, and confident.	The student was not clear, fluent, and confident.

Scoring Sheet for Rubric for Evaluating Debate Performance

Group	Organization	Supporting Facts/Details	Persuasiveness	Conclusion	Presentation Skills	Total Score
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						