

DEP'T OF EDUCATION FINAL REPORT ON D.C. VOUCHERS

U.S. Dep't of Education, *Evaluation of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program: Final Report* (June 2010).¹

Using a Voucher Did Not Improve Student Academic Achievement.²

- The use of a voucher had **no statistically significant impact on overall student achievement** in math or reading.
- In all four years of the study, the use of a voucher resulted in **no statistically significant improvement in reading or math for “students who applied from schools in need of improvement (SINI), the group Congress designated as the highest priority for the Program.”**³
- The use of a voucher had **“no impacts on math achievement for any of the six subgroups examined.”**⁴
- In all four years of the study, students who used the voucher and who either entered the program⁵ **from a SINI school** or, who entered the program in the lower one-third of the applicant test-score performance distribution **showed no improvement in reading.**
- Ultimately, three subgroups of students (females, students entering the Program from non-SINI schools, and students entering the program with test scores in the higher two-thirds of the applicant test-score performance distribution) who used the voucher *may* have shown improvement in reading. But, **“those findings may be due to chance,” are possibly “false discoveries,” and “should be interpreted with caution.”**

Source: 2010 U.S. Dep't of Ed. Report at xv, 35-40; 2009 U.S. Dep't of Ed. Report at xviii, xxvi, xxiv-xxx, 35, 40; 2008 U.S. Dep't of Ed. Report at 34-38; 2007 U.S. Dep't of Ed. Report at xviii, xx, 44, 46.

D.C. Vouchers Fail Students with Special Needs.

- In all four years of the study, **students in the program were less likely “to attend a school that offered special programs for students who may be academically challenged.”** They **“experienced a lower likelihood that their school offered special programs for students with learning problems,”** and **“special programs for English language learners.”**
- 21.6% of the parents who rejected a voucher that was offered to their child did so because the **school lacked the special needs services that their child needed.** 12.3% of the parents who accepted a voucher for their child but then left the program cited a **lack of special needs services.**

Source: 2010 U.S. Dep't of Ed. Report at xxiv-xxvi, xxvii, 19-20; 24-26; 55-57, 60.

D.C. Vouchers Have Not Improved Student Motivation and Engagement or the Educational Experience.

- **Students offered vouchers were “less likely to be in schools with special programs for advanced learners.”**
- In each year these factors were evaluated, participation in the program **had no statistically significant impact** on students' reports of student **aspirations; engagement in extracurricular activities; frequency of doing homework; reading for fun; or tardiness** rates. In addition, students who participated in the program may actually have been *more likely* to be absent from school.
- Participation in the program also resulted in **no greater access to before- or after-school programs and no positive impact on the student-teacher ratio.**
- In all four years of the study, students in the program were also **less likely** to attend a school with a **cafeteria facility, a nurse's office, counselors, and art programs.**

Source: 2010 U.S. Dep't of Ed. Report at xxvii, 19-20; 56-60; 2009 U.S. Dep't of Ed. Report at xxxii, 55-56; 2008 U.S. Dep't of Ed. Report at xxvi, 57-58, F-6.

¹ The final study examined the impacts of the voucher program “after at least four years”: Most students in the study had been in the program for four years, but “a small portion of the sample” of students actually was in the program for five years. 2010 U.S. Dep't of Ed. Report at xix, 35-40.

² These findings applied equally to those students who were offered but did not use a voucher. 2010 U.S. Dep't of Ed. Report at xv.

³ The study broke down students into six subgroups, which include: students who entered the program from SINI schools, students who entered from non-SINI schools, males, females, students who entered in the higher two-thirds of the applicant test-score performance distribution, and those who entered from the lower two-thirds of the applicant test-score performance distribution. 2010 U.S. Dep't of Ed. Report at 39.

⁴ The same finding was made in years two and three. In year one, “students who applied with a relative advantage in academic preparation” (students who entered the program from non-SINI schools and who entered the program in the higher two-thirds of the test-score performance distribution) may have shown improvement in math. But, the authors warned this finding may have been a “false discovery” and the “results may not be reliable indicators of Program effects.” 2009 U.S. Dep't of Ed. Report at 44-48. Considering there was no such improvement found the next three years, the finding was likely a false discovery.

⁵ In accordance with the reports, participation “in the program” includes all students *offered* a voucher, regardless of whether they used the voucher.

Using a Voucher Has Had No Impact on Student Reports of Safety or Satisfaction.⁶

- In all four years of the study, **the use of a voucher had no significant impact on students' reports of school safety and climate.** This is true for students overall and for all six subgroups of students.
- In all four years of the study, **the use of a voucher had no significant impact on student satisfaction with their school.** This is true for students overall and for all six subgroups of students.

Source: 2010 U.S. Dep't of Ed. Report at xvi, 44-52; 2009 U.S. Dep't of Ed. Report at xxvi, xxviii, 44-45, 49-50; U.S. Dep't of Ed. Report at 42-43, 50; 2007 U.S. Dep't of Ed. Report at xx, 1-4.

Parents of Students Who Entered the Program from SINI Schools Did Not Report Higher Ratings of School Safety or Satisfaction.

- Parents in **only one of the six subgroups** — parents of students not from *SINI schools* — perceived improved safety and order in their children's voucher school. It is noteworthy that the **voucher did not impact the perceptions of the parents of students who entered the program from SINI schools.**
- **Parents of students from SINI schools and parents of male students showed no statistically significant improvement in satisfaction with their child's school.** The findings of improved parent satisfaction from the other subgroups—with the exception of the subgroup of parents whose children entered the program from non-SINI schools—"may be false discoveries."

Source: 2010 U.S. Dep't of Ed. Report at xvi, 44-46, 48-50.

The Vast Majority of D.C. Voucher Students Attend a Faith-Based School.

- In 2008-2009, **54% of the participating schools were faith-based. 80% percent of the students in the program attended a faith-based school.**

Source: 2010 U.S. Dep't of Ed. Report at 17-18.

Entry Into the D.C. Voucher Program Decreases Student Access to Key Services.

Service	% of students <u>in</u> the program whose schools have the service as compared to students <u>not in</u> the program			
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Final Report
ESL Programs	38% fewer	31% fewer	31% fewer	25% fewer
Learning Support/Special Needs	38% fewer	24% fewer	17% fewer	18% fewer
Tutors	no significant difference	10% fewer	17% fewer	4% fewer
Counselors	7% fewer	15% fewer	13% fewer	10% fewer
Nurse's Office	56% fewer	42% fewer	51% fewer	33% fewer
Cafeteria	14% fewer	14% fewer	9% fewer	15% fewer

Source: 2010 U.S. Dep't of Ed. Report at 20; 2009 U.S. Dep't of Ed. Report at xxii, 17; 2008 U.S. Dep't of Ed. Report at xvii, 16; 2007 U.S. Dep't of Ed. Report at 21.

⁶ These findings applied equally to those students who were offered, but did not use, a voucher. 2010 U.S. Dep't of Ed. Report at 46, 51, 52.