

# Walled Lake school board comes down on vouchers

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If parents want to send their children to private or parochial schools, Walled Lake Schools officials say they should have to pay for it.

The school board unanimously approved a resolution opposing vouchers or tuition tax credits as a method of funding tuition and fees for private and parochial schools. The Walled Lake district includes the northwest portion of Farmington Hills.

A voucher is an amount of money that follows a student's enrollment to private or parochial schools which could be given directly to the school or parent, who then gives it to the school. Superintendent James Geisler said he was concerned the proposed tuition tax credit would have a negative dollar impact on public schools.

The resolution — which in part states that tax revenues paid

into the federal, state or local treasuries by residents of the Walled Lake Schools should be used to support public education — will be sent to state legislators.

"Somehow the revenue is going to be diverted," Geisler said. "We see this as a first step to a bigger problem. We know as a hold harmless district, our revenues seem to be going flat."

Geisler was referring to the fact that Walled Lake schools are among the highest-spending districts in the state because of the average yearly growth of 500 new students. Geisler said the costs associated with that growth, such as new buildings and staff, outweigh the average two percent annual increase in state funding.

"Ultimately all of the money for public schools comes out of one pot," Geisler said.

And if that pot is dipped into by the private school system, Geisler said, state revenues would further decline.

"I think the vouchers and

tuition tax credit is very dangerous," said trustee Michael Karson.

Walled Lake Schools parent Lori Rich told the board she didn't agree the tax credits would be a threat to the school system. Rich said a number of her friends send their children to private and parochial schools because they are concerned about the values their children are learning and they don't feel the public schools are adequately addressing that concern.

"I would love to think we could be more proactive than reactive," Rich said. "If concerned parents pull their child out ... maybe we need to look at why."

Geisler said he was not concerned about the tax break causing a drop in enrollment and, he said, "I don't think there's anything in the intent of this resolution that's against private schools. But these are private choices people can make if they want to send their children there."

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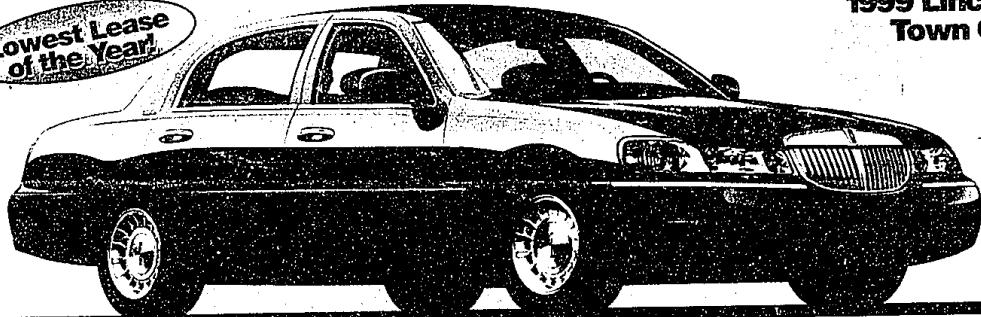
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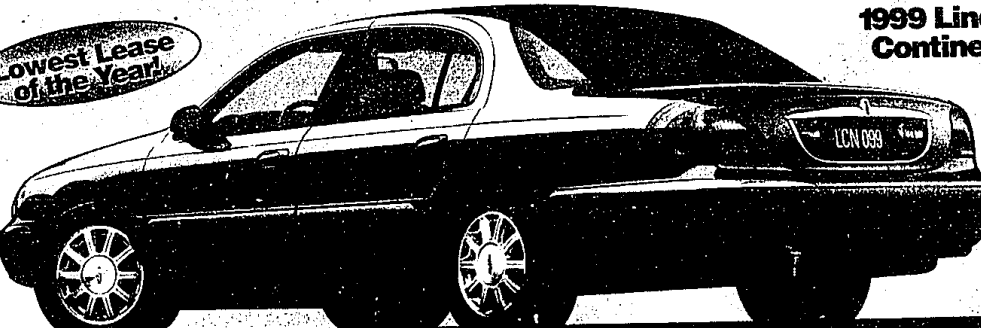
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